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Invectives as a Stylistic Device in Martin Luther's Reformation Rhetoric

Abstract: The article explores Luther's usage of invective language. In recent years of research into Church history, it has only rarely been recognized, and often been concealed, as an indispensable part of Luther's theology. Firstly the article presents some (relevant) passages of Luther's invective rhetoric. In a second section, perspectives on the interpretation of this form of linguistic expression are explained. The final section concludes with the appeal to a historicizing claim essential to understanding the designs of the Reformation theology of the Wittenberg reformer.

Keywords: Martin Luther, Augustin von Alveldt, Antichrist, social order, group identity, authoritative rule

1 Introduction

The Wittenberg reformer Martin Luther (1483–1546) is known for his robust, aggressive polemics and polarizing rhetoric. Even a superficial perusal of his writings reveals this to be a continuum as a form of expression. Again and again, divided opinions emerge on his Ruffianism (Grobianismus).[1] It was not uncommon for this to lead to a distortion of his theological concerns, because the harsh language was simply ignored in the interpretation, or just as one-sidedly, it was moved into the center of a critical appraisal. Developmental psychology, gerontology, and linguistics, as well as other academic disciplines, have made a number of attempts at explanations, which, however, in no case reach the theological core of Luther's statements. As early as 1982, Heiko A. Oberman emphasized that Luther's content and form could not be separated in this way: committed to Christ as a defender of Christianity, Luther crudely advances his contempt for satanically violent criminals:

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1 See Kurt Ihlenfeld, "Grobian Luther," in *Angst vor Luther?*, ed. Kurt Ihlenfeld (Berlin, Witten: Eckart, 1967), 32–41.

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> But if you haven't had enough of it, you devil, I've also shat and peed, wipe your mouth with it and bite you with it.[2]

Great importance is attached to the devil as God's adversary in all the writings of the late Reformer.[3] Satan opposes God by bewildering access to divine revelation and the word of Scripture, through his improper practice of interpretation, thus diverting people from the right path in their search for salvation. This must be countered with all determination and, if necessary, with drastic means. Luther emphasized this as early as 1515 at a meeting of the observant Augustinian hermits[4] in Gotha:

> A slanderer does nothing but chew the filth of others with his teeth and dig his nose in the dirt like a pig; hence his filth stinks the most, only surpassed by the devil's filth […] And although man secretly defecates, the slanderer does not allow it to be secret; he wants to wallow in it, is worth nothing better after God's righteous judgment.[5]

The connection of the devil with scatological statements is certainly to be seen as time-related matter as well. Nevertheless, Luther's drastic mode of expression, not

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2 "Hast Du aber nicht gnug daran, du Teufel, so hab ich auch geschmissen und gepinkelt, daran wische dein Maul und beiße dich wol damit." Quotations from Luther's Works follow *D. Martin Luthers Werke (WA)*, ed. J.K.F. Knaake et al., 120 vols. (Weimar: 1883–2009); different sections are labeled with "TR" for *Table Talks*, "Br" for "Letters and correspondence," "DB" for the German Bible Translation, revision, and drafts. We quote volume and page. References to Letters and Table-Talks will additionally contain a number (*N°*). For a synopsis of Luther's Works in German and English translations see Heinrich J. Vogel, *Vogel's Cross Reference and Index to the Contents of Luther's Works* (Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 1983). Translating Luther's early modern German into English appropriately is quite a challenge. Therefore, the noted versions are provisionally and require further proof. I keep the German wording in brackets or in the footnotes. In the text our proposal for a translation is given. However, this must be critically evaluated and reactions, responses, and critique by the readers of this article are highly welcome. See also the translation by Gritsch in: *Luther's Works*, III, *Church and Ministry*, vol. 41, ed. by Eric W. Gritsch, vol. 41 (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1958, repr. 1966). – For the quote see *WA TR* 6 (1921), *N°* 6827, 216, see furthermore Heiko A. Oberman, *Luther: Mensch zwischen Gott und Teufel* (Munich: Pantheon, 1991), 112; see also 114 and 115: "Die deftigen Wortkanonaden, die Luther zeitlebens den Gegnern des Evangeliums entgegenschleudert, werden verharmlost, wenn sie auf eine 'schlechte Kinderstube' zurückgeführt werden. Sie enthüllen vielmehr, wie Luther seine Aufgabe verstanden hat: Kampf dem größten Verleumder aller Zeiten."
3 Harmannus Obendiek, *Der Teufel bei Martin Luther: Eine theologische Untersuchung* (Berlin: Furche-Verlag, 1931).
4 For an overview to the history of the observant branch of the Augustinian Hermits see Wolfgang Günter, *Reform und Reformation: Geschichte der deutschen Reformkongregation der Augustinereremiten (1432–1539)*, Reformationsgeschichtliche Studien und Texte 168 (Münster: Aschendorff, 2018).
5 *WA* 1 (1883), 50: "Nam omnis detractor nihil aliud agit nisi quod dentibus molit oleta hominum et naribus suis in lutis eorum obsonat sicut sus, unde stercus hominum maxime omnium foedat, sed super hoc Diaboli (*Teuffels Dreck*) […] Detractor autem, etiamsi homo occulte ponat stercus suum, non sinit occultum esse, *hat Lust darinnen zu weltzen, ist auch nichts besseres werth*, iusto Dei iudicio."

only represents a recourse to contemporary rhetoric,[6] but is to be interpreted in the overall context of his eschatological-apocalyptic interpretation of the world.[7]

While the above quote owes its origins to a speech during a gathering of the stated religious order, Luther also uses his fierce forms of expression as a means to communicate in the vernacular with the non-university, less academically educated people, thus finding an audience with them.[8] This socio-historical interpretation still requires further source-based investigation, but nevertheless substantiates the fact that Luther definitely takes this dimension into account during his public appearances.[9]

However, the question of the historiographical and theological-historical handling of Luther's invectives comes second. Here is a preliminary and highly vague outline of his powerful, cruel, and defamatory rhetoric. It is then only necessary to deal with the implications of such a review for the interpretation of Luther in particular and the historiography of the Reformation in general.

2 Exemplary Views of Some of Luther's Writings

2.1 About the Papacy in Rome against the Renowned Romanist in Leipzig (1520)

In the process, which led to the imminent condemnation of Luther by the Roman Church, several writings came out accusing him of heresy and apostasy, as well as deviating from Roman truth. In 1520, Luther was also busy with numerous publications, including the so-called main writings of the Reformation.[10] However,

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6 See Dieter Gutzen, "Grobianismus," in *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, ed. Horst Robert Balz et al., vol. 14 (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 1986), 256–59.

7 See Kurt Victor Selge, "Ekklesiologisch-heilsgeschichtliches Denken beim frühen Luther," in *Augustine, the Harvest and Theology (1300–1650): Essays Dedicated to Heiko Augustinus Oberman in Honor of His Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. Kenneth Hagen (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 259–85.

8 See Robert W. Scribner, *For the Sake of Simple Folk: Popular Propaganda for the German Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

9 See Martin Luther, *Sendbrief vom Dolmetschen* (1530): "One should ask the mother at home, the children in the street, the common man at the market about it and look at their mouth and see how they talk and translate accordingly" ("man mus die mutter jhm hause, die kinder auff der gassen, den gemeinen man auff dem marckt darumb fragen, und den selbigen auff das maul sehen, wie sie reden, und darnach dolmetzschen," *WA* 30/II (1909), 632–46, here 637).

10 For further discussion see Thomas Kaufmann, "Luthers Publizistik des Jahres 1520," *Luther: Zeitschrift der Luthergesellschaft* 92 (2021), 9–28; Roland M. Lehmann, "Der Sermon *Von den guten Werken*: Eine Einführung in Martin Luthers reformatorisches Christentumsverständnis," *Luther* 92 (2021), 29–46; Christian V. Witt, "Verheißung und Glaube als Grundfesten der Kirche: Luthers

he always took time to react to individual attacks. When a Latin pamphlet by the Leipzig Franciscan Augustin Alveldt appeared in April,[11] the Wittenberg professor of theology did not find it necessary to say a word about it. He asked his student assistant Johann(es) Lonicer[12] to write a reply. Now in this commission to a student who had just graduated – Lonicer earned his bachelor's degree in liberal arts in 1519 –, a social and academic asymmetry becomes visible that can be seen as an affront. Luther did not perceive his Franciscan opponent as an equal. At the same time, a rebuttal to Alveldt by Bartholomäus Bernhardi also appeared.[13] The latter was a licentiate in the theological faculty since 1518 and became rector of the University of Wittenberg the following year. With this, a renowned theologian now entered the scene. In the meantime, however, Alveldt had published a tract in German and dedicated it to the council and the citizens of Leipzig. That flabbergasted even staunch supporters of Rome. The controversy was carried out from the closed room of the university where scholars engage in disputes into the public square. This in turn provoked Luther to make a public reply in German. In it he tries to counter false accusations that may mislead and confuse the citizens of Leipzig. Right at the beginning of the introduction Luther states:

> Something new has come on the scene again, after a great deal of rain these years and much growth in recent times. So far, many have touched me with insults and self-important lies, which have not exactly succeeded. Now the brave heroes stand out foremost, on the market square in Leipzig, who not only want to be looked at, but also assail everyone in a quarrel. You are very well armed, I have not encountered anything similar. They have their helmets on their feet, their swords on their heads, guilt and armor hanging on their backs, they hold the spears by the blade, and the whole suit of armor suits them very judgmentally, in the new manner.[14]

Schrift *De captivitate Babylonica ecclesiae praeludium*," *Luther* 92 (2021), 47–61; Anne Käfer, "Todesschrecken: Luthers Freiheitsschrift – ein Traktat wider die Angst," *Luther* 92 (2021), 62–70; Albrecht Beutel, "Luthers reformatorische Nebenschriften des Jahres 1520: Ein achtenswertes historisches Komplement," *Lutherjahrbuch* 87 (2020), 11–40.

11 See Heribert Smolinsky, *Augustin von Alveldt und Hieronymus Emser: Eine Untersuchung zur Kontroverstheologie der frühen Reformationszeit im Herzogtum Sachsen*, Reformationsgeschichtliche Studien und Texte 122 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1984).

12 See Heinrich Reinermann, *Johannes Lonicerus (1499–1569): Ein Leben im Zeichen der Reformation* (Ubstadt and Weiher: Verlag Regionalkultur, 2018); Christine Mundhenk and Heinz Scheible, *Melanchthons Briefwechsel*, vol. 13 (Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 2019), 154.

13 See Dorothea McEwan, *Das Wirken des Vorarlberger Reformators Bartholomäus Bernhardi* (Dornbirn: Vorarlberger Verlagsanstalt, 1986); Hans-Joachim Böttcher, *Bedeutende historische Persönlichkeiten der Dübener Heide* (Leipzig: Arbeitsgemeinschaft für mitteldeutsche Familienforschung, 2014), 11–12.

14 "Es ist aber etwas news auff denn plan kummen, nach dem es disze jare wol geregnet und vile newer zeit erwachsenn. Vil haben mich biszher mit schmachworten unnd herlichen lugen antastet, wilchen es nit fast gelungen. Nu thun sich aller erst die tapffern helte erfur, zu Leyptzck auff dem

The ironic-polemical introduction to his work above picks up on a few motifs that Luther was to use again and again in later writings, however, in modified forms. The means of dispute here is certainly a disparagement. However, it portrays Luther in elegant satire or caricature. He uses the image of soldier of Christ (*miles Christianus*) from the Bible (Rom 13:12; 1 Thess 5:8; Eph 6:13–17; 2 Cor 10:3–6; 2 Tim 2:3–4).[15] It is, of course, replaced by a grotesque reversal of military or knightly armor. However, such argumentation is as curious and nonsensical as the behavior of Luther's controversial theological opponents and is most powerful in conflict.[16]

2.2 Reformation Educational Impulses (1524, 1530)

In his programmatic writings for a Protestant educational reform,[17] Luther made unmistakably clear what he thinks of traditional church educational work, in contrast to contemporary, often humanist initiated reform considerations. For a variety of reasons, Luther rejected traditional scholastic learning, but did not mention his decisive theological argument, the perversion of the Gospels.

marckt, die sich nit allein wollen lassen ansehen, sondern auch yderman mit streyt besteenn: sie sein fast wol gerustet, das mir der gleychen nit sein furkummen, die eyszenhut haben sie an den fussen, das schwert auff dem kopff, schilt und krebsz hangen auff dem rucken, die spiesz halten sie bey der schneyden, und stet yhn der gantz harnisch gar feyn reutterisch ann auff die new manier," *WA* 6 (1888), 285. See (correctly) Martin Brecht, "Der 'Schimpfer' Martin Luther," *Luther: Zeitschrift der Luthergesellschaft* 52 (1981), 97–113, here 99, note 3.

15 See additionally Gerd Althoff, "*Nunc fiant Christi milites, quid dudum extiterunt raptores*: Zur Entstehung von Rittertum und Ritterethos," *Saeculum* 32 (1981), 317–33; Hilkert Weddige, *Einführung in die germanistische Mediävistik* (Munich: Beck, 2006), 175–77; Hanns Christoph Brennecke, "Militia Christi," in *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*[4], ed. Hans Dieter Betz (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 1231–33.

16 See Markus Wriedt, "Founding a New Church? The Early Ecclesiology of Martin Luther in the Light of the Debate about Confessionalization," in *Confessionalization in Europe 1555–1700: Essays in Honor and Memory of Bodo Nischan*, ed. John Headley, Hans Hillerbrand, and Anthony J. Papalas (Aldershot: Routledge, 2004), 51–66.

17 *WA* 15 (1899), 27–53 and 517–88. See Martin Luther, "An die Ratsherren […]. (1524)" and Luther, "Sermon, dass man Kinder zur Schule halten solle (1530)," ed. and trans. Markus Wriedt in *Deutsch-Deutsche Lutherausgabe*, ed. Helmuth Zschoch et al., vol. 3 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt 2016), 357–405 and 715–87; Markus Wriedt, "Die theologische Begründung der Bildungsreform bei Luther und Melanchthon," in *Humanismus und Wittenberger Reformation: Festgabe anläßlich des 500. Geburtstages des Praeceptor Germaniae Philipp Melanchthon am 16. Februar 1997*, ed. Michael Beyer et al. (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1996), 155–84; Markus Wriedt, "Bildungslandschaften zwischen Späthumanismus und Reformation: Evangelische Universitäten als Zentren der Entstehung einer akademischen Konfessionskultur," in *Entfaltung und zeitgenössische Wirkung der Reformation im europäischen Kontext,* ed. Irene Dingel and Ute Lotz-Heumann (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2015), 249–67; Markus Wriedt, "Bildung," in *Luther-Handbuch*, ed. Albrecht Beutel (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 231–36.

Apparently, the Reformer thought that he had presented this argument in detail in earlier writings and therefore could dispense with it here. Even more, however, he criticized the ineffective, bloated and often absurd teaching system,[18] which he knew from his own experience. For him, the church schools appeared as "donkey's stables and the devil's school"[19] because they did not fulfill the educational mandate given by God, or had, instead, done the opposite. Their teachers, "child eaters and corrupters"[20] fell under Jesus's condemnation according to Matt 18:6–7. The defenders of the traditional education system still protested against language teaching and failed to see that they were in fact complicit in the decline of classical education.[21] Luther sharply criticized the traditional teaching methods[22] and the accumulation of useless and unhelpful books, namely books that interpret the Holy Scriptures.[23]

Without question, this furious attack was also influenced by Luther's own experience with the late medieval school and educational system.

In relation to the significance of invectives in the work of the Reformer discussed in this article, another peculiarity should be noted. In addition to the attacks on the devil's work, which are often combined with scatological abnormalities, animal metaphors are increasingly used. They usually have pejorative connotations, emphasizing the creatures' stupidity, sexual desire, and filthiness. In addition to "donkeys" and "pigs," there are "goats"[24] and other animals that Luther knew from contemporary court settings and from their colloquial use.

2.3 Against Hans Worst (1542)[25]

Already marked by several afflictions, not least by the affair surrounding the double marriage of Philip of Hesse,[26] Martin Luther wrote a pamphlet in 1542 against Duke Heinrich von Braunschweig to Wolfenbüttel. He had attacked Johann Friedrich I of

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18 *WA* 15 (1899), 31,14–20; 46,26–27 and 50,25–51,10.

19 "esels stelle und teuffels schulen," *WA* 15 (1899), 31,25.

20 "Kinderfressern und Verderbern," *WA* 15 (1899), 33,20–24.

21 *WA* 15 (1899), 36,16–21.

22 *WA* 15 (1899), 46,6–9.

23 *WA* 15 (1899), 50,4–18; 51,25–27 and 52,33–53,3.

24 See also Martin Luther, *Auf das überchristliche* […] *Buch Bocks Emsers zu Leipzig Antwort* (Leipzig 1521), *WA* 7 (1897), 621–88.

25 *WA* 51 (1914), 469–572.

26 See in addition William Walker Rockwell, *Die Doppelehe des Landgrafen Philipp von Hessen* (Marburg: Wentworth Pr, 1904); Stephan Buchholz, "Rechtsgeschichte und Literatur: Die Doppelehe Philipps von Hessen," in *Landgraf Philipp der Großmütige von Hessen und seine Residenz Kassel*, ed. Heide Wunder et al. (Marburg: Elwert, 2004), 57–73; Kai Lehmann, ed., *Fatale Lust: Philipp von Hessen und seine Doppelehe* (Schmalkalden-Meiningen: Wehry, 2016).

Saxony, the Elector of Saxony and one of the leaders of the Schmalkaldic League, in various pamphlets. In one of these pamphlets, the descendent of the noble Welf family claimed that Luther insulted his sovereign Johann Friedrich by calling him a "Hans Sausage" (Hans Worst). The Wittenberg theologian then accused Heinrich II of wanting to make himself known at his own expense by spreading lies. In addition, he spoke irreverently against the Elector of Saxony by insulting him as a heretic.[27]

During his objection, Martin Luther himself scolded Heinrich eloquently and sometimes in hateful scatological language. At the same time, he developed a coherent system of the Reformation's understanding of the Church. It essentially corresponded to its apostolic model,[28] whereas the Roman Church had been covered up and made unseemly by all sorts of adaptations.[29] The sharp polemic specifically targeted the "papists" and the long-deceased preacher of indulgences, Johann Tetzel (1460/65–1519). Luther used numerous passages from the Bible to convince opponents of the perfidiousness of their faith. Of course, he had little hope that anything would change here. For him the antagonism between the Protestant Church and the Church of Rome was insurmountable.

This is not least since the Roman Church had come under the influence of the devil through inappropriate adaptations. He ruled the corrupt Church from Rome and sought to solidify his influence through new laws and regulations. The representatives of the Curia were "of the devil" and contradicted everything that would befit the Church of Christ. In this context, however, it should be noted that this satanic affront must be distinguished from the general diagnosis that the Antichrist rules in Rome. The devil is according to Luther undoubtedly one of the Antichrist's comrades-in-arms but must not be confused with him. Because the devil still has an important function within the framework of God's saving acts: he is as a constant challenge and threat to Christians; nonetheless, he is there to punish these people and lead them back to God.[30] Just as the devil is a tool in God's plan of salvation, the Roman theologians he deceived also function as God's appeal and rod.

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27 See Mark U. Edwards, Jr., *Luther's Last Battles: Politics and Polemics 1531–1546* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 1983); Georg Kuhaupt, *Veröffentlichte Kirchenpolitik: Kirche im publizistischen Streit zur Zeit der Religionsgespräche (1538–1541)*, Forschungen zur Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte 69 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998); Franz Petri, "Herzog Heinrich der Jüngere von Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel: Ein niederdeutscher Territorialfürst im Zeitalter Luthers und Karls V," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 72 (1981), 122–57.
28 "For sure, we are the true old Church without any fornication and innovation" ("Wir aber [...] sind [...] gewislich die rechte alte Kirche, on alle Hurerey und Newerey," *WA* 51 [1914], 498).
29 The Romans "left the old Church and their old groom like the archdevil's whore" ("das sie die alte Kirche und jren alten Breutgam als ein Ertzteufelshure verlassen") and turned themselves "into the devil's last and most shameful bride" ("des Teufels letzte und schendlichste braut," *WA* 51 [1914], 498).
30 See Markus Wriedt, "Die Sicht des Anderen – Luthers Verständnis des 'Türken' als 'Zuchtrute Gottes' and 'Geißel der Endzeit'," *Lutherjahrbuch* 77 (2010), 107–27; Markus Wriedt, "Kampf am Ende

Against the background of their theological interpretation in the Reformer's writing, the insult undeniably associated with such characterizations receives a forgiving note: not only the devil, but also his followers still have the chance to be reconciled through God's mercy and to be accepted back into the heavenly community of the redeemed. At the same time, it becomes apparent that the satanic emphasis does not only fulfill the purpose of an invective but is to be integrated into the broader horizon of Luther's eschatological-apocalyptical thinking.

2.4 Against the Papacy in Rome Established by the Devil (1545)

Luther's last pamphlet against the papacy and the Curia in Rome, which is difficult to outrival in its polemics, arose from a contemporary provocation. Pope Paul III (Farnese) reprimanded Emperor Charles V in a brief because he allegedly pursued a policy that was too pro-Protestant in the decree of the last diet in Speyer (1544).[31] It seems that Luther wrote his treatise in one outpouring and without any restraint. The text can be roughly divided into three parts: after a prelude, in which Luther discusses the question of whether the pope has the right to convene or dismiss a council,[32] there follows a treatise on the institution of the papacy.[33] Second, there is the question of who is allowed to judge the pope,[34] and third, there is the historiographical argument as to whether the Roman Empire was ultimately legitimized and justified by the pope.[35] The sections are asymmetrical because they are of different lengths, and the structure is not immediately clear to the reader. Luther allowed himself to be guided too much by his aggressive prevailing mood. The curtailment of the sections may be because Luther's anger had subsided and the cathartic effect in the completion of the pages emerged.

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der Zeiten: Zur apokalyptischen Transformation des mittelalterlichen Antichrist-Motivs bei Martin Luther," in *Reformationen des 16. Jahrhunderts – Abschied vom Mittelalter*, ed. Karl-Heinz Braun and Birgit Studt (Ostfildern: Thorbecke, 2021), 77–95.

31 See Hellmut Zschoch, "Luther und seine altgläubigen Gegner," in *Luther-Handbuch*, ed. Beutel, 115–20.

32 *WA* 54 (1928), 206–28.

33 "Das Erste: […] das der Bapst nicht sey der Oberst und das Heubt der Christenheit," *WA* 54 (1928), 228(–85).

34 "Das ander stück: OBs war sey, das den Bapstesel niemand urteilen noch richten kŏnne […]," *WA* 54 (1928), 285(–95).

35 "Das dritte stück: OB der Bapst das Rŏmische Reich von den Griechen hab auff uns Deudschen gewand," *WA* 54 (1928), 295(–99).

In regard of this writing, a detailed study by Markus Hundt is available,[36] so that only a few examples from Luther's rhetorical portfolio should be mentioned. Luther formulates the basic tenor of his argument in dialectical opposition:

> Whoever wants to hear God speak, reads the Holy Bible. Whoever wants to hear the devil speak, reads the Pope's decree and bulls.[37]

The agonistic contrast between Holy Scripture, from which God speaks, and the decrees and bulls of the pope, in which Satan articulates himself, is striking. Here Luther used not only the diastatic opposition, which he had used as the ideal form of his theological expression (*modus loquendi theologicus*)[38] since reading the anonymous treatise *Eyn Deutsch Theologia*. He also used a play on words: decree becomes *dreck*. The pure Word of God is opposed to the *dreck* of papal pronouncements. They are belittled, denigrated, discredited, and declared "totally filthy."[39] In addition to scatological motifs, Luther also purposefully used defamatory slurs from the animal kingdom:

> Also, Charlemagne in Rome, in Frankfurt and in France, and his son Louis in Aachen, and more emperors held agreement. My dear, should such fine bishops and emperors have done such injustice and be damned because of the farts of the donkey in Rome (what else can he do more?) out of his own great head he calculates and out of his nasty belly he farts. It doesn't belong to the emperor to set up a council, to appoint or name other people. O how is the rude ass so well off! It struggles after its guide, who puts a rod on a sack, so that his hindquarters would have to bend![40]

The stated argument that the right to convene a council does not lie exclusively with the pope is polemically exaggerated. Such a rule, if it had any strength and authority,

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36 Markus Hundt, *Sprachliche Aggression bei Martin Luther: Argumentationsformen und -funktionen am Beispiel der Streitschrift "Wider das Papsttum zu Rom vom Teufel gestiftet" (1545)*, Lingua Historica Germanica 27 (Berlin and Boston, MA: De Gruyter, 2022).

37 "Wer Gott wil hȯren reden, der lese die heilige Schrifft. Wer den Teufel wil hȯren reden, der lese des Bapsts Drecket und Bullen," *WA* 54 (1928), 263. "Drecket" is a pun, which combines the German word "Dreck," which means "filth" or "dirt," with the Latin term "decretum." It appears as loanword "Dekret" in German and means "decree."

38 See Leif Grane, *Modus loquendi theologicus: Luthers Kampf um die Erneuerung der Theologie (1515–1518)*, Acta Theologica Danica 12 (Leiden: Brill, 1975); Albrecht Beutel, *In dem Anfang war das Wort: Studien zu Luthers Sprachverständnis*, Hermeneutische Untersuchungen zur Theologie 27 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991).

39 *WA* 54 (1928), 263 and 271.

40 "Auch Karolus Magnus zu Rom, zu Franckfort und in Franckreich, und sein son Ludwig zu Ah, und ander mehr Keiser Concilia gehalten haben. Lieber, solten solche feine Bisschove und Keiser darumb haben unrecht gethan und verdampt sein, das der fartz Esel zu Rom (was kan er sonst mehr?) aus seinem eigen tollen kopff setzt und aus seinem garstigen bauch fartzet, Es gebȯr dem Keiser nicht, an zu setzen ein Concilium, noch personen dazu zu ordenen, oder nennen. O wie ist dem groben esel so wol! Er ringet nach einem, der jm einen stecken auff den sack leget, das jm die lenden sich beugen mȯsten!," *WA* 54 (1928), 222.

would put the emperors who held such a council at fault. This is completely illogical and absurd. Such reasoning can only be interpreted as the enormous flatulence of an ass. The negative connotation of the metaphor[41] is supplemented by the possible behavior towards a beast of burden,[42] which is tamed and controlled by its user, punished, and humiliated.

Luther's aggressive polemics were further intensified using religious motifs. He repeatedly emphasized the pope's origin and relationship with the devil. This topos is used more than 145 times, for example when the pope is referred to as devil's property,[43] devil's apostle and the devil's desperate child,[44] devil's larva,[45] devil's breading ground of evil,[46] devil's spook,[47] from their synagogue of Satan and the devil's church,[48] devil's work and idolatry.[49] Luther subsequently exposed the pope's close relationship with the devil as blasphemous and profane.[50]

The motif of religious insults is obviously supplemented by slurs from contemporary vernacular.[51] The pope and his followers appear as "worst knaves, murderers, traitors, liars, and the right broth of evil for all the wickedest people on earth."[52] The pope himself acts as a "werewolf," and as a "donkey" or "farting ass"; his followers are depicted as "mules."[53] Other motifs of this diatribe are "wretched Paul,"[54] "Roman school for rouges,"[55] the "rogue Paula"[56] (a total of nine records),

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41 The donkey initially stood for lack of education, stubborn stupidity, and an animalistic sex drive. In schools and universities in the late Middle Ages, in particular, a student who does not complete his or her assignments is referred to as a donkey and punished by being made to wear an animal mask for a period of time.

42 Similar *WA* 54 (1928), 290.

43 "Teufels eigenthum," *WA* 54 (1928), 225.

44 "Teufels Apostel und verzweivelte teufels Kinder," *WA* 54 (1928), 227.

45 "Teufels larven," *WA* 54 (1928), 229.

46 "Teufels grundsuppe," *WA* 54 (1928), 233.

47 "Teufels gespenst," *WA* 54 (1928), 242.

48 "jrer teufels Synagoga und Teufels kirche," *WA* 54 (1928), 245.

49 "Teufels-werck und abgoetterey," *WA* 54 (1928), 259. To this compilation see Hundt, *Sprachliche Aggression*, 93.

50 *WA* 54 (1928), 215, 218, 231, 239, 242, 244, 246, 259–60, and 268–69.

51 See the compilation by Hundt, *Sprachliche Aggression*, 94–95.

52 "Ertzspitzbuben, Mörder, Verrheter, Lügener, und die rechte grundsuppe aller bösesten Menschen auff Erden," *WA* 54 (1928), 218.

53 "Beerwolff," *WA* 54 (1928), 218; "esel," "fartzesel," "maulesel," *WA* 54 (1928), 266.

54 "bösewicht Paulus," *WA* 54 (1928) 54, 222; what is meant here is Pope Paul III (Farnese) not the Apostle.

55 "römische Bubenschule," *WA* 54 (1928) 211, 271.

56 "schalck Paula," *WA* 54 (1928), 215; see also the reference to sexual insults by giving the wrong gender below.

with "your German sows,"[57] "rouges,"[58] "greedy belly Paulus,"[59] the "disgraceful liar,"[60] "against the sow Dr Eck in Leipzig,"[61] "mule,"[62] today's or "main rogue,"[63] "lazy potbelly" and "rude Pope ass and the farting ass in Rome."[64] "Therefore, it is a sacrosanct Word: Petre, love me, feed my sheep. For they are dear shepherds, not like the cruel two-footed buffaloes and asses in Rome,"[65] the "Pope and his mob."[66] Luther escalated the insults to a veritable "barrage of insults." A total of twenty offensive phrases are asyndetically connected in this one sentence.

> that, praise God, no good Christian conscience can otherwise believe that the Pope is or still can be today the vicegerent of God or Christ, but is now the accursed Church of every knave on the earth, a representative of the devil, an enemy of God, an adversary of Christ and destroyer of the Churches of Christ, teacher of all lying profanities and idolatries, an arch thief of Churches and Church robbers of the keys, of all good things, both of Churches and of earthly lords, a murderer of kings, and an inciter to all kinds of bloodshed, a lawbreaker above all lawbreakers [2 Thess 2:3] and all fornication, even which cannot be named, an antichrist, a man of sinners and a child of perdition, a real werewolf.[67]

57 "deinen Deudschen sewen," *WA* 54 (1928), 217; an insult to Emperor Charles V attributed to the Pope.
58 In relation to the word choice, a total of 33 examples including the variations arch rogue ("Erzspitzbube"), roguish ("spitzbůbisch"), roguestry ("Spitzbůberey") can be substantiated; see the corresponding entries in the twelve-volume index of the Weimar edition of Luther's writings.
59 "geitzwanst Paulus," *WA* 54 (1928), 222. Here again Pope Paul III (Farnese; 1468–1549) is addressed.
60 "schendlichste lůgner," *WA* 54 (1928), 231.
61 "wider D. Saw Eken to Leipzig," *WA* 54 (1928), 231. For more information see Erwin Iserloh, *Johannes Eck (1486–1543): Scholastiker, Humanist, Kontroverstheologe*, Katholisches Leben und Kirchenreform im Zeitalter der Glaubensspaltung 41 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1981); Benedikt Peter, *Der Streit um das kirchliche Amt: Die theologischen Positionen der Gegner Martin Luthers*, Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Europäische Geschichte Mainz 170 (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1997).
62 "maulesel," *WA* 54 (1928), 253.
63 "Hauptschalck," *WA* 54 (1928), 263; meant is Pope Boniface VIII (Caetani; 1235–1303).
64 "faulen wanst," "groben Bapstesel und fartzesel zu Rom," *WA* 54 (1928), 265.
65 "Darumb ists gar ein gros Wort: Petre, hastu mich lieb, so weide meine Schafe. Denn sie sind theur, solche Hirten, und nicht so gemein, als die zweyfůssige Puffel und Bapstesel zu Rom," *WA* 54 (1928), 280.
66 "Bapst und seine Rotten," *WA* 54 (1928), 281.
67 "das, Gott lob, kein gut Christlich gewissen anders gleuben kan, denn das der Bapst nicht sey noch sein kan das heubt der Christlichen Kirchen noch Stathalter Gottes oder Christi, sondern sey das heubt der verfluchten kirchen aller ergesten Buben auff erden, Ein stathalter des Teufels, ein feind Gottes, ein widersacher Christi und verstôrer der Kirchen Christi, Ein lerer aller lůgen Gottslesterung und abgôttereien, Ein Ertzkirchendieb und Kirchenreuber der schlůssel, aller gůter, beide der kirchen und der weltlichen Herrn, ein môrder der Kônigen, und hetzer zu allerley blutvergiessen, Ein hurnwirt uber alle hurnwirte [2 Thess 2:3] und aller unzucht, auch die nicht zu nennen ist, ein Widerchrist, ein Mensch der sůnden und kind des verderbens, ein rechter Beerwolff," *WA* 54 (1928), 283–84.

The frequent usage of the accusation of malice relates to numerous incriminating examples of actions by Luther's opponents, who committed such actions with the knowledge of their depravity:

> Because they didn't either unknowingly or out of infirmity start the vexatious papacy. They knew very well that their predecessors St Gregory, Pelagius, Cornelius, Fabian, and many other holy bishops of the Roman Churches, had not practiced such rancor as reported above. They well knew that St Cyprian, Augustine, Hilary, Martin, Ambrose, Jerome, Dionysius, and many other holy bishops all over the world, had known nothing about a pope, nor had they been subject to the Roman church. They well knew that the four high councils, Nicaea, Constantinople, Ephesus, Chalcedon, and many others in agreement, had never recognized such pontiffs. […] You knew it and still know it now […]. You still know it today well.[68]

Unawareness or even ignorance from the Roman theologians and officials can hardly be cited to exonerate them. They acted badly in full awareness of what they are doing. Again and again, Luther took material examples from the Bible, from the Church, but above all from (Church) history to illustrate his accusations. He considered them self-evident. Therefore, they are not further expounded upon.

According to Luther, the hypertrophic-exclusive appeal to Christ's founding word and authority is a *contradictio in adiecto*:

> Here either Christ must be a liar who has not kept his word, or the Pope must be a desperate, lecherous villain who accuses our Lord of such lies.[69]

The one-sided claim of the authority of the Son of God means that his word is turned into its opposite and thus he is branded a liar. Luther found this malicious and blasphemous. Who is the pope, that he can make God a liar?

This lead to a carnivalesque disorder.[70] However, it is not just limited to a foolish role-playing game, but rather a performance of sexual identity that confuses the

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68 *WA* 54 (1928), 243: "Denn sie haben nicht unwissentlich noch aus gebrechlickeit das leidige Bapstum angefangen. Sie wusten seer wol, das jre vorfaren S. Gregorius, Pelagius, Cornelius, Fabianus, und viel mehr heilige Bischove der Rȏmischen Kirchen, solchen grewel nicht hatten geȗbt, wie droben gemeldet. Sie wusten wol, das S. Cyprianus, Augustinus, Hilarius, Martinus, Ambrosius, Hieronymus, Dionysius, und viel mehr in aller welt heilige Bischove, nichts vom Bapstum gewust hatten, auch nicht unter der Rȏmischen Kirchen gewest. Sie wusten wol, das die vier hohe Concilia, Nicenum, Constantinopolitanum, Ephesinum, Calcedonense, und viel ander Concilia, solchen Bepstlichen grewel nie erkennet hatten. […] Sie wustens wol und wissens noch jtzt wol […]. Sie wissen noch heutiges tages wol."
69 "Hie mus entweder Christus ein Lȗgener sein, der sein Wort nicht gehalten habe, oder der Bapst mus ein verzweivelter, Gottslesterlicher Bȏsewicht sein, der unserm HErrn solche lȗgen aufflegt […]," *WA* 54 (1928), 262.
70 For the biblical motif 2 Cor 11:16–12,13 and on the use of the fool metaphor in Luther see Dieter Kartschoke, "Narrenrede bei Brant, Luther und Sachs," in *Der fremdgewordene Text: Festschrift für*

divine order of creation. Next to the scatological motifs typical of the time[71] is sexual denigration a popular topos of heretics and the heretical catalogs.[72] Misleading teaching follows from sexual disorder – but the reverse is also possible:

> The imperial law says a lot about the furioso, about nonsensical, mad people, how they should be kept. How much more urgent it is that the Pope and Cardinal and the whole Roman See were put in sticks, chains, prisons, who have not become mad in a common way, but so deeply and ghoulishly rant, although now men, they now want to become women, and no knowledge of the time, when the mood will arrive. At the same time, we Christians should believe that such raging and furious Roman hermaphrodites have the Holy Spirit and may be the supreme healers, masters and teachers of Christendom.[73]

However, the folly of Rome Luther found repeatedly to excel by the indocility and stupidity of the curial representatives:

> I know that our children, or catechumens, that is, those who know the catechism, are more learned than the Pope, Cardinal, and the entire Roman See, along with all their followers. For no need to worry about that ass of a Pope with his Roman school boys who wouldn't understand one out of the ten commandments, not even a plea in the Lord's Prayer, nor an article in faith, or how baptism and sacraments are to be understood and used, how a Christian should live, what

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Helmut Brackert zum 65. Geburtstag, ed. Silvia Bovenschen et al. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1997), 105–23; see the entry "nar" in *Frühneuhochdeutsches Wörterbuch*, https://fwb-online.de/lemma/nar.s.0m (accessed 19 July 2022); Günter Bader, *Assertio: Drei fortlaufende Lektüren zu Skepsis, Narrheit und Sünde bei Erasmus und Luther*, Hermeneutische Untersuchungen zur Theologie 20 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1990).

71 See Hundt, *Sprachliche Aggression*, 81: "[…] die Frequenz und Intensität der skatologischen Beschimpfungen (sind) in dieser Streitschrift sicherlich – auch im Vergleich zu anderen polemischen Schriften – besonders auffällig. Dominant ist im Text das Scheissen und Furzen und alles, was mit Ausscheidungen/Exkrementen zu tun hat. Insgesamt werden aber letztlich alle Körperöffnungen und deren Auswürfe für Beleidigungen genutzt" ("The frequency and intensity of the scatological insults [are] in this pamphlet certainly striking – also in comparison to other polemical writings. Shitting and farting and everything that has to do with excretions/excrement is dominant in the text. Overall, however, all orifices and their ejections are ultimately used for insults").

72 See *Sexuality in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times: New Approaches to a Fundamental Cultural-Historical and Literary-Anthropological Theme*, ed. Albrecht Classen, Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture 3 (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2008).

73 "DJe Keiserlichen rechten sagen viel de Furiosis, von unsinnigen, tollen Leuten, wie man sie halten sol. Wie viel grosser not were hie, das man Bapst und Cardinal, und den gantzen Römischen Stuel in stöcke, keten, kerker legte, die nicht gemeiner weise rasend worden sind, sondern so tieff grewlich toben, das sie jtzt Menner, jtzt Weiber sein wollen, und des keine gewisse zeit wissen, wenn sie die laun ankomen wird. Gleichwol sollen wir Christen gleuben, das solche rasende und wütende Römische Hermaphroditen den heiligen Geist haben und der Christenheit öberste Heubter, Meister und Lerer sein mögen," *WA* 54 (1928), 228. See also 214, 222, 226–27, 233, 234, 236, 288. They are supplemented by sexist insults, for example when the pope is referred to as a woman and denigrated in the context of late medieval gender relations; *WA* 54 (1928), 214–15, 223, 277, and 282.

good works are, God grant that he can repeat the ten commandments (the brain likes to keep still) one after the other, like our children of four or five years old can.[74]

The supposed erudition of the Roman theologians is nullified in the face of the simple knowledge of schoolchildren. Even elementary knowledge is foreign to the Roman theologians. The juxtaposition reveals all the madness of Rome, which confuses the natural order, apparently. The fools have the authority, and children prove to be the real keepers of proper rationality.

Luther supplemented his invective rhetoric with all sorts of threatening scenarios and fantasies of violence. For example, when he declared the authorities who do not defend themselves against papal dominance to be complicit in the decline of the Church.[75] Elsewhere he fashioned his criticism in curse words:

> Someone would gladly swear that they were killed by lightning and thunder, hellish fire burnt, pestilence, French disease, St Vitus' dance, St Anthony's fire, leprosy, carbuncle and all plagues.[76]

The compilation covers a large part of the curses in the language at that time, which often contain a religious connotation. Saint Vitus and Saint Anthony are commonly invoked for help in illnesses such as epilepsy (formerly called St Vitus' dance) and ergotism (St Anthony's fire). The "French" denotes syphilis, carbuncles mean purulent ulcers, and the plagues refer to the plagues in the book of Exodus 7–11, among other things. Elsewhere they are modeled after the biblical woes of Jesus (Luke 6:24–26 in conjunction with Matt 26:24).[77] In this context, Luther also chose the image of a desecration of the papal coat of arms, which he intends to soil with human excrement and then destroy.[78] Indeed, Luther was not unfamiliar with the idea of violently

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74 "Jch weis, das unser Kinder oder Catechumeni, das ist, die den Catechismum kŏnnen, gelerter sind, denn Bapst, Cardinal und gantzer Rŏmischer Hoff, sampt all jrem anhang. Denn dafŭr darffestu nicht sorgen, das der Bapstesel mit seiner rŏmischen Bubenschule ein einig Gebot unter den zehen verstehet, Auch nicht eine Bitte im Vater unser, noch einen Artickel im Glauben, oder wie Tauffe und Sacrament zu verstehen und zu brauchen sey, wie ein Christ leben sol, was gute werck sind, Gott gebe, das er die zehen Gebot (wil des verstands gerne schweigen) kŏnne nach einander zelen, wie unser Kinder von vier, fŭnff jaren kŏnnen," *WA* 54 (1928), 271.

75 *WA* 54 (1928), 290.

76 "Es mŏcht jemand wol gern fluchen, das sie der Blitz und Donner erschlŭge, Hellisch fewr verbrente, Pestilentz, Frantzosen, S. Velten, S. Antoni, Aussatz, Carbunckel und alle Plage hetten," *WA* 54 (1928), 227 and 276–77.

77 *WA* 54 (1928), 263: "O weh, weh, weh dem, der dahin kompt, das er Bapst oder Cardinal wird, Dem were besser, dass er nie geborn were" ("Oh woe, woe, woe to him who happens to become a pope or a cardinal, It would be better that he were never born.").

78 *WA* 54 (1928), 242.

combating the pope.[79] Parts of these scenarios are impressively illustrated by woodcuts.[80]

Luther never tired of citing passages from the Bible that can be used in his criticism of the pope and the Roman Church.[81] The appeal to the authority of Scripture is a legitimate means which the medieval Church must also recognize. That is why Luther exerted time and energy in several places to identify the right form of scriptural interpretation in the examples of Matt 16:18–19 and John 21:15–17.[82] In the overarching context regarding the question about the formation of denominational education, this section is of the greatest importance. In fact, Reformation theology clearly differed from the requirements of Rome in the material expositions of Church teaching, a different procedure of interpreting Scripture is fundamental, as Luther demonstrated as early as 1520 in the foreword to his affirmation of the 95 theses.[83] These passages also end with the "old Luther" and again scatological outbursts, as well as the reputation-diminishing comparisons out of the animal world:

> If I now ask here: What did all the other apostles lead to grazing, especially S. Paul? Then the massive fart of the Pope's ass may say that they possibly herded rats, mice and lice, or when all goes well, sows, just to make sure that only the Pope's ass is shepherd, and all other Apostles remain shepherds of pigs.[84]

The instruction of Jesus to "graze the sheep" is recorded, caricatured, and corrupted. It culminates in Luther's identification of the papacy with the Antichrist as early as 1519:

> You may read 2 Thessalonians 2 yourself and see what Saint Paul means when he says: the Anti-Christ sits in the temple of God, that is, in the Church of Christ, as if he were Christ and God himself, as his hypocrites blaspheme, and say the Pope is not a pure human being, but a mixture

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79 *WA* 54 (1928), 283.

80 Some of these can be found via https://blog.sbb.berlin/sackpfeifenesel-co-kampfbilder-gegen-das-papsttum/ (accessed 13 September 2022).

81 *WA* 54 (1928), 232, 235, 237–38, 263, 287 and more often.

82 *WA* 54 (1928), 226–27.

83 *WA* 7 (1897), 94–101; see Markus Wriedt, "Schriftauslegung des Neuen Testaments bei Luther: Eine theologiehistorische Erinnerung an die Grundlage des reformatorischen Selbstverständnisses," in *Notwendiges Umdenken: Festschrift für Werner Zager zum 60. Geburtstag,* ed. Markus Wriedt and Raphael Zager (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2019), 109–28; Markus Wriedt, "Martin Luther (NT)," in *Das wissenschaftliche Bibellexikon im Internet* (WiBiLex), ed. Michaela Bauks et al., https://www.bibelwissenschaft.de/stichwort/59466/ (accessed 15 July 2022).

84 "Wenn ich nu hie fraget: Was haben denn die andern Apostel alle, sonderlich S. Paul geweidet? Da wird der grosse fortz des bapstesels villeicht sagen, das sie villeicht ratten, meuse und leuse, oder wens gut wird, sew geweidet haben, auff das allein der Bapstesel der schefer, und alle Apostel sewhirten bleiben," *WA* 54 (1928), 273.

between God and man, just as our Christ alone is. And what a sinful man he is as you can easily understand this from the previous passages, since he is not only a sinner in himself, but with sins, false worship, blasphemy, unbelief and lies, the world, especially the temple of God, the churches, full, full made, so that a child is also doomed, that is, he himself goes to the blaze and eternal damnation with untimely souls he has led.[85]

In the last phase of his life, Luther gave up the earlier practiced differentiation between pope and papacy. In his polemic he first abridges the statements of the apostle Paul from 2 Thessalonians 2 on the material obfuscation of the doctrine. The earlier view that the papacy systematically prevents proper interpretation of Scripture is echoed in the next passage and adds to the evidence that curial behavior fulfills Paul's prediction word for word.

Here you must hear the master and shepherd of all sheep and understand the text correctly. Because it depends on a good interpreter, they say, as you heard above [p. 274], the rock is called the Pope, then the builder is called to be obedient, binders are called emperors, kings, and catch all the world. You must not learn Latin, Greek, Hebrew in the most holy father's decrees, but learn and understand the new Roman language, just as lady Paula Tertius, up there, interprets the words "free, Christian, German" for the emperor and the empire in his Roman language. So now the Roman opinion is: Go (that is, you Peter go alone) into all the world (that is, to Rome) and preach (that is, appoint a Pope who is God and Lord) of all creatures (that is, who has power over bishop, emperor and kings, over heaven and earth, c. Omnes), Whoever believes (that is, who is obedient to the Pope) and is baptized (kisses the Pope's feet), will be saved (remains undamaged), Whoever does not believe (is not obedient) is condemned (is a heretic).[86]

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85 "HJe magstu selbs lesen ij Thess ij und sehen, was S. Paulus meinet, da er sagt: Der Endechrist sitze im Tempel Gottes, das ist, in der Kirchen Christi, als sey er Christus und Gott selbs, wie seine Heuchler lestern, und sagen, Der Bapst sey nicht ein pur mensch, sondern aus Gott und Mensch ein vermischte person, gleich wie unser Christus allein ist. Und was ein Mensch der Sůnden sey, hastu aus vorigen stůcken leicht zu vernemen, da er nicht allein fůr sich ein Sůnder ist, sondern mit Sůnden, falschem Gottesdienst, Gotteslesterung, unglauben und lůgen, die welt, sonderlich den Tempel Gottes, die Kirchen, vol, vol gemacht, Damit auch ein Kind ist des verderbens, das ist, sich selbs mit unzelichen Seelen zur Hellen und ewigem verdamnis gefůrt hat," *WA* 54 (1928), 269.

86 Luther explains this on pp. 273–74: "Hie mustu den Meister und Hirten aller Schafe hŏren und den Text recht verstehen. Denn es ligt an einem guten Ausleger, spricht man, wie du droben | gehŏrt hast, das Fels heisse der bapst, drauff bawen heisse jm gehorsam sein, Binden heisse Keiser, Kŏnige, und alle welt fangen. du must in des heiligsten Vaters Decreten nicht Lateinisch, Griechisch, Ebreisch, Sondern die newe Rŏmische sprache lernen und verstehen, wie auch droben Jungfraw Paula Tertius dem Keiser und dem Reich die Wort 'Frey, Christlich, Deudsch' auff sein Rŏmisch auslegt. Also ist nu Rŏmisch hie die meinung: Gehet hin (das ist, du Peter gehe allein hin) in alle Welt (das ist, gen Rom) und prediget (das ist, setze einen Bapst, der Gott und Herr sey) aller Creatur (das ist, der macht habe uber Bisschoff, Keiser und Kŏnige, uber Himelreich und Erdreich, c. Omnes), Wer da gleubt (das ist, wer dem Bapst gehorsam ist) und getaufft wird (dem Bapst die fůsse kůsset), der wird selig (bleibt unverdampt), Wer nicht gleubt (nicht gehorsam ist), wird verdampt (ist ein Ketzer)."

This interpretation of Scripture is obscured by the curial interpretation. Luther opposed this with his own official authority.[87] However, he also drew on other authorities, such as those of the so-called "Church fathers"[88] or even secular authorities.[89]

The insult by way of characterizing papacy as the Antichrist[90] needs no further rhetorical dress or form. It is a theological invective par excellence. Luther saw the biblical text as the template for his interpretation of church reality. No rhetorical device could make the affront stronger than Luther's direct identification of biblical statements considering ecclesiastical reality.

In addition to the forms of Luther's polemical and aggressive rhetoric already mentioned, there is also a high degree of polarization and emphasis on "you" and "we." This differentiative criterion is intended to work out the group cohesion – the identity – of Luther's followers in relation to that of the curial representatives of the papacy, who have been stylized as the enemy. They are vilified by means of devaluation and caricaturing disparagement. Conversely, by reversing the rhetorical devices mentioned above, Luther could also carve out the quality and legitimacy of his own group.[91]

In summarizing the findings of the meticulous investigation into Luther's polemic *Wider das Papsttum zu Rom vom Teufel gestiftet* from 1545, Markus Hundt characterizes it as "a prime example of linguistic aggression in the Early Modern Period."[92] Martin Luther impressively demonstrated here his mastery of the aggressive, offending and disparaging as well as stylizing, praising and lauding

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87 *WA* 54 (1928), 273, 284, and 286.

88 "auctoritas patrum." See in addition Leif Grane et al., eds., *Auctoritas Patrum: Contributions on the Reception of the Church Fathers in the 15th and 16th Century*, Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Europäische Geschichte Mainz. Beiheft 37 (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1993); Leif Grane et al., eds., *Auctoritas Patrum II: Neue Beiträge zur Rezeption der Kirchenväter im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert*, Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Europäische Geschichte Mainz. Beiheft 44 (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1998); Irena Backus, ed., *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West* (Leiden: Brill, 1997); Günter Frank et al., eds., *Die Patristik in der frühen Neuzeit: Die Relektüre der Kirchenväter in den Wissenschaften des 15.–18. Jahrhunderts*, Melanchthon Schriften der Stadt Bretten 10 (Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 2005); Stefan Michels, *Testes veritatis: Studien zur transformativen Entwicklung des Wahrheitszeugenkonzeptes in der Wittenberger Reformation*, Spätmittelalter, Humanismus, Reformation 129 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2022).

89 *WA* 54 (1928), 207–08.

90 On Luther's idea of the Antichrist see Bernhard McGinn, *Two Thousand Years of the Human Fascination with Evil* (San Francisco, CA: Bernard McGinn, 1996); Markus Wriedt, "Kampf am Ende der Zeiten," 30.

91 For group feeling and its linguistic expression see Albrecht Beutel, "*Wir Lutherischen*: Zur Ausbildung eines konfessionellen Identitätsbewusstseins bei Martin Luther," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 110 (2013), 158–86.

92 Hundt, *Sprachliche Aggression*, 215.

rhetoric. In terms of content, the polemics of this late writing offers hardly any new arguments or perspectives. However, the excessiveness of his invectives reached a dramatic climax.

3 Perspectives on the Invectivity of Martin Luther

3.1 Invective Language Creates Difference and Distance

Using numerous reputation-damaging and insulting metaphors from the animal kingdom in connection with scatological terminology, Luther clearly and positionally distinguished himself from his opponents and presumed opponents. Through the association with the devil, the Antichrist and other apocalyptic beings, the distance between "I/we" and "you/they" was constructed and expanded. The logic and verifiability of these allegations were of little importance. The insults had primacy and served to discriminate against people who were considered opponents.

Nevertheless, the obvious, evident and plausible invective choice in language is not without finesse. On the one hand, through the frequent and repeated use of invective terms, Luther cemented the caricatured pictorial image of his opponents. He characterized them as "pigs," "sows," "donkeys" or "goats." They are in league with the devil and are not always aware of this connection. Through the stereotypical, asyndetic accumulation of invective characterization, these can then, as the argument progresses, replace the proper name or a more detailed and specific description of the antagonistic position. So, the expression of the "sowtheologians"[93] needed no further specification in the sense of incriminated scholastic theology. Its close ties to the foundations of Aristotelian philosophy are condemned across the board and in a comprehensive manner. The fact that Luther himself not infrequently borrowed from the scholastic method and that an intensive reception of Aristotle can be proven in his writings[94] is no longer significant. The asyndetic juxtaposition of invective increases the rhetorical weight and can replace actual argumentation in individual cases. They increase the pathos of the way of speaking or writing. At the same time, the variety of terms used gave the listener or reader the opportunity to identify with Luther and his

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93 See *WA* 56 (1938), 273: "O stulti, Sawtheologen!" ("O stupids, sowtheologians!").
94 See Otto Hermann Pesch, *Martin Luther, Thomas von Aquin und die reformatorische Kritik an der Scholastik: Zur Geschichte und Wirkungsgeschichte eines Missverständnisses mit weltgeschichtlichen Folgen,* Berichte aus den Sitzungen der Joachim-Jungius-Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften 12–13 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995); Theodor Dieter, *Der junge Luther und Aristoteles: Eine historisch-systematische Untersuchung zum Verhältnis von Theologie und Philosophie,* Theologische Bibliothek Töpelmann 105 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1997).

argument. However, there was also the aspect of being repelled and marginalized by it. Of course, in Luther's style of speaking, this proved to be collateral damage. He wanted to demarcate, sometimes also to exclude, but this is done to forge into a reliable group those who are favourable towards him in the audience and keep them on the "right" side.

Invectives sometimes led to truncation, caricature, and falsification of the position attacked. They therefore did not contribute to the end of the dispute, but to a polarization and challenge in positioning. In this way they prolonged the agonal disputes. The technique of printing allowed the mass distribution of the positioning and thus also the formation of factions among the people who read and received the writings.

3.2 Invective Language and Group Identity

As already mentioned, the invective characterization of other, foreign, or conflicting positions and their representatives contributes to the fact that not only Luther's argument can be grasped in positional unambiguousness. In addition, such language promoted adherence to Luther's position and his arguments – often also their expression – to be adopted. Admittedly, emotive partisanship more and more frequently outweighed actual argumentative agreement. Invectives against scholastic theology, the Roman Church and its priests, the pope and the curia led by him, and the numerous inner-Protestant opponents and dissenters seemed to bring about ultimate clarity and unambiguousness. It is not possible to explain at this point why invectives developed their effect more influentially and sustainably.[95] In any case, the emotional charge of the language with invective surpasses the cognitive comprehension of what is said or written and releases a wealth of associations that defy rational semantics. They determine to a large extent the reception of the statement and its further communicative processing.

It is noteworthy that the positive declaration of group identity, such as that of the followers of Martin Luther, predominated. In many cases, invective characterizations of opposing positions are eschewed. In the field of controversial literature, however, this attitude is gaining in importance. Specific language formations such as the "sawtheologen," "Römlingen" (pejorative term used in reference to John 10:12 for a certain and irresponsible employee), "priests" (term for a secular or religious

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95 That would be the task of psycholinguistics; see e.g. Hans Hörmann, *Einführung in die Psycholinguistik* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1981); Hans Hörmann, *Meinen und Verstehen: Grundzüge einer psychologischen Semantik* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1976).

clergyman, which in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries increasingly became a term of abuse for members of the profession who were negligent or non-compliant with their duties) or "plate bearers"[96] (alluding to the tonsure of ecclesiastical religious) served to impose or recreate group identity. This resulted in creative new formations as well as semantic transformations of already existing linguistic tropes and metaphors. Belonging to the group became manifested in a common, but rarely convincingly homogeneous language culture.

At this point, it would again be the task of psycholinguistics and psychosemantics to analyze the higher cohesiveness of negatively connoted catchphrases and keywords as well as the associated emotionalization of the respective group. For the sake of brevity this must be omitted here.

Insofar as invective language releases a high degree of emotions and emotionally charged associations, it facilitates individual positioning and tends to level differences or make them unrecognizable due to its shortened and caricatured language. While the theologians of the Reformation were unanimous in their criticism of scholastic theology and their authoritative justification of certain practices of piety, opinions differed soon after 1520 on the implementation of the Reformation position and the acts of faith associated with it.[97] Luther's assertion of the philological pre-eminence of the evangelical (i.e. his) interpretation of the Gospel was not a prerequisite shared by all Protestant groups. The question of the correct interpretation rather lead to confusing differentiations in the Reformation movement. Invective language patterns were used again for this inner-Protestant development. They, too, transformed traditional terminology and imagery from the late Middle Ages. For them, however, a Lutheran invective became characteristic: Luther described the growing number of dissenters, dissidents, and non-conformists as fanatics ("Schwärmer"). He derived this metaphor from bees and other insects flying around, from which no order can be discerned.[98] The Wittenberg theologian characterized the thoughts and arguments of his opponents just as untidy and confused.

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96 "Plattenträger," *WA* 8 (1889), 251.

97 See in general George H. Williams, *The Radical Reformation* (Kirksville, MO: Truman St. University Press, 1999), or Günter Vogler et al., *Wegscheiden der Reformation: Alternatives Denken vom 16. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert* (Weimar: Böhlau, 1994).

98 See Bernhard Lohse, "Luther und der Radikalismus," *Lutherjahrbuch* 44 (1977), 7–27; see also: Alois M. Haas, *Der Kampf um den Heiligen Geist – Luther und die Schwärmer*, Wolfgang Stammler Gastprofessur für Germanische Philologie – Vorträge (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1997).

3.3 Invective Language Creates, Criticizes and Changes Social Orders

Through invective forms of language, likewise, differentiations become virulent, as well as the clarification of previous positions due to progressive demarcation. In particular, the blanket accusation of enthusiasm forces a number of followers of the Protestant Reformation to sharpen their profiles. For example, opinions differ on the question of the power of the Holy Spirit in the interpretation of Scripture and the norms of action derived from it. While Luther insists that the Holy Spirit never says anything other than what was revealed in Scripture, as God's living Word, various groups of so-called "spiritualists" emphasize the spirit's power of revelation that goes beyond these narrow limits.[99]

Insofar as invective language is often destructive and primarily criticizes the unjust actions of people characterized as dissidents arising from the disorder of mind, there was the phenomenon of adopting the language coined by thought leaders like Luther and others. In addition, however, there was also an effort to achieve a clear positioning through courses of action.[100]

Hereby we touch on the question of determining the relationship between orthodoxy and orthopraxy. Theology as a (scholarly) reflection on one's own practice of faith usually arose – and arises – where this practice is contested, restricted, or inhibited. Consequently, the theoretical justification and argumentative defense of certain pious practices often only take place in a second step and mostly when the actions are criticized by others.[101]

Invective language shortened the process of argumentative penetration of obstacles to action and their elimination. The pious action coagulated into the expression of a positional statement. The focus was no longer on the question of

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99 For spiritualism of the sixteenth century see Gustav Adolf Benrath, "Die Lehre der Spiritualisten," in *Handbuch der Dogmen- und Theologiegeschichte*, ed. Carl Andresen, vol. 2 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 560–610.

100 See, for example, the argument about the baptism of children or the elevation of the host in the Lord's Supper: Hans-Jürgen Goertz, *Die Täufer: Geschichte und Deutung* (Munich: Beck, 1987); Marlies Mattern, *Leben im Abseits: Frauen und Männer im Täufertum, 1525–1550; Eine Studie zur Alltagsgeschichte* (Frankfurt/Main: Peter Lang, 1998); Andrea Strübind, *Eifriger als Zwingli: Die frühe Täuferbewegung in der Schweiz* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2003); Jörg Trelenberg, "Luther und die Bestrafung der Täufer," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 110 (2013), 22–49; for the rite of elevating the host see Hans Bernhard Meyer, "Die Elevation im deutschen Mittelalter und bei Luther," *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 85 (1963), 162–217.

101 See Markus Wriedt, "Wissenschaft aus dem Geist der Kontroverse: Kirchenhistorische Anmerkungen zum Diskursraum 'Theologie'," in *Evangelische Theologie: Eine Selbstverständigung in enzyklopädischer Absicht*, ed. Heiko Schulz (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2016), 107–75.

biblical justification or a reflected theological analysis of action, but rather the need for clear and, as such, unquestionable action.[102] It was promoted by the invective forms of speech, insofar as nobody liked to be drawn into a group of "pigs," "goats" or "donkeys" or to be completely discredited as "the devils." Not infrequently, theological reflection in a form effective in the media, such as sermons or pamphlets, only fulfilled the task of bringing about the desired form of action in the sense of group-specific homogeneity. Intention, motivation, and justification took a back seat – and with them theological reflection. This shortened a possible evangelical plurality to an agonistic unity, the theological foundation of which not only receded into the background but was often completely repressed.

Not least, the fact that social and cultural norms of action had grown histori-cally and owed their existence to a specific genesis that should not be accepted or rejected uncritically and anachronistically, was condensed into norm decisions in the Protestant Church ordinances, which the people of a community perceive as without alternative, authoritative and statutorily applied. A critical, theological reflection on religious action was no longer possible. The decision of the sovereign Church regent had to be taken over. Since then, an intensive debate arose as to whether one can escape the regulations of the respective Church ordinances or whether detailed regulations on religious tolerance within narrow limits are possible. A legal regulation of religiously motivated migration[103] or also a tolera-tion of alternative religious practice[104] only slowly became possible in the seven-teenth and then in the eighteenth century. However, the debates also made clear

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102 See for example the discussion of elevating the host and the rite of breaking the bread (*frac-tio panis)* in Bodo Nischan, *The Reformation and the Princes, People and Confession: The Second Reformation in Brandenburg* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994).

103 See Ulrich Niggemann, *Christliche Konfessionsmigration, Europäische Geschichte Online*, urn:nbn:de:0159-2019070800 (accessed 18 July 2022).

104 See Rainer Forst, *Toleranz im Konflikt: Geschichte, Gehalt und Gegenwart eines umstrittenen Begriffs* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 2003); Ole Peter Grell and Bob Scribner, eds., *Tolerance and Intolerance in the European Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Hans R. Guggisberg, "Wandel der Argumente für religiöse Toleranz und Glaubensfreiheit im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert," in *Zur Geschichte der Toleranz und Religionsfreiheit*, ed. Heinrich Lutz (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1977), 455–81; Volker Leppin, "Toleranz im Horizont protes-tantischer Selbstverständigung in der Frühen Neuzeit," in *Schwierige Toleranz: Der Umgang mit Andersdenkenden und Andersgläubigen in der Christentumsgeschichte*, ed. Mariano Delgado et al., Studien zur christlichen Religions- und Kulturgeschichte 17 (Fribourg: Academic Press; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2012), 81–90; Astrid von Schlachta, *Gefahr oder Segen? Die Täufer in der politischen Kommunikation* (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2009); Winfried Schulze, "Ex dictamine rationis sapere: Zum Problem der Toleranz im Heiligen Römischen Reich nach dem Augsburger Religionsfrieden," in *Querdenken: Dissenz und Toleranz im Wandel der Geschichte*, ed. Michael Erbe (Mannheim: Palatium, 1996), 223–39; Klaus Schreiner, "Toleranz," in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, ed. Otto Brunner et al., vol. 6 (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1990), 524–604.

that the normative decision-making basis for practical questions no longer lay in the field of theology, but was determined and referenced by law and its own rationality.[105]

On the fringes of these developments, one can see how invective language was used to orientate action and to mobilize group-specific interaction. However, standardizing texts are usually free of invective. Rather, it is mediating, media-reproduced statements that initially provoked or then subsequently popularized the norm-finding process. Only some parts of these processes took place in public, with the term "public" denoting a much-discussed field of historiography in the Early Modern Period.[106] In any case, however, one will have to state that the current (partial) public appreciated invective language and possibly even provoked it. Conversely, the author used invectives in a targeted manner to stoke emotions, prepare actions as reactions, and in one way or another made themselves common with their audience or readers. What role invectivity of language had on these processes still needs to be clarified. Invectives belonged to the language of the rhetorical *genus deliberativum* especially when emotional reactions had to be provoked. These reactions included the whole range of group formation processes up to the concrete implementation of action orientation in violent acts such as iconoclasm,[107] the dissolution of monasteries, the secularization of Church property[108] and much more.

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105 Concerning the change in leading disciplines in the Early Modern Period, see Arno Seifert, "Das höhere Schulwesen: Universitäten und Gymnasien," in *Handbuch der deutschen Bildungsgeschichte*, ed. Christa Berg, vol. 1 (Munich: Beck, 1996), 197–345; see also Christoph Strohm, ed., *Reformation und Recht: Ein Beitrag zur Kontroverse um die Kulturwirkungen der Reformation* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017).
106 Compare Karel Hruza, *Propaganda, Kommunikation und Öffentlichkeit (11.–16. Jahrhundert)* (Vienna: ÖAW, 2002); Jürgen Schiewe, *Öffentlichkeit: Entstehung und Wandel in Deutschland* (Paderborn: UTB 2004); Esther-Beate Körber, "Öffentlichkeit im Herzogtum Preußen im 16. und frühen 17. Jahrhundert," in *Kulturgeschichte Ostpreußens in der Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Klaus Garber et al. (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2012), 219–42.
107 Helmut Feld, *Der Ikonoklasmus des Westens*, Studies in the History of Christian Traditions 41 (Leiden: Brill, 1990); Norbert Schnitzler, *Ikonoklasmus – Bildersturm: Theologischer Bilderstreit und ikonoklastisches Handeln während des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts* (Munich: Fink, 1996); Robert W. Scribner, ed., *Bilder und Bildersturm im Spätmittelalter und in der frühen Neuzeit* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1990); Peter Blickle et al., eds., *Macht und Ohnmacht der Bilder: Reformatorischer Bildersturm im Kontext der europäischen Geschichte* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2002); Gudrun Litz, *Die reformatorische Bilderfrage in den schwäbischen Reichsstädten*, Spätmittelalter, Humanismus, Reformation 35 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007).
108 Irene Crusius, ed., *Zur Säkularisation geistlicher Institutionen im 16. und im 18./19. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996); Eike Wolgast, "Säkularisationen und Säkularisationspläne im Heiligen Römischen Reich Deutscher Nation vom 16. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert," *Blätter für württembergische Kirchengeschichte* 104 (2004), 47–72.

For Luther, however, it can be said that he fundamentally rejected violent, subversive, and order-threatening actions. Despite all the aggressiveness that characterized his texts, he was deeply convinced of the traditional order as a divine foundation. In particular, he denounced the Roman Church for its innovations, as a result of which the good and wholesome order of God was changed and endangered. From 1522 this became the decisive argument in Luther's fight against the fanatics ("Schwärmer"). The rejection of violent acts against public order then increasingly determined his arguments against the peasants in 1525 and all groups in which he recognized devilish activity or taking sides with the Antichrist.[109]

3.4 Invective Language as an Expression of Authoritative Rule

In the use of invective speech, Luther became not wrongly accused of immoderation. He presented his position as the only true. His interpretation of Scripture derived directly from the Gospels. His intolerance and increasing reluctance to argue with his opponents earned him the title of "Pope(s) of Wittenberg" from Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt.[110] In his later years after 1530 and the diet of Augsburg Luther's harsh attitude towards his opponents grew stronger and stronger. This can be related to the intensification of his interpretation of reality in the light of apocalyptic writings of the Bible and a progredient corporal weakness.[111] The aforementioned reduction of invective characterizations led to an expanded leveling of the planes of argumentation and a heightened expectational pressure on himself, but also on his followers, which caused him to publish a lot. The personal development of a serious illness began in his mid-thirties and coupled with a gloomy interpretation of world and reality made the Wittenberg theologian appear one-sided, aggressive, and hurtful. The reference to the bruteness of the time, which can easily be determined from the writings and statements of his opponents, did not change anything.

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109 See *WA* 11 (1900), 229–81; Silvana Nitti, "Luther und die Obrigkeit," in *Martin Luther: Ein Christ zwischen Reformen und Moderne (1517–2017)*, ed. Alberto Melloni (Berlin and Boston, MA: De Gruyter, 2017), 249–74.

110 See Volker Leppin, "Die Wittenbergische Bulle: Andreas Karlstadts Kritik an Luther," in *Die Kirchenkritik der Mystiker: Prophetie aus Gotteserfahrung*, ed. Mariano Delgado, vol. 2, Studien zur christlichen Religions- und Kulturgeschichte 4 (Fribourg: Academic Press; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2005), 117–29.

111 See Hans-Joachim Neumann, *Luthers Leiden: Die Krankheitsgeschichte des Reformators* (Berlin: Wichern, 1995); Lyndal Roper, *Der feiste Doktor* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2012); Lyndal Roper, *Martin Luther: Renegade and Prophet* (London: Penguin, 2016).

In the numerous debates about the legitimacy of the Reformation, its design and institutionalization, as well as the demarcation from Reformists, dissidents and deviants, the focus was on theological truth. This will be discussed in more detail below. First, however, these discourses are also to be interpreted as negotiations of power. Luther had been under ban since 1521 and was therefore no longer operational outside the borders of Electoral Saxony. However, he took part in many theological disputes and often voted for or against a certain position, not infrequently at the request of his followers, which he did not always do out of genuine conviction. He was dependent on the information that was brought to him. The narrowing of his scope of action and the insight that the Reformation became a concern of the secular authorities, which paid little heed to its theological justification, left him in a state of resentment and his rejection held of everything that he considered harmful to the Church of Jesus Christ, became immoderate. However, his strong identification with his office as "Prophet of the Germans"[112] and "Reformer"[113] makes it difficult to distinguish between his personal concern and his theological concerns.

That discourses usually imply the negotiation of power is as banal as it is well-known.[114] However, the debate between followers of Michel Foucault and Jürgen Habermas also shows that the more precise definition of power in discourses is anything but consensual.[115] Since Luther and many of his followers and successors were always concerned with the only and unalterable answer to the question of truth, it is impossible for those involved in the discourse to take a somewhat neutral position. This leads to problems in the hermeneutic reflection of the phenomenon to be dealt with here. An investigation of the controversial, theological "invectivity" in

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112 See the title of the publication Norbert Mecklenburg, *Der Prophet der Deutschen: Martin Luther im Spiegel der Literatur* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2016); also Markus Wriedt, "Die Hammerschläge von Wittenberg und ihr Widerhall in den deutschen Landen: Zur konfessionskulturellen Inanspruchnahme Luthers in den Gebieten der Wittenberger Reformation," in *Martin Luther im Widerstreit der Konfessionen: Historische und theologische Perspektiven*, ed. Christian Danz and Jan-Heiner Tück (Freiburg et al.: Herder, 2017), 76–108.

113 For Luther's self-image see Bernhard Lohse, "Luthers Selbsteinschätzung," in Bernhard Lohse, *Evangelium in der Geschichte: Studien zu Luther und der Reformation; Zum 60. Geburtstag des Autors*, ed. Leif Grane et al. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1988), 158–75.

114 See Michael Maset, *Diskurs, Macht, Geschichte: Foucaults Analysetechniken und die historische Forschung* (Frankfurt/Main: Campus, 2022); Peter V. Zima, *Diskurs und Macht: Einführung in die Herrschaftskritische Erzähltheorie* (Opladen and Toronto: UTB, 2022).

115 David B. Ingram, "Foucault and Habermas," in *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, ed. Gary Gutting (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 240–83; Michael Kelly, ed., *Critique and Power: Recasting the Foucault/Habermas Debate* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994); Thomas Biebricher, *Selbstkritik der Moderne: Foucault und Habermas im Vergleich* (Frankfurt/Main and New York: Campus, 2005).

the age of confessional system competition can only be undertaken if the question of truth is considered. One does not have to accept the answer from the opponents of the sixteenth century. However, this makes access and understanding of the agony of the forms of argumentation more difficult. In addition, these are basic religious assumptions that continue to apply in a wide variety of contemporary institutions. It is certainly possible to collect the invectives of the theological authors of the sixteenth century and to organize them in a systematic way to interpret them.[116]

3.5 On the Theological Justification of Invective Speech

In an article, David Bagchi attempted to interpret Luther's scatological failures theologically.[117] Based on an investigation of Luther's letters of spiritual counsel and several *Table Talks* he observed how this scatology relates to the key themes in Reformation theology. In the further course of his investigation, he sees Luther's convictions in his doctrine of creation, his reflections on the Incarnation and finally his understanding of justification as fundamental for the use of his scatological and invective language. Bagchi places himself in the succession of previous research with reference to Gordon Rupp[118] and Heiko A. Oberman,[119] whereby he expands their theses with a view to the pastoral aspect.[120] In this context, scatological language becomes a metaphor for one's attachment to sin. It served the drastic interpretation of Scripture as law. On the other hand, Luther pointed to the Gospels as promise of acceptance of the sinner. Just as Oberman interprets Luther as being in tension between God and devil, Bagchi believes that this agonistic distance can also be understood in the categories of law and Gospels and made comprehensible in other paradoxical word pairs such as "coram

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116 The question asked at the beginning about the significance of Luther's statements for the present, especially for the members of numerous churches that identify with the name of the Reformer, cannot be answered at this point. If we do not want to reject Luther (or at least his aggressively polemical writings) in general, nor try to distance ourselves from parts of his argumentation, we should ask whether and to what extent Luther's theological "invectivity" reveals dimensions of his religiosity and piety that still have effects on church and religion today.

117 David Bagchi, "The German Rabelais? Foul Words and the Word in Luther," *Reformation and Renaissance Review* 7 (2005), 143–62.

118 See E. Gordon Rupp, *Righteousness of God: Luther Studies* (London: Hodder & Soughton, 1953), 13–14: "Blasphemy and apostasy are not simply evil: they are filthy things, which must be described in language coarse enough and repulsive enough to nauseate the reader."

119 Oberman, *Luther*.

120 "simul iustus et peccator." See Bagchi, "The German Rabelais?," 152: Rupp saw scatology as a function of Luther's polemical theology, and Oberman brought far greater precision to this insight. But we have noted that it is as much a feature of his pastoral as of his polemical theology.

Deo – coram hominibus."[121] Luther's scatological use of words accentuated the perspective of the law in a powerful and gloomy way, which then makes the evangelical word of promise appear all the brighter. From a tropological perspective, mankind's tension between God and the devil expanded into a description of mankind as sinful and righteous at the same time.[122]

The use of invective speech was thus theologically contained, but not explained in a drastic manner. Luther's sensitivity in the context of pastoral statements, which was admirable in many respects, stood in stark contrast to the merciless determination of his hamartiology. One is tempted to interpret this agony as a tension between Gospels and law, sin and grace. It seems appropriate to measure Luther's statements critically against the standard he set for a biblically based one that ascribes the mercy and love of God. In particular, the writings of the late Luther do not meet this standard and have therefore to be criticized.

As a consequence, one might wonder what is the point of this section in Luther's reasoning. Should it arouse the sinner's remorse?[123] Is he supposed to "drown the old Adam" as stated in the Pauline metaphor?[124] One of the peculiarities of Luther's pastoral texts is that they can hardly be interpreted without reference to the concrete situation in which he expresses himself and in which the challenge of the questioner is articulated. This requires a renewed review of all of Luther's pastoral texts and in particular his letters.[125] While the satanic origin of the appeal is usually widely considered, there is hardly any reference to the invective speech and its theological justification that is repeatedly associated with it. Corresponding lemmas are missing in the registers of the relevant standard works.

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121 See Gerhard Ebeling, *Luther: Einführung in sein Denken* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006).

122 Bagchi, "The German Rabelais?," 154.

123 Compare Reinhold Rieger, *Martin Luthers theologische Grundbegriffe: Von "Abendmahl" bis "Zweifel"* (Tübingen: UTB, 2017), 231–33, refering to Martin Brecht, "Luthers neues Verständnis der Buße und die reformatorische Entdeckung, *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 101 (2004), 181–91.

124 Martin Luther, *Kleiner Katechismus*, here: "über das Sakrament der Taufe zum Vierten," referring to Romans 6; see *Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche: Vollständige Neuedition*, ed. Irene Dingel (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014), 884–85.

125 See Ute Mennecke-Haustein, *Luthers Trostbriefe* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1989); Matthieu Arnold, *La correspondance de Luther: étude historique, littéraire et théologique*, Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Europäische Geschichte Mainz 168 (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1996); Gerhard Ebeling, *Luthers Seelsorge an seinen Briefen dargestellt* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997).

4 Outlook

In one of his Table Talks, Luther once stated that the Holy Spirit had revealed the way how to interpret Scripture on the toilet ("on this toilet").[126] Even though archeologists have explored a former toilet in the monastery in Wittenberg[127] the quote should not be overestimated. It is clear from the context that Luther takes the drastic description of the place where he explored the Gospel metaphorically. In his understanding scholastic theologians, ecclesiastical representatives, priests, and bishops have turned the truth into dirt and garbage, and with this thrown it away. Luther understood his interpretation of Scripture as a cleansing process by referring to the original roots of reading and understanding the Word of God. The addition of further authorities and new inspirations seemed to him as dirt. He most provokingly used an ultimate metaphor to explain his finding: Scripture is covered by crap and can therefore be found in the latrine. Simultaneously his use of scatological language illustrates a deep insight into the early Reformation theology. Luther had learned a motif from mystical theologians like Master Eckhardt, Johannes Tauler[128], and the "German" Theology:[129] God reveals himself in opposition to realistic evidence. God is covered by masks and vestments, which do not allow to see his dignity at first glance.[130] Likewise, the truth of Scripture has to be uncovered and explained in the only appropriate way, by interpreting Scripture itself. Thus, Luther used offensive, provoking, and invective language to articulate the opposition of what should be said. He argued aggressively and with

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126 "auf diss Cloaca," *WA TR* 2 (1913), 177, N° 1681.

127 See https://www.luther2017.de/martin-luther/geschichte-geschichten/die-latrine-als-ort-refor-matorischer-erkenntnis/index.html (accessed 15 September 2022).

128 See Henrik Otto, *Vor- und frühreformatorische Tauler-Rezeption: Annotationen in Drucken des späten 15. und frühen 16. Jahrhunderts*, Quellen und Forschungen zur Reformationsgeschichte 75 (Gütersloh: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2003); Ulrich Köpf, "Martin Luther und Johannes Tauler," in *Frömmigkeitsgeschichte und Theologiegeschichte: Gesammelte Aufsätze*, ed. Ulrich Köpf (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2022), 515–39.

129 "Theologia Deutsch." For a survey on Luther's mystical background see Alois M. Haas, "Luther und die Mystik," *Deutsche Vierteljahresschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 60 (1986), 177–207; Reinhard Schwarz, "Mystischer Glaube: Die Brautmystik Martin Luthers," in *Zu dir hin: Über mystische Lebenserfahrung von Meister Eckhart bis Paul Celan,* ed. Wolfgang Böhme (Frankfurt/Main: Insel, 1990), 125–40; Markus Wriedt, "Luther und die Mystik," in *Hildegard von Bingen in ihrem Umfeld: Mystik und Visionsformen in Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit,* ed. Änne Bäumer-Schleinkofer (Würzburg: Religion & Kultur, 2001), 249–74; *Gottes Nähe unmittelbar erfahren: Mystik im Mittelalter und bei Martin Luther*, ed. Berndt Hamm and Volker Leppin, Spätmittelalter, Humanismus, Reformation 36 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007); Volker Leppin, *Die fremde Reformation: Luthers mystische Wurzeln* (Munich: Beck, 2016).

130 See David M. Whitford, *Martin Luther (1483–1546).* Chapter "Deus Absconditus – The Hidden God," *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, https://iep.utm.edu/luther/#SH2d (accessed 15 September 2022).

great furor with his opponents for he saw them covering the truth with lies, false information, fake news, and other illusion. He understood them as acting following the command of the devil and thus representing the Antichrist.

The multi-dimensional nature of Luther's theological argumentation could be illustrated by further examples. However, the question arises as to how Luther's drastic invectiveness relates to his theological concern and its claim in later times. Historiographically, a careful distinction must be made between Luther's invective speech in the contemporary context of the sixteenth century and the adoption of his choice of language today. Many of Luther's crude and invective statements arose in contexts that sound strange to modern readers. They are consequently to be historicized. And to measure it again and again against the truth postulate of the Reformation interpretation of Scripture. One can only derive a theological benefit from this when the context of Luther's statements reveals a theologically responsible application.