

THE LIMITS UPON ADIAPHORISTIC FREEDOM: LUTHER AND MELANCHTHON¹

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WHEN LUTHER and his principal spokesman, Philip Melanchthon, launched their attack against the many ecclesiastical laws and regulations which had cropped up over the centuries, it was not so much a matter of attacking the traditions in themselves as it was an attempt to restore the doctrine of solafideism, which in their opinion the traditions had severely jeopardized. Once that doctrine was fully appreciated, Luther wrote, the Christian would “easily and safely find his way through those myriad mandates and precepts of popes, bishops, monasteries, churches, princes, and magistrates.”²

As it turned out, that way, according to both Luther and Melanchthon, was an adiaphoristic *via media*. But whether such a path was as “easily and safely” to be discerned as Luther thought, may be doubted; for, as a matter of fact, the adiaphoristic freedom championed by the two Wittenberg Reformers was closely circumscribed by “limits” from without and within, which, because of their subtlety and complexity, could be and not infrequently were overlooked. In what follows, it will be my intention to show exactly what those limits are. I will begin by trying to establish the outer boundaries, or, in other words, the precise locus of the adiaphorism proffered by Luther and Melanchthon.

At its sixth session the Council of Trent declared: “Si quis dixerit, nihil praeceptum esse in Evangelio praeter fidem, cetera esse indifferentia, neque praecepta, neque prohibita, sed libera, aut decem praecepta nihil pertinere ad Christianos: anathema sit.”³ In commenting on this

¹ By “adiaphoristic freedom” is to be understood that liberty which one enjoys in the realm of adiaphora. Etymologically, the latter term is derived from the Greek verb *diapherein*, “to differ,” and is used therefore in a very general sense to designate those matters which “make no difference” or are “indifferent.” The specific sense in which it was employed by Christian theologians, the Reformers in particular, will become clear in the course of the subsequent discussion.

² *Tractatus de libertate christiana* (WA 7, 68). The following abbreviations will be used in citing the German and English editions of Luther’s works: WA *Luthers Werke*, Kritische Gesamtausgabe (Weimar, 1883 ff.), LW *Luther’s Works* (Philadelphia and St. Louis, 1955 ff.).

³ *Concilio Tridentini actorum*, ed. S. Eshes, 5 (Freiburg, 1911) 799, canon 19. This canon was finally approved along with the whole Decree on Justification on Jan. 13, 1547. It had first been presented for consideration to the Council fathers on Oct. 31, 1546. Eshes notes that the phrase “cetera esse indifferentia” was added by Cardinal de Monte (*ibid.*, p. 516).

Tridentine canon about a century and a half ago, C. C. E. Schmid remarked that Luther's emphasis upon the Pauline doctrine of justification by faith alone was so strong that he was unable to escape the suspicion of teaching that everything but faith is indifferent.⁴ Apparently the Tridentine Fathers shared that suspicion; for, while Schmid was inclined to think that the above canon was probably directed against some "careless followers" of Luther's evangelical doctrine and not against Luther himself,⁵ the fact that the decree as a whole does have Luther and Melancthon very much in mind would suggest that the latter were also the target of canon 19.⁶ This is further substantiated by the fact that already some fifteen years earlier, in his *404 Articles* and the *Confutatio pontificia*, John Eck had accused the Lutherans of subscribing to the notion that "faith alone is necessary; all other things are entirely free and neither commanded nor prohibited."⁷ Some scholars in more recent times have also left the impression that the Tridentine Fathers would not have been altogether wrong had they indeed intended the canon as a condemnation of the two Wittenberg Reformers.

T. W. Street, in an unpublished study of John Calvin's adiaphorism, has attempted to establish a distinction between Calvin's understanding of adiaphora and that of Luther and Melancthon, on the grounds that the latter locate the indifference of external acts in their not being "sources of justification."⁸ C. L. Manschreck suggested much the same when, in introducing a discussion of Melancthon's role in the adiaphoristic controversy of 1549, he wrote that "external observances are adiaphora so far as righteousness is concerned; they are not necessary to justification."⁹ But if that were the case, then Luther and Melancthon both would have had to have said that all things outside of faith were adiaphora, since, according to both, man is justified by faith alone.

⁴C C E Schmid, *Adiaphora, wissenschaftlich und historisch untersucht* (Leipzig, 1809) p 617

⁵*Ibid*

⁶During the long discussion that continued from October 1546 to January 1547 on the justification decree, canon 19 received almost no attention at all. The conciliar secretary simply reports that it received no comment (Ehser, *op cit*, pp 761, 517-789). The final form in which it was approved was exactly the same as it was when presented on Oct 31. This lack of discussion of the canon makes it impossible to determine exactly against whom the canon was directed.

⁷See *The Augsburg Confession: A Collection of Sources*, ed J M Reu (St Louis, 1966) pp 108, 338

⁸T W Street, "John Calvin on Adiaphora: An Exposition," unpublished Ph D dissertation, Union Theological Seminary (N Y C), 1954, pp 255-56

⁹C L Manschreck, "The Role of Melancthon in the Adiaphora Controversy," *Archiv fur Reformationsgeschichte* 49 (1957) 165, hereafter cited as Manschreck, "Controversy"

Manschreck implied that that is precisely what Luther and Melanchthon had had in mind; for he writes that "if one insists that justification is by faith alone, everything else is adiaphoristic."¹⁰

To judge from such remarks, Luther and Melanchthon did indeed teach what the Tridentine canon condemned. But was that actually the case? It would seem not.¹¹ From its position in the Tridentine text, it is clear that the aforementioned canon had reference not to the Reformers' doctrine about "original justification" (the alien righteousness imputed to man) but to their notion of "sanctification" (the "new being" which comes with the appropriation of Christ's righteousness). The same must probably be assumed also of the remarks by Street and Manschreck, since both Luther and Melanchthon were so clear in teaching that in the process of original justification every human action apart from faith ushered *coram Deo* not only is of no value (notwithstanding its "natural" goodness) but is positively sinful, and therefore not to be conceived of as indifferent. Like the Tridentine canon, therefore, Street and Manschreck probably had in mind only to suggest that according to Luther and Melanchthon everything but faith is indifferent for the Christian insofar as he is a "new man." But can one make even such an assertion?

By reason of his faith in Christ, Melanchthon wrote, the Christian is no longer a slave of the law; the law has been abrogated in his regard, and not only the judicial and ceremonial laws but the moral law as well.¹² He becomes, in the words of Luther, "the free lord of all, subject to none."¹³ No longer does he have to prove himself worthy under the law. Although he remains a sinner, he need not despair. The accusations of the law, of the devil, of the pope, of the self, or of anyone else, can no longer overwhelm him. By faith the righteousness of Christ is now his righteousness. His sin will no longer be held against him. He has been accepted as he is. Having recognized God, he can forget himself. His is a share in the lordship of Christ, and he finds that now "everything is free

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ It may be noted that Schmid drew the same conclusion, but made little effort to substantiate it, being more concerned with the philosophical dimensions of adiaphorism. His preoccupation with the latter may be explained in part by the fact that his contemporaries, Immanuel Kant and Friedrich Schleiermacher, were also airing their opinions on the theory at about the same time. See I. Kant, *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft*, ed. K. Vorländer (Hamburg, 1956) p. 21; F. Schleiermacher, "Grundlinien einer Kritik der bisherigen Sittenlehre," *Werke* 1 (Leipzig, 1910) 135-38; Schleiermacher, "Über den Begriff des Erlaubten," *Werke* 1, 417-44.

¹² *Melanchthons Werke in Auswahl*, ed. R. Stupperich, H. Engelland, et al., 2/1 (Gütersloh, 1952) 125-32; this edition of Melanchthon's works hereafter cited as *MW*.

¹³ *De lib. christ.* (*WA* 7, 49). See, in general, M. E. Marty, "Luther on Ethics: Man Free and Slave," *Accents in Luther's Theology*, ed. H. O. Kadai (St. Louis, 1967) pp. 199-227.

and nothing necessary."¹⁴ Such, according to Luther and Melancthon, is the radical freedom enjoyed by every Christian. But is it of an adiaphoristic sort?

In its original conception among the ancient Cynic and Stoic philosophers, the term *adiaphoron* had been used to designate a thing which, when considered in itself, was never of such decisive value or disvalue as not to be able to be rendered either good or evil in the concrete by the human intention.¹⁵ Such an understanding of the term was introduced into Christian thought by the Alexandrians Clement and Origen,¹⁶ and received some attention from other early Church Fathers like John Chrysostom, John Cassian, and Augustine.¹⁷ During the High Middle Ages it figured considerably in the long debate over the intrinsic morality of human actions that was started by Abelard and reached a conclusion of sorts with Thomas Aquinas.¹⁸ By the late Middle Ages, however, most of the discussion of adiaphora had shifted to the more specifically theological line of adiaphoristic thought, which had also been under development since apostolic times.¹⁹ Along this latter line the emphasis

¹⁴ *Epist. ad Rom.* [Die Scholien] (WA 56, 493).

¹⁵ This conclusion is drawn from an analysis of Cynic and Stoic adiaphorism in the context of their doctrine of the "sufficiency of virtue." For the basic texts referring directly to their concept of adiaphora, see H. F. A. von Arnim, *Stoicorum veterum fragmenta* 1 (Leipzig, 1921) 191-96, 559-62; 3, 117-23; Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, tr. R. D. Hicks (New York, 1931) 6:105; 7:101-8, 160. See also Margaret E. Reesor, "Indifferents in Old and Middle Stoa," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 82 (1951) 102-10.

¹⁶ For Clement, see *Stromata* 4, 5 (PG 8, 1231), 2, 21 (PG 8, 1071-72), 7, 3 (PG 9, 422), 4, 26 (PG 8, 1374 f.); *Paedagogus* 2, 1-9 (PG 8, 391, 394, 406, 410-32, 490-98). For Origen, see *Comm. in Matt.* 11, 12 (PG 13, 939); *Comm. in ep. b. Pauli ad Romanos* 4, 9 (PG 14, 994), 10, 3 (PG 14, 1253); *De principiis* 3, 2, 7 (PG 11, 313); *In Numeros homilia* 16, 7 (PG 12, 696); *Contra Celsum* 4, 45 (PG 11, 1102), 5, 49 (PG 11, 1238), 8, 30 (PG 11, 1559).

¹⁷ For Chrysostom, see *Quod non oporteat peccata fratrum evulgare* 2 (PG 51, 355); *Homiliae in ep. primam ad Cor.* 17, 1 (PG 61, 139-40); *Hom. ad Rom.* 11 (PG 60, 483 ff.); *Hom. ad Eph.* 13 (PG 62, 93 ff.); *Hom. ad Tim.* 12 (PG 62, 559, 563); *Hom. ad Col.* 12 (PG 62, 384); *Ad illuminandos catecheses* 2, 3 (PG 49, 235-36). For Cassian, see *Collatio* 21, 12-16 (PL 49, 1185-91), 6, 2-12 (PL 49, 648-64). For Augustine, see *De sermone domini in monte* 2, 18 (PL 34, 1296-97); *Expositio ad Romanos* 78 (PL 35, 2086).

¹⁸ For a general summary of the debate, see O. Lottin, "Le problème de la moralité intrinsèque d'Abélard à saint Thomas d'Aquin," *Psychologie et morale aux XII^e et XIII^e siècles, Problèmes de morale* 2 (Louvain, 1948) 425-64. It should be noted that this debate concerned a question that was altogether distinct from the question about the indifference of human actions in the concrete, which was also hotly debated during the High Middle Ages.

¹⁹ Those pursuing this line appealed generally to the remarks of Jesus about the "lightness" of the Christian burden (e.g., Mt 11:28-30) and to the Pauline doctrine concerning "ceremonies" like circumcision, festivals, the eating of unclean foods, etc. (see esp. Gal 2; Rom 14; 1 Cor 8-10). Among the many contributing to its development down through the centuries may be noticed especially Augustine (see *Epistolae* 27 [PL 33, 11 f.],

was not so much upon the intrinsic morality of things in themselves as upon the *relationship* of the person to them, with the result that an adiaphoron came to be defined also as a thing that is "permitted"²⁰ or "free," because it has been "neither commanded nor prohibited" by the external operations of divine law as revealed in the New Testament.

It was precisely this latter theological definition of the adiaphoron which found expression among almost all the sixteenth-century magisterial Reformers, and therefore also in the aforementioned Tridentine canon ("... indifferentia, neque praecepta, neque prohibita, sed libera"). But if one so defines an adiaphoron, then it clearly cannot be employed to describe the whole of that "radical freedom" which, according to Luther and Melanchthon, is the Christian's by way of his lordship over all things; for even though he shares in Christ's lordship,

40 [PL 33, 154 ff.], 72 [PL 33, 243 f.], 73 [PL 33, 245 ff.], 74 [PL 33, 251 ff.], 82 [PL 33, 275], 180, 5 [PL 33, 779]; Aquinas (see esp. *Sum. theol.* 1/2, 108, 1 and 2); Jan Hus (see *De ecclesia* 17, 19, 20, 21); and Wessel Gansfort (see esp. *Ecclesiastical Dignity and Power* 2, in *Wessel Gansfort: Life and Writings*, ed. E. W. Miller [New York, 1917] p. 162).—It should also be pointed out here that it was not really until the sixteenth century that the theory of adiaphorism came to be applied to the realm of doctrine. During the earlier centuries, however, a variety of distinctions were being drawn by one or another theologian which tended to favor some sort of hierarchical evaluation of Christian doctrine. Such, e.g., had been the Pauline distinctions between the kerygma and didache, and between the "milk" and "meat" of Christ's message, both of which distinctions were echoed repeatedly by the early Church Fathers, to some extent inspired the formulation of the Creeds, and by the time of Augustine began to give rise to the more technical distinction between explicit and implicit faith, which, while presupposing the "unity of faith," nevertheless made allowances for the "weak." Not surprisingly, what with its inherent and charitable concern for the "weak" and its emphasis upon the lightness of the Christian burden, the theory of adiaphorism, when it finally came to be applied by William Tyndale, John Frith, and other English Reformers to the realm of doctrine, hearkened back, at least implicitly, to such distinctions (see, e.g., W. Tyndale, *Doctrinal Treatises*, ed. H. Walter [Cambridge, 1848] pp. liii–lviii, 381–85; J. Frith, "The Articles Wherefore John Frith Died," *The Works of the English Reformers: W. Tyndale and J. Frith*, ed. T. Russell 3 [London, 1831] 450–54; Frith, "A Disputation of Purgatory," *ibid.* 3, 181–98).—Like Erasmus and some of his followers (Cassander and Witzel), most of the Reformers, including Luther and Melanchthon, were inclined to draw a distinction between fundamental and nonfundamental articles (see, in general, U. Valeske, *Hierarchia veritatum* [Munich, 1968] pp. 82–83, 107–19, 129–30; F. W. Kantzenbach, *Das Ringen um die Einheit der Kirche im Jahrhundert der Reformation* [Stuttgart, 1957] pp. 40 ff.; Street, *op. cit.*, pp. 284–317; F. Hildebrant, *Melanchthon, Alien or Ally* [Cambridge, 1946] pp. 27–33, 78–98; P. Althaus, *Theology of Luther*, pp. 224–25, 118; G. Tavard, "Hierarchia veritatum," *THEOLOGICAL STUDIES* 32 [1971] 286; Y. Congar, *Tradition and Traditions* [New York, 1966] pp. 512–18). The Erasmians and the Reformers, however, seldom cast such a distinction within an explicitly adiaphoristic frame of reference.

²⁰ For a further discussion of the relation of the term "adiaphoron" to the notion of "things permitted" or "das Erlaubte," see Wolfgang Trillhaas, "Adiaphoron: Erneute Erwägungen eines alten Begriffs," *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 79 (1954) 457–62; W.

the Christian still, according to the two Reformers, has certain things commanded and certain things forbidden him. To demonstrate this point, and to discover finally where it is that the Reformers do actually locate their adiaphorism, it will be necessary to review the second half of Luther's paradoxical formula of Christian liberty, namely, that the Christian who is the free lord of all is also and for that very reason "the perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all."²¹

Emancipated from the curse of the law, and the chains of his slavery to self thereby broken, the man of faith, Luther said, has been set free toward his neighbor and toward the world.²² No longer does he need to use his neighbor as party to some moralistic scheme of proving himself worthy.²³ Nor need he any longer search out some especially "holy" vocation by which to gain self-respect and divine approval.²⁴ Now instead, his love of neighbor can be genuinely altruistic and expressed freely and confidently in the ordinary "stations" of life.²⁵

Such service will not be a "work of the law" but a "work of grace,"²⁶ the result of the man of faith having submitted himself to the creative lordship of Christ. Possessed and moved by Christ's Spirit, he will no longer need the law's "demands and warnings."²⁷ His life of love will be a spontaneous one, inspired and guided from within. As Althaus has put it, Luther's man of faith lives "in theonomous creativity."²⁸ He is not bound legalistically to any external law—not the Decalogue, nor even the New Testament "commandments."²⁹ Indeed, to the extent that he lives in the power of the Spirit, the man of faith can write and rewrite his own law in accordance with the specific situation within which he finds himself.³⁰

Luther and Melanchthon were not, however, antinomianists. Only the man who thinks that sin is once and for ever behind him, they said, will consider himself no longer in any need whatever of the law.³¹ But in their view the Christian remains at once a righteous man and a sinner. Thus, for all their talk of the abrogation of the law, Luther and Melanchthon would also conceive of the law as continuing to play a role in the life of

Trillhaas, *Ethik* (Berlin, 1959) pp. 63–71; N. H. Sϕe, *Christliche Ethik* (Munich, 1965) pp. 150–56; P. Althaus, *Grundriss der Ethik* (Gütersloh, 1953) p. 84.

²¹ *De lib. christ.* (WA 7, 49).

²² See Marty, *op. cit.*, pp. 215–16, 220–22.

²³ See Althaus, *Theology of Luther*, pp. 302–3, 134–36.

²⁴ See Althaus, *The Ethics of Martin Luther*, tr. R. C. Schultz (Philadelphia, 1972) p. 39.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 36–42.

²⁶ Althaus, *Theology of Luther*, p. 267.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 270.

²⁸ *Ethics of Luther*, p. 32.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 30–32.

³⁰ Althaus, *Theology of Luther*, p. 270.

³¹ W. Joest, *Gesetz und Freiheit* (Göttingen, 1968) pp. 62–63.

the Christian. Not to mention its "civil function,"³² the law will continue to function "theologically," they said, by serving to remind the Christian of the twofold sense in which, notwithstanding his righteousness, he remains a sinner, i.e., "totally," insofar as while living "in Christ" he remains "an sich,"³³ in his own "empirical sinful existence,"³⁴ and "partially," to the extent that the "flesh," the "old man," persists in warring against the "spirit," or the "new man" now abuilding within him under the impetus of faith.³⁵ Cognizant of the "good news" of Christ's saving grace, the Christian will not let such a function of the law drive him, as it did before his reception of the gospel, into despair. It will, however, goad him into renewing ever again his original act of trust in God, and into carrying on the daily struggle against the "flesh."³⁶

But there is, according to Luther and Melanchthon, still a further function of the law in the Christian's life.³⁷ To the extent that he remains "partially holy" and "partially sinful," his discernment of God's will is clouded.³⁸ In his efforts to live a life of love such as will not jeopardize the unity of Christian ethical judgment, it will be necessary, therefore, that he take into serious account the moral "norms" or directives to be found in divine law.³⁹ Among the latter are to be counted the Ten Commandments,⁴⁰ and even more so the "new decalogues" by which Christ and his apostles brought into sharper focus the original intention of the Decalogue⁴¹ and, among other things, delineated the various "stations" in the context of which Christians are to work out their love for one another.⁴² To avoid giving the impression that such directives are "legally" binding upon the Christian or necessary, in a moralistic sense, to salvation, Luther chose to refer to them not as laws but as

³² See Althaus, *Ethics of Luther*, pp. 112-54.

³³ Joest, *op. cit.*, pp. 58-59, 62-64.

³⁴ Althaus, *Theology of Luther*, pp. 242-44, 268.

³⁵ Joest, *op. cit.*, pp. 65-77; Althaus, *Theology of Luther*, pp. 268-69.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ See, in general, Joest, *op. cit.*, pp. 71-77; Althaus, *Theology of Luther*, pp. 270-73; F. Böckle, *Law and Conscience*, tr. M. J. Donnelly (New York, 1966) pp. 32-35; H. Fagerberg, *A New Look at the Lutheran Confessions*, tr. G. J. Lund (St. Louis, 1972) pp. 79-87; E. Schlink, *Theology of the Lutheran Confessions*, tr. P. Koehnke and H. Bouman (Philadelphia, 1961) pp. 105-22.

³⁸ Althaus, *Theology of Luther*, p. 270.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 271-72; Joest, *op. cit.*, pp. 72-77.

⁴⁰ Luther wrote that apart from the Ten Commandments no work can be pleasing to God, no matter how worthy it may seem to men (*Grosser Katechismus* 311, *Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche* [Göttingen, 1967] p. 639). According to Melanchthon, it was simply inconceivable that the Spirit of God "can be in the human heart without fulfilling the Decalogue" (*Loci* [MW 2/1, 133]).

⁴¹ Althaus, *Ethics of Luther*, pp. 30-32.

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 36-42, 83-160.

“commands,” “precepts,” “exhortations,” “remedies,” and so forth.⁴³ Furthermore, and probably for the same reason, he seems never to have used the expression “the third function of the law.”⁴⁴ Still, like Melancthon and other of the Reformers whose emphasis upon the law’s “third function” was more explicit, Luther clearly deemed it necessary for Christians to look to the biblical commands and prohibitions as to a criterion by which to know what sort of “good works” God requires.⁴⁵ “In the New Testament,” Luther wrote, “all those things are shown which ought to be done and ought not to be done.”⁴⁶ What, therefore, the Scripture commands, the Christian “must” do; what is therein forbidden, he “must” omit.⁴⁷

As will be seen shortly, however, Luther and Melancthon were also very much aware that the commands and prohibitions of Scripture do not cover the whole of Christian life and worship. And it was precisely this realm left uncovered by Scripture, and only this realm, which they identified as being adiaphoristic. That those things and actions belonging to such a realm were not to be considered “sources of justification” was presupposed. But this had nothing immediately to do with their definition as adiaphora. Their adiaphoristic character was derived rather by Luther and Melancthon from the fact that such matters had been “neither commanded nor forbidden” by the divine law revealed in Scripture.⁴⁸

By thus identifying the outer limits of adiaphoristic liberty with the biblical commands and prohibitions, Luther and Melancthon were left with the problem of having to specify exactly what Scripture had “neither commanded nor forbidden.” In that regard, it was recognized, first of all, that there exists a whole realm of things and actions over which the Christian has been explicitly “permitted” by Scripture to exercise freedom of choice. As Melancthon put it, the Spirit cannot be

⁴³ Fagerberg, *op. cit.*, pp. 80, 86; Joest, *op. cit.*, p. 74; Althaus, *Theology of Luther*, p. 271 n.

⁴⁴ W. Elert, *Law and Gospel*, tr. E. H. Schroeder (Philadelphia, 1967) pp. 38 ff.; Joest, *op. cit.*, p. 72. Althaus notes that although Luther, unlike Melancthon, did not use the expression *tertius usus legis*, “in substance it also occurs” in his thought (*Theology of Luther*, p. 273).

⁴⁵ Fagerberg, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

⁴⁶ WA 7, 760, as cited in Althaus, *Theology of Luther*, p. 271 n.

⁴⁷ It may be noted that according to the *Formula of Concord* (1580) it is permissible for Lutherans to use the term “necessary” in reference to the new obedience of the just man, so long as one understands thereby not the constraint of the law but the impulse of a free and spontaneous spirit (Article 4, in P. Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom* [Grand Rapids, 1966] p. 123).

⁴⁸ For several examples of an explicit use of the formula “neither commanded nor forbidden,” see Luther, *Wider die himml. Proph.* (WA 18, 111 f.).

tied down by the sort of distinctions of places and times, persons and things, which characterized the old Judaic ceremonial and judicial codes.⁴⁹ Hence the Christian finds that under the New Law he is allowed to decide for himself whether to marry or not to marry, when or when not to partake of this or that food or drink and so forth.⁵⁰ In contrast to the dictates of the Decalogue and the New Testament "commandments," all such matters are in themselves adiaphora,⁵¹ and concrete determinations in their regard need not be observed "by necessity."⁵²

In addition to those matters explicitly permitted by Scripture, however, were many others concerning which the Scriptures have left no explicit direction at all. Were such matters also to be considered adiaphora? Already in the third century a controversy had arisen in the Church over how this "silence" of Scripture was to be interpreted. Some Christians had argued then that attendance at the pagan "spectacles," or the wearing of the laurel wreath, were permitted because they had been neither commanded nor prohibited in Scripture.⁵³ It was their

⁴⁹ *Loci* [MW 2/1, 133].

⁵⁰ See especially in this regard the short treatise *Von Menschenlehre zu meiden* (WA 10², 72-92), which Luther issued in 1522 so that all who wished to escape from their "bondage" might learn how to do so with God's approval (*ibid.*, p. 72). He cites ten different scriptural passages to prove that no one may add to what Scripture teaches and that Scripture itself makes no distinction of food, dress, and the like. See also Luther's commentary on Romans 14, wherein he argues that it does not belong to the new law to designate some days and not others for fasting, to select certain kinds of food and distinguish them from others, to say some days are holy and others are not, to require organs, altar decorations, chalices, and pictures, or to make priests and monks wear tonsures and special garb (WA 56, 493-94). Also *Vom Missbrauch der Messe* (WA 8, 484); *Vorlesung über die Briefe an Titus und Philemon* (WA 25, 9); *Vorlesung über I Mose* (WA 42, 510-12). In championing the right of priests to marry, Luther concluded that evangelical liberty also involves "that freedom under which all the commandments of men are summed up, as well as what may be regarded as external ceremonies, which include such matters as food, clothing, persons, gestures, places, vessels, and days, things a man may observe or not observe, for as long as, where, how, when, and as often as he likes or the occasion demands" (*On Monastic Vows* [LW 44, 310]). For Melancthon's views in this regard, see *Comm. ad Rom.* (MW 5, 331); *Loci* (MW 2/1, 162).

⁵¹ *Comm. ad Rom.* (MW 5, 331).

⁵² *Loci* (MW 2/1, 133). A further implication here is that while God has ordained the various "stations" of life (e.g., labor, government, etc.), He has left the determination of their concrete historical form up to man himself. In his *Commentary on Romans* Melancthon expanded on the same point: "Et cum evangelium doceat de justitia quadam aeterna spiritus, non requirit politiam et leges forenses Mosis, sed concedit in hac vita corporali legibus uti omnium politiarum, in quibus vivimus, sicut concedit omnium architectonia aut medicina uti" (MW 5, 335); "... etsi evangelium subicit nos politicis legibus, tamen non requirit unam aliquam certam formam" (*ibid.*, p. 337). See also Althaus, *Ethics of Luther*, p. 118; H. R. Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York, 1956) pp. 173-77.

⁵³ See Tertullian, *De spectaculis* 3 (PL 1, 634); *De corona* 1 (PL 2, 77).

position, in other words, that "whatever is not forbidden is certainly permitted."⁵⁴ Tertullian argued otherwise. It is easy, he said, for someone to ask "Where in Scripture are we forbidden to wear a crown?"⁵⁵ But those who thus demand the support of a scriptural text for a view they do not hold ought to be willing to submit their own position to the same scriptural text. Can they show a text, he asked, which says we should be crowned?⁵⁶ But if they cannot, what is the rule to be? For his own part, Tertullian said, he rejects the position that "whatever is not forbidden is certainly permitted" and holds rather that "whatever is not clearly permitted is forbidden."⁵⁷ Both positions found adherents among the sixteenth-century Reformers.

Among the latter, some, like the Anabaptists, were inclined to think that in the New Testament the Church could find a paradigmatic formula for the whole of its life and worship. Thus, to their way of thinking, for one thing or another to be permitted in the Church it had necessarily to enjoy the express sanction of Scripture. Whatever lacked such explicit sanction had to be considered forbidden.⁵⁸

To others of the Reformers, including Luther and Melancthon, however, such a conclusion seemed absurd. On occasion, as for example when Luther wrote in his 1520 treatise on the Mass that the closer our Masses are to the first Mass of Christ, the better they are,⁵⁹ the two Wittenberg Reformers could also give expression to a conviction that the Church and its structures ought to be brought into a condition of positive accord with the New Testament. But such a conviction never led them to a position of biblical reductionism. Were one to contend that all is forbidden which is not explicitly permitted by Scripture, it would be necessary, Luther said, to observe the Eucharistic service nowhere but in Jerusalem, or even to refrain from it altogether, since the Scripture does not state whether red or white wine, wheat rolls or barley bread, had been used by Christ and the apostles at the Last Supper.⁶⁰ That being absurd,

⁵⁴ *De corona 2 (PL 2, 78).*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Thus, Conrad Grebel and others wrote to Thomas Müntzer in 1524, objecting to the latter's use of singing during the Eucharistic service on the grounds that they could "find nothing taught in the New Testament about singing, nor any example of it" ("Konrad Grebel und Genossen an Müntzer, September 5, 1524," T. Müntzer, *Schriften und Briefe*, ed. G. Frantz [Gütersloh, 1968] p. 439). "What we have not been taught by clear words and examples," the Anabaptists concluded, "should be thought of as forbidden" (*ibid.*). On Zwingli's position over against this biblical reductionism of the Anabaptists, see B. Verkamp, "The Zwinglians and Adiaphorism," *Church History* 42 (1973) 486-504.

⁵⁹ *Ein Sermon von dem neuen Testament (WA 6, 354-55).*

⁶⁰ *Wider die himml. Proph. (WA 18, 115).*

one is forced to conclude, Luther said, that there is no need for servile imitation of Christ's every action,⁶¹ and further, that what God has left unsaid, i.e., neither commanded nor prohibited, should remain "free," as God Himself has left it.⁶²

Such a conclusion struck not only at the position of the biblical reductionists but also against those papalists who were inclined to compensate for the "silence" of Scripture on one or another matter by appealing to the so-called "unwritten apostolic traditions"⁶³ or to the supposed prerogative of Church authorities to bind subjects under pain of mortal sin in matters not laid down in Scripture.⁶⁴ To this papalist way of thinking—as evidenced, for example, by the English trio of More, Fisher, and Henry VIII—the Spirit was at work no less in tradition than in the written word of Scripture.⁶⁵ Far from being mere "optional human inventions," therefore, the "unwritten traditions" and other laws and ceremonies sanctioned by Church authorities down through the centuries are "the inventions of the holy spirit,"⁶⁶ and as such may very well bind

⁶¹ *Ibid*, p 114

⁶² *Ibid*, p 112

⁶³ See, e.g., B Latomus, *Zwei Streitschriften gegen M Bucer*, ed L Keil (Munster, 1924), *Corpus catholicorum* 8, 106–7, J Eck, *Enchiridion locorum communium adversus Lutherum et alios hostes ecclesiae* (Paris, 1559) pp 66–69, J Cochlaeus, *De autoritate ecclesiae et scripturae* 1 (n p, 1524) iv, sig B, fol 4, viii, sig E, fol 2

⁶⁴ See, e.g., J Eck, *Defensio contra amarulentas d Andreae Bodenstein Carolstatum invectiones*, ed J Greving (Munster, 1919), *Corpus catholicorum* 1, 80, Eck, *Enchiridion*, pp 122–32, J Clichtove, *Compendium veritatum* (Paris, 1529) chaps 5–7 It should be noted that not all Roman theologians during this period considered all Church laws binding in conscience Kaspar Schatzgeyer, e.g., was inclined to agree with the opinion of Jean Gerson (see J Schneider, "Die Verpflichtung des menschlichen Gesetzes nach J Gerson," *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 75 [1953] 1–54) that purely human laws cannot oblige man *sub gravi* Not on their own, therefore, but only to the extent that they respect divine law can they bind in conscience (K Schatzgeyer, *Scrutinium divinae scripturae* [1522], c 9 1, 18 [Munster, 1922], *Corpus catholicorum* 5, 126 ff, see also H Klomps, *Kirche, Freiheit und Gesetz bei dem Franziskanertheologen Kaspar Schatzgeyer* [Munster, 1959] pp 131–68) Cardinal Cajetan in 1530 recommended that a general decree be issued by the pope "to the effect that the commandments of the Church regarding the reception of the sacraments and the feast and fast days were not binding under grave sin" (J Jedin, *A History of the Council of Trent*, tr E Graf, 1 [Edinburgh, 1957] p 274) Cajetan's canonist colleague Accolti, however, thought it necessary to warn the pope against granting such a concession to the Protestants (*ibid*)

⁶⁵ See T More, *Responsio ad Lutherum*, *The Complete Works of St Thomas More*, ed J M Headley, tr S Mandeville, 5/1 (New Haven, 1969) 90, 102, 152, 232, 242, 280, 372, 404, 410, 430, Henry VIII, *Assertio septem sacramentorum*, ed L O'Donovan (New York, 1908) p 439, J Fisher, *Assertio Lutheranae confutatio, Opera omnia* (Wurzburg, 1597) pp 286, 293, 385, *The English Works of John Fisher*, ed J E B Mayor, Early English Text Society, extra series 27 (London, 1876) pp 333–38 E Surtz, it may be noted, has attempted to exonerate Fisher of the *partim partim* theory of the relation of Scripture and tradition (*The Works and Days of John Fisher* [Cambridge, Mass, 1967] p 112)

⁶⁶ More, *Responsio*, p 372

Christian consciences under pain of sin⁶⁷ or be considered "necessary to salvation."⁶⁸

As will be seen at a later point in this study, Luther and Melanchthon did not deny as such the right of Church (and civil) authorities to legislate in the realm of adiaphora. They did, however, emphatically reject as preposterous and blasphemous any claim that such laws could bind the Christian in conscience, as if obedience to them were necessary to salvation.⁶⁹

It is clear from the above, therefore, that Christian liberty, as it was conceived by Luther and Melanchthon, enjoys a variety of dimensions which, while closely interrelated, are not to be confused. There is, in the first place, that radical emancipation of the Christian from the constraint of the law, on the basis of which he can claim a lordship over all things. This lordship, however, will express itself paradoxically in a life of obedient service which, while motivated and directed from within, must nonetheless follow the external operations of divine law as revealed in the New Testament. Such is the second dimension of his liberty. The third dimension arises out of the fact that the commands and prohibitions of Scripture do not cover the whole of Christian life and worship. There is a realm of things and actions concerning which Scripture either gives no direction at all or explicitly permits the Christian to decide for himself which direction to take in order to best serve his God and neighbor. The adiaphoristic liberty that obtains for the Christian therein clearly presupposes but is by no means simply coterminous with (as Eck, the

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 416, 424, 414.

⁶⁸ Somewhat confusedly, Josse Clichtove wrote that "the gospel of Christ is indeed sufficient to lead a good life and it contains precepts that suffice to salvation; yet not all things that we have to do to reach salvation are explained in it in all particulars and details" (*Antilutherus*, fol. 29[v], as cited in G. Tavard, *Holy Writ or Holy Church* [London, 1959] p. 160). Other sixteenth-century Roman theologians were inclined to state outright that Scripture contains all that is "necessary to salvation," but according to Congar, their point of view "was not shared by the majority of the [Tridentine] Fathers" (*Tradition and Traditions*, p. 513).

⁶⁹ "Si quid praeter scripturam statuerint in hoc, ut conscientias obstringant, non sunt audiendi. Nihil enim conscientiam obligat nisi jus divinum. . . Quidquid enim episcopi praeter scripturam imperant, tyrannis est. Nam imperandi jus non habent" (Melanchthon, *Loci* [MW 2/1, 160]). See also the *Augsburg Confession*, Part 2, art. 7 (Schaff, *op. cit.*, p. 65). Luther made this point in many of his writings: see *Ep. ad Rom.* (WA 56, 494); *Von Menschenlehre zu meiden* (WA 10^a, 76, 87-92); *De capt. Babylonica* (WA 6, 535-36); *Vermahnung an die Geistlichen* (WA 30^a, 347 ff.). But one of his most thorough and incisive discussions of the question was the 1539 tract *Von den Konziliis und Kirchen* (WA 50, 488-653). After a lengthy discussion of the apostolic council at Jerusalem and the first four ecumenical councils, Luther concluded that "hat ein Concilium nicht macht, neue Ceremonien den Christen auffzulegen, bei einer todsunde oder bei fahr des gewillens zu halten, als fastage, feiertage, speise, tranck, kleider" (*ibid.*, p. 613).

Tridentine Fathers, and others seemed to think) the first dimension of his freedom.⁷⁰

That Luther and Melanchthon would conceive of adiaphora as taking their definition from the fact of their not being covered by the external operations of divine law implied that all such things and actions were by definition nonessential to the Spirit's work of love in the new man. It did not mean, however, that adiaphora were for that reason altogether exempt from the inner law of love. Quite the contrary. One might marry or not marry, eat or not eat meat, sing or not sing in church, and so forth; but whatever one does in the realm of adiaphora must always be done within the bounds of charity. In other words, there are also, according to Luther and Melanchthon, limits upon adiaphoristic freedom which arise, as it were, from within.

In the first place, the law of charity will require that in his exercise of adiaphoristic freedom the Christian evidence a concern for those sheep of Christ's flock who stand in danger of falling prey to the "Romish wolves."⁷¹ Down through the centuries, the *Augsburg Confession* claimed,⁷² all Christianity had come to be thought of as an observance of certain holy days, rites, fasts, and attire,⁷³ with the result that the gospel was obscured, human traditions were preferred to God's commandments, and great damage was done to men's consciences, terrified as they had become at the thought of omitting one or another tradition that was said to be necessary to salvation or the perfection of the spiritual life.⁷⁴ Those who would seek to perpetuate such a state of affairs must be confronted boldly, "lest many others be snared by their impious views," Luther said.⁷⁵ In their presence, one should follow Paul's example of refusing to circumcise Titus⁷⁶ and do the very opposite of what they demand,⁷⁷ however much scandal they might take at the same.⁷⁸ Furthermore, the

⁷⁰ It should be noted that the last of these three dimensions outlined by Melanchthon in the 1521 *Loci* (*MW* 2/1, 129) was subdivided in the 1559 edition, with the exemption of political life from the Mosaic judicial code being considered separately from the discussion of things indifferent (*MW* 2/2, 764-72).

⁷¹ Luther, *De lib. christ.* (*WA* 7, 71).

⁷² Although Luther remained at Coburg while the *Augsburg Confession* was being written by Melanchthon, and was somewhat chagrined at not being kept informed of its progress, he wholeheartedly approved its final version (see C. L. Manschreck, *Melanchthon: The Quiet Reformer* [New York, 1958] pp. 176-77, 180-84, 195).

⁷³ Part 2, art. 5, (Schaff, *op. cit.*, p. 43).

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 42-45.

⁷⁵ *De lib. christ.* (*WA* 7, 70).

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 70-71.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 70. Luther claimed that this was one of the reasons, namely, to spite the pope, for his eventual marriage (R. Bainton, *Here I Stand* [New York, 1950] p. 225).

⁷⁸ *Loci* (*MW* 2/1, 162).

inexperienced should be instructed that they commit no sin in violating human traditions.⁷⁹ If the chance to escape the "popish tyranny" is afforded them, they should be told to take it.⁸⁰

In fighting against the wolves, however, one should take care, Luther warned, that one is actually fighting "for the sheep and not against them."⁸¹ There are many, he observed, who, on hearing of Christian liberty, promptly set out to prove that they are free men and Christians only by despising and criticizing the existing traditions and human laws, as if they were Christians because they do not fast when others do, omit the customary prayers, and ridicule the precepts of men, while paying little heed to all else that pertains to Christianity.⁸² By insisting upon making an uninhibited, public display of their freedom, such individuals err in the same way as those who cling to the ceremonies; they attach too much importance to matters which in themselves are of little account.⁸³ It is right, Luther said, to boldly confront the obstinate papists with the fact of Christian liberty, but care must also be taken lest in the process the "weak" who lack a mature understanding of the faith be scandalized.⁸⁴ Thus the law of charity may occasionally require that in the presence of "weaker" brethren the Christian, following the example of the Apostle Paul, bear with tyranny and exercise his adiaphoristic liberty only in secret, keeping it between himself and God.⁸⁵

Similarly, it may sometimes be necessary, Luther and Melancthon said, to limit the exercise of one's freedom and bear with tyranny so as to avoid disturbing the peace⁸⁶ or jeopardizing the essentials of the Christian faith.⁸⁷ It was especially with this latter principle in mind that

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

⁸¹ *De lib. christ.* (WA 7, 71).

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 69.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 70-71.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 71. For an expression of similar views by Melancthon, see *Loci* (MW 2/1, 159-62). On the Reformers' concrete application of this point to clerical marriage, see my "Clerical Marriages—Reformation Style," *America*, March 3, 1973, pp. 185-88.

⁸⁶ *Loci* (MW 2/1, 159).

⁸⁷ "If your lord, the Margrave and Elector, allows you to preach the gospel of Christ purely, without man's additions, and permits the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper according to Christ's appointment, and does not insist upon the worshipping of the saints as mediators and intercessors, and the carrying of the host in the procession, nor upon daily masses for the dead. . . then in God's name go round with them, carrying a silver or gold cross, and cowl or surplice of velvet, silk or linen. And if one of these be not enough, then put on three. . . . And if your lord the Elector be not satisfied with one procession, then go round seven times. . . . I have no objections to that. For such things, if not abused, neither add to nor take from the gospel, but they must never be regarded as necessary nor made a matter of conscience" (Luther to George Bucholzer, 1539, in *Letters of Martin Luther*, sel. and tr. M. A. Currie [London, 1908] pp. 378-79).

Melanchthon chose to suffer the imposition of the Leipzig Interim by Charles V in 1549.⁸⁸ Because, to his view, the latter did not compromise the essential Protestant doctrine of solafideism, and because the ceremonies it sanctioned were supposedly of an indifferent nature, Melanchthon thought that the Interim could be tolerated. "In order to retain the essentials," he wrote, "we are less strict about the nonessentials."⁸⁹ Melanchthon's conclusion in this regard was promptly challenged, however, from many other quarters of the Lutheran Church. Hence the so-called Adiaphoristic Controversy which was to rage on for years among Lutheran theologians.⁹⁰

The most outspoken of Melanchthon's critics was Mathias Flacius Illyricus.⁹¹ Flacius did not deny the existence as such of adiaphora⁹² but only insisted that "true" and "false" adiaphora be clearly distinguished. True adiaphora, he said, take their origin ultimately from God Himself,

⁸⁸ In 1530 Charles V had decreed that all "protestants" were to abide by the *Confutatio Pontificia*, the papalist reply to the *Augsburg Confession* prepared by John Eck and others. Due to a variety of reasons, mostly of a political sort, it was a long time, however, before the emperor could actually impose the sort of religious unity he wanted. Finally, with the defeat of the Protestant forces at Mühlberg in 1547, his chance came. On May 15, 1548, he issued the Augsburg Interim. While attempting to meet the Protestant point of view on such questions as clerical marriage and the granting of the Eucharistic cup to the laity, it also undermined the doctrine of solafideism, and was rejected by Melanchthon and other Wittenberg theologians. But because Charles V immediately proceeded to force the implementation of the Interim by banishing rebellious ministers and devastating uncooperative cities, Melanchthon and the German Protestants were faced with a serious dilemma. Finally, after extended and desperate negotiations, Melanchthon and others put together what has come to be known as the Leipzig Interim, which while retaining or reinstating most of the traditional ceremonies, nonetheless respected basic Protestant doctrine. This Leipzig Interim remained in effect from December 1548 until Duke Maurice, whose earlier betrayal of his father-in-law, Philip of Hesse, had made Charles V's victory at Mühlberg possible, turned coat once again and forced the emperor to negotiate the Peace of Passau (1552). On these and other basic facts pertaining to the Interim, see Manschreck, *Controversy*, pp. 165-81; Manschreck, *Melanchthon*, pp. 277-92; Manschreck, "A Critical Examination and Appraisal of the Adiaphoristic Controversy in the Life of Philip Melanchthon," unpub. Ph.D. Dissertation (Yale University, 1948).

⁸⁹ *Corpus reformatorum* 7, 252.

⁹⁰ For a listing and a rather jaded discussion of much of the polemical literature exchanged by the disputing parties, see F. Bente, *Historical Introductions to the Book of Concord* (St. Louis, 1965) pp. 107-12. See also the references cited above in n. 88, and R. A. Kolb, "Nicholas von Amsdorf, Knight of God and Exile of Christ: Piety and Polemic in the Wake of Luther," unpub. Ph.D. Dissertation (University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1973) chap. 3.

⁹¹ On Flacius' life and thought in general, see W. Preger, *Mathias Flacius Illyricus und seine Zeit*, 2 vols. (Munich, 1861).

⁹² He cites 1 Cor 7, 8, 10, 14 and Rom 14 as ample proof that there are adiaphora in the Church (*Liber de veris et falsis adiaphoris* [Magdeburg, 1549], *Omnia Latina scripta Matthiae Flacii Illyrici* [n.d., n.p.] sig. X, fol. 2).

who directs them *in genere* toward the glorification of His own name and the edification of His people.⁹³ The authority to specify further the ordering of adiaphora belongs to the whole Church.⁹⁴ But adiaphora will remain genuine under the Church's jurisdiction only so long as the exercise of the Church's prerogative in their regard remains free from coercion and consistent with God's will.⁹⁵ Finally, the Church may delegate her authority to individuals, but to avoid the corruption of adiaphora such individuals must be men of "pious and enlightened" character.⁹⁶

According to Flacius, the imposition of the Interim ceremonies failed to meet any of these criteria. In the first place, he said, they have been thrust upon the Church entirely against her will and thereby constitute a serious violation of her freedom.⁹⁷ Secondly, they contradict the will of God, who does not desire the re-establishment of ceremonies which have long served idolatry and which on that account had already been abolished previously.⁹⁸ Thirdly, they have not been ordered by "pious and enlightened" men but by the "worst and most blatant enemies of Christ."⁹⁹ Thus, whatever they may once have been, "they are no longer [true] adiaphora, but are rather the impious commands of the Anti-christ,"¹⁰⁰ and as such "may in no way find a place in the Church."¹⁰¹

A further condemnation of the Interim ceremonies was made by Flacius in terms of their "goal." To be genuine, he said, adiaphora must, as the Apostle Paul has prescribed, be oriented toward edification of the Christian community.¹⁰² All of the mainline Reformers had also insisted that adiaphoristic liberty be exercised with an eye toward building up the Church. But Flacius is saying something more here. It is not simply a matter of adiaphora being used in an edifying manner. Rather, like so many of the English Puritans, Flacius conceives of edification as a necessary, constitutive element in the very definition of adiaphora. "All things which are indifferent," he said, "are indifferent only to the extent that they serve to glorify God's name and edify the Church."¹⁰³ Ceremonies that "transgress these latter ends are no longer adiaphora

⁹³ *Ibid.*, sig. X, fol. 3[v], fol. 4[v].

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, sig. X, fol. 3[v].

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, sig. X, fol. 4[v].

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, sig. Y, fol. 6[v], fol. 8.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, sig. Z, fol. 1.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, sig. Y, fol. 8.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, sig. X, fol. 5.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, sig. Y, fol. 5[v].

but impious abominations that must be avoided by every means."¹⁰⁴

Chief among the many arguments introduced by Flacius to prove that the Interim ceremonies were not edifying but "pseudadiaphora," was his contention that "ceremonies are the principal sinews of popery, and that in them is to be found the very sum of the Roman religion."¹⁰⁵ Charles V's attempt to impose the ceremonies must, therefore, be viewed, Flacius said, as being in reality an endeavor to re-establish the papacy and all its "superstitious beliefs."¹⁰⁶ To submit to the ceremonies under such conditions would, according to Flacius, inevitably imply a loss of faith.¹⁰⁷ Hence, far from edifying, the ceremonies would, in the situation at hand, greatly scandalize the Christian community and on those grounds must be rejected as "pseudadiaphora."¹⁰⁸ "In a time of confession and scandal," Flacius concluded, "there are no adiaphora."¹⁰⁹

Against these and other arguments with which Flacius hounded him until his death in 1560, Melanchthon insisted that by having secured the doctrine of solafideism he had in fact not compromised but saved Christian liberty; for without freedom in essentials, external freedom in adiaphora, he said, is nothing.¹¹⁰ But eventually, with the Formula of Concord of 1580, the position of Flacius came to prevail in the Lutheran Church.¹¹¹

What might have been Luther's own position had he still been alive during the Interim controversy is hard to say. Perhaps he might have concluded that the period of the Interim was one of those times when the "Romish wolves" must be boldly confronted with the fact of Christian liberty in adiaphora, "lest others be snared by their impious views." Or, perhaps, like Melanchthon, he might have chosen to emphasize the interior character of adiaphoristic liberty and, satisfied with the removal of the "poison" from the ceremonies by way of securing the doctrine of solafideism, have withstood all demands to "prove" his adiaphoristic liberty in the external forum. But to posit either of these two alternatives is to assume that Luther would have appraised the Interim ceremonies in adiaphoristic terms. Melanchthon obviously made that assumption, apparently resting it upon the further assumption that Luther would not have found the "persecution" introduced by Charles V radically different from the "tyranny" in the face of which the two of them had earlier

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, sig. Aa, fol. 8.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, sig. Bb, fol. 1; also sig. Aa, fol. 8.

¹⁰⁷ See *ibid.*, sig. Bb, fol. 5—sig. Cc, fol. 6[v].

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, sig. Bb, fol. 8.

¹⁰⁹ *Regula generalis de adiaphoris (OLS, sig. C, fol. 2).*

¹¹⁰ *Corpus reformatorum* 7, 325.

¹¹¹ See art. 10 of the Formula (*Bekennnis-Schriften*, pp. 1053-59).

worked out their principles for the exercise of adiaphoristic liberty. If, therefore, Melanchthon did go beyond Luther or, as Calvin charged, "overextended the category of adiaphora,"¹¹² it was only in the sense of having presumed to apply the theory of adiaphorism in a situation such as might conceivably have inclined Luther (and Calvin) to have declared the theory inoperative.

But if Melanchthon perhaps failed to take into adequate account the special conditions obtaining during the Interim, it is also true that Flacius' arguments were such as to leave little room for an adiaphoristic appraisal of the ceremonies even outside a period of persecution. Not surprisingly, much of Flacius' support during the Interim controversy came from the likes of John Epinus, who were either opposed to the theory of adiaphorism altogether or wanted to keep its application within the narrowest of limits at all times, not only during a "time of confession."¹¹³ In fact, many of Flacius' arguments, like his contention, for example, that ceremonies are the "main sinews of popery," or that ceremonies once abused by idolatry cannot be considered adiaphora, could have been lifted right off the pages of the antiadiaphorist literature which William Turner, John Bale, and others had promulgated during the course of their hot pursuit of the "Romish Foxe" in England not many years prior to the period of the Interim.¹¹⁴ Furthermore, the Flacian conclusion that adiaphora must be "edifying" by definition (a notion which seems to defy rational explanation¹¹⁵) would become a basic ingredient of the "puritan" attack against the "indifferent mean" of the Anglican Church.

Our concern here, however, is not to choose a winner out of the host of disputants involved in the Adiaphoristic Controversy, but simply to highlight the sort of maze into which the adiaphoristic approach, for all

¹¹² Calvin to Melanchthon, June 18, 1550, in J. Calvin, *Opera quae supersunt omnia*, ed. J. W. Baum *et al.*, 8 (Berlin, 1863-1900) 593.

¹¹³ See Epinus' letter to Flacius in *OLS*, sig. Q, fol. 3 ff. At one point Epinus summed up his displeasure with the theory of adiaphorism as follows: "Diabolus ad uerum Dei cultum abolendum, et ad euertendam ueram Christi Ecclesiam, nihil potuisset callidius excogitare Adiaphorica mitigatione ac mutatione: Hac enim longe plus effecit, quam saeuicia et tyrannide effecisset. Tanta enim uis inest huic adiaphorico toxico, ut alias loquacissimos reddat plane mutos, disertos balbutientes, recte institutos ambiguos et perplexos. Ex pastoribus quibusdam lupos, et ex Christianis Epicureos, tantum in huius uitae commoda intentos. Metamorphosis, olim attributa Circes carminibus et poculis, nihil est ad hanc immutationem, quae Adiaphoricis ueneficiis efficitur" (*ibid.*, sig. R, fol. 5[v]).

¹¹⁴ See W. Turner, *The Huntynge and Fyndynge out of the Romishe Fox* (Basle, 1543); J. Bale, *Yet a Course at the Romyshe Foxe* (Zurich, 1543); Turner, *The Seconde Course of the Hunter at the Romishe Fox and Hys Advocate* (Zurich[?], 1545).

¹¹⁵ Notwithstanding J. S. Coolidge's valiant efforts to prove the contrary (*The Pauline Renaissance in England* [Oxford, 1970] pp. 23-54).

its apparent simplicity, could lead the Reformers. Of course, the period of the Interim was exceptional, hardly the best of times, therefore, to test the worth of such an approach. But trying to keep the exercise of adiaphoristic liberty within the boundaries of love was no mean task for the Reformers at any time. Hence the need for the Reformers to spell out time and again the following limits or guidelines for the proper use of adiaphoristic liberty within the Christian community itself, and outside times of persecution.

Once again, the primary emphasis was upon a charitable consideration of the weaker brethren. The Christian must not look only upon his own strength but upon his brothers' also, and act accordingly.¹¹⁶ Keeping in mind the distinction between those things that are "free" and those that are "necessary,"¹¹⁷ and recognizing that not everyone matures in his faith at the same pace,¹¹⁸ the Christian will not try to force upon individuals changes for which they are not yet prepared.¹¹⁹ Those who, like Karlstadt,¹²⁰ would insist that certain human traditions must be abolished and rashly proceed to do so, err no less, Luther said, than the papists. Theirs is simply a new type of tyranny. The papists destroy freedom by commanding, constraining, and compelling Christians to do things which God has not commanded or required; Karlstadt and his kind do so by forbidding, preventing, and hindering the Christian from doing that which is neither prohibited nor forbidden by God.¹²¹ The Christian should avoid both errors and stay to the "middle path," along the lines of which one neither clings to the traditions as being in themselves necessary to salvation nor insists upon their abolition as necessary to salvation.¹²² The important thing is to remove the "poison" from the human traditions, i.e., the notion that they are binding upon

¹¹⁶ *Pred. des Jah. 1522* (WA 10³, 8); *Unterricht der Visitatoren* (WA 26, 214-15); *Eyne christliche Vormanung* (WA 18, 417-21).

¹¹⁷ *Pred. des Jah. 1522* (WA 10³, 11).

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹¹⁹ To force the weak to accept that for which they are not yet ready would only turn them into hypocrites, Luther said (*ibid.*, pp. 15-16).

¹²⁰ For the best English discussion of Karlstadt, see G. Rupp, *Patterns of the Reformation* (Philadelphia, 1969) pp. 47-153. According to Rupp, "the difference between reformation and Puritanism lies" in Luther's distinction between "the evangelical may" and the "legalistic must" (*ibid.*, p. 109), which is as much as to say that the Puritans and mainline Reformers are to be distinguished by the fact that while the latter subscribed to the theory of adiaphorism, the former did not, or, at most, only in a very limited way. Significantly, Rupp classifies Karlstadt as a Puritan (*ibid.*, pp. 47 ff.).

¹²¹ *Wider die himml. Proph.* (WA 18, 111). See also Luther to William Provest at Kiel [1528], in Enders, *Luthers Briefwechsel* 6 (Stuttgart, 1884 ff.) 226; Melanchthon, *Loci* (MW 2/1, 131).

¹²² *Wider die himml. Proph.* (WA 18, 111 f.).

consciences and necessary to salvation.¹²³ Once that is done, it matters little as such whether the traditions be removed or retained.¹²⁴ Adiaphoristic freedom is primarily a matter between God and the Christian, not between the Christian and his fellow man. In this same regard, however, one should be sure that the matter under discussion is actually indifferent; “for it is one thing to tolerate the weak in matters indifferent, and quite another in matters blatantly evil.”¹²⁵

Furthermore, it must be remembered, Luther said, that “it is unchristian to allow ceremonies priority over peace and unity.”¹²⁶ Love and peace are far more important than all ceremonies,¹²⁷ and therefore the Christian ought not allow his exercise of adiaphoristic freedom to become the source of disruptive contention in the Church.¹²⁸ Both Luther and Melancthon admitted that some of the human traditions had been established precisely for the sake of unity and order, and for that reason could still serve a very useful purpose.¹²⁹ Such ecclesiastical rites as offer no occasion to sin, therefore, the *Augsburg Confession* stated, need not be rejected.¹³⁰ On the contrary, should any tradition prove profitable for the peace and good order of the Church, it is to be observed, as, for example,

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ “Luther an den Propst, die Domherren und das Capitel in Wittenberg,” Enders, *op. cit.* 4, 4.

¹²⁶ *Der 82. Psalm ausgelegt* (WA 31, 210).

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ *Unterr. der Vis.* (WA 26, 222). Melancthon wrote similarly in his commentary on Romans: “In his [adiaphora] sunt considerandi fines. Si finis est politicus harum observationum, licitae sunt, ut cum feriae constituuntur aut servantur, non quod tale opus sit cultus ex opere operato, sed ordinis causa, ut populus sciat, quo tempore convenire debeat et evangelium discat et sacramentis uti; item cum certae lectiones aut cantilenae praescribuntur, ne quid tumultus oriatur, si in templo diversa carmina, ut fit inter ebrios, singuli canant eodem tempore . . .” (*MW* 5, 331). In 1539 Melancthon wrote to Henry VIII: “Retineatur ergo simplex et perspicua sententia de libertate in *adiaphoris*, et doceant concionatores quae scandala vitanda sint; retineantur ritus divinitus instituti, et aliquae humanae ordinationes utiles ad bonum ordinem; ut Paulus loquitur, et sit modus caeremoniarum quae habeant conjunctam gravitatem et elegantiam; decet autem abesse ab ecclesiis barbariem: caeteri inutiles et inepti ritus non duriter flagitentur” (G. Burnet, *The History of the Reformation of the Church of England* [Oxford, 1829] 1/2 [Documents] 490–91). It may be noted also that Melancthon was prepared to allow the papacy on a *jure humano* basis if the same would contribute to the peace and tranquility of the Church. In an addition to the 1537 Smalcald Articles he stated: “I, Philip Melancthon . . . hold that if he [the pope] will permit the gospel, the government of the bishops which he now has from others may be *jure humano* also conceded to him by us, for the sake of peace and the common tranquility of those Christians who are or may hereafter be under him” (cited in Manschreck, *Melancthon*, p. 251).

¹³⁰ Part 1, art. 15, p. 16.

the commemoration of holy days, feasts, and the like.¹²¹

From this last point it is clear also that Luther and Melanchthon did not conceive of adiaphoristic freedom as being entirely exempt from the control of ecclesiastical or civil authorities. During the course of his *Invocavit* sermons in 1522, Luther complained that although he was nearby and could easily have been reached by letter when things started getting out of hand at Wittenberg, not the slightest communication was sent to him about the changes that were being made at Karlstadt's instigation.¹²² This was not merely the cry of a hurt ego, but rather was indicative of Luther's conviction that even in matters indifferent one must proceed orderly, which in turn implied going through the proper channels of authority,¹²³ including the secular authorities, whose decrees regarding religious services should be obeyed to the extent that they make for orderly life and do not contradict the gospel.¹²⁴ Luther

¹²¹ *Ibid.* The *Confession* adds that it is actually a calumnious falsehood that all the ceremonies, all the things instituted of old, have been abolished in the Lutheran churches (see Part 1, art. 22, p. 27; Part 2, arts. 3, p. 34, 4, pp. 41-42, and 5, pp. 47-49). Only those traditions which by their abuse have endangered consciences have been removed (see Part 1, art. 22, p. 27; Part 2, arts. 3, p. 35, 5, p. 48, 7, p. 71).

¹²² *Pred. des Jah. 1522* (WA 10^o, 10). Luther was at the Wartburg when the controversies had arisen.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10. See also, in this regard, Luther's vigorous protest against the "sneaks" who go around "preaching privately" and practicing "secret ceremonies" (*Der 82. Ps.* [WA 31¹, 210]). He rejected the opinion that his earlier emphasis upon the priesthood of all the faithful warranted such action (*ibid.*).

¹²⁴ *Unterr. der Vis.* (WA 26, 223). Unlike Bucer, Zwingli, and Bullinger (the one-time instructor of Erastus), Luther and Melanchthon allowed civil authorities some control over ecclesiastical adiaphora only with considerable reluctance. Luther's distrust of the princes was visceral (G. Rupp, *The Righteousness of God* [London, 1963] p. 287) and what control he did allow them over ecclesiastical adiaphora resulted more from political expedience than from any conviction that they enjoyed some special right thereto. According to Manschreck, Melanchthon "might have accepted such control as a 'harsh servitude,' but not gladly and humbly as Starkey advocated" (*Controversy*, p. 181 n.). Like his suggestion that "Melanchthon would have been more apt to agree with Milton that requiring adiaphora is a denial of liberty" (*ibid.*), such an assertion by Manschreck is probably an exaggeration, being based too much on Melanchthon's attitude toward Charles V's imposition of the Interims. But Melanchthon's misgivings about the Protestant princes were real enough. His aforementioned willingness to accept the papacy on a *jure humano* basis, e.g., was probably prompted, as Manschreck has noted, by a desire to devise some means "for keeping Church polity independent of the state" (*Melanchthon*, p. 251).—Whether Luther and Melanchthon and other sixteenth-century Reformers considered civil legislation of adiaphora binding in conscience is a question very much complicated by the then prevalent mixture of secular and spiritual powers, and one which I have pursued in another monograph to be published in the near future. Suffice it here to say that the Reformers' appeal to Rom 13:5 need not have meant, as especially Calvin was quick to point out (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. J. T. McNeill, tr. F. L. Battles [Philadelphia, 1967] 4, 10, 3-5), that specific civil laws touching upon adiaphora carried

explicitly stated in this same regard that a council has the power to institute some ceremonies, provided that they do not enhance the bishops' tyranny, are useful and profitable to the people, and evidence fine, orderly discipline. Thus, the conciliar decrees concerning times and places of assembly, the hours for preaching, administration of the sacraments, praying, singing, praising and thanking God are indispensable to the survival of the Church.¹³⁶ In his diatribe against Karlstadt, Luther claimed that he himself had never forbidden the outward removal of images, so long as it had been done without rioting or uproar and had been authorized by the proper officials.¹³⁸ In exercising authority over the realm of adiaphora, the *Augsburg Confession* stated, the bishops or pastors are simply following the example of St. Paul when he ordained that women should cover their heads in the congregation.¹³⁷ Thus, when they do legislate on such matters as the observance of the Sabbath and so forth, they are generally to be obeyed for the sake of charity and peace.¹³⁸

In this regard, however, the *Augsburg Confession* also cautioned authorities to keep two things in mind. First, it must be remembered that what may have been instituted with good reason in an earlier age might not be suitable to later times.¹³⁹ Many human traditions have in fact been changed in time, and such a change did not destroy the unity of the Church.¹⁴⁰ In the second place, authorities must remember that it is not necessary that human traditions, rites or ceremonies, be everywhere alike.¹⁴¹ The true unity of the Church depends rather upon agreement concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the

anything more than a *sub poena* obligation, and that much of the actual civil legislation of adiaphora was not, as a matter of fact, considered binding in conscience by many Continental and English Reformers. To that extent, not only Calvin's but all the Reformers' adiaphoristic thought has an important bearing upon the tradition of a purely penal-law theory that had begun to evolve in the thirteenth century (see M. Herron, *The Binding Force of Civil Laws* [Paterson, 1958] pp. 34 ff.; D. C. Bayne, *Conscience, Obligation and the Law* [Chicago, 1966] pp. 71 ff.), and during the sixteenth century was being espoused in some Roman circles, at least so far as it concerned civil laws, especially by Alfonso de Castro (*ibid.*, p. 92).

¹³⁶ *Von den Konziliis und Kirchen* (WA 50, 614).

¹³⁷ *Wider die himml. Proph.* (WA 18, 68).

¹³⁸ Part 2, art. 7, p. 68.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 68, 69. This did not eliminate the possibility of disregarding such regulations when no disturbance or scandal was involved (*ibid.*) nor of exercising one's liberty in secret (*De lib. christ.* [WA 7, 71]).

¹⁴⁰ Part 2, art. 7, p. 71.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.* In connection with this point it may be noted, with V. Vatja, that Luther had no intention of fixing the shape of the liturgy once and for all time (*Luther on Worship*, tr. U. W. Leupold [Philadelphia, 1958] pp. 177 f.).

¹⁴¹ Part 1, art. 7, p. 12.

sacraments.¹⁴² In support of this position, the Reformers referred to the adiaphoristic settlement of the first Easter controversy, cited the incidence of diversity in the early Church as reported in the *Tripartite History*, and quoted dicta of Pope Gregory I and St. Augustine to the effect that diversity does not violate the unity of the Church and that the unity of the Church does not consist in external human ordinances.¹⁴³

In addition to serving the peace and unity of the Christian community, some human traditions, according to Luther and Melanchthon, might also be useful for pedagogical purposes.¹⁴⁴ As Luther repeatedly insisted against the spiritualists, the Christian remains a creature of this world, who as such needs a bridge to the Spirit. In the word and the sacraments, the Spirit has afforded man such a bridge. But the man weak in faith—the plight of every Christian to one extent or another—may need the help of further external aids if he is to take full advantage of the word and the sacraments.¹⁴⁵ Luther referred in this regard to the positive contribution which he said had been made by the pictures contained in his German Bible. These latter, he said, helped the reader better to understand the word he was reading and to recall vividly to his mind the events of Christ's life. He added that images do no more harm on walls than in books, and expressed the desire that the rich and mighty would permit the whole Bible to be painted on houses, inside and out.¹⁴⁶ Luther's reform of the liturgy proceeded, although not exclusively, with the same pedagogical purpose in mind.¹⁴⁷ Like most of the other mainline Continental Reformers, Luther was also of the conviction that "the need for ritual was in inverse ratio to the earnestness of Christian faith."¹⁴⁸ But he was far less optimistic about the general level of maturity among Christians than were the Zwinglians or, for that matter, even Bucer and Calvin.¹⁴⁹ Thus, while he considered some of the

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ Part 2, art. 5, pp. 48-49. The papalists, it may be noted, agreed that in "indifferent things" variety did not destroy the unity of faith (*Confutatio pontificia*, Reu, *op. cit.*, p. 376). And if, therefore, the Reformers have in mind "special" or "particular" rites, "they are to be praised" for not regarding a variety of rites as separating unity of faith (*ibid.*, p. 353). It was such "special" rites which Gregory and Augustine were speaking of when they upheld diversity (*ibid.*, pp. 376-77). "Universal" Church rites, however, are not indifferent matters, the papalists said, and the Reformers therefore are wrong in not observing them and are in diametrical opposition to Augustine's advice to Januarius that "what has been universally delivered by the Church must be universally observed" (*ibid.*, pp. 353-54, 357, 376-77).

¹⁴⁴ *Augsburg Confession*, Part 1, art. 3, p. 34; Melanchthon, *MW* 5, 331-32.

¹⁴⁵ *De lib. christ.* (WA 7, 71 f.).

¹⁴⁶ *Wider die himml. Proph.* (WA 18, 83).

¹⁴⁷ See Vatja, *op. cit.*, pp. 172 ff.

¹⁴⁸ J. Pelikan, *Obedient Rebels* (New York, 1964) p. 93.

¹⁴⁹ Without meaning to advocate thereby the sort of reduction in ceremonies that

traditional ceremonies too "childish"¹⁵⁰ or "nonsensical"¹⁵¹ to warrant retention, he was prepared to retain, for the sake of instructing the faithful, many ceremonies which in other Protestant circles had been, or would be, swept aside.¹⁵²

Finally, in the exercise of his adiaphoristic freedom the Christian must also, Luther and Melanchthon said, take into account how that freedom can best be put to the service of other members of the community. While, therefore, a matter like clerical celibacy, which Scripture neither commands nor prohibits, is in itself clearly adiaphoristic and not to be imposed as binding upon consciences,¹⁵³ the inner law of love may well excite one or another Christian to accept, so far as he is able,¹⁵⁴ a certain limitation upon his freedom to marry in order to serve better the needs of the community.¹⁵⁵

As noted earlier, the path toward adiaphoristic freedom plotted by Luther and Melanchthon within the limits outlined above was intended by them to be a *via media* that would skirt both the legalism of the right and the excessive antinomianism of the left. To some of their contempo-

occurred at Zurich, Calvin was nonetheless emphatic in contending that Christians no longer stand in need of the kind of ceremonial "tutelage" God had afforded ancient Israel (*Institutes* 4, 10, 14). In Zwingli's regard, it should be added that, instead of being interpreted as a sign of confidence in the maturity of Christians, his taste for liturgical simplicity could conceivably suggest the very opposite, in the sense that his "aggressive supernaturalism" (K. McDonnell, *John Calvin, The Church, and the Eucharist* [Princeton, 1967] pp. 89, 93) might have inclined him to doubt the ability of the average Christian to withstand the danger of superstition inherent in the ceremonies.

¹⁵⁰ *Vermahnung an die Geistlichen* (WA 30², 353).

¹⁵¹ *Von Menschenlehre zu meiden* (WA 10², 76).

¹⁵² *Ein Sermon von dem neuen Testament* (WA 6, 354-55). His aforementioned remark about bringing the Mass into accord with Christ's first Mass was meant, he explained, to emphasize the difference between the essentials and nonessentials of the Mass, and was not intended as an appeal for the total elimination of the latter (*ibid.*).

¹⁵³ For Luther's assertions on this point, see *The Estate of Marriage* (LW 44, 9); *Lectures on Titus, Philemon, and Hebrews* (LW 29, 18-21); *To the Christian Nobility* (LW 44, 175-79); *Exhortation to All Clergy* (LW 34, 48); *On Monastic Vows* (LW 44, 261-62, 310-14, 341, 395). For Melanchthon's position, see the 1521 *Apology*, which he wrote in defense of a certain German priest, Bartholomew Bernhard, who had married (*Corpus reformatorum* 1, 421-40), and the letter which Melanchthon wrote to Henry VIII protesting the prohibition of clerical marriage by the Six Articles Act of 1539 (*The Acts and Monuments of John Foxe* 5 [New York, 1965] 350-58).

¹⁵⁴ The argument of some Roman theologians like Latomus (*Corpus catholicorum* 8, 76-77) and of the Tridentine Fathers (Ehser, *op. cit.* 9, 968) to the effect that God's grace will amply compensate for any difficulty on man's part in keeping a vow of celibacy was rejected as presumptuous by Luther (see *On Monastic Vows* [LW 44, 339-40]).

¹⁵⁵ See esp. Luther's remarks *ibid.*, pp. 263-64, and *Lectures on Galatians* (LW 26, 458-59).

aries, however, it looked more like a labyrinth¹⁶⁶ or a dead-end road.¹⁶⁷ These latter negative impressions were hardly allayed by the fact that in practice the course laid out by the Reformers proved considerably more difficult to negotiate than Luther had predicted. But to say whose impression was the more accurate, the Reformers' own or their critics', must depend ultimately upon the relative merits of the various positions from which their judgments were passed.

¹⁶⁶This was one of the criticisms leveled against Luther by the aforementioned English trio of More, Fisher, and Henry VIII. In the first place, they accused Luther of contradicting himself. Henry wrote that at one time Luther holds that Christ commanded both the Eucharistic bread and cup to be given to the laity, then he turns around and argues that it is a thing left to every man's discretion (Henry VIII, *Assertio*, p. 219). "What need have we to contradict him who contradicts himself?" (*ibid.*). More chimed in with the same refrain. Luther whirls this way and that, he wrote: one time he says that it is lawful for men to decide that water be mixed with the wine at Mass because it is only a rite and a matter unessential to the sacrament, and very shortly thereafter that it is not lawful because it has an evil significance (More, *Responsio* 1, 432, 422-24). More frequently it is charged that the freedom in adiaphora offered by Luther is simply a devious way of doing away with all the sacraments, laws, customs, rites, and ceremonies of the Church. To Luther's suggestion that the times, hours, places, vestments, and rites pertaining to the Eucharistic celebration are "free," More replied: "All things are free for you; nor does it make any difference to you where, when, how you offer the sacrifice, whether by night or by day, whether in the light or in darkness, drunk or sober, clothed or naked, clean or filthy, on the altar or on the toilet, you hang-dog knave" (*Responsio*, p. 418). While less vitriolic than More, Fisher also warned that the sort of adiaphoristic liberty championed by Luther threatened to extinguish all worship of God (*Confutatio*, p. 587) and to bring about the complete breakdown of law and order (*ibid.*). Erasmus of Rotterdam, who himself propounded a version of adiaphorism along the lines of his Neoplatonic and humanist tendencies (see esp. *Enchiridion militis christiani*, *D. Erasmi opera omnia*, ed. J. Clericus, 5 [Leiden, 1703-6] 25-39), also accused Luther of turning a religion whose "sum" ought to be "peace and harmony" (*Opus epist. d. Erasmi*, ed. P. S. Allen, 5 [Oxford, 1926] 177) into a chaotic, labyrinthian maze (see his diatribe against the "pseudo evangelicals" in *Opera omnia* 10, 1577-87).

¹⁶⁷The reference here is to the opinion of Karlstadt and others on the left, who generally thought that Luther and Melancthon had failed to follow all the way through on their initial proposals for reform.