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## Social Conflict and Sacrificial Rhetoric

### Luther's Discursive Intervention and the Religious Division of Labor

#### Introduction

'Sacrifice' is a religious term whose use extends far beyond the church door. People from all walks of life speak of 'sacrifice' when they want to evoke an irreducible conflict in the relations between self, family, and society. In America, hardly a speech goes by without political leaders insisting upon the necessity and virtue of sacrifice, but rarely will they clarify who is sacrificing what, and to whom. Indeed, this is not only an American phenomenon, as a number of recent texts examining 'sacrifice' as a term in various national discourses have shown.<sup>1</sup> Such a political and economic deployment of a religious figure demands interpretation, for not only does the rhetoric of sacrifice span the globe,<sup>2</sup> it constitutes a problem with a long genealogy. As a key moment in the Western segment of this genealogy, this article will examine the way that Luther's exegetical work rhetoricalized sacrifice, and, in doing so, constructed a new discursive position, the pastor as anti-sophist, or *parrhesiast*, in the religious division of labor.

The overarching question for this inquiry is how did a particular religious ritual like sacrifice come to serve as such a widespread rhetorical figure? When faced with the immense historical distance between, first, the public destruction of wealth or butchering of an animal, and, last, a speech act describing non-ritual phenomena as a sacrifice, one measures the distance not only in years but also in religious and cultural transformation. For Christianity, and Luther, perhaps, in particular, few events in this

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1 For sacrificial rhetoric in France from the Ancient Regime to the twentieth century, see Strenski 2002; for America, see Mizruchi 1998; for Germany, see Evans 1996.

2 A brief survey of the reaction of developing nations to World Bank and International Monetary Fund austerity demands reveals a persistent recourse to sacrificial rhetoric, especially in Africa.

history have been as decisive as Paul's interpretation of the relationship between the Hebrew 'Law' and Jesus's crucifixion.<sup>3</sup> In conjunction with his rejection of circumcision and other acts of ritual piety, or 'works', addressing Gentile audiences in his 'Letter to the Romans' and 'Letter to the Galatians' Paul shifts the emphasis from the Torah's complementary conception of works and faith (*pistis*) to focus more decisively on the latter.<sup>4</sup> In what was to become a pivotal moment in the history of Christian dogma, Paul argued that the death and resurrection of Jesus had 'fulfilled' the Law of Moses, and beseeched others to 'present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship' (Rom. 12:1). This formulation, which endorsed the incorporation of the public ritual of sacrifice into the worshiper's body, led to an intensive focus on both physical and doctrinal purity. Hence, the rhetorical redefinition of 'sacrifice' informed the pursuit of individual holiness that grounded the transformed sacrificial practices of martyrdom and monastic asceticism.<sup>5</sup>

This background constitutes the dual-channeled heritage of sacrificial transformation that Luther first encountered. As an Augustinian monk Luther soon adopted Paul's emphasis on faith over works and became the most vociferous critic of monastic practices, dismissing them as 'works' of the 'Law'. As befits Luther's critique of works, in his 1516–7 (published in 1519) exegesis of Galatians there are few mentions of sacrifice, yet in his 1531 (published in 1535) version the text is suffused with sacrificial rhetoric. Although Paul's 'Letter to the Galatians', which deals specifically with the status of Jewish law and ritual in the still forming Christian churches, provided fertile opportunity for Luther's discussion of sacrifice,

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3 According to Harnack, 'The Reformation as represented in the Christianity of Luther ... judged by its religious kernel ... is ... a restoration of Pauline Christianity in the spirit of the new age' (Harnack 1957: 541).

4 At the end of a pivotal passage from Rom. 2:25–9, we read that 'real circumcision is a matter of the heart – it is spiritual and not literal'. In Rom. 4:9–12, Paul asserts that Abraham, who 'received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised', is therefore 'the ancestor of all who believe without being circumcised and who thus have righteousness reckoned to them'. In Rom. 4:24–5, Paul brings righteousness, faith, and sacrifice into one formulation: '[Righteousness] will be reckoned to us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification.' All Biblical quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version.

5 Edward E. Malone provides a useful map of the doctrinal path that legitimated the transition from sacrifice to martyr and monk (Malone 1950).

because of this difference in the editions we cannot explain the emergence of sacrificial rhetoric as simply the consequence of his exegetical object. One can, however, hypothesize that, as the Reformation took shape and proceeded, one of Luther's rhetorical goals was to clarify the proper nature of Christian sacrifice.

### Rhetoric and Exegesis

In formulating Luther's sacrificial rhetoric as an object of scrutiny, I am taking a different trajectory from much Luther scholarship.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, because Luther came to reject what he saw as the abuse of allegory,<sup>7</sup> a rhetorical treatment could seem an inappropriate approach to Luther's text. Since my focus here will be on Luther's 'Lectures on Galatians'<sup>8</sup> this analysis will shift the rhetorical study of Luther from his sermons to his scriptural exegesis, where debate usually centers upon the theological cogency of his arguments. To insist on the rhetorical nature of Luther's commentary already suggests a skeptical attitude towards any exegesis that attempts to 'speak the truth' of a given text. Nonetheless, in speaking of Luther's exegetical text as a rhetorical performance, one does not necessarily negate the theological truth-claims, but one does inevitably shift the debate away from the terrain of theology. Indeed, my reading will highlight the degree to which Luther's exegesis of Paul uses Scripture as a point of departure for addressing wider social tensions in early sixteenth-century Europe. That is, like any good rhetorician, with one eye on the received tradition and the other on his heterogeneous audience of readers, Luther sought social change through the primary work of reformulating the fundamental categories of existence.

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6 Because Luther was an Augustinian monk, and Augustine himself entered public life as a Quintillian-influenced professor of rhetoric, Luther's rhetorical practices have gained some attention (to begin, see Oberman 1988, Vickers 1988, Matheson 1998), but most often in regards to his pastoral practice of employing epideictic discourse in his sermons.

7 According to F. Edward Cranz, 'The firm tie between the literal sense of the Bible and its spiritual reality, threatened by humanism and nominalism, is reestablished by Luther as the literal and the anagogic senses coincide in faith' (Cranz 1974: 102).

8 *In epistolam S. Pauli ad galata Commentarius*, in German translation, *Vorlesung über den Galaterbrief*. For quotations from this text, I will first cite the English translation, then the Weimar edition of Luther.

Finally, this move away from discussing the theological plausibility of Luther's truth-claims will allow us to focus on the categorical infrastructure that forms the condition of possibility of the text's truth-effects. In other words, through the lens of rhetoric we can examine how Luther attempts to persuade his audience regarding the truth of sacrifice. A rhetorical analysis provides a promising framework for this topic because, since Luther strove to empty most rituals of religious significance, I contend that 'sacrifice' itself thereby became solely a matter of rhetoric. That is, with Luther, sacrifice becomes a *solely discursive effect*, a consequence of the way that one talks about an act or event. I will further show how this led to Luther's disenchantment of reason and the authorization of the pastor as a figure with new duties in the religious division of labor.

### Sacrifice and the Critique of Works

Given the emergence of Luther's sacrificial rhetoric in the 1535 'Lectures on Galatians', one could hypothesize that, as the Reformation took shape and proceeded, it became imperative to clarify the proper nature of Christian sacrifice. This concern with defining a proper sacrifice accords with the very nature of rhetoric, which purportedly traces its origins as a distinct practice of persuasion to the adjudication of competing property claims after the deposition of two Sicilian tyrants around 485 BC (Barthes 1988: 16). The transition from confusion and conflict to a resolution defined by the restoration of the proper and the just forms perhaps the fundamental motif of rhetorical practice. Just as, at its origin, rhetoric concerned itself with determining 'proprietaryship' and the 'proper', we can see that Luther was bedeviled by the question: Of the competing factions in Christendom, which will become the proprietor of sacrifice?

To recapitulate, after Paul it was no longer necessary for a Christian to undergo circumcision, sacrifice at the Temple, or observe other ritual markers of Hebrew identity. What remained was an emphasis on holiness which, combined with the early exemplary martyrs, created a dual idiom of sacrifice: both an extreme form, to the point of self-annihilation in the case of martyrdom, and a more 'rational' or mitigated form in the case of asceticism. It was in this context that Luther set forth key dichotomies, such as Law versus Gospel and active versus passive righteousness, that defined his critique of Works. Early in his 1535 'Lectures on Galatians', Luther states that 'Christian righteousness (*Iustitiam christianam*) ... is heavenly and passive (*coelestis et passiva*). ... We do not perform it; we ac-

cept it by faith, through which we ascend beyond all laws and works (*ascendimus supra omnes leges et opera*).’ (Luther 1963: 8 and 1911: 46.) Next, Luther presents a short conversion narrative wherein he personifies the devotee of active righteousness. After casting himself in the role of the sacrificial agent, Luther laments, ‘I crucified Christ daily in my monastic life (*Ego in monachatu Christum quotidie crucifixi*). ... I observed chastity, poverty, and obedience. ... Nevertheless, under the cover of this sanctity and confidence I was nursing incessant ... blasphemy against God.’ (Luther 1963: 70 and 1911: 137.) As is typical of the genre of conversion narratives, Luther stages a dramatic inversion of values. As opposed to an Occamist reliance on the will, as would befit his education, to Luther the human will is completely corrupt as a result of the Fall,<sup>9</sup> making the ritual observances that depend upon the agent’s contrite will worse than useless. Thus, a doctrine that accords a place for human agency in the work of salvation is not only misguided; by diverting hope from its rightful object, namely, God’s grace, it places one on the side of Satan.<sup>10</sup> How, then, can sacrifice escape this critique and serve as the figure for the full actualization of Christian righteousness?

### Luther’s Polemical Context

In addition to a choleric temperament that served him well in the theological disputes of his day, Luther’s deployment of the grammatical quantifier *sola* to isolate *fides* from *leges* in his translations of Paul entailed a remarkable combativeness towards any position that would combine his ‘solisms’<sup>11</sup> with any other desiderata of righteousness. Among these, the positions of humanists and scholastic theologians particularly earned his scorn. Both camps looked to Greek and Hellenistic texts as resources for contemporary issues, with the scholastics incorporating Aristotelian developments

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9 Luther makes this abundantly clear in his debate with Erasmus (Erasmus 1969 and Luther 1969).

10 Soon thereafter one reads: ‘For Satan loves such saints and treats as his own beloved those who destroy their own bodies and souls, and who deprive themselves of all the blessings of the gifts of God. ... [S]uch saints are the slaves of Satan. ... But these men, far from acknowledging that their abominations, idolatries, and wicked acts of worship are sins, actually declare that they are a sacrifice pleasing to God (*acceptissimum Deo sacrificium*).’ (Luther 1963: 70 and 1911: 138.)

11 Rublack employed this term to describe Luther’s closed the set of authoritative resources: *sola gratia, sola Christus, sola fides, sola scriptura* (Rublack 1985: 31).

into the established neo-Platonic elements of Christianity, and humanists seeking to recover classical learning in a more holistic sense. Of course, there were many contentious issues separating Luther's opponents. For example, in matters of scripture and practice the humanist rallying cry was 'ad fontes!' Because this return to the sources had the consequence of circumventing the continuity of Church tradition, the humanists thereby challenged scholastic, and especially Dominican, hegemony. Nonetheless, although there was much tension between humanists and scholastics, what they shared – and what damned them in Luther's eyes – was an admiration for virtuous pagans and a central role for reason in the Christian life.

To Erasmus, for example, virtuous pagans like Aristotle and Cicero had, through the right use of reason, approximated many of the moral teachings of scripture. In his debate with Luther on the nature of the will, Erasmus asserted that even 'in those who lack grace ... reason was obscured but not extinguished'. Believing that the right use of reason can take one very far along the path towards righteousness, Erasmus could argue that, among the pagans,

... philosophers, without the light of faith, and without the assistance of Holy Scripture, drew from created things the knowledge of the everlasting power and divinity of God, and left many precepts concerning the good life, agreeing wholeheartedly with the teachings of the Gospels (Erasmus 1969: 49).

To Luther, such a statement did little more than insult the divinity of revelation by mingling it with the tepid moral admonitions and specious metaphysics of benighted pagans. However, this conflict concerning the status of pagan authors was itself but the effect of a more fundamental rift.

For both humanists and scholastics, humans were created by a benevolent creator, who endowed each person with the faculties necessary to attain some limited knowledge of the divine. As a result, revelation and reason enjoyed a complementary relation. According to Aquinas,

... it is clear that those things which are implanted in reason by nature, are most true, so much so that it is impossible to think them to be false. Nor is it lawful to deem false that which is held by faith, since it is so evidently confirmed by God. Seeing then that the false alone is opposed to the true, as evidently appears if we examine their definitions, it is impossible for the aforesaid truth or faith to be contrary to those principles which reason knows naturally. (Aquinas 1924: 14.)

Since it was 'reason' that authorized Erasmus's admiration for Cicero and Aquinas's admiration for Aristotle, Luther decried this extension of prestige beyond the Christian world. To Luther, by contrast, these pagan authors offer only a semblance of reason and morality that threatened to seduce the scholastic theologian and the humanist philologist away from scripture.<sup>12</sup> Against his rivals, then, Luther wants to defend his solisms, and the way to do this is to topple reason from its place at the pinnacle of human faculties. Indeed, from this perspective Luther's discourse here becomes the most explicitly rhetorical, for, taking Barthes's definition of rhetoric as a 'metalanguage ... whose language-object [is] "discourse"' (Barthes 1988: 12), Luther's revalorization of reason challenges both the epistemological status of language itself and the social prestige which it commands.

### Mediating Luther's Dualisms

In arguing that faith alone constitutes Christian righteousness, like Paul before him, Luther has to undermine any collaborative or complementary relation between faith and reason. Actually, for a writer whose vision was dominated by such stark dualisms as those of the two kingdoms (the 'Kingdom of Earth' [*regnum mundi*] and the 'Kingdom of Christ' [*regnum Christi*]), as well as the oppositions between the Hebrew 'Law' and the Christian Gospel, dissolving this collaborative relationship between faith and reason constitutes but a single example of a more general strategy. Given Luther's penchant for dichotomizing, then, instances where Luther mediates these dualisms have drawn much scrutiny.<sup>13</sup> In this case, instead of a resolution or reconciliation, Luther's mediation between the sacred and the profane underscores the costly violence of the operation. It is as if, by an exigency of Luther's rhetoric, difference almost inevitably entails opposition, and opposition, ineradicable strife. With Luther, 'sacrifice' as a figure encapsulates this tendency.

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12 Although aware of this danger, Luther did defend the pedagogical, as opposed to the spiritual, role of pagan literature. See Spitz 1996.

13 For a good example, see Heiko Oberman's discussion of perhaps the most celebrated of these instances. In *Luther's Freedom of a Christian* he describes the 'third incomparable benefit of faith' as 'unit[ing] the soul with Christ, as a bride is united with her bridegroom. By this mystery, ... Christ and the soul become one flesh.' For a compelling discussion of this topic, see Oberman 1974: 23.

In his commentary on Paul's assertion that Abraham's faith was 'reckoned to him as righteousness', Luther writes, 'With these words Paul makes faith in God the supreme worship, the supreme allegiance, the supreme obedience, and the supreme sacrifice (*Et Paulus hic ex fide in Deum summum cultum, summum obsequium, summam obedientiam et sacrificium facit ex fide in Deum*)' (Luther 1963: 226–7 and 1911: 360).<sup>14</sup> The question immediately arises, how can faith, however understood, in any way resemble the ritual butchering of an animal or a public expenditure of some mitigated form of wealth? What is the cost, one might ask, of a 'sacrifice of faith'? To dispense completely with the expenditure (one almost wants to say, 'to negate the negation'<sup>15</sup>) seems to nullify the very notion of 'sacrifice'. Furthermore, how can the writer most trenchantly opposed to all works, the entire spectrum of mitigated sacrifices that had filtered into every aspect of medieval life, employ the very figure at the foundation of this edifice? Luther must empty sacrifice of its connotations of voluntarism, of a work that one undertakes, but how is one to divest an act of its agent, an action of its spontaneity?

### The Problem of Praising Faith

As Ludwig Feuerbach argued in his reading of Luther, for the latter the operative distinction was not Creator versus the Created; rather it was God versus Man. Humans are defined not in relation to their own properties or faculties as created by God, but directly in relation to God – that is, as precisely not-God, and thus without any of God's characteristics, such as true knowledge and benevolence.<sup>16</sup> The emphasis thereby falls not on how a benevolent God equipped humans to know the divine, but on human limitation, ignorance and weakness. Theology therefore turns not on the available links between the human and the divine (the divine light of rea-

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14 Luther follows this formulation with, 'Whoever is an orator, let him develop this topic [*Qui Rhetor est, exaggeret hunc locum ...*].' Note the way that with this invitation Luther creates distance between himself and the rhetorician and thereby disavows the rhetorical nature of his commentary.

15 This Hegelian formulation has informed many more recent interpretations of sacrifice, such as those of Georges Bataille (1990) and Jean-Luc Nancy (1991).

16 'To every lack in man there is opposed a perfection in God; God is and has exactly what man is not and has not. Whatever is attributed to God is denied to man, and contrariwise whatever one gives to man one takes from God. ... The less God is, so

son, the sublimity and order of nature, etc.), but on the abyss that categorically divides them. In this way, Luther can construct an analogy so that faith and reason fall on either side of the fault line between salvation and damnation: as God is to man, and faith is to reason, so salvation is to damnation. Human reason now emerges both as the allegorical representative of agency and the author of all works. In short, the separation of sacrifice from agency and works has begun.

With human reason now singled out and abstracted from the complex of human faculties, Luther can move the primary locus of the agon between faith and reason into the soul of the aspiring believer. This move too is cast as a return to origins, but unlike the humanists, this *fontes* is not Greek but Jewish, for '[f]aith certainly had this struggle with reason (*Istam luctam profecto habuit fides cum ratione*) in Abraham' (Luther 1963: 228 and 1911: 362).<sup>17</sup> With faith on God's side, though, the struggle could seem unequal. Lest this psychic conflict lack pathos, Luther emphasizes repeatedly how especially onerous it is that a thing as low as reason challenges God, who should rightly be worshiped and esteemed by all. But there is more to this struggle than the challenge of an upstart faculty that does not know its place.

What is the nature of this antagonism between faith and reason? As we have seen, this enmity pivots upon Luther's critique of works. Because works are nothing and grace is all, faith attributes all praise to God, but reason, having erroneously deduced the efficacy of works, can only praise itself. When Luther notes that 'Paul makes such a boast of his calling that he despises all the others', Luther shifts the value of this behavior in order to make a point about the proper attitude of worship and devotion: 'this style of boasting is necessary. It has to do, not with the glory of Paul or with our glory but with the glory of God; and by it the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving is offered up to Him (*Ibi gloriatur deus, sacrificatur ei sacri-*

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much more is man; the less man is, so much more is God. ... The nullity of man is the presupposition of the reality of God. To affirm God is to negate man; to honor God is to scorn man; to praise God is to revile man. The glory of God rests only on the lowliness of man, divine blessedness only on human misery, divine wisdom only on human folly, divine power only on human weakness.' (Feuerbach 1967: 33.)

17 In this passage, Luther speaks repeatedly of either the agent or faith slaughtering (*occidit*), slaying (*mactat, mactavit*, killing (*mortificant*), or sacrificing (*sacrificavit*) reason. In instances like this, the most charged religious term among the group lends its sacramental overtones to the other more quotidian terms.

*ficiam laudis et gratitudinis).*' (Luther 1963: 17 and 1911: 57.) The continuity between true theology and sacrificial offerings relies not upon the material efficacy of the rite in coercing a divine response, but wholly upon the interpretation of sacrifice as a sign (and *only* a sign) of a deferential and worshipful attitude. Here is the key to Luther's construction of a sacrifice that surpasses the critique of works: by means of a sacrifice that is simultaneously the destruction of reason and the manifestation of faith, this operation consists entirely of a shift in perspective, a reconceptualization. Luther's sense of the impiety of reason, as well as the sacrifice of faith, both hinge upon the rhetorical work of correctly defining one's concept of 'the praiseworthy'.

How, then, does Luther walk the tightrope between seizing proprietorship of 'true Christian sacrifice' and resurrecting it as just one more false work? This is an especially acute problem here, for the revalorization of received values courts the danger of starting a process that one cannot stop. How are his readers to avoid praising faith for its sacrifice of reason? Would sacrifice then become a valiant and praiseworthy 'work' of faith? Because sacrifice involves such a violent presentation of agency, how can this rhetoric avoid a too-literal reading that takes the act of faith's sacrifice in the active sense? It might be that all metaphorical depictions of 'faith' materialize it too much. That is, once moving beyond a quasi-mystical adumbration of one's relation to the divine, we always run the same risk of transforming faith defined as non-work and non-knowledge into a false reification. Does Luther's conception of the 'sacrifice of faith' do this as well, but simply brings this problem more clearly to the surface?

Despite these dangers, the flexibility of Luther's sacrificial rhetoric allows him to tread this fine line, primarily because of a key innovation: instead of depicting sacrifice as an act that one could actively pursue or passively undergo, Luther makes 'reason' the sacrificial object and thus splits the subject, making it simultaneously the sacrificial agent *and* object. By combining aspects of the martyr and the monk, the sacrificial idiom is no longer split between the passive sacrifice of martyrdom (passive because one should not actively seek martyrdom) and the active sacrifice of ascetic renunciation (active because construed as the willful sacrifice of the will). With the passive and the active aspects of sacrifice both resonating, Luther synthesizes the dual idioms of sacrifice – both an extreme form, to the point of self-annihilation in the case of martyrdom, and a more 'rational' or mitigated form in the case of asceticism. Thus, far from leaping out of the continuum of the Church, Luther rather closes the circle: through the detours of the Eucharist and ascetic substitutions like chastity, poverty,

and obedience, 'sacrifice' had become attenuated and individualized to the point that its two distinct idioms of violent self-annihilation and rational mitigation could meet in Luther's rhetorical deployment, a culmination that was simultaneously invisible and absolute.

One consequence of this was to renounce any goal of a united or harmonious subject. Pitting one element of the psyche against another, Luther takes Abraham as his model and imports the spiritual battlefield into the subject. While also recognizable as a practice of monastic asceticism and a stage of conversion narratives, the difference here is that this conflict is not chronic or accidental, but essential and absolute. No longer do we see St Anthony or St Benedict tempted by the demonic passions and the bestial urges of the body; now, reason itself, that which was most human, that which distinguished us from the animal, becomes the (hitherto prized, henceforth despised) object of sacrifice. This is the consequence of the rhetorical work of redistributing phenomena into the categories of the 'praiseworthy' and the 'contemptible', the 'sacrificeable' and the 'unsacrificeable'. Furthermore, because this rhetorical work is never finished, the sacrifice never ceases to take place, for as soon as faith emerges from its agon with reason and, flush with battle, makes the category error of praising its own triumph, one can know that this faith is only reason in disguise, and the battle must continue.

### **The Bestialization of Reason and the Monstrosity of Sophism**

Though Luther depicts reason as a beast unworthy of praise and worthy of sacrifice, reason is not a merely natural beast, for to serve as the enemy of God it must appear unnatural, anti-natural, even monstrous. To achieve this, Luther attacks reason, not as a human faculty of overweening pride, but as a beast: 'faith slaughters reason and kills the beast that the whole world and all the creatures cannot kill' (Luther 1963: 228 and 1911: 362). Going one step further and divesting reason completely of all its esteem, Luther insists that we must 'exclude all works (*exclusis omnibus operibus*)' in order to destroy 'the heads of the beast called reason, which is the fountainhead of all evils (*capitibus huius bestiae quae vocatur Ratio, quae est fons fontium omnium malorum*)' (Luther 1963: 230 and 1911: 365). By not only bestializing reason, but metaphorically ascribing to it characteristics of Hydra, the many-headed monster from Greek mythology, Luther thereby casts it into the category of 'the sacrificeable' and casts himself in the role of the hero Heracles. In this one figure, then, Luther traffics in anti-pagan

rhetoric to link, via reason, scholasticism, humanism and paganism along an axis of demonization. What is the nature, though, of the heroism that champions faith?

Between 1517 and 1531 there was a radical upsurge of 'sacrifice' in Luther's text. Of course, one might expect two versions of scriptural exegesis so separated in time, with so many momentous events intervening, to differ in many ways, but one is justified in surmising that something clearly happened to Luther's understanding of the status of 'sacrifice' in the Christian life. Perhaps the upsurge of martyrs in the course of the Reformation made it clear to Luther that this term had to be appropriated if his cause was to succeed.<sup>18</sup> This and more could help to explain *why* there is a metastasis of sacrificial rhetoric in Luther's text. For a rhetorical analysis, however, which must pay heed to the surface features of the text, in place of *why* the far more important question is *how*: how does this sacrificial rhetoric make its appearance?

To describe this appearance as a metastasis is already the beginning of an explanation, for 'metastasis' is both the rhetorical term for 'rapid transition from one topic or figure to the next', and the clinical term for the manifestation and spread of disease.<sup>19</sup> This is appropriate here for this rhetoric appears throughout the text, almost as if, to counter the Hydra that grows evermore heads with each decapitation, sacrificial rhetoric spreads to combat the rebellion of reason as it appears. This life/death struggle takes place here because the process of exegesis closely resembles the rationalization of a text whose very spirit should take one beyond the limits of reason. Within the context of Luther's theological presuppositions, the metastasis of sacrificial rhetoric emerges as an effect of the genre of scriptural exegesis.

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18 According to Brad S. Gregory, 'Luther and his contemporaries were living in remarkable times. Because Christ had told his followers to expect persecution for his sake (Matt. 24:9, Luke 21:12, John 15:18–20), and because this was the experience of Paul, Stephen, and other apostolic Christians, persecution and martyrdom confirmed Luther's view that he had dared to proclaim the Gospel aright.' (Gregory 1999: 149.)

19 'Metastasis' in *Oxford English Dictionary* 1980: 680.

### Martyr, Monk, Friar, Pastor

Aside from the conditions of Luther's textual production, if we take Luther's rhetoric as first and foremost a social practice with social effects, as I propose, we can ask, if reason is one's interior enemy, how does Luther typify reason's worldly agents whom he saw springing up incessantly, like so many heretical heads of Hydra? In a passage where Luther decries the way that reason 'regards [God's] Word as heresy', he condemns 'the theology of all the sophists and of the sectarians, who measure the Word of God by reason (*Theologia omnium Sophistarum et sectariorum qui metiuntur verbum Dei ratione*)' (Luther 1963: 228 and 1911: 362). How can one recognize these sophists and sectarians who so bedevil Luther's project?

Just as sectarians sow dissension in the true church, sophists multiply truth-claims beyond the confines of the true. At least since Gorgias delivered his 'Encomium of Helen', which attempted to excuse her role in the Trojan War, the 'sophist' has been an orator who has questioned received ideas and communal values. Although Socrates provoked controversy as well, what distinguished the sophist in Plato's eyes was that, instead of attempting to set conceptions aright, like Socrates, the sophist turns values upside down in order to make right appear wrong and the true appear false. Luther's use of the term is no different. Faith and reason are not in contention because they are equally powerful, but because the individual erroneously understands reason to be superior. Reason itself is culpable for this misrecognition, but the sophist, as reason's agent, also contributes to this false image of reason's power. By alienating reason and then personifying it in the sophist, Luther makes it clear that, in the agon of faith and reason, it is the sophist who helps reason deceive us that it and its works are supreme and not God.

Against this rhetorical construction of the contemporary sophist, Luther presents a new and distinct function for faith's agent, the pastor. Luther took as his model for this function Pauline *parrhesia* (traditionally translated as 'free speech' but cast by Foucault [2001] as 'fearless speech'), which we have already encountered. Paul's 'Letter to the Galatians' is known for the candid mode of discourse that eschews all pleasantries in pursuit of its dogmatic rectifications. Perhaps conscious of their social function, Luther is full of admiration for Paul's opposition to the 'boasting' and 'pharisaical pride and insolence' of the 'false apostles'. Luther applauds how

Paul boldly and with great *parrhesia* pits his apostolic authority, commends his calling, and defends his ministry. Although he does not do

this anywhere else, he refuses to yield to anyone, even to the apostles themselves, much less to any of their pupils. ... In addition, he pays no attention to the possible offense but says plainly in the text that he took it upon himself to reprove Peter himself, the prince of the apostles, who had seen Christ and had known Him intimately. (Luther 1963: 15 and 1911: 55–6.)

Modeled, then, on Paul's author-function in his letter to the Galatians, Luther's pastor is entrusted with specific rhetorical duties. Instead of the local representative of a distant institutional authority, the pastor replaces monk and friar to become a *parrhesiast*, a fearless speaker of truth. Empowered to espouse the Gospel freely and fearlessly, the pastor is entrusted with two duties: to shape his flock with epideictic flows of praise and blame, and to protect the feeble-minded from the sophists at the gate. Luther's sacrificial rhetoric thus constructs a new configuration in the religious division of labor.

## Conclusion

Luther's deployment of sacrificial rhetoric was a discursive articulation with a long future, and not only among the clergy. Luther's disenchanting view of reason still exerts great influence, for a reason devoted to earthly pursuits dovetailed well with broad changes in the constitution of the modern nation-state and the global consolidation of capitalist markets. In short, this disenchanting rationality, joined with a utilitarian notion of human nature, formed a hegemonic framework that today goes virtually uncontested.<sup>20</sup>

Luther's bestialization of reason ushers in the disenchantment of human rationality by divesting reason of its last divine remnant. With this achieved, *homo oeconomicus*, whose every faculty serves self-interest by definition, is near on the horizon. According to this model of human nature, we can only serve our passions, or, more neutrally, our self-interest, so that even apparent acts of altruism simply serve our desire for the social

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20 Though Max Weber's authoritative voice casts the longest shadow in Religious Studies, the work of Nobel Prize winner Gary Becker has opened the way to an economic analysis of every non-economic form of behavior through his acolytes, such as Laurence R. Iannacone (1992). On this, see Becker's Nobel-acceptance speech (1993) and the pivotal essay on time allocation (1964).

prestige or genetic success that such altruism brings. No longer a divine spark or the differentiating, criterial mark of humanity, reason becomes just one more instrument of the body. Luther thus articulates a position that would surface again in Hume's critique of rationalism, Marx's assault on bourgeois ideology, as well as the critiques of other hermeneuts of suspicion, such as Nietzsche and Freud.

Like these audacious skeptics, the sacrificial rhetorician utilizes the figure of 'sacrifice' as a means to intervene in the reproduction of received notions of self, society, worship and work. Luther's transformation of the religious division of labor becomes evident in a culminating passage such as this:

Any Christian is a supreme pontiff, because, first, he offers and slaughters his reason and the mind of the flesh (*offert et mactat suam rationem et sensum carnis*), and, secondly, he attributes to God the glory of being righteous, truthful, patient, kind, and merciful. This is the continuous evening and morning sacrifice (*sacrificium vespertinum et matutinum*) in the New Testament. The evening sacrifice is to kill the reason, and the morning sacrifice is to glorify God (*Vespertinum: mortificare rationem, Matutinum: glorificare Deum*). Thus a Christian is involved, daily and perpetually, in this double sacrifice (*duplici sacrificio*) and in its practice. No one can adequately proclaim the value and the dignity of Christian sacrifice (*sacrificii Christiani*). (Luther 1963: 233 and 1911: 370.)

This passage well represents Luther's intervention: first, define, then re-define the proper channels of a righteous economy of prestige. In one passage Luther brings the Pope to the level of Everyman, attacks the status of reason, and ends with an *aporia*, a rhetorical statement affirming the inadequacy of language in the face of divine dignity. Here, by means of a performative discursive act presented as a descriptive designation, Luther employs this rhetoric to make a strategic move in the development of the religious division of labor. Moving on from martyr, monk and friar, Luther constructs a new position in the field of discursive production, the pastor as *parrhesiast*. Luther thereby dedicates his discourse less to applying reason and employing logic than to stirring in his audience dynamic flows of affect, a response he conjures by framing his discourse as an ongoing battle with the irrepressible enemies of faith. By preserving the active role in the discourse for a 'sacrificing faith' and the passive role for a 'sacrificed reason', the two faculties, complementary in humanism and scholasticism, get redistributed into a hierarchy of values which both reflects and substantiates a new social order. Hence, Luther's rhetoric works on the world,

producing effects in a society that will now have a place for a type of religious specialist who is neither monk nor friar but a fully embodied male whose worship does not consist of the physical asceticisms of monastic poverty or celibacy, but solely of faith's sacrifice of reason.

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