

A Man Named Martin

Part 1: The Man

Session Four

Johannes Tetzel: (Note: the German name for John is either Johannes or Johann—so some writers use Johannes, Johann, or simply John. We have retained the author’s choice in the articles below.)

[Johannes Tetzel](#): Here is a biography of the infamous indulgence salesman.

[Johann Tetzel's Rebuttal against Luther's Sermon on Indulgences and Grace](#): After posting his 95 Theses on October 31, 1517, Luther published a sermon against indulgences in 1518. Just a month later, Tetzel replied with his rebuttal. By the second paragraph, he is beginning to compare Luther to John Hus.

John Huss: (Note: you will notice different spellings for John Huss’ name. The original Bohemian spelling is Jan Hus. In English it is translated John Huss—sometimes with one ‘s’, sometimes with two. In the following articles we have retained the spelling used by the writer.)

[Jan Hus](#): This biography gives us information on the life, teachings and death of Jan Hus, who was influential in the life and thought of Martin Luther.

[Luther's Attitude toward John Huss](#): In this *Concordia Theological Monthly* article (October 1948), Jaroslav Pelikan explores how Luther’s thought toward John Hus developed.

Heidelberg Disputation, 1518

[The Heidelberg Disputation](#): In answer to Luther’s 95 Theses, Johannes Staupitz, Luther’s superior, called for a formal disputation on indulgences among the Augustinian Order. Here is Luther’s disputation.

[Luther's Theology of the Cross](#): In this *Concordia Theological Quarterly* article (July 1999), Heino O. Kadai explores what Luther meant by his “theology of the cross.”

Luther and Prierias: In the early controversy over Luther’s 95 Theses, Pope Leo X’s court theologian Sylvester Prierias jumped into the fray to oppose Luther. The Dominican scholar quickly found himself outmatched.

[Sylvester Prierias](#): This article provides background information on Prierias.

[Formal Legal Proceedings against Luther begin in Rome](#): This article describes the involvement of Prierias.

Cardinal Cajetan

[Tomasso de Vio \(Cardinal\) Cajetan](#): This biography gives the background of Cardinal Cajetan.

[Luther meets with Cajetan at Augsburg](#): This article describes Luther's meetings with Cardinal Cajetan.

Electoral Saxony

[Electoral Saxony \(The Once and Never Kings\)](#): This article gives a brief history of Electoral Saxony.

Leipzig Debate (1519)

[Leipzig Debate](#): This article describes the debate between Luther and John Eck.

[Johann Eck](#): This biographical sketch shows us Luther's former friend and Leipzig opponent.

Luther's 1520 Treatises:

[Treatise on Good Works](#)

[Treatise to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation](#)

[On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church](#)

[Concerning Christian Liberty](#)

Luther's Tower Experience

[Luther's Tower Experience](#): Luther describes the process by which he came to learn what Paul meant by the phrase, "righteousness of God."

Exsurge Domine

[Text of the Papal Bull Exsurge Domine](#)

[Bull Exsurge Domine proclaimed in Rome](#): This article describes the significance of Pope Leo X's papal bull.

Diet of Worms

[Charles V](#): This contains a brief biographical sketch of the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire.

[Luther Appears before the Emperor at Worms](#): This contains a brief sketch of the occasion.

Johannes Tetzel

<http://reformation500.csl.edu/bio/tetzel/>

Johannes Tetzel



A Dominican prior and inquisitor, Johannes Tetzel became notable at the outset of the Reformation as the preacher of indulgences who instigated Luther's *95 Theses*. Born 1465 in Pirna near Meissen, he would receive education in Leipzig from 1482 to 1487, earning the bachelor of arts, before joining the Dominican order in 1489. He ascended to the rank of prior in Poland in 1497. The superior general of the Dominicans, Cardinal (Tomasso de Vio Gaetani) Cajetan, eventually named him inquisitor in Poland, where he sought to enforce church doctrine in his order. He would later receive his licentiate in 1509 and his doctorate in 1518, both from the University of Frankfurt-on-Oder. Tetzel's role in the preaching of indulgences, however, brought him into conflict with Luther.

Indulgences had arisen in the Middle Ages as a means to earn remission for sins, first preached by Pope Urban II in 1095 to those who would participate in a crusade. Indulgences were subsequently granted for such acts as pilgrimages, could be conferred on the dead in purgatory, and eventually became sold from the so-called Treasury of Merits, a cache of remission accrued through the deaths of Christ and the martyrs. The theology supporting indulgences trailed behind their preaching and sale. Rome only authorized the sale of specific indulgences to purchase in 1476, while the doctrine of purgatory itself was not affirmed until 1439. Consequently, the practice was open to scholarly debate at the time of the Reformation.

Tetzel had a long history as an indulgence preacher prior to the controversy with Luther. Between 1503 and 1510, he would preach indulgences in ten different German cities. He was first commissioned to preach jubilee indulgences for three years under the auspices of the Teutonic Knights of Livonia, who had obtained the right to sell indulgences in Magdeburg, Bremen, and Riga from Pope Alexander VI. Alexander's successor, Julius II,

extended his commission another three years in 1506, this time to Cologne, Mainz, and Trier. In 1509, Tetzel would preach indulgences in Strasburg, and in 1510 he would do the same in Nuremberg, Würzburg, and Bamberg.

The occasion for his preaching of indulgences near Wittenberg was Pope Leo X's commissioning of their sale for Albrecht of Mainz. Albrecht was already bishop of the diocese of Magdeburg, but sought a second see in Mainz. In order to pay the fines levied for his pluralism (occupation of a second bishopric), Albrecht obtained a sizeable loan from the Fugger bankers in Augsburg. Leo X authorized the sale of indulgences to repay the loan to the Fuggers and help subsidize the rebuilding of St. Peter's basilica in Rome. The pope published a 1515 bull commissioning the sale and Tetzel—prior in Leipzig since 1509—was conscripted to preach it.

Appointed subcommissioner of indulgences at Meissen in 1516, Tetzel would proceed to Albrecht's territories of Magdeburg and Halberstadt that year. The commissioning prohibited him from preaching indulgences in Saxony, which belonged to Albrecht's rival and Luther's benefactor, Frederick the Wise. The closest Tetzel would come was St. Peter's in Jüterbog, where many traveled from Wittenberg to purchase them. They also brought back tales of Tetzel and his famous rhyme: "When the coin in the coffer rings/the soul from purgatory springs."

Luther wrote his October 1517 *95 Theses* in an attempt to debate the unclear theology behind indulgences, not necessarily to criticize Tetzel. Nonetheless, there were basic points in the theses directed at the Dominican preacher from Leipzig. Generally speaking, Luther took issue with Tetzel's opinion—drawn from a rather small minority of late medieval theologians—that contrition was not necessary to obtain remission of sins when purchasing of an indulgence. This position was condemned in 1519 by none other than Cajetan himself. Luther also targeted an alleged view of Tetzel that such onerous sins as violating the Virgin Mary could be absolved by an indulgence, though this was unsubstantiated.

Tetzel entered the fray repeatedly over the next year. First, he presented a series of 106 theses against Luther's views at a January 1518 disputation at Frankfurt. The theses were composed by Konrad Koch, a professor at Frankfurt better known as Wimpina. When the Frankfurt theses arrived at Wittenberg in March 1518 and were read eagerly by the laity, Luther wrote a German sermon (*A Sermon on Indulgence and Grace*)

intended to make the *95 Theses* more understandable to them. In April 1518, Tetzel penned a German treatise, *Vorlegung*, which attempted to refute Luther's sermon. By May 1518, Tetzel published his *Subscriptas positionas*, fifty theses originally used in defense of his doctorate at Leipzig. Each of these works focused chiefly upon the authority of the papacy to issue indulgences, not the theology behind the indulgences that concerned Luther at the outset of the controversy.

By the time Luther's focus had shifted to questions of church authority at the 1519 debate with Johann Eck in Leipzig, Tetzel had taken ill and was on his deathbed. Luther wrote a letter of consolation to his former adversary that the debate over indulgences was never directed at him personally. Tetzel died of the plague 11 August 1519 and was buried under the high altar at the Dominican church in Leipzig. His role in the controversy over indulgences would characterize him in the years after his death, leading the papal ambassador, Karl von Miltitz, to blame Tetzel for the entire dispute and to make allegations of Tetzel's personal immorality, again not entirely substantiated.

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Johann Tetzel's Rebuttal against Luther's Sermon on Indulgences and Grace

<http://www.pitts.emory.edu/DigiTexts/Documents/Tetzel.pdf>

JOHANN TETZEL'S

Rebuttal

AGAINST LUTHER'S

Sermon on Indulgences and Grace

Translation and Introduction by Dewey Weiss Kramer

An Occasional Publication of the Pitts Theology Library

EDITOR'S PREFACE

Since 1987 and the gift of forty-one early German Reformation imprints by Richard and Martha Kessler, the Pitts Theology Library has worked alongside the Kesslers and their friends and other supporters to build the current body of more than 3,500 books, pamphlets, and manuscripts that comprises the Richard C. Kessler Reformation Collection. While more than a thousand items in the collection were written by Martin Luther himself, hundreds of others were issued by his Catholic opponents. Such diversity in collecting was part of the plan from the beginning, carefully articulated by Pitts Librarian Channing R. Jeschke in collaboration with the Kesslers and the Standing Advisory Committee for the Kessler Collection. The aim was always to enable researchers to hear both sides of the sixteenth-century debates.

This acquisition of rare and important materials related to the German Reformation has been accompanied over the past quarter century by the lecture and musical programs of the annual Reformation Day at Emory University, the creation of the Digital Image Archive with its thousands of Reformation woodcuts and engravings, and by a series of print and electronic publications intended to make the riches of the Kessler Collection more widely known and accessible. The current publication of Prof. Kramer's translation is the latest of such efforts.

Johann Tetzel's *Vorlegung* or *Rebuttal* (Leipzig: Melchior Lotter, 1518) was purchased in 2001 at a German auction and was valued as a representative of the early Catholic opposition to Luther and his reforms. Printed only six months after the issue of Luther's *Ninety-Five Theses* and written by one of the reformer's most notable early opponents, it was indeed a signature piece. I am deeply grateful to Professor Dewey Weiss Kramer for her willingness to undertake the translation of this pamphlet, since it enables English readers for the first time to hear Tetzel for themselves, rather than relying on the reports of his critics. It has been a labor of love for her, extending over several years and involving considerable research and consultations with other scholars, and has now yielded an important contribution to the study of the German Reformation. Without the unselfish efforts of Professor Kramer and other such friends, the Kessler Collection could never achieve its aim of nourishing the efforts of all those engaged in Reformation studies.

In addition to the contributions of Professor Manfred Hoffmann and Professor Kurt Hendel, which Kramer notes in her introduction, I would express thanks to G. Gordon Boice and the staff of Emory Creative Group for taking the text provided and working their magic to transform it into a beautiful pamphlet, almost five hundred years after Melchior Lotter issued Tetzel's original.

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Vorlegung gemacht
von Bruder Johan Tetzel Prediger
Dides Ketzermeister: wyder eynen
vormessen Sermon von tzwentzig
irrigē Artickeln Hebstlichen ablas
vñ gnade belangēde allen cristglau-
bigē menschē tzuwissen von notten.

INTRODUCTION TO THE TRANSLATION

Early Spring 1518—Two Publications

The theological debates sparked by Martin Luther's posting of ninety-five theses on a church door in Wittenberg 1517 picked up new strength in 1518, as Luther published his *Sermon on Indulgence and Grace*,¹ which was enthusiastically received and went through twenty-two printings by 1520. Luther's opponent, Johann Tetzel, Order of Preachers, inquisitor of heretics, subcommissioner for the preaching of the St. Peter's indulgence in the Dioceses of Mainz and Magdeburg, responded just a month later with the publication of his *Rebuttal*.² This work was far less popular, and although it was reprinted in a few sixteenth-century editions of Luther's collected works, it has remained little noticed, not easily accessible, and never translated into either modern German or English. Only three extant copies are known today, two in German libraries (Staatsbibliothek, Munich and Universitätsbibliothek, Würzburg) and one in the Kessler Reformation Collection of Pitts Theology Library, Candler School of Theology, Emory University.

With the digitization of Tetzel's original German pamphlet (www.pitts.emory.edu/DigiTexts/SCScanDocuments/1518Tetzel.pdf) and its translation into English here, readers can for the first time read the actual words of this much excoriated Dominican. Appearing simple at first glance, the scrutiny demanded in working with the original source both reveals unexpected insights into factors that had a bearing on the initial conflict and foreshadows issues to come.

A brief analysis of the language and format of Tetzel's work is followed here by an explanation of the translation of the title. Then the Luther-Tetzel exchange, which generated the pamphlet, is outlined to illuminate its historical-chronological setting. Finally, the introduction proposes a reevaluation of Tetzel, based on a careful reading of his own words rather than on rumor and the charges of his opponents.

Language and Format

The proper understanding of the language and format of Tetzel's pamphlet are crucial for assessing its significance. In robust and formulaic language the *Rebuttal* offers a preview of the intellectual and linguistic sparring that would become the norm in the polemical fireworks to follow. While both Luther's *Ninety-Five Theses* and Tetzel's response to them (*106 Theses*)

1 Commonly cited with the German title, *Ein Sermon von Ablass und Gnade*, the first edition was issued as, *Eynn Sermon von dem Ablass vnnd gnade . . .* (Wittenberg: Johann Rhau-Grunenberg, 1518). *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe; Schriften; Schriften*; 69 vols. (Weimar: Böhlau, 1883–), 1:240ff. (Cited hereafter, WA.)

2 Johann Tetzel, *Vorlegung gemacht von Bruder Johan Tetzel Prediger Orde[n]s Ketzermeister: wyder eynen vormessen Sermon von tzwenzig irrige[n] Artickeln Bebstlichen ablas vn[d] gnade belange[n]de allen cristglaubige[n] mensche[n] tzuwissen von notten* (Leipzig: Melchior Lotter, 1518). See note 14 below.

in vernacular German.

When Tetzel responded to Luther (*Vorlegung wider einen vermessen Sermon*), he also resorted to the vernacular, answering Luther's twenty "articles" or theses by first quoting each of them *verbatim*. Thus, within this one volume, the two antagonists are locked in a fateful struggle, inextricably linked by their common German tongue. The exchange of ideas articulated here would have momentous results, not the least of which was the unleashing of the German language as an effective weapon for Luther and many of the antagonists of the Reformation era. After 1518 the vernacular reigns, and for the German language, the foremost molder of that language is Martin Luther.³

Translation of the title of Tetzel's pamphlet proved problematic. *Vorlegung* (the noun of the verb *vorlegen*) in contemporary New High German (NHG) denotes "presentation," as of a document or of a proposed topic for discussion. However, in Early NHG it could denote "contradiction" (*widerlegen* = to contradict). Tetzel's usage of this word contains elements of both meanings. He quite judiciously sets forth the standard Roman Catholic teaching of his day on penance and indulgences (although he goes too far on some points, claiming as doctrinal truth matters open to theological and academic debate).⁴ In this sense, his work is a "presentation."

Nevertheless, Tetzel is presenting his case "against" an opponent's "presumptuous" ideas, and so he and Luther might be heard here as debate opponents, both of whom maintain a somewhat moderate rhetorical level during much of their exchange. Near the end, however, the rhetoric intensifies and concludes with barbed *ad hominem* accusations from both sides.

Thus, even though both connotations of *Vorlegung* are present, this translation uses "rebuttal" as a more appropriate expression of the tenor of the piece and of the attitudes of the author (indeed of both its authors). The reader should bear in mind, however, that the debate is very much Tetzel's presentation of the Roman Catholic Church's teaching of the time.

Historical-Chronological Account

The genesis of this small work extends over just a few months of the earliest days of the Reformation, as the following chronology demonstrates.⁵

3 This has been demonstrated particularly in the analysis of pamphlets from the early Reformation era. Mark U. Edwards, *Printing, Propaganda, and Martin Luther* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), p. 21.

4 Nikolaus Paulus, *Johann Tetzel, der Ablassprediger* (Mainz: Kirchheim, 1899), p. 52. Paulus' biography covers the whole of Tetzel's life and provides detailed explanation of his teaching on indulgences. Paulus' work offered the first reevaluation of the man based on solid scholarship, and it has provided the foundation for all subsequent serious studies. His discussion of Tetzel's interaction with Luther is found on pp. 45–67 and 80–83.

5 Scott Hendrix's *Luther and the Papacy: Stages in a Reformation Conflict* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981) is the definitive study of Luther's developing attitude toward Rome. Pages 34–38 cover specifically Luther's interaction with Tetzel from 1517 to 1519, but the whole of chs. 2 and 3 chronicles the events from October

MARCH 31, 1515 ¶ Pope Leo X issues a Bull granting plenary indulgences for those contributing to the rebuilding of the new basilica of St. Peter's in Rome. Prince-Elector Albrecht of Brandenburg, archbishop of Magdeburg, Mainz, and Halberstadt is granted authority to promote it throughout his dioceses. By early 1517 this indulgence is being energetically preached by the Dominicans of Albrecht's dioceses, under the leadership of Johann Tetzel, the Dominicans' inquisitor of heretics, and the subcommissioner for the promotion of the St. Peter's indulgence.

OCTOBER 31, 1517 ¶ Having become increasingly alarmed at the extravagant and spiritually destructive claims offered by the indulgence preachers to the Christians of Wittenberg's neighboring electorate, Martin Luther presents his *Ninety-Five Theses*, couched in standard academic Latin. He does this as invitation to his intellectual peers for an academic exchange of ideas on the subject of indulgences and the abuses associated with them.

JANUARY 20, 1518 ¶ At their regional chapter meeting in Frankfurt an der Oder, three hundred Dominicans gather to hold a disputation in Latin concerning Luther's *Ninety-Five Theses*. Subcommissioner Tetzel participates by presenting the *106 Frankfurt Theses* to refute the Augustinian Luther's theses.⁶ In keeping with accepted disputation practice of the time, the actual author was not Tetzel but a fellow Dominican, Konrad Wimpina, who had founded and continued to serve as rector for the University at Frankfurt. Yet the *106 Frankfurt Theses* were commonly attributed to Tetzel.

JANUARY-MARCH, 1518 ¶ In response to Tetzel's presentation at Frankfurt an der Oder, Luther works to further clarify his understanding of indulgences and penance and so produces his *Resolutiones* (in Latin), which was not published until early summer 1518.⁷ He is also increasingly aware of a popular campaign being waged against him by Dominican preachers, who attack him from various pulpits as a heretic and one who deviates from established Church practice.⁸ Not long after the Frankfurt disputation, a bookseller brings numerous printed copies of Tetzel's *106 Frankfurter Theses* to sell in Wittenberg. University students, by then enthusiastic supporters of Luther, snatch the copies from the bookseller and burn them in the town square.⁹

1517 to December 1518 and so is germane to Tetzel's interaction with Luther.

6 See note 9 below.

7 *Resolutiones disputationum de Indulgentiarum virtute* (Wittenberg: Johann Rhau-Grunenberg, 1518). WA 1:523.

8 Cf. Jared Wicks, *Luther's Reform: Studies on Conversion and the Church*, (Mainz: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 1992), p. 151. Wicks is one of the most prolific and important Roman Catholic scholars of Luther and of the Roman Catholic responses to him. Part II of this volume includes several chapters on the earliest stages of the Reformation from both Luther's and Rome's side. Chapter 7, "Roman Reactions to Luther: the First Year, 1518," pp. 149–188, discusses the Luther-Tetzel exchange.

9 Wicks, *Luther's Reform*, p.151; Peter Fabisch and Erwin Iserloh, (eds.) *Dokumente zur Causa Lutheri*,

LENT 1518 ¶ Responding to these academic and popular campaigns against him by unleashing the power of the language of ordinary German people, Luther publishes his *Eyn Sermon vom Ablass und Gnade* (*A Sermon on Indulgence and Grace*).¹⁰ The small book presents the ideas of his *Ninety-Five Theses* for popular consumption and in nonacademic language and is thus a response to the popular campaign against him. It refutes specific points of Tetzel's criticism, his academic response beginning with an attack on the scholastic tripartite division of penance as scripturally unfounded and concluding with a direct reproach of Tetzel's insinuations that Luther was a heretic.

MARCH OR APRIL 1518 ¶ Tetzel responds almost immediately to the Sermon. Realizing that he must fight fire with fire (i.e., German with German), he publishes his *Vorlegung . . . wider einen vermessenem Sermon von zwanzig irrigen Artikeln päpstlichen Ablass und Gnade belangend*.¹¹ The debate continues, and does so in German.

END OF APRIL/BEGINNING OF MAY 1518 ¶ Although Luther brands Tetzel's *Vorlegung* "an unparalleled example of ignorance,"¹² it nonetheless spurs him on to a second printed response: *Eine Freiheit des Sermons päpstlichen Ablass und Gnade belangend*.¹³ As Tetzel announces in the twentieth and concluding section of his rebuttal, he plans a more comprehensive response to Luther's ideas than is possible in the *Vorlegung*. This he delivers in Latin as *50 Theses*, this time without Wimpina's assistance.¹⁴

END OF THE DEBATE ¶ Though Luther takes some notice of Tetzel's *50 Theses* in his *Eine Freiheit des Sermons*,¹⁵ he essentially goes his own way, as he will from thenceforth. Tetzel is never again heard from in print, and one year later, on July 4, 1519, he is dead.

(1517–1521) 1. Teil: *Das Gutachten des Prierias und weitere Schriften gegen Luthers Ablassthesen (1517–1518)* (Corpus Catholicorum: Werke katholischer Schriftsteller im Zeitalter der Glaubensspaltung, 41; Münster Westfalen: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1988), p. 314. (Cited hereafter as *Dokumente zur Causa Lutheri*.)

At least one copy of the *106 Frankfurt Theses* must have survived the flames for Luther to have read it, since he responds to specific points in his *Sermon vom Ablass und Gnade*. Paulus discovered and published (1899) the sole extant copy, now in the Bavarian Staatsbibliothek. The *106 Frankfurt Theses* are reprinted in *Dokumente zur Causa Lutheri* (Text 10), pp. 321–337.

10 See note 1 above.

11 See note 2 above.

12 *Dokumente zur Causa Lutheri*, p. 340.

13 *Eyn Freyheydt desz Sermons Bestlichen ablasz vnd gnad belangend . . . wider die Vorlegung, so tzur schmach seyn, vnd desselben Sermon ertichtett* (Wittenberg: Johann Rhau-Grünenberg, 1518). WA 1:380–381.

14 Tetzel's *50 Theses* reprinted in *Dokumente zur Causa Lutheri* (Text 12), pp. 369–375.

15 *Dokumente zur Causa Lutheri*, p. 364.

Toward a Modest Reevaluation of Johann Tetzel

With this translation of his *Rebuttal*, Tetzel is granted a new hearing, indeed probably a first hearing for most persons. What one has heard of his own words is the infamous jingle (unfortunately, actually part of the indulgence preachers' promotional techniques): "As soon as the penny in the money chest clinks, the soul out of purgatory springs." In the *Rebuttal*, however, instead of the caricatured money-grubber, one hears a genuine concern for the salvation of souls, praise of God's inestimable mercy, and a concern for the whole of Christendom. In his impassioned outcry of rebuttal 20, Tetzel foresees what tragic consequences can follow upon Luther's ideas—the dissolution of Christianity, its shattering into fragments, the very opposite of Christ's desire that all people might be one in him.

For centuries Tetzel has also been consistently caricatured as stupid, ignorant of Latin, and unable to write his own theses. The *Rebuttal* provides a different witness. His presentation here is well-structured; exhibits a credible understanding of Scripture, Catholic doctrines, and the major theologians of the Christian tradition; and shows him fully as proficient as his debate opponent in Latin and in the citation of Scripture to support his arguments.

A Concluding Consideration

This translation of Tetzel's *Rebuttal* is a contribution to the celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the Kessler Reformation Collection of the Pitts Theology Library. Just as Tetzel's pamphlet arose in the course of theological debate joined by academics and clerics and presents the opposing views of two leading figures, so too the Kessler Collection draws together on a larger scale and in creative tension America's largest collection of original Luther imprints and the Catholic works that engaged them. From its inception the Kessler Collection has allowed scholars, pastors, and believers alike to profit from the study of original sources, free of the polemical atmosphere of the Reformation era, and its presence at Emory and Candler School of Theology will continue to further the work of original research, theological understanding, and human reconciliation.

Translation Format

Paragraphs have been introduced where content warrants it, in accordance with modern English usage.

The long, multiple relative clause-laden sentences characteristic of sixteenth-century German have been broken into shorter units where feasible, again to accord more with standard English usage.

Words or phrases in [brackets] denote the translator's addition for reasons of clarity.

Regarding the singular/plural form of "indulgence," the original German text employs, variously, no article, the definite article, or the indefinite article, usually without expressing a specific nuance. In many instances, the English plural expresses the German singular as well

or better, without change of meaning. Thus I often use the plural form, “indulgences,” where Tetzel and Luther use the singular.

This translation prefers inclusive language where Tetzel’s and Luther’s use of the nouns and pronouns denoting human beings implies “all persons” in general.

Notes have been kept to a minimum, and so no attempt has been made to cite the voluminous literature on the Luther-Tetzel conflict.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the persons who have been so supportive of this translation project. M. Patrick Graham, director of the Pitts Theology Library, first offered me the opportunity to work on this rare copy of Tetzel’s work and has continued to encourage it. The study of Tetzel’s pamphlet was one of my two projects during my 2003–2004 tenure as guest scholar at the Institute for Ecumenical and Cultural Research of St. John’s University, Collegeville, Minnesota. Discovery there in St. John’s Alcuin Library of Nikolaus Paulus’ 1899 biography of Tetzel has been foundational for my appraisal of Tetzel. Thanks are due also to Manfred Hoffmann, professor emeritus of Candler School of Theology at Emory, and to Kurt K. Hendel, Bernard, Fischer, Westberg Distinguished Ministry Professor of Reformation History at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, for his valuable advice and suggestions. Finally, as is the case with all my endeavors, academic and personal, I thank my husband, Victor A. Kramer.

Vorlegung gemacht von Bruder Jo-

han Detzel Prediger Ordens Ketzermeister / wider
einen vormessen Sermon von tzwentzig irrigen Arti-
keln Hebstliche Ablass vnd gnade belangende allen crist
glaubigen menschen tzuwissen von nothen.

Vff das die Christglaubigen menschen / durch eine pre-
digeth / von tzwentzig yrrigen artickeln / vormessenn ge-
macht / wydder die teyl des Sacraments der busse / vnd
warheit des ablass / vnd yn der fasten / iungst vorschinen /
gedruckt / aus gegangen / welcher prediget Tittel / der
massen lauteth / Ein Sermon von dem Ablass vnd gna-
de ꝛc. vnd sich nach diesem Tittel also anhebeth / Zum er-
sten solt yr wissen das etliche Nawe lerer als Magister
Sententiarū ꝛc. / vnd ym tzwentzigstem artickel sich also
endeth / Doch goth gebe yn vnd vns rechten syn / Nicht
geergert vnd vorfirt werden / Hab ich bruder Johan-
nes Detzel / prediger ordens / Ketzermeister / ꝛc. den selbigē
Sermon der tzwentzig yrrigen artickel mit seynem Ti-
tel / anfang / vnd beschlus / vmbdruckten lassen / vnd volle-
ge einen yglichen artickel / des gnanthen Sermons / mit
bestendigen grundt der heiligenn schrifft / wy yderman
nochfolgende ermessen wyrdt / Unangesehen / das ym
Neuntzenden artickel des gnanthen Sermons / geschri-
ben steth / vnd losz doctores scolasticos scolasticos seyn /
syz seyn allesampt nicht genung mit yren opinien / das sie
eine prediget befestigen solten / welcher worth / kein Crist-
lich mensch / sich ergern sal / Wen solth der Sermon der
tzwentzig yrrigen artickel ein schein haben / bey den men-
schen / szo muste tzuuor sein tichter aberewnen doctores
scolasticos / die alle eintrechtig yn yren schriften / wyder
ynen sein / Der heilige Augustinus saget wen man wider
die ketzer disputiren wil / szo thut man das vornemlich
durch auctoritates / das ist / der heiligen schrifft / vnd bes-

TRANSLATION

Rebuttal made by Brother Johann Tetzel, the Order of Preachers' inquisitor of heretics against a presumptuous sermon of twenty erroneous articles concerning papal indulgences and grace, necessary for all believers in Christ to know.¹⁶

This is a rebuttal made by Brother Johann Tetzel, the Order of Preachers' inquisitor for heretics, necessary for all faithful believers in Christ to know, against a sermon of twenty erroneous articles concerning papal indulgences and grace.

So that Christians not be unduly upset and misled by a sermon of twenty erroneous articles, presumptuously attacking aspects of the sacrament of penance and the truth of indulgences, which was printed and distributed during Lent, the title of which reads, *A Sermon on Indulgences and Grace, etc.*, and after the title continues, "You should know first of all that certain modern teachers such as the Master of the Sentences" and ends in the twentieth article, "But may God give them and us right understanding,"¹⁷ I, Brother Johannes Tetzel, the Order of Preachers' inquisitor of heretics, have had that same sermon of twenty erroneous articles printed, together with its title, opening, and conclusion. And I refute each article of the named sermon with constant reference to Holy Scripture, as everyone will judge from the following pages.

I do this in spite of the fact that in the nineteenth article of the named sermon is written, "And let the scholastic doctors¹⁸ be scholastics. The whole lot of them with their opinions

16 Tetzel's pamphlet was published in March or April of 1518. In addition to the copy owned by the Pitts Theology Library, two others are extant and held at the Staatsbibliothek, Munich and at the Universitätsbibliothek, Würzburg.

Tetzel's pamphlet was reprinted in J. E. Kapp, *Sammlung einiger zum Päpstlichen Ablass überhaupt, Sonderlich aber zu der im Anfang der Reformation zwischen D. Martin Luther und Johann Tetzel hiervon geführten Streitigkeit gehörigen Schriften* (Leipzig: Martini, 1721), pp. 317–356; in V. E. Loescher (ed.), *Vollständige Reformations-Acta und Documenta* (Leipzig: Gross, 1720), I, pp. 484–503; in Walter Köhler (ed.), *Dokumente zum Ablassstreit von 1517* (Tübingen/Leipzig: J.C.B. Mohr, 1902; 2nd ed., 1934) (rebuttal 20 incomplete); and Walter Köhler, *Luthers 95 Thesen samt seinen Resolutionen sowie den Gegenschriften von Wimpina-Tetzel, Eck und Prierias and den Antworten Luthers darauf* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1903).

The most recent and best critical edition is that of Fabisch and Iserloh, (eds.), *Dokumente zur Causa Lutheri* (for full bibliographic citation, see note 9 above), which was intended to correct and expand upon Köhler's 1903 work, *Luthers 95 Thesen* and makes readily accessible—some for the first time—Roman Catholic writings of the earliest stage of the Reformation. Its emphasis lies on the historically crucial texts concerning the preaching of the St. Peter's Indulgence in the dioceses of Mainz and Magdeburg, as well as the earliest Roman reactions to *Luther's 95 Theses*, from 1517 to 1519. The editors provide extensive historical background and bibliographical details for each document.

17 Martin Luther, "Ein Sermon von Ablass und Gnade, 1517," in *D. Martin Luther's Werke: kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Weimar: Herman Böhlhaus Nachfolger, 1883–), 1:239–246.

18 This quotation appears in Luther's sermon (thesis 19) and in Tetzel's Rebuttal. Tetzel's Latin term *doctores* and the German *Doctorn* refer to the most influential teachers of Christendom both ancient and modern. Many of both Luther's and Tetzel's arguments are concerned with the authority of the "modern" doctors (e.g., Thomas Aquinas, Peter Lombard)—questioning or affirming it, as well as the reliability of the professors of theology at contemporary universities. Hence the term refers equally to teachers who hold the doctoral

are not able to put together a single sermon.” These words should upset no good Christian person. Because if the sermon of twenty erroneous articles hopes to convince anyone, then its author would first have to sweep away the “scholastic doctors,” who all harmoniously oppose these articles in their writings. St. Augustine writes, “When one wants to dispute with the heretics, then one must do so above all on the basis of the Authorities,” that is, Holy Scripture and the writings of reliable theologians uniformly. Just so, “When one wants to instruct Christian believers, it occurs properly by using solid, supporting rationes,”¹⁹ that is, through rational evidence and teaching. The heretics know this, and so whenever they want to promote a heretical falsehood among the people, they first reject and scorn all the scholars who have written openly against this particular error, just as Wycliffe and Johannes Hus did.²⁰

This same Johannes Hus not only considered satisfaction for sin unnecessary, but also sacramental confession itself, and persuaded the people accordingly. For this reason the holy ecumenical Council of Constance condemned him to the stake. Such ways are also being pursued in this erroneous sermon of twenty articles. For the Master of Hoenszyn,²¹ along with many thousand doctors (of whom many are numbered in the ranks of the revered saints),²² are scorned in the erroneous sermon, in spite of the fact that the Holy Catholic Church agrees with them concerning the three parts of penance. It has neither found fault with them, but accepted them all as truthful; nor has it admitted or proven that they have written a single dissentient word contrary to Scripture and the four Doctors of the Church.²³

degree and to theologians in general. This translation uses both terms interchangeably.

19 St. Augustine of Hippo, 354–430, church father whose theological and philosophical works have exercised tremendous influence on the development of Christian doctrine, for both Eastern and Western Churches. Luther was a monk of the Augustinian Order, which followed the *Rule of St. Augustine*. For this citation, see J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus . . . Series Latina* (Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1844–1891), 32:1377–1384 (hereafter cited as *PL*).

20 John Wycliffe, c. 1329–1384, Oxford theologian, translator of the Bible into English, critic of the temporal authority of the church. He rejected transubstantiation, purgatory, and indulgences. Though condemned as heretic, he died of natural causes, but his works were formally condemned by the Council of Constance (1414), and his remains were exhumed and burned.

Johannes Hus (or Jan Huss), 1374–1415, Czech priest, theologian, preacher, and rector of the University of Prague. Influenced by Wycliffe’s ideas on church reform, he led the reform movement in Bohemia. He rejected transubstantiation and demanded communion in both kinds. Summoned to the Council of Constance (1414) under imperial guarantee of safe conduct, he was condemned as a heretic and burned at the stake on July 6, 1415.

21 Master of Hoenszyn or Peter Lombard, 1100–1160, French theologian, known as the Master of the *Sentences*, as noted in Luther’s opening lines. The *Sentences* (1157–1158) is a four-volume presentation of the essentials of Christian doctrine. From the early thirteenth to the mid-seventeenth centuries, students of theology were required to comment on all or part of this text. As focus of theological study, this work was second only to the Bible. Tetzl is here enjoying some German-Latin word play: Hoenszyn = Master of Gaul = “Haehnchen” (German, “little cock”) = “gallus” (Latin, “cock”).

22 “. . . of whom many are saints, etc.” Tetzl uses this phrase several times to strengthen his case for the absolute reliability of certain “modern” doctors, most notably St. Thomas Aquinas, the first University of Paris doctor to be canonized and a fellow Dominican. Thomas’ system of theology has acquired quasi-official status in the Church through repeated formal endorsement by various popes.

23 The four Doctors of the Church, Saints Ambrose (340–397), Jerome (340–420), Augustine (354–430),

Rather, they have been recognized as true interpreters of Holy Scripture and of the ancient holy Church Fathers.

For such reasons it should be assumed publicly and supported by all believing Christians that these following articles of this presumptuous *Sermon* are suspect, erroneous, entirely misleading, and contrary to the holy Christian Church, as I intend to prove with the help of God by refuting each of the Articles individually and in depth.

I bring this rebuttal to the attention of his Papal Holiness, the Pope, the whole Christian Church, and all Universities.²⁴

I.

A Sermon concerning Indulgences and Grace, etc. Its first erroneous article reads as follows:

“First, you should know that various new teachers such as the Master of the Sentences, St. Thomas, and their followers ascribe three parts to penance, namely contrition, confession, and satisfaction. And although this distinction according to their opinion is with difficulty or not at all to be found substantiated in Holy Scripture or in the ancient holy Christian teachers, nevertheless we will let it stand now as it is and speak in their manner.”²⁵

REBUTTAL ¶ This erroneous article is rebutted thusly in a Christian manner and on solid foundation: First, it is erroneous and unfounded, when it claims that the three parts of penance are not founded on Holy Scripture and on the ancient Christian teachers, wherein truth resides. For Scripture and the ancient and modern holy doctors, of whom there are many thousand, maintain that Almighty God wishes to have repayment and satisfaction for sin. For Christ our Lord commands sinners in the Gospel, “Bear fruit worthy of repentance.” [Matthew 3:8] This is interpreted and understood by all the holy doctors of the whole world to mean satisfying penance.

For this reason, too, God sent his only Son into the world to make sufficient satisfaction for the sins of humankind, even though Adam and Eve repented most profoundly of their sin and yet for which they were cast forth from paradise into penance. However, that the Lord Jesus released Mary Magdalene, the adulteress, [Luke 7:37–51; John 8:1–11] and the paralytic man [Matthew 9:1–8; Mark 2:1–12; Luke 5:18–26] from all their sins without imposing any kind of penance has nothing to do with the fact that God desires from the

and Gregory I (540–604), were proclaimed “Doctors of the Church” by Pope Boniface VIII on September 20, 1295. The title recognized them as the preeminent teachers of the Christian faith.

24 Tetzel employs a variation of this sentence to conclude each rebuttal. It expresses succinctly and unmistakably his stance on the importance of papal authority and emphasizes his own legitimacy as representative speaker for accepted Church teaching, doctrines which at that very time are being articulated by “trustworthy” academic theologians (cf. note 40 below).

25 In each of the twenty articles, Tetzel quotes Luther’s sermon first and then proceeds to refute it.

sinner only contrition and the carrying of the cross. For Christ recognized that the contrition of the persons just mentioned, which he himself gave them, was sufficient. Moreover, he himself forgave them, and he released them perfectly by means of the power of the key, that is by the power of his absolute perfection. Priests, however, can neither recognize a person's contrition nor give them contrition. They possess merely the key of their office. Therefore, no matter how greatly a person repents of his sins or carries the cross, if he scorns confession or satisfaction as elements of the sacrament of penance, the pain due his sins will never be forgiven him.

Offered in acknowledgment of the holy Papal See and of all Christian universities and doctors.

II. - III.

The second and third erroneous articles of the sermon read as follows:

“Second, they say that an indulgence does not remove the first or second part, i.e., contrition or confession, but rather the third part, namely satisfaction.”

“Third, satisfaction is divided further into three parts: that is praying, fasting, and giving alms. Prayer includes all kinds of works that are concerned with the soul, such as reading, writing, hearing God's word, preaching, teaching, and similar practices. Fasting comprises all kinds of works of the mortification of the flesh, such as night watches, physical labor, uncomfortable bed, clothing, etc. Giving alms comprises all kinds of good works of love and mercy toward one's neighbor.”

REBUTTAL ■ They are rebutted thusly in a Christian manner: First, both of them are erroneous and entirely misleading since in them the truth is silenced. For in the holy Council of Constance it was once again confirmed that whoever wishes to earn an indulgence must, in addition to contrition, have gone to confession according to the ordinances of Holy Church or appear for confession according to the ordinances of the Church. This instruction is found in all papal bulls and letters of indulgence. But in the first article such confession is implicitly, that is secretly, separated and severed from genuine contrition, though erroneously.

Written in acknowledgement of His Papal Holiness and of all Christian universities and theologians.

IV.

The fourth article of the erroneous sermon reads as follows:

“Fourth, it is unquestioned by all of them that indulgence takes away those same works of satisfaction obligated by or imposed for sins. Thus, since it is supposed to take away all of these works, there would remain nothing else good for us to do.”

REBUTTAL ¶ It is rebutted in this Christian manner: The plenary indulgence remits the works of satisfaction to this extent: whoever is granted complete remission of pain is freed through papal power so that he is no longer obligated to do those works of satisfaction noted in article three, which had been imposed upon him for repented and confessed sins. Yet after the complete forgiveness of sins and pain, a person is no less tempted by the devil, his own flesh, and the world than he was before forgiveness. And evil habits and the possibility of falling quickly into sin again remain after forgiveness of sins and suffering. Therefore, in order to resist the devil, the flesh and the world and to subdue evil, sinful habit, inclination, and the possibility of falling quickly into sin again, a man, after complete forgiveness of sins and suffering, dare not refrain from penitential works that are salvific for him and a medicine for his spiritual weakness and also helpful toward gaining eternal life.

Also, no papal or episcopal brief of indulgence maintains that people who earn an indulgence should refrain henceforth from good works and from making satisfaction. In fact, we owe it to the honor of the eternal Godhead to do good works, even had we not sinned, solely because of his creation. And when we have accomplished all the good works that are possible for us, then we should [still] say, “We are useless servants of God.” [Luke 10:17] For this reason, this article is completely erroneous and misleading, and fabricated solely to the disadvantage of indulgences.

Set forth with acknowledgment of the holy Roman See and of all Christian universities and theologians.

V.

The fifth erroneous article of the sermon reads as follows:

“Fifth, for many people there has been an important and as yet unresolved question whether indulgence also removes something more than such prescribed good works, that is, whether indulgence also removes the suffering that divine justice demands for sin.”

REBUTTAL ¶ It is rebutted thusly in a Christian manner: First of all, it is completely erroneous and deceptive. For the plenary indulgence remits also the suffering that divine justice requires for sins, when they have been repented of and confessed and the penance imposed by

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the priest is insufficient. For the Papal Holiness follows St. Peter to the throne and papal office and also possesses, like St. Peter himself, the authority and the power to remit all sin. And it possesses this power from the words of the Lord, “All that you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven, etc.” [Matthew 16:19] Now because the pope can forgive all sins, he can also remit, through indulgence, all the suffering due sin. For all the pain that people deserve to suffer for their sin is imposed and conferred on them as just punishment, first and foremost by God, against whom all mortal sin is directed.

Concerning the second point and following, suffering is imposed upon the sinner by priestly authority in God’s stead. Thus, this authority should exercise the greatest diligence in imposing the penance ordered by the canons of the law, called *canones penitentiales*, in order to be in conformity with divine justice. For this reason no one should consider it merely an *unresolved question* that indulgences remit the pain demanded by divine justice for repented and confessed sins but for which the priest imposed insufficient penance. For the holy Roman Church observes this practice, as do all Christian theologians of whom there are thousands; and this practice, [as mentioned in the fifth article], has never been repudiated by the Roman Church. Therefore, this article is erroneous and intended to deceive people.

Submitted in acknowledgment of the holy Roman See and of all Christian universities and doctors.

VI.

The sixth erroneous article reads as follows:

“Sixth, I leave their opinion without condemnation for the moment. I say that no one can prove by a single word of Scripture that divine justice desires or demands any sort of suffering or satisfaction from the sinner other than his heartfelt and genuine sorrow or conversion, with the intention to bear the cross of Christ from now on and practice the works mentioned above (which are also not imposed by anyone). For thus he speaks through Ezekiel, “If the sinner repents and does right, then I will never remember his sin.” [Ezekiel 18:21; 33:14–16] Furthermore, he himself absolved everyone—Mary Magdalene, the paralytic, the woman caught in adultery, etc. And I should very much like to hear who would prove otherwise, in spite of the fact that some theologians have thought so.”

REBUTTAL ❏ It is rebutted accordingly on the basis of Holy Scripture: First, it is entirely erroneous, unfounded und misleading, fabricated to the detriment of indulgences. For Holy Scripture, both the Old and the New Testament, indicate that God demands satisfaction for sin. One finds this in Deuteronomy in the twenty-fifth chapter. [Deuteronomy 25:1–2; 32:49] The ancient holy Christian teachers say the same thing, in particular St. Gregory in his Thirty-Second Lay Homily or Omelia, “The heavenly physician, Our Lord Jesus Christ,

prescribes for every specific vice valuable medicine.”²⁶ Also St. Augustine says, “God has given no one license to sin, and he mercifully forgives the sins that are committed, as long as the fitting and necessary satisfaction for the sin is not omitted.”²⁷ God forgave David his adultery, yet as satisfaction he had to suffer a war, the disgracing of his wives, and after his remorse and confession the death of his child. David also felt great sorrow for his sin regarding the census of his people. But he still had to offer satisfaction to God for that sin in addition to his remorse, for the angel slew seventy thousand men at God’s command because of it, as the Book of Kings relates in detail. [2 Samuel 24]

Years ago, with the same wording and message of this sixth article, the heretics Wycliffe and Johannes Hus also sought to maintain that confession and satisfaction are unnecessary. That is why in several countries persons who go to confession are given no penance by the priest. Rather, he says to them, “Go forth and determine never more to sin.”²⁸ This article is erroneous and not to be believed.

Submitted in acknowledgement of His Papal Holiness, of the holy See in Rome and of all Christian universities and theologians.

VII.

The seventh erroneous article reads as follows:

“Seventh, one does indeed observe that God punishes some persons according to his righteousness, or forces them toward contrition through suffering, as Psalm 88 says, “If his children shall sin, I will punish their transgression with the rod, but I will not turn my mercy from them.” [Psalm 89:30–34] But to remit this suffering lies in no one’s power except God’s alone. Indeed, he will not remit it; rather he promises that he will impose it.”

REBUTTAL ¶ It is rebutted in Christian manner thusly: First of all, it is trite prattle and mirror tricks. For God who says, “If my children shall sin, then I shall punish their sin with the rod, yet I shall not turn my mercy from them,” has granted the fullness of his power to St. Peter and to every legitimately elected pope who reigns over Holy Church in such a manner that the pope has the power to do all things necessary in the Church that are for the Holy Church and for the salvation of humankind.

For this reason the pope has the power, by means of plenary indulgences, to remit the suffering imposed by God upon sinners for their sin, as long as it has been repented of

²⁶ This is Homily 25 in modern editions: Gregory I, “Homilia XXV” in *PL* 76:1188–1196, quote from 1195. For an English translation, Gregory the Great, *Forty Gospel Homilies*; Dom David Hurst, transl. (Cistercian Studies Series, 123; Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1990), pp. 187–199, quote from p. 197.

²⁷ Augustine, “De utilitate agenda poenitentiae (Sermo 351, 10)” in *PL* 39, 1545–1547.

²⁸ Refers to the practice of the Hussites, followers of the doctrine of Johannes Hus, still viable in areas of Europe at the time of the Reformation.

and confessed by them. That a person is absolved from the suffering that God has imposed and decreed as judgment for his sin (should the priest's imposed penance be insufficient for his repentance and confession) serves that person quite positively for his soul's salvation. It is also a tremendous act of God's mercy that his deputy, the pope, releases man from the suffering of his sin by means of an indulgence. For this reason, David's words are cited as a subterfuge in this erroneous article without their true Christian meaning. Thus this article should be read with critical eyes and not be expounded blindly and obscurely.

When God says that he will punish the sins of his children with the rod, that is, to force them through pain to repent, it means that an indulgence is not useful against this kind of pain, but rather only for the pain of repented and confessed sin. For one finds it written in Holy Scripture that at times God inflicts pain upon men to increase their merit, as with Job; at times to preserve their virtue, as with St. Paul; at times as chastisement for sins, as with Miriam, the sister of Moses; at times for the honor of God, as with the man born blind; and at times as the beginning of the suffering of eternal punishment, as with Herod. To impose such God-willed chastisements and sufferings on a man remains solely in God's power. Nonetheless, the pope can with a plenary indulgence remit the pain imposed by God for those sins that have been repented of and confessed but assigned insufficient penance by the priest. Consequently, this article is erroneous and deceptive.

This submitted in acknowledgment of the holy Papal See and of all Christian universities and doctors.

VIII.

The eighth erroneous article reads as follows:

“Eighth, therefore, no one can assign this so-called suffering a name. Also no one knows what it is, if it is neither this punishment nor the above-mentioned good works.”

REBUTTAL ■ It is rebutted in Christian manner thusly: First, it is erroneous because the suffering that God's righteousness imposes on a person for his sin, if insufficiently repented of or insufficiently acknowledged through the priest in confession, is called a reckoning of God and the worthy fruit of contrition. Satisfaction for this cannot be made by just any kind of contrition but only by profoundly compensatory satisfaction. St. Augustine and all theologians of Christianity say this. What the particular name of such suffering exacted by God will have in purgatory is known [only] to those people suffering it now, along with the ones who will suffer it because of their wretched deception of poor believers in Christ, if indeed they don't go to hell instead!

Submitted with acknowledgement of the holy Roman See and of all Christian universities and doctors.

IX.

The ninth erroneous article reads as follows:

“Ninth, I say, ‘Even if the Christian church right now would decide and declare that indulgence removes more than the works of satisfaction, it would still be a thousand times better, if no Christian would buy or desire an indulgence but would rather do the works and bear the suffering. For indulgence is nothing else, and cannot become anything else, than a release from good works and wholesome suffering. Men should rightly welcome these rather than avoid them, in spite of the fact that some modern preachers have invented two kinds of suffering: remedial and satisfactory, that is, some suffering is for satisfaction, some for amending one’s ways. But we have more freedom to disdain this and all such prattle (Thanks be to God!) than they do to invent it. For all suffering, indeed everything that God inflicts, is beneficial and useful for Christians.’”

REBUTTAL ❏ It is rebutted thusly in a Christian manner: It is deceptive because the holy Roman Church observes and decides by means of its tradition and practice that a plenary indulgence removes not only the works of satisfaction imposed by the priest or by law but also by God’s righteousness, if the sins are insufficiently repented and the priest in confession has imposed insufficient satisfaction. For St. Augustine declares that the customs, which the people of God or Christians exercise, and the statements of the Church Fathers are to be considered valid, even though Holy Scripture says nothing specific of such practices and matters. For this reason the pope by right can remit all the aforementioned suffering through a plenary indulgence, as long as the Roman See is observing such practice.²⁹

This erroneous article also indicates that no person should desire an indulgence, but also that the indulgence remits more from that person than the penance imposed by priest or canon law. These words contradict Christian truth. For with them the article maintains that a person may have an indulgence without contrition. Thus, it also separates the indulgence from contrition and the production of the good works for which indulgence is given. That can nevermore be substantiated in Christian doctrine. For those who earn an indulgence are living in a state of genuine contrition and in the love of God, which state does not allow them to remain lazy and slothful. Rather, it enflames them to serve God and do great works to honor him. For it is as clear as day that Christian, God-fearing, pious people, and not loose and lazy persons, earn indulgences with fervent desire.

For this reason this article is full of poison and by its argument wants to make indulgences, which are most necessary and salutary for poor sinners, disgusting to people. Indeed, God’s great unconstrained mercy appears to us most clearly in the granting of indulgences. For through his mercy God chooses to let Jesus’ own satisfaction satisfy for all the suffering

²⁹ Cf. Augustine, “Ep. 118 ad Ianuarium,” *Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* 34 II, 165, 11–14 = PL 33, 202.

due to persons who have not repented sufficiently of their sin and for which sins insufficient penance was assigned by the priest. In this way papal authority applies Christ's own satisfaction to their guilt.

It is also Christian to believe that when anyone gives alms, prays, visits churches, undertakes pilgrimage, fasts, or does other good works that earn indulgences and does them with the same love of God in which one would do such works, if not graced with indulgences, that [then] these named indulgenced works are far better and more meritorious for people than others [not so graced]. For this reason this article is miserably formulated to lead people astray.

Submitted with acknowledgment of the holy Papal See and of all Christian universities and doctors.

X.

The tenth erroneous article reads as follows:

“Tenth, it is vacuous talk to say that there is so much suffering and so many works that a person cannot accomplish them due to the brevity of life, for which reason indulgences are necessary. I counter that as unfounded and pure fantasy. For God and Holy Church impose on no one more than is possible for him to bear, just as St. Paul says, that God does not allow anyone to be tempted by more than he can bear. [1 Corinthians 10:8] And it contributes not little to Christianity's shame that one blames it for imposing more than we can bear.”

REBUTTAL ■ It is rebutted in a Christian manner thusly: An indulgence is not granted solely because the brevity of a person's life does not let him complete the required works of satisfaction. It is as clear as day that the greatest sinner can satisfy God's justice for all the penance incurred by his sin through genuine, complete contrition, provided of course that he not disdain sacramental confession and penance. When these two things are disdained, all contrition is null and powerless. For this reason it is untruthfully imputed to us subcommissioners and preachers of grace that we defame God and Christianity by supposedly saying that God and the Church impose impossible things upon a person. Such words are incomprehensible! For indulgences are granted at times for alms-giving; at times because of personal accomplishments, such as when one goes on crusade against the infidels and heretics, builds bridges, and repairs roads. At times the precariousness of life prompts earning indulgences, such as when persons travel overseas to the Holy Land, as our sacred laws clearly mandate. Therefore, indulgences are not granted solely on account of the brevity of human life that could prevent a person from completing his assigned penance.

Submitted with acknowledgement of the holy Papal See and of all Christian universities and doctors.

21

XI.

*The eleventh article reads as follows:*³⁰

“Eleventh, even if acts of penance as established by canon law were now in effect, mandating seven years of penance for each mortal sin, Christianity would still have to abandon such regulations and not impose anything more than a person could bear. All the more, since such canon law is not now in effect, one must take care not to impose more than any person can possibly bear.”

REBUTTAL ¶ It is to be exposed as an unfounded statement as follows: Even though the statutes of canon law establishing acts of penance for human frailty are not now in effect, people are not thereby given greater license to sin, nor are the sins liable to less penance than canon law stipulates, nor are they less obligated to accept penances appropriate to divine justice. For whoever does not carry out the penance imposed by canon law must suffer something different, which God’s justice accepts as equally valid fruits of penance. Also, when the priest is absolving the sinner, he must consider not only the contrition, as he is imposing the penance on him for repented of and confessed sin. Rather, he must also take very seriously the corpus of penances set out in the penitential canons so that he does not—as much as possible—act contrary to the divine justice spelled out by the canons, as stated in canon law. And when he has taken into account the penitent’s contrition and the satisfaction imposed by canon law, he should then assign the penitent satisfaction in confession.

In this manner and not according to their whims, priests are to assign the sinner a penance in confession for repented of sins. The penance imposed by the priest in confession profits the absolved sinner in that he does not sin, if he does not observe the penance for his sin spelled out in canon law. However, if the priest assigns too little penance, then God will demand of a person the remaining part, either here or in the next world. Whoever teaches people otherwise, that person deceives them.

Submitted in acknowledgment of the holy Papal See and of all Christian universities and doctors.

³⁰ Tetzel omits in the introductory formula for rebuttals 11 and 12 his usual “erroneous” jab at the sermon’s articles.

XII.

The twelfth article reads as follows:

“Twelfth, one indeed says that the sinner should either be sent to purgatory with the remaining suffering or directed to an indulgence. But these are indeed more things said without foundation and proof.”

REBUTTAL ¶ It is set forth in Christian manner thusly: It is first of all completely erroneous and is set forth without any validity and proof of Holy Scripture, and also without any recourse to juridical insight, as though its subject matter were inappropriate for the holy Gospel, although in truth they are as different as night and day.

Besides, it is Christian and true to know that the sinner should be sent either to purgatory with the remaining suffering or to an indulgence. For the holy Christian Church and the community of all ancient and modern theologians teach that God is so merciful that he forgives guilt and sin, [but] that he nevertheless remains just in not letting these go unpunished. Therefore, if one’s inner contrition is insufficient to count as punishment for sin, and external satisfaction is not undertaken and completed, then God, who knows the extent and number of sins, will demand that the remaining penance and satisfaction not performed by the person in this life be completed in purgatory.

Further, as Anselm says in his book, *Cur deus homo* [*Why God Became Man*], “A person can do enough for his sin solely through good works, which could not be demanded of a person unless he had sinned.”³¹ And in any case people are obligated to do the good works of God’s commandments because of creation, which God also demands of people, even if they had not sinned. Thus, this twelfth article is erroneous and misleading, since satisfaction must take place in this life or in the next.

Submitted with acknowledgment of the holy Papal See and of all Christian universities and theologians.

XIII.

The thirteenth erroneous article reads as follows:

“Thirteenth, it is a great error that anyone would think that he would himself make satisfaction for his sins, since God forgives those same sins at all times for free, out of his inestimable grace, demanding nothing but that one live well from thence forward. Christianity, to be

31 St. Anselm of Canterbury, c. 1033–1109. His *Cur deus homo* describes Christ’s death on the cross as an act of satisfaction, returning to God the honor stolen by human sin. This passage is found in Anselm, *Opera II*, 48.74–84.101f, as cited in *Dokumente zur Causa Lutheri*, p. 353, n.52.

sure, does demand something, thus it can and should also cease doing this and not impose difficult and unbearable things.”

REBUTTAL ❏ It is rebutted in Christian manner thusly: First, it is unfounded and misleading, for God, along with the Church, as shown repeatedly above, desires satisfaction for sins. This has been the conclusion of the ancient and modern doctors of Holy Church, of whom there are thousands and of whom many count among the saints in heaven. They all say that no matter how great contrition is, if a person scorns confession and acts of penance, then contrition alone will not help. To be sure, for a mortal sin no one can be reconciled with God without the help of Christ’s sufferings, as St. Augustine also believes. Indeed, if the author of this article had considered St. Augustine, this error would not have been promoted. For St. Augustine says, “For God does not look with indulgence on our sinning, however much you mitigate the suffering due the already committed sin, if the corresponding satisfaction is neglected.”³² However, this erroneous article does not count as new, for Wycliffe and Johannes Hus also maintained this error: specifically, the idea that confession, in which acts of satisfaction are imposed upon a person, is not necessary. And for this reason Johannes Hus was burned at the stake by the ecumenical Council of Constance and Wycliffe died as a heretic.

Offered in acknowledgment of the holy Papal See and all Christian universities and theologians.

XIV.

The fourteenth erroneous article reads as follows:

“Fourteenth, an indulgence is allowed for the sake of imperfect and lazy Christians who do not want to practice good works earnestly or who are sickly.³³ For an indulgence does not spur them on to improvement but tolerates and allows their imperfection. Therefore, no one should speak against indulgences, but also no one should persuade anyone to seek one.”

REBUTTAL ❏ It is rebutted in Christian manner thusly: Even though a person earns every indulgence, he should still not refrain from penitential works. Thus says Pope Innocent, for after the forgiveness of sins and of all penance through indulgence, there remains in a person the tendency to sin again.³⁴ A person must medicate himself against this tendency by means of good works. If after the forgiveness of sin and penance he also wants to gain great

³² “Nemini enim dedit laxamentum peccati deus, quamvis miserando deleas iam facta peccata, si non satisfactio congrua negligatur.” Cf. Augustine, *De poenitentia*, ch. 18 (Augustinus, Ench. c. 70), as cited in *Dokumente zur Causa Lutheri*, 354, n.54.

³³ Luther’s word, *unleyedlich* (“who are sickly”) could refer either to someone’s physical incapacity (sickness) to practice good works or to a mental or spiritual indisposition (those who find them intolerable).

³⁴ Pope Innocent III, 1198–1216. Cf. *PL* 217, 691–702.

merit with God and increase his merit, then he dare not omit painful good works. Rather he must bear the cross of Christ to the very end. An indulgence does not remove this but rather inflames a person toward the cross and makes him ready and eager to perform painful works and to avoid laziness.

Therefore, this article is erroneous and mere prattle, because it announces that no one ought to speak against indulgences, which nonetheless occurs in almost every article of the sermon. One should also not persuade people to do what is clearly against the practice of the holy Roman Church and render it disgusting, as [is done here against] the Church's announcing and publicizing the holy Jubilee Year long before it is to be celebrated in Rome.³⁵

The article also contradicts the practice of all those individual Christian churches throughout the whole world, which always allow papal indulgences as well as those of their own bishops to be proclaimed. For example, a crusade is undertaken by Christians against heretics and infidels, and people are urged and admonished with great diligence to participate, also in part because of the plenary indulgence that crusaders gain. Hence, the concluding words of this article are declared contrary to all truth.

This offered in acknowledgment of the holy Roman See and of all Christian universities and theologians.

XV.

The fifteenth erroneous article reads as follows:

“Fifteenth, it would be far more positive and beneficial for a person to give to the building of St. Peter, or to whatever project is named, solely for the sake of God than to get an indulgence for so doing. For it is dangerous to make such a gift for the sake of an indulgence and not for the sake of God.”

REBUTTAL ■ It is rebutted thusly in Christian manner: First, it is totally bare and naked and fabricated without any proof based on Holy Scripture, when it implies in its conclusion that a person could give alms merely for the sake of an indulgence and not for the sake of God. As though anyone would give alms for the sake of an indulgence without thereby also praising God! For just as surely as a person gives alms for an indulgence, so too he gives it for the sake of God. Indeed, all indulgences are given first of all for the glory of God. Thus, whoever gives alms for the sake of an indulgence is also giving it principally for the sake of God, aside from the fact that no one earns an indulgence unless he has true contrition and love of God. And whoever does good works for the love of God is dedicating them to God and his praise. Therefore, Christians should not believe this article in the least.

³⁵ Luther refers to the Jubilee Indulgence in thesis 26 of his *Ninety-Five Theses*, and Tetzel addresses that topic in thesis 33 of his *106 Frankfurt Theses*. For details, see W. Lurz, “Heiliges Jahr II” in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche* (1993), 4:1325.

This offered in acknowledgment of the holy Roman See and of all Christian universities and theologians.

XVI.

The sixteenth erroneous article reads as follows:

“Sixteenth, far better is the good work shown a needy person than given to a building. It is also far better than the indulgence granted for it. For as it is said: ‘Better is a good work done than much remitted.’ The indulgence, however, is the remittance of many good works, or else nothing is remitted.

Indeed, so that I instruct you correctly, pay attention. You should above all things (considering neither St. Peter’s nor indulgence) give to your poor neighbor, if you want to give anything. But if it should happen that there is no one else in your city who needs help (which unless God will it, will never happen), then you should give as you will, to the churches, altars, jewels, chalices in your city. And when that too is now no longer necessary, then and only then may you give as you will to the building of St. Peter’s or to anything else. Nonetheless, that also you ought not do for the sake of indulgences. For St. Paul says, ‘Whoever does not do good to his closest neighbor is no Christian and worse than a heathen.’ [1 Timothy 5:8] And keep this in mind: whoever tells you otherwise is deceiving you or is really seeking your soul in your purse. And if he finds a penny therein, he would prefer that to every soul.

If you then declare, ‘Then I will never more buy an indulgence,’ I reply, ‘I have already said earlier that my will, desire, request, and advice is that no one seek an indulgence. Let lazy and sleepy Christians buy indulgences. You go your own way.’ ”

REBUTTAL ❏ It is rebutted in Christian manner thusly: First, it is unfounded and entirely obscure, since it considers one matter and leaves the other matter unmentioned. For giving alms to a poor person is more beneficial for the earning of salvation, yet buying a plenary—or indeed any indulgence—is more beneficial for the speedier satisfaction of punishment due to sin. Further, everyone should know that buying an indulgence is also a work of mercy. For whoever buys an indulgence takes pity on his soul and makes himself well-pleasing to God thereby. Therefore, this article concludes erroneously in saying that buying an indulgence is not an act of mercy, and it concludes in a quite un-Christian manner in maintaining that an indulgence is the omission of many good works. For it substantiates that with no passage of Scripture, nor will one ever be found, which could confirm such a thing. Besides, anyone who earns an indulgence must be living in God’s love, and where that love is in a person, that person does many good and great works. [Cf. Galatians 5:6]

This erroneous article also contradicts the contents of all indulgence bulls and briefs, all of which proclaim unanimously that indulgences are given to spur people on to contrition and confession and good works. Therefore, this erroneous article should be entirely discounted.

26

Pronounced in acknowledgment of the holy Roman See and of all Christian universities and doctors.

This article also implies that people are given true teaching in the erroneous sermon. That corresponds not at all with the truth. Rather, it “is wished, implored, and advised” in this article “that no one should buy an indulgence,” advice which is detrimental to salvation. The article says further that only “lazy and sleepy Christians” should purchase an indulgence, which cruelly misleads Christianity. Consider that a person does himself much more good in purchasing the indulgence he needs, than in giving alms to a poor person who is not in a state of utmost need. For the alms or the good work with which someone is earning the indulgence functions just as meritoriously toward eternal life, since it is done for the love of God, as do the alms given to a poor person.

Furthermore, because a person who earns an indulgence by giving alms is released quickly and speedily from the suffering due him for his sins, it is better for him to earn an indulgence than to give alms to poor persons not in a condition of extreme need. Also, the Lord Jesus says in Luke, the eleventh chapter, “Whatever is superfluous, give alms therefrom” [Luke 11:41], which means to those who are not in a condition of utmost need. God does, however, command us to give alms to those who are in a condition of utmost need, even of those goods needed to maintain our nature and status. Therefore, St. Paul is improperly quoted in this article. For St. Paul says, “Whoever does not act well toward the members of his household is no Christian and worse than a heathen.” [1 Timothy 5:8] He does not, however, forbid a person to do good for himself sooner than for his household members who are not in a state of utmost need. Each person should also observe the order of charity in giving alms; that is, he helps himself sooner than his relatives, as discussed above. Therefore, Christian believers should grant no credence to the plain, naked, unsupported words of this article, for the article is not established on the basis of any reliable substantiation of Holy Scripture.

This offered in acknowledgment of the holy Roman See and of all Christian universities and doctors.

XVII.

The seventeenth erroneous article reads as follows:

“Seventeenth, an indulgence is not required, also not recommended but rather is one of those things that are tolerated and allowed. Therefore, it is not a work of obedience, is also not meritorious, but is rather an excuse from obedience. Therefore, just as one should not prevent anyone from buying an indulgence, so too one should draw Christians away from doing so and instead should stimulate and strengthen them for the works and sufferings that could be remitted by indulgence.”

REBUTTAL ¶ It is rebutted in true Christian manner thusly: True, there is no command to earn an indulgence. It is, however, most truly advised by Their Holinesses the Popes, by the revered holy ecumenical councils, by all devout prelates of Holy Church who grant indulgences for the sake of practicing good works, to the honor of God and for the good of Christendom and for the profit of an individual (since he does good works for the sake of the indulgence) and for the good of the person so that he is freed from the suffering due his sins, as mentioned above. Therefore, an indulgence is not one of those things that are merely “tolerated and allowed.”

This article claims further that earning an indulgence is not a meritorious work but rather a way out of obedience, which for all eternity can be as little justified by any shred of Holy Scripture as all the other articles. For the works that are graced with an indulgence are always better than the same ones accomplished with the same love but without an indulgence. Thus, this article contradicts the freedom of the holy Roman See, for God has entrusted to his regent, the pope and the Papal See, the prime leadership of the things that serve humankind for salvation.

This offered in acknowledgment of the holy Roman See and of all Christian universities and theologians.

XVIII.

The eighteenth erroneous article reads as follows:

“Eighteenth, whether souls are drawn out of purgatory by indulgences, I do not know. Still, I do not believe so, although various modern scholars say so. But it is impossible for them to prove it, and furthermore, the Church has not yet come to a conclusion. Therefore, for greater certainty it is better that you pray for them and labor for them. For this is more proven and is certain.”

REBUTTAL ¶ It is refuted thusly in Christian manner: First, it is full of malicious guile, when it claims that the Church has not concluded that souls can be delivered from purgatory through indulgences. For the tradition of the Roman Church does maintain that souls are delivered from purgatory by an indulgence. There are also very many altars, churches, and chapels in Rome, where souls are released by celebrating Masses or by doing other good works. This is so because the popes have granted plenary indulgences to these very places to release souls, whenever Mass is celebrated there or other good works are carried out, as is the practice in Rome. The pope and the Roman Church would not permit this release of souls in such manner in Rome, if it were not thoroughly established. For the pope and the holy See, as well as the papal office, do not err in matters that concern the faith.

Now indulgences also concern faith, for whoever does not believe that the pope can grant indulgences and plenary indulgences to the living and the dead—as long as they remain in God’s love—that person maintains that the pope has not received complete authority from the Lord Christ over Christian believers, which contradicts sacred canon law.

This article also announces that various modern theologians say that souls can be delivered from purgatory through indulgences, but that it is impossible for them to prove it. In this regard one should know that the revered modern theologians have indeed established it very well and have never been condemned for that by the holy Roman Church. Accordingly, they must well have proven it. Especially is this the case with St. Thomas, whose teaching is concerned with faith and the salvation of souls. The Popes Urban and Innocent have accepted and affirmed his teaching as Christian and true.³⁶ Furthermore, no following pope has ever condemned his teaching. Because the teaching of St. Thomas is accepted as Christian, the truth of this article is truly questionable. Also St. Jerome says, “Because the faith of His Papal Holiness is accepted as right and good, since he occupies the throne and faith of Peter, so then that person who reproves his [the pope’s] faith proves himself to be ignorant, or evil, or a heretic.”³⁷ And this is how that person is to be judged who reproves St. Thomas’ teaching of the Christian faith as unsubstantiated.

This is offered in acknowledgment of the holy See and of all Christian universities and doctors.

XIX.

The nineteenth erroneous article reads as follows:

“Nineteenth, in these points I have no doubts and they are sufficiently grounded in Scripture. Therefore, you should also have no doubt and let the Scholastic Doctors remain Scholastics. Taken all together they are not enough with their opinions to substantiate a sermon.”

REBUTTAL ■ It is refuted in Christian manner accordingly: First, this article and all the articles cited are totally ungrounded in Scripture. For the articles contradict the practice of the holy Roman Church and the teaching of all modern, venerable Christian teachers. If St. Augustine together with the three other ancient, venerable Doctors of the Church had foreseen that the authority of the papal office and of the Roman Church concerning indulgences would be so despised by erring persons, they would certainly have forestalled it with their writings. Modern revered theologians have, however, experienced and heard how malicious

³⁶ Urban IV, Pope 1261–1264, French, never resided in Rome. Innocent VI, Pope 1352–1362, French, acted severely toward the Spiritual Franciscans. Aquinas served as theological counselor to this papal court in Viterbo.

³⁷ St. Jerome, “Epistula ad Damasum (No. 15),” *Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* (Vindobonae: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1996), 54:62–67.

men have been speaking, preaching, and writing against the pope and the validity of indulgences, and they have challenged this, based on solid Christian foundation. Nor has the holy Roman Church rebuked or censored them for doing so.

This article also states, "One should let the "*Doctores Scholasticos*" remain "Scholastics," for taken all together, they with their opinions are unable to substantiate a sermon." [And further,] ignorant people hold this opinion of the venerable scholastic doctors, for these venerable "*Doctores*" uncover and oppose all new errors. Therefore, wrong-thinking people deride them. However, the holy Roman Church together with the whole community of sacred Christendom are in unanimous agreement that the revered venerable "*Doctores Scholasticos*" buttress the holy Christian faith against the heretics with their truly salvific teaching based on solid Christian doctrine. And what is more, they are certainly able to preach a sermon! Thus this article makes sport of them quite unfairly and shamefully and contrary to all reason and truth.

Further, all the erroneous articles are characterized by abruptness and obscurity, perhaps because they are intended to be interpreted however one will and in any direction. The great scandal that they elicit, however, ought to have been considered beforehand. For because of them many people will hold the *magisterium* and jurisdiction of His Papal Holiness and the holy Roman See in contempt. The works of sacramental reparation will also cease. People will no longer believe preachers and theologians. Everyone will want to interpret Holy Scripture according to his own whim. Through this, all of holy Christendom must come into great spiritual danger, since each person will believe what best pleases him. In time, as the deceptive article announces, the modern revered theologians, in whom for many centuries Christianity has placed great confidence, shall no longer be considered credible. For these reasons this article is entirely erroneous.

Submitted in acknowledgment of the holy Roman See and of all Christian universities and theologians.

XX.

The twentieth erroneous article reads as follows:

"Twentieth, whether some people reproach me as a heretic (for such a truth is quite injurious for their money boxes), I pay little heed to such babblings inasmuch as no one does so except some muddled brains who have never sniffed a Bible, have never read the Christian teachers, have never understood their own teachers but rather are decaying in their riddled and fragmented opinions. For if they had understood them, they would know that they should defame no one without hearing and challenging him. Nonetheless, may God give them and us right understanding. Amen."

REBUTTAL ■ It refuted in a Christian and well-grounded manner: First, it is totally erroneous, and it requires no riddled brain to know who is a heretic. Therefore I, Brother Johann Tetzel, Order of Preachers, am forced to leave out several other teachings and positions here, which I intend, with God's help, to discuss and prove correct in a Christian manner at the respected University of Frankfurt an der Oder on a date to be arranged.³⁸ That disputation will make anyone with half a brain able to learn and recognize who is a *Heresiarcha, Hereticus, Sismaticus, Erroneus, Temerarius, Malesonans, etc.*, (which is translated: *an archheretic, a heretic, a reprobate, a lunatic, a blasphemer or slanderer, etc.*) and who is truly a Christian believer or not, granted of course that they have considered this treatise of mine as well as my previous treatise and [also] the sermon on twenty erroneous articles, as well as the treatise that begins, "*Amore et studio elucidando veritatis,*" and concludes in the last thesis, "*Ac sic magis per multas tribulationes intrare celum quam per securitatem pacis confidunt.*"³⁹

From all this it will also become clear who "has a confused brain, who has never sniffed a Bible, never read the Christian masters, has never understood his own teachers." Therefore, I offer all of this rebuttal and my position that I have written regarding these matters for the consideration and judgment of His Holiness the Pope, the holy Roman Church, all trustworthy Christian universities, and doctors⁴⁰ with sure trust in the truth, with the commitment to suffer whatever they judge just, [if any of it be heretical], be it through imprisonment, the stocks, drowning, or burning at the stake.

I write this as true Christian fraternal admonition, so that from now on no one should believe the sermon on the twenty erroneous articles nor the theses that begin, "*Dominus et Magister noster Ihesus Christus dicendo penitentiam agite etc.*," and end, "*Ac sic magis per multas tribulationes intrare celum etc.*,"⁴¹ [that is to say], unless their author were to submit to the consideration and judgment of the His Papal Holiness, the holy Roman Church, and all trustworthy Christian universities and shall have proven such submission through his actions. For I am confident that without such submission, the sermon on the twenty articles and the recently mentioned theses would be neither sermon nor redemptive doctrine but rather a seduction and a perversion of the people. For Christ himself says, "Whoever hears not the Church, that one shall be to you as a gentile and a publican." [Matthew 18:17]

38 Tetzel is referring to his forthcoming, disputation-document, "50 Positiones," a second series of fifty theses in Latin that he (rather than Wimpina) would write. Printed in late April/early May, no original copy exists. Reprinted in *Dokumente zur Causa Lutheri*, Text 12, pp. 369–375.

39 Luther's *Ninety-Five Theses*. Tetzel quotes the opening words of the "Introduction" ("Out of love and zeal for the truth . . ."), and the complete thesis 95 ("And thus be confident of entering into heaven through many tribulations rather than through the false security of peace").

40 Note Tetzel's subtle but crucial variation of his concluding formula, from "all Christian" to "all trustworthy Christian" (*unvordechtig* = trustworthy, above suspicion) and his insertion of it three times into the body itself of this rebuttal 20. Note also his inclusion of the formula (unchanged) within the body of rebuttal 16 above (cf. note 24 above).

41 In this final reference to Luther's *Ninety-Five Theses*, Tetzel omits the opening phrase quoted in paragraph one above, and cites instead the beginning of the first thesis ("When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, 'Repent'").

And if that person who wrote and distributed the erroneous sermon on the twenty articles should maintain anything publicly against this rebuttal of mine without the evidence of Holy Scripture, of canon law, and of theologians, or without consideration of sufficient cause and reason, then no Christian should be upset by him, for it is mere prattle. And if this person does not submit his fabrication publicly and in writing to the judgment of His Papal Holiness, of the holy See, and of all trustworthy Christian universities, then I will not write against him again, considering it all unworthy of response and rebuttal. To which I do here-with publicly give my witness.

Submitted for the praise of God, for the salvation of humankind, and to the honor of the holy Papal See.

Jan Hus

<http://reformation500.csl.edu/bio/jan-hus/>



Jan Hus

The fifteenth-century church reformer Jan Hus is known as much for his controversial execution at the Council of Constance in 1415 as he is for his teachings. His legacy for the Protestant Reformation remains that of a controversial late medieval pastor who sought the reform of the church in his lands. It was in fact the name of Jan Hus that was intoned against Luther during the later stages of the indulgence controversy.

Luther soon found himself corresponding with Bohemian Hussites on matters of common agreement, leading him to write, “We are all Hussites.” Hus’s career as a

reformer, however, owed as much to political tensions and revolution in Bohemia as it did to his theology.

Jan Hus came from a family of little means in the southern Bohemian town of Husinec, from which he takes his surname. Though his date of birth is still uncertain, by 1393 he had enrolled in the arts faculty at the university in Prague. He would earn his bachelor of arts there in 1393 and his master of arts in 1396, thereafter beginning to teach in the arts faculty. By 1400, he was ordained a priest and enrolled in the theology faculty at Prague, while continuing to teach in the arts. A year later, he was named dean of the arts faculty, and then in 1402 was chosen by the Czech masters of Charles College to be preacher of Bethlehem Chapel. This role included supervision of two residential student colleges in connection with the chapel, where he served for the next decade. He progressed through the baccalaureate stages in theology, but the ongoing controversy over reform forced him to cease his studies.

During this period, Hus became known for his passionate, orthodox sermons in support of reform, though he did provoke occasional controversy by attacking popular religious practices, such as pilgrimages to see bleeding hosts in Germany, and church teaching, such as the prohibition against unlicensed preaching. What both made Hus's theology attractive and evoked opposition to it, however, was its similarity to the teachings of the notorious fourteenth-century English reformer, John Wycliffe (d. 1384). Wycliffe's philosophical and theological writings had made their way to Prague during the 1390s, when Hus was a student. Hus himself had even copied some of Wycliffe's manuscripts in 1398. Wycliffite theology spread throughout Bohemia, which itself had a long tradition of reform efforts and made it fertile ground for many of Wycliffe's ideas, including his rejection of transubstantiation and the claims of the papacy, his belief that there was a true church composed of the predestined standing independent of the Roman church, and his support for secular lordship over territorial churches free from papal control.

Hus did not agree with all of Wycliffite theology, in particular the rejection of transubstantiation, but he supported much of it and used it in support of moral, ecclesiastical, and theological reform. In 1403, forty-five articles were extracted from Wycliffe's writings and condemned by the Germany faculty at Prague. This reflected a broader splintering of the Bohemian nation. Czech Bohemians had been at odds with the German Bohemians—represented by Bavarians, Saxons, and Poles—and sought their independence. With Wycliffe's teachings continuing to gain ground, the archbishop of Prague compelled the Czech university masters to condemn the forty-five articles again in 1408 and thus suppress its influence amongst the Czech nationalists.

The archbishop's plan backfired, however, and resulted in further momentum for a Wycliffite reform of the Bohemian church with Hus as its most influential representative. This had immediate political and ecclesiastical consequences. In 1409, Hus and other Czech nationalist reformers persuaded the Bohemian king, Wenceslas IV, to support them against the German nations present on the Prague faculty. The Kuttenberg Decree of 1409 enabled the Czechs to take control of the faculty, forcing the Germans to leave for other universities. The faculty chose Hus as rector at Prague that same year, signifying his elevation to the head of its reform movement. The political and ecclesiastical basis for their reforms was a Wycliffite view of sovereign territorial churches under the headship of a secular ruler, not the papacy in Rome.

This not unexpectedly caused massive political turmoil and brought a stern reaction from the local archbishop and the Roman curia. In 1409, Archbishop Zbyněk appealed to Pope Alexander V, recently elected at Pisa to end the ongoing papal schism, regarding Wycliffite theology and secular encroachment on the church's authority in Bohemia. Alexander responded with a 1409 bull that condemned Wycliffite theology and the list of forty-five articles already proscribed by the Prague faculty, and even prohibited preaching in Hus's Bethlehem chapel. A year later, the archbishop burned all of Wycliffe's works. Hus continued to defend Wycliffe and to preach from the Bethlehem pulpit, however, and soon appealed to the new pope, John XXIII, regarding the earlier bull of Alexander. As a result, Hus was excommunicated by his archbishop, thus beginning the ecclesiastical proceedings against him that would end in Constance.

After his local excommunication, Hus was referred to Rome for his Wycliffite teaching and disobedience to ecclesiastical superiors in August 1410. He refused to stand trial in Rome and was excommunicated by the Roman court in February 1411. Popular support for him in Bohemia only grew as a result, forcing the archbishop of Prague to flee. Hus soon took on the status of both icon and pariah. Anti-papal polemicists flocked to his side as he continued to support the Wycliffite teaching of the reformers. His opponents congregated in Rome, including supporters of his exiled archbishop, German theologians who were forced off the faculty at Prague, and Czechs who opposed Wycliffe's theology.

The situation in Prague grew more unstable as a result of Hus's opposition to the preaching of papal indulgences, authorized by John XXIII in 1412. King Wenceslas IV approved the indulgences because the profits were to be split between him and the pope, as did the anti-Wycliffite theologians at the university. Public demonstrations ensued, with Hus's supporters declaring opposition to the pope, whom they proclaimed "Antichrist." As a result three protestors were executed by Prague magistrates in July 1412. Shortly thereafter, Hus's excommunication by Rome was declared in Prague, forcing him to withdraw from the city for two years. During this sabbatical, Hus wrote his more famous treatises, including his Wycliffite ecclesiology (the Latin *De ecclesia*) and his proposal for clerical reform (the Czech *On Simony*). In 1413, King Wenceslas hoped to overcome the religious controversy by establishing a royal commission to bring about peace, but it only dissolved over continued theological and political differences. The stage was then set for Hus's fateful trip to Constance. The Council of Constance had convened in 1414 to bring end to yet another recent papal schism, as well as address the

need for ongoing reform of the church and the problem of heresy—which included both Wycliffite teaching and Jan Hus’s support of it. Hus decided to attend believing that there was little hope for amicable agreement in Bohemia. The Holy Roman emperor, Sigismund, offered him a passage of safe conduct in spring 1414, but Hus proceeded without it. He arrived in fall 1414, then was imprisoned in November due to the presence of his enemies at Constance. Hus’s supporters, including Wenceslas, were finally able to convince the council to hold a public hearing for him in June 1415. Hus expected a theological debate, but he was simply approached with a list of thirty teachings ascribed to him. Even though he did not teach or hold all of them as charged, he nonetheless refused to recant, and in a purportedly hostile rant denounced the council. On July 6, 1415, the council condemned him as a heretic, stripped him of his ecclesiastical vesture, and handed him over to secular authorities, who burned him alive.

Hus’s significance for the Reformation largely exists in the image of a martyred reformer who opposed the papacy and the Roman institutional church. At the Leipzig Debate of 1519, Johann Eck accused Luther of being a Hussite for rejecting the exclusive authority of the Roman church. Luther responded that he found nothing wrong in Hus’s claim that the Greek church was on equal footing with the Roman church and that the Council of Constance had erred in condemning and executing Hus. This led Luther to first exclaim that councils, like popes and theologians, could err and were thus subordinate to Scripture. It was only after Leipzig that in 1520 Luther finally read Hus’s *De ecclesia*, which led him to state that he, his prior Johannes von Staupitz, St. Augustine, and even St. Paul were “all Hussites.”

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Luther's Attitude toward John Hus

<http://www.ctsfw.net/media/pdfs/PelikanLuthersAttitudeHus.pdf>

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Ein Prediger muss nicht allein weiden, also dass er die Schafe unterweise, wie sie rechte Christen sollen sein, sondern auch daneben den Wölfen wehren, dass sie die Schafe nicht angreifen und mit falscher Lehre verführen und Irrtum einführen.

Luther

Es ist kein Ding, das die Leute mehr bei der Kirche behält denn die gute Predigt. — *Apologie, Art. 24*

If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle? — *1 Cor. 14:8*

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ARCHIVE

Luther's Attitude Toward John Hus

By JAROSLAV PELIKAN, JR.

The history of the development of Protestantism in Eastern Europe is an area of church history to which comparatively little attention has been devoted. Because Protestantism is now relatively weak in the lands east of the Iron Curtain, many students of church history are inclined to forget that at one time the churches of the Reformation had millions of adherents in these lands which are now dominated by Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and Soviet Communism.

In a previous issue of this journal we have called attention to an important chapter from the history of the Reformation in Poland.¹ In many ways, however, the Reformation in Bohemia is far more important, especially because of its relationship to Luther's Reformation. That relationship was climaxed in Luther's endorsement of the *Confessio Bohemica* of 1535. But the chief factor involved in the negotiations between Luther and the Bohemians was Luther's high regard for John Hus (ca. 1369—1415). It is the purpose of this paper to trace the development of Luther's feeling about Hus.²

I

Just when Luther first heard of Hus, and from whom, is difficult to determine. But it seems safe to say that his first knowledge of Hus and of the Hussites came when he was quite young. Luther's father was a miner, and the German miners of the latter half of the fifteenth century were in constant contact with Bohemia.³ German noblemen hired Czech artists, and vice versa. The contact between Germany and

¹ "The Consensus of Sandomierz," *CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY*, XVIII (1947), 825—37.

² The first to try a comprehensive discussion of this development was the Russian scholar E. Novikof, *Gus i Luter* (2 vols.; Moskva, 1859). A less voluminous, but more penetrating study of the problem is that of Jaroslav Goll, "Jak soudil Luther o Husovi?" *Časopis musea království českého*, 1880, 69 ff. Independent of the previous two, because, as he says, he cannot read "Ungarisch" (!), are the pertinent sections of Walter Koehler, *Luther und die Kirchengeschichte nach seinen Schriften*, I. (untersuchender) Teil, 1. Abteilung (Erlangen, 1900). Cf. also W. H. T. Dau, "Luther's Relation to Hus," in *Theological Quarterly*, XIX, 3 (July, 1915), pp. 129—163.

³ On the extent of the contacts between German and Czech miners, cf. S. Harrison Thomson, *Czechoslovakia in European History* (Princeton, 1943), pp. 101—02.

Bohemia can also be gauged through a study of the Czech, Moravian, and Silesian students at various German universities in this period;⁴ and one can glimpse the meaning of this academic contact if he pay particular attention to those who studied at Wittenberg.⁵

Much more conclusive than this tenuous evidence for an awareness of Hus among Luther's contemporaries is the fact that the memory of the Hussite Wars was still alive in the places where and among the people with whom Luther spent his early life. At least three times in his writings⁶ the Reformer indicates an acquaintance with German participation in those wars, and that is not surprising; for the city of Erfurt, whose university Luther entered early in 1501, had been a collecting place for the anti-Hussite taxes of the early and middle fifteenth century.⁷ In the German lower classes, too, the social upheavals of the Hussite period served as a reminder and an encouragement in their difficult lot.⁸

The extent of the awareness referred to above may well be gauged from the part played by Jan Zizka (d. Nov. 11, 1424) in the writings of Luther's contemporaries.⁹ Thus, for example, a colored picture of Zizka and of the Hussite armies decorates the cover of a sixteenth-century "Relatio historica

⁴ J. V. Šimák, "Studenti z Čech, Moravy a Slezka na nemeckých universitách v XV.—XVII. století," *Časopis českého musea*, 1905; also J. O. Novotný, *Střední Slovensko* (Praha, 1937), I, pp.150—59.

⁵ Ferdinand Menčík, "Studenti z Čech a Moravy ve Wittemberku od r. 1502 až do r. 1602," *Časopis českého musea*, 1897, 250—68; most of them, of course, came after 1530. For a handy summary see E. G. Schwiebert, *Reformation Lectures* (Valparaiso, 1937), Appendix B "Student Matriculation in the University of Wittenberg from 1520—1560," p. iv.

⁶ "Warnunge D. Martini Luther, An seine lieben Deudschen," *Werke* (Weimar, 1881 ff.; hereafter referred to as WA), 30—III, 281. Cf. his reference to the Germans as those "qui occidimus eum," "Schreiben an die boehmischen Landstaende," WA 10—II, 174; also "De instituendis ministris ecclesiae," WA 12, 171, and Ernst Schaefer, *Luther als Kirchenhistoriker* (Guetersloh, 1897), p. 459.

⁷ Cf. František Palacký, *Dejiny národu českého* (Praha, 1921), page 624.

⁸ See Wilhelm Vogt, *Die Vorgeschichte des Bauernkriegs* (Halle, 1887), pp. 57—83: "Das 'boehmische Gift' und seine Vorbereitung in Deutschland."

⁹ Jan Žižka of Trebova was the one-eyed leader of the Hussite armies. A sketchy discussion of Žižka's place in the humanistic literature of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries is offered by Karel Hrdina, "Žižka v humanistickém písemnictví XV. a XVI. století" in Rudolf Urbánek (ed.), *Sborník Žižkov 1424—1924* (Praha, 1924), pp. 196—99.

de Turcarum moribus."¹⁰ And the German anticlericals¹¹ of the time, notably Ulrich von Hutten, used Zizka as proof of the fact that an anticlerical revolt could be successful.¹² This enthusiasm for Zizka was shared by others in the same period,¹³ as well as by Luther's followers of a generation later.¹⁴

As the Hussite Wars had not been forgotten, so, too, it was rumored about here and there that the condemnation of John Hus at Constance had not been completely legal and fair.¹⁵ Luther became acquainted with these rumors from at least two sources. One of them was Johann Greffenstein, who told him that Hus "sey noch nie mit schriften ubirwunden."¹⁶ Diligent study by Biereye, supplemented by Otto Scheel,¹⁷ has failed to identify Greffenstein; but it seems safe to take 1505 as the *terminus ad quem* of the utterance. Similarly, he heard "von Andreas Proles" that Hus was defeated in debate by a Bible corrupted in the passage Ezekiel 34:10.¹⁸ Now, Luther is said to have seen Proles "jam decrepitem" in Magdeburg in

¹⁰ Reprinted as plate 120 in the appendix to Urbánek, *op. cit.* The manuscript is — or, at least, was — preserved in Vienna.

¹¹ The attempt has recently been made to interpret both Hussitism and Hutten's admiration for it as an instance of class warfare rather than of anticlericalism; the argument appears highly tendential. Roman Jakobson, *Moudrost starých Čechu* (New York, 1943), pp. 170—72.

¹² *Gespraeche von Ulrich von Hutten uebersetzt und erlaeutert*, edited by David Friedrich Strauss as Part III of his *Ulrich von Hutten* (Leipzig, 1860), p. 209. For an interpretation see Paul Held, *Ulrich von Hutten* (Leipzig, 1928), pp. 146—47.

¹³ So Martin Bucer, or whoever it was that wrote *Gesprechbiechlein newew Karsthans*, edited with an introduction by Ernst Lehmann (Halle, 1930), p. 15. For this passage in its historical context, see Hajo Holborn, *Ulrich von Hutten and the German Reformation* (New Haven, 1937), page 179.

¹⁴ Matthias Flacius Illyricus, *Catalogus testium veritatis* (Frankfurt, 1672), p. 733.

¹⁵ The extent of Hussite propaganda in Germany during this period is summarized by Lindsay, *A History of the Reformation*, I (New York, 1926), pp. 98 and 309.

¹⁶ "Von den newen Eckischenn Bullen und lugen," WA 6, 591. James Mackinnon doubts the effectiveness of Greffenstein's words at the time they were spoken, *Luther and the Reformation* (London, 1925—30), I, page 25.

¹⁷ *Martin Luther. Vom Katholizismus zur Reformation*, I (Tuebingen, 1921), p. 306, on the relative merit of the view that Greffenstein was an Augustinian and of the theory that he was one of Luther's teachers.

¹⁸ "Von den newen Eckischenn Bullen und lugen," WA 6, 590.

1497.¹⁹ But it was probably not directly from Proles, but through Johann Staupitz,²⁰ that Luther heard the story.

What is the significance of these data? Ever since Flacius²¹ it has been customary to speak of Proles as a "pre-Reformer," to compare him with John the Baptist as a preparer of the way.²² On the basis of the data quoted above and similar indications, Ludwig Keller has sought to find such a "pre-Reformer" also in Staupitz, but in vain.²³ For Keller's is, as Theodor Kolde has shown, an artificial theory, based not upon an observation of the facts, but upon speculation.²⁴ Rather, it seems nearer to the truth to see in these facts an indication of an active spiritual life in the Augustinian order, a spiritual life which may well have recognized John Hus as the loyal son of the Church that he really was.²⁵

That indication is strengthened by the fact that there were books by Hus lying around in certain places where they could be read. That this was true of either Luther's monastery or his university is apparent from his own words.²⁶ From his quotations at the Leipzig Disputation in 1519 it seems that, despite his claim never to have read anything by Hus,²⁷ Luther had read the Acts of the Council of Constance carefully²⁸ and had also retained passages from Hus' *De ecclesia* not contained in the condemnatory decrees of that Council,²⁹ though

¹⁹ Melchior Adamus, *Vitae Germanorum Theologorum* (Heidelberg, 1620), p. 6.

²⁰ So Luther himself reports, *WA, Tischreden* (hereafter referred to as *Ti*), 4, 654.

²¹ Cf. his *Catalogus testium veritatis*, pp. 849—50.

²² So, for example, H. A. Proehle, *Andreas Proles, ein Zeuge der Wahrheit kurz vor Luther* (Gotha, 1867).

²³ *Johann von Staupitz und die Anfaenge der Reformation* (Leipzig, 1888).

²⁴ "Johann von Staupitz, ein Waldenser und Wiedertaeufer, eine kirchenhistorische Entdeckung beleuchtet," *Zeitschrift fuer Kirchengeschichte* (hereafter referred to as *ZKG*), 7 (1887).

²⁵ Cf. Hedwig Vonschott, *Geistiges Leben im Augustinerorden am Ende des Mittelalters und zu Beginn der Neuzeit* (Berlin, 1915).

²⁶ "Vorrede zu Confessio fidei ac religionis baronum et nobilium regni Bohemiae," *WA* 50, 379.

²⁷ Cf. Luther to Johann Staupitz, October 3, 1519, *WA, Briefe*, 2, 514, and "Von den newen Eckischenn Bullen und lügen," *WA* 6, 587—88.

²⁸ ". . . als auch etlich acta selbs schreyben," "Von den newen Eckischenn Bullen und lügen," *WA* 6, 591; cf. Luther and Carlstadt to the Elector Frederick, August 18, 1519, *WA, Briefe*, 2, 470.

²⁹ This was the conclusion reached by Theodor Kolde, *Luthers Stellung zu Konzil und Kirche bis zum Wormser Reichstag 1521* (Guettersloh, 1876), p. 47.

they may well have been recorded in other anti-Hussite writings. Nor is the possibility excluded that the books of Johann Wesel, of which Luther spoke highly,³⁰ provided him with information; for Wesel had been in close contact with the Bohemians and had addressed some treatises to them which made trouble for him.³¹

Luther's early experiences of John Hus can, therefore, be summarized thus: Although, in harmony with the ecclesiastical tradition, Luther was taught that Hus was a heretic to be avoided,³² there were nevertheless influences in his early life which gave him a proclivity for the Czech Reformer, a proclivity which made itself increasingly prominent as his reformatory thought progressed.

II

The first of Luther's opponents to recognize his affinity for Hus was probably either John Tetzel³³ or Sylvester Prierias, who received the impression upon reading some of Luther's words that "si talia in lucem dedisses quasi mox ad Bohemos commigraturus aut magnum aliquod ac latens adhuc scisma propalaturus."³⁴ Prierias' right to that priority is made questionable by the doubtful date of his "Replica";³⁵ but in any event, the fact that this is merely a passing remark and only one expletive among very many would tend to reduce its importance. There were probably others among Luther's opponents early in 1518 who hurled the name "Hussite" at him;³⁶ and it may well be that the use of that name

³⁰ "Von den Konziliis und Kirchen," WA 50, 600; also "Responsio Lutheriana," WA 6, 184.

³¹ Cf. Otto Clemen, "Wesel," *Realenzyklopaedie fuer die protestantische Theologie und Kirche* (3d ed.; 1896 ff.), 21, 129.

³² His references to "venenum sub melle," WA 50, 379, or to his mortal hatred for Hus, "In epistolam S. Pauli ad Galatas Commentarius," WA 40—I, 138, are probably exaggerated accounts. But it seems clear that he was warned about Hus: "Schreiben an die boehmischen Landstaende," WA 10—II, 172.

³³ Cf. Walter Koehler, *op. cit.*, p. 172.

³⁴ "Replica F. Silvestri Prieriatis, sacri Palatii apostolici Magistri, ad F. Martinum Luther Ordinis Eremitarum," WA 2, 51.

³⁵ Although some scholars date it earlier, Knaake puts it "wahrscheinlich Anfang November 1518," WA 2, 48.

³⁶ Cf. Luther to Johann Lang, March 21, 1518, WA, *Briefe*, 1, 154, on the many "portenta" with which his adversaries attempted to smear him.

was a common polemical device in the early sixteenth century.³⁷

Effective use was not made of the similarity between Luther and Hus, however, until the entry of Johann Eck into the controversies which had sprung up as a result of Luther's theses. Slightly younger than Luther, Eck was pro-chancellor at the University of Ingolstadt and inquisitor for Bavaria and Franconia. The publication of the Ninety-Five Theses moved him to break off his friendship with Luther and to write "Obelisca" against him sometime early in 1518. Here he takes exception to Luther's view of the Church, labeling it "Bohemicum virus."³⁸ Although his "Asterisca," written in reply, do not refer to this charge, Luther was struck by it.³⁹ And when, a year later, various accusations by Eck had begun to accumulate, Luther published a "Disputatio et excusatio," in which he first expressed criticism of the Council of Constance, where Hus had been executed,⁴⁰ and ridiculed Eck's accusation of Hussitism by a reference to an inscription on the Lateran Church in Rome.⁴¹

Strengthened by this in his conviction that Luther was in league with the Hussites, Eck came to Leipzig in June, 1519, and on the twenty-seventh day of that month began his debate with Andreas Carlstadt. Rumor had it that there were some Bohemians in Leipzig for the disputation, who wanted to support Luther as a follower of Hus.⁴² When Luther was asked to preach, all the churches were closed to him, and he used the debate auditorium. His sermon, delivered on June 29, St. Peter's and St. Paul's day,⁴³ dealt with

³⁷ In an undated sermon on John 8, Luther compares the attacks on him as a Hussite to attacks on Christ as a Samaritan, *WA* 4, 614. For another instance, see Oskar Farner, *Huldrych Zwingli*, II (Zuerich, 1946), page 331.

³⁸ Eck, "Obelisca" No. 18, *WA*, 1, 302.

³⁹ Cf. Luther to Johann Sylvius Egranus, March 24, 1518, *WA Briefe*, 1, 158; also Carlstadt to Eck, June 11, 1518, in *Luthers Saemtliche Schriften* (Saint Louis Edition, hereafter referred to as *StL*), 15, 805.

⁴⁰ "Disputatio et excusatio F. Martini Luther adversus criminationes D. Iohannis Eccii," *WA* 2, 159. This holds if J. Knaake's reading "Constantipolitanam" is correct rather than "Constantinopolitanam" in other editions.

⁴¹ ". . . ut ipsa quoque Ecclesia Ecce sit Hussita," *ibid.*, p. 159.

⁴² Eck to Georg Hauen and Franz Burckardt, July 1, 1519, *StL* 15, 1228.

⁴³ "Ein Sermon von sanct Peters und Pauls fest," *WA* 2, 246—49.

grace and free will, and with the primacy of Peter. Because of its treatment of this latter point the sermon seemed to Eck to be Hussitic.⁴⁴ And so it is not surprising that when Luther chanced into the Paulist church one morning while the fathers were reading mass, they ran away with their monstrosities for fear of being contaminated by the heretic.⁴⁵

On July 4, 1519, after the preliminary bout between Eck and Carlstadt was over, the debate between Eck and Luther began. Before the morning had passed, Eck took occasion to refer to the fact that "cum summa Christianorum iniuria sumus experti portas infernorum prevaluisse ecclesie Hierosolymitane . . . addo quoque Boemice."⁴⁶ Luther's reply mentioned the Bohemians, and no more.⁴⁷ But the next day Eck pressed his point, acknowledging himself as an enemy of the schismatic Bohemians and citing the resemblance between their position and Luther's on the controverted points; "fateor, quod Bohemi in suorum errorum pertinaci defensione illa commemorant," he added, "et his armis virulentis se defendunt."⁴⁸ While granting that the Bohemians sinned by breaking the highest law of Christian love,⁴⁹ Luther expressed his amazement that so avid an opponent of the Bohemians as Eck had never taken the time to write against them.⁵⁰ Although he attempted at first to sidestep the issue about his agreement with Hus and his disagreement with the Council of Constance,⁵¹ he was ultimately forced to defend Hus and even to grant that the Bohemians had been wronged; for

⁴⁴ Eck to Jacob Hochstraten, July 24, 1519, *StL* 15, 1227; cf. Eck to Hauen and Burckardt, July 1, 1519, *StL* 15, 1228.

⁴⁵ Sebastian Froeschel, Preface to "Vom Koenigreich Jesu Christi und seinem ewigen Priesterthum," *StL* 15, 1208; cf. W. H. T. Dau, *The Leipzig Debate in 1519* (St. Louis, 1919), p. 130.

⁴⁶ "Disputatio Excellentium theologorum Iohannis Eckii et Martini Lutheri Augustiniani," *WA* 2, 262.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, *WA* 2, 266.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, *WA* 2, 275; cf. also Eck's *Ad malesanam Lutheri venationem* of October 28, 1519, preserved in the Fritzlaff Memorial Library, leaf 4 B; and Eck to the Elector Frederick, November 18, 1519, *StL* 15, 1317.

⁴⁹ "Disputatio," *WA* 2, 275; for an interpretation cf. Erich Seeberg, *Luthers Theologie, II: Christus. Wirklichkeit und Urbild* (Stuttgart, 1937), p. 226.

⁵⁰ "Disputatio," *WA* 2, 276; see also the curious misreading of this passage in Heinrich Boehmer, *Road to Reformation* (Philadelphia, 1946), page 285.

⁵¹ On the Council, "Disputatio," *WA* 2, 283; on Hus, *ibid.*, p. 288.

many of Hus' articles were most Christian and evangelical.⁵² With inexorable logic, Eck concluded that if Luther supported Hus, whom Constance had condemned, then Luther was putting his own judgment above that of the Council.⁵³

III

Eck's strategy had worked, his suspicions were confirmed: Luther was a Hussite and had been forced to admit it. And now that Luther's identity with the Hussites was established, Eck determined to take full advantage of the situation. A few months after the debate he tried to use the Hussite bogey to scare Luther's protector, Frederick,⁵⁴ but the attempt failed. Less than a year after that, in October, 1520, he published a tract in criticism of what Luther had said and written since Leipzig.⁵⁵ There was much that displeased him, most of all Luther's growing friendship for Hus and the Hussites. This friendship did not surprise him, for Luther seemed to have much in common with the Bohemian heretics.⁵⁶ Indeed, in June, 1520, Luther had urged that attempts be made to conciliate the Czechs, since an injustice had been done them⁵⁷ — a charge that irked Eck very much.⁵⁸ In his pamphlet on the Lord's Supper of December, 1519, Luther had even sug-

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 297. Eck referred to this statement eleven years later in the thirtieth of his *Theses* 405, reprinted in Wilhelm Gussmann, *Quellen und Forschungen zur Geschichte des augsburgischen Glaubensbekenntnisses*, II (Kassel, 1930), p. 107. Because the disputation was in public, it is, I think, correct to see in this action, as Hartmann Grisar does, proof that Luther was "in die Enge gebracht," *Martin Luther*, I (Freiburg, 1911), p. 295.

⁵³ "Disputation," WA 2, 299. He insisted especially that Luther's view of the Church as the company of the elect "ad Hussiticam intelligentiam, est hereticissimum," *ibid.*, p. 295. For the place of this in the debate and in Luther's development, cf. Karl Holl, "Die Entstehung von Luthers Kirchenbegriff," *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte*, I: *Luther* (6th ed.; Tübingen, 1932), p. 312, n. 3.

⁵⁴ Eck to Frederick, November 18, 1519, *StL* 15, 1317.

⁵⁵ "Des heiligen concilii tzu Costentz, der heylgen Christenheit und hochloeblichen keyzers Sigmunds, und auch des teutzschen adels entschuldigung etc.," reprinted in Karl Meisen and Friedrich Zoepfl (ed.), Johann Eck, *Vier deutsche Schriften* (Muenster in Westfalen, 1929), pages 1—18.

⁵⁶ Eck, "Entschuldigung," pp. 17—18.

⁵⁷ "An christlichen Adel deutscher Nation von des christlichen Standes Besserung," WA 6, 454.

⁵⁸ He quotes Luther's words on the title page of the "Entschuldigung" and again later (p. 14), labeling them as "den grossen frevel . . . des keynen frummen Christen nicht tzu gedulden ist."

gested the permissibility of Communion under both kinds,⁵⁹ an indication to Eck that Luther preferred the practice of the heretics to the custom of the orthodox Church.⁶⁰ And what was even worse in Eck's eyes,⁶¹ Luther had urged compromise with those Bohemians, who doubted the Roman doctrine of transubstantiation and had also himself declared that doctrine to be a fiction.⁶² It was, therefore, with renewed confidence in the correctness of his tactics at Leipzig that Eck could throw the approval of Hus up to Luther in the presence of the Emperor at the Diet of Worms.⁶³ And even in 1530 he referred to Luther's previous denunciation of the Bohemians⁶⁴ and called him "der Pickardisch Luther,"⁶⁵ insisting that "Luttero enim debemus . . . novos Hussitas."⁶⁶

Once established by Eck, Luther's affinity with Hus and the Hussites was exploited by his enemies; and it soon became the usual practice in a polemic against Luther to refer to his "Hussitism." Thus, when Luther made his fateful admission about Hus at Leipzig, Duke George of Saxony, himself of Czech blood,⁶⁷ arose with arms akimbo and cried: "Das walt

⁵⁹ "Sermon von dem hochwirdigen sacrament des heyligen waren leychnams Christi und von den bruederschafften," WA 2, 742-43. Luther lived to regret some of the phrases in this "Sermon"; cf. "Ein brieff an die zu Franckfort am Meyn" of 1533, WA 30-III, 563. For the effect of this pamphlet on Duke George, cf. note 69 below. On the *sub utraque* in Luther's thought see also WA 6, 138. As often, Carlstadt was ahead of Luther in considering this problem, as evidenced by his thesis of July 19, 1521: "Non sunt Bohemi, sed veri Christiani, panem et poculum Christi sumentes," Hermann Barge, *Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt* (Leipzig, 1905), I, p. 291, n. 118; also the Wittenberg faculty to the Elector, October 20, 1521, in *Corpus Reformatorum* (Halle, 1834 ff.), 1, 469 on the accusation that one holding to the *sub utraque* is a Bohemian. For Luther's interpretation of the incident, cf. "Von beider Gestalt des Sakraments zu nehmen," WA 10-II, 11-41, esp. p. 17, where he refers to Bohemia.

⁶⁰ "Entschueldigung," p. 4; Henry VIII's "Adsertio," *StL* 19, 146.

⁶¹ ". . . ich noch fuer unleidlicher acht," "Entschueldigung," p. 5.

⁶² "An christlichen Adel," WA 6, 456.

⁶³ According to Aleander's report, Eck listed the sympathy with Hus as one of the worst offenses of Luther's early writings, WA 7, 836. Cf. also Eck's reply to Luther's arguments, *ibid.*, p. 837.

⁶⁴ *Christliche erhaltung der stell der geschriff fuer das Fegfeuer wider Luthers lasterbuechlin* (August, 1530), leaf 4 B. This work, too, is preserved in Pritzlaff Memorial Library.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, leaf 16 B.

⁶⁶ "Praefatio" to *Theses* 405, Gussmann, *op. cit.*, II, p. 101.

⁶⁷ So, at least, it was claimed, Luther to Amsdorf, January 2, 1526, WA, *Briefe*, 4, 3; see the note to J. K. Seidemann, "Schriftstuecke zur Reformationsgeschichte," *Zeitschrift fuer historische Theologie*, 44 (1874), 120.

die Sucht!"⁶⁸ When the above-mentioned pamphlet on the Lord's Supper appeared,⁶⁹ and when Luther published essays and books praising Hus,⁷⁰ the theologizing duke feared that the heresiarch's influence would assert itself in his land, too.⁷¹ Royalty was joined to nobility in that denunciation when Henry of England expressed the thought that perhaps Luther would flee to the Bohemians if the situation in Germany grew too hot for him⁷² — a rumor that had been current for some time.⁷³ Ever the politician, Henry used the example of the Bohemians to warn the Saxon dukes of what continued toleration of Luther might mean.⁷⁴ The rumor which had come to Henry's ears about Luther's trips to Bohemia eventually grew, so that he was said to be a Czech himself, born and reared in Prague.⁷⁵ In 1528 a book appeared under the name of J. Faber, comparing Luther unfavorably with Hus;⁷⁶ George Witzel took Luther's Smalcald Articles as an occasion to remind Luther of what he had written to the Bohemians in 1523;⁷⁷ and ultimately even Erasmus joined in.⁷⁸ Johann

⁶⁸ According to Froeschel's report, quoted by Karl Friedrich Koehler, "M. Sebastian Froeschel," *Zeitschrift fuer historische Theologie*, 42 (1872), 535.

⁶⁹ Duke George to Elector Frederick of Saxony, December 27, 1519, *StL* 19, 450—51.

⁷⁰ Duke George to Luther, December 28, 1525, *WA*, *Briefe*, 3, 648.

⁷¹ Duke George to Elector Frederick of Saxony, December 27, 1519, *StL* 19, 450—51; and Frederick's answer, December 29, 1519, *StL* 19, 452—53.

⁷² "Adsertio septem sacramentorum," *StL* 19, 149.

⁷³ Cf. note 34 above; also Conrad Pellicanus to Luther, March 15, 1520, *WA*, *Briefe*, 2, 67; Silvester von Scharmberg to Luther, June 11, 1520, *WA*, *Briefe*, 2, 121; Luther to Spalatin, July 10, 1520, *WA*, *Briefe*, 2, 137.

⁷⁴ Henry to Elector Frederick, Dukes John and George, February 20, 1523, *StL* 19, 357.

⁷⁵ He first heard of the rumor early in 1520: Luther to Spalatin, January 10, 1520, *WA*, *Briefe*, 1, 608; it was substantiated a few days later, Luther to Spalatin, January 14, 1520, *WA*, *Briefe*, 1, 610; see also Luther to Johann Lang, January 26, 1520, *WA*, *Briefe*, 1, 619; and "Verklaerung etlicher Artikel in dem Sermon von dem heiligen Sakrament," *WA* 6, 81—82.

⁷⁶ It was called: "Nonaginta articuli, in quibus Joan. Hus et Pighardi, Waldenses ac Wesselius tractabiliores ac meliores Martino Luthero inveniuntur." Gussmann, *op. cit.*, II, p. 45.

⁷⁷ "Antwort auff Martin Luthers letzt bekennete artickel, unsere gantze religion und das concili belangend" (1538), edited by Hans Volz (Muenster, 1932), p. 106.

⁷⁸ "Purgatio adversus epistolam non sobriam Lutheri," quoted in Grisar, *op. cit.*, I, p. 82.

Fisher summarized the feelings of many when he stated that "Iohannes Husz pontificem Romanum totius ecclesiae divino iure monarcham profitetur, Lutherus contra penitus reclamatur."⁷⁹

IV

Sooner or later someone was bound to see the dangers connected with identifying Luther and the Hussites. Despite its disadvantages for the theory of papal supremacy, the Bohemian schism did perform the function of preventing the formation of a bloc against Rome. But if Luther were to take Hus' part in the controversy, might that not effect such a bloc, brought on by the loyal Roman Catholics who had used the Hussite stratagem to force Luther into a heretical position?

That danger was a real one, and something had to be done about it. The most obvious way to accomplish this was to play one Bohemian group against another and thus to irritate the disunity in the Bohemian situation as a lever against the chances of Luther's uniting with the Czechs. Such a thought seems to have occurred already to Eck, since he was concerned about the pious Czechs.⁸⁰ But it remained for Hieronymus Emser, one of Eck's cronies, to take concrete steps in that direction. While in the service of Duke George, Emser had an opportunity to travel in Bohemia;⁸¹ and on this trip, or a similar one, he acquired a Bohemian mistress.⁸² Feeling that such a connection with Bohemia imposed upon him the duty of setting Czech affairs straight, Emser wrote an essay for the faithful Czechs a month after the Leipzig Debate.⁸³ After calling Bohemia a "terra . . . supstitionis & confusionis" and lamenting the fact that the religious situation had even divided families,⁸⁴ the treatise goes on to show that there was no connection between Luther's position and that of the Czechs, and that Luther had repudiated the role

⁷⁹ "Epistola dedicatoria" to *Sacri Sacerdotii Defensio contra Lutherum*, edited by Hermann Klein Schmeink (Muenster, 1925), p. 6.

⁸⁰ So, at least, it seems from his letter to the Elector Frederick, July 22, 1519, *StL* 15, 1287.

⁸¹ Gustav Kawerau, *Hieronymus Emser* (Halle, 1898), p. 18.

⁸² Luther ridiculed Emser about this liaison, "Ad aegocerotem Emserianum M. Lutheri additio," *WA* 2, 661; other references in Kawerau, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

⁸³ *De disputatione Lipsicensi, quantum ad Boemos obiter deflexa est*. There is an old edition of this epistle in Pritzlaff Memorial Library.

⁸⁴ *De disputatione*, leaf 1 A.

of being a patron of Hus and the Czechs. Emser appealed to the leader of the Czech Catholics to rally to the cause of Church and country.⁸⁵ Luther recognized the significance of Emser's treatise, exclaiming: "Nova miracula, qui ab Eccio delyrabar esse Boemus, ab Emserio mihi infensiore quam multi Eccii Boemus esse abnegor";⁸⁶ but he still condemned the schismatic Bohemians⁸⁷ and so did not enter into the alliance of which Emser and his coreligionists were so afraid.

Nevertheless, as Luther's contacts with the Czechs grew, Emser's fears spread among other Catholics. Illustrative of the situation in which Luther's opponents found themselves is Johann Cochlaeus (1479—1552). He may himself have come from a Slavic family — his real name was Dobneck⁸⁸ — and was in contact with Bohemia, both through personal visits⁸⁹ and particularly through correspondence with various people there. He carried on an extensive correspondence especially with Pietro Paolo Vergerio (1497—1564), papal legate in Prague,⁹⁰ from whom, among other things, Cochlaeus sought financial help from the legacy of a wealthy Czech for historical and polemical writing,⁹¹ chiefly against Luther. The character of that writing is apparent from his history of the Waldenses,⁹² in which he recorded, as he said, "articulos haereticorum, quos approbat noster antipapa."⁹³

But more important than his Waldensian study was Cochlaeus' research in Hussite history. In his *magnum opus* in this field, which is useful even today⁹⁴ and which caused

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, leaf 3 A. For another example of Emser's use of Hus in polemic see Barge, *Karlstadt*, I, p. 395.

⁸⁶ "Ad Aegocerotem Emserianum M. Lutheri Additio," *WA* 2, 658.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 661—63.

⁸⁸ Theodor Kolde, "Cochlaeus," *Realenzyklopaedie*, 4, 194.

⁸⁹ Cf. Cochlaeus to Aleander, written from Prague, April 12, 1534, *ZKG* 18, 247; W. Friedensburg's note, *ZKG* 18, 270; and Cochlaeus to Cardinal Farnese, June 18, 1540, *ZKG* 18, 433.

⁹⁰ See Karl Benrath, "Vergerio," *Realenzyklopaedie*, 20, 546—50.

⁹¹ Cochlaeus to Vergerio, December 24, 1533, *ZKG* 18, 242; March 14, 1534, *ZKG* 18, 243; April 27, 1534, *ZKG* 18, 249; July 27, 1534, *ZKG* 18, 254.

⁹² On the progress of this writing, which was apparently the reworking of an older manuscript, see Cochlaeus to Aleander, May 5, 1521, *ZKG* 18, 111; Cochlaeus to Aleander, June 11, 1521, *ZKG* 18, 115; his complaint to the Pope, June 19, 1521, *ZKG* 18, 117; and his desire to revise it, Cochlaeus to Aleander, September 27, 1521, *ZKG*, 18, 125.

⁹³ Cochlaeus to Aleander, May 11, 1521, *ZKG* 18, 112; on Luther as "antipapa," cf. Cochlaeus to Morone, March 19, 1538, *ZKG* 18, 284.

⁹⁴ See Joseph Sauer, "Cochlaeus," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, 4, 79.

him much grief while he was writing it,⁹⁵ he purposed to expose "utrorumque Hussitarum, Bohemicorum et Teuthonicorum, malicia et pernicioza machinatio."⁹⁶ As a result of these researches, Cochlaeus was quite free in applying the name "Hussite" to Luther⁹⁷ and in blaming Hussite influences for Luther's doctrinal aberrations.⁹⁸ Nevertheless, Cochlaeus seems to have had fears similar to those of Emser, with whom he was in constant contact and whose opinion and work he highly respected.⁹⁹ But there were factors in the religious and political situation that made Cochlaeus even more apprehensive than was Emser about driving Luther and the Czechs together.

Perhaps chief among those factors for Cochlaeus was the Polish question. Emser had feared a tie-up of Luther and the Czechs; Cochlaeus feared the influence of the Lutheran movement upon other lands throughout Europe, but especially upon Poland. He frequently referred to the fact that one of the chief purposes of his writing was the prevention of the spread of the Lutheran heresy outside Germany,¹⁰⁰ and also the counteracting of the influence of Luther's translated books.¹⁰¹ Being probably quite aware of the many churches which the *Unitas Fratrum* had in Poland, Cochlaeus must have known of the intense struggle that had been going on in Poland for over a century, with the lower clergy supporting the

⁹⁵ Cochlaeus to Aleander, June 25, 1535, ZKG 18, 265; Cochlaeus to Johann Fabri, October 28, 1534, ZKG 18, 258. The book was put on the Index by Sixtus V: Kolde, "Cochlaeus," p. 200.

⁹⁶ Cochlaeus to Aleander, September 8, 1534, ZKG 18, 256-57; he wanted to defend the Apostolic See, Cochlaeus to Vergerio, July 27, 1534, ZKG 18, 254.

⁹⁷ Luther is referred to as "novus Hussita," Cochlaeus to Pope Leo, June 19, 1521, ZKG 18, 116; Hus is referred to as Luther's "magister" in Cochlaeus' *Articuli CCCC Martini Lutheri* (1526), art. 63. This latter writing is also in Pritzlaff Memorial Library, Saint Louis.

⁹⁸ On the doctrine of the Church, Cochlaeus' *Articuli*, art. 159; on purgatory, *ibid.*, art. 109, also note 64 above; on miracles at holy places, *Articuli*, art. 154; on the mass and other ceremonies, *ibid.*, art. 220; in general, Luther and his followers preach "Hussitica et Pighardica iam olim damnata dogmata," *ibid.*, art. 113.

⁹⁹ ". . . solus Emserus perstat invictus," Cochlaeus to Aleander, September 27, 1521, ZKG 18, 124; on Emser's answer to "An christlichen Adel," Cochlaeus to Aleander, May 22, 1521, ZKG 18, 114.

¹⁰⁰ Cochlaeus to Ottonello Vida, July 26, 1536, ZKG 18, 268; Cochlaeus to Vergerio, June 2, 1534, ZKG 18, 253; Cochlaeus to Aleander, September 8, 1534, ZKG 18, 257; Cochlaeus to Vergerio, July 27, 1534, ZKG 18, 254.

¹⁰¹ Cochlaeus to Vergerio, June 2, 1534, ZKG 18, 253.

Hussites and the higher clergy, with German backing, advocating the eradication of the Hussite heresy.¹⁰² That situation was still in a state of flux in the sixteenth century, and any strong unifying force might have brought about a realignment. Of this Cochlaeus was afraid — of an alliance between Poland, Bohemia, and Lutheran Saxony against Rome.

Cochlaeus' fears regarding the young Polish noblemen who were enrolled at Wittenberg have been described elsewhere.¹⁰³ When it was rumored about that one of the Polish bishops was inviting Melanchthon to Poland¹⁰⁴ and that even the young Polish king was "lutherico fermento infectus,"¹⁰⁵ he began to write profusely. He was overjoyed when the Polish king forbade his nobles to send their sons to Wittenberg to study, attributing the success of this to his books and to the grace of God.¹⁰⁶ But what he feared almost happened anyway in 1537, when reports came that some of Melanchthon's noble Polish pupils were plotting a rebellion "non modo contra episcopos, sed etiam contra regem ipsum."¹⁰⁷ The rebellion failed to materialize, but Cochlaeus was never completely certain of Poland's relation to the Church of Rome.

Because of such fears, it is not surprising to learn that Cochlaeus was careful about how he dealt with Luther-Hus polemics. As noted above, he did call Luther a Hussite. And while he could not avoid seeing and pointing out affinities between Luther's position and that of the Hussites, notably on the Eucharist,¹⁰⁸ he took every chance to point out that Luther was now guilty of what he had criticized in the

¹⁰² Cf. Ed. Dav. Schnaase, "Die boehmischen Brueder in Polen und die Reformierten in Danzig," *Zeitschrift fuer historische Theologie*, 37 (1867), 125—56. For more detailed bibliography, see my article on the Consensus of Sandomierz, referred to in note 1 above.

¹⁰³ "The Consensus of Sandomierz," *CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY*, XVIII (1947), p. 831; see also the statistics cited there, p. 837.

¹⁰⁴ Cochlaeus to Aleander, April 23, 1534, *ZKG* 18, 248. The arrangements were being made through Andrew Krzycki; cf. Theodor Wotschke, *Geschichte der Reformation in Polen* (Leipzig, 1911), p. 27.

¹⁰⁵ Cochlaeus to Vergerio, July 27, 1534, *ZKG* 18, 255; *Nuntiaturberichte aus Deutschland nebst ergaenzten Aktenstuecken*, I (Gotha, 1892), No. 108, p. 291.

¹⁰⁶ Cochlaeus to Aleander, June 25, 1535, *ZKG* 18, 265.

¹⁰⁷ Cochlaeus to Aleander, October 7, 1537, *ZKG* 18, 275—76.

¹⁰⁸ See note 98 above; on the Eucharist, *Articuli CCCC*, art. 422; and Cochlaeus to Morone, August 31, 1537, *ZKG* 18, 272.

Czechs,¹⁰⁹ namely, the perversion of the Scriptures in proof of a position¹¹⁰ and particularly the sectarianism to which Luther had often pointed.¹¹¹ This he did, of course, to show the Czechs, as had Emser, that Luther was different from them. Another strategy he employed for that same purpose was his aid to Catholic Czechs. Among them was John Hasenberg, for whom he secured financial assistance.¹¹² He performed the same favor for four Czech noblemen.¹¹³ The provost of All Saints' Church in Prague, Simon Villaticus, managed to publish his poems in Leipzig through Cochlaeus' intercession.¹¹⁴ So concerned was Cochlaeus about the problem of Luther's alliance with the Hussites that he hoped to use the Czechs as a lever to bring the Germans back to the Church¹¹⁵ and wanted to revise his history of the Hussites to avoid offending the Czechs.¹¹⁶ And though he pretended to be shocked¹¹⁷ at Luther's statement of 1520 that "si ille [Hus] fuit haereticus, ego plus decies haereticus sum,"¹¹⁸ it actually gave him an opportunity to continue his strategy by granting Luther's point.¹¹⁹

But Cochlaeus' attempts were in vain. The forces which Eck had set in motion at Leipzig were too strong to be checked; and by the time Luther's enemies had become aware of the dangers latent in the Hussite myth, Luther's friends and Luther himself had willingly accepted the charge and were acquainting themselves with Hus and his views.

¹⁰⁹ *Articuli CCCC*, art. 152 and 243.

¹¹⁰ *Confutatio XCI. articulorum* (Cologne, 1525), art. 66. Like other works previously cited, this tract is preserved in Pritzlaff Library.

¹¹¹ Cf. note 49 above; WA 1, 625; WA 1, 697. See Cochlaeus, "Ein noetig und christlich bedencken auff des Luthers artickeln, die man gemeynsamem concilio fuertragen sol," edited by Hans Volz (Muenster, 1932), p. 7.

¹¹² Cochlaeus to Vergerio, March 14, 1534, ZKG 18, 243; May 29, 1534, ZKG 18, 252.

¹¹³ Cochlaeus to Bishop Giberti, January 31, 1540, ZKG 18, 422-23.

¹¹⁴ Cochlaeus to Morone, January 12, 1538, ZKG 18, 282; and Johann Metzler in *Tres Orationes Funebres in Exequio Iohannis Eckii Habitae* (Muenster, 1930), p. iv; a sample of Villaticus' poetry is on p. 7.

¹¹⁵ Cochlaeus to Johann Fabri, October 28, 1534, ZKG 18, 259.

¹¹⁶ Cochlaeus to Vergerio, November 16, 1535, ZKG 18, 266.

¹¹⁷ *Articuli CCCC*, art. 228; "Ein noetig . . . bedenken," p. 7.

¹¹⁸ "Assertio omnium articulorum M. Lutheri per bullam Leonis X. novissimam damnatorum," WA 7, 135.

¹¹⁹ *Commentarius de actis et scriptis Mt. Lutheri* (German translation, 1581), p. 550.

V

As late as 1522 some of Luther's friends were still defending him against the Hussite charge.¹²⁰ But soon after, Otto Brunfels became the first of the Evangelicals to publish some of Hus' works. More significant was the work done by Johann Agricola in acquainting himself and others with the life of Hus.¹²¹ In 1529 he collaborated with Nicholas Krumbacher in the publication of a "History und warhafftige geschicht" about Hus; it was published in Hagenau, the same city in which Hus' *De ecclesia* had come out for foreign consumption for the first time.¹²² The treatise is largely a collection of documents—letters, reports and speeches—dealing with Hus' defense at Constance.¹²³ In 1536, after moving to Wittenberg, Agricola published a German translation of Luther's edition of some of Hus' letters; the next year there appeared a "Disputatio Iohannis Hus, quam absolutum dum ageret Constantia," containing various tracts by Hus; and in 1538 Agricola wrote a five-act drama of Hus' martyrdom.¹²⁴ It was this last piece of work¹²⁵ which moved Cochlaeus to compose a dialog between Luther and a friend proving that the Council of Constance was correct in condemning Hus.¹²⁶ Because of all this activity on Agricola's part, it is not surprising that it should have been Agricola who wrote the preface to the *Apologia* of the *Unitas Fratrum* when that document appeared in 1538.¹²⁷

¹²⁰ Cf. the anonymous "Ein kurze anred zu allen misgunstigen doctor Luthers, und der christenlichen Freiheit" in Oskar Schade (ed.), *Satiren und Pasquille aus der Reformationszeit* (2d ed.; Hanover, 1863), II, p. 191.

¹²¹ Agricola's research and publicistic activity in this field are well summarized in the chapter "Hussitica" in Gustav Kawerau, *Johann Agricola von Eisleben* (Berlin, 1881), pp. 118—28.

¹²² Jan Jakubec, *Dejiny literatury české*, I (Praha, 1929), p. 316.

¹²³ Although I have been unable to find a copy of Agricola's original, there is what seems to be a second edition in the Pritzlaff Memorial Library. The book is anonymous and bears the title: "Die in Huszen bekriegte, doch unbesiegte Wahrheit" (Frankfurt and Leipzig, 1686); cf. page 4.

¹²⁴ See the selections from it in Kawerau, *Agricola*, pp. 120—21.

¹²⁵ Cf. Cochlaeus to Aleander, October 7, 1537, ZKG 18, 277.

¹²⁶ *Ein heimlich gespraech von der tragedia Johannis Huszen*, edited by Hugo Holstein (Halle, 1900). Kawerau, *Agricola*, p. 122, n. 2, seeks to disprove Cochlaeus' authorship, but his arguments are not convincing.

¹²⁷ Cf. Georg Loesche, *Luther, Melancthon und Calvin in Oesterreich-Ungarn* (Tuebingen, 1909), p. 55.

Such were the forces, hostile and friendly, which brought Luther to the conviction that he was supporting the same cause for which, a hundred years before, John Hus had lived a hero's life and died a martyr's death. The development of Luther's attitude toward Hus is important for the entire history of Protestantism in Eastern Europe, since it was chiefly through this attitude that relations between the Reformation and Eastern lands were stimulated. It is no less significant for the light it sheds on Luther's "Entwicklung zum Reformator" and on the evolution of his reformatory consciousness, for which his attitude toward Hus is a helpful barometer. Luther's appreciation of Hus also helps explain why, in 1538, he was willing to endorse a confessional document, the *Confessio Bohemica*, which was not completely Lutheran in every respect. It is to this latter problem, valuable for the present ecclesiastical and theological crisis, that we hope to turn in a later article.

Valparaiso, Ind.

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The Heidelberg Disputation

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Editor's Introduction

Following Luther's proposal for a disputation on the subject of indulgences, the Augustinian Order, to which Luther belonged, was generally supportive of his views. The head of the order in Germany, Johannes Staupitz, called for a formal disputation to be attended by the leadership of the order, in which Luther would be provided a chance to expand upon his concern. The disputation took place at the meeting of the Augustinian Order, in Heidelberg, in April 1518. Luther's opponents had been hopeful that Luther would be silenced, but Staupitz wanted to give Luther a fair hearing, since he was generally sympathetic with Luther's views. At the meeting, Luther put forward a "theology of the cross" as opposed to a "theology of glory." The disputation is, in many ways, more significant than the 95 theses, for they advanced Luther's growing realization that the theology of late Medieval Roman Catholicism was fundamentally and essentially at odds with Biblical theology. As a result of the disputation, John Eck proposed a debate between himself and representatives of Luther's views, which was held in Leipzig from June to July, 1519.

The Heidelberg Disputation

Brother Martin Luther, Master of Sacred Theology, will preside, and Brother Leonhard Beyer, Master of Arts and Philosophy, will defend the following theses before the Augustinians of this renowned city of Heidelberg in the customary place, on April 26th 1518.

THEOLOGICAL THESES

Distrusting completely our own wisdom, according to that counsel of the Holy Spirit, "Do not rely on your own insight"(Prov. 3:5), we humbly present to the judgment of all those who wish to be here these theological paradoxes, so that it may become clear whether they have been deduced well or poorly from St. Paul, the especially chosen vessel and instrument of Christ, and also from St. Augustine, his most trustworthy interpreter.

1. The law of God, the most salutary doctrine of life, cannot advance man on his way to righteousness, but rather hinders him.
2. Much less can human works, which are done over and over again with the aid of natural precepts, so to speak, lead to that end.
3. Although the works of man always seem attractive and good, they are nevertheless likely to be mortal sins.
4. Although the works of God are always unattractive and appear evil, they are nevertheless really eternal merits.

5. The works of men are thus not mortal sins (we speak of works which are apparently good), as though they were crimes.
6. The works of God (we speak of those which he does through man) are thus not merits, as though they were sinless.
7. The works of the righteous would be mortal sins if they would not be feared as mortal sins by the righteous themselves out of pious fear of God.
8. By so much more are the works of man mortal sins when they are done without fear and in unadulterated, evil self-security.
9. To say that works without Christ are dead, but not mortal, appears to constitute a perilous surrender of the fear of God.
10. Indeed, it is very difficult to see how a work can be dead and at the same time not a harmful and mortal sin.
11. Arrogance cannot be avoided or true hope be present unless the judgment of condemnation is feared in every work.
12. In the sight of God sins are then truly venial when they are feared by men to be mortal.
13. Free will, after the fall, exists in name only, and as long as it does what it is able to do, it commits a mortal sin.
14. Free will, after the fall, has power to do good only in a passive capacity, but it can always do evil in an active capacity.
15. Nor could free will remain in a state of innocence, much less do good, in an active capacity, but only in its passive capacity.
16. The person who believes that he can obtain grace by doing what is in him adds sin to sin so that he becomes doubly guilty.
17. Nor does speaking in this manner give cause for despair, but for arousing the desire to humble oneself and seek the grace of Christ.
18. It is certain that man must utterly despair of his own ability before he is prepared to receive the grace of Christ.
19. That person does not deserve to be called a theologian who looks upon the "invisible" things of God as though they were clearly "perceptible in those things which have actually happened" (Rom. 1:20; cf. 1 Cor 1:21-25),
20. he deserves to be called a theologian, however, who comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the cross.
21. A theology of glory calls evil good and good evil. A theology of the cross calls the thing what it actually is.
22. That wisdom which sees the invisible things of God in works as perceived by man is completely puffed up, blinded, and hardened.
23. The "law brings the wrath" of God (Rom. 4:15), kills, reviles, accuses, judges, and condemns everything that is not in Christ.
24. Yet that wisdom is not of itself evil, nor is the law to be evaded; but without the theology of the cross man misuses the best in the worst manner.
25. He is not righteous who does much, but he who, without work, believes much in Christ.
26. The law says, "do this", and it is never done. Grace says, "believe in this", and everything is already done.
27. Actually one should call the work of Christ an acting work (*operans*) and our work an accomplished work (*operatum*), and thus an accomplished work pleasing to God by the grace of the acting work.

28. The love of God does not find, but creates, that which is pleasing to it. The love of man comes into being through that which is pleasing to it.

PROOFS OF THE THESES

debated in the Chapter at Heidelberg, May 1518, A.D.

1. The law of God, the most salutary doctrine of life, cannot advance man on his way to righteousness, but rather hinders him.

This is made clear by the Apostle in his letter to the Romans (3:21): "But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law." St. Augustine interprets this in his book 'The Spirit and the Letter' (De Spiritu et Littera): "Without the law, that is, without its support." In Rom. 5:20 the Apostle states, "Law intervened, to increase the trespass", and in Rom. 7:9 he adds, "But when the commandment came, sin revived." For this reason he calls the law "a law of death" and "a law of sin" in Rom. 8:2. Indeed, in 2 Cor. 3:6 he says, "the written code kills", which St. Augustine throughout his book 'The Spirit and the Letter' understands as applying to every law, even the holiest law of God.

2. Much less can human works, which are done over and over again with the aid of natural precepts, so to speak, lead to that end.

Since the law of God, which is holy and unstained, true, just, etc., is given man by God as an aid beyond his natural powers to enlighten him and move him to do the good, and nevertheless the opposite takes place, namely, that he becomes more wicked, how can he, left to his own power and without such aid, be induced to do good? If a person does not do good with help from without, he will do even less by his own strength. Therefore the Apostle, in Rom. 3:10-12, calls all persons corrupt and impotent who neither understand nor seek God, for all, he says, have gone astray.

3. Although the works of man always seem attractive and good, they are nevertheless likely to be mortal sins.

Human works appear attractive outwardly, but within they are filthy, as Christ says concerning the Pharisees in Matt. 23:27. For they appear to the doer and others good and beautiful, yet God does not judge according to appearances but searches "the minds and hearts" (Ps. 7:9). For without grace and faith it is impossible to have a pure heart. Acts 15:9: "He cleansed their hearts by faith."

The thesis is proven in the following way: If the works of righteous men are sins, as Thesis 7 of this disputation states, this is much more the case

concerning the works of those who are not righteous. But the just speak in behalf of their works in the following way: "Do not enter into judgment with thy servant, Lord, for no man living is righteous before thee" (Ps. 143:2). The Apostle speaks likewise in Gal. 3:10, "All who rely on the works of the law are under the curse." But the works of men are the works of the law, and the curse will not be placed upon venial sins. Therefore they are mortal sins. In the third place, Rom. 2:21 states, "You who teach others not to steal, do you steal?" St. Augustine interprets this to mean that men are thieves according to their guilty consciences even if they publicly judge or reprimand other thieves.

4. Although the works of God are always unattractive and appear evil, they are nevertheless really eternal merits.

That the works of God are unattractive is clear from what is said in Isa. 53:2, "He had no form of comeliness", and in 1 Sam. 2:6, "The Lord kills and brings to life; he brings down to Sheol and raises up." This is understood to mean that the Lord humbles and frightens us by means of the law and the sight of our sins so that we seem in the eyes of men, as in our own, as nothing, foolish, and wicked, for we are in truth that. Insofar as we acknowledge and confess this, there is "no form or beauty" in us, but our life is hidden in God (i.e. in the bare confidence in his mercy), finding in ourselves nothing but sin, foolishness, death, and hell, according to that verse of the Apostle in 2 Cor. 6:9-10, "As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as dying, and behold we live." And that it is which Isa. 28:21 calls the "alien work" of God "that he may do his work" (that is, he humbles us thoroughly, making us despair, so that he may exalt us in his mercy, giving us hope), just as Hab. 3:2 states, "In wrath remember mercy." Such a man therefore is displeased with all his works; he sees no beauty, but only his depravity. Indeed, he also does those things which appear foolish and disgusting to others.

This depravity, however, comes into being in us either when God punishes us or when we accuse ourselves, as 1 Cor. 11:31 says, "If we judged ourselves truly, we should not be judged by the Lord". Deut. 32:36 also states, "The Lord will vindicate his people and have compassion on his servants." In this way, consequently, the unattractive works which God does in us, that is, those which are humble and devout, are really eternal, for humility and fear of God are our entire merit.

5. The works of men are thus not mortal sins (we speak of works which are apparently good), as though they were crimes.

For crimes are such acts which can also be condemned before men, such as adultery, theft, homicide, slander, etc. Mortal sins, on the other hand, are those which seem good yet are essentially fruits of a bad root and a bad tree. Augustine states this in the fourth book of 'Against Julian' (*Contra Julianum*).

6. The works of God (we speak of those which he does through man) are thus not merits, as though they were sinless.

In Eccles. 7:20, we read, "Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins." In this connection, however, some people say that the righteous man indeed sins, but not when he does good. They may be refuted in the following manner: If that is what this verse wants to say, why waste so many words? Or does the Holy Spirit like to indulge in loquacious and foolish babble? For this meaning would then be adequately expressed by the following: "There is not a righteous man on earth who does not sin." Why does he add "who does good," as if another person were righteous who did evil? For no one except a righteous man does good. Where, however, he speaks of sins outside the realm of good works he speaks thus (Prov. 24:16), "The righteous man falls seven times a day." Here he does not say: A righteous man falls seven times a day when he does good. This is a comparison: If someone cuts with a rusty and rough hatchet, even though the worker is a good craftsman, the hatchet leaves bad, jagged, and ugly gashes. So it is when God works through us.

7. The works of the righteous would be mortal sins if they would not be feared as mortal sins by the righteous themselves out of pious fear of God.

This is clear from Thesis 4. To trust in works, which one ought to do in fear, is equivalent to giving oneself the honor and taking it from God, to whom fear is due in connection with every work. But this is completely wrong, namely to please oneself, to enjoy oneself in one's works, and to adore oneself as an idol. He who is self-confident and without fear of God, however, acts entirely in this manner. For if he had fear he would not be self-confident, and for this reason he would not be pleased with himself, but he would be pleased with God.

In the second place, it is clear from the words of the Psalmist (Ps. 143:2), "Enter not into judgment with thy servant", and Ps. 32:5, "I said: I will confess my transgressions to the Lord." etc. But that these are not venial sins is clear because these passages state that confession and repentance are not necessary for venial sins. If, therefore, they are mortal sins and "all the saints intercede for them", as it is stated in the same place, then the works of the saints are mortal sins. But the works of the saints are good works, wherefore they are meritorious for them only through the fear of their humble confession.

In the third place, it is clear from the Lord's Prayer, "Forgive us our trespasses" (Matt. 6:12). This is a prayer of the saints, therefore those trespasses are good works for which they pray. But that these are mortal sins is clear from the following verse, "If you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your father forgive your trespasses" (Matt. 6:15). Note that these trespasses are such that, if unforgiven, they would condemn them, unless they pray this prayer sincerely and forgive others.

In the fourth place, it is clear from Rev. 21:27, "Nothing unclean shall enter into it" (the kingdom of heaven). But everything that hinders entrance into the kingdom of heaven is mortal sin (or it would be necessary to interpret the concept of "mortal sin" in another way). Venial sin, however, hinders because it makes the soul unclean and has no place in the kingdom of heaven. Consequently, etc.

8. By so much more are the works of man mortal sins when they are done without fear and in unadulterated, evil self-security.

The inevitable deduction from the preceding thesis is clear. For where there is no fear there is no humility. Where there is no humility there is pride, and where there is pride there are the wrath and judgment of God, "for God opposes the haughty." Indeed, if pride would cease there would be no sin anywhere.

9. To say that works without Christ are dead, but not mortal, appears to constitute a perilous surrender of the fear of God.

For in this way men become certain and therefore haughty, which is perilous. For in such a way God is constantly deprived of the glory which is due him and which is transferred to other things, since one should strive with all diligence to give him the glory-the sooner the better. For this reason the Bible advises us, "Do not delay being converted to the Lord." For if that person offends him who withdraws glory from him, how much more does that person offend him who continues to withdraw glory from him and does this boldly! But whoever is not in Christ or who withdraws from him withdraws glory from him, as is well known.

10. Indeed, it is very difficult to see how a work can be dead and at the same time not a harmful and mortal sin.

This I prove in the following way: Scripture does not speak of dead things in such a manner, stating that something is not mortal which is nevertheless dead. Indeed, neither does grammar, which says that "dead" is a stronger term than "mortal". For the grammarians call a mortal work one which kills, a "dead" work not one that has been killed, but one that is not alive. But God despises what is not alive, as is written in Prov. 15:8, "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord."

Second, the will must do something with respect to such a dead work, namely, either love or hate it. The will cannot hate a dead work since the will is evil. Consequently the will loves a dead work, and therefore it loves something dead. In that act itself it thus induces an evil work of the will against God whom it should love and honor in this and in every deed.

11. Arrogance cannot be avoided or true hope be present unless the judgment of condemnation is feared in every work.

This is clear from Thesis 4. For it is impossible to trust in God unless one has despaired in all creatures and knows that nothing can profit one without God. Since there is no person who has this pure hope, as we said above, and since we still place some confidence in the creature, it is clear that we must, because of impurity in all things, fear the judgment of God. Thus arrogance must be avoided, not only in the work, but in the inclination also, that is, it must displease us still to have confidence in the creature.

12. In the sight of God sins are then truly venial when they are feared by men to be mortal.

This becomes sufficiently clear from what has been said. For as much as we accuse ourselves, so much God pardons us, according to the verse, "Confess your misdeed so that you will be justified" (cf. Isa. 43:26), and according to another (Ps. 141:4), "Incline not my heart to any evil, to busy myself with wicked deeds".

13. Free will, after the fall, exists in name only, and as long as it does what it is able to do, it commits a mortal sin.

The first part is clear, for the will is captive and subject to sin. Not that it is nothing, but that it is not free except to do evil. According to John 8:34, 36, "Every one who commits sin is a slave to sin." "So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed." Hence St. Augustine says in his book 'The Spirit and the Letter': "Free will without grace has the power to do nothing but sin"; and in the second book of 'Against Julian', "You call the will free, but in fact it is an enslaved will," and in many other places.

The second part is clear from what has been said above and from the verse in Hos. 13:9, "Israel, you are bringing misfortune upon yourself, for your salvation is alone with me," and from similar passages.

14. Free will, after the fall, has power to do good only in a passive capacity, but it can always do evil in an active capacity.

An illustration will make the meaning of this thesis clear. Just as a dead man can do something toward life only in his original capacity (*in vitam solum subiective*), so can he do something toward death in an active manner while he lives. Free will, however, is dead, as demonstrated by the dead whom the Lord has raised up, as the holy teachers of the church say. St. Augustine, moreover, proves this same thesis in his various writings against the Pelagians.

15. Nor could free will remain in a state of innocence, much less do good, in an active capacity, but only in its passive capacity (*subiectiva potentia*).

The Master of the Sentences (Peter Lombard), quoting Augustine, states, »By these testimonies it is obviously demonstrated that man received

a righteous nature and a good will when he was created, and also the help by means of which he could prevail. Otherwise it would appear as though he had not fallen because of his own fault." He speaks of the active capacity (*potentia activa*), which is obviously contrary to Augustine's opinion in his book 'Concerning Reprimand and Grace' (De Correptione et Gratia), where the latter puts it in this way: "He received the ability to act, if he so willed, but he did not have the will by means of which he could act." By "ability to act" he understands the original capacity (*potentia subiectiva*), and by "will by means of which he could," the active capacity (*potentia activa*).

The second part (of the thesis), however, is sufficiently clear from the same reference to the Master.

16. The person who believes that he can obtain grace by doing what is in him adds sin to sin so that he becomes doubly guilty.

On the basis of what has been said, the following is clear: While a person is doing what is in him, he sins and seeks himself in everything. But if he should suppose that through sin he would become worthy of or prepared for grace, he would add haughty arrogance to his sin and not believe that sin is sin and evil is evil, which is an exceedingly great sin. As Jer.

2:13 says, "For my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns, that can hold no water," that is, through sin they are far from me and yet they presume to do good by their own ability.

Now you ask: What then shall we do? Shall we go our way with indifference because we can do nothing but sin? I would reply: By no means. But, having heard this, fall down and pray for grace and place your hope in Christ in whom is our salvation, life, and resurrection. For this reason we are so instructed—for this reason the law makes us aware of sin so that, having recognized our sin, we may seek and receive grace. Thus God "gives grace to the humble" (1 Pet. 5:5), and "whoever humbles himself will be exalted" (Matt. 23:12). The law humbles, grace exalts. The law effects fear and wrath, grace effects hope and mercy. Through the law comes knowledge of sin (Rom. 3:20), through knowledge of sin, however, comes humility, and through humility grace is acquired. Thus an action which is alien to God's nature (*opus alienum dei*) results in a deed belonging to his very nature (*opus proprium*): he makes a person a sinner so that he may make him righteous.

17. Nor does speaking in this manner give cause for despair, but for arousing the desire to humble oneself and seek the grace of Christ.

This is clear from what has been said, for, according to the gospel, the kingdom of heaven is given to children and the humble (Mark 10:14, 16), and Christ loves them. They cannot be humble who do not recognize that

they are damnable whose sin smells to high heaven. Sin is recognized only through the law. It is apparent that not despair, but rather hope, is preached when we are told that we are sinners. Such preaching concerning sin is a preparation for grace, or it is rather the recognition of sin and faith in such preaching. Yearning for grace wells up when recognition of sin has arisen. A sick person seeks the physician when he recognizes the seriousness of his illness. Therefore one does not give cause for despair or death by telling a sick person about the danger of his illness, but, in effect, one urges him to seek a medical cure. To say that we are nothing and constantly sin when we do the best we can does not mean that we cause people to despair (unless we are fools); rather, we make them concerned about the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

18. It is certain that man must utterly despair of his own ability before he is prepared to receive the grace of Christ.

The law wills that man despair of his own ability, for it "leads him into hell" and "makes him a poor man" and shows him that he is a sinner in all his works, as the Apostle does in Rom. 2 and 3:9, where he says, "I have already charged that all men are under the power of sin." However, he who acts simply in accordance with his ability and believes that he is thereby doing something good does not seem worthless to himself, nor does he despair of his own strength. Indeed, he is so presumptuous that he strives for grace in reliance on his own strength.

19. That person does not deserve to be called a theologian who looks upon the "invisible" things of God as though they were clearly "perceptible in those things which have actually happened" (Rom. 1:20; cf. 1 Cor 1:21-25).

This is apparent in the example of those who were "theologians" and still were called "fools" by the Apostle in Rom. 1:22. Furthermore, the invisible things of God are virtue, godliness, wisdom, justice, goodness, and so forth. The recognition of all these things does not make one worthy or wise.

20. He deserves to be called a theologian, however, who comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the cross.

The manifest and visible things of God are placed in opposition to the invisible, namely, his human nature, weakness, foolishness. The Apostle in 1 Cor. 1:25 calls them the weakness and folly of God. Because men misused the knowledge of God through works, God wished again to be recognized in suffering, and to condemn "wisdom concerning invisible things" by means of "wisdom concerning visible things", so that those who did not honor God as manifested in his works should honor him as he is hidden in his suffering (*absconditum in passionibus*). As the Apostle says in 1 Cor. 1:21, "For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe." Now it is not sufficient for anyone, and it does him no good to

recognize God in his glory and majesty, unless he recognizes him in the humility and shame of the cross. Thus God destroys the wisdom of the wise, as Isa. 45:15 says, "Truly, thou art a God who hidest thyself."

So, also, in John 14:8, where Philip spoke according to the theology of glory: "Show us the Father." Christ forthwith set aside his flighty thought about seeing God elsewhere and led him to himself, saying, "Philip, he who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). For this reason true theology and recognition of God are in the crucified Christ, as it is also stated in John 10 (John 14:6) "No one comes to the Father, but by me." "I am the door" (John 10:9), and so forth.

21. A theology of glory calls evil good and good evil. A theology of the cross calls the thing what it actually is.

This is clear: He who does not know Christ does not know God hidden in suffering. Therefore he prefers, works to suffering, glory to the cross, strength to weakness, wisdom to folly, and, in general, good to evil. These are the people whom the apostle calls "enemies of the cross of Christ" (Phil. 3:18), for they hate the cross and suffering and love works and the glory of works. Thus they call the good of the cross evil and the evil of a deed good. God can be found only in suffering and the cross, as has already been said. Therefore the friends of the cross say that the cross is good and works are evil, for through the cross works are dethroned and the "old Adam", who is especially edified by works, is crucified. It is impossible for a person not to be puffed up by his "good works" unless he has first been deflated and destroyed by suffering and evil until he knows that he is worthless and that his works are not his but God's.

22. That wisdom which sees the invisible things of God in works as perceived by man is completely puffed up, blinded, and hardened.

This has already been said. Because men do not know the cross and hate it, they necessarily love the opposite, namely, wisdom, glory, power, and so on. Therefore they become increasingly blinded and hardened by such love, for desire cannot be satisfied by the acquisition of those things which it desires. Just as the love of money grows in proportion to the increase of the money itself, so the dropsy of the soul becomes thirstier the more it drinks, as the poet says: "The more water they drink, the more they thirst for it." The same thought is expressed in Eccles. 1:8: "The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing." This holds true of all desires.

Thus also the desire for knowledge is not satisfied by the acquisition of wisdom but is stimulated that much more. Likewise the desire for glory is not satisfied by the acquisition of glory, nor is the desire to rule satisfied by power and authority, nor is the desire for praise satisfied by praise, and so on, as Christ shows in John 4:13, where he says, "Every one who drinks of this water will thirst again."

The remedy for curing desire does not lie in satisfying it, but in extinguishing it. In other words, he who wishes to become wise does not seek wisdom by progressing toward it but becomes a fool by retrogressing into seeking "folly". Likewise he who wishes to have much power, honor, pleasure, satisfaction in all things must flee rather than seek power, honor, pleasure, and satisfaction in all things. This is the wisdom which is folly to the world.

23. The "law brings the wrath" of God (Rom. 4:15), kills, reviles, accuses, judges, and condemns everything that is not in Christ.

Thus Gal. 3:13 states, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law"; and: "For all who rely on works of the law are under the curse" (Gal. 3:10); and Rom. 4:15: "For the law brings wrath"; and Rom. 7:10: "The very commandment which promised life proved to be the death of me"; Rom. 2:12: "All who have sinned without the law will also perish without law." Therefore he who boasts that he is wise and learned in the law boasts in his confusion, his damnation, the wrath of God, in death. As Rom. 2:23 puts it: "You who boast in the law."

24. Yet that wisdom is not of itself evil, nor is the law to be evaded; but without the theology of the cross man misuses the best in the worst manner.

Indeed "the law is holy" (Rom. 7:12), "every gift of God good" (1 Tim. 4:4), and "everything that is created exceedingly good", as in Gen. 1:31. But, as stated above, he who has not been brought low, reduced to nothing through the cross and suffering, takes credit for works and wisdom and does not give credit to God. He thus misuses and defiles the gifts of God.

He, however, who has emptied himself (cf. Phil. 2:7) through suffering no longer does works but knows that God works and does all things in him. For this reason, whether God does works or not, it is all the same to him. He neither boasts if he does good works, nor is he disturbed if God does not do good works through him. He knows that it is sufficient if he suffers and is brought low by the cross in order to be annihilated all the more. It is this that Christ says in John 3:7, "You must be born anew." To be born anew, one must consequently first die and then be raised up with the Son of Man. To die, I say, means to feel death at hand.

25. He is not righteous who does much, but he who, without work, believes much in Christ.

For the righteousness of God is not acquired by means of acts frequently repeated, as Aristotle taught, but it is imparted by faith, for "He who through faith is righteous shall live" (Rom. 1:17), and "Man believes with his heart and so is justified" (Rom. 10:10). Therefore I wish to have the words "without work" understood in the following manner: Not that the righteous person does nothing, but that his works do not make him

righteous, rather that his righteousness creates works. For grace and faith are infused without our works. After they have been imparted the works follow. Thus Rom. 3:20 states, "No human being will be justified in His sight by works of the law," and, "For we hold that man is justified by faith apart from works of law" (Rom. 3:28). In other words, works contribute nothing to justification.

Therefore man knows that works which he does by such faith are not his but God's. For this reason he does not seek to become justified or glorified through them, but seeks God. His justification by faith in Christ is sufficient to him. Christ is his wisdom, righteousness, etc., as 1 Cor 1:30 has it, that he himself may be Christ's vessel and instrument (*operatio seu instrumentum*).

26. The law says, "do this", and it is never done. Grace says, "believe in this", and everything is already done.

The first part is clear from what has been stated by the Apostle and his interpreter, St. Augustine, in many places. And it has been stated often enough above that the "law" "works wrath" and keeps all men under the curse. The second part is clear from the same sources, for faith justifies. And the law (says St. Augustine) commands what faith obtains. For through faith Christ is in us, indeed, one with us. Christ is just and has fulfilled all the commands of God, wherefore we also fulfill everything through him since he was made ours through faith.

27. Actually one should call the work of Christ an acting work (*operans*) and our work an accomplished work (*operatum*), and thus an accomplished work pleasing to God by the grace of the acting work.

Since Christ lives in us through faith so he arouses us to do good works through that living faith in his work, for the works which he does are the fulfilment of the commands of God given us through faith. If we look at them we are moved to imitate them. For this reason the Apostle says, "Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children" (Eph. 5:1). Thus deeds of mercy are aroused by the works through which he has saved us, as St. Gregory says: "Every act of Christ is instruction for us, indeed, a stimulant." If his action is in us it lives through faith, for it is exceedingly attractive according to the verse, "Draw me after you, let us make haste" (Song of Sol. 1:4) toward the fragrance "of your anointing oils" (Song of Sol. 1:3), that is, "your works."

28. The love of God does not find, but creates, that which is pleasing to it. The love of man comes into being through that which is pleasing to it.

The second part is clear and is accepted by all philosophers and theologians, for the object of love is its cause, assuming, according to Aristotle, that all power of the soul is passive and material and active only in receiving something. Thus it is also demonstrated that Aristotle's philosophy is contrary to theology since in all things it seeks those things which are its own and receives rather than gives something good. The first part is clear because the love of God which lives in man loves sinners, evil persons, fools, and weaklings in order to make them righteous, good, wise, and strong. Rather than seeking its own good, the love of God flows forth and bestows good. Therefore sinners are "attractive" because they are loved; they are not loved because they are "attractive": For this reason the love of man avoids sinners and evil persons. Thus Christ says: "For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners" (Matt. 9:13). This is the love of the cross, born of the cross, which turns in the direction where it does not find good which it may enjoy, but where it may confer good upon the bad and needy person. "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35), says the Apostle. Hence Ps. 41:1 states, "Blessed is he who considers the poor," for the intellect cannot by nature comprehend an object which does not exist, that is the poor and needy person, but only a thing which does exist, that is the true and good. Therefore it judges according to appearances, is a respecter of persons, and judges according to that which can be seen, etc.

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Luther's Theology of the Cross

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Luther's Theology of the Cross

Heino O. Kadai

As a young man, before the Reformation in Germany, Martin Luther advised his friend George Spenlein: "My dear Friar, learn Christ and him crucified. Learn to praise him and, despairing of yourself, say, 'Lord Jesus, you are my righteousness, just as I am your sin.'"¹ Years later, in heated literary battle with the illustrious humanist Erasmus, Dr. Luther, by then well known himself, held true to this advice. Again he said, "We teach nothing save Christ crucified."² This remained the heart of Luther's theology throughout life. Once at a disputation in Heidelberg he called it *theologia crucis*.³ In his swan-song lecture series on the first book of the Pentateuch that took a decade to deliver he called it the "theology of the Gospel."⁴ The label does not matter. The important point is that Luther's theology centers uniquely around the crucified Jesus. As *doctor biblicus* and professor of exegetical theology at the University of Wittenberg, his calling was to expound the word of God, and in his considered judgment Jesus Christ was the central message of the Holy Scriptures. "Take Christ from the Scriptures—and what more will you find in them?" he asked.⁵

¹"Letter to George Spenlein, April 8, 1516," *Luther's Works*, American Edition, 55 volumes, edited by J. Pelikan and H. T. Lehmann (St. Louis: Concordia and Philadelphia: Fortress, 1955-1986), 48:12. Subsequent references to volumes in this series will be abbreviated *LW*.

²Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, edited by J. I. Packer and O. R. Johnston (Westwood, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1957), 107.

³"Theses for the Heidelberg Disputation," *LW* 31:40.

⁴"Lectures on Genesis," *LW* 8:30.

⁵*Bondage of the Will*, 71.

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Luther did not attempt to penetrate the mysteries of God not revealed in the word. He realized that "there is a great deal hid in God of which we know nothing."⁶ God must be sought where He has revealed Himself, that is, in Jesus. To find God, Luther turned to this humble Jew of Nazareth, who long ago had told Thomas: "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life; no one comes to the Father but by Me. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; henceforth you know Him and have seen Him."⁷ Of all places, the glory of God was to be sought on the cross of Golgotha. Luther agreed profoundly with St. Paul's words to the Galatian Christians: "Far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."⁸ The central figure in Luther's theology is the crucified Christ. It is fitting that his theology be known as *theologia crucis*.

I. The Cross as the Common Christian Heritage

The cross is the catholic heritage of all Christendom. Although there are indications that its religious significance extended beyond the pale of Christendom—pre-Christian crosses were used symbolically in Assyria, Persia, India, and northern Scandinavia—the cross has come to be identified with Christianity.⁹ There is good reason for this. The heart of the Christian faith is summed up in the cross of Jesus Christ. Leon Morris has demonstrated just how extensively the cross motif penetrates the marrow of New Testament theology.¹⁰

⁶*Bondage of the Will*, 71.

⁷John 14:6-7.

⁸Galatians 6:14.

⁹Daniel J. Fleming, "Religious Symbols Crossing Cultural Boundaries," *Religious Symbolism*, edited by F. Ernest Johnson (New York: The Institute for Religious and Social Studies and Harper & Brothers, 1955), 84.

¹⁰Leon Morris, *The Cross in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965), especially pages 364 and following.

Cross and the Early Church

While making use of the symbol of the cross, early Christian writers seldom saturated theological treatises with allusions to it, especially as the instrument of torture on which Christ died.¹¹ Early Christian artists also seemed reluctant to use it, preferring the indirection of the symbol: the anchor, mast, and crossbeams of the ship and the Greek letter X, the initial of Christ. In fact the cross as a graphic symbol was probably overshadowed by the fish, *ichthus* (ἰχθύς), the individual letters of which spell out the initials of Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior.¹² The sign of the cross, however, gained popularity early and by the end of the second century was an established custom in Christian piety.

Crucifixion as such does not appear in early Christian art.¹³ Probably the earliest remaining pictorial presentation of the crucifixion of Christ was drawn during the second century by hostile hands. On the wall of the Domus Celotiana in Rome, a building used as a school for imperial pages, one sees a drawing of a crucified ass with the Greek inscription "Alexamenos (adores) God."¹⁴ Not until the fourth century did Christians begin to represent in art form the narrative of the death of Christ. Why did the Passion narrative appear so relatively late in Christian art? Several reasons come to mind. Perhaps there is some truth to the conjecture that since the cross remained a sign of foolishness and a stumbling block to the Graeco-Roman

¹¹Here note an interesting study by G. Q. Reijnders, *The Terminology of the Holy Cross in Early Christian Literature* (Nijmegen: Dekker Van de Veegt N. V., 1965). He demonstrates that the usual name for the cross in patristic texts and earliest apocryphal writings was an instrument of torture. This usage agrees with the vocabulary of the evangelists in the Passion narratives and with usage in contemporary profane literature. It is remarkable, however, that the word never occurs in the Septuagint. See page 215.

¹²Eric Newton and William Neil, *2000 Years of Christian Art* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 31.

¹³Crucifixion as a subject of art does not appear before the fifth century in the West. See Gilbert Cope, *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959), 41.

¹⁴For a reproduction of the drawing see Jean Daniélou and Henri Marrou, *The First Six Hundred Years*, volume I of *The Christian Centuries* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1964), plate 10.

world, believers found it more advantageous to stress the resurrection of their Lord rather than draw attention to His ignominious death.¹⁵ A sounder reason is to be found in the theology of the period. As Jean Daniélou has indicated, early Christian theology saw in the symbolism of the cross the expression of Christ's irresistible power and divine efficacy.¹⁶ The lowly, suffering Jesus of the Passion story simply did not fit into the scheme of patristic Christology. The Greek Fathers were more impressed by the doctrine of the Incarnation than the Vicarious Atonement. This is well illustrated by Irenaeus, the brilliant second-century Greek-speaking Father from Lyons, in whose hands the Incarnation becomes *the* event of man's salvation: "The Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ. . . through His transcendent love, became what we are, that He might bring us to be even what He is Himself."¹⁷ Hermann Sasse is right when he states that here the doctrine of the cross is contained in the doctrine of Incarnation, but it has lost its independent status. For the ancient church as well as the later Eastern church the reality of the cross tended to become hidden in the glory of Christmas and Easter. The cross was outshone by the divine glory of Christ incarnate and the risen Lord.¹⁸

Cross and Byzantine Christianity

As the patristic era progressed into the so-called Middle Ages, the cross became a common symbol in artistic representation. In early Byzantine art it played a major role, becoming a favorite architectural design. The little cruciform building in Ravenna known as the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia may have the distinction of being the earliest major example of Christian art

¹⁵Cope, 41.

¹⁶Daniélou and Marrou, 78-79.

¹⁷Irenaeus "Against Heresies" (Preface to Book V), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, edited by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1956), 1:526. Also consult the excellent work by Gustaf Wingren, *Man and the Incarnation: A Study in the Biblical Theology of Irenaeus* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1959).

¹⁸Hermann Sasse, "Theologia crucis," *Briefe an lutherische Pastoren*, Nr. 18 (April 15, 1951), 3.

in Italy. Its opulent Oriental decor includes the mosaic panels of Martyr St. Lawrence and the beardless Good Shepherd, both prominently incorporating the cross into the design. But the work is so heavily laden with brilliance, mystery, and decorative magnificence that the stark reality of the pain of the cross is largely lost. To be sure, it is there, but it does not dominate.¹⁹ The story is much the same with the mosaic in the apse of Santa Pudenziana in Rome where Christ is depicted as teacher of the apostles in the heavenly Jerusalem (401-417). Again the cross is prominent, but its golden majesty hardly suggests suffering. Rather, it stands as a token of Christ's victory.²⁰

The Greek and the Byzantine artists took the cue from their theologians, who tended toward an idealistic conception of man with a leaning toward what came to be known as Pelagianism. The lack of a truly biblical understanding of the serious nature of sin helped prevent the early and the Byzantine churches from reaching the full significance of the cross. Thus they remained short of a true *theologia crucis*.

Cross and the Medieval West

Sasse convincingly contends that *theologia crucis* belongs to the Western church.²¹ It was in the West that Constantine, the first Roman ruler really friendly toward the Christians, conquered under the sign of the cross. It was he who had the Church of the Holy Sepulchre built in the holy city of Jerusalem to house the alleged relic of the Holy Cross. The act was a definite boost for the veneration of the cross throughout all Christendom. But the real home of cross-centered piety was the "Holy Cross in Jerusalem" Church in Rome.

¹⁹For reproductions of the mosaics in the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia (d. 450) see Wolfgang Fritz Volbach, *Early Christian Art* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1961), plates 146 and 147. For a discussion of the subject see Newton and Neil, 41.

²⁰For a reproduction see Volbach, plate 130.

²¹"*Theologia crucis*," 4.

Western veneration of the cross had its liturgical aspects. Important hymns were produced. The Latin poet Venantius Fortunatus (circa 530-circa 600) composed two, *Pange lingua gloriosi* and *Vexilla Regis*. Both were directly addressed to the cross and became part of the Roman liturgical heritage for Good Friday worship. There is no doubt that this type of liturgical piety was sincere and cross-oriented. In fact it was a kind of theology of the cross. While not yet the theology of Bernard of Clairvaux's *Salve caput cruentatum*²² or the popular, tender *Stabat mater dolorosa/juxta crucem lachrymosa*, it pointed the way toward such theology.²³

As in the early church, so also in early medieval piety the cross remained a symbol of divine victory and power. Christian emperors carried it on the battlefield and were confident that they conquered and killed under its blessings. The church militant looked and learned from the secular environment and battled demons and devils by its power. The cross became an almost magical weapon, at the disposal of the visible church to repel its enemies.

The discovery of the naked reality of the suffering and dying Savior by medieval monks and churchmen was of monumental significance to the life and theology of the church. The great Pantocrator Christ, for example, in the magnificent Norman-built twelfth-century cathedral at Cefalù in Sicily²⁴ gave way to Benedetto Antelami's modest conception of "The Deposition"

²²Paul Gerhardt's hymn (1656) *O Haupt von Blut und Wunden* is based on Bernard's *Salve caput cruentatum*. Gerhardt's hymn is in *The Lutheran Hymnal* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1941), Hymn 172.

²³The hymn is of unknown origin. Suggested authors are Innocent III (d. 1216), St. Bonaventura (d. 1274) and Jacopone da Todi (d. 1306). The hymn came into liturgical use in the late Middle Ages and found its way into the Roman Missal in the eighteenth century. See F. L. Cross, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), 1285. See also Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, volume 5, *The Middle Ages* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1960), 859-868.

²⁴For illustration see Newton and Neil, 81.

(1178) in Parma²⁵ or to the humble Passion narrative on the tympanum of the central portal of the Gothic Cathedral of Strasbourg (thirteenth century).²⁶ The Man of Sorrows replaced the image of the victorious Christ. Christ's humility, suffering, pain, and death continued to interest both the medieval theologian and the artist. This piety perhaps is climaxed in the work of Grünewald, a German painter and contemporary of Luther. Grünewald's artistic representation of the crucifixion forms the central panel of the Isenheim Altarpiece (about 1509-1515) and is one of the most moving ever produced. According to Eric Newton, the noted art critic, "it strains the possibilities of the tragic, the static, the mystical and the macabre to a point never reached before or since in Christian art. Perhaps it is the one great series of paintings that dwells, almost hysterically, on horror and yet never loses the spirit of reverence for suffering."²⁷

Changing moods in the fine arts were symptoms of change in theological attitudes. Discovery of the suffering and death of Christ as a bitter reality went hand in hand with realization of the serious nature of sin and guilt, and medieval theologians began to take the plight of sin far more seriously. Unfortunately, the answers they proposed to the problems of sin and grace were often unbiblical. The penitential system, developed as cure for men's souls, turned out to harbor serious contradictions to the gospel. However, medieval man, both cleric and layman, was impressed by the magnitude of his sin and his dire need of absolution. It was this type of theological climate that formed the context for Luther's quest for the gracious God and in 1505 helped him decide for the monastic way among the Augustinian Eremites. The quest for the meaning of the cross had already moved the Latin church for a thousand years before it became a crucial problem for the German Reformation.

²⁵For illustration see Newton and Neil, 99.

²⁶For illustration see Marcel Aubert and Simone Goubet, *Gothic Cathedrals of France and Their Treasures* (London: Nicholas Kaye Limited, 1959), plate 273.

²⁷Newton and Neil, 157. For a good reproduction see plate IX.

One of the fruits of medieval reflection on the doctrine of sin and salvation was Anselm's profound book *Cur Deus homo*. This work was a product of the age of Scholasticism and therefore understandably suffers some of the weaknesses inherent in the attempted synthesis of faith and reason. In some respects, however, Anselm of Canterbury transcended the weaknesses of his theological milieu.²⁸ Students of the history of Christian thought note with interest that Anselm was the first to raise the *satisfactio vicaria* to its rightful place in theology. According to Sasse:

it is a remarkable fact that the doctrine according to which the death of Christ is the satisfaction for the sins of the world is the only doctrine of the Middle Ages which eventually found general assent. The medieval doctrines of sin and grace have remained in dispute. The dogma of transubstantiation has been limited to the Roman Church. All doctrines developed in the 16th century are limited to certain sections of Christendom. But the doctrine of the *satisfactio vicaria* has been dogmatized by the Lutheran, the Reformed, the Anglican, and the Roman Churches independently in their respective confessions.²⁹

Thus Anselm made a lasting contribution to the theology of the cross.³⁰

It is evident that the cross was no stranger to the Christian tradition before Luther. It had already appeared in many shapes: the Greek cross, the Latin cross, the Egyptian cross, the Maltese cross, the Papal cross, and the cross of Lorraine. Iconographers have identified more than fifty varieties, all of

²⁸An interpretation of Anselm's theological significance and scope that deserves praise is Karl Barth's *Anselm: Fides Quaerens Intellectum* (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1960).

²⁹"Theologia crucis," 5.

³⁰For a convenient English text of Anselm's *Cur Deus homo* see *A Scholastic Miscellany: Anselm to Ockham*, edited by Eugene R. Fairweather (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1956), 100-183.

which have figured in Christian symbolism.³¹ It appeared in and on reliquaries, graced church buildings, formed the ground plan for some of the houses of worship, rode in processions, was embroidered on the silk and satin of ecclesiastical vestments, and appeared as a perennial sign on the fingertips of cleric and layman alike. It was ever on the lips of the whole of medieval Christendom. Yet the real depth of the theology of the cross also eluded the Middle Ages. Only in the sixteenth century did *theologia crucis* come to full biblical dimensions in the theology of Martin Luther.

II. Luther's *theologia crucis*

Luther did not need to discover that Jesus Christ had died on the cross for the sins of the world. The church had known that for a long time. In fact, his Catholic superior Staupitz and his father confessor at the monastery both directed him to the forgiveness available in the cross of Christ when he was waging a desperate struggle for righteousness and salvation. In a measure the theology he was taught was that of the cross. It was not, however, all that Luther's own *theologia crucis* came to mean.

In some respects the *theologia crucis* was a radical reversal of the medieval theology of the cross, which Luther later came to call *theologia gloriae*, theology of glory. As Luther came to recognize the full sweetness of God's love in the cross, he realized that the cross also had an epistemological dimension. It offered clues to understanding the mysteries of divine revelation. This formed the backbone of the *theologia crucis*. Luther realized that the love of God toward the sinner that the dying Savior symbolized and manifested as He atoned was, although important, only one aspect of the theology of the cross. An equally important aspect of *theologia crucis*, the cross event, was that it revealed the mystery of God's revelation and afforded insight into the secrets of God's dealings with men. Luther made this discovery rather early in his career. By the

³¹See *The Encyclopædia of the Lutheran Church*, edited by Julius Bodensieck (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1965), 1:640-641.

time the Ninety-five Theses shook the foundations of Western Christendom he had already given concise definition to his ideas on *theologia crucis*. His early lectures on the Epistle to the Hebrews (1517) clearly show that he had already grasped its full dimensions.³² The lectures were interrupted midstream when Luther received a summons to appear before the regular triennial meeting of the German Congregation of the Augustinian Eremites in Heidelberg (1518).³³ During these meetings Vicar General Johann von Staupitz offered him the opportunity (April 26, 1518) to preside over a debate covering 28 theological and 12 philosophical theses that Luther had prepared beforehand.³⁴ The theses demonstrated the growing maturity of his evangelical thought and are of particular interest to those who seek to grasp his *theologia crucis*. Never did Luther express his theology of the cross more succinctly.

Heidelberg Theses on theologia crucis

The most relevant of the Heidelberg Theses are 18 through 21:

18. It is certain that man must utterly despair of his own ability before he is prepared to receive the grace of Christ.

19. That person does not deserve to be called a theologian who looks upon the invisible things of God as though they were clearly perceptible in those things which have actually happened.

20. He deserves to be called a theologian, however, who comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the cross.

³²Luther: *Early Theological Works*, edited and translated by James Atkinson, volume 16 of *Library of Christian Classics* (London: SCM Press, 1962). See particularly page 82, note 1.

³³Luther: *Early Theological Works*, 21.

³⁴Actually Leonhard Beier debated the theses, with Luther presiding. *LW* 31:38.

21. A theologian of glory calls evil good and good evil. A theology of the cross calls the thing what it actually is.³⁵

A number of theological insights emerge.

Paradox of the Knowledge of God

How do Christians know and recognize God? Luther faced this epistemological question. First, there is a contrast between man's attempt to know God on his own and the knowledge and encounter that God makes available. Using his reasoning power man may seek to know God by way of philosophical reflection or contemplation of created reality. In such cases the goal is the knowledge of God as He is in His naked majesty. Luther knew that such a quest was doomed to failure. Man simply cannot bear exposure to the glory of divine majesty. God had told Moses: "You cannot see My face; for man shall not see Me and live. . . . Behold, there is a place by Me where you shall stand upon the rock; and while My glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with My hand until I have passed by; then I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back; but My face shall not be seen."³⁶

Prior to eternity God does not encounter man in naked majesty but adjusts Himself to the human situation, that is, He covers Himself with a mask, revealing Himself in concretized, humanized, and incarnate form. Any attempt to push the mask aside or glance behind it results in tragedy. Man must learn to find God in the masks He has chosen to clothe Himself. The most important of the masks is the Incarnation. God took upon Himself humanity and revealed Himself in Jesus of Nazareth. Luther well knew that God had given Himself to be known in Jesus and that outside of Him God was not to be found. Whoever seeks God outside of Christ, said Luther, actually ends up by finding the devil. Thus the knowledge of God can come only on God's own initiative and terms. But He has chosen the way of masks and veils in order to accommodate human frailty. A paradox obtains: God in His revelation conceals Himself

³⁵LW 31:40.

³⁶Exodus 33:20-23.

behind masks. This is the way of God even today. Paul Althaus writes: "The Holy Spirit comes to us through the external, physical, sensible means of the word, of the human voice, and of the sacraments. All these words and sacraments are his veils and clothing, masks and disguises with which he covers himself so that we may bear and comprehend him."³⁷

In Thesis 19 Luther speaks primarily to scholastic theologians when he warns that true theologians should know better than to try to speculate about God on the basis of the created world and historical data. The "invisible things of God," His eternal power and deity, cannot be properly derived from a knowledge of things.³⁸ Luther clearly rejects the Thomistic type of natural theology. But he does not reject a "natural" knowledge of God.³⁹ As far as Luther is concerned, to move from below to above, from creation to the Creator via *analogia entis*, is not sound theology.

According to Luther, a theologian worthy of the name "comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the cross" (Thesis 20). Here a contrast is established between the invisible nature of God and His majestic attributes (see Romans 1:20) on the one hand, and His visible back side of humanity, weakness, and foolishness (1 Corinthians 1:25) on the other. Further contrast emerges between knowledge of God from His works and from His suffering. A true theologian seeks God where God Himself has

³⁷Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, translated by Robert C. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 22.

³⁸Romans 1:20.

³⁹Philip S. Watson's work *Let God Be God* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1947) is more helpful than most treatments of the subject. Watson writes (78, 79): "For Luther, God is not to be sought behind His creation by inference from it, but is rather to be apprehended in and through it. . . . In a certain sense, therefore, the Creator is concealed by His works. Yet the *larvae Dei* have another and more positive significance than that of mere concealment. Rightly understood, they are media of Divine revelation." See also "Lectures on Genesis," *LW* 1:11: "God also does not manifest Himself except through His works and the Word, because the meaning of these is understood in some measure."

hidden His revelation: in the foolishness, humility, and shame of the cross.⁴⁰ A theology of glory seeks God only in the manifestation of His power. But in His blinding glory and power God is beyond man. He wants to and must be known in His suffering and death. This is the essence of Luther's *theologia crucis*. Accordingly, a theologian who seeks God must stop at the foot of the cross of Golgotha. In the crucified Savior God meets man as his gracious and merciful Father. The real reality is not accessible to man as man but must be revealed to him.

Radical Revelation of Reality

In Thesis 21 Luther complained that the theology of glory did not have a true understanding of reality. While having a taste for pomp and ceremony, majesty, might, and power, *theologia gloriae* was embarrassed by the suffering Savior figure, as well as by the suffering God placed on the shoulders of the followers of Christ. Man had decided to use his own standards in evaluating God's reality. To be sure, by human standards the cross, suffering, and weakness were to be avoided as unworthy of a mighty and benevolent God. It was not so at all in God's sight. He had chosen to offer His grace in a form that was foolishness to the Greeks and a stumbling block to the Jews, an offense to man's good common sense. Think of the bystander at the scene of the crucifixion. What he saw was the dying Jesus of Nazareth, the final defeat for a religious enthusiast. In reality, as God's revelation testifies, it was *the* event of history. God's Son was conquering the forces of evil and making the salvation of mankind possible. Once Luther told Erasmus, "Your thoughts of God are too human."⁴¹ He implied the same when he reprimanded the theologians of glory at Heidelberg.

Luther's explanation of Thesis 21 indicates that he was unconvinced that his opponents really knew the full revelation of God in Christ. "He who does not know Christ does not know God hidden in suffering," he said.⁴² Such a man "prefers works

⁴⁰See an excellent discussion of the matter by Althaus, 26.

⁴¹*Bondage of the Will*, 87.

⁴²LW 31:53.

to suffering, glory to the cross, strength to weakness, wisdom to folly, and, in general, good to evil."⁴³ Luther was convinced that God could be found only in suffering and the cross.⁴⁴ Friends of the cross would therefore call suffering good. Friends of *theologia gloriae* would prefer humanly devised good works to suffering. They would want to attain God's favor by works that they by themselves had decided should please God. Luther had no sympathy with such opinions. He believed that "through the cross works are dethroned and the old Adam, who is especially edified by works, is crucified."⁴⁵

There was little room left for man's pride, but Luther was not upset. If man is to receive God's grace, he must "utterly despair of his own ability" (Thesis 18). The divine law must do its work of leading him into hell and showing him that he is a sinner in all his works. Only after man has learned to accept the fact that it is utterly presumptuous of him to strive for grace on the basis of his own strength is he ready for God's grace in Christ.⁴⁶ "It is impossible," said Luther, "for a person not to be puffed up by his good works unless he has first been deflated and destroyed by suffering and evil until he knows that he is worthless and that his works are not his but God's."⁴⁷

The radical reevaluation of reality is possible by faith alone. The new insight into reality appeals neither to reason nor to common sense. It is the foolishness of God which is wiser than men.⁴⁸ In this light Luther's *theologia crucis* might also be called a theology of faith. The very nature of faith, Luther once told his students, is "to see what cannot be seen and not see what can be seen."⁴⁹

⁴³LW 31:53.

⁴⁴LW 31:53.

⁴⁵LW 31:53.

⁴⁶LW 31:51-52.

⁴⁷LW 31:53.

⁴⁸On wisdom and foolishness in divine economy as it relates to Luther's theology of the Heidelberg Disputation see the perceptive essay by Edmund Schlink, "Weisheit und Torheit," *Kerygma und Dogma* 1 (1955): 1-22.

⁴⁹Luther: *Early Theological Works*, 222.

III. Luther Remains True to His *theologia crucis*

Any serious student of Luther knows that the Reformer's theology evolved over a period of many years. While his tower experience, the discovery of the biblical meaning of the "righteousness of God," may have occurred abruptly, his theology as a whole matured slowly.⁵⁰ Therefore it is not altogether misleading to speak of the "young Luther" or the "mature Luther" when evaluating his work. Understandably, Luther needed time to extricate himself from the theological patterns of thought in which he was trained and nurtured. Once the "Copernican revolution" in theology had begun, thinking through its implications required time. Luther sometimes found that his early theological views needed modification. To cite examples, consider his changing attitude toward the papacy, purgatory, and indulgences. His *theologia crucis* does not belong in this group. To contend that theology of the cross merely belongs to the young or Catholic Luther is to err.⁵¹ It characterized his whole theological effort. Walther von Loewenich, the best-known interpreter of Luther's *theologia crucis*, heartily agrees that "*theologia crucis* is a principle of Luther's whole theology, it may not be limited to any particular period."⁵² No less a Luther interpreter than Gerhard Ebeling supports this view, pointing out that although Luther in his later work did not use the phrase *theologia crucis* frequently – quite

⁵⁰This writer finds it difficult to see real merit in perennial discussion on the date of Luther's famous discovery. The early date of 1513 or 1514, held by E. G. Schwiebert (*Luther and His Times* [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950], 282 and following) and Gordon Rupp (*The Righteousness of God: Luther Studies* [New York: Philosophical Library, 1953]), considering all factors, seems much more satisfying than the late date proposed by Ernst Bizer (*Fides ex auditu* [Neukirchner Verlag, 1961]) and Uuras Saarnivaara (*Luther Discovers the Gospel* [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1951]).

⁵¹Otto Ritschl called it "monk's theology" and assigned it to Luther's prereformatory period. See his *Dogmengeschichte des Protestantismus*, volume 2 (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichsche Buchhandlung, 1912), especially pages 40-84.

⁵²*Luthers Theologia Crucis*, 4. Auflage (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1954), 7; Walter von Loewenich, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, translated by Herbert J.A. Bouman (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1976), 12-13.

the opposite is true – the label nevertheless well describes all his theology.⁵³ This writer is convinced. A spot check of Luther's work dispels all doubt.

The Commentary on the Magnificat and theologia crucis (1521)

Luther's commentary on the Magnificat is a devotional tract composed in the stormy days of the spring and summer of 1521. The work was addressed to Prince John Frederick of Saxony, the elector's nephew, who was later destined to become the benevolent evangelical ruler of Electoral Saxony (1532-1547). The writing of the commentary was interrupted by Luther's call to the Diet of Worms and was completed during the relative quiet of the Wartburg confinement. By June 10, 1521, the work was ready for the printer.⁵⁴

The commentary is a delightful pamphlet of considerable spiritual depth. In it Luther offered remarkably candid advice to the young nobleman: "Unless a lord and ruler loves his subjects and has for his chief concern not how to live at ease but how to uplift and improve his people, his case is hopeless; he rules only for his soul's perdition."⁵⁵ As Luther saw it, a good ruler was a true Christian and took "the fear of God for his defense and rampart," and it was his duty as a Christian theologian, citizen, and subject to offer "wholesome instruction and admonition" to his future prince and lord.⁵⁶

The burden of the message of the Magnificat was Christian humility, and he developed this theme in such a manner that it becomes quite clear that his *theologia crucis* underlay the whole exposition.⁵⁷

⁵³Luther: *Einführung in sein Denken* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1964), 259; See also chapter 14: "Verborgener und offenbarer Gott," 259-279.

⁵⁴Letter to George Spenlein, June 10, 1521," LW 48:254. For a discussion of the composition of the commentary see LW 21:xvii and following.

⁵⁵LW 21:357.

⁵⁶LW 21:357, 356.

⁵⁷LW 21:300, 306, 315-316, 343. Luther calls it the highest of virtues, 313.

In the introductory paragraphs Luther established that God's and man's evaluation of reality did not coincide. He wrote:

Even now and to the end of the world, all His works are such that out of that which is nothing, worthless, despised, wretched, and dead, He makes that which is something, precious, honorable, blessed, and living. On the other hand, whatever is something, precious, honorable, blessed, and living, He makes to be nothing, worthless, despised, wretched, and dying. In this manner no creature can work.⁵⁸

He was convinced that God humbled the proud and gave grace to the humble.⁵⁹ Where the experience prevails that God "looks into the depths and helps only the poor, despised, afflicted, miserable, forsaken, and those who are nothing, there a hearty love for Him is born."⁶⁰

Luther believed that Mary, whom he often called the Mother of God, taught how to know, love, and praise God by word and example.⁶¹

Knowing God

There is a false way and a true way to the knowledge of God. Of the false, the way of speculation and reason, Luther said:

There are many who praise God with a loud voice, preach about Him with high-sounding words, speak much of Him, dispute and write about Him, and paint His image; whose thoughts dwell often upon Him and who reach out after Him and speculate about Him with their reason; there are also many who exalt Him with false devotion and a false will.⁶²

Speculation and philosophical reflection do not lead to a true knowledge of God because God dwells in the darkness of

⁵⁸LW 21:299; see also 356.

⁵⁹Luther is thinking here of 1 Peter 5:5.

⁶⁰LW 21:300.

⁶¹LW 21:301.

⁶²LW 21:307.

faith.⁶³ The true reality of God cannot be seen; man must comprehend by faith, which Luther defines as “firm confidence in the unseen grace of God that is promised us.”⁶⁴ Since God’s works are in secret, without semblance of power, and men judge by appearances, men often err.⁶⁵ God operates by a standard unfamiliar to man’s conception of the deity. His wisdom and power are not those most highly esteemed by men.⁶⁶ In fact, He chose what is foolish in the world in order to shame the wise.⁶⁷ If man really wants to know the truth, his eyes need to be changed. He must realize that God’s value judgments are tipped in favor of the lowly and the despised.⁶⁸ God has power, but that power is seen through faith; moreover to understand God’s works requires faith. By faith the real nature, will, and mind of God become known.⁶⁹ Even God’s greatest work, the Incarnation, seems a humble historical event to the natural eye,⁷⁰ but without this event the whole world would still be in sin and accursed, and this in spite of man’s doing and knowing.⁷¹ One must view the whole Christ event with faith. To the human eye Christ looked powerless on the cross, yet it was there that He performed His mightiest work. So sense and reason must close their eyes and faith must take over.⁷² As man comprehends God’s gracious regard to him, a sinner, God gives Himself to man and lets Himself be known as the gracious Father. One might wonder about proof. Hardly! God’s word and work do not demand proof of reason; man must know in free and pure faith alone.⁷³ Luther was convinced that to know God was to

⁶³LW 21:304.

⁶⁴LW 21:305.

⁶⁵LW 21:339.

⁶⁶LW 21:314.

⁶⁷LW 21:313.

⁶⁸LW 21:317.

⁶⁹LW 21:331.

⁷⁰LW 21:350.

⁷¹LW 21:352.

⁷²LW 21:340-341.

⁷³LW 21:353.

believe that He was good even if His goodness escaped man's sense experience.⁷⁴

The Magnificat taught Luther that a Christian does not place his trust in God's gifts; he trusts in His grace, in God Himself.⁷⁵ Perverted lovers of God, the parasites, hirelings, and slaves, love salvation but not their Savior.⁷⁶ They "seek their own advantage in God, neither love nor praise His bare goodness, but have an eye to themselves and consider only how good God is to them."⁷⁷ When He hides His face and withdraws the rays of goodness, love cools promptly. They seem to be unable to love the bare, unfelt goodness hidden in God. Contrary to this spirit the Christians, the truly lowly, naked, hungry, and God-fearing—like the Virgin Mary—love God Himself, not only the good things of God.⁷⁸ The hirelings, thinks Luther, would let God's good things go unloved and unpraised if heaven and hell did not exist.⁷⁹ Such men are actually trying to make a lackey out of God. They surely will not obtain a reward; God is not their Savior; they have fabricated a savior for themselves.⁸⁰

Praising God

A Christian is to lay claim to nothing as far as his own ability is concerned.⁸¹ God alone is to be exalted and praised.⁸² However, praise of the Lord with gladness is not a man-fabricated work, rather it is joyful suffering.⁸³ Self-chosen works neither afford salvation nor render praise. Faith alone makes men pious, united, peaceable; human works tend to breed discrimination, sin, and discord.⁸⁴ One must remember that God

⁷⁴Luther comments that it is a practical impossibility that a Christian would never experience God's goodness. See *LW* 21:310.

⁷⁵*LW* 21:325.

⁷⁶*LW* 21:309, 312.

⁷⁷*LW* 21:309.

⁷⁸*LW* 21:311.

⁷⁹*LW* 21:312.

⁸⁰*LW* 21:312.

⁸¹*LW* 21:308.

⁸²*LW* 21:328.

⁸³*LW* 21:302.

⁸⁴*LW* 21:304-305.

looks at the heart and not at works.⁸⁵ True worship and service of God is to let God be God and let Him perform His works in the believer. Luther was definitely unhappy with what people tended to associate with "service of God."

Alas, the word 'service of God' has nowadays taken on so strange a meaning and usage that whoever hears it thinks not of these works of God, but rather of the ringing of bells, the wood and stone of churches, the incense pot, the flicker of candles, the mumbling in the churches, the gold, silver, and precious stones in the vestments of choirboys and celebrants, of chalices and monstrances, of organs and images, processions and churchgoing, and, most of all, the babbling of lips and the rattling of rosaries. This, alas, is what the service of God means now. Of such service God knows nothing at all.⁸⁶

He was likewise critical of the worship service. He complained: "There is today in the churches a great ringing of bells, blowing of trumpets, singing, shouting, and intoning, yet I fear precious little worship of God, who wants to be worshiped in spirit and truth, as He says in John 4:24."⁸⁷

According to Luther the real praise is God's own work which He performs in the believer; it is joyful suffering.⁸⁸ Of course this does not agree with those who are ready to praise God only when He does well to them.⁸⁹ Ironically, God's good gifts often have an undesirable effect; they tend to feed man's pride and self-confidence, producing complacent hearts.⁹⁰ Therefore God often allows Christians to remain poor and hapless.⁹¹ He places the cross of Christ on them in order to help them maintain their

⁸⁵LW 21:318.

⁸⁶LW 21:350.

⁸⁷LW 21:325.

⁸⁸LW 21:302.

⁸⁹LW 21:307.

⁹⁰LW 21:308.

⁹¹LW 21:309.

humble spirit.⁹² Humility, said Luther, is a truly Christian virtue. God cannot condone the proud, powerful, and smart-alecky. Of such a man he writes:

Especially when he finds he ought to give way or confess himself in the wrong, he becomes so insolent and is so utterly devoid of the fear of God that he dares to boast of being infallible, declares God is on his side and the others on the devil's side, and has the effrontery to appeal to the judgment of God. If such a man possesses the necessary power, he rushes on headlong, persecuting, condemning, slandering, slaying, banishing, and destroying all who differ with him, saying afterward he did it all to the honor and glory of God.⁹³

A Christian must remain humble, truly humble. He should be the last person to recognize his own humility, let alone boast about it.⁹⁴

But even a humble Christian must accept the cross of suffering. Luther has some definite opinions on this. God may use the opportunity to test faith and in the process actually strengthen man's trust.⁹⁵ Knowing this may be the case, a Christian surrenders patiently that which God sees fit to deprive him of.⁹⁶ He will suffer lack with equanimity. There is no question about demanding "rights" because in God's sight man has no rights.⁹⁷ He will patiently suffer wrong if necessary, endure shame if that is his lot. All this he will do for Christ's sake and in so doing will cling to Him alone.⁹⁸ Sometimes a Christian may even be called upon to suffer for the sake of the community in which he lives.⁹⁹ If this happens, he will do so

⁹²See *LW* 21:301.

⁹³*LW* 21:333. Luther may have in mind particularly the ecclesiastical leaders of his day.

⁹⁴*LW* 21:313. Luther has some sharp words for those who cover their pride with the garb of humility, 316.

⁹⁵One may see *LW* 21:334.

⁹⁶*LW* 21:335.

⁹⁷*LW* 21:337.

⁹⁸*LW* 21:336-337.

⁹⁹*LW* 21:337.

gladly. But what he will not do is compromise on his confession of the love and mercy of God in Christ. If that entails suffering, he will gladly suffer, but he will remain steadfast.¹⁰⁰

Luther obviously enjoyed writing the commentary on the Magnificat and felt personally quite committed about its content. While he did not once use *theologia crucis* in this devotional exposition, the entire commentary is based on his theology of the cross.

Lectures on Genesis 45 and theologia crucis (1545)

Like Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics*, Luther's lectures on Genesis were momentous. They extended over a full decade, frequently interrupted by illness or urgent business away from Wittenberg, and were finally concluded late in 1545. Just three months later Luther closed his eyes for the last time in Eisleben, where he had been born some sixty-two years before. The lectures on Genesis are lengthy. They fill eight volumes of the American Edition of his works. Their very length indicates the seriousness with which the author viewed them. Since these were Luther's mature years, it is interesting to know whether he remained true to his *theologia crucis*. If he did, then it is reasonable to conclude that *theologia crucis* also penetrated his entire theological harvest. An analysis of the entire Genesis commentary exceeds the scope of this essay. To reduce the task to manageable proportions, we selected Genesis 45, the beautiful Joseph-meets-his-brothers story that Luther approached in January 1545.¹⁰¹

Early in chapter 45 of his commentary Luther showed that he had detected a certain parallel between Joseph's revelation of his identity to his brothers and God's dealings with men. Luther himself must be heard here.

Accordingly, this is a very beautiful example of how God deals with us. For when He afflicts the godly and conceals

¹⁰⁰LW 21:334.

¹⁰¹LW 8:ix.

the fact that He is our God and Father and rather conducts Himself as a tyrant and judge who wants to torture and destroy us, He says at last in His own time and at a suitable hour: 'I am the Lord your God. Hitherto I have treated you just as if I wanted to cast you off and hurl you into hell. But this is a game I am wont to play with My saints; for if I had not wished you well from My heart, I would never have played with you in this manner.'¹⁰²

The Paradox of the Knowledge of God

To Luther knowledge of God was the chief and highest knowledge.¹⁰³ In his commentary on Genesis 45 Luther once more pointed out that philosophers argue and speculate about the existence of God and arrive at some sort of knowledge of Him. This, however, is limited to what Luther called objective knowledge.¹⁰⁴ It falls short of the true knowledge of God, which entails comprehension of His nature and will. The latter knowledge implies a trust that God cares, that He has the will, wisdom, and power to help, and that He wants to help. It implies that God wants to be a personal Lord and merciful Father.¹⁰⁵ This is beyond metaphysical knowledge. A philosopher like Plato, according to Luther's colorful imagery, remains like a cow who looks at a new door, refusing to enter.¹⁰⁶ The real knowledge of God, unlike metaphysical speculation, one must gain in a "practical" manner.¹⁰⁷ To know God, one must learn to understand His ways, His masks, His gospel, His cross.

God and His Masks

Luther closed his commentary on Genesis 45 with quotes from Exodus 33:23 and 33:20: "You shall see My back, not My face;

¹⁰²LW 8:4-5.

¹⁰³LW 8:28.

¹⁰⁴LW 8:17.

¹⁰⁵LW 8:17.

¹⁰⁶LW 8:17.

¹⁰⁷LW 8:28.

for man shall not see Me and live."¹⁰⁸ As the regions of heaven and earth differ, so do the ways of God and man.¹⁰⁹ In dealing with men God often conceals Himself. He acts as a tyrant, who in Joseph's story deserts the father and hurls the son into slavery.¹¹⁰ Behind a mask "He offers Himself to us as the God of wrath, death, and hell."¹¹¹ Frequently it seems that only groanings, tears, troubles, and oppression for the poor prevail. Rather than seeing God's face, man gazes at the devil's behind.¹¹² Worse yet, there seems to be no easy way out of this dilemma. Says Luther: "I cannot escape or draw away that horrible mask which hides the face of God, but I must stay in darkness and in exceedingly dark mist until a new light shines forth."¹¹³ This must be so; how else would there be room for faith?¹¹⁴ Instead of being scandalized by the masks, man must learn to understand what God really means with His unfamiliar and strange forms.¹¹⁵ He must learn to trust that behind the masks is the true face of God, according to which He is the God of life, glory, salvation, joy, and peace.¹¹⁶ That this is so, God has revealed in His word.¹¹⁷ According to biblical revelation, the God who kills also brings to life; the God who terrifies man with frightening faces provides salvation. This a Christian can and must know, but only by God's grace, and in faith.¹¹⁸ So a Christian dutifully bears burdens, endures ill and pain, and lets God act as He pleases.¹¹⁹ Luther's advice is clear enough: believe, hope, pray, listen to the word of God, and cling to it.¹²⁰

¹⁰⁸LW 8:74.

¹⁰⁹LW 8:29.

¹¹⁰LW 8:31.

¹¹¹LW 8:31.

¹¹²LW 8:47.

¹¹³LW 8:33.

¹¹⁴LW 8:37.

¹¹⁵LW 8:31.

¹¹⁶LW 8:31.

¹¹⁷LW 8:17.

¹¹⁸See LW 8:20; 8:35; see also 8:10, 8:20.

¹¹⁹LW 8:30.

¹²⁰LW 8:47.

God and the Gospel

No matter how angry God seems, men should believe that He is their personal Savior and Father.¹²¹ On one occasion Luther called this the doctrine of the Christians, on another, the theology of promise.¹²² He knew that neither the philosophers nor the jurists would understand and teach it. For the human mind the death of Christ on the cross naturally seemed to be utmost confusion and wretchedness, not the glorious salvation event it really was.¹²³ But a Christian knows better in spite of tears, sorrow, pain, and death. Luther confessed boldly: "I believe in Christ, Him I confess and invoke. Let the world laugh or be angry, who cares?"¹²⁴ In the face of adversity and the cross a Christian will grab hold of God's sure promises and will stand his ground. In the lectures Luther reminds his students repeatedly on what Christian hope is based. He would say: "I have been baptized, I believe in God the Father. I believe in Jesus Christ!"¹²⁵ "I have been baptized; I have been called through the Word; I believe in the Son of God, who suffered for me."¹²⁶ "The Lord lives. I have been baptized. I have the Word."¹²⁷

There is no doubt in Luther's mind that God frees, defends, and governs. His grace is sufficient at all times, also in adversity. In faith there is no difference between life and death, wealth and poverty, disgrace and fame. This makes a Christian powerful in battle and enables him to stand above the horrors of death, hell, and all adversity.¹²⁸ He knows that, through the gospel of forgiveness, hell is closed, heaven opened, faith bolstered, and consolation made to sound sweeter than ever.¹²⁹ This is as far as a Christian can go in this life. In eternity God

¹²¹LW 8:9.

¹²²LW 8:30; see also 8:11.

¹²³LW 8:35.

¹²⁴LW 8:36.

¹²⁵LW 8:8.

¹²⁶LW 8:8-9.

¹²⁷LW 8:32.

¹²⁸LW 8:10.

¹²⁹LW 8:27, 58-59.

will pour Himself out completely on His children. But meanwhile only a glimpse of His real face is visible in His promises.¹³⁰ This to Luther was the theology of the gospel.¹³¹

God and the Cross

The God of the gospel made wonderful promises, but sparing the Christian of his cross was not one of them. Luther is reminded of what the saints, Matthew and Paul, wrote: "He who does not take his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me" (Matthew 10:38) and: "All of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death" (Romans 6:3). To be sure, grief, torment, and pain will continue.¹³² Spiritual trials, struggles of conscience, sorrow, and anguish must also occur.¹³³ The heart must be smitten by terror; the old man must be destroyed.¹³⁴ Struggles with unbelief, indignation against God, even despair plague the Christian because he often cannot see the will of God and His counsel in time of suffering.¹³⁵

Luther's advice is clear: Be still; let God rule.¹³⁶ Thank God that He has given you the word and the promise. Luther, thinking of 2 Peter 1:19, urges the Christian to fix his eyes and keenness of mind on the word alone, on baptism, on the Lord's Supper, and on absolution. Everything else may be regarded as darkness.¹³⁷

Why must afflictions and the cross be borne by the Christian? In his Genesis commentary Luther suggested several reasons. Since man is proud, he needs to be humbled. Afflictions often help man to know himself better and come to a starker

¹³⁰LW 8:12, 30.

¹³¹LW 8:30.

¹³²LW 8:6, 9.

¹³³LW 8:7.

¹³⁴LW 8:27, 29.

¹³⁵LW 8:8. It is interesting to note that in Luther's opinion "God does not reckon those complaints and that murmuring as sin."

¹³⁶LW 8:33, 36.

¹³⁷LW 8:33.

understanding of the plight of his original sin.¹³⁸ Above all, he must be purged of sin.¹³⁹ Then again, afflictions could serve as punishment for sin or as chastisement for the benefit of others who see and hear about it.¹⁴⁰ Only God knows the details. But there is something that afflictions are definitely not. They are not an opportunity to render satisfaction to God. "It is the merit of His [Christ's] suffering that our humbling, mortification, rejection, and damnation are pleasing to God."¹⁴¹ Of course reason does not understand all this; it despairs.¹⁴² However, faith comes to rescue. Therefore Luther's advice is: "Let us keep on believing, teaching, suffering, and dying."¹⁴³

We now face the question whether Luther held to *theologia crucis* in the Genesis commentary. We believe that the above discussion fully supports the thesis that all the salient features of *theologia crucis* are present, many developed in depth, perhaps even beyond his earlier work. Certainly neither the epistemological nor the soteriological aspects of the theology of the cross have been altered in basic structure. It is true that one notices nuances in the more mature Luther that are not quite the same as in the earlier years. There seems to be greater emphasis on eschatology.¹⁴⁴ The written word and the sacraments as means of God's revelation of Himself, His real nature, seem more prominent than, for example, in the Heidelberg Disputation.¹⁴⁵ Although *theologia crucis* – law and gospel, too, for that matter – are never used as labels in his commentary on Genesis 45, Luther's text is never far from the ideas they express. As indicated earlier, in 1545 Luther called his doctrine the theology of the gospel. This certainly is apt. Theology of the

¹³⁸LW 8:5.

¹³⁹LW 8:5 and following; one may also see 8:27. Without purging we get spiritually lazy and sluggish in the flesh, thinks Luther. "God pricks and drives the stupid, and lazy ass, our flesh, which oppresses us with its huge bulk" (15).

¹⁴⁰LW 8:73.

¹⁴¹LW 8:6.

¹⁴²LW 8:8.

¹⁴³LW 8:36.

¹⁴⁴LW 8:20, 26, 35, 46, 54.

¹⁴⁵LW 8:17, 42, 47, 54, 60.

gospel and *theologia crucis*, however, are not mutually exclusive. Rather they are more like the two sides of the same coin. It seems quite safe to conclude that Luther remained true to his theology of the cross throughout his life.

IV. Luther's *theologia crucis* and Late-Medieval Theology

This is not the place for an in-depth discussion of the relationship between Luther's *theologia crucis* and late-medieval theology. More groundwork still needs to be done. But the question whether Luther borrowed his *theologia crucis* from medieval mystics simply cannot be ignored in any treatment of *theologia crucis*. Only the more obvious observations can be sketched here.

Certain Similarities

The late-medieval piety that may have exerted significant influence on the development of Luther's *theologia crucis* has many facets. The theology of the German Dominican mystic Johann Tauler (circa 1300-1361) appealed to Luther, who especially appreciated his sermons.¹⁴⁶ The theology of an anonymous work probably written by a member of the Teutonic Knights of Sachsenhausen near Frankfurt in the latter half of the fourteenth century impressed Luther so deeply that he edited the work for publication in 1516 and again in 1518, the second time under the title *A German Theology*.¹⁴⁷ In the preface to the later edition Luther said: "No book except the Bible and St. Augustine has come to my attention from which I have learned more about God, Christ, man, and all things."¹⁴⁸ There was also the fatherly interest and influence of Johann von Staupitz (1460-1524), the vicar general of the Augustinian Eremites in Saxony and the first dean of the theological faculty of Wittenberg. In personal correspondence Luther gratefully acknowledged the

¹⁴⁶"Letter to John Lang, February 8, 1517," LW 48:36.

¹⁴⁷*Late Medieval Mysticism*, edited by Ray C. Petry, volume 13 of the *Library of Christian Classics* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press and London: SCM Press, 1957) 321 and following; LW 31:73-74.

¹⁴⁸LW 31:75.

help his superior had given him in his struggles for the biblical meaning of penitence.¹⁴⁹ Staupitz' theology perhaps can be described as biblically oriented practical mysticism, somewhat akin to the *Devotio moderna* piety.¹⁵⁰

There seems to be no question about the influence of German mysticism on Luther. The question remains, however, to what extent, if any, was his *theologia crucis* derived from this source. One cannot deny surface similarities. Like Luther, mystics speak of the life of a Christian in terms of accepting the cross, humility, resignation, and conformity to Christ and His suffering.¹⁵¹ In *The German Theology* one finds the statement:

No one can become perfect in a day. A man must first wholly deny himself, and willingly forsake all things for God's sake, and must give up his own will, and all his natural inclinations, and purge and cleanse himself thoroughly from all sins and evil ways. After this let him humbly take up the cross and follow Christ.¹⁵²

It is true that in his early days, especially in his lectures on Romans, Luther sometimes spoke the language of the mystics.¹⁵³ But even when he is close to the letter of the mystics, he is far from their spirit.

Radical Differences

Both mysticism and faith are independent religious orientations proposing different ways of comprehending God. All mysticism is basically being oriented. It conceives of God as the *summum esse* and brackets Him together with creation in the category of being. Personalism simply has no room here. The religious goal of the mystic is not communion, but the establishment of oneness and unity with the Divine. Contrary to

¹⁴⁹"Letter to John von Staupitz, May 30, 1518," *LW* 48:65.

¹⁵⁰See Loewenich, 163 and following.

¹⁵¹Loewenich, 148.

¹⁵²*Late Medieval Mysticism*, 335.

¹⁵³*Luther: Lectures on Romans*, edited by Wilhelm Pauck, volume 15 of the *Library of Christian Classics* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press and London: SCM Press, 1961), xxxiv and following; Loewenich, 154.

the mystic way, faith-oriented religion rejects the dissolution of the pious soul in God. Faith regards God as the covenant partner in an I-and-Thou relationship. It never abrogates the difference between the creature and the Creator. As one would expect, mysticism and faith-oriented religion differ sharply concerning the doctrine of sin. For the mystic, sin is creatureliness that must ultimately be overcome. For a faith-centered theologian like Luther sin is unbelief, disobedience to God's will. Systematically speaking, Luther was no mystic; in fact his theology was in many respects sharply opposed to mysticism.¹⁵⁴

In the light of this it is not at all strange that Luther's *theologia crucis* differs substantially from mystic theology. Examples bear this out clearly. Tauler's theology, for instance, essentially proclaimed the birth of God in the human soul and looked in the direction of ultimate submergence of man in God. From Luther's point of view Tauler's theology is more a *theologia gloriae* than *crucis*. To Tauler, suffering was an important yet temporary aspect in the process of salvation. To Luther, God Himself brought the cross into the life of the Christian in order to do His strange work (*opus alienum*), which served the purpose of His proper work (*opus proprium*). Furthermore, Tauler's concept of suffering was based on speculative Neoplatonism, whereas Luther's similar-sounding expressions were ethically oriented.¹⁵⁵

Much the same could be said about *The German Theology*. However, a difference that may complicate the matter emerges. The Frankfurter, as some call the author, seemed to hold to both, religioethically and Neoplatonically oriented concepts of sin.¹⁵⁶ Luther definitely did not adopt the speculative bases of *The German Theology*.

¹⁵⁴See Loewenich, 149 and following.

¹⁵⁵This is substantially what Loewenich contends, 159.

¹⁵⁶Loewenich, 162.

Staupitz is closer to Luther's *theologia crucis* than other mystics. For both theologians Christian humility and self-accusation (*accusatio sui*) play a significant role. Unfortunately it becomes evident after some probing that Staupitz' theology did not escape basic medieval work-righteousness.¹⁵⁷ This emerges when one looks at the function of suffering. For Staupitz the plight of the cross afforded opportunities for pleasing works. Luther saw in the cross an encounter with the reality of God, who through His strange work was seeking the sinner.¹⁵⁸

One may conclude then that Luther's faith-oriented *theologia crucis* was not simply the product of late-medieval piety. In spite of some similarities, they differed radically. However, the similarities – an emphasis on the cross, suffering, and practical piety – are also important. To be sure, Luther had learned something from the German mystics, as he readily admitted. One might even go so far as to say that Luther's *theologia crucis* might have been impossible without the author's monastic experience.¹⁵⁹ However, all this does not challenge the conclusion.

V. Some Implications of Luther's *theologia crucis*

Many implications come to mind. For the sake of convenience they may be looked at in terms of theological, pastoral, and ecumenical concerns.

Theological Concerns

To spell out the manner in which Luther's theology radiates from the core of *theologia crucis* would be a welcome task but one definitely beyond the scope of this piece. Not much imagination is required to see how several aspects of the German Reformer's theology ultimately converged on the cross. His conception of God, Christology, anthropology, soteriology, doctrine of the word, sacraments, the church, ministry, and

¹⁵⁷Loewenich, 165 and following.

¹⁵⁸Loewenich, 166.

¹⁵⁹Loewenich, 166.

ethics all stand in the context of the cross. Not to recognize the implications of *theologia crucis* in the several aspects of his theology is to a large extent to miss what makes Luther's theology Lutheran. Luther scholar Heinrich Bornkamm tends to agree. He contends that Luther's theology "receives its inner unity and its distinctiveness from the other churches" from the theology of the cross.¹⁶⁰

Many contemporary theological difficulties stem from lack of clarity on *theologia crucis* and *theologia gloriae*. For example, the so-called death-of-God theologians—radical theologians, as they prefer to be known—insist on seeing God as He is. Disappointed in the results of metaphysical reflection, they tend to abandon the God of the Christian faith altogether and turn for religious stimulus to oriental mystics and nineteenth-century philosophical malcontents.¹⁶¹

Luther's theology is—and Lutherans would do well to heed this—Christocentric. Man's relationship to God depends on the saving event of the cross of Christ. Without Incarnation and Atonement he would be, in sin and thus alienated from God. Luther's theology is also revelation oriented. God meets man in the cross of Jesus Christ. Now His gracious revelation continues in the word, the Holy Scriptures. God also offers His gracious forgiveness in the sacraments of baptism and the eucharist. Again Luther's theology is faith-centered. It does not seek support in reason, philosophy, or metaphysical speculation. One apprehends salvation, healing, and new life through faith alone. The affairs of the world may often confound the Christian, but he can—and this in spite of what he may see or hear—believe by grace in God's gracious presence.

¹⁶⁰Heinrich Bornkamm, *The Heart of Reformation Faith: The Fundamental Axioms of Evangelical Belief*, translated by John W. Doberstein (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 54.

¹⁶¹Thomas J. J. Altizer, *The Gospel of Christian Atheism* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966), and Thomas J. J. Altizer and William Hamilton, *Radical Theology and the Death of God* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1966).

Luther's *theologia crucis* is also relevant in the realm of Christian ethics. As noted above, his theology demands a radical reevaluation of all values.¹⁶² The *theologia crucis* suggests a mysterious identity of man's and Christ's suffering. But disposing of the matter in terms of *imitatio Christi* is too simple.¹⁶³ God calls on Christians to accept the cross in hope and faith. This may have implications for contemporary social concerns. It may even suggest guiding principles in charting out the Christian quest of ameliorating social injustices. Further, it speaks to Luther's understanding of the concept of vocation and the honorable place of work in God's perspective.

This writer has a special interest in historical theology and therefore in the Christian interpretation of history. Here too, it seems, Luther's *theologia crucis* is relevant. In fact it may go a long way in helping historians toward a truly Christian understanding of history. Much has been written on Christian interpretation of history.¹⁶⁴ Unfortunately, however, one often encounters confusion. Especially in the past many able historians, including church historians, have insisted on a *theologia gloriae* oriented interpretation. They have interpreted events as if God's acts were plainly visible and not hidden behind His masks. According to *theologia crucis*, the meaning of history is not what it appears to be in man's mind. Nor is man capable of figuring out God's ways step by step. A Christian interpreter of history must realize that he too must live by faith alone. God does not need man for His counselor, even the historian. In history God shows His "back side" and acts like a "tyrant." Only by faith can one conclude that God performs His "strange work" in order to accomplish His "proper work." Only

¹⁶²Regin Prenter, "Luther's Theology of the Cross," *Lutheran World* 6 (December 1959): 222.

¹⁶³Prenter, 223-224.

¹⁶⁴This writer has been impressed by Alan Richardson's *History Sacred and Profane* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1964), and Eric C. Rust's *Towards a Theological Understanding of History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963). One may also consult the very useful study by John M. Headley, *Luther's View of Church History* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1963).

thus can it be, as it was on Golgotha, that what seems defeat is God's victory. On the other hand some empirical victory of the Christian church may actually be an embarrassment to God's kingdom. A Christian historian must simply accept the fact that he is unqualified to write the definitive biography of God and His deeds. He has no special insight into interpreting reality. He too must live by faith alone, holding on to the sure promises of the word and the sacraments.

Pastoral Concerns

Luther's work, like that of other truly great theologians, was deeply immersed in pastoral concerns. This is particularly evident from the many sermons, table talks, and the more than 3,000 letters that survive.¹⁶⁵ As a spiritual counselor Luther was called on to address the sick, the dying, and the epidemic-stricken. Sometimes he was called on to deal with those who suffered from a variety of spiritual temptations and trials. On many occasions he addressed words of comfort to the mourners.

His pastoral counsel was almost always a practical application of *theologia crucis*. For example, in 1531 Luther wrote to his own dying mother:

First, dear mother, you are now well-informed about God's grace and know that this sickness of yours is his gracious, fatherly chastisement. It is quite a slight thing in comparison with what he inflicts upon the godless, and sometimes even upon his own dear children. One person is beheaded, another burned, a third drowned, and so on. And all of us must say, "For thy sake are we killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter." Therefore, this sickness should not distress or depress you. On the contrary, you should accept it with thankfulness as a token of God's grace, recognizing how slight a suffering it is (even if it be a sickness unto death) compared with the

¹⁶⁵Luther, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, edited by Theodore G. Tappert, volume 18 of the *Library of Christian Classics* (Philadelphia: Westminster and London: SCM, 1955) 22.

sufferings of his own dear Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who did not suffer for himself, as we do, but for us and for our sins.¹⁶⁶

To a friend of long standing, John Reineck, Luther wrote on the occasion of the death of Reineck's wife:

How should we conduct ourselves in such a situation? God has so ordered and limited our life here that we may learn and exercise the knowledge of his very good will so that we may test and discover whether we love and esteem his will more than ourselves and everything that he has given us to have and love on earth. And although the inscrutable goodness of the divine will is hidden (as is God Himself) from the old Adam as something so great and profound that man finds no pleasure in it, but only grief and lamentation, we nevertheless have his holy and sure Word which reveals to us this hidden will of his and gladdens the heart of the believer.¹⁶⁷

Basic human relationships have not changed since the sixteenth century. Illness, personal tragedy, death, and doubt still plague modern man. There are no more profound answers to the perennial "Why did this have to happen to me?" than those based on *theologia crucis*.

Much the same holds true of the preaching ministry. What is a pastor to preach in this complicated and often frightened space age? Luther's answer is as vital as ever: "*Unum praedica: sapientiam crucis!*" The wisdom of the cross is relevant for any age. The cross is relevant also for today.¹⁶⁸

Ecumenical Significance

"The cross of Christ binds together the whole of Christendom; it stands on the altars of all confessions" observes Professor Bornkamm of Heidelberg.¹⁶⁹ It is, however, equally true that on

¹⁶⁶Luther: *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 33-34.

¹⁶⁷Luther: *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 69.

¹⁶⁸One may see "Theologia crucis," 2.

¹⁶⁹*Heart of Reformation Faith*, 45.

closer examination differences emerge in the common heritage. Honesty demands that neither aspect of *theologia crucis* be brushed aside lightly. *Theologia crucis* both binds and separates. To see only one side of the matter is to indulge in harmful oversimplification. As much as all Christians need and want to rejoice in the unity of the cross of Christ, they cannot afford to overlook the distinctive characteristics, theological and practical, that the symbol has assumed in Christian church bodies. St. Thomas Aquinas, the leading spirit of Roman Catholicism, knew that man is a sinner and that Jesus Christ the Crucified is his Savior. But it is unlikely that anyone would seriously contend that he and Luther shared the same *theologia crucis*. God can and may answer the fervent prayers of most Christians for a true and speedy unity. The unity, however, dare not be created by violent hands or for wrong reasons—for *theologia gloriae*. The biblical insights of Luther's *theologia crucis* are too precious to be lost. On the theology of the cross stand the four great *solas* of the Reformation heritage: *sola Scriptura*, *sola gratia*, *sola fide*, and *solus Christus*.¹⁷⁰

¹⁷⁰*Heart of Reformation Faith*, 15.

Sylvester Prierias

<http://reformation500.csl.edu/bio/prierias/>

Sylvester Prierias

Sylvester (Mazzolini) Prierias entered the early controversy over indulgences when, as papal court theologian, he drafted a theological critique of the *95 Theses* that were attached to the letter summoning Luther to Rome in 1518. Born Sylvester Mazzolini in 1456 in the town of Priero, part of the Piedmont region in northwestern Italy, Prierias would later take the Latin form of his hometown for a last name. He joined the Dominican order in 1471 and, while little is known of his family background or early education, by 1493 he had become a noted teacher of Thomistic theology at Pavia, then later Bologna and Rome. He later served as vicar-general of the Lombardian Dominicans from 1508 to 1510. It was Pope Julius II that called the theologian to Rome, where he would join the faculty at the Sapienza University before being named *magistri sacri Palati* (“Master of the Sacred Palace”), a court theologian providing advice to Pope Leo X.

By the time of the indulgence controversy, Prierias had attained notoriety for his theological works. Prior to arriving in Rome, he had written numerous vernacular mystical treatises and published his popular *Rosa aurea*, commentaries on the Gospel lessons for Sundays and feast days throughout the liturgical year. His most notable work, the *Summa summarum de casibus conscientiae*, or *Summa Silvestrina*, was a reference manual for confessors that drew on canon law to provide substantial commentary on theological and moral matters. During this period, he became embroiled in a debate amongst the Dominicans, including Cardinal Cajetan, concerning the reason’s ability to demonstrate the immortality of the soul.

Prierias was drafted into the early Reformation conflict while serving in Leo X’s court. After receiving a copy of Luther’s *95 Theses* and obtaining a verdict from the faculty at Mainz concerning the theses, Albrecht von Hohenzollern sent an official request to Rome for an investigation of Luther’s teachings. As part of the due process, Leo had canonist Jerome Ghinucci draft a letter summoning Luther to Rome for a hearing and ordered Prierias to provide a theological critique of the theses. Prierias was not unfamiliar with Wittenberg, being present when Luther’s own teacher, Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt, underwent a 1516 public disputation in Rome to earn his

doctorate in civil and canon law. Afterward, the two had a terse exchange over the role of Scripture in the debate that would suggest the later conflict with Luther.

In 1518, Prierias wrote his *Dialogus de potestate papae*, which set out a general critique of Luther's arguments against the theology behind indulgences. Like Johannes Tetzel and Johannes Eck, Prierias embodied the common attempt of Luther's rivals to shift the debate toward church authority rather than focusing solely on the question of indulgences. He argued that Luther's theses were methodologically unclear, then offered a fourfold set of principles drawn from the Thomistic tradition for proceeding with debate: the Roman church and the papacy were equivalent with the universal church; neither the Roman church, the papacy, nor a rightly constituted council can err theologically; anyone who disagrees with the infallible proclamations of the Roman church, the papacy, or a council is a heretic; and this judgment extends to both official teachings and official practices. The last of the four would prove the most pivotal to the ensuing debate.

Luther received the *Dialogus*, along with the summons to appear in Rome within sixty days, on 7 August 1518. He immediately drafted his *Responsia* to address Prierias's points and sent them to Frederick the Wise's secretary, Georg Spalatin, for review on 31 August. Luther contended in his response that indulgences were an unsettled question in the church, so as doctor of Holy Scripture and a teacher in the church he was well within his right to debate them. For Prierias, however, indulgences were an official practice of the church and thus no less authoritative than official teachings. This exposed a deeper rift between the two. Whereas Luther appealed to Scripture, church councils, and canon law, Prierias relied primarily on the theology of Thomas Aquinas and used it support unqualified obedience to papally sanctioned practices as well as dogma. It was in his rejoinder that Luther first cites a claim by fifteenth-century canon lawyer and conciliarist Panormitanus (Nicholas of Tudeschi) regarding the fallibility of both council and pope. Luther would use this argument again in his debate with Eck at Leipzig the next summer, where he began to emphasize to a greater degree the authority of Scripture over all other sources, including canon law and conciliar decrees.

Prierias remained active in the controversy the final years of his life. He wrote two additional treatises against Luther's position, the *Epitoma* in 1519 and the *Errata et argumenta Martini Lutheris* in 1520, but ill health and advancing age prohibited him from contributing further. He would die in Rome in 1523.

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Formal Legal Proceedings against Luther Begin in Rome

<http://reformation500.csl.edu/timeline/formal-legal-proceedings-against-luther-begin-in-rome/>

Formal legal proceedings against Luther begin in Rome

Initial charges of heresy were brought against Luther in the summer of 1518. The source for those charges is uncertain. One possibility was the rival Dominicans in Germany, led by John Tetzel, who was conferred a doctorate at the plenary chapter meeting of the Dominicans just prior to the legal proceedings against Luther, which essentially made him Luther's equal as a doctor of the church and thus able to debate his critic. Another possibility was the Leipzig cleric Jerome Emser, a member of Duke George of Saxony's court who interrogated Luther in July of that year. Yet another option was the letter of concern Albrecht of Mainz sent to Rome as a result of the opinion he received from his theology faculty after the publication of the *95 Theses*. Whatever the source, Rome initiated proceedings in June on the basis of complaints made against Luther's theology of indulgences and related criticism of papal authority.

The official response to Luther came from the pen of Sylvester Prierias, the master of the sacred palace in Rome and a noted theologian in his own right. Prierias composed an opinion against Luther that focused on his view of the papacy. For Prierias, the pope had authority over the church, he was infallible in matters of faith and morals, indulgences fell within the scope of faith and morals, therefore the pope had proper authority to institute indulgences. At roughly the same time as he received notice of the legal proceedings, Luther also received a copy of Prierias' *Dialogus*, which explained in detail his criticisms of Luther's position. Luther in turn had Prierias' tract printed and then offered a rebuttal of his own, appealing not to papal authority, but Scriptural authority. In the process, he cited St. Paul, Augustine, and the fifteenth-century canonist, Nicholas Tudeschi (Panormitanus), in arguing that while popes can err, Scripture does not. Even though Luther had resisted making direct statements on the papacy, as he made clear in his later years, his opponents continued to shift the debate to questions of authority.

On the basis of Prierias' opinion, Rome sent Luther a summons to appear for trial within sixty days, a letter he received on August 7, 1518. Though the summons indicated Luther had to stand trial in Rome, that requirement was relaxed. Cardinal Cajetan, the papal legate who presumably delivered the summons at Augsburg, was instructed to

meet with Luther in person and give him an opportunity to recant. That meeting would take place in October of 1518.

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Tomasso de Vio (Cardinal) Cajetan

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Tomasso de Vio (Cardinal) Cajetan



Cardinal Cajetan, baptized Giacomo de Vio, is best known for his interview of Luther at Augsburg in 1518, but he was also a prolific theologian in his own right who authored more than 150 works and would produce an influential—and controversial—interpretation of Thomas Aquinas. Born in Gaeta, Italy, on 20 February 1469, he entered the Dominican order in 1484 and was given the name Thomas (Tomasso). He later studied philosophy at Naples, earning his bachelor's in 1492. It was there that he first took the Latinized version of his hometown as a last name—*Cajetanus*. He proceeded to study theology at Bologna and to lecture on Lombard's *Sentences* at Padua, where he was awarded the master of sacred theology for his success in debate against the famed humanist, Pico della Mirandola, during a 1494 meeting of the Dominican order in Ferrara. He thereafter took up lecturing on Aquinas's *Summa Theologia* at Pavia from 1497 to 1499. His reputation grew for his forceful defense of Aquinas against the followers of John Duns Scotus, who rejected the univocity of being, and the Averroists, who posited a two-source theory of truth.

Cajetan eventually moved to Rome, where he would serve in numerous capacities the remainder of his life. From 1501 to 1508, he lectured at the Sapienza University and served as procurator general for the Dominicans, functioning as a liaison between his order and the Roman curia. In 1508, he was appointed vicar-general of the Dominican order. During this period, he was active both administratively and theologically. He published an important 1509 commentary on the Aristotle treatise *De anima* in which he rejected the Averroist view that the immortality of the soul could only be proven by revelation rather than inferred from reason—the latter view being condemned at the Fifth Lateran Council (1512–17). He also played an important role in the convocation of Lateran V. When several cardinals sought to convene a council independent of Roman approval at Pisa in 1511, Cajetan appealed to Pope Julius II to convoke a legitimate council under papal authority. To this end, he composed a treatise against councils in

support of papal authority that same year (*De comparatione auctoritatis papae et concilii*). As vicar-general, he also sent a Dominican contingent to the New World to inspect the Spanish colonization, eventually criticizing the conquest based on the reports brought back to him.

More significantly, these years saw Cajetan bring near to completion his massive commentary on Aquinas's *Summa*, published between 1507 and 1520. What marked his interpretation of Aquinas was how closely he saw the Angelic Doctor as a thoroughgoing Aristotelian. As he had earlier in his career, Cajetan countered the arguments of Scotus against the univocity of being and the Averroists concerning the two-source theory of truth by emphasizing the analogy of being (*analogia entis*), or the belief that all humans have access to certain truths about God from their natural constitution, though not truths that are dependent upon revelation. This position, which ultimately came to draw an opposition between reason and revelation, would influence centuries of Thomistic thought. Two popes, Pius V (1570) and Leo XIII (1882), deemed it an authoritative interpretation of Aquinas and published the *Summa* with Cajetan's commentary appended to it.

At the outset of the Reformation, however, Cajetan would take a formative role in the controversies after being named cardinal of St. Sixtus in Rome on 6 July 1517. He was initially appointed archbishop of Palermo, but resigned due to opposition the next year before receiving his native see of Gaeta on 14 March 1519. One of the first tasks of his cardinalate was to act as papal legate to Germany in order to rouse support for a crusade against the Turk and influence the election of Charles V as Holy Roman Emperor and successor to his father, Maximilian. This brought Cajetan to Augsburg for the diet of 1518, where he would have a fateful interview with Martin Luther in the home of the prominent Fugger bankers in October of that same year. Rome had initiated an investigation of Luther's teachings on the basis of complaints brought forward by Albrecht of Mainz, to whom Luther had sent a draft of his controversial 95 *Theses* contesting indulgences. A towering intellect in his own right, Cajetan was commanded by Rome not to engage Luther, but instead to force him to recant. The cardinal could not resist the debate, however, and the result was three days of increasing tension between him and Luther as they argued over indulgences, Aquinas, canon law, and church authority.

The debate with Protestants would dominate Cajetan's tenure as cardinal. He wrote numerous treatises against Protestant doctrines, in particular addressing Roman

primacy (1521), the presence of Christ in the Eucharist (1525), the sacrifice of Mass (1531), and the role of faith and works in justification (1532). Despite their disagreements, Cajetan would urge continued theological dialogue with his opponents and even propose to Pope Clement VII in 1530 that Rome permit certain concessions to them in order to resolve the conflict, chiefly allowing clerical marriage and communion in both kinds. Other measures reflected his concern with reform. In 1519, he moved to resolve ambiguities in the theology of indulgences, such as Johannes Tetzel's claim that the remission of sins did not require contrition of the heart on the part of the penitent purchasing an indulgence. In 1526, he composed a manual for confessors (*Summula peccatorum*) that placed confession in a more pastoral and theological light. In his capacity as a cardinal, he would also participate in the 1522 conclave that elected Adrian VI and visit Hungary, Poland, and Bohemia as legate in 1523 to gather support for a crusade.

Cajetan's final years would be taken up by his interest in biblical interpretation. Between 1527 and 1534, he wrote numerous commentaries on Scripture, including a translation of the Psalms from Hebrew rather than the authorized Latin Vulgate. Though no humanist himself, the cardinal sympathized with the academic rigor and exegetical interests of the Renaissance humanists. He took many of their critical positions on Scripture, most notably suggesting that the Vulgate was an inferior text. Some of these views were criticized by his contemporaries and even censured by faculty members at the Sorbonne. Nonetheless, he was still a favorite to be elected pope after the death of Clement VII in 1534, but he grew ill and died himself on 10 August 1534. He was buried at the entrance of the Dominican church in Santa Maria sopra Minerva.

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Luther Meets with Cajetan at Augsburg

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Luther meets with Cajetan at Augsburg



In the summer of 1518, legal proceedings in church courts began against Luther for his criticism of indulgences, as was standard procedure for clerics who were subject to ecclesiastical jurisdiction rather than civil jurisdiction. As a result, an order was issued for Luther to stand trial in Rome. However, Rome lifted that requirement, paving the way for his interrogation on German soil. The counselor appointed for that case was the Dominican cardinal and papal legate Tomas de Vio, named Cajetan for his Italian

hometown of Gaeta. Cajetan was a theologian and ecclesiastic of high standing. He had published an extended commentary of Aquinas' *Summa*, eventually became vicar general of the Dominican Order, and delivered an address at the opening of Lateran V in 1512. Cajetan was a committed Thomist with a high view of papal authority and the clash with Luther was inevitable.

Frederick the Wise, Luther's prince and the benefactor of the university at Wittenberg, had arranged for the accused's safe conduct to Augsburg and a fair hearing from Cajetan. The hearing itself was held in the home of the famous Fugger bankers, whose loan to Leo X for the building of St. Peter's was the cause for the increased sale of indulgences. Cajetan was directed by Rome neither to debate Luther, nor make a final judgment on his theology, but rather to insist that he recant by saying the simple word *revoco*—"I recant." Upon arrival, Luther followed the advice of his colleagues and prostrated himself before Cajetan, then rose to his knees to answer the cardinal's interrogation. Luther, however, refused to recant his positions and instead pressed Cajetan for clarity on where he was in error. Over the course of the three meetings on consecutive days from October 12-14, the theologically erudite cardinal was unable to resist debate with Luther.

The central point of contention Cajetan had with Luther was the authority of the papacy to issue indulgences. Cajetan repeatedly cited Aquinas and the bull *Unigenitus*, promulgated by Clement VI in 1343 in support of indulgences, to validate his position. Luther rejected the authority of Aquinas and claimed the pope had no authority to institute a dogma teaching justification through any means other than Christ. When Cajetan pressed him on the point, Luther responded that pope, council, and theologian can all err, appealing to numerous medieval theologians and even canon law in support of his argument. With each passing day of the hearing, the situation grew increasingly tense and ultimately resulted in Cajetan sending Luther on his way with the demand to recant or face the consequences, presumably imprisonment and deportation to Rome.

After the heated final session, Cajetan implored both Johannes von Staupitz, Luther's Augustinian superior, and Wenceslaus Link, his Saxon legal counsel, to extricate a repudiation from Luther, but they were unsuccessful. Realizing the gravity of the situation, Staupitz absolved Luther of his vow of obedience and thus freed himself from responsibility for Luther's teaching, leaving the young monk with the words, "You should bear in mind, brother, that you began this in the name of Jesus Christ." With that, Luther proceeded with his cause and made an appeal to a future council to resolve the issue—a plight specifically forbidden in the 1460 papal bull *Execrabilis*, but one he and other Germans had availed themselves of variously over the years and would continue do so until the convocation of the Council of Trent in 1545.

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Electoral Saxony (The Once and Never Kings)

[http://althistory.wikia.com/wiki/Electoral_Saxony_\(The_Once_and_Never_Kings\)](http://althistory.wikia.com/wiki/Electoral_Saxony_(The_Once_and_Never_Kings))

Electoral Saxony (The Once and Never Kings)

The **Grand Duchy of Saxony**, *Electoral Saxony*, is a medium sized constitutional monarchy in the east-central Holy Roman Empire. It borders the Imperial states of Austria-Bohemia, Prussia, Magdeburg, Anhalt, Mansfield, Ducal Saxony, and Bayreuth.

History

The largest successor state of the medieval Duchy of Saxony, the region today known Saxony began as a small collection of land around the town of Wittenburg. Saxony was given to the Ascanian family after the deposing of the Welf Henry the Lion. The Ascanians were already the Lords of Lauenburg, and so added saxony to their realm. When Saxony and Lauenburg were divided between brothers, both lines claimed the Saxon electoral powers. This caused confusion when Imperial elections came around, possibly most famously in 1314 when the two branches voted for opposing candidates.

The issue was resolved in 1356 when the Luxembourg Emperor Charles IV affirmed the Saxe-Wittenburg as having the Saxon Electoral dignity.

The Wittenburg Ascanian line went extinct in 1422. Despite pressure from Saxe-Lauenburg, Electoral Saxony was given to the Wettin Margraves of Meissen. In 1485, after the death of Elector Frederick II, Saxony was divided between his sons Ernst and Albert. Ernst, being the elder, took much of the old Saxe-Wittenburg and southern Thuringia as well as the Electoral power, while Albert took Meissen and northern Thuringia.

The Protestant Reformation began in Ernestine Saxony when Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses to the door of the Cathedral of Wittenburg. The Reformation only deepened the rivalry growing between the Ernestine and Albertine branches, as Albertine Saxony remained steadfastly Catholic.

Indeed, they would join the Schmalkaldic War on opposing sides, and upon the Catholic victory, much of Ernestine Saxony's land (coincidentally including Wittenburg) and the electoral power was transferred to the Albertine line. The new Electoral Saxony was also forbidden to divide its land in inheritance, a privilege that did not extend to the Ernestine line, who saw their lands divided and semi-reunified through the centuries.

Electoral Saxony was initially neutral in the Forty Years War, but declared war on the Protestant League in 1634 when a Brandenburg-Prussian army sacked Meissen. Its entrance was checked by the near-simultaneous declaration of war by the Ernestine duchies.

The opposing Saxons fought each other with tremendous brutality, often fighting more ferocious than they did against their main opposing armies. As the war dragged on, it lost its religious element, and devolved more into an issue of "settling scores". The only things that stopped the clashes were the bankruptcies the repeated sacking and looting brought to both entities, and the Peace of Hamburg in 1658.

Since the Forty Years War, Saxony has further engaged in diplomacy outside of the Holy Roman Empire, culminating in the Polish Sejm electing Frederick Augustus I to the Commonwealths throne. Looking to take advantage of the Austro-Prussian War to seize Silesia and connect the lands, his son, Frederick Augustus II declared war.

Despite some relative early success in a March on Breslau, Saxony-Poland was soon facing a broad, unexpected Imperial coalition including Austria, Prussia, Luxembourg, and the Hansa, Saxony proper was swiftly overrun, and Warsaw fell several weeks later. The personal union was broken in the peace, and both were forbidden from doing such a union again.

Looking for revenge, Electoral Saxony joined Napoleone di Buonaparte in the Napoleonic Wars, though saw much smaller success than their ally. When Napoleone's Italy fell in 1857, Saxony was stripped of Lusatia, and it was taken by Austria.

Since then, Saxony has toned down its visibility, content with the rather sporadic times a Wettin is elected Emperor.

Government

Electoral Saxony is a unitary state, divided into 59 districts, and governed by a single chambered legislature. The Elector still retains several powers, and his signature is required to pass legislation.

The Holy Roman Empire	
Frankfurt (capital)	
General	Holy Roman Empire • Holy Roman Emperors (<i>Francis I</i>) • Imperial Chancellors
Kingdoms	<i>Austria-Bohemia • Luxembourg • Prussia • Bavaria • Württemberg • Naples • Sicily</i>

Grand Duchies	<i>Milan</i> • <i>Hesse-Kassel</i> • <i>Electoral Saxony</i> • Tuscany
Duchies	Savoy • <i>Oldenburg</i> • Berg • Kalenburg • Brunswick-Wolfenbuttel • Hesse-Darmstadt • Julich • Na Sulzbach • Furstenburg • Baden • Parma • Modena • Ferrara • Mantua • Urbino • <i>Magdeburg</i>
Principalities	Zweibrucken • Anhalt • Bayreuth • Friesland • Lippe • Rinteln • Hanau • Königsbronn • Liechten
Counties	<i>Palatinate</i> • <i>Geneva</i> • Sponheim • Hoya • Reuss • Bentheim • Mansfeld • Waldeck • Isenburg • H
Bishoprics	Münster • <i>Salzburg</i> • <i>Trier</i> • <i>Mainz</i> • <i>Cologne</i> • Wurzburg • Osnabruck • Hildesheim • Drübeck •
Republics and Imperial Cities	<i>The Hansa</i> • Genoa • Nordhausen • Wetzlar • Frankfurt • Muhlhausen • Aachen • Nuremburg • Marino • Freiburg • Offenburg • Rottweil • Biberach • Kaufbeuren
	<i>Italics</i> denote electors.

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Leipzig Debate

<http://reformation500.csl.edu/timeline/leipzig-debate/>

Leipzig debate



The Leipzig Debate in the summer of 1519 proved significant in pushing the indulgence controversy beyond the question of penance and justification to the question of authority in the church. John Eck, a scholastic theologian teaching at Ingolstadt, had engaged Luther in private correspondence on the issue of indulgences, but that correspondence was published against Luther's own wishes. In defense of his Wittenberg colleague, Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt wrote an extensive repudiation of Eck's treatise, including well over 300 theses addressing questions of grace, free will, and penance. Eck replied in kind with another set of theses. The written controversy led to demand for a debate, initially restricted to Eck and Karlstadt, but later including Luther. It was to be held at Leipzig under the patronage of Duke George of Saxony.

The literature preceding the debate had raised the question of whether Luther rejected papal authority in the same way as the Bohemian heretic Jan Hus. Debating the nature of papal authority was proscribed, but Duke George allowed it to go forward. Prior to the debate Luther privately admitted to his friend Georg Spalatin a rising belief that the pope was of some relation to the antichrist—echoing claims made by others before him in the Middle Ages—but publicly he continued to affirm the papacy as established by God for the unity of the church. Then in a sermon on the eve of the debate in Leipzig, he emphasized the centrality of faith in Christ as the basis for salvation, not papal fiat. But at the outset of the debate, all three participants were required to announce publicly their commitment to orthodoxy and Luther did so with the qualification that he was only debating papal authority because Eck had pressured him to do so, not of his own volition.

After the early stages of the debate involved an exchange between Karlstadt and Eck on grace and free will, Luther and Eck then shifted the discussion toward authority in the church. While Eck defended papal authority from traditional proof texts, such as Matthew 16, Luther rejected them on the grounds of exegesis. He accepted the papacy as a divine institution, but he did not accept Eck's interpretation of those texts as attributing authority over salvific matters to the papacy. In the course of the debate, Luther eventually responded to the claim that he was supporting a condemned position by defending many of Hus's positions as essentially orthodox. When Eck questioned his defense of a noted heretic, Luther countered that the Council of Constance, which sentenced Hus to death, could have been in error. This led him to state that councils could and had erred, as had popes and canon law. What remained infallible for Luther was Scripture and thus it was finally authoritative for the church.

For the first time, Luther had articulated clearly his position that popes, councils, and theologians were all subject to error, leaving Scripture as the supreme authority in all theological matters. This became a watershed moment, resulting in both increased support and increased opposition after he left Leipzig. It even led to correspondence with the Bohemians, after which Luther famously exclaimed in agreement with their doctrine of the church: "We are all Hussites." It is worth noting, however, that after Leipzig Luther continued to support the papacy as a divine institution, though he disagreed with the extent of its authority.

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Johann Eck

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Johann Eck



As professor at Ingolstadt in Bavaria during the outbreak of the Reformation, John Eck would play a significant role in opposing Luther's reform and winning Bavaria for the Catholic party. Born Johann Maier in the Swabian village of Eck, he would go on to study at Heidelberg, Tübingen, Cologne and Freiburg, earning his master's at Tübingen in 1501 and his doctorate in theology at Freiburg in 1510. Having taken the

Latinized name of his village for his own (Eckius), he arrived at Ingolstadt in 1510 with a noted reputation as humanist. He had received ordination in 1508 and would later serve two extended terms as pastor in Ingolstadt. Eck's early years at the university were relatively quiet. His first treatise, *Chrysopassus*, dealt with predestination and was published in 1514.

Eck came to international prominence due to his polemical battles with Luther and other reformers. At first on good terms because of their common interest in humanist reform of the German universities, Eck's rebuttal of the *95 Theses* eventually forged a rivalry between him and Luther. The *Obelisks*, written as a private critique of Luther's theses on indulgences were leaked and printed publicly, leading to a heated exchange of treatises between Eck, Luther's colleague at Wittenberg, Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt, and Luther himself. Eventually it resulted in the convening of the Leipzig Debate in summer 1519. The debate was initially established for Eck and Karlstadt, but the obvious reason for the controversy was Luther and he worked his way into the proceedings. During the course of the debate, the topic shifted to papal authority. Luther and Eck were at odds over the nature of the papacy, its support in Scripture, and the extent of the pope's authority. More importantly, when Eck accused his opponent of supporting a Bohemian heresy in his opinion on the matter, Luther defended it by claiming that the Council of Constance, which executed the Bohemian Jan Hus, was human and fallible like popes and canon law, but only Scripture was infallible.

His role in the Leipzig Debate led to increased notoriety. Later that year he published a treatise defending his views of papal authority against Luther, *De Primatu Petri*. In April of 1520, he arrived in Rome at a pivotal time as the proceedings against Luther were advancing. He immediately put his imprint on the bull threatening excommunication, *Exurge Domine*, by appending the already drafted bull with a list of forty one errors of which he deemed Luther guilty. He would deliver by hand the final draft to Leo X for the pope's signature during a hunt. After the bull's promulgation in June of 1520, Eck was conscripted as a legate to spread it throughout German lands.

During the intervening years, Eck would continue his efforts against the spread of Protestantism. He drafted numerous treatises defending Catholic doctrines, including purgatory, penance, and the sacrifice of the Mass. In 1525, he published his *Enchiridion*, a polemical manual describing what he deemed the major Protestant errors. It would become his most popular and reprinted work. Soon thereafter he debated the Swiss reformer Johannes Oecolampadius over Zwinglian teaching at the Baden Disputation and prevailed on the Swiss cantons to reject Zwingli and the Reformation. Eck would again find himself across the aisle from Protestants in 1530 at the Diet of Augsburg. Prior to the diet, he had published his *404 Articles*, a list of theses directed at Luther, Zwingli, Philipp Melancthon, Martin Bucer, Oecolampadius, Johannes Bugenhagen, and Osiander, among others. After the gathered evangelical princes presented their Melancthon-penned *Augsburg Confession* during the diet, Eck led the delegation that responded to it. A hastily written retort was deemed unacceptable by the emperor and his court. The second attempt produced the Roman *Confutation*, which Charles V accepted and enforced as religious law of the land for the empire.

Despite his vehement resistance to the reformers' doctrine, Eck nevertheless participated in two important attempts at diplomacy between the two sides. After Charles officially concluded the 1530 Diet of Augsburg in favor of the Catholics, a colloquy ensued between theologians of the respective sides. Eck was a leading participant and the two parties reached amicable agreements on many doctrinal positions before dissent over practical questions, in particular communion under both kinds, private mass, and the canon of the mass. Another round of colloquies were convened later between 1539 and 1541, most significantly the Regensburg Colloquy at the 1541 Diet of Ratisbon. Eck was one of the six collocutors who on the basis of the infamous "Regensburg Book" reached consensus on such notable doctrines as the fall, free will, the cause of sin, and original sin. The cardinal achievement of Regensburg was

a settlement on the doctrine of justification, only to see the entire colloquy fall apart on questions of church authority. Eck would later condemn the agreements forged there and disavow any role in them.

Despite his ecclesiastical involvement abroad, Eck would remain professor at Ingolstadt the remainder of his life. He taught, served both university and parish in numerous capacities, and continued publishing, including a 1537 German translation of the New Testament intended to counteract Luther's. He died in 1543.

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Treatise on Good Works

<http://www.projectwittenberg.org/pub/resources/text/wittenberg/luther/work-01.txt>

A Treatise on Good Works

together with the Letter of Dedication by Dr. Martin Luther, 1520

Published in: 'Works of Martin Luther' Adolph Spaeth, L.D. Reed, Henry Eyster Jacobs, et Al., Trans. & Eds. (Philadelphia: A. J. Holman Company, 1915), Vol. 1, pp. 173-285.

TREATISE ON GOOD WORKS

1520

DEDICATION

JESUS

To the Illustrious, High-born Prince and Lord, John, Duke of Saxony, Landgrave of Thuringia, Margrave of Meissen, my gracious Lord and Patron.

Illustrious, High-born Prince, gracious Lord! My humble duty and my feeble prayer for your Grace always remembered!

For a long time, gracious Prince and Lord, I have wished to show my humble respect and duty toward your princely Grace, by the exhibition of some such spiritual wares as are at my disposal; but I have always considered my powers too feeble to undertake anything worthy of being offered to your princely Grace.

Since, however, my most gracious Lord Frederick, Duke of Saxony, Elector and Vicar of the Holy Roman Empire, your Grace's brother, has not despised, but graciously accepted my slight book, dedicated to his electoral Grace, and now published -- though such was not my intention -- I have taken courage from his gracious example and ventured to think that the princely spirit, like the princely blood, may be the same in both of you, especially in gracious kindness and good will. I have hoped that your princely Grace likewise would not despise this my humble offering which I have felt more need of publishing than any other of my sermons or tracts. For the greatest of all questions has been raised, the question of Good Works; in which is

practiced immeasurably more trickery and deception than in anything else, and in which the simpleminded man is so easily misled that our Lord Christ has commanded us to watch carefully for the sheep's clothings under which the wolves hide themselves.

Neither silver, gold, precious stones, nor any rare thing has such manifold alloys and flaws as have good works, which ought to have a single simple goodness, and without it are mere color, show and deceit.

And although I know and daily hear many people, who think slightingly of my poverty, and say that I write only little pamphlets and German sermons for the unlearned laity, this shall not disturb me. Would to God I had in all my life, with all the ability I have, helped one layman to be better! I would be satisfied, thank God, and be quite willing then to let all my little books perish.

Whether the making of many great books is an art and a benefit to the Church, I leave others to judge. But I believe that if I were minded to make great books according to their art, I could, with God's help, do it more readily perhaps than they could prepare a little discourse after my fashion. If accomplishment were as easy as persecution, Christ would long since have been cast out of heaven again, and God's throne itself overturned. Although we cannot all be writers, we all want to be critics.

I will most gladly leave to any one else the honor of greater things, and not be at all ashamed to preach and to write in German for the unlearned laymen. Although I too have little skill in it, I believe that if we had hitherto done, and should henceforth do more of it, Christendom would have reaped no small advantage, and have been more benefited by this than by the great, deep books and quaestiones, which are used only in the schools, among the learned.

Then, too, I have never forced or begged any one to hear me, or to read my sermons. I have freely ministered in the Church of that which God has given me and which I owe the Church. Whoever likes it not, may hear and read what others have to say. And if they are not willing to be my debtors, it matters little. For me it is enough, and even more than too much, that some laymen condescend to read what I say. Even though there were nothing else to urge me, it should be more than sufficient that I have learned that your princely Grace is pleased with such German books and is eager to receive instruction in Good Works and the

Faith, with which instruction it was my duty, humbly and with all diligence to serve you.

Therefore, in dutiful humility I pray that your princely Grace may accept this offering of mine with a gracious mind, until, if God grant me time, I prepare a German exposition of the Faith in its entirety. For at this time I have wished to show how in all good works we should practice and make use of faith, and let faith be the chief work. If God permit, I will treat at another time of the Faith itself -- how we are daily to pray or recite it.

I humbly commend myself herewith to your princely Grace,
Your Princely Grace's
Humble Chaplain,

DR. MARTIN LUTHER.
From Wittenberg, March 29th, A. D. 1520.

THE TREATISE

I. We ought first to know that there are no good works except those which God has commanded, even as there is no sin except that which God has forbidden. Therefore whoever wishes to know and to do good works needs nothing else than to know God's commandments. Thus Christ says, Matthew xix, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." And when the young man asks Him, Matthew xix, what he shall do that he may inherit eternal life, Christ sets before him naught else but the Ten Commandments. Accordingly, we must learn how to distinguish among good works from the Commandments of God, and not from the appearance, the magnitude, or the number of the works themselves, nor from the judgment of men or of human law or custom, as we see has been done and still is done, because we are blind and despise the divine Commandments.

II. The first and highest, the most precious of all good works is faith in Christ, as He says, John vi. When the Jews asked Him: "What shall we do that we may work the works of God?" He answered: "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him Whom He hath sent." When we hear or preach this word, we hasten over it and deem it a very little thing and easy to do, whereas we ought here to pause a long time and to ponder it well. For in this work all good works must be done and receive from it

inflow of their goodness, like a loan. This we must put bluntly, that men may understand it.

We find many who pray, fast, establish endowments, do this or that, lead a good life before men, and yet if you should ask them whether they are sure that what they do pleases God, they say, "No"; they do not know, or they doubt. And there are some very learned men, who mislead them, and say that it is not necessary to be sure of this; and yet, on the other hand, these same men do nothing else but teach good works. Now all these works are done outside of faith, therefore they are nothing and altogether dead. For as their conscience stands toward God and as it believes, so also are the works which grow out of it. Now they have no faith, no good conscience toward God, therefore the works lack their head, and all their life and goodness is nothing. Hence it comes that when I exalt faith and reject such works done without faith, they accuse me of forbidding good works, when in truth I am trying hard to teach real good works of faith.

III. If you ask further, whether they count it also a good work when they work at their trade, walk, stand, eat, drink, sleep, and do all kinds of works for the nourishment of the body or for the common welfare, and whether they believe that God takes pleasure in them because of such works, you will find that they say, "No"; and they define good works so narrowly that they are made to consist only of praying in church, fasting, and almsgiving. Other works they consider to be in vain, and think that God cares nothing for them. So through their damnable unbelief they curtail and lessen the service of God, Who is served by all things whatsoever that are done, spoken or thought in faith.

So teaches Ecclesiastes ix: "Go thy way with joy, eat and drink, and know that God accepteth thy works. Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment. Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity." "Let thy garments be always white," that is, let all our works be good, whatever they may be, without any distinction. And they are white when I am certain and believe that they please God. Then shall the head of my soul never lack the ointment of a joyful conscience.

So Christ says, John viii: "I do always those things that please Him." And St. John says, I. John iii: "Hereby I we know that we are of the truth, if we can comfort our hearts before Him and have a good confidence. And if our heart condemns or frets us,

God is greater than our heart, and we have confidence, that whatsoever we ask, we shall receive of Him, because we keep His Commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight." Again: "Whosoever is born of God, that is, whoever believes and trusts God, doth not commit sin, and cannot sin." Again, Psalm xxxiv: "None of them that trust in I Him shall do sin." And in Psalm ii: "Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him." If this be true, then all that they do must be good, or the evil that they do must be quickly forgiven. Behold, then, why I exalt faith so greatly, draw all works into it, and reject all works which do not flow from it.

IV. Now every one can note and tell for himself when he does what is good or what is not good; for if he finds his heart confident that it pleases God, the work is good, even if it were so small a thing as picking up a straw. If confidence is absent, or if he doubts, the work is not good, although it should raise all the dead and the man should I give himself to be burned. This is the teaching of St. Paul, Romans xiv: "Whatsoever is not done of or in faith is sin." Faith, as the chief work, and no other work, has given us the name of "believers on Christ." For all other works a heathen, a Jew, a Turk, a sinner, may also do; but to trust firmly that he pleases God, is possible only for a Christian who is enlightened and strengthened by grace.

That these words seem strange, and that some call me a heretic because of them, is due to the fact that men have followed blind reason and heathen ways, have set faith not above, but beside other virtues, and have given it a work of its own, apart from all works of the other virtues; although faith alone makes all other works good, acceptable and worthy, in that it trusts God and does not doubt that for it all things that a man does are well done. Indeed, they have not let faith remain a work, but have made a habitus of it, as they say, Scripture gives the name of a good, divine work to no work except to faith alone. Therefore it is no wonder that they have become blind and leaders of the blind. And this faith brings with it at once love, peace, joy and hope. For God gives His Spirit at once to him who trusts Him, as St. Paul says to the Galatians: "You received the Spirit not because of your good works, but when you believed the Word of God."

V. In this faith all works become equal, and one is like the other; all distinctions between works fall away, whether they be great, small, short, long, few or many. For the works are acceptable not for their own sake, because of the faith which alone is, works and lives in each and every work without

distinction, however numerous and various they are, just as all the members of the body live, work and have their name from the head, and without the head no member can live, work and have a name.

From which it further follows that a Christian who lives in this faith has no need of a teacher of good works, but whatever he finds to do he does, and all is well done; as Samuel said to Saul: "The Spirit of the Lord will come upon thee, and thou shalt be turned into another man then do thou as occasion serves thee; for God is with thee." So also we read of St. Anna, Samuel's mother "When she believed the priest Eli who promised her God's grace, she went home in joy and peace, and from that time no more turned hither and thither," that is, whatever occurred, it was all one to her. St. Paul also says: "Where the Spirit of Christ is, there all is free." For faith does not permit itself to be bound to any work, nor does it allow any work to be taken from it, but, as the First Psalm says, "He bringeth forth his fruit in his season," that is, as a matter of course.

VI. This we may see in a common human example. A When a man and a woman love and are pleased with each other, and thoroughly believe in their love, who teaches them how they are to behave, what they are to do, leave undone, say, not say, think? Confidence alone teaches them all this, and more. They make no difference in works: they do the great, the long, the much, as gladly as the small, the short, the little, and vice versa; and that too with joyful, peaceful, confident hearts, and each is a free companion of the other. But where there is a doubt, search is made for what is best; then a distinction of works is imagined whereby a man may win favor; and yet he goes about it with a heavy heart, and great disrelish; he is, as it were, taken captive, more than half in despair, and often makes a fool of himself.

So a Christian who lives in this confidence toward God, a knows all things, can do all things, undertakes all things B that are to be done, and does everything cheerfully and freely; not that he may gather many merits and good works, but because it is a pleasure for him to please God thereby, and he serves God purely for nothing, content that his service pleases God. On the other hand, he who is not at one with God, or doubts, hunts and worries in what way he may do enough and with many works move God. He runs to St. James of Compostella, to Rome, to Jerusalem, hither and yon, prays St. Bridget's prayer and the rest, fasts on this day and on that, makes confession here, and makes

confession there questions this man and that, and yet finds no peace. He does all this with great effort, despair and disrelish of heart, so that the Scriptures rightly call such works in Hebrew *Avenamal*, that is, labor and travail. And even then they are not good works, and are all lost. Many have been crazed thereby; their fear has brought them into all manner of misery. Of these it is written, Wisdom of Solomon v: "We have wearied ourselves in the wrong way; and have gone through deserts, where there lay no way; but as for the way of the Lord, we have not known it, and the sun of righteousness rose not upon us."

VII. In these works faith is still slight and weak; let us ask further, whether they believe that they are well-pleasing to God when they suffer in body, property, honor, friends, or whatever they have, and believe that God of His mercy appoints their sufferings and difficulties for them, whether they be small or great. This is real strength, to trust in God when to all our senses and reason He appears to be angry; and to have greater confidence in Him than we feel. Here He is hidden, as the bride says in the Song of Songs: "Behold he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the windows"; that is, He stands hidden among the sufferings, which would separate us from Him like a wall, yea, like a wall of stone, and yet He looks upon me and does not leave me, for He is standing and is ready graciously to help, and through the window of dim faith He permits Himself to be seen. And Jeremiah says in Lamentations, "He casts off men, but He does it not willingly."

This faith they do not know at all, and give up, thinking that God has forsaken them and is become their enemy; they even lay the blame of their ills on men and devils, and have no confidence at all in God. For this reason, too, their suffering is always an offence and harmful to them, and yet they go and do some good works, as they think, and are not aware of their unbelief. But they who in such suffering trust God and retain a good, firm confidence in Him, and believe that He is pleased with them, these see in their sufferings and afflictions nothing but precious merits and the rarest possessions, the value of which no one can estimate. For faith and confidence make precious before God all that which others think most shameful, so that it is written even of death in Psalm cxvi, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." And just as the confidence and faith are better, higher and stronger at this stage than in the first stage, so and to the same degree do the sufferings which are borne in this faith excel all works of faith. Therefore between such works and sufferings there is an

immeasurable difference and the sufferings are infinitely better.

VIII. Beyond all this is the highest stage of faith, when; God punishes the conscience not only with temporal sufferings, but with death, hell, and sin, and refuses grace and mercy, as though it were His will to condemn and to be angry eternally. This few men experience, but David cries out in Psalm vi, "O Lord, rebuke me not in Thine anger." To believe at such times that God, in His mercy, is pleased with us, is the highest work that can be done by and in the creature; but of this work-righteous and doers of good works know nothing at all. For how could they here look for good things and grace from God, as long as they are not certain in their works, and doubt even on the lowest step of faith.

In this way I have, as I said, always praised faith, and I rejected all works which are done without such faith, in order thereby to lead men from the false, pretentious, pharisaic, unbelieving good works, with which all monastic houses, churches, homes, low and higher classes are overfilled, and lead them to the true, genuine, thoroughly good, believing works. In this no one opposes me except the unclean beasts, which do not divide the hoof, as the Law of Moses decrees; who will suffer no distinction among good works, but go lumbering along: if only they pray, fast, establish endowments, go to confession, and do enough, everything shall be good, although in all this they have had no faith in God's grace and approval. Indeed, they consider the works best of all, when they have done many, great and long works without any such confidence, and they look for good only after the works are done; and so they build their confidence not on divine favor, but on the works they have done, that is, on sand and water, from which they must at last take a cruel fall, as Christ says, Matthew vii. This good-will and favor, on which our confidence rests, was proclaimed by the angels from heaven, when they sang on Christmas night: "Gloria in excelsis Deo, Glory to God in the highest, peace to earth, gracious favor to man."

IX. Now this is the work of the First Commandment, which commands: "Thou shalt have no other gods," which means: "Since I alone am God, thou shalt place all thy confidence, trust and faith on Me alone, and on no one else." For that is not to have a god, if you call him God only with your lips, or worship him with the knees or bodily gestures; but if you trust Him with the heart, and look to Him for all good, grace and favor, whether in works or sufferings, in life or death, in joy or sorrow; as the

Lord Christ says to the heathen woman, John iv: "I say unto thee, they that worship God must worship Him in spirit and in truth." And this faith, faithfulness, confidence deep in the heart, is the true fulfilling of the First Commandment; without this there is no other work that is able to satisfy this Commandment. And as this Commandment is the very first, highest and best, from which all the others proceed, in which they exist, and by which they are directed and measured, so also its work, that is, the faith or confidence in God's favor at all times, is the very first, highest and best, from which all others must proceed, exist, remain, be directed and measured. Compared with this, other works are just as if the other Commandments were without the First, and there were no God, Therefore St. Augustine well says that the works of the First Commandment are faith, hope and love. As I said above, such faith and confidence bring love and hope with them. Nay, if we see it aright, love is the first, or comes at the same instant with faith. For I could not trust God, if I did not think that He wished to be favorable and to love me, which leads me, in turn, to love Him and to trust Him heartily and to look to Him for all good things.

X. Now you see for yourself that all those who do not at all times trust God and do not in all their works or sufferings, life and death, trust in His favor, grace and good-will, but seek His favor in other things or in themselves, do not keep this Commandment, and practice real idolatry, even if they were to do the works of all the other Commandments, and in addition had all the prayers, fasting, obedience, patience, chastity, and innocence of all the saints combined. For the chief work is not present, without which all the others are nothing but mere sham, show and pretense, with nothing back of them; against which Christ warns us, Matthew vii: "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing." Such are all who wish with their many good works, as they say, to make God favorable to themselves, and to buy God's grace from Him, as if He were a huckster or a day-laborer, unwilling to give His grace and favor for nothing. These are the most perverse people on earth, who will hardly or never be converted to the right way. Such too are all who in adversity run hither and thither, and look for counsel and help everywhere except from God, from Whom they are most urgently commanded to seek it; whom the Prophet Isaiah reproves thus, Isaiah ix: "The mad people turneth not to Him that smiteth them"; that is, God smote them and sent them sufferings and all kinds of adversity, that they should run to Him and trust Him But they run away from Him to men, now to Egypt, now to Assyria, perchance also to the devil; and of such

idolatry much is written in the same Prophet and in the Books of the Kings. This is also the way of all holy hypocrites when they are in trouble: they do not run to God, but flee from Him, and only think of how they may get rid of their trouble through their own efforts or through human help, and yet they consider themselves and let others consider them pious people.

XI. This is what St. Paul means in many places, where he ascribes so much to faith, that he says: *Justus ex fide sua vivit*, "the righteous man draws his life out of his faith," and faith is that because of which he is counted righteous before God. If righteousness consists of faith, it is clear that faith fulfils all commandments and makes all works righteous, since no one is justified except he keep all the commands of God. Again, the works can justify no one before God without faith. So utterly and roundly does the Apostle reject works and praise faith, that some have taken offence at his words and say: "Well, then, we will do no more good works," although he condemns such men as erring and foolish.

So men still do. When we reject the great, pretentious works of our time, which are done entirely without faith, they say: Men are only to believe and not to do anything good. For nowadays they say that the works of the First Commandment are singing, reading, organ-playing, reading the mass, saying matins and vespers and the other hours, the founding and decorating of churches, altars, and monastic houses, the gathering of bells, jewels, garments, trinkets and treasures, running to Rome and to the saints. Further, when we are dressed up and bow, kneel, pray the rosary and the Psalter, and all this not before an idol, but before the holy cross of God or the pictures of His saints: this we call honoring and worshiping God, and, according to the First Commandment, "having no other gods"; although these things usurers, adulterers and all manner of sinners can do too, and do them daily.

Of course, if these things are done with such faith that we believe that they please God, then they are praiseworthy, not because of their virtue, but because of such faith, for which all works are of equal value, as has been said. But if we doubt or do not believe that God is gracious to us and is pleased with us, or if we presumptuously expect to please Him only through and after our works, then it is all pure deception, outwardly honoring God, but inwardly setting up self as a false god. This is the reason why I have so often spoken against the display, magnificence and multitude of such works and have rejected them, because it is as clear as day that they are not only done in

doubt or without faith, but there is not one in a thousand who does not set his confidence upon the works, expecting by them to win God's favor and anticipate His grace; and so they make a fair of them, a thing which God cannot endure, since He has promised His grace freely, and wills that we begin by trusting that grace, and in it perform all works, whatever they may be.

XII. Note for yourself, then, how far apart these two are: keeping the First Commandment with outward works only, and keeping it with inward trust. For this last makes true, living children of God, the other only makes worse idolatry and the most mischievous hypocrites on earth, who with their apparent righteousness lead unnumbered people into their way, and yet allow them to be without faith, so that they are miserably misled, and are caught in the pitiable babbling and mummerly. Of such Christ says, Matthew xxiv: "Beware, if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there"; and John iv: "I say unto thee, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem worship God, for the Father seeketh spiritual worshipers."

These and similar passages have moved me and ought to move everyone to reject the great display of bulls, seals, flags, indulgences, by which the poor folk are led to build churches, to give, to endow, to pray, and yet faith is not mentioned, and is even suppressed. For since faith knows no distinction among works, such exaltation and urging of one work above another cannot exist beside faith. For faith desires to be the only service of God, and will grant this name and honor to no other work, except in so far as faith imparts it, as it does when the work is done in faith and by faith. This perversion indicated in the Old Testament, when the Jews left the Temple and sacrificed at other places, in the green parks and on the mountains. This is what these men also do: they are zealous to do all works, but this chief work of faith they regard not at all.

XIII. Where now are they who ask, what works are good; what they shall do; how they shall be religious? Yes, and where are they who say that when we preach of faith, we shall neither teach nor do works? Does not this First Commandment give us more work to do than any man can do? If a man were a thousand men, or all men, or all creatures, this Commandment would yet ask enough of him, and more than enough, since he is commanded to live and walk at all times in faith and confidence toward God, to place such faith in no one else, and so to have only one, the true God, and none other.

Now, since the being and nature of man cannot for an instant be without doing or not doing something, enduring or running away from something (for, as we see, life never rests), let him who will be pious and filled with good works, begin and in all his life and works at all times exercise himself in this faith; let him learn to do and to leave undone all things in such continual faith; then will he find how much work he has to do, and how completely all things are included in faith; how he dare never grow idle, because his very idling must be the exercise and work of faith. In brief, nothing can be in or about us and nothing can happen to us but that it must be good and meritorious, if we believe (as we ought) that all things please God. So says St. Paul: "Dear brethren, all that ye do, whether ye eat or drink, do all in the Name of Jesus Christ, our Lord." Now it cannot be done in this Name except it be done in this faith. Likewise Romans vii: "We know that all things work together for good to the saints of God."

Therefore, when some say that good works are forbidden when we preach faith alone, it is as if I said to a sick man: "If you had health, you would have the use of all your limbs; but without health, the works of all your limbs are nothing"; and he wanted to infer that I had forbidden the works of all his limbs; whereas, on the contrary, I meant that he must first have health, which will work all the works of all the members. So faith also must be in all works the master-workman and captain, or they are nothing at all.

XIV. You might say: "Why then do we have so many laws of the Church and of the State, and many ceremonies of churches, monastic houses, holy places, which urge and tempt men to good works, if faith does all things through the First Commandment?" I answer: Simply because we do not all have faith or do not heed it. If every man had faith, we would need no more laws, but every one would of himself at all times do good works, as his confidence in God teaches him.

But now there are four kinds of men: the first, just mentioned, who need no law, of whom St. Paul says, I. Timothy i, "The law is not made for a righteous man," that is, for the believer, but believers of themselves do what they know and can do, only because they firmly trust that God's favor and grace rests upon them in all things. The second class want to abuse this freedom, put a false confidence in it, and grow lazy; of whom St. Peter says, I. Peter ii, "Ye shall live as free men, but not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness," as if he said: The freedom of faith does not permit sins, nor will it cover them,

but it sets us free to do all manner of good works and to endure all things as they happen to us, so that a man is not bound only to one work or to a few. So also St. Paul, Galatians v: "Use not your liberty for an occasion to the flesh." Such men must be urged by laws and hemmed in by teaching and exhortation. The third class are wicked men, always ready for sins; these be constrained by spiritual and temporal laws, like wild horses and dogs, and where this does not help, they must be put to death by the worldly sword, as St. Paul says, Romans xiii: "The worldly ruler bears the sword, and serves God with it, not as a terror to the good, but to the evil." The fourth class, who are still lusty, and childish in their understanding of faith and of the spiritual life, must be coaxed like young children and tempted with external, definite and prescribed decorations, with reading, praying, fasting, singing, adorning of churches, organ playing, and such other things as are commanded and observed in monastic houses and churches, until they also learn to know the faith. Although there is great danger here, when the rulers, as is now, alas! the case, busy themselves with and insist upon such ceremonies and external works as if they were the true works, and neglect faith, which they ought always to teach along with these works, just as a mother gives her child other food along with the milk, until the child can eat the strong food by itself.

XV. Since, then, we are not all alike, we must tolerate such people, share their observances and burdens, and not despise them, but teach them the true way of faith. So St. Paul teaches, Romans xiv: "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, to teach him." And so he did himself, I. Corinthians ix: "To them that are under the law, I became as under the law, although I was not under the law." And Christ, Matthew xvii, when He was asked to pay tribute, which He was not obligated to pay, argues with St. Peter, whether the children of kings must give tribute, or only other people. St. Peter answers: "Only other people." Christ said: "Then are the children of kings free; notwithstanding, lest we should offend them go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and in his mouth thou shalt find a piece of money; take that and give it for me and thee."

Here we see that all works and things are free to a Christian through his faith; and yet, because the others do not yet believe, he observes and bears with them what he is not obligated to do. But this he does freely, for he is certain that this is pleasing to God, and he does it willingly, accepts it as any other free work which comes to his hand without his choice,

because he desires and seeks no more than that he may in his faith do works to please God.

But since in this discourse we have undertaken to teach what righteous and good works are, and are now speaking of the highest work, it is clear that we do not speak of the second, third and fourth classes of men, but of the first, into whose likeness all the others are to grow, and until they do so the first class must endure and instruct them. Therefore we must not despise, as if they were hopeless, these men of weak faith, who would gladly do right and learn, and yet cannot understand because of the ceremonies to which they cling; we must rather blame their ignorant, blind teachers, who have never taught them the faith, and have led them so deeply into works. They must be gently and gradually led back again to faith, as a sick man is treated, and must be allowed for a time, for their conscience sake, to cling to some works and do them as necessary to salvation, so long as they rightly grasp the faith; lest if we try to tear them out so suddenly, their weak consciences be quite shattered and confused, and retain neither faith nor works. But the hardheaded, who, hardened in their works, give no heed to what is said of faith, and fight against it, these we must, as Christ did and taught, let go their way, that the blind may lead the blind.

XVI. But you say: How can I trust surely that all my works are pleasing to God, when at times I fall, and talk, eat, drink and sleep too much, or otherwise transgress, as I cannot help doing? Answer: This question shows that you still regard faith as a work among other works, and do not set it above all works. For it is the highest work for this very reason, because it remains and blots out these daily sins by not doubting that God is so kind to you as to wink at such daily transgression and weakness. Aye, even if a deadly sin should occur (which, however, never or rarely happens to those who live in faith and trust toward God), yet faith rises again and does not doubt that its sin is already gone; as it is written I. John ii: "My little children, these things I write unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with God the Father, Jesus Christ, Who is the propitiation of all our sins." And Wisdom xv: "For if we sin, we are Thine, knowing Thy power." And Proverbs xxiv: "For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again." Yes, this confidence and faith must be so high and strong that the man knows that all his life and works are nothing but damnable sins before God's judgment, as it is written, Psalm cxliiii: "In thy sight shall no man living be justified"; and he must entirely despair of his works, believing that they cannot be good except

through this faith, which looks for no judgment, but only for pure grace, favor, kindness and mercy, like David, Psalm xxvi: "Thy loving kindness is ever before mine eyes, and I have trusted in Thy truth"; Psalm iv: "The light of Thy countenance is lift up upon us (that is, the knowledge Thy grace through faith), and thereby hast Thou put gladness in my heart"; for as faith trusts, so it receives.

See, thus are works forgiven, are without guilt and are good, not by their own nature, but by the mercy and grace of God because of the faith which trusts on the mercy of God. Therefore we must fear because of the works, but comfort ourselves because of the grace of God, as it is written, Psalm cxlvii: "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that I fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy." So we pray with perfect confidence: "Our Father," and yet petition: "Forgive us our trespasses"; we are children and yet sinners; are acceptable and yet do not do enough; and all this is the work of faith, firmly grounded in God's grace.

XVII. But if you ask, where the faith and the confidence I can be found and whence they come, this it is certainly most necessary to know. First: Without doubt faith does not come from your works or merit, but alone from Jesus Christ, and is freely promised and given; as St. Paul writes, Romans v: "God commendeth His love to us as exceeding sweet and kindly, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"; as if he said: "Ought not this give us a strong unconquerable confidence, that before we prayed or cared for it, yes, while we still continually walked in sins, Christ dies for our sin?" St. Paul concludes: "If while we were yet sinners Christ died for us, how much more then, being justified by His blood shall we be saved from wrath through Him; and if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by His life."

Lo! thus must thou form Christ within thyself and see how in Him God holds before thee and offers thee His mercy without any previous merits of thine own, and from such a view of His grace must thou draw faith and confidence of the forgiveness of all thy sins. Faith, therefore, does not begin with works, neither do they create it, but it must spring up and flow from the blood, wounds and death of Christ. If thou see in these that God is so kindly affectioned toward thee that He gives even His Son for thee, then thy heart also must in its turn grow sweet and kindly affectioned toward God, and so thy confidence must grow out of pure good-will and love -- God's love toward thee and thine toward God. We never read that the Holy Spirit was given

to any one when he did works, but always when men have heard the Gospel of Christ and the mercy of God. From this same Word and from no other source must faith still come, even in our day and always. For Christ is the rock out of which men suck oil and honey, as Moses says, Deuteronomy xxxii.

XVIII. So far we have treated of the first work and of the First Commandment, but very briefly, plainly and hastily, for very much might be said of it. We will now trace the works farther through the following Commandments.

The second work, next to faith, is the work of the Second Commandment, that we shall honor God's Name and not take it in vain. This, like all the other works, cannot be done without faith; and if it is done without faith, it is all sham and show. After faith we can do no greater work than to praise, preach, sing and in every way exalt and magnify God's glory, honor and Name.

And although I have said above, and it is true, that there is no difference in works where faith is and does the work, yet this is true only when they are compared with faith and its works. Measured by one another there is a difference, and one is higher than the other. Just as in the body the members do not differ when compared with health, and health works in the one as much as in the other; yet the works of the members are different and one is higher, nobler, more useful than the other; so, here also, to praise God's glory and Name is better than the works of the other Commandments which follow; and yet it must be done in the same faith as all the others.

But I know well that this work is lightly esteemed, and has indeed become unknown. Therefore we must examine it further, and will say no more about the necessity of doing it in the faith and confidence that it pleases God. Indeed there is no work in which confidence and faith are so much experienced and felt as in honoring God's Name; and it greatly helps to strengthen and increase faith, although all works also help to do this, as St. Peter says, II. Peter i: "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence through good works to make your calling and election sure."

XIX. The First Commandment forbids us to have other gods, and thereby commands that we have a God, the true God, by a firm faith, trust, confidence, hope and love, which are the only works whereby a man can have, honor and keep a God; for by no

other work can one find or lose God except by faith or unbelief, by trusting or doubting; of the other works none reaches quite to God. So also in the Second Commandment we are forbidden to use His Name in vain. Yet this is not to be enough, but we are thereby also commanded to honor, call upon, glorify, preach and praise His Name. And indeed it is impossible that God's Name should not be dishonored where it is not rightly honored. For although it be honored with the lips, bending of the knees, kissing and other postures, if this is not done in the heart by faith, in confident trust in God's grace, it is nothing else than an evidence and badge of hypocrisy.

See now, how many kinds of good works a man can do under this Commandment at all times and never be without the good works of this Commandment, if he will; so that he truly need not make a long pilgrimage or seek holy places. For, tell me, what moment can pass in which we do not without ceasing receive God's blessings, or, on the other hand, suffer adversity? But what else are God's blessings and adversities than a constant urging and stirring up to praise, honor, and bless God, and to call upon His Name? Now if you had nothing else at all to do, would you not have enough to do with this Commandment alone, that you without ceasing bless, sing, praise and honor God's Name? And for what other purpose have tongue, voice, language and mouth been created? As Psalm li. says: "Lord, open Thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth Thy praise." Again: "My tongue shall sing aloud of Thy mercy."

What work is there in heaven except that of this Second Commandment? As it is written in Psalm Lxxxiv: "Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house: they will be for ever praising Thee." So also David says in Psalm xxxiv: "God's praise shall be continually in my mouth." And St. Paul, I. Corinthians x: "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." Also Colossians iii: "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father." If we were to observe this work, we would have a heaven here on earth and always have enough to do, as have the saints in heaven.

XX. On this is based the wonderful and righteous judgment of God, that at times a poor man, in whom no one can see many great works, in the privacy of his home joyfully praises God when he fares well, or with entire confidence calls upon Him when he fares ill, and thereby does a greater and more acceptable work than another, who fasts much, prays much, endows churches, makes pilgrimages, and burdens himself with great deeds in this place

and in that. Such a fool opens wide his mouth, looks for great works to do, and is so blinded that he does not at all notice this greatest work, and praising God is in his eyes a very small matter compared with the great idea he has formed of the works of his own devising, in which he perhaps praises himself more than God, or takes more pleasure in them than he does in God; and thus with his good works he storms against the Second Commandment and its works. Of all this we have an illustration in the case of the Pharisee and the Publican in the Gospel. For the sinner calls upon God in his sins, and praises Him and so has hit upon the two highest Commandment and God's honor. The hypocrite misses both and struts about with other good works by which he praises himself and not God, and puts his trust in himself more than in God. Therefore he is justly rejected and the other chosen.

The reason of all this is that the higher and better the works are, the less show they make; and that every one thinks they are easy, because it is evident that no one pretends to praise God's Name and honor so much as the very men who never do it and with their show of doing it, while the heart is without faith, cause the precious work to be despised. So that the Apostle St. Paul dare say boldly, Romans ii, that they blaspheme God's Name make their boast of God's Law. For to name the Name of God and to write His honor on paper and on the walls is an easy matter; but genuinely to praise and bless Him in His good deeds and confidently to call upon Him in all adversities, these are truly the most rare, highest works, next to faith, so that if we were to see how few of them there are in Christendom, we might despair for very sorrow. And yet there is a constant increase of high, pretty, shining works of men's devising, or of works which look like these true works, but at bottom are all without faith and without faithfulness; in short, there is nothing good back of them. Thus also Isaiah xlvi. rebukes the people of Israel: "Hear ye this, ye which are called by the name of Israel, which swear by the Name of the Lord, and make mention of the God of Israel neither in truth, nor in righteousness"; that is, they did it not in the true faith and confidence, which is the real truth and righteousness, but trusted in themselves, their works and powers, and yet called upon God's Name and praised Him, two things which do not fit together.

XXI. The first work of this Commandment then is, to praise God in all His benefits, which are innumerable, so that such praise and thanksgiving ought also of right never to cease or end. For who can praise Him perfectly for the gift of natural life, not to mention all other temporal and eternal blessings? And so

through this one part of the Commandment man is overwhelmed with good and precious works; if he do these in true faith, he indeed not lived in vain. And in this matter none sin so much as the most resplendent saints, who are pleased with themselves and like to praise themselves or to hear themselves praised, honored and glorified before men.

Therefore the second work of this Commandment is, to be on one's guard, to flee from and to avoid all temporal honor and praise, and never to seek a name for oneself, or fame and a great reputation, that every one sing of him and tell of him; which is an exceedingly dangerous sin, and yet the most common of all, and, alas! Little regarded. Every one wants to be of importance and not to be the least, however small he may be; so deeply is nature sunk in the evil of its own conceit and in its self-confidence contrary to these two first Commandments.

Now the world regards this terrible vice as the highest virtue, and this makes it exceedingly dangerous for those who do not understand and have not had experience of God's Commandments and the histories of the Holy Scriptures, to read or hear the heathen books and histories. For all heathen books are poisoned through and through with this striving after praise and honor; in them men are taught by blind reason that they were not nor could be men of power and worth, who are not moved by praise and honor; but those are counted the best, who disregard body and life, friend and property and everything in the effort to win praise and honor. All the holy Fathers have complained of this vice and with mind conclude that it is the very last vice to be overcome. St. Augustine says: "All other vices are practised in evil works; only honor and self-satisfaction are practised in and by means of good works."

Therefore if a man had nothing else to do except this second work of this Commandment, he would yet have to work all his life-time in order to fight this vice and drive it out, so common, so subtle, so quick and insidious is it. Now we all pass by this good work and exercise ourselves in many other lesser good works, nay, through other good works we overthrow this and forget it entirely. So the holy Name of God, which alone should be honored, is taken in vain and dishonored through our own cursed name, self-approval and honor-seeking. And this sin is more grievous before God than murder and adultery; but its wickedness is not so clearly seen as that of murder, because of its subtilty, for it is not accomplished in the coarse flesh, but in the spirit.

XXII. Some think it is good for young people that they be enticed by reputation and honor, and again by shame of and dishonor, and so be induced to do good. For there are many who do the good and leave the evil undone out of fear of shame and love of honor, and so do what they would otherwise by no means do or leave undone. These I leave to their opinion. But at present we are seeking how true good works are to be done, and they who are inclined to do them surely do not need to be driven by the fear of shame and the love of honor; they have, and are to have a higher and far nobler incentive, namely, God's commandment, God's fear, God's approval, and their faith and love toward God. They who have not, or regard not this motive, and let shame and honor drive them, these also have their reward, as the Lord says, Matthew vi; and as the motive, so is also the work and the reward: none of them is good, except only in the eyes of the world.

Now I hold that a young person could be more easily trained and incited by God's fear and commandments than by any other means. Yet where these do not help, we must endure that they do the good and leave the evil for the sake of shame and of honor, just as we must also endure wicked men or the imperfect, of whom we spoke above; nor can we do more than tell them that their works are not satisfactory and right before God, and so leave them until they learn to do right for the sake of God's commandments also. Just as young children are induced to pray, fast, learn, etc., by gifts and promises of the parents, even though it would not be good to treat them so all their lives, so that they never learn to do good in the fear of God: far worse, if they become accustomed to do good for the sake of praise and honor.

XXIII. But this is true, that we must none the less have a good name and honor, and every one ought so to live that nothing evil can be said of him, and that he give offence to no one, as St. Paul says, Romans xii: "We are to be zealous to do good, not only before God, but also before all men." And II. Corinthians iv: "We walk so honestly that no man knows anything against us." But there must be great diligence and care, lest such honor and good name puff up the heart, and the heart find pleasure in them. Here the saying of Solomon holds: "As the fire in the furnace proveth the gold, so man is proved by the mouth of him that praises him." Few and most spiritual men must they be, who, when honored and praised, remain indifferent and unchanged, so that they do not care for it, nor feel pride and pleasure in it but remain entirely free, ascribe all their honor and fame to God, offering it to Him alone, and using it only to the glory of God, to the edification of their neighbors, and in no way to

their own benefit or advantage; so that a man trust not in his own honor, nor exalt himself above the most incapable, despised man on earth, but acknowledge himself a servant of God, Who has given him the honor in order that with it he may serve God and his neighbor, just as if He had commanded him to distribute some gulden to the poor for His sake. So He says, Matthew v: "Your light shall shine before men, so that they may see your good works and glorify your Father Who is in heaven." He does not say, "they shall praise you," but "your works shall only serve them to edification, that through them they may praise God in you and in themselves." This is the correct use of God's and honor, when God is thereby praised through the edification of others. And if men want to praise us and not God in us, we are not to endure it, but with all our powers forbid it and flee from it as from the most grievous sin and robbery of divine honor.

XXIV. Hence it comes that God frequently permits a man to fall into or remain in grievous sin, in order that he may be put to shame in his own eyes and in the eyes of all men, who otherwise could not have kept himself from this great vice of vain honor and fame, if he had remained constant in his great gifts and virtues; so God must ward off this sin by means of other grievous sins, that His Name alone may be honored; and thus one sin becomes the other's medicine, because of our perverse wickedness, which not only does the evil, but also misuses all that is good.

Now see how much a man has to do, if he would do good works, which always are at hand in great number, and with which he is surrounded on all sides; but, alas! Because of his blindness, he passes them by and seeks and runs after others of his own devising and pleasure, against which no man can sufficiently speak and no man can sufficiently guard. With this all the prophets had to contend, and for this reason they were all slain, only because they rejected such self-devised works preached only God's commandments, as one of them says, Jeremiah vii: "Thus saith the God of Israel unto you: Take your burnt offerings unto all your sacrifices and eat your burnt-offerings and your flesh yourselves; for concerning these things I have commanded you nothing, but this thing commanded I you: Obey My voice (that is, not what seems right and good to you, but what I bid you), and walk in the way that I have commanded you." And Deuteronomy xii: "Thou shalt not do whatsoever is right in thine own eyes, but what thy God has commanded thee."

These and numberless like passages of Scripture are spoken to tear man not only from sins, but also from the works which seem to men to be good and right, and to turn men, with a single mind, to the simple meaning of God's commandment only, that they shall diligently observe this only and always, as it is written, Exodus xiii: "These commandments shall be for a sign unto thee upon thine hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes." And Psalm i: "A godly man meditates in God's Law day and night." For we have more than enough and too much to do, if we are to satisfy only God's commandments. He has given us such commandments that if we understand them aright, we dare not for a moment be idle, and might easily forget all other works. But the evil spirit, who never rests, when he cannot lead us to the left into evil works, fights on our right through self-devised works that seem good, but against which God has commanded, Deuteronomy xxviii, and Joshua xxiii, "Ye shall not go aside from My commandments to the right hand or to the left."

XXV. The third work of this Commandment is to call C upon God's Name in every need. For this God regards as keeping His Name holy and greatly honoring it, if we name and call upon it in adversity and need. And this is really why He sends us so much trouble, suffering, adversity and even death, and lets us live in many wicked, sinful affections, that He may thereby urge man and give him much reason to run to Him, to cry aloud to Him, to call upon His holy Name, and thus to fulfil this work of the Second Commandment, as He says in Psalm 1: "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me; for I desire the sacrifice of praise." And this is the way whereby thou canst come unto salvation; for through such works man perceives and learns what God's Name is, how powerful it is to help all who call upon it; and whereby confidence and faith grow mightily, and these are the fulfilling of the first and highest Commandment. This is the experience of David, Psalm liv: "Thou hast delivered me out of all trouble, therefore will I praise Thy Name and confess that it is lovely and sweet." And Psalm xci says, "Because he hath set his hope upon Me, therefore will I deliver him: I will help him, because he hath known My Name."

Lo! what man is there on earth, who would not all his life long have enough to do with this work? For who lives an hour without trials? I will not mention the trials of adversity, which are innumerable. For this is the most dangerous trial of all, when there is no trial and every thing is and goes well; for then a man is tempted to forget God, to become too bold and to misuse the times of prosperity. Yea, here he has ten times more need to

call upon God's Name than when in adversity. Since it is written, Psalm xci, "A thousand shall fall on the left hand and ten thousand on the right hand."

So too we see in broad day, in all men's daily experience, that more heinous sins and vice occur when there is peace, when all things are cheap and there are good times, than when war, pestilence, sicknesses and all manner of misfortune burden us; so that Moses also fears for his people, lest they forsake God's commandment for no other reason than because they are too full, too well provided for and have too much peace, as he says, Deuteronomy xxxii "My people is waxed rich, full and fat; therefore has it forsaken its God." Wherefore also God let many of its enemies remain and would not drive them out, in order that they should not have peace and must exercise themselves in the keeping of God's commandments, as it is written, Judges iii. So He deals with us also, when He sends us all kinds of misfortune: so exceedingly careful is He of us, that He may teach us and drive us to honor and call upon His Name, to gain confidence and faith toward Him, and so to fulfil the first two Commandments.

XXVI. Here foolish men run into danger, and especially the work-righteous saints, and those who want to be more than others; they teach men to make the sign of the cross; one arms himself with letters, another runs to the fortunetellers; one seeks this, another that, if only they may thereby escape misfortune and be secure. It is beyond telling what a devilish allurements attaches to this trifling with sorcery, conjuring and superstition, all of which is done only that men may not need God's Name and put no trust in it. Here great dishonor is done the Name of God and the first two Commandments, in that men look to the devil, men or creatures for that which should be sought and found in God alone, through naught but a pure faith and confidence, and a cheerful meditation of and calling upon His holy Name.

Now examine this closely for yourself and see whether this is not a gross, mad perversion: the devil, men and creatures they must believe, and trust to them for the best; without such faith and confidence nothing holds or helps. How shall the good and faithful God reward us for not believing and trusting Him as much or more than man and the devil, although He not only promises help and sure assistance, but also commands us confidently to look for it, and gives and urges all manner of reasons why we should place such faith and confidence in Him? Is it not lamentable and pitiable that the devil or man, who

commands nothing and does not urge, but only promises, is set above God, Who promises, urges and commands; and that more is thought of them than of God Himself? We ought truly to be ashamed of ourselves and learn from the example of those who trust the devil or men. For if the devil, who is a wicked, lying spirit, keeps faith with all those who ally themselves with him, how much more will not the most gracious, all-truthful God keep faith, if a man trusts Him? Nay, is it not rather He alone Who will keep faith? A rich man trusts and relies upon his money and possessions, and they help him; and we are not willing to trust and rely upon the living God, that He is willing and able to help us? We say: Gold makes bold; and it is true, as Baruch iii. says, "Gold is a thing wherein men trust." But far greater is the courage which the highest eternal Good gives, wherein trust, not men, but only God's children.

XXVII. Even if none of these adversities constrain us to call upon God's Name and to trust Him, yet were sin alone more than sufficient to train and to urge us on in this work. For sin has hemmed us in with three strong, mighty armies. The first is our own flesh, the second the world, the third the evil spirit, by which three we are without ceasing oppressed and troubled; whereby God gives us occasion to do good works without ceasing, namely, to fight with these enemies and sins. The flesh seeks pleasure and peace, the world seeks riches, favor, power and honor, the evil spirit seeks pride, glory, that a man be well thought of, and other men be despised.

And these three are all so powerful that each one of them is alone sufficient to fight a man, and yet there is no way we can overcome them, except only by calling upon the holy Name of God in a firm faith, as Solomon says, Proverbs xviii: "The Name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it, and is set aloft." And David, Psalm cxvi: "I will drink the cup of salvation, and call upon the Name of the Lord." Again, Psalm xviii: "I will call upon the Lord with praise: so shall I be saved from all mine enemies." These works and the power of God's Name have become unknown to us, because we are not accustomed to it, and have never seriously fought with sins, and have not needed His Name, because we are trained only in our self devised works, which we were able to do with our own powers.

XXVIII. Further works of this Commandment are: that we shall not swear, curse, lie, deceive and conjure with the holy Name of God, and otherwise misuse it; which are very simple matters and well known to every one, being the sins which have been almost exclusively preached and proclaimed under this Commandment.

These also include, that we shall prevent others from making sinful use of God's Name by lying, swearing, deceiving, cursing, conjuring, and otherwise. Herein again much occasion is given for doing good and warding off evil.

But the greatest and most difficult work of this Commandment is to protect the holy Name of God against all who misuse it in a spiritual manner, and to proclaim it to all men. For it is not enough that I, for myself and in myself, praise and call upon God's Name in prosperity and adversity. I must step forth and for the sake of God's honor and Name bring upon myself the enmity of all men, as Christ said to His disciples: "Ye shall be hated of all men for My Name's sake." Here we must provoke to anger father, mother, and the best of friends. Here we must strive against spiritual and temporal powers, and be accused of disobedience. Here we must stir up against us the rich, learned, holy, and all that is of repute in the world. And although this is especially the duty of those who are commanded to preach God's Word, yet every Christian is also obligated to do so when time and place demand. For we must for the holy Name of God risk and give up all that we have and can do, and show by our deeds that we love God and His Name, His honor and His praise above all things, and trust Him above all things, and expect good from Him; thereby confessing that we regard Him as the highest good, for the sake of which we let go and give up all other goods.

XXIX. Here we must first of all resist all wrong, where truth or righteousness suffers violence or need, and dare make no distinction of persons, as some do, who fight most actively and busily against the wrong which is done to the rich, the powerful, and their own friends; but when it is done to the poor, or the despised or their own enemy, they are quiet and patient. These see the Name and the honor of God not as it is, but through a painted glass, and measure truth or righteousness according to the persons, and do not consider their deceiving eye, which looks more on the person than on the thing. These are hypocrites within and have only the appearance of defending the truth. For they well know that there is no danger when one helps the rich, the powerful, the learned and one's own friends, and can in turn enjoy their protection and be honored by them.

Thus it is very easy to fight against the wrong which is done to popes, kings, princes, bishops and other big-wigs. Here each wants to be the most pious, where there is no great need. O how sly is here the deceitful Adam with his demand; how finely does he cover his greed of profit with the name of truth and righteousness and God's honor! But when something happens to a

poor and insignificant man, there the deceitful eye does not find much profit, but cannot help seeing the disfavor of the powerful; therefore he lets the poor man remain unhelpt. And who could tell the extent of this vice in Christendom? God says in the lxxxii. Psalm, "How long will ye judge unjustly, and accept the persons of the wicked? Judge the matter of the poor and fatherless, demand justice for the poor and needy; deliver the poor and rid the forsaken out of the hand of the wicked." But it is not done, and therefore the text continues: "They know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness"; that is, the truth they do not see, but they stop at the reputation of the great, however unrighteous they are; and do not consider the poor, however righteous they are.

XXX. See, here would be many good works. For the greater portion of the powerful, rich and friends do injustice and oppress the poor, the lowly, and their own opponents; and the greater the men, the worse the deeds; and where we cannot by force prevent it and help the truth, we should at least confess it, and do what we can with words, not take the part of the unrighteous, not approve them, but speak the truth boldly.

What would it help a man if he did all manner of good, made pilgrimages to Rome and to all holy places, acquired all indulgences, built all churches and endowed houses, if he were found guilty of sin against the Name and honor of God, not speaking of them and neglecting them, and regarding his possessions, honor, favor and friends more than the truth (which is God's Name and honor)? Or who is he, before whose door and into whose house such good works do not daily come, so that he would have no need to travel far or to ask after good works? And if we consider the life of men, how in every place men act so very rashly and lightly in this respect, we must cry out with the prophet, Omnis homo mendax, "All men are liars, lie and deceive"; for the real good works they neglect, and adorn and paint themselves with the most insignificant, and want to be pious, to mount to heaven in peaceful security.

But if you should say: "Why does not God do it alone and Himself, since He can and knows how to help each one?" Yes, He can do it; but He does not want to do it alone; He wants us to work with Him, and does us the honor to want to work His work with us and through us. And if we are not willing to accept such honor, He will, after all, perform the work alone, and help the poor; and those who were unwilling to help Him and have despised the great honor of doing His work, He will condemn with the unrighteous, because they have made common cause with the

unrighteous. Just as He alone is blessed, but He wants to do us the honor and not be alone in His blessedness, but have us to be blessed with Him. And if He were to do it alone, His Commandments would be given us in vain, because no one would have occasion to exercise himself in the great works of these Commandments, and no one would test himself to see whether he regards God and His Name as the highest good, and for His sake risks everything.

XXXI. It also belongs to this work to resist all false, seductive, erroneous, heretical doctrines, every misuse of spiritual power. Now this is much higher, for these use the holy Name of God itself to fight against the Name of God. For this reason it seems a great thing and a dangerous to resist them, because they assert that he who resists them resists God and all His saints, in whose place they sit and whose power they use, saying that Christ said of them, "He that heareth you, heareth Me, and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me." On which words they lean heavily, become insolent and bold to say, to do, and to leave undone what they please; put to the ban, accurse, rob, murder, and practise all their wickedness, in whatever way they please and can invent, without any hindrance.

Now Christ did not mean that we should listen to them in everything they might say and do, but only then when they present to us His Word, the Gospel, not their word, His work, and not their work. How else could we know whether their lies and sins were to be avoided? There must be some rule, to what extent we are to hear and to follow them, and this rule cannot be given by them, but must be established by God over them, that it may serve us as a guide, as we shall hear in the Fourth Commandment.

It must be, indeed, that even in the spiritual estate the greater part preach false doctrine and misuse spiritual power, so that thus occasion may be given us to do the works of this Commandment, and that we be tried, to see what we are willing to do and to leave undone against such blasphemers for the sake of God's honor.

Oh, if we were God-fearing in this matter, how often would the knaves of officials have to decree their papal and episcopal ban in vain! How weak the Roman thunderbolts would become! How often would many a one have to hold his tongue, to whom the world must now give ear! How few preachers would be found in Christendom! But it has gotten the upper hand: whatever they assert and in whatever way, that must be right. Here no one

fighters for God's Name and honor, and I hold that no greater or more frequent sin is done in external works than under this head. It is a matter so high that few understand it, and, besides, adorned with God's Name and power, dangerous to touch. But the prophets of old were masters in this; also the apostles, especially St. Paul, who did not allow it to trouble them whether the highest or the lowest priest had said it, or had done it in God's Name or in his own. They looked on the works and words, and held them up to God's Commandment, no matter whether big John or little Nick said it, or whether they had done it in God's Name or in man's. And for this they had to die, and of such dying there would be much more to say in our time, for things are much worse now. But Christ and St. Peter and Paul must cover all this with their holy names, so that no more infamous cover for infamy has been found on earth than the most holy and most blessed Name of Jesus Christ!

One might shudder to be alive, simply because of the misuse and blasphemy of the holy Name of God; through which, if it shall last much longer, we will, as I fear, openly worship the devil as a god; so completely do the spiritual authorities and the learned lack all understanding in these things. It is high time that we pray God earnestly that He hallow His Name. But it cost blood, and they who enjoy the inheritance of the holy martyrs and are won with their blood, must again make martyrs. Of this more another time.

I. We have now seen how many good works there are in the Second Commandment, which however are not good in themselves, unless they are done in faith and in the assurance of divine favor; and how much we must do, if we take heed to this Commandment alone, and how we, alas! busy ourselves much with other works, which have no agreement at all with it. Now follows the Third Commandment: "Thou shalt hallow the day of rest." In the First Commandment is prescribed our heart's attitude toward God in thoughts, in the Second, that of our mouth in words, in this Third is prescribed our attitude toward God in works; and it is the first and right table of Moses, on which these three Commandments are written, and they govern man on the right side, namely, in the things which concern God, and in which God has to do with man and man with God, without the mediation of any creature.

The first works of this Commandment are plain and outward, which we commonly call worship, such as going to mass, praying, and hearing a sermon on holy days. So understood there are very few

works in this Commandment; and these, if they are not done in assurance of and with faith in God's favor, are nothing, as was said above. Hence it would also be a good thing if there were fewer saint's days, since in our times the works done on them are for the greater part worse than those of the work days, what with loafing, gluttony, and drunkenness, gambling and other evil deeds; and then, the mass and the sermon are listened to without edification, the prayer is spoken without faith. It almost happens that men think it is sufficient that we look on at the mass with our eyes, hear the preaching with our ears, and say the prayers with our mouths. It is all so formal and superficial! We do not think that we might receive something out of the mass into our hearts, learn and remember something out of the preaching, seek, desire and expect something in our prayer. Although in this matter the bishops and priests, or they to whom the work of preaching is entrusted, are most at fault, because they do not preach the Gospel, and do not teach the people how they ought to look on at mass, hear preaching and pray. Therefore, we will briefly explain these three works.

II. In the mass it is necessary that we attend with our hearts also; and we do attend, when we exercise faith in our hearts. Here we must repeat the words of Christ, when He institutes the mass and says, "Take and eat, this is My Body, which is given for you"; in like manner over the cup, "Take and drink ye all of it: this is a new, everlasting Testament in My Blood, which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins. This shall ye do, as oft as ye do it, in remembrance of Me." In these words Christ has made for Himself a memorial or anniversary, to be daily observed in all Christendom, and has added to it a glorious, rich, great testament, in which no interest, money or temporal possessions are bequeathed and distributed, but the forgiveness of all sins, grace and mercy unto eternal life, that all who come to this memorial shall have the same testament; and then He died, whereby this testament has become permanent and irrevocable. In proof and evidence of which, instead of letter and seal, He has left with us His own Body and Blood under the bread and wine.

Here there is need that a man practise the first works of this Commandment right well, that he doubt not that what Christ has said is true, and consider the testament sure, so that he make not Christ a liar. For if you are present at mass and do not consider nor believe that here Christ through His testament has bequeathed and given you forgiveness of all your sins, what else is it, than as if you said: "I do not know or do not believe that it is true that forgiveness of my sins is here bequeathed

and given me"? Oh, how many masses there are in the world at present! But how few who hear them with such faith and benefit! Most grievously is God provoked to anger thereby. For this reason also no one shall or can reap any benefit from the mass except he be in trouble of soul and long for divine mercy, and desire to be rid of his sins; or, if he have an evil intention, he must be changed during the mass, and come to have a desire for this testament. For this reason in olden times no open sinner was allowed to be present at the mass.

When this faith is rightly present, the heart must be made joyful by the testament, and grow warm and melt in God's love. Then will follow praise and thanksgiving with a pure heart, from which the mass is called in Greek Eucharistia, that is, "thanksgiving," because we praise and thank God for this comforting, rich, blessed testament, just as he gives thanks, praises and is joyful, to whom a good friend has presented a thousand and more gulden. Although Christ often fares like those who make several persons rich by their testament, and these persons never think of them, nor praise or thank them. So our masses at present are merely celebrated, without our knowing why or wherefore, and consequently we neither give thanks nor love nor praise, remain parched and hard, and have enough with our little prayer. Of this more another time.

III. The sermon ought to be nothing else than the proclamation of this testament. But who can hear it if no one preaches it? Now, they who ought to preach it, themselves do not know it. This is why the sermons ramble off into other unprofitable stories, and thus Christ is forgotten, while we fare like the man in II. Kings vii: we see our riches but do not enjoy them. Of which the Preacher also says, "This is a great evil, when God giveth a man riches, and giveth him not power to enjoy them." So we look on at unnumbered masses and do not know whether the mass be a testament, or what it be, just as if it were any other common good work by itself. O God, how exceeding blind we are! But where this is rightly preached, it is necessary that it be diligently heard, grasped, retained, often thought of, and that the faith be thus strengthened against all the temptation of sin, whether past, or present, or to come.

Lo! this is the only ceremony or practice which Christ has instituted, in which His Christians shall assemble exercise themselves and keep it with one accord; and this He did not make to be a mere work like other ceremonies, but placed into it a rich, exceeding great treasure, to be offered and bestowed upon all who believe on it.

This preaching should induce sinners to grieve over their sins, and should kindle in them a longing for the treasure. It must, therefore, be a grievous sin not to hear the Gospel, and to despise such a treasure and so rich a feast to which we are bidden; but a much greater sin not to preach the Gospel, and to let so many people who would gladly hear it perish, since Christ has so strictly commanded that the Gospel and this testament be preached, that He does not wish even the mass to be celebrated, unless the Gospel be preached, as He says: "As oft as ye do this, remember me"; that is, as St. Paul says, "Ye shall preach of His death." For this reason it is dreadful and horrible in our times to be a bishop pastor and preacher; for no one any longer knows this testament, to say nothing of their preaching it, although this is their highest and only duty and obligation. How heavily must they give account for so many souls who must perish because of this lack in preaching.

IV. We should pray, not as the custom is, counting many pages or beads, but fixing our mind upon some pressing need, desire it with all earnestness, and exercise faith and confidence toward God in the matter, in such wise that we do not doubt that we shall be heard. So St. Bernard instructs his brethren and says: "Dear brethren, you shall by no means despise your prayer, as if it were in vain, for I tell you of a truth that, before you have uttered the words, the prayer is already recorded in heaven; and you shall confidently expect from God one of two things: either that your prayer will be granted, or that, if it will not be granted, the granting of it would not be good for you."

Prayer is, therefore, a special exercise of faith, and faith makes the prayer so acceptable that either it will surely be granted, or something better than we ask will be given in its stead. So also says St. James: "Let him who asketh of God not waver in faith; for if he wavers, let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord." This is a clear statement, which says directly: he who does not trust, receives nothing neither that which he asks, nor anything better.

And to call forth such faith, Christ Himself has said Mark xi: "Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall surely have them." And Luke xi: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you; for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what father is there of you, who, if his son shall ask bread, will he

give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? or if he ask an egg, will he give him a scorpion? But if you know how to give good gifts to your children, and you yourselves are not naturally good, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give a good spirit to all them that ask Him!"

V. Who is so hard and stone-like, that such mighty words ought not to move him to pray with all confidence! joyfully and gladly? But how many prayers must be reformed, if we are to pray aright according to these words! Now, indeed, all churches and monastic houses are full of praying and singing, but how does it happen that so little improvement and benefit result from it, and things daily grow worse? The reason is none other than that which St. James indicates when he says: "You ask much and receive not, because ye ask amiss." For where this faith and confidence is not in the prayer, the prayer is dead, and nothing more than a grievous labor and work. If anything is given for it, it is none the less only temporal benefit without any blessing and help for the soul; nay, to the great injury and blinding of souls, so that they go their way, babbling much their mouths, regardless of whether they receive, or desire, or trust; and in this unbelief, the state of mind most opposed to the exercise of faith and to the nature of prayer, they remain hardened.

From this it follows that one who prays aright never doubts that his prayer is surely acceptable and heard, although the very thing for which he prays be not given him. For we are to lay our need before God in prayer, but not prescribe to Him a measure, manner, time or place; but if He wills to give it to us better or in another way than we think, we are to leave it to Him; for frequently we do not know what we pray, as St. Paul says, Romans viii; and God works and gives above all that we understand, as he says, Ephesians iii, so that there be no doubt that the prayer is acceptable and heard, and we yet leave to God the time, place, measure and limit; He will surely do what is right. They are the true worshipers, who worship God in spirit and in truth. For they who believe not that they will be heard, sin upon the left hand against this Commandment, and go far astray with their unbelief. But they who set a limit for Him, sin upon the other side, and come too close with their tempting of God. So He has forbidden both, that we should err from His Commandment neither to the left nor to the right, that is, neither with unbelief nor with tempting, but with simple faith remain on the straight road, trusting Him, and yet setting Him no bounds.

VI. Thus we see that this Commandment, like the Second, is to be nothing else than a doing and keeping of the First Commandment, that is, of faith, trust, confidence, hope and love to God, so that in all the Commandments the First may be the captain, and faith the chief work and the life of all other works, without which, as was said, they cannot be good.

But if you say: "What if I cannot believe that my prayer is heard and accepted?" I answer: For this very reason faith, prayer and all other good works are commanded, that you shall know what you can and what you cannot do. And when you find that you cannot so believe and do, then you are humbly to confess it to God, and so begin with a weak spark of faith and daily strengthen it more and more by exercising it in all your living and doing. For as touching infirmity of faith (that is, of the First and highest Commandment), there is no one on earth who does not have his good share of it. For even the holy Apostles in the Gospel, and especially St. Peter, were weak in faith, so that they also prayed Christ and said: "Lord increase our faith"; and He very frequently rebukes them because they have so little faith.

Therefore you shall not despair, nor give up, even if you find that you do not believe as firmly as you ought and wish, in your prayer or in other works. Nay, you shall thank God with all your heart that He thus reveals to you your weakness, through which He daily teaches and admonishes you how much you need to exercise yourself and daily strengthen yourself in faith. For how many do you see who habitually pray, sing, read, work and seem to be great saints, and yet never get so far as to know where they stand in respect of the chief work, faith; and so in their blindness they lead astray themselves and others think they are very well off, and so unknowingly build on the sand of their works without any faith, not on God's mercy and promise through a firm, pure faith.

Therefore, however long we live, we shall always have our hands full to remain, with all our works and sufferings, pupils of the First Commandment and of faith, and not to cease to learn. No one knows what a great thing it is to trust God alone, except he who attempts it with his works.

VII. Again: if no other work were commanded, would not prayer alone suffice to exercise the whole life of man in faith? For this work the spiritual estate has been specially established, as indeed in olden times some Fathers prayed day and night. Nay,

there is no Christian who does not have time to pray without ceasing. But I burdened with his labor, but that if he will he can, while working, speak with God in his heart, lay before Him his need and that of other men, ask for help, make petition, and in all this exercise and strengthen his faith.

This is what the Lord means, Luke xviii, when He says, "Men ought always to pray, and never cease," although in Matthew vi. He forbids the use of much speaking and long prayers, because of which He rebukes the hypocrites; not because the lengthy prayer of the lips is evil, but because it is not that true prayer which can be made at all times, and without the inner prayer of faith is nothing. For we must also practise the outward prayer in its proper time, especially in the mass, as this Commandment requires, and wherever it is helpful to the inner prayer and faith, whether in the house or in the field, in this work or in that; of which we have no time now to speak more. For this belongs to the Lord's Prayer, in which all petitions and spoken prayer are summed up in brief words.

VIII. Where now are they who desire to know and to do good works? Let them undertake prayer alone, and rightly exercise themselves in faith, and they will find that it is true, as the holy Fathers have said, that there is no work like prayer. Mumbling with the mouth is easy, or at least considered easy, but with earnestness of heart to follow the words in deep devotion, that is, with desire and faith, so that one earnestly desires what the words say, and not to doubt that it will be heard: that is a great deed in God's eyes.

Here the evil spirit hinders men with all his powers. Oh, how often will he here prevent the desire to pray, not allow us to find time and place, nay, often also raise doubts, whether a man is worthy to ask anything of such a Majesty as God is, and so confuse us that a man himself does not know whether it is really true that he prays or not; whether it is possible that his prayer is acceptable, and other such strange thoughts. For the evil spirit knows well how powerful one man's truly believing prayer is, and how it hurts him, and how it benefits all men. Therefore he does not willingly let it happen.

When so tempted, a man must indeed be wise, and not doubt that he and his prayer are, indeed, unworthy before such infinite Majesty; in no wise dare he trust his worthiness, or because of his unworthiness grow faint; but he must heed God's command and cast this up to Him, and hold it before the devil, and say: "Because of my worthiness I do nothing, because of my

unworthiness I cease from nothing. I pray and work only because God of His pure mercy has promised to hear and to be gracious to all unworthy men, and not only promised it, but He has also most sternly, on pain of His everlasting displeasure and wrath, commanded us to pray, to trust and to receive. If it has not been too much for that high Majesty so solemnly and highly to obligate His unworthy worms to pray, to trust, and to receive from Him, how shall it be too much for me to take such command upon myself with all joy, however worthy or unworthy I may be?" Thus we must drive out the devil's suggestion with God's command. Thus will he cease, and in no other way whatever.

IX. But what are the things which we must bring before Almighty God in prayer and lamentation, to exercise faith thereby? Answer: First, every man's own besetting need and trouble, of which David says, Psalm xxxii: "Thou art my refuge in all trouble which compasseth me about; Thou art my comfort, to preserve me from all evil which surrounds me." Likewise, Psalm cxlii: "I cried unto the Lord with my voice; with my voice unto the Lord did I make my supplication. I poured out my complaint before Him; I showed before Him my trouble." In the mass a Christian shall keep in mind the short-comings or excesses he feels, and pour out all these freely before God with weeping and groaning, as woefully as he can, as to his faithful Father, who is ready to help him. And if you do not know or recognise your need, or have no trouble, then you shall know that you are in the worst possible plight. For this is the greatest trouble, that you find yourself so hardened, hard-hearted insensible that no trouble moves you.

There is no better mirror in which to see your need than simply the Ten Commandments, in which you will find what you lack and what you should seek. If, therefore, you find in yourself a weak faith, small hope and little love toward God; and that you do not praise and honor God, but love your own honor and fame, think much of the favor of men, do not gladly hear mass and sermon, are indolent in prayer, in which things every one has faults, then you shall think more of these faults than of all bodily harm to goods, honor and life, and believe that they are worse than death and all mortal sickness. These you shall earnestly lay before God, lament and ask for help, and with all confidence expect help, and believe that you are heard and shall obtain help and mercy.

Then go forward into the Second Table of the Commandments, and see how disobedient you have been and still are toward father and mother and all in authority; how you sin against your

neighbor with anger, hatred and evil words; how you are tempted to unchastity, covetousness and injustice in word and deed against your neighbor; and you will doubtless find that you are full of all need and misery, and have reason enough to weep even drops of blood, if you could.

X. But I know well that many are so foolish as not to want to ask for such things, unless they first be conscious that they are pure, and believe that God hears no one who is a sinner. All this is the work of those false preachers, who teach men to begin, not with faith and trust in God's favor, but with their own works.

Look you, wretched man! if you have broken a leg, or the peril of death overtakes you, you call upon God, this Saint and that, and do not wait until your leg is healed, or the danger is past: you are not so foolish as to think that God hears no one whose leg is broken, or who is in bodily danger. Nay, you believe that God shall hear most of all when you are in the greatest need and fear. Why, then, are you so foolish here, where there is immeasurably greater need and eternal hurt, and do not want to ask for faith, hope, love, humility, obedience, chastity, gentleness, peace, righteousness, unless you are already free of all your unbelief, doubt, pride, disobedience, unchastity, anger, covetousness and unrighteousness. Although the more you find yourself lacking in these things, the more and more diligently you ought to pray or cry.

So blind are we: with our bodily sickness and need we run to God; with the soul's sickness we run from Him, and are unwilling to come back before we are well, exactly as if there could be one God who could help the body, and another God who could help the soul; or as if we would help ourselves in spiritual need, although it really is greater than the bodily need. Such plan and counsel is of the devil.

Not so, my good man! If you wish to be cured of sin, you must not withdraw from God, but run to Him, and pray with much more confidence than if a bodily need had overtaken you. God is not hostile to sinners, but only to unbelievers, that is, to such as do not recognize and lament their sin, nor seek help against it from God, but in their own presumption wish first to purify themselves, are unwilling to be in need of His grace, and will not suffer Him to be a God Who gives to everyone and takes nothing in return.

XI. All this has been said of prayer for personal needs, and of prayer in general. But the prayer which really belongs to this Commandment and is called a work of the Holy Day, is far better and greater, and is to be made for all Christendom, for all the need of all men, of foe and friend, especially for those who belong to the parish or bishopric.

Thus St. Paul commanded his disciple Timothy: exhort thee, that thou see to it, that prayers and intercessions be made for all men, for kings, and for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour." For this reason Jeremiah, chapter xxix, commanded the people of Israel to pray for the city and land of Babylon, because in the peace thereof they should have peace. And Baruch i: "Pray for the life of the king of Babylon and for the life of his son, that we may live in peace under their rule."

This common prayer is precious and the most powerful, and it is for its sake that we come together. For this reason also the Church is called a House of Prayer, because in it we are as a congregation with one accord to consider our need and the needs of all men, present them before God, and call upon Him for mercy. But this must be done with heart-felt emotion and sincerity, so that we feel in our hearts the need of all men, and that we pray with true sympathy for them, in true faith and confidence. Where such prayers are not made in the mass, it were better to omit the mass. For what sense is there in our coming together into a House of Prayer, which coming together shows that we should make common prayer and petition for the entire congregation, if we scatter these prayers, and so distribute them that everyone prays only for himself, and no one has regard for the other, nor concerns himself for another's need? How can that prayer be of help, good, acceptable and a common prayer, or a work of the Holy Day and of the assembled congregation, which they make who make their own petty prayers, one for this, the other for that, and have nothing but self-seeking, selfish prayers, which God hates?

XII. A suggestion of this common prayer has been retained from ancient practice, when at the end of the sermon the Confession of Sins is said and prayer is made on the pulpit for all Christendom. But this should not be the end of the matter, as is now the custom and fashion; it should be an exhortation to pray throughout the entire mass for such need as the preacher makes us feel; and in order that we may pray worthily, he first exhorts us because of our sin, and thereby makes us humble. This

should be done as briefly as possible, that then the entire congregation may confess their own sin and pray for every one with earnestness and faith.

Oh, if God granted that any congregation at all heard mass and prayed in this way, so that a common earnest heart-cry of the entire people would rise up to God, what immeasurable virtue and help would result from such a prayer! What more terrible thing could happen to all the evil spirits? What greater work could be done on earth, whereby so many pious souls would be preserved, so many sinners converted?

For, indeed, the Christian Church on earth has no greater power or work than such common prayer against everything that may oppose it. This the evil spirit knows well, and therefore he does all that he can to prevent such prayer. Gleefully he lets us go on building churches, endowing many monastic houses, making music, reading, singing, observing many masses, and multiplying ceremonies beyond all measure. This does not grieve him, nay, he helps us do it, that we may consider such things the very best, and think that thereby we have done our whole duty. But in that meanwhile this common, effectual and fruitful prayer perishes and its omission is unnoticed because of such display, in this he has what he seeks. For when prayer languishes, no one will take anything from him, and no one will withstand him. But if he noticed that we wished to practise this prayer, even if it were under a straw roof or in a pig-sty, he would indeed not endure it, but would fear such a pig-sty far more than all the high, big and beautiful churches, towers and bells in existence, if such prayer be not in them. It is not a question of the places and buildings in which we assemble, but only of this unconquerable prayer, that we pray it and bring it before God as a truly common prayer.

XIII. The power of this prayer we see in the fact that in olden times Abraham prayed for the five cities, Sodom, Gomorrah, etc., Genesis xviii, and accomplished so much, that if there had been ten righteous people in them, two in each city, God would not have destroyed them. What then could many men do, if they united in calling upon God earnestly and with sincere confidence?

St. James also says: "Dear brethren, pray for one another, that ye may be saved. For the prayer of a righteous man availeth much, a prayer that perseveres and does not cease" (that is, which does not cease asking ever more and more, although what it asks is not immediately granted, as some timid men do). And as an example in this matter he sets before us Elijah, the Prophet,

"who was a man," he says, "as we are, and prayed, that it might not rain; and it rained not by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and it rained, and everything became fruitful." There are many texts and examples in the Scriptures which urge us to pray, only that it be done with earnestness and faith. As David says, "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears are open unto their cry." Again, "The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth." Why does he add, "call upon Him in truth"? Because that is not prayer nor calling upon God when the mouth alone mumbles.

What should God do, if you come along with your mouth, book or Paternoster, and think of nothing except that you may finish the words and complete the number? So that if some one were to ask you what it all was about, or what it was that you prayed for, you yourself would not know; for you had not thought of laying this or that matter before God or desiring it. Your only reason for praying is that you are commanded to pray this and so much, and this you intend to do in full. What wonder that and lightning frequently set churches on fire, because we thus make of the House of Prayer a house of mockery, and call that prayer in which we bring nothing before God and desire nothing from Him.

But we should do as they do who wish to ask a favor of great princes. These do not plan merely to babble a certain number of words, for the prince would think they mocked him, or were insane; but they put their request very plainly, and present their need earnestly, and then leave it to his mercy, in good confidence that he will grant it. So we must deal with God of definite things, namely, mention some present need, commend it to His mercy and good-will, and not doubt that it is heard; He has promised to hear such prayer, which no earthly lord has done.

XIV. We are masters in this form of prayer when we suffer bodily need; when we are sick we call here upon St. Christopher, there upon St. Barbara; we vow a pilgrimage to St. James, to this place and to that; then we make earnest prayer, have a good confidence and every good kind of prayer. But when we are in our churches during mass, we stand like images of saints; know nothing to speak of or to lament; the beads rattle, the pages rustle and the mouth babbles; and that is all there is to it.

But if you ask what you shall speak of and lament in your prayer, you can easily learn from the Ten Commandments and the

Lord's Prayer. Open your eyes and look into your life and the life of all Christians, especially of the spiritual estate, and you will find how faith, hope, love, obedience, chastity and every virtue languish, and all manner of heinous vices reign; what a lack there is of good preachers and prelates; how only knaves, children, fools and women rule. Then you will see that there were need every hour without ceasing to pray everywhere with tears of blood to God, Who is so terribly angry with men. And it is true that it has never been more necessary to pray than at this time, and it will be more so from now on to the end of the world. If such terrible crimes do not move you to lament and complain, do not permit yourself to be led astray by your rank, station, good works or prayer: there is no Christian vein or trait in you, however righteous you may be. But it has all been foretold, that when God's anger is greatest and Christendom suffers the greatest need, then petitioners and supplicants before God shall not be found, as Isaiah says with tears, chapter lxiv: "Thou art angry with us, and there is none that calleth upon Thy Name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of Thee." Likewise, Ezekiel xxii: "I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found none. Therefore have I poured out Mine indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of My wrath." With these words God indicates how He wants us to withstand Him and turn away His anger from one another, as it is frequently written of the Prophet Moses, that he restrained God, lest His anger should overwhelm the people of Israel.

XV. But what will they do, who not only do not such misfortune of Christendom, and do not pray against it, but laugh at it, take pleasure in it, condemn, malign, sing and talk of their neighbor's sins, and yet are, unafraid and unashamed, go to church, hear mass, say prayers, and regard themselves and are regarded as pious Christians? These truly are in need that we pray twice for them, if we pray once for those whom they condemn, talk about and laugh at. That there would be such is also prophesied by the thief on Christ's left hand, who blasphemed Him in His suffering, weakness and need; also by all those who reviled Christ on the Cross, when they should most of all have helped Him.

O God, how blind, nay, how insane have we Christians become! When will there be an end of wrath, O heavenly Father? That we mock at the misfortune of Christendom, to pray for which we gather together in Church and at the mass, that we blaspheme and condemn men, this is the fruit of our mad materialism. If the

Turk destroys cities, country and people, and ruins churches, we think a great injury has been done Christendom. Then we complain, and urge kings and princes to war. But when faith perishes, love grows cold, God's Word is neglected, and all manner of sin flourishes, then no one thinks of fighting, nay, pope, bishops, priests and clergy, who ought to be generals, captains and standard-bearers in this spiritual warfare against these spiritual and many times worse Turks, these are themselves the very princes and leaders of such Turks and of the devil host, just as Judas was the leader of the Jews when they took Christ. It had to be an apostle, a bishop, a priest, one of number of the best, who began the work of slaying Christ. So also must Christendom be laid waste by no others than those who ought to protect it, and yet are so insane that they are ready to eat up the Turks and at home themselves set house and sheep-cote on fire and let them burn up with the sheep and all other contents, and none the less worry about the wolf in the woods. Such are our times, and this is the reward we have earned by our ingratitude toward the endless grace which Christ has won for us freely with His precious blood, grievous labor and bitter death.

XVI. Lo! where are the idle ones, who do not know how to do good works? Where are they who run to Rome, to St. James, hither and thither? Take up this one singl work of the mass, look on your neighbor's sin and ruin, and have pity on him; let it grieve you, tell it to God, and pray over it. Do the same for every other need of Christendom, especially of the rulers, whom God, for the intolerable punishment and torment of us all, allows to fall and be misled so terribly. If you do this diligently, be assured you are one of the best fighters and captains, not only against the Turks, but also against the devils and the powers of hell. But if you do it not, what would it help you though you performed all the miracles of the saints, and murdered all the Turks, and yet were found guilty of having disregarded your neighbor's need and of having thereby sinned against love? For Christ at the last day will not ask how much you have prayed, fasted, pilgrimaged, done this or that for yourself, but how much good you have done to others, even the very least.

Now without doubt among the "least" are also those who are in sin and spiritual poverty, captivity and need, of whom there are at present far more than of those who suffer bodily need. Therefore tke heed: our own self-assumed good works lead us to and into ourselves, that we seek only our own benefit and salvation; but God's commandments drive us to our neighbor, that we may thereby benefit others to their salvation. Just as Christ on the Cross prayed not for Himself alone, but rather for us,

when He said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," so we also must pray for one another. From which every man may know that the slanderers, frivolous judges and despisers of other people are a perverted, evil race, who do nothing else than heap abuse on those for whom they ought to pray; in which vice no one is sunk so deep as those very men who do many good works of their own, and seem to men to be something extraordinary, and are honored because of their beautiful, splendid life in manifold good works.

XVII. Spiritually understood, this Commandment has a yet far higher work, which embraces the whole nature of man. Here it must be known that in Hebrew "Sabbath" means "rest," because on the seventh day God rested and ceased from all His works, which He had made. Genesis ii. Therefore He commanded also that the seventh day should be kept holy and that we cease from our works which we do the other six days. This Sabbath has now for us been changed into the Sunday, and the other days are called work-days; the Sunday is called rest-day or holiday or holy day. And would to God that in Christendom there were no holiday except the Sunday; that the festivals of Our Lady and of the Saints were all transferred to Sunday; then would many evil vices be done away with through the labor of the work-days, and lands would not be so drained and impoverished. But now we are plagued with many holidays, to the destruction of souls, bodies and goods; of which matter much might be said.

This rest or ceasing from labors is of two kinds, bodily and spiritual. For this reason this Commandment is also to be understood in two ways.

The bodily rest is that of which we have spoken above, namely, that we omit our business and work, in order that we may gather in the church, see mass, hear God's Word and make common prayer. This rest is indeed bodily and in Christendom no longer commanded by God, as the Apostle says, Colossians ii, "Let no man obligate you to any holiday whatever" -- for they were of old a figure, but now the truth has been fulfilled, so that all days are holy days, as Isaiah says, chapter lxvi, "One holy day shall follow the other"; on the other hand, all days are workdays. Yet it is a necessity and ordained by the Church for the sake of the imperfect laity and working people, that they also may be able to come to hear God's Word. For, as we see, the priests and clergy celebrate mass every day, pray at all hours and train themselves in God's Word by study, reading and hearing. For this reason also they are freed from work before others, supported by tithes and have holy-day every day, and

every day do the works of the holy-day, and have no work-day, but for them one day is as the other. And if we were all perfect, and knew the Gospel, we might work every day if we wished, or rest if we could. For a day of rest is at present not necessary nor commanded except only for the teaching of God's Word and prayer.

The spiritual rest, which God particularly intends in this Commandment, is this: that we not only cease from our labor and trade, but much more, that we let God alone work in us and that we do nothing of our own with all our powers. But how is this done? In this way: Man, corrupted by sin, has much wicked love and inclination toward all sins, as the Scriptures say, Genesis viii, "Man's heart and senses incline always to the evil," that is, to pride, disobedience, anger, hatred, covetousness, unchastity, etc., and summa summarum, in all that he does and leaves undone, he seeks his own profit, will and honor rather than God's and his neighbor's. Therefore all his works, all his words, all his thoughts, all his life are evil and not godly.

Now if God is to work and to live in him, all this vice and wickedness must be choked and up-rooted, so that there may be rest and a cessation of all our works, thoughts and life, and that henceforth (as St. Paul says, Galatians ii.) it may be no longer we who live, but Christ Who lives, works and speaks in us. This is not accomplished with comfortable, pleasant days, but here we must hurt our nature and let it be hurt. Here begins the strife between the spirit and the flesh; here the spirit resists anger, lust, pride, while the flesh wants to be in pleasure, honor and comfort. Of this St. Paul says, Galatians v, "They that are our Lord Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts." Then follow the good works, -- fasting, watching, labor, of which some say and write so much, although they know neither the source nor the purpose of these good works. Therefore we will now also speak of them.

XVIII. This rest, namely, that our work cease and God alone work in us, is accomplished in two ways. First, through our own effort, secondly, through the effort or urging of others.

Our own effort is to be so made and ordered that, in the first place, when we see our flesh, senses, will and thoughts tempting us, we resist them and do not heed them, as the Wise Man says: "Follow not thine own desires." And Moses, Deuteronomy xii: "Thou shalt not do what is right in thine own eyes."

Here a man must make daily use of those prayers which David prays: "Lord, lead me in Thy path, and let me not walk in my own ways," and many like prayers, which are all summed up in the prayer, "Thy kingdom come." For the desires are so many, so various, and besides at times so nimble, so subtile and specious, through the suggestions of the evil one, that it is not possible for a man to control himself in his own ways. He must let hands and feet go, commend himself to God's governance, and entrust nothing to his reason, as Jeremiah says, "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in his own power." We see proof of this, when the children of Israel went out of Egypt through the Wilderness, where there was no way, no food, no drink, no help. Therefore God went before them, by day in a bright: cloud, by night in a fiery pillar, fed them with manna from heaven, and kept their garments and shoes that they waxed not old, as we read in the Books of Moses. For this reason we pray: "Thy kingdom come, that Thou rule us, and not: we ourselves," for there is nothing more perilous in us than our reason and will. And this is the first and highest work of God in us and the best training, that we cease from our works, that we let our reason and will be idle, that we rest and commend ourselves to God in all things, especially when they seem to be spiritual and good.

XIX. After this comes the discipline of the flesh, to kill its gross, evil lust, to give it rest and relief. This we must kill and quiet with fasting, watching and labor, and from this we learn how much and why we fast, watch and labor.

There are, alas! many blind men, who practise their castigation, whether it be fasting, watching or labor, only because they think these are good works, intending by them to gain much merit. Far blinder still are they who measure their fasting not only by the quantity or duration, as these do, but also by the nature of the food, thinking that it is of far greater worth if they do not eat meat, eggs or butter. Beyond these are those who fast according to the saints, and according to the days; one fasting on Wednesday, another on Saturday, another on St. Barbara's day, another on St. Sebastian's day, and so on. These all seek in their fasting nothing beyond the work itself: when they have performed that, they think they have done a good work. I will here say nothing of the fact that some fast in such a way that they none the less drink themselves full; some fast by eating fish and other foods so lavishly that they would come much nearer to fasting if they ate meat, eggs and butter, and by so doing would obtain far better results from their fasting. For

such fasting is not fasting, but a mockery of fasting and of God.

Therefore I allow everyone to choose his day, food and quantity for fasting, as he will, on condition that he do not stop with that, but have regard to his flesh; let him put upon it fasting, watching and labor according to its lust and wantonness, and no more, although pope, Church, bishop, father-confessor or any one else whosoever have commanded it. For no one should measure and regulate fasting, watching and labor according to the character or quantity of the food, or according to the days, but according to the withdrawal or approach of the lust and wantonness of the flesh, for the sake of which alone the fasting, watching and labor is ordained, that is, to kill and to subdue them. If it were not for this lust, eating were as meritorious as fasting, sleeping as watching, idleness as labor, and each were as good as the other without all distinction.

XX. Now, if some one should find that more wantonness arose in his flesh from eating fish than from eating eggs and meat, let him eat meat and not fish. Again, if he find that his head becomes confused and crazed or his body and stomach injured through fasting, or that it is not needful to kill the wantonness of his flesh, he shall let fasting alone entirely, and eat, sleep, be idle as is necessary for his health, regardless whether it be against the command of the Church, or the rules of monastic orders: for no commandment of the Church, no law of an order can make fasting, watching and labor of more value than it has in serving to repress or to kill the flesh and its lusts. Where men go beyond this, and the fasting, eating, sleeping, watching are practised beyond the strength of the body, and more than is necessary to the killing of the lust, so that through it the natural strength is ruined and the head is racked; then let no one imagine that he has done good works, or excuse himself by citing the commandment of the Church or the law of his order. He will be regarded as a man who takes no care of himself, and, as far as in him lies, has become his own murderer.

For the body is not given us that we should kill its natural life or work, but only that we kill its wantonness; unless its wantonness were so strong and great that we could not sufficiently resist it without ruin and harm to the natural life. For, as has been said, in the practice of fasting, watching and labor, we are not to look upon the works in themselves, not on the days, not on the number, not on the food,

but only on the wanton and lustful Adam, that through them he may be cured of his evil appetite.

XXI. From this we can judge how wisely or foolishly some women act when they are with child, and how the sick are to be treated. For the foolish women cling so firmly to their fasting that they run the risk of great danger to the fruit of their womb and to themselves, rather than not to fast when the others fast. They make a matter of conscience where there is none, and where there is matter of conscience they make none. This is all the fault of the preachers, because they continually prate of fasting, and never point out its true use, limit, fruit, cause and purpose. So also the sick should be allowed to eat and drink every day whatever they wish. In brief, where the wantonness of the flesh ceases, there every reason for fasting, watching, laboring, eating this or that, has already ceased, and there no longer is any binding commandment at all.

But then care must be taken, lest out of this freedom there grow a lazy indifference about killing the wantonness of the flesh; for the roguish Adam is exceedingly tricky in looking for permission for himself, and in pleading the ruin of the body or of the mind; so some men jump right in and say it is neither necessary nor commanded to fast or to mortify the flesh, and are ready to eat this and that without fear, just as if they had for a long time had much experience of fasting, although they have never tried it.

No less are we to guard against offending those who, not sufficiently informed, regard it a great sin if we do not fast or eat as they do. These we must kindly instruct, and not haughtily despise, nor eat this or that in despite of them, but we must tell them the reason why it is right to do so, and thus gradually lead them to a correct understanding. But if they are stubborn and will not listen, we must let them alone, and do as we know it is right to do.

XXII. The second form of discipline which we receive at the hands of others, is when men or devils cause us suffering, as when our property is taken, our body sick, and our honor taken away; and everything that may move us to anger, impatience and unrest. For God's work rules in us according to His wisdom, not according to our wisdom, according to His purity and chastity, not according to the wantonness of our flesh; for God's work is wisdom and purity, our work is foolishness and impurity, and these shall rest: so in like manner it should rule in us according to His peace, not our anger, impatience and lack of

peace. For peace too is God's work, impatience is the work of our flesh; this shall rest and be dead, that we thus in every way keep a spiritual holiday, let our works stand idle, and let God work in us.

Therefore in order to kill our works and the Adam in us, God heaps many temptations upon us, which move us to anger, many sufferings, which rouse us to impatience, and last of all death and the world's abuse; whereby He seeks nothing else than that He may drive out anger, impatience and lack of peace, and attain to His work, that is, to peace, in us. Thus says Isaiah xxviii, "He does the work of another that He may come to His own work." What does this mean? He sends us suffering and trouble that He may teach us to have patience and peace; He bids us die that He may make us live, until a man, thoroughly trained, becomes so peaceful and quiet that he is not disturbed, whether it go well or ill with him, whether he die or live, be honored or dishonored. There God Himself dwells alone, and there are no works of men. This is rightly keeping and hallowing the day of rest; then a man does not guide himself, then he desires nothing for himself, then nothing troubles him; but God Himself leads him, there is naught but godly pleasure, joy and peace with all other works and virtues.

XXIII. These works He considers so great that He commands us not only to keep the day of rest, but also to hallow it or regard it as holy, whereby He declares that there are no more precious things than suffering, dying, and all manner of misfortune. For they are holy and sanctify a man from his works to God's works, just as a church is consecrated from natural works to the worship of God. Therefore a man shall also recognise them as holy things, be glad and thank God when they come upon him. For when they come they make him holy, so that he fulfils this Commandment and is saved, redeemed from all his sinful works. Thus says David: "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints."

In order to strengthen us thereto He has not only commanded us to keep such a rest (for nature is very unwilling to die and to suffer, and it is a bitter day of rest for it to cease from its works and be dead); but He has also comforted us in the Scriptures with many words and told us, Psalm xci, "I will be with him in all his trouble, and will deliver him." Likewise Psalm xxxiv: "The Lord is nigh unto all them that suffer, and will help them."

As if this were not enough, He has given us a powerful, strong example of it, His only, dear Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who on the Sabbath lay in the tomb the entire day of rest, free from all His works, and was the first to fulfil this Commandment, although He needed it not for Himself, but only for our comfort, that we also in all suffering and death should be quiet and have peace. Since, as Christ was raised up after His rest and henceforth lives only in God and God in Him, so also shall we by the death of our Adam, which is perfectly accomplished only through natural death and burial, be lifted up into God, that God may live and work in us forever. Lo! these are the three parts of man: reason, desire, aversion; in which all his works are done. These, therefore, must be slain by these three exercises, God's governance, our self-mortification, the hurt done to us by others; and so they must spiritually rest before God, and give Him room for His works.

XXIV. But such works are to be done and such sufferings to be endured in faith and in sure confidence of God's favor, in order that, as has been said, all works remain in the First Commandment and in faith, and that faith, for the sake of which all other commandments and works are ordained, exercise and strengthen itself in them. See, therefore, what a pretty, golden ring these three Commandments and their works naturally form, and how from the First Commandment and faith the Second flows on to the Third, and the Third in turn drives through the Second up into the First. For the first work is to believe, to have a good heart and confidence toward God. From this flows the second good work, to praise God's Name, to confess His grace, to give all honor to Him alone. Then follows the third, to worship by praying, hearing God's Word, thinking of and considering God's benefits, and in addition chastising one's self, and keeping the body under.

But when the evil spirit perceives such faith, such honoring of God and such worship, he rages and stirs up persecution, attacks body, goods, honor and life, brings upon us sickness, poverty, shame and death, which God so permits and ordains. See, here begins the second work, or the second rest of the Third Commandment; by this faith is very greatly tried, even as gold in the fire. For it is a great thing to retain a sure confidence in God, although He sends us death, shame, sickness, poverty; and in this cruel form of wrath to regard Him as our all-gracious Father, as must be done in this work of the Third Commandment. Here suffering contains faith, that it must call upon God's Name and praise it in such suffering, and so it comes through the Third Commandment into the Second again; and through

that very calling on the Name of God and praise, faith grows, and becomes conscious of itself, and so strengthens itself, through the two works of the Third and of the Second Commandment. Thus faith goes out into the works and through the works comes to itself again; just as the sun goes forth unto its setting and comes again unto its rising. For this reason the Scriptures associate the day with peaceful living in works, the night with passive living in adversity, and faith lives and works, goes out and comes in, in both, as Christ says, John ix.

XXV. This order of good works we pray in the Lord's Prayer. The first is this, that we say: "Our Father, Who art in heaven"; these are the words of the first work of faith, which, according to the First Commandment, does not doubt that it has a gracious Father in heaven. The second: "Hallowed be Thy Name," in which faith asks that God's Name, praise and honor be glorified, and calls upon it in every need, as the Second Commandment says. The third: "Thy kingdom come," in which we pray for the true Sabbath and rest, peaceful cessation of our works, that God's work alone be done in us, and so God rule in us as in His own kingdom, as He says, Luke xvii, "Behold, God's kingdom is nowhere else except within you." The fourth petition is "Thy will be done"; in which we pray that we may keep and have the Seven Commandments of the Second Table, in which faith is exercised toward our neighbor; just as in the first three it is exercised in works toward God alone. And these are the petitions in stands the word "Thou, Thy, Thy, Thy," because they seek only what belongs to God; all the others say "our, us, our," etc; for in them we pray for our goods and blessedness.

Let this, then, suffice as a plain, hasty explanation of the First Table of Moses, pointing out to simple folk what are the highest of good works.

The Second Table follows.

"Thou shalt honor thy father and thy mother."

From this Commandment we learn that after the excellent works of the first three Commandments there are no better works than to obey and serve all those who are set over us as superiors. For this reason also disobedience is a greater sin than murder, unchastity, theft and dishonesty, and all that these may include. For we can in no better way learn how to distinguish between greater and lesser sins than by noting the order of the Commandments of God, although there are distinctions also within

the works of each Commandment. For who does not know that to curse is a greater sin than to be angry, to strike than to curse, to strike father and mother more than to strike any one else? Thus these seven Commandments teach us how we are to exercise ourselves in good works toward men, and first of all toward our superiors.

The first work is that we honor our own father and mother. And this honor consists not only in respectful demeanor, but in this: that we obey them, look up to, esteem and heed their words and example, accept what they say, keep silent and endure their treatment of us, so long as it is not contrary to the first three Commandments; in addition, when they need it, that we provide them with food, clothing and shelter. For not for nothing has He said: "Thou shalt honor them"; He does not say: "Thou shalt love them," although this also must be done. But honor is higher than mere love and includes a certain fear, which unites with love, and causes a man to fear offending them more than he fears the punishment. Just as there is fear in the honor we pay a sanctuary, and yet we do not flee from it as from a punishment, but draw near to it all the more. Such a fear mingled with love is the true honor; the other fear without any love is that which we have toward things which we despise or flee from, as we fear the hangman or punishment. There is no honor in that, for it is a fear without all love, nay, fear that has with it hatred and enmity. Of this we have a proverb of St. Jerome: What we fear, that we also hate. With such a fear God does not wish to be feared or honored, nor to have us honor our parents; but with the first, which is mingled with love and confidence.

II. This work appears easy, but few regard it aright. For where the parents are truly pious and love their children not according to the flesh, but (as they ought) instruct and direct them by words and works to serve God according to the first three Commandments, there the child's own will is constantly broken, and it must do, leave undone, and suffer what its nature would most gladly do otherwise; and thereby it finds occasion to despise its parents, to murmur against them, or to do worse things. There love and fear depart, unless they have God's grace. In like manner, when they punish and chastise, as they ought (at times even unjustly, which, however, does not harm the soul's salvation), our evil nature resents the correction. Beside all this, there are some so wicked that they are ashamed of their parents because of poverty, lowly birth, deformity or dishonor, and allow these things to influence them more than the high Commandment of God, Who is above all things, and has with

benevolent intent given them such parents, to exercise and try them in His Commandment. But the matter becomes still worse when the child has children of its own; then love descends to them, and detracts very much from the love and honor toward the parents.

But what is said and commanded of parents must also be understood of those who, when the parents are dead or absent, take their place, such as relatives, god-parents, sponsors, temporal lords and spiritual fathers. For every one must be ruled and be subject to other men. Wherefore we here see again how many good works are taught in this Commandment, since in it all our life is made subject to other men. Hence it comes that obedience is so highly praised and all virtue and good works are included in it.

III. There is another dishonoring of parents, much more dangerous and subtle than this first, which adorns itself and passes for a real honor; that is, when a child has its own way, and the parents through natural love allow it. Here there is indeed mutual honor, here there is mutual love, and on all sides it is a precious thing, parents and child take mutual pleasure in one another.

This plague is so common that instances of the first form of dishonoring are very seldom seen. This is due to the fact that the parents are blinded, and neither know nor honor God according to the first three Commandments; hence also they cannot see what the children lack, and how they ought to teach and train them. For this reason they train them for worldly honors, pleasure and possessions, that they may by all means please men and reach high positions: this the children like, and they obey very gladly without gainsaying.

Thus God's Commandment secretly comes to naught while all seems good, and that is fulfilled which is written in the Prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah, that the children are destroyed by their own parents, and they do like the king Manasseh, who sacrificed his own son to the idol Moloch and burned him, II. Kings xxi. What else is it but to sacrifice one's own child to the idol and to burn it, when parents train their children more in the way of the world than in the way of God? let them go their way, and be burned up in worldly pleasure, love, enjoyment, possessions and honor, but let God's love and honor and the desire of eternal blessings be quenched in them?

O how perilous it is to be a father or a mother, where flesh and blood are supreme! For, truly, the knowledge and fulfilment of the first three and the last six Commandments depends altogether upon this Commandment; since parents are commanded to teach them to their children, as Psalm lxxviii says, "How strictly has He commanded our fathers, that they should make known God's Commandments to their children, that the generation to come might know them and declare them to their children's children." This also is the reason why God bids us honor our parents, that is, to love them with fear; for that other love is without fear therefore it is more dishonor than honor.

Now see whether every one does not have good works enough to do, whether he be father or child. But we blind men leave this untouched, and seek all sorts of other works which are not commanded.

IV. Now where parents are foolish and train their children after the fashion of the world, the children are in no way to obey them; for God, according to the first three Commandments, is to be more highly regarded than the parents. But training after the fashion of the world I call it, when they teach them to seek no more than pleasure, honor and possessions of this world or its power.

To wear decent clothes and to seek an honest living is a necessity, and not sin. Yet the heart of a child must be taught to be sorry that this miserable earthly life cannot well be lived, or even begun, without the striving after more adornment and more possessions than are necessary for the protection of the body against cold and for nourishment. Thus the child must be taught to grieve that, without its own will, it must do world's will and play the fool with the rest of men, and endure such evil for the sake of something better and to avoid something worse. So Queen Esther wore her royal crown, and yet said to God, Esther xiv, "Thou knowest, that the sign of my high estate, which is upon my head, has never yet delighted me, and I abhor it as a menstruous rag, and never wear it when I am by myself, but when I must do it and go before the people." The heart that is so minded wears adornment without peril; for it wears and does not wear, dances and does not dance, lives well and does not live well. And these are the secret souls, hidden brides of Christ, but they are rare; for it is hard not to delight in great adornment and parade. Thus St. Cecilia wore golden clothes at the command of her parents, but within against her body she wore a garment of hair.

Here some men say: "How then could I bring my children into society, and marry them honorably? I must make some display." Tell me, are not these the words of a heart which despairs of God, and trusts more on its own providing than on God's care? Whereas St. Peter teaches and says, I. Peter v, "Cast all your care upon Him, and be certain that He cares for you." It is a sign that they have never yet thanked God for their children, have never yet rightly prayed for them, have never yet commended them to Him; otherwise they would know and have experienced that they ought to ask God also for the marriage dower of their children, and await it from Him. Therefore also He permits them to go their way, with cares and worries, and yet succeed poorly.

V. Thus it is true, as men say, that parents, although they had nothing else to do, could attain salvation by training their own children; if they rightly train them to God's service, they will indeed have both hands full of good works to do. For what else are here the hungry, thirsty, naked, imprisoned, sick, strangers, than the souls of your own children? with whom God makes of your house a hospital, and sets you over them as chief nurse, to wait on them, to give them good words and works as meat and drink, that they may learn to trust, believe and fear God, and to place their hope on Him, to honor His Name, not to swear nor curse, to mortify themselves by praying, fasting, watching, working, to attend worship and to hear God's Word, and to keep the Sabbath, that they may learn to despise temporal things, to bear misfortune calmly, and not to fear death nor to love this life.

See, what great lessons are these, how many good works you have before you in your home, with your child, that needs all these things like a hungry, thirsty, naked, poor, imprisoned, sick soul. O what a blessed marriage and home were that where such parents were to be found! Truly it would be a real Church, a chosen cloister, yea, a paradise. Of such says Psalm cxxviii: "Blessed are they that fear God, and walk in His Commandments; thou shalt eat of the labor of thine hands; therefore thou shalt be happy, and it shall be well with thee. Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine in thine house, and thy children shall be as the young scions of laden olive trees about thy table. Behold, thus shall the man be blessed, that feareth the Lord," etc. Where are such parents? Where are they that ask after good works? Here none wishes to come. Why? God has commanded it; the devil, flesh and blood pull away from it; it makes no show, therefore it counts for nothing. Here this husband runs to St. James, that wife vows a pilgrimage to Our Lady; no one vows that he will properly govern and teach himself and his child to the honor of

God; he leaves behind those whom God has commanded him to keep in body and soul, and would serve God in some other place, which has not been commanded him. Such perversity no bishop forbids, no preacher corrects; nay, for covetousness' sake they confirm it and daily only invent more pilgrimages, elevations of saints, indulgence-fairs. God have pity on such blindness.

VI. On the other hand, parents cannot earn eternal punishment in any way more easily than by neglecting their own children in their own home, and not teaching them the things which have been spoken of above. Of what help is it, that they kill themselves with fasting, praying, making pilgrimages, and do all manner of good works? God will, after all, not ask them about these things at their death and in the day of judgment, but will require of them the children whom He entrusted to them. This is shown by that word of Christ, Luke xxiii, "Ye daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but for yourselves and for your children. The days are coming, in which they shall say: Blessed are the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck." Why shall they lament, except because all their condemnation comes from their own children? If they had not had children, perhaps they might have been saved. Truly, these words ought to open the eyes of parents, that they may have regard to the souls of their children, so that the poor children be not deceived by their false, fleshly love, as if they had rightly honored their parents when they are not angry with them, or are obedient in worldly matters, by which their self-will is strengthened; although the Commandment places the parents in honor for the very purpose that the self-will of the children may be broken, and that the children may become humble and meek.

Just as it has been said of the other Commandments, that they are to be fulfilled in the chief work, so here too let no one suppose that the training and teaching of his children is sufficient of itself, except it be done in confidence of divine favor, so that a man doubt not that he is well pleasing to God in his works, and that he let such works be nothing else than an exhortation and exercise of his faith, that he trust God and look to Him for blessings and a gracious will; without which faith no work lives, or is good and acceptable; for many heathen have trained their children beautifully, but it is all lost, because of their unbelief.

VII. The second work of this Commandment is to honor and obey the spiritual mother, the holy Christian Church, the spiritual power, so that we conform to what she commands, forbids, appoints, orders, binds and looses, and honor, fear and love the

spiritual authority as we honor, love and fear our natural parents, and yield to it in all things which are not contrary to the first three Commandments.

Now with regard to this work, things are almost worse than with regard to the first. The spiritual authority should punish sin with the ban and with laws, and constrain its spiritual children to be good, in order that they might have reason to do this work and to exercise themselves in obeying and honoring it. Such zeal one does not see now; they act toward their subjects like the mothers who forsake their children and run after their lovers, as Hosea ii. says; they do not preach, they do not teach, they do not hinder, they do not punish, and there is no spiritual government at all left in Christendom.

What can I say of this work? A few fast-days and feast-days are left, and these had better be done away with. But no one gives this a thought, and there is nothing left except the ban for debt, and this should not be. But spiritual authority should look to it, that adultery, unchastity, usury, gluttony, worldly show, excessive adornment, and such like open sin and shame might be most severely punished and corrected; and they should properly manage the endowments, monastic houses, parishes and schools, and earnestly maintain worship in them, provide for the young people, boys and girls, in schools and cloisters, with learned, pious men as teachers, that they might all be well trained, and so the older people give a good example and Christendom be filled and adorned with fine young people. So St. Paul teaches his disciple Titus, that he should rightly instruct and govern all classes, young and old, men and women. But now he goes to school who wishes; he is taught who governs and teaches himself; nay, it has, alas! come to such a pass that the places where good should be taught have become schools of knavery, and no one at all takes thought for the wild youth.

VIII. If the above order prevailed, one could say how honor and obedience should be given to the spiritual authority. But now the case is like that of the natural parents who let their children do as they please; at present the spiritual authority threatens, dispenses, takes money, and pardons more than it has power to pardon. I will here refrain from saying more; we see more of it than is good; greed holds the reins, and just what should be forbidden is taught; and it is clearly seen that the spiritual estate is in all things more worldly than the worldly estate itself. Meanwhile Christendom must be ruined, and this Commandment perish.

If there were a bishop who would zealously provide for all these classes, supervise, make visitations and be faithful as he ought, truly, one city would be too much for him. For in the time of the Apostles, when Christendom was at its best estate, each city had a bishop, although the smallest part of the inhabitants were Christians. How may things go when one bishop wants to have so much, another so much, this one the whole world, that one the fourth of it.

It is time that we pray God for mercy. Of spiritual power we have much; but of spiritual government nothing or little. Meanwhile may he help who can, that endowments, monastic houses, parishes and schools be well established and managed; and it would also be one of the works of the spiritual authority that it lessen the number of endowments, monastic houses and schools, where they cannot be cared for. It is much better that there be no monastic house or endowment than that there be evil government in them, whereby God is the more provoked to anger.

IX. Since, then, the authorities so entirely neglect their work, and are perverted, it must assuredly follow that they misuse their power, and undertake other and evil works, just as parents do when they give some command contrary to God. Here we must be wise; for the Apostle has said, that those times shall be perilous in which such authorities shall rule. For it seems as if we resisted their power if we do not do and leave undone all that they prescribe. Therefore we must take hold of the first three Commandments and the First Table, and be certain that no man, neither bishop, nor pope, nor angel, may command or determine anything that is contrary to or hinders these three Commandments, or does not help them; and if they attempt such things, it is not valid and amounts to nothing; and we also sin if we follow and obey, or even tolerate such acts.

From this it is easy to understand that the commands of fasting do not include the sick, the pregnant women, or those who for other reasons cannot fast without injury. And, to rise higher, in our time nothing comes from Rome but a fair of spiritual wares, which are openly and shamelessly bought and sold, indulgences, parishes, monastic houses, bishoprics, provostships, benefices, and every thing that has ever been founded to God's service far and wide; whereby not only is all money and wealth of the world drawn and driven to Rome (for this would be the smallest harm), but the parishes, bishoprics and prelacies are torn to pieces, deserted, laid waste, and so the people are neglected, God's Word and God's Name and honor come to naught, and faith is destroyed, so that at last such

institutions and offices fall into the hands not only of unlearned and unfit men, but the greater part into the hands of the Romans, the greatest villains in the world. Thus what has been founded for God's service, for the instruction, government and improvement of the people, must now serve the stable-boys, mule-drivers, yea, not to use plainer language, Roman whores and knaves; yet we have no more thanks than that they mock us for it as fools.

X. If then such unbearable abuses are all carried on in the Name of God and St. Peter, just as if God's Name and the spiritual power were instituted to blaspheme God's honor, to destroy Christendom, body and soul: we are indeed in duty bound to resist in a proper way as much as we can. And here we must do like pious children whose parents have become insane, and first see by what right that which has been founded for God's service in our lands, or has been ordained to provide for our children, must be allowed to do its work in Rome, and to lapse here, where it ought to serve. How can we be so foolish?

Since then bishops and spiritual prelates stand idle in this matter, offer no opposition or are afraid, and thus allow Christendom to perish, it is our duty first of all humbly to call upon God for help to prevent this thing, then to put our hand to work to the same end, send the courtesans and those who bear letters from Rome about their business, in a reasonable, gentle way inform them that, if they wish to care for their parishes properly, they shall live in them and improve the people by preaching or by good example; or if not, and they do live in Rome or elsewhere, lay waste and debauch the churches, then let the pope feed them, whom they serve. It is not fitting that we support the pope's servants, his people, yes, his knaves and whores, to the destruction and injury of our souls.

Lo! these are the true Turks, whom the kings, princes and the nobility ought to attack first: not seeking thereby their own benefit, but only the improvement of Christendom, and the prevention of the blasphemy and disgracing of the divine Name; and so to deal with the clergy as with a father who has lost his sense and wits; who, if one did not restrain him and resist him (although with all humility and honor), might destroy child, heir and everybody. Thus we are to honor Roman authority as our highest father; and yet, since they have gone mad and lost their senses, not allow them to do what they attempt, lest Christendom be destroyed thereby.

XI. Some think, this should be referred to a General Council. To this I say: No! For we have had many councils in which this has been proposed, namely, at Constance, Basel and the last Roman Council; but nothing has been accomplished, and things have grown ever worse, Moreover, such councils are entirely useless, since Roman wisdom has contrived the device that the kings and princes must beforehand take an oath to let the Romans remain what they are and keep what they have, and so has put up a bar to ward off all reformation, to retain protection and liberty for all their knavery, although this oath is demanded, forced and taken contrary to God and the law, and by it the doors are locked against the Holy Spirit, Who should rule the councils. But this would be the best, and also the only remedy remaining, if kings, princes, nobility, cities and communities themselves began and opened a way for reformation, so that the bishops and clergy, who now are afraid, would have reason to follow. For here nothing else shall and must be considered except God's first three Commandments, against which neither Rome, nor heaven nor earth can command or forbid anything. And the ban or threatening with which they think they can prevent this, amounts to nothing; just as it amounts to nothing if an insane father severely threatens the son who restrains him or locks him up.

XII. The third work of this Commandment is to obey the temporal authority, as Paul teaches, Romans xiii, and Titus iii, and St. Peter, I. Peter ii: "Submit yourselves to the king as supreme, and to the princes as his ambassadors, and to all the ordinances of the worldly power." But it is the work of the temporal power to protect its subjects, and to punish thievery, robbery, and adultery, as St. Paul says, Romans xiii: "It beareth not the sword in vain; it serves God with it, to the terror of evil doers, and to the protection of the good."

Here men sin in two ways. First, if they lie to the government, deceive it, and are disloyal, neither obey nor do as it has ordered and commanded, whether with their bodies or their possessions. For even if the government does injustice, as the King of Babylon did to the people of Israel, yet God would have it obeyed, without treachery and deception. Secondly, when men speak evil of the government and curse it, and when a man cannot revenge himself and abuses the government with grumbling and evil words, publicly or secretly.

In all this we are to regard that which St. Peter bids us regard, namely, that its power, whether it do right or wrong, cannot harm the soul, but only the body and property; unless indeed it should try openly to compel us to do wrong against God

or men; as in former days when the magistrates were not yet Christians, and as the Turk is now said to do. For to suffer wrong destroys no one's soul, nay, it improves the soul although it inflicts loss upon the body and property; but to do wrong, that destroys the soul, although should gain all the world's wealth.

XIII. This also is the reason why there is not such great danger in the temporal power as in the spiritual, when it does wrong. For the temporal power can do no harm, I since it has nothing to do with preaching and faith and the first three Commandments. But the spiritual power does harm not only when it does wrong, but also when it neglects its duty and busies itself with other things, even if they were better than the very best works of the temporal power. Therefore, we must resist it when it does not do right, and not resist the temporal power although it does wrong. For the poor people believe and do as they see the spiritual power believing and doing; if they are not set an example and are not taught, then they also believe nothing and do nothing; since this power is instituted for no other reason than to lead the people in faith to God. All this is not found in the temporal power; for it may do and leave undone what it will, faith to God still goes its way and works its works, because I need not believe what it believes.

Therefore, also, the temporal power is a very small thing in God's sight, and far too slightly regarded by Him, that for its sake, whether it do right or wrong, we should resist, become disobedient and quarrel. On the other hand, the spiritual power is an exceeding great blessing, and far too precious in His eyes, that the very least of Christians should endure and keep silent, if it departs a hair's breadth from its own duty, not to say when it does the very opposite of its duty, as we now see it do every day.

XIV. In this power also there is much abuse. First, when it follows the flatterers, which is a common and especially harmful plague of this power, against which no one can sufficiently guard and protect himself. Here it is led by the nose, and oppresses the common people, becomes a government of the like of which a heathen says: "The spider-webs catch the small flies, but the mill-stones roll through." So the laws, ordinances and government of one and the same authority hold the small men, and the great are free; and where the prince is not himself so wise that he needs nobody's advice, or has such a standing that they fear him, there will and must be (unless God should do a special wonder) a childish government.

For this reason God has considered evil, unfit rulers the greatest of plagues, as He threatens, Isaiah iii, "I will take away from them every man of valor, and will give children to be their princes and babes to rule over them." Four plagues God has named in Scripture, Ezekiel xiv. The first and slightest, which also David chose, is pestilence, the second is famine, the third is war, the fourth is all manner of evil beasts, such as lions, wolves, serpents, dragons; these are the wicked rulers. For where these are, the land is destroyed, not only in body and property, as in the others, but also in honor, discipline, virtue and the soul's salvation. For pestilence and famine make people good and rich; but war and wicked rulers bring to naught everything that has to do with temporal and eternal possessions.

XV. A prince must also be very wise and not at all times undertake to enforce his own will, although he may have the authority and the very best cause. For it is a far nobler virtue to endure wrong to one's authority than to risk property and person, if it is advantageous to the subjects; since worldly rights attach only to temporal goods.

Hence, it is a very foolish saying: I have a right to it, therefore I will take it by storm and keep it, although all sorts of misfortune may come to others thereby. So we read of the Emperor Octavianus, that he did not wish to make war, however just his cause might be, unless there were sure indications of greater benefit than harm, or at least that the harm would not be intolerable, and said: "War is like fishing with a golden net; the loss risked is always greater than the catch can be." For he who guides a wagon must walk far otherwise than if he were walking alone; when alone he may walk, jump, and do as he will; but when he drives, he must so guide and adapt himself that the wagon and horses can follow him, and regard that more than his own will. So also a prince leads a multitude with him and must not walk and act as he wills, but as the multitude can, considering their need and advantage more than his will and pleasure. For when a prince rules after his own mad will and follows his own opinion, he is like a mad driver, who rushes straight ahead with horse and wagon, through bushes, thorns, ditches, water, up hill and down dale, regardless of roads and bridges; he will not drive long, all will go to smash.

Therefore it would be most profitable for rulers, that they read, or have read to them, from youth on, the histories, both in sacred and in profane books, in which they would find more examples and skill in ruling than in all the books of law; as we

read that the kings of Persia did, Esther vi. For examples and histories benefit and teach more than the laws and statutes: there actual experience teaches, here untried and uncertain words.

XVI. Three special, distinct works all rulers might do in our times, particularly in our lands. First, to make an end of the horrible gluttony and drunkenness, not only because of the excess, but also because of its expense. For through seasonings and spices and the like, without which men could well live, no little loss of temporal wealth has come and daily is coming upon our lands. To prevent these two great evils would truly give the temporal power enough to do, for the inroads they have made are wide and deep. And how could those in power serve God better and thereby also improve their own land?

Secondly, to forbid the excessive cost of clothing, whereby so much wealth is wasted, and yet only the world and the flesh are served; it is fearful to think that such abuse is to be found among the people who have been pledged, baptised and consecrated to Christ, the Crucified, and who should bear the Cross after Him and prepare for the life to come by dying daily. If some men erred through ignorance, it might be borne; but that it is practised so freely, without punishment, without shame, without hindrance, nay, that praise and fame are sought thereby, this is indeed an unchristian thing. Thirdly, to drive out the usurious buying of rent-charges, which in the whole world ruins, consumes and troubles all lands, peoples and cities through its cunning form, by which it appears not to be usury, while in truth it is worse than usury, because men are not on their guard against it as against open usury. See, these are the three Jews, as men say, who suck the whole world dry. Here princes ought not to sleep, nor be lazy, if they would give a good account of their office to God.

XVII. Here too ought to be mentioned the knavery which is practised by officiales and other episcopal and spiritual officers, who ban, load, hunt and drive the poor people with great burdens, as long as a penny remains. This ought to be prevented by the temporal sword, since there is no other help or remedy.

O, would God in heaven, that some time a government might be established that would do away with the public bawdy-houses, as was done among the people of Israel! It is indeed an unchristian sight, that public houses of sin are maintained among Christians, a thing formerly altogether unheard of. It should be

a rule that boys and girls should be married early and such vice be prevented. Such a rule and custom ought to be sought for by both the spiritual and the temporal power. If it was possible among the Jews, why should it not also be possible among Christians? Nay, if it is possible in villages, towns and some cities, as we all see, why should it not be possible everywhere?

But the trouble is, there is no real government in the world. No one wants to work, therefore the mechanics must give their workmen holiday: then they are free and no one can tame them. But if there were a rule that they must do as they are bid, and no one would give them work in other places, this evil would to a large extent be mended. God help us! I fear that here the wish is far greater than the hope; but this does not excuse us.

Now see, here only a few works of magistrates are indicated, but they are so good and so many, that they have superabundant good works to do every hour and could constantly serve God. But these works, like the others, should also be done in faith, yea, be an exercise of faith, so that no one expect to please God by the works, but by confident trust in His favor do such works only to the honor and praise of his gracious God, thereby to serve and benefit his neighbor.

XVIII. The fourth work of this Commandment is obedience of servants and workmen toward their lords and ladies, masters and mistresses. Of this St. Paul says, Titus ii: "Thou shalt exhort servants that they highly honor their masters, be obedient, do what pleases them, not cheating them nor opposing them"; for this reason also: because they thereby bring the doctrine of Christ and our faith into good repute, that the heathen cannot complain of us and be offended. St. Peter also says: "Servants, be subject to your masters, for the fear of God, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward and harsh. For this is acceptable with God, if a man suffers harshness, being innocent."

Now there is the greatest complaint in the world about servants and working men, that they are disobedient, unfaithful, unmannerly, and over-reaching; this is a plague sent of God. And truly, this is the one work of servants whereby they may be saved; truly they need not make pilgrimages or do this thing or the other; they have enough to do if their heart is only set on this, that they gladly do and leave undone what they know pleases their masters and mistresses, and all this in a simple faith; not that they would by their works gain much merit, but that they do it all in the confidence of divine favor (in which

all merits are to be found), purely for nothing, out of the love and good-will toward God which grows out of such confidence. And all such works they should think of as an exercise and exhortation ever to strengthen their faith and confidence more and more. For, as has now been frequently said, this faith makes all works good, yea, it must do them and be the master-workman.

XIX. On the other hand, the masters and mistresses should not rule their servants, maids and workingmen roughly, not look to all things too closely, occasionally overlook something, and for peace' sake make allowances. For it is not possible that everything be done perfectly at all times among any class of men, as long as we live on earth in imperfection. Of this St. Paul says, Colossians iv, "Masters, do unto your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven." Therefore as the masters do not wish God to deal too sharply with them, but that many things be overlooked through grace, they also should be so much the more gentle toward their servants, and overlook some things, and yet have a care that the servants do right and learn to fear God.

But see now, what good works a householder and a mistress can do, how finely God offers us all good works so near at hand, so manifold, so continuously, that we have no need of asking after good works, and might well forget the other showy, far-off, invented works of men, such as making pilgrimages, building churches, seeking indulgence, and the like.

Here I ought naturally also to say how a wife ought to be obedient, subject to her husband as to her superior, give way to him, keep silent and give up to him, where it is a matter not contrary to God's commands. On the other hand, the husband should love his wife, overlook a little, and not deal strictly with her, of which matter St. Peter and St. Paul have said much. But this has its place in the further explanation of the Ten Commandments, and is easily inferred from these passages.

XX. But all that has been said of these works is included in these two, obedience and considerateness. Obedience is the duty of subjects, considerateness that of masters, that they take care to rule their subjects well, deal kindly with them, and do everything whereby they may benefit and help them. That is their way to heaven, and these are the best works they can do on earth; with these they are more acceptable to God than if without these they did nothing but miracles. So says St. Paul, Romans xii: "He that ruleth, let him do it with diligence"; as who should say: "Let him not allow himself to be led astray by

what other people or classes of people do; let him not look to this work or to that, whether it be splendid or obscure; but let him look to his own position, and think only how he may benefit those who are subject to him; by this let him stand, nor let himself be torn from it, although heaven stood open before him, nor be driven from it, although hell were chasing him. This is the right road that leads him to heaven."

Oh, if a man were so to regard himself and his position, and attended to its duties alone, how rich in good works would he be in a short time, so quietly and secretly that no one would notice it except God alone! But now we let all this go, and one runs to the Carthusians, another to this place, a third to that, just as if good works and God's Commandments had been thrown into corners and hidden; although it is written in Proverbs i, that divine wisdom crieth out her commandments publicly in the streets, in the midst of the people and in the gates of the cities; which means that they are present in profusion in all places, in all stations of life and at all times, and we do not see them, but in our blindness look for them elsewhere. This Christ declared, Matthew xxiv: "If they shall say unto you: Lo, here is Christ, or there, believe it not. If they shall say: Behold, He is in the desert, go not forth; behold, He is in the secret chambers, believe it not; they are false prophets and false Christs."

XXI. Again, obedience is the duty of subjects, that they direct all their diligence and effort to do and to leave undone what their over-lords desire of them, that they do not allow themselves to be torn or driven from this, whatever another do. Let no man think that he lives well or does good works, whether it be prayer or fasting, or by whatever name it may be called, if he does not earnestly and diligently exercise himself this.

But if it should happen, as it often does, that the temporal power and authorities, as they are called, should urge a subject to do contrary to the Commandments of God, or hinder him from doing them, there obedience ends, and that duty is annulled. Here a man must say as St. Peter says to the rulers of the Jews: "We ought to obey God rather than men." He did not say: "We must not obey men"; for that would be wrong; but he said: "God rather than men." Thus, if a prince desired to go to war, and his cause was manifestly unrighteous, we should not follow nor help him at all; since God has commanded that we shall not kill our neighbor, nor do him injustice. Likewise, if he bade us bear false witness, steal, lie or deceive and the like. Here we ought

rather give up goods, honor, body, and life, that God's Commandments may stand.

The four preceding Commandments have their works in the understanding, that is, they take a man captive, rule him and make him subject, so that he rule not himself, approve not himself, think not highly of himself; but in humility know himself and allow himself to be led, that pride be prevented. The following Commandments deal with the passions and lust of men, that these also be killed.

I. The passions of anger and revenge, of which the Fifth Commandment says, "Thou shalt not kill." This Commandment has one work, which however includes many and dispels many vices, and is called meekness. Now this is of two kinds. The one has a beautiful splendor, and there is nothing back of it. This we practice toward our friends and those who do us good and us pleasure with goods, honor and favor, or who do not offend us with words nor with deeds. Such meekness irrational animals have, lions and snakes, Jews, Turks, knaves, murderers, bad women. These are all content and gentle when men do what they want, or let them alone; and yet there are not a few who, deceived by such worthless meekness, cover over their anger and excuse it, saying: "I would indeed not be angry, if I were left alone." Certainly, my good man, so the evil spirit also would be meek if he had his own way. Dissatisfaction and resentment overwhelm you in order that they may show you how full of anger and wickedness you are, that you may be admonished to strive after meekness and to drive out anger.

The second form of meekness is good through and through, that which is shown toward opponents and enemies, does them no harm, does not revenge itself, does not curse nor revile, does not speak evil of them, does not meditate evil against them, although they had taken away goods, honor, life, friends and everything. Nay, where it is possible, it returns good for evil, speaks well of them, thinks well of them, prays for them. Of this Christ says, Matthew v: "Do good to them that despitefully use you. Pray for them that persecute you and revile you." And Paul, Romans xii: "Bless them which curse you, and by no means curse them, but do good to them."

II. Behold how this precious, excellent work has been lost among Christians, so that nothing now everywhere prevails except strife, war, quarreling, anger, hatred, envy, back-biting, cursing, slandering, injuring, vengeance, and all manner of

angry works and words; and yet, with all this, we have our many holidays, hear masses, say our prayers, establish churches, and more such spiritual finery, which God has not commanded. We shine resplendently and excessively, as if we were the most holy Christians there ever were. And so because of these mirrors and masks we allow God's Commandment to go to complete ruin, and no one considers or examines himself, how near or how far he be from meekness and the fulfilment of this Commandment; although God has said, that not he who does such works, but he who keeps His Commandments, shall enter into eternal life.

Now, since no one lives on earth upon whom God does not bestow an enemy and opponent as a proof of his own anger and wickedness, that is, one who afflicts him in goods, honor, body or friends, and thereby tries whether anger is still present, whether he can be well-disposed toward his enemy, speak well of him, do good to him, and not intend any evil against him; let him come forward who asks what he shall do that he may do good works, please God and be saved. Let him set his enemy before him, keep him constantly before the eyes of his heart, as an exercise whereby he may curb his spirit and train his heart to think kindly of his enemy, wish him well, care for him and pray for him; and then, when opportunity offers, speak well of him and do good to him. Let him who will, try this and if he find not enough to do all his life long, he may convict me of lying, and say that my contention was wrong. But if this is what God desires, and if He will be paid in no other coin, of what avail is it, that we busy ourselves with other great works which are not commanded, and neglect this? Therefore God says, Matthew v, "I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his neighbor, is in danger of the judgment; but whosoever shall say to his brother, Thou fool (that is, all manner of invective, cursing, reviling, slandering), he shall be in danger of everlasting fire." What remains then for the outward act, striking, wounding, killing, injuring, etc., if the thoughts and words of anger are so severely condemned?

III. But where there is true meekness, there the heart is pained at every evil which happens to one's enemy. And these are the true children and heirs of God and brethren of Christ, Whose heart was so pained for us all when He died on the holy Cross. Even so we see a pious judge passing sentence upon the criminal with sorrow, and regretting the death which the law imposes. Here the act seems to be one of anger and harshness. So thoroughly good is meekness that even in such works of anger it remains, nay, it torments the heart most sorely when it must be angry and severe.

But here we must watch, that we be not meek contrary to God's honor and Commandment. For it is written of Moses that he was the very meekest man on earth, and yet, when the Jews had worshiped the golden calf and provoked God to anger, he put many of them to death, and thereby made atonement before God. Likewise it is not fitting that the magistrates should be idle and allow sin to have sway, and that we say nothing. My own possessions, my honor, my injury, I must not regard, nor grow angry because of them; but God's honor and Commandment we must protect, and injury or injustice to our neighbor we must prevent, the magistrates with the sword, the rest of us with reproof and rebuke, yet always with pity for those who have merited the punishment.

This high, noble, sweet work can easily be learned, if we perform it in faith, and as an exercise of faith. For if faith does not doubt the favor of God nor question that God is gracious, it will become quite easy for a man to be gracious and favorable to his neighbor, however much he may have sinned; for we have sinned much more against God. Behold, a short Commandment this, but it presents a long, mighty exercise of good works and of faith.

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

In this Commandment too a good work is commanded, which includes much and drives away much vice; it is called purity, or chastity, of which much is written and preached, and it is well known to every one, only that it is not as carefully observed and practised as other works which are not commanded. So ready are we to do what is not commanded and to leave undone what is commanded. We see that the world is full of shameful works of unchastity, indecent words, tales and ditties, temptation to which is daily increased through gluttony and drunkenness, idleness and frippery. Yet we go our way as if we were Christians; when we have been to church, have said our little prayer, have observed the fasts and feasts, then we think our whole duty is done.

Now, if no other work were commanded but chastity alone, we would all have enough to do with this one; so perilous and raging a vice is unchastity. It rages in all our members: in the thoughts of our hearts, in the seeing of our eyes, in the hearing of our ears, in the words of our mouth, in the works of our hands and feet and all our body. To control all these requires labor and effort; and thus the Commandments of God

teach us how great truly good works are, nay, that it is impossible for us of our own strength to conceive a good work, to say nothing of attempting or doing it. St. Augustine says, that among all the conflicts of the Christian the conflict of chastity is the hardest, for the one reason alone, that it continues daily without ceasing, and chastity seldom prevails. This all the saints have wept over and lamented, as St. Paul does, Romans vii: "I find in me, that is in my flesh, no good thing."

II. If this work of chastity is to be permanent, it will drive to many other good works, to fasting and temperance over against gluttony and drunkenness, to watching and early rising over against laziness and excessive sleep, to work and labor over against idleness. For gluttony, drunkenness, lying late abed, loafing and being without work are weapons of unchastity, with which chastity is quickly overcome. On the other hand, the holy Apostle Paul calls fasting, watching and labor godly weapons, with which unchastity is mastered; but, as has been said above, these exercises must do no more than overcome unchastity, and not pervert nature.

Above all this, the strongest defence is prayer and the Word of God; namely, that when evil lust stirs, a man flee to prayer, call upon God's mercy and help, read and meditate on the Gospel, and in it consider Christ's sufferings. Thus says Psalm cxxxvii: "Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth the little ones of Babylon against the rock," that is, if the heart runs to the Lord Christ with its evil thoughts while they are yet young and just beginning; for Christ is a Rock, on which they are ground to powder and come to naught.

See, here each one will find enough to do with himself, and more than enough, and will be given many good works to do within himself. But now no one uses prayer, fasting, watching, labor for this purpose, but men stop in these works as if they were in themselves the whole purpose, although they should be arranged so as to fulfil the work of this Commandment and unify us daily more and more.

Some have also indicated more things which should be avoided, such as soft beds and clothes, that we should avoid excessive adornment, and neither associate nor talk with members of the opposite sex, nor even look upon them, and whatsoever else may be conducive to chastity. In all these things no one can fix a definite rule and measure. Each one must watch himself and see what things are needful to him for chastity, in what quantity

and how long they help him to be chaste, that he may thus choose and observe them for himself; if he cannot do this, let him for a time give himself up to be controlled by another, who may hold him to such observance until he can learn to rule himself. This was the purpose for which the monastic houses were established of old, to teach young people discipline and purity.

III. In this work a good strong faith is a great help, more noticeably so than in almost any other; so that for this reason also Isaiah xi. says that "faith is a girdle of the reins," that is, a guard of chastity. For he who so lives that he looks to God for all grace, takes pleasure in spiritual purity; therefore he can so much more easily resist fleshly impurity: and in such faith the Spirit tells him of a certainty how he shall avoid evil thoughts and everything that is repugnant to chastity. For as the faith in divine favor lives without ceasing and works in all works, so it also does not cease its admonitions in all things that are pleasing to God or displease Him; as St. John says in his Epistle: "Ye need not that any man teach you: for the divine anointing, that is, the Spirit of God, teacheth you of all things."

Yet we must not despair if we are not soon rid of the temptation, nor by any means imagine that we are free from it as long as we live, and we must regard it only as an incentive and admonition to prayer, fasting, watching, laboring, and to other exercises for the quenching of the flesh, especially to the practice and exercise of faith in God. For that chastity is not precious which is at ease, but that which is at war with unchastity, and fights, and without ceasing drives out all the poison with which the flesh and the evil spirit attack it. Thus St. Peter says, "I beseech you, abstain from fleshly desires and lusts, which war always against the soul." And St. Paul, Romans vi, "Ye shall not obey the body in its lusts." In these and like passages it is shown that no one is without evil lust; but that everyone shall and must daily fight against it. But although this brings uneasiness and pain, it is none the less a work that gives pleasure, in which we shall have our comfort and satisfaction. For they who think they make an end of temptation by yielding to it, only set themselves on fire the more; and although for a time it is quiet, it comes again with more strength another time, and finds the nature weaker than before.

Thou shalt not steal.

This Commandment also has a work, which embraces very many good works, and is opposed to many vices, and is called in German

Mildigkeit, "benevolence;" which is a work ready to help and serve every one with one's goods. And it fights not only against theft and robbery, but against all stinting in temporal goods which men may practise toward one another: such as greed, usury, overcharging and plating wares that sell as solid, counterfeit wares, short measures and weights, and who could tell all the ready, novel, clever tricks, which multiply daily in every trade, by which every one seeks his own gain through the other's loss, and forgets the rule which says: "What ye wish that others do to you, that do ye also to them." If every one kept this rule before his eyes in his trade, business, and dealings with his neighbor, he would readily find how he ought to buy and sell, take and give, lend and give for nothing, promise and keep his promise, and the like. And when we consider the world in its doings, how greed controls all business, we would not only find enough to do, if we would make an honorable living before God, but also be overcome with dread and fear for this perilous, miserable life, which is so exceedingly overburdened, entangled and taken captive with cares of this temporal life and dishonest seeking of gain.

II. Therefore the Wise Man says not in vain: "Happy is the rich man, who is found without blemish, who does not run after gold, and has not set his confidence in the treasures of money. Who is he? We will praise him, that he has done wondrous things in his life." As if he would say: "None such is found, or very few indeed." Yea, they are very few who notice and recognise such lust for gold in themselves. For greed has here a very beautiful, fine cover for its shame, which is called provision for the body and natural need, under cover of which it accumulates wealth beyond all limits and is never satisfied; so that he who would in this matter keep himself clean, must truly, as he says, do miracles or wondrous things in his life.

Now see, if a man wish not only to do good works, but even miracles, which God may praise and be pleased with, what need has he to look elsewhere? Let him take heed to himself, and see to it that he run not after gold, nor set his trust on money, but let the gold run after him, and money wait on his favor, and let him love none of these things nor set his heart on them; then he is the true, generous, wonderworking, happy man, as Job xxxi says: "I have never yet: relied upon gold, and never yet made gold my hope and confidence." And Psalm lxii: "If riches increase, set not your heart upon them." So Christ also teaches, Matthew vi, that we shall take no thought, what we shall eat and drink and wherewithal we shall be clothed, since God cares for this, and knows that we have need of all these things.

But some say: "Yes, rely upon that, take no thought, and see whether a roasted chicken will fly into your mouth!" I do not say that a man shall not labor and seek a living; but he shall not worry, not be greedy, not despair, thinking that he will not have enough; for in Adam we are all condemned to labor, when God says to him, Genesis iii, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." And Job v, "As the birds to flying, so is man born unto labor." Now the birds fly without worry and greed, and so we also should labor without worry and greed; but if you do worry and are greedy, wishing that the roasted chicken fly into your mouth: worry and be greedy, and see whether you will thereby fulfil God's Commandment and be saved!

III. This work faith teaches of itself. For if the heart looks for divine favor and relies upon it, how is it possible that a man should be greedy and worry? He must be sure beyond a doubt that God cares for him; therefore he does not cling to money; he uses it also with cheerful liberality for the benefit of his neighbor, and knows well that he will have enough, however much he may give away. For his God, Whom he trusts, will not lie to him nor forsake him, as it is written, Psalm xxxvii: "I have been young, and now am old; never have I seen a believing man, who trusts God, that is a righteous man, forsaken, or his child begging bread." Therefore the Apostle calls no other sin idolatry except covetousness, because this sin shows most plainly that it does not trust God for anything, expects more good from its money than from God; and, as has been said, it is by such confidence that God is truly honored or dishonored.

And, indeed, in this Commandment it can be clearly seen how all good works must be done in faith; for here every one most surely feels that the cause of covetousness is distrust and the cause of liberality is faith. For because a man trusts God, he is generous and does not doubt that he will always have enough; on the other hand, a man is covetous and worries because he does not trust God. Now, as in this Commandment faith is the master-workman and the doer of the good work of liberality, so it is also in all the other Commandments, and without such faith liberality is of no worth, but rather a careless squandering of money.

IV. By this we are also to know that this liberality shall extend even to enemies and opponents. For what manner of good deed is that, if we are liberal only to our friends? As Christ teaches, Luke vi, even a wicked man does that to another who is his friend. Besides, the brute beasts also do good and are

generous to their kind. Therefore a Christian must rise higher, let his liberality serve also the undeserving, evil-doers, enemies, and the ungrateful, even as his heavenly Father makes His sun to rise on good and evil, and the rain to fall on the grateful and ungrateful.

But here it will be found how hard it is to do good works according to God's Commandment, how nature squirms, twists and writhes in its opposition to it, although it does the good works of its own choice easily and gladly. Therefore take your enemies, the ungrateful, and do good to them; then you will find how near you are to this Commandment or how far from it, and how all your life you will always have to do with the practice of this work. For if your enemy needs you and you do not help him when you can, it is just the same as if you had stolen what belonged to him, for you owed it to him to help him. So says St. Ambrose, "Feed the hungry; if you do not feed him, you have, as far as you are concerned, slain him." And in this Commandment are included the works of mercy, which Christ will require at men's hands at the last day.

But the magistrates and cities ought to see to it that the vagabonds, pilgrims and mendicants from foreign lands be debarred, or at least allowed only under restrictions and rules, so that knaves be not permitted to run at large under the guise of mendicants, and their knavery, of which there now is much, be prohibited. I have spoken at greater length of this Commandment in the Treatise on Usury.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

This Commandment seems small, and yet is so great, that he who would rightly keep it must risk and imperil life and limb, goods and honor, friends and all that he has; and yet it includes no more than the work of that small member, the tongue, and is called in German Wahrheit sagen, "telling the truth" and, where there is need, gainsaying lies; so that it forbids many evil works of the tongue. First: those which are committed by speaking, and those which are committed by keeping silent. By speaking, when a man has an unjust law-suit, and wants to prove and maintain his case by a false argument, catch his neighbor with subtilty, produce everything that strengthens and furthers his own cause, and withhold and discount everything that furthers his neighbor's good cause; in doing which he does not do to his neighbor as he would have his neighbor do to him. This some men do for the sake of gain, some to avoid loss or shame, thereby seeking their own advantage more than God's Commandment,

and excuse themselves by saying: *Vigilanti jura subveniunt*, "the law helps him who watches"; just as if it were not as much their duty to watch for their neighbor's cause as for their own. Thus they intentionally allow their neighbor's cause to be lost, although they know that it is just. This evil is at present so common that I fear no court is held and no suit tried but that one side sins against this Commandment. And even when they cannot accomplish it, they yet have the unrighteous spirit and will, so that they would wish the neighbor's just cause to be lost and their unjust cause to prosper. This sin is most frequent when the opponent is a prominent man or an enemy. For a man wants to revenge himself on his enemy: but the ill will of a man of prominence he does not wish to bring upon himself; and then begins the flattering and fawning, or, on the other hand, the withholding of the truth. Here no one is willing to run the risk of disfavor and displeasure, loss and danger for the truth's sake; and so God's Commandment must perish. And this is almost universally the way of the world. He who would keep this Commandment, would have both hands full doing only those good works which concern the tongue. And then, how many are there who allow themselves to be silenced and swerved aside from the truth by presents and gifts! so that in all places it is truly a high, great, rare work, not to be a false witness against one's neighbor.

II. There is a second bearing of witness to the truth, which is still greater, with which we must fight against the evil spirits; and this concerns not temporal matters, but the Gospel and the truth of faith, which the evil spirit has at no time been able to endure, and always so manages that the great among men, whom it is hard to resist, must oppose and persecute it. Of which it is written in Psalm lxxxii, "Rid the poor out of the hand of the wicked, and help the forsaken to maintain his just cause."

Such persecution, it is true, has now become infrequent; but that is the fault of the spiritual prelates, who do not stir up the Gospel, but let it perish, and so have abandoned the very thing because of which such witnessing and persecution should arise; and in its place they teach us their own law and what pleases them. For this reason the devil also does not stir, since by vanquishing the Gospel he has also vanquished faith in Christ, and everything goes as he wishes. But if the Gospel should be stirred up and be heard again, without doubt the whole world would be aroused and moved, and the greater portion of the kings, princes, bishops, doctors and clergy, and all that is great, would oppose it and rage against it, as has always

happened when the Word of God has come to light; for the world cannot endure what comes from God. This is proved in Christ, Who was and is the very greatest and most precious and best of all that God has; yet the world not only did not receive Him, but persecuted Him more cruelly than all others who had ever come forth from God.

Therefore, as at that time, so at all times there are few who stand by the divine truth, and imperil and risk life and limb, goods and honor, and all that they have, as Christ has foretold: "Ye shall be hated of all men for My Name's sake." And: "Many of them shall be offended in Me." Yea, if this truth were attacked by peasants, herdsmen, stable-boys and men of no standing, who would not be willing and able to confess it and to bear witness to it? But when the pope, and the bishops, together with princes and kings attack it, all men flee, keep silent, dissemble, in order that they may not lose goods, honor, favor and life.

III. Why do they do this? Because they have no faith in God, and expect nothing good from Him. For where such faith and confidence are, there is also a bold, defiant, fearless heart that ventures and stands by the truth, though it cost life or cloak, though it be against pope or kings; as we see that the martyrs did. For such a heart is satisfied and rests easy because it has a gracious, loving God. Therefore it despises all the favor, grace, goods and honor of men, lets them come and go as they please; as is written in Psalm xv: "He contemneth them that contemn God, and honoreth them that fear the Lord"; that is, the tyrants, the mighty, who persecute the truth and despise God, he does not fear, he does not regard them, he despiseth them; on the other hand, those who are persecuted for the truth's sake, and fear God more than men, to these he clings, these he defends, these he honors, let it vex whom it may; as it is written of Moses, Hebrews xi, that he stood by his brethren, regardless of the mighty king of Egypt.

Lo, in this Commandment again you see briefly that faith must be the master-workman in this work also, so that without it no one has courage to do this work: so entirely are all works comprised in faith, as has now been often said. Therefore, apart from faith all works are dead, however good the form and name they bear. For as no one does the work of this Commandment except he be firm and fearless in the confidence of divine favor; so also he does no work of any other Commandment without the same faith: thus every one may easily by this Commandment test and weigh himself whether he be a Christian and truly believe in Christ, and thus whether he is doing good works or no. Now we see how

the Almighty God has not only set our Lord Jesus Christ before us that we should believe in Him with such confidence, but also holds before us in Him an example of this same confidence and of such good works, to the end that we should believe in Him, follow Him and abide in Him forever; as He says, John xiv: "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life," -- the Way, in which we follow Him; the Truth, that we believe in Him; the Life, that we live in Him forever.

From all this it is now manifest that all other works, which are not commanded, are perilous and easily known: such as building churches, beautifying them, making pilgrimages, and all that is written at so great length in the Canon Law and has misled and burdened the world and ruined it, made uneasy consciences, silenced and weakened faith, and has not said how a man, although he neglect all else, has enough to do with all his powers to keep the Commandments of God, and can never do all the good works which he is commanded to do; why then does he seek others, which are neither necessary nor commanded, and neglect those that are necessary and commanded?

The last two Commandments, which forbid evil desires of the body for pleasure and for temporal goods, are clear in themselves; these evil desires do no harm to our neighbor, and yet they continue unto the grave, and the strife in us against them endures unto death; therefore these two Commandments are drawn together by St. Paul into one, Romans vii, and are set as a goal unto which we do not attain, and only in our thoughts reach after until death. For no one has ever been so holy that he felt in himself no evil inclination, especially when occasion and temptation were offered. For original sin is born in us by nature, and may be checked, but not entirely uprooted, except through the death of the body; which for this reason is profitable and a thing to be desired. To this may God help us. Amen.

DR. REU'S INTRODUCTION

1. The Occasion of the Work. -- Luther did not impose himself as reformer upon the Church. In the course of a conscientious performance of the duties of his office, to which he had been regularly and divinely called, and without any urging on his part, he attained to this position by inward necessity. In 1515 he received his appointment as the standing substitute for the sickly city pastor, Simon Heinse, from the city council of Wittenberg. Before this time he was obliged to preach only occasionally in the convent, apart from his activity as teacher in the University and convent. Through this appointment he was in duty bound, by divine and human right, to lead and direct the congregation at Wittenberg on the

true way to life, and it would have been a denial of the knowledge of salvation which God had led him to acquire, by way of ardent inner struggles, if he had led the congregation on any other way than the one God had revealed to him in His Word. He could not deny before the congregation which had been intrusted to his care, what up to this time he had taught with ever increasing clearness in his lectures at the University -- for in the lectures on the Psalms, which he began to deliver in 1513, he declares his conviction that faith alone justifies, as can be seen from the complete manuscript, published since 1885, and with still greater clearness from his Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans (1515-1516), which is accessible since 1908; nor what he had urged as spiritual adviser of his convent brethren when in deep distress -- compare the charming letter to Georg Spenlein, dated April 8, 1516.

Luther's first literary works to appear in print were also occasioned by the work of his calling and of his office in the Wittenberg congregation. He had no other object in view than to edify his congregation and to lead it to Christ when, in 1517, he published his first independent work, the Explanation of the Seven Penitential Psalms. On Oct 31 of the same year he published his 95 Theses against Indulgences. These were indeed intended as controversial theses for theologians, but at the same time it is well known that Luther was moved by his duty toward his congregation to declare his position in this matter and to put in issue the whole question as to the right and wrong of indulgences by means of his theses. His sermon 'Of Indulgences and Grace', occasioned by Tetzels attack and delivered in the latter part of March, 1518, as well as his sermon Of Penitence, delivered about the same time, were also intended for his congregation. Before his congregation (Sept., 1516-Feb., 1517) he delivered the Sermons on the Ten Commandments, which were published in 1518 and the Sermons on the Lord's Prayer, which were also published in 1518 by Agricola. Though Luther in the same year published a series of controversial writings, which were occasioned by attacks from outside sources, viz., the Resolutiones disputationis de Virtute indulgentiarum, the Asterisci adversus obeliscos Joh. Eccii, and the Ad dialogum Silv. Prieriatis responsio, still he never was diverted by this necessary rebuttal from his paramount duty, the edification of the congregation. The autumn of the year 1518, when he was confronted with Cajetan, as well as the whole year of 1519, when he held his disputations with Eck, etc., were replete with disquietude and pressing labors; still Luther served his congregation with a whole series of writings during this time, and only regretted that he was not entirely at its disposal. Of such writings we mention: Explanation of the Lord's Prayer for the simple Laity (an elaboration of the sermons of 1517); Brief Explanation of the Ten Commandments; Instruction concerning certain Articles, which might be ascribed and imputed to him by his adversaries; Brief Instruction how to Confess; Of Meditation on the Sacred Passion of Christ; Of Twofold Righteousness; Of the Matrimonial Estate; Brief Form to understand and to pray the Lord's Prayer; Explanation of the Lord's Prayer "vor sich und hinter sich"; Of Prayer and Processions in Rogation Week; Of Usury; Of the Sacrament of Penitence; Of Preparation for Death; Of the Sacrament of Baptism; Of the Sacrament of the Sacred Body; Of Excommunication. With but few exceptions these writings all appeared in print in the year 1519, and again it was the congregation which Luther sought primarily to serve. If the bounds of his congregation spread ever wider beyond Wittenberg, so that his writings found a surprisingly ready sale, even afar, that was not Luther's fault. Even the Tesseractas consolatoria, written in 1519

and printed in 1520, a book of consolation, which was originally intended for the sick Elector of Saxony, was written by him only upon solicitation from outside sources.

To this circle of writings the treatise *Of Good Works* also belongs. Though the incentive for its composition came from George Spalatin, court-preacher to the Elector, who reminded Luther of a promise he had given, still Luther was willing to undertake it only when he recalled that in a previous sermon to his congregation he occasionally had made a similar promise to deliver a sermon on good works; and when Luther actually commenced the composition he had nothing else in view but the preparation of a sermon for his congregation on this important topic.

But while the work was in progress the material so accumulated that it far outgrew the bounds of a sermon for his congregation. On March 25. he wrote to Spalatin that it would become a whole booklet instead of a sermon; on May 5. he again emphasizes the growth of the material; on May 13. he speaks of its completion at an early date, and on June 8. he could send Melancthon a printed copy. It was entitled: *Von den guten werckenn: D. M. L. Vuittenberg*. On the last page it bore the printer's mark: *Getruck zu Wittenberg bey dem iungen Melchior Lotther. Im Tausent funfhundert vnnd zweyntzigsten Jar*. It filled not less than 58 leaves, quarto. In spite of its volume, however, the intention of the book for the congregation remained, now however, not only for the narrow circle of the Wittenberg congregation, but for the Christian layman in general. In the dedicatory preface Luther lays the greatest stress upon this, for he writes: "Though I know of a great many, and must hear it daily, who think lightly of my poverty and say that I write only small *Sexternlein* (tracts of small volume) and German sermons for the untaught laity, I will not permit that to move me. Would to God that during my life I had served but one layman for his betterment with all my powers; it would be sufficient for me, I would thank God and suffer all my books to perish thereafter.... Most willingly I will leave the honor of greater things to others, and not at all will I be ashamed of preaching and writing German to the untaught laity."

Since Luther had dedicated the afore-mentioned *Tessaradecas consolatoria* to the reigning Prince, he now, probably on Spalatin's recommendation, dedicated the *Treatise on Good Works* to his brother John, who afterward, in 1525, succeeded Frederick in the Electorate. There was probably good reason for dedicating the book to a member of the reigning house. Princes have reason to take a special interest in the fact that preaching on good works should occur within their realm, for the safety and sane development of their kingdom depend largely upon the cultivation of morality on the part of their subjects. Time and again the papal church had commended herself to princes and statesmen by her emphatic teaching of good works. Luther, on the other hand, had been accused -- like the Apostle Paul before him (Rom. 3 31) -- that the zealous performance of good works had abated, that the bonds of discipline had slackened and that, as a necessary consequence, lawlessness and shameless immorality were being promoted by his doctrine of justification by faith alone. Before 1517 the rumor had already spread that Luther intended to do away with good works. Duke George of Saxony had received no good impression from a sermon Luther had delivered at Dresden, because he feared the consequences which Luther's doctrine of justification by faith alone might have upon the morals of the masses. Under

these circumstances it would not have been surprising if a member of the Electoral house should harbor like scruples, especially since the full comprehension of Luther's preaching on good works depended on an evangelical understanding of faith, as deep as was Luther's own. The Middle Ages had differentiated between *fides informis*, a formless faith, and *fides formata* or *informata*, a formed or ornate faith. The former was held to be a knowledge without any life or effect, the latter to be identical with love for, as they said, love which proves itself and is effective in good works must be added to the formless faith, as its complement and its content, well pleasing to God. In Luther's time every one who was seriously interested in religious questions was reared under the influence of these ideas.

Now, since Luther had opposed the doctrine of justification by love and its good works, he was in danger of being misunderstood by strangers, as though he held the bare knowledge and assent to be sufficient for justification, and such preaching would indeed have led to frivolity and disorderly conduct. But even apart from the question whether or not the brother of the Elector was disturbed by such scruples, Luther must have welcomed the opportunity, when the summons came to him, to dedicate his book *Of Good Works* to a member of the Electoral house. At any rate the book could serve to acquaint him with the thoughts of his much-abused pastor and professor at Wittenberg, for never before had Luther expressed himself on the important question of good works in such a fundamental, thorough and profound way.

2. The Contents of the Work. -- A perusal of the contents shows that the book, in the course of its production, attained a greater length than was originally intended. To this fact it must be attributed that a new numeration of sections begins with the argument on the Third Commandment, and is repeated at every Commandment thereafter, while before this the sections were consecutively numbered. But in spite of this, the plan of the whole is clear and lucid. Evidently the whole treatise is divided into two parts: the first comprising sections 1-17, while the second comprises all the following sections. The first, being fundamental, is the more important part. Luther well knew of the charges made against him that "faith is so highly elevated" and "works are rejected" by him; but he knew, too, that "neither silver, gold and precious stone, nor any other precious thing had experienced so much augmentation and diminution" as had good works "which should all have but one simple goodness, or they are nothing but color, glitter and deception." But especially was he aware of the fact that the Church was urging nothing but the so-called self-elected works, such as "running to the convent, singing, reading, playing the organ, saying the mass, praying matins, vespers, and other hours, founding and ornamenting churches, altars, convents, gathering chimes, jewels, vestments, gems and treasures, going to Rome and to the saints, curtsying and bowing the knees, praying the rosary and the psalter," etc., and that she designated these alone as truly good works, while she represented the faithful performance of the duties of one's calling as a morality of a lower order. For these reasons it is Luther's highest object in this treatise to make it perfectly clear what is the essence of good works. Whenever the essence of good works has been understood, then the accusations against him will quickly collapse.

In the fundamental part he therefore argues: Truly good works are not self-elected works of monastic or any other holiness, but such only as God has commanded, and as are

comprehended within the bounds of one's particular calling, and all works, let their name be what it may, become good only when they flow from faith, the first, greatest, and noblest of good works." (John 6:29.) In this connection the essence of faith, that only source of all truly good works, must of course be rightly understood. It is the sure confidence in God, that all my doing is well pleasing to Him; it is trust in His mercy, even though He appears angry and puts sufferings and adversities upon us; it is the assurance of the divine good will even though "God should reprove the conscience with sin, death and hell, and deny it all grace and mercy, as though He would condemn and show His wrath eternally." Where such faith lives in the heart, there the works are good "even though they were as insignificant as the picking up of a straw"; but where it is wanting, there are only such works as "heathen, Jew and Turk" may have and do. Where such faith possesses the man, he needs no teacher in good works, as little as does the husband or the wife, who only look for love and favor from one another, nor need any instruction therein "how they are to stand toward each other, what they are to do, to leave undone, to say, to leave unsaid, to think."

This faith, Luther continues, is "the true fulfilment of the First Commandment, apart from which there is no work that could do justice to this Commandment." With this sentence he combines, on the one hand, the whole argument on faith, as the best and noblest of good works, with his opening proposition (there are no good works besides those commanded of God), and, on the other hand, he prepares the way for the following argument, wherein he proposes to exhibit the good works according to the Ten Commandments. For the First Commandment does not forbid this and that, nor does it require this and that; it forbids but one thing, unbelief; it requires but one thing, faith, "that confidence in God's good will at all times." Without this faith the best works are as nothing, and if man should think that by them he could be well-pleasing to God, he would be lowering God to the level of a "broker or a laborer who will not dispense his grace and kindness gratis."

This understanding of faith and good works, so Luther now addresses his opponents, should in fairness be kept in view by those who accuse him of declaiming against good works, and they should learn from it, that though he has preached against "good works," it was against such as are falsely so called and as contribute toward the confusion of consciences, because they are self-elected, do not flow from faith, and are done with the pretension of doing works well-pleasing to God.

This brings us to the end of the fundamental part of the treatise. It was not Luther's intention, however, to speak only on the essence of good works and their fundamental relation to faith; he would show, too, how the "best work," faith, must prove itself in every way a living faith, according to the other commandments. Luther does not proceed to this part, however, until in the fundamental part he has said with emphasis, that the believer, the spiritual man, needs no such instruction (1. Timothy 1:9), but that he of his own accord and at all times does good works "as his faith, his confidence, teaches him." Only "because we do not all have such faith, or are unmindful of it," does such instruction become necessary.

Nor does he proceed until he has applied his oft repeated words concerning the relation of faith to good works to the relation of the First to the other Commandments. From the fact,

that according to the First Commandment, we acquire a pure heart and confidence toward God, he derives the good work of the Second Commandment, namely, "to praise God, to acknowledge His grace, to render all honor to Him alone." From the same source he derives the good work of the Third Commandment, namely, "to observe divine services with prayer and the hearing of preaching, to incline the imagination of our hearts toward God's benefits, and, to that end, to mortify and overcome the flesh." From the same source he derives the works of the Second Table.

The argument on the Third and Fourth Commandments claims nearly one-half of the entire treatise. Among the good works which, according to the Third Commandment, should be an exercise and proof of faith, Luther especially mentions the proper hearing of mass and of preaching, common prayer, bodily discipline and the mortification of the flesh, and he joins the former and the latter by an important fundamental discussion of the New Testament conception of Sabbath rest.

Luther discusses the Fourth Commandment as fully as the Third. The exercise of faith, according to this Commandment, consists in the faithful performance of the duties of children toward their parents, of parents toward their children, and of subordinates toward their superiors in the ecclesiastical as well as in the common civil sphere. The various duties issue from the various callings, for faithful performance of the duties of one's calling, with the help of God and for God's sake, is the true "good work."

As he now proceeds to speak of the spiritual powers, the government of the Church, he frankly reveals their faults and demands a reform of the present rulers. Honor and obedience in all things should be rendered unto the Church, the spiritual mother, as it is due to natural parents, unless it be contrary to the first Three Commandments. But as matters stand now the spiritual magistrates neglect their peculiar work, namely, the fostering of godliness and discipline, like a mother who runs away from her children and follows a lover, and instead they undertake strange and evil works, like parents whose commands are contrary to God. In this case members of the Church must do as godly children do whose parents have become mad and insane. Kings, princes, the nobility, municipalities and communities must begin of their own accord and put a check to these conditions, so that the bishops and the clergy, who are now too timid, may be induced to follow. But even the civil magistrates must also suffer reforms to be enacted in their particular spheres; especially are they called on to do away with the rude "gluttony and drunkenness," luxury in clothing, the usurious sale of rents and the common brothels. This, by divine and human right, is a part of their enjoined works according to the Fourth Commandment.

Luther, at last, briefly treats of the Second Table of the Commandments, but in speaking of the works of these Commandments he never forgets to point out their relation to faith, thus holding fast this fundamental thought of the book to the end. Faith which does not doubt that God is gracious, he says, will find it an easy matter to be graciously and favorably minded toward one's neighbor and to overcome all angry and wrathful desires. In this faith in God the Spirit will teach us to avoid unchaste thoughts and thus to keep the Sixth Commandment. When the heart trusts in the divine favor, it cannot seek after the temporal goods of others, nor cleave to money, but according to the Seventh Commandment, will use

it with cheerful liberality for the benefit of the neighbor. Where such confidence is present there is also a courageous, strong and intrepid heart, which will at all times defend the truth, as the Eighth Commandment demands, whether neck or coat be at stake, whether it be against pope or kings. Where such faith is present there is also strife against the evil lust, as forbidden in the Ninth and Tenth Commandments, and that even unto death.

3. The Importance of the Work. -- Inquiring now into the importance of the book, we note that Luther's impression evidently was perfectly correct, when he wrote to Spalatin, long before its completion -- as early as March 25. -- that he believed it to be better than anything he had heretofore written. The book, indeed, surpasses all his previous German writings in volume, as well as all his Latin and German ones in clearness, richness and the fundamental importance of its content. In comparison with the prevalent urging of self-elected works of monkish holiness, which had arisen from a complete misunderstanding of the so-called evangelical counsels (comp. esp. Matthew 19:16-22) and which were at that time accepted as self-evident and zealously urged by the whole church, Luther's argument must have appeared to all thoughtful and earnest souls as a revelation, when he so clearly amplified the proposition that only those works are to be regarded as good works which God has commanded, and that therefore, not the abandoning of one's earthly calling, but the faithful keeping of the Ten Commandments in the course of one's calling, is the work which God requires of us. Over against the wide-spread opinion, as though the will of God as declared in the Ten Commandments referred only to the outward work always especially mentioned, Luther's argument must have called to mind the explanation of the Law, which the Lord had given in the Sermon on the Mount, when he taught men to recognize only the extreme point and manifestation of a whole trend of thought in the work prohibited by the text, and when he directed Christians not to rest in the keeping of the literal requirement of each Commandment, but from this point of vantage to inquire into the whole depth and breadth of God's will -- positively and negatively -- and to do His will in its full extent as the heart has perceived it. Though this thought may have been occasionally expressed in the expositions of the Ten Commandments which appeared at the dawn of the Reformation, still it had never before been so clearly recognized as the only correct principle, much less had it been so energetically carried out from beginning to end, as is done in this treatise. Over against the deep-rooted view that the works of love must bestow upon faith its form, its content and its worth before God, it must have appeared as the dawn of a new era (Galatians 3:22-25) when Luther in this treatise declared, and with victorious certainty carried out the thought, that it is true faith which invests the works, even the best and greatest of works, with their content and worth before God.

This proposition, which Luther here amplifies more clearly than ever before, demanded nothing less than a breach with the whole of prevalent religious views, and at that time must have been perceived as the discovery of a new world, though it was no more than a return to the clear teaching of the New Testament Scriptures concerning the way of salvation. This, too, accounts for the fact that in this writing the accusation is more impressively repelled than before, that the doctrine of justification by faith alone resulted in moral laxity, and that, on the other hand, the fundamental and radical importance of righteousness by faith for the whole moral life is revealed in such a heart-refreshing manner. Luther's appeal in this treatise to kings, princes, the nobility, municipalities and

communities, to declare against the misuse of spiritual powers and to abolish various abuses in civil life, marks this treatise as a forerunner of the great Reformation writings, which appeared in the same year (1520), while, on the other hand, his espousal of the rights of the "poor man" -- to be met with here for the first time -- shows that the Monk of Wittenberg, coming from the narrow limits of the convent, had an intimate and sympathetic knowledge of the social needs of his time. Thus he proved by his own example that to take a stand in the center of the Gospel does not narrow the vision nor harden the heart, but rather produces courage in the truth and sympathy for all manner of misery.

Luther's contemporaries at once recognized the great importance of the Treatise, for within the period of seven months it passed through eight editions; these were followed by six more editions between the years of 1521 and 1525; in 1521 it was translated into Latin, and in this form passed through three editions up to the year 1525; and all this in spite of the fact that in those years the so-called three great Reformation writings of 1520 were casting all else into the shadow. Melancthon, in a contemporaneous letter to John Hess, called it Luther's best book. John Mathesius, the well-known pastor at Joachimsthal and Luther's biographer, acknowledged that he had learned the "rudiments of Christianity" from it.

Even to-day this book has its peculiar mission to the Church. The seeking after self-elected works, the indolence regarding the works commanded of God, the foolish opinion, that the path of works leads to God's grace and good-will, are even to-day widely prevalent within the kingdom of God. To all this Luther's treatise answers: Be diligent in the works of your earthly calling as commanded of God, but only after having first strengthened, by the consideration of God's mercy, the faith within you, which is the only source of all truly good works and well-pleasing to God.

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**An Open Letter to The Christian Nobility
of the German Nation
Concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate, 1520
by Martin Luther (1520)
Introduction and Translation by C. M. Jacobs**

**Part 1
Translator's Introduction**

INTRODUCTION

THE OPEN LETTER TO THE CHRISTIAN NOBILITY OF THE GERMAN NATION is closely related to the tract **ON THE PAPACY AT ROME: A REPLY TO THE CELEBRATED ROMANIST AT LEIPZIG**.^[1] In a letter to Spalatin^[2] dated before June 8, 1520, Luther says: "I shall assail that ass of an Alveld in such wise as not to forget the Roman pontiff, and neither of them will be pleased." In the same letter he writes, "I am minded to issue a broadside to Charles and the nobility of Germany against the tyranny and baseness of the Roman curia." The attack upon Alveld is the tract on **THE PAPACY AT ROME**; the scheda publica grew into the **OPEN LETTER**. At the time when the letter to Spalatin was written, the work on **THE PAPACY AT ROME** must have been already in press, for it appeared in print on the 26th of the month,^[3] and the composition of the **OPEN LETTER** had evidently not yet begun. On the 23rd Luther sent the manuscript of the Open Letter to Amsdorf,^[4] with the request that he read it and suggest changes. The two weeks immediately preceding the publication of the work **ON THE PAPACY** must, therefore, have been the time when the Open Letter was composed. In the conclusion to the earlier work Luther had said: "Moreover, I should be truly glad if kings, princes, and all the nobles would take hold, and turn the knaves from Rome out of the country, and keep the appointments to bishoprics and benefices out of their hands. How has Roman avarice come to usurp all the foundations, bishoprics and benefices of our fathers? Who has ever read or heard of such monstrous robbery? Do we not also have the people who need them, while out of our poverty we must enrich the ass-drivers and stable-boys, nay, the harlots and knaves at Rome, who look upon us as nothing else but arrant fools, and make us the objects of their vile mockery? Oh, the pity, that kings and princes have so little reverence for Christ, and His honor concerns them so little that they allow such abominations to gain the upper hand, and look on, while at Rome they think of nothing but to continue in their madness and to increase

the abounding misery, until no hope is left on earth except in the temporal authorities. Of this I will say more anon, if this Romanist comes again; let this suffice for a beginning. May God help us at length to open our eyes. Amen."

This passage may fairly be regarded as the germ of the Open Letter. The ideas of the latter work are suggested with sufficient clearness to show that its materials are already at hand, and its plan already in the author's mind. The threat to write it is scarcely veiled. That Luther did not wait for that particular Romanist to "come again" may have been due to the intervention of another Romanist, none other than his old opponent, Sylvester Prierias. Before the 7th of June[5] Luther had received a copy of Prierias' **Epitome of a Reply to Martin Luther**,[6] which is the boldest and baldest possible assertion of the very theory of papal power which Luther had sought to demolish in his tract on the Papacy. In the preface to his reprint of the **Epitome**, Luther bids farewell to Rome: "Farewell, unhappy, hopeless, blasphemous Rome! The wrath of God hath come upon thee, as thou hast deserved! We have cared for Babylon, she is not healed; let us, then, leave her, that she may be the habitation of dragons, specters and witches, and true to her name of Babel, an everlasting confusion; a new pantheon of wickedness."[7]

These words were written while the Open Letter was in course of composition. The Open Letter is, therefore, Luther's first publication after the time when he recognized that the breach between him and the papal church was complete, and likely to be permanent. Meanwhile, the opposing party had come to the same conclusion. The verdict of the pope upon Luther had been long delayed, but on the 15th of June, midway between the letter to Spalatin, above mentioned, and completion of the Open Letter, Leo X signed the bull of excommunication, though it was not published in Germany until later. Thus Open Letter shows us the mind of Luther in the weeks when the permanent separation between him and Rome took place. It was also the time when he had the highest hopes from the promised support of the German knights,[8] who formed the patriotic party Germany and are included in the "nobility" to whom the Open Letter is addressed.[9]

The first edition of 4000 copies came off the press of Melchior Lotther in Wittenberg before the 18th of August.[10] It is surmised[11] that the earlier portion[12] of the work was not contained in the original manuscript, but was added while it was in the printer's hands; perhaps it was added at the suggestion of Amsdorf. Less than a week later a second edition was in course of preparation.[13] This "enlarged and revised edition"[14] contained three passages not included in the first.[15] They are indicated in the notes to the present edition.

He who would know the true Luther must read more than one of his writings; he must not by any chance omit to read the Open Letter to the Christian Nobility of the

German Nation. In his other works we learn to know him as the man of God, or the prophet, or the theologian; in this treatise we meet Luther the German. His heart is full of grief for the affliction of his people, and grief turns to wrath as he observes that this affliction is put upon them by the tyranny and greed of the pope and the cardinals and the "Roman vermin?" The situation is desperate; appeals and protests have been all in vain; and so, as a last resort, he turns to the temporal authorities, -- to Charles V, newly elected, but as yet uncrowned; to the territorial lords, great and small, who have a voice in the imperial diet and powers of jurisdiction in their own domains, -- reciting the abuses of "Roman tyranny," and pleading with them to intervene in behalf of the souls that are going to destruction "through the devilish rule of Rome." It is a cry out of the heart of Germany, a nation whose bent is all religious, but which, from that very circumstance, is all the more open to the insults and wrongs and deceptions of the Roman curia.

Yet it is no formless and incoherent cry, but an orderly recital of the ills of Germany. There are times when we feel in reading it that the writer is laying violent hands on his wrath in the effort to be calm. For all its scathing quality, it is a sane arraignment of those who "under the holy name of Christ and St. Peter" are responsible for the nation's woes, and the remedies that are proposed are, many of them, practicable as well as reasonable.

The materials of the work are drawn from many sources, -- from hearsay, from personal observation, from such histories as Luther had at his command, from the proceedings of councils and of diets; there are passages which would seem to bear more than an accidental resemblance to similar passages in Hutten's **VADISCUS**. All grist that came to Luther's mill. But the Spirit of the work is Luther's own.

For the general historian, who is concerned more with the practical than with the theoretical or theological aspects of the Reformation, the OPEN LETTER is undoubtedly Luther's greatest work. Its frank outspokenness true condition of Germany, the number and variety of the subjects that it treats, the multiplicity of the sources from which the subject-matter is drawn, and the point of view from which the whole is discussed make it a work of absorbing interest and priceless historical value. It shows, as does no other single work of the Reformation time, the things that were in men's minds and the variety of motives which led them to espouse the cause of the Protestant party. Doctrine, ethics, history, politics, economics, all have their place in the treatise. It is not only "a blast on the war-trumpet," but a connecting link between the thought of the Middle Ages and that of modern times, prophetic of the new age, but showing how closely the new is bound up with the old.

The text of the Open Letter is found in Weimar Ed., VI, 404-469; Erl. Ed., XXI, 277-360; Walch Ed., X, 296-399; St. Louis Ed., X, 266-351; Berlin Ed., 1,203-290;

Clemen 1,363-425. The text of the Berlin Ed. is modernized and annotated by E. Schneider. The editions of K. Benrath (Halle, 1883) and E. Lemme (**Die 3 grossen Reformationsschriften L's vom J. 1520**; Gotha, 1884) contain a modernized text and extensive notes. A previous English translation in Wace and Buchheim, **LUTHER'S PRIMARY WORKS** (London and Philadelphia, 1884). The present translation is based on the text of Clemen.

For full discussion of the contents of the work, especially its sources, See Weimar Ed., VI, 381-391; Schafer, **LUTHER ALS KIRCHEN HISTORIKER**, Gutersloh, 1897; Kohler, **L'S SCHRIFT AN DEN ADEL. . .IM SPIEGEL DER KULTURGESCHICHTE**, Halle, 1895, and **LUTHER UND DIE KIRCHENGESCHICHTE**, Erlangen, 1900. Extensive comment in all the biographies, especially **KOSTLIN-KAWERAU I**, 315 ff.

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NOTES:

[1] In this edition, I, 337 ff.

[2] ENDERS, II, 414; SMITH, **L's Correspondence**, I, No. 266.

[3] ENDERS, II, 424.

[4] See below, p. 62.

[5] See letter of June 7th to John Hess, ENDERS, II, 411; SMITH, I, No, 265.

[6] Published at Rome 1519: printed with Luther's preface and notes, Weimar Ed., VI, 328 ff.; Erl. Ed., op. var. arg., II, 79 ff.

[7] Weimar Ed., VI, 329.

[8] See ENDERS, II, 415,443; SMITH, Nos. 269,279, and documents in St. Louis Ed., XV, 1630 ff.

[9] See KOSTLIN-KAWERAU, Martin Luther, I, 308 ff., and Weimar Ed., VI, 381ff.

[10] See Luther's letters to Lang and Staupitz, who wished to have the publication withheld (ENDERS, II, 461,463).

[11] Clemen, I, 362

[12] Below, pp. 63-90.

[13] See Weimar Ed., VI, 397.

[14] See title B, *ibid.*, 398.

[15] Printed as an appendix in **Clemen**, I, 421-425.

[16] So it was called by Johann Lang (ENDERS. II, 461).

Luther's Cover Letters

**To the Esteemed and Reverend Master
NICHOLAS VON AMSDORF
Licentiate Of holy Scripture and Canon at Wittenberg,
my special and kind friend;
Doctor Martin Luther.**

The grace and peace of God be with thee, esteemed and reverend dear sir and friend.

The time to keep silence has passed and the time to (Eccl 3:7) speak is come, as saith Ecclesiastes. I have followed out intention^[1] and brought together some matters touching the reform of the Christian Estate, to be laid before the Christian Nobility of the German Nation, in the hope that may deign to help His Church through the efforts of the laity, since the clergy, to whom this task more properly belongs, have grown quite indifferent. I am sending the whole thing to your Reverence, that you may pass judgment on it and, if necessary, improve it.

I know full well that I shall not escape the charge of presumption in that I, a despised monk, venture to address such high and great Estates on matters of such moment, and to give advice to people of such high intelligence. I shall offer no apologies, no matter who may chide me. Perchance I owe my God and the world another pie of folly, and I have now made up my mind honestly to pay that debt, if I can do so, and for once to become court jester; if I fail, I still have one advantage, -- no one need buy me a cap or cut me my comb.^[2] It is a question which one will put the bells on the other.^[3] I must fulfill the proverb, "Whatever the world does, a monk must be it, even if he has

to be painted in." [4] More than once a fool has spoken wisely, and wise men often have been arrant (1 Cor 3:18) fools, as Paul says, "If any one will be wise, let him become a fool." Moreover since I am not only a fool, but also a sworn doctor of Holy Scripture, I am glad for the chant to fulfill my doctor's oath in this fool's way.

I pray you, make my excuses to the moderately intelligent, for I know not how to earn the grace and favor of the immoderately intelligent, though I have often sought to do with great pains. Henceforth I neither desire nor regard their favor. God help us to seek not our own glory, but His alone! Amen.

Wittenberg, in the house of the Augustinians,
on the Eve of St. John the Baptist (June 23d),
in the year fifteen hundred and twenty.

**To His Most Illustrious and Mighty Imperial Majesty,
and to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation,
Doctor Martin Luther.**

Grace and power from God, Most Illustrious Majesty, and most gracious and dear Lords.

It is not out of sheer forwardness or rashness that I, a single, poor man, have undertaken to address your worships. The distress and oppression which weigh down all the Estates of Christendom, especially of Germany, and which move not me alone, but everyone to cry out time and again, and to pray for help, [5] have forced me even now to cry aloud that God may inspire some one with His Spirit to lend this suffering nation a helping hand. Oft times the councils [6] made some presence at reformation, but their attempts have been cleverly hindered by the guile of certain men and things have gone from bad to worse. I now intend, by the help of God, to throw some light upon the wiles and wickedness of these men, to the end that when they are known, they may not henceforth be so hurtful and so great a hindrance. God has given us a noble youth to be our head and thereby has awakened great hopes of good in many hearts; [7] wherefore it is meet that we should do our part and profitably use this time of grace.

In this whole matter the first and most important thing is that we take earnest heed not to enter on it trusting great might or in human reason, even though all power in the world were ours; for God cannot and will not suffer a good work to be begun with trust in our own power or reason. Such works He crushes ruthlessly to earth, as it (Ps. 33:16) is written in the xxiii Psalm, "There is no king saved by the multitude of an

host: a mighty man is not delivered by much strength." On this account, I fear, it came to pass of old that the good Emperors Frederick I[8] and II[9] and many other German emperors were shamefully oppressed and trodden under foot by the popes, although all the world feared them. It may be that they relied on own might more than on God, and therefore they had to fall. In our own times, too, what was it that raised the bloodthirsty Julius II[10] to such heights? Nothing else, I fear, except that France, the Germans and Venice relied (Judges 20:21) upon themselves. The children of Benjamin slew 42,000 Israelites[11] because the latter relied on their own strength.

That it may not so fare with us and our noble young Emperor Charles, we must be sure that in this matter are dealing not with men, but with the princes of hell, who can fill the world with war and bloodshed, but whom war and bloodshed do not overcome. We must go at this work despairing of physical force and humbly trusting God; we must seek God's help with earnest prayer, and fix our minds on nothing else than the misery and distress of suffering Christendom, without regard to the deserts of evil men. Otherwise we may start the game with great prospect of success, but when we get well into it the evil spirits will stir up such confusion that the whole world will swim in blood, and yet nothing will come of it. Let us act wisely, therefore, and in the fear of God. The more force we use, the greater our disaster if we do not act humbly and in God's fear. The popes and the Romans have hitherto been able, by the devil's help, to set kings at odds with one another, and they may well be able to do it again, if we proceed by our own might and cunning, without God's help.

NOTES

[1] **Unserm furnchmen nach**. See Introduction, p.57.

[2] An ironical comparison of the monks' cowl and tonsure with the headgear of the jester.

[3] i.e., Which one turns out to be the real fool.

[4] The proverb ran, **Monachus semper praesens**, "a monk is always there." See WANDER, **Deutsches Sprichwörterlexicon, under Monch**, No. 130.

[5] Evidently a reference to the Gravamina of the German Nation; See GEBHARDT, **Die Grav. Der Deutschen Nation**, Breslau, 1895.

[6] Councils of the Church, especially those of Constance (1414-18), and of Basel (1431-39).

[7] Charles V. was elected Emperor in 1519, when but twenty years of age. Hutten expresses his "hopes of good" from Charles in Vadiscus (BOCKING, IV, 156).

[8] Frederick Barbarossa (1152-1190).

[9] Frederick II (1212-1250), grandson of Barbarossa and last of the great Hohenstaufen Emperors. He died under excommunication.

[10] Pope Julius II (1503-1513). Notorious among the popes for his unscrupulous pursuit of political power, he was continually involved in war with one and another of the European powers over the possession of territories in Italy.

[11] Luther's recollection of the figures was faulty.

I THE THREE WALLS OF THE ROMANISTS

The Romanists[1], with great adroitness, have built three walls about them, behind which they have hitherto defended themselves in such wise that no one has been able to reform them; and this has been the cause of terrible corruption throughout all Christendom.

First, when pressed by The temporal power, they have made decrees and said that the temporal power has no jurisdiction over them, but, on the other hand, that the spiritual is above the temporal power. Second, when the attempt is made to reprove them out of the Scriptures, they raise the objection that the interpretation of the Scriptures belongs to no one except the pope. Third, if threatened with a council, they answer with the fable that no one can call a council but the pope.

In this wise they have slyly stolen from us our three rods[2], that they may go unpunished, and have ensconced themselves within the safe stronghold of these three walls, that they may practice all the knavery and wickedness which we now see. Even when they have been compelled to hold a council they have weakened its power in advance by previously binding the princes with an oath to let them remain as they are. Moreover, they have given the pope full authority over all the decisions of the council, so that it is all one whether there are many councils or no councils, -- except that they deceive us with puppet-shows and sham-battles. So terribly do they fear for their skin in a really free council! And they have intimidated kings and princes by making them believe it would be an offense against God not to obey them in all these knavish, crafty deceptions.[3]

Josh. 6:20 Now God help us, and give us one of the trumpets with which the walls of Jericho were overthrown, that we may blow down these walls of straw and paper, and may set free the Christian rods for the punishment of sin, bringing to light the craft and deceit of the devil, to the end that through punishment we may reform ourselves, and once more attain God's favor.

Against the first wall we will direct our first attack.

It is pure invention that pope, bishops, priests and monks are to be called the "spiritual estate"; princes, lords, artisans, and farmers the "temporal estate." That is indeed a fine bit of lying and hypocrisy. Yet no one should be frightened by it; and for this reason -- viz., that all Christians are truly of the "spiritual estate," and there is among them no difference at all but that of office, as Paul says in I Corinthians 12:12, We are all one body, yet every member has its own work, where by it serves every other, all because we have one baptism, one Gospel, one faith, and are all alike Christians; for baptism, Gospel and faith alone make us "spiritual" and a Christian people.

But that a pope or a bishop anoints, confers tonsures; ordains, consecrates, or prescribes dress unlike that of the laity, this may make hypocrites and graven images,[4] but it never makes a Christian or "spiritual" man. Through baptism all of us are consecrated to the priesthood, as St. Peter says in I Peter 2:9, "Ye are a royal priesthood, a priestly kingdom," and the book of Revelation says, Rev. 5:10 "Thou hast made us by Thy blood to be priests and kings." For if we had no higher consecration than pope or bishop gives, the consecration by pope or bishop would never make a priest, nor might anyone either say mass or preach a sermon or give absolution. Therefore when the bishop consecrates it is the same thing as if he, in the place and stead of the whole congregation, all of whom have like power, were to take one out of their number and charge him to use this power for the others; just as though ten brothers, all king's sons and equal heirs, were to choose one of themselves to rule the inheritance for them all, -- they would all be kings and equal in power, though one of them would be charged with the duty of ruling.

To make it still clearer. If a little group of pious Christian laymen were taken captive and set down in a wilderness, and had among them no priest consecrated by a bishop, and if there in the wilderness they were to agree in choosing one of themselves, married or unmarried, and were to charge him with the office of baptizing, saying mass, absolving and preaching, such a man would be as truly a priest as though all bishops and popes had consecrated him. That is why in cases of necessity any one can baptize and give absolution,[5] which would be impossible unless we were all priests. This great grace and power of baptism and of the Christian Estate they have well-nigh destroyed and caused us to forget through The canon law.[6] It was in the manner aforesaid that Christians in olden days chose from their number bishops and priests,

who were afterwards confirmed by other bishops, without all the show which now obtains. It was Thus that Sts. Augustine,[7] Ambrose[8] and Cyprian[9] became bishops.

Since, then, the temporal authorities are baptized with the same baptism and have the same faith and Gospel as we, we must grant that they are priests and bishops, and count their office one which has a proper and a useful place in the Christian community. For whoever comes out the water of baptism[10] can boast that he is already consecrated priest, bishop and pope, though it is not seemly that every one should exercise the office. Nay, just because we are all in like manner priests, no one must put himself forward and undertake, without our consent and election, to do what is in the power of all of us. For what is common to all, no one dare take upon himself without the will and the command of the community; and should it happen that one chosen for such an office were deposed for malfeasance, he would then be just what he was before he held office. Therefore a priest in Christendom is nothing else than an office-holder. While he is in office, he has precedence; when deposed, he is a peasant or a townsman like the rest. Beyond all doubt, then, a priest is no longer a priest when he is deposed. But now they have invented characters indelebilis,[11] and prate that a deposed priest is nevertheless something different from a mere layman. They even dream that a priest can never become a layman, or be anything else than a priest. All this is mere talk and man-made law.

From all this it follows that there is really no difference between laymen and priests, princes and bishops, "spirituals" and "temporals," as they call them, except that of office and work, but not of "estate"; for they are all of the same estate,[12] -- true priests, bishops and popes, -- though they are not all engaged in the same work, just as all priests and monks have not the same work. This is the teaching of St. Paul in Romans 12:4 and I Corinthians 12:12, and of St. Peter in I Peter 2:9, as I have said above, viz., that we are all one body of Christ, the Head, all members one of another. Christ has not two different bodies, one "temporal," the other "spiritual." He is one Head, and He has One body.

Therefore, just as Those who are now called "spiritual" -- priests, bishops or popes -- are neither different from other Christians nor superior to them, except that they are charged with the administration of the Word of God and the sacraments, which is their work and office, so it is with the temporal authorities, -- they bear sword and rod with which to punish the evil and to protect the good. A cobbler, a smith, a farmer, each has the work and office of his trade, and yet they are all alike consecrated priests and bishops, and every one by means of his own work or office must benefit and serve every other, that in this way many kinds of work may be done for the bodily and spiritual welfare of the community, even as all the members of the body serve one another.

See, now, how Christian is the decree which says that the temporal power is not above the "spiritual estate" and may not punish it.[13] That is as much as to say that the hand shall lend no aid when the eye is suffering. Is it not unnatural, not to say unchristian, that one member should not help another and prevent its destruction? Verily, the more honorable the member, the more should the others help. I say then, since the temporal power is ordained of God to punish evil-doers and to protect them that do well, it should therefore be left free to perform its office without hindrance through the whole body of Christendom without respect of persons, whether it affect pope, bishops, priests, monks, nuns or anybody else. For if the mere fact that the temporal power has a smaller place among the Christian offices than has the office of preachers or confessors, or of the clergy, then the tailors, cobblers, masons, carpenters, pot-boys, tapsters, farmers, and all the secular tradesmen, should also be prevented from providing pope, bishops, priests and monks with shoes, clothing, houses, meat and drink, and from paying them tribute. But if these laymen are allowed to do their work unhindered, what do the Roman scribes mean by their laws, with which they withdraw themselves from the jurisdiction of the temporal Christian power, only so that they may be free to do evil and to fulfill what St. Peter has said: 2. Peter 2:1 "There shall be false teachers among you, and through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you."

On this account the Christian temporal power should exercise its office without let or hindrance, regardless whether it be pope, bishop or priest whom it affects; whoever is guilty, let him suffer. All that the canon law has said to the contrary is sheer invention of Roman presumption. For thus saith St. Paul to all Christians: Roman 13:1, 4 "Let every soul (I take that to mean the pope's soul also) be subject unto the higher powers; for they bear not the sword in vain, but are the ministers of God for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well." St. Peter also says: 1 Peter 2:13, 15 "Submit yourselves unto every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, for so is the will of God" He has also prophesied that such men shall come as will despise the temporal authorities; and this has come to pass through the canon law.

So then, I think this first paper-wall is overthrown, since the temporal power has become a member of the body of Christendom, and is of the "spiritual estate," though its work is of a temporal nature. Therefore its work should extend freely and without hindrance to all the members of the whole body; it should punish and use force whenever guilt deserves or necessity demands, without regard to pope, bishops and priests,-let them hail threats and bans as much as they will.

Again, it is intolerable that in the canon law so much importance is attached to the freedom, life and property of the clergy, as though the laity were not also as spiritual as good Christians as they, or did not belong to the Church. Why are your life and limb, your property and honor so free, and mine not? We are all alike Christians, and

have baptism, faith, Spirit and all things alike. If a priest is killed, the land is laid under interdict,[15] -- why not when a peasant is killed? Whence comes this great distinction between those who are equally Christians? Only from human laws and inventions!

Moreover, it can be no good spirit who has invented such exceptions and granted to sin such license and impunity. For if we are bound to strive against the works and words of the evil spirit, and to drive him out in whatever way we can, as Christ commands and His Apostles, ought we, then to suffer it in silence when the pope or his satellites are bent on devilish words and works? Ought we for the sake of men to allow the suppression of divine commandments and truths which we have sworn in baptism to support with life and limb? Of a truth we should then have to answer all the souls that would thereby be abandoned and it astray.

It must therefore have been the very prince of devils who said what is written in the canon law: "If the pope were so scandalously bad as to lead souls in crowds to the devil, yet he could not be deposed." [16] On this accursed and devilish foundation they build at Rome, and think that we should let all the world go to the devil, rather than resist their knavery. If the fact that one man is set over others were sufficient reason why he should escape punishment, then no Christian could punish another, since Christ commands that every man shall esteem himself the lowliest and the least.

Where sin is, there is no escape from punishment; as St. Gregory [17] also writes that we are indeed all equal, but guilt puts us in subjection one to another. Now we see how they whom God and the Apostles have made subject to the temporal sword deal with Christendom, depriving it of its liberty by their own wickedness, without warrant of Scripture. It is to be feared that this is a game of Antichrist [18] or a sign that he is close at hand.

The second wall [19] is still more flimsy and worthless. They wish to be the only Masters of The Holy Scriptures, [20] even though in all their lives they learn nothing from them. They assume for themselves sole authority, and with insolent juggling of words they would persuade us that the pope, whether he be a bad man or a good man, cannot err in matters of faith, [21] and yet they cannot prove a single letter of it. Hence it comes that so many heretical and unchristian, nay, even unnatural ordinances have a place in the canon law, of which, however, there is no present need to speak. For since they think that the Holy Spirit never leaves them, be they never so unlearned and wicked, they make bold to decree whatever they will. And if it were true, where would be the need or use of Holy Scriptures? Let us burn them, and be satisfied with the unlearned lords at Rome, who are possessed of the Holy Spirit, -- although He can possess only pious hearts! Unless I had read it myself, [22] I could not have believed that the devil would make such clumsy pretensions at Rome, and find a following.

But not to fight them with mere words, we will quote the Scriptures. St. Paul says in I Corinthians 14:30: "If to anyone something better is revealed, though he be sitting and listening to another in God's Word, then the first, who is speaking, shall hold his peace and give place." What would be the use of this commandment, if we were only to believe him who does the talking or who has the highest seat? Christ also says in John 6:45, that all Christians shall be taught of God. Thus it may well happen that the pope and his followers are wicked men, and no true Christians, not taught of God, not having true understanding. On the other hand, an ordinary man may have true understanding; why then should we not follow him? Has not the pope erred many times? Who would help Christendom when the pope errs, if we were not to believe another, who had the Scriptures on his side, more than the pope?

Therefore it is a wickedly invented fable, and they cannot produce a letter in defense of it, that the interpretation of Scripture or the confirmation of its interpretation belongs to the pope alone. They have themselves usurped this power; and although they allege that this power was given to Peter when the keys were given to him, it is plain enough that the keys were not given to Peter alone, but to the whole community.[23] Moreover, the keys were not ordained for doctrine or government, but only for the binding and loosing of they arrogate to themselves is mere invention. But Christ's word to Peter, Luke 22:32 "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fall not," cannot be applied to the pope, since the majority of the popes have been without faith, as they must themselves confess. Besides, it is not only for Peter that Christ prayed, but also for all Apostles and Christians, as he says in John 17:9, 20: "Father, I pray for those whom Thou hast given Me, and not for these only, but for all who believe on Me through their word." Is not this clear enough?

Only think of it yourself! They must confess that there are pious Christians among us, who have the true faith, Spirit, understanding, word and mind of Christ. Why, then, should we reject their word and understanding and follow the pope, who has neither faith nor Spirit? That would be to deny the whole faith and the Christian Church. Moreover, it is not the pope alone who is always in the right, if the article of The Creed is correct: "I believe one holy Christian Church"; otherwise the prayer must run: "I believe in the pope at Rome," and so reduce the Christian Church to one man, - which would be nothing else than a devilish and hellish error.

Besides, if we are all priests, as was said above, [24] and all have one faith, one Gospel, one sacrament, why should we not also have the power to test and judge what is correct or incorrect in matters of faith? What becomes of the words of Paul in I Corinthians 2:15: "He that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man," II Corinthians 4:13: "We have all the same Spirit of faith"? Why, then, should not we perceive what squares with faith and what does not, as well as does an unbelieving pope?

All these and many other texts should make us bold and free, and we should not allow the Spirit of liberty, as Paul calls Him, to be frightened off by the fabrications of the popes, but we ought to go boldly forward to test all that they do or leave undone, according to our interpretation of the Scriptures, which rests on faith, and compel them to follow not their own interpretation, but the one that is better. In the olden days Abraham had to listen to Sarah, although she was in more complete subjection to him than we are to anyone on earth. Balaam's ass, also, was wiser than the prophet himself. If God then spoke an ass against a prophet, why should He not be able even now to speak by a righteous man against the pope? In like manner St. Paul rebukes St. Peter as a man in error. Therefore it behooves every Christian to espouse the cause of the faith, to understand and defend it, and to rebuke errors.

The third wall falls of itself when the first two are down. For when the pope acts contrary to the Scriptures, it is our duty to stand by the Scriptures, to reprove him, and to constrain him, according to the word of Christ in Matthew 18:15: "If thy brother sin against thee, go and tell it him between thee and him alone; if he hear thee not, then take with thee one or two more; if he hear them not, tell it to the Church; if he hear not the Church, consider him a heathen." Here every member is commanded to care for every other. How much rather should we do this when the member that does evil is a ruling member, and by his evil-doing is the cause of much harm and offense to the rest! But if I am to accuse him before the Church, I must bring the Church together.

They have no basis in Scripture for their contention that it belongs to the pope alone to call a council or confirm its actions;[25] for this is based merely upon their own laws, which are valid only in so far as they are not injurious to Christendom or contrary to the laws of God. When the pope deserves punishment, such laws go out of force, since it is injurious to Christendom not to punish him by means of a council.

Thus we read in Acts 15:6 that it was not St. Peter who called the Apostolic Council, but the Apostles and elders. If, then, that right had belonged to St. Peter alone, the council would not have been a Christian council, but an heretical conciliabulum.[26] Even the Council of Nicaea -- the most famous of all--was neither called nor confirmed by the Bishop of Rome, but by the Emperor Constantine,[27] and many other emperors after him did the like, yet these councils were the most Christian of all.[28] But if the pope alone had the right to call councils, then all then all councils must have been heretical. Moreover, if I consider the councils which the pope has created, I find that they have done nothing of special importance.

Therefore, when necessity demands, and the pope is an offense to Christendom, the first man who is able should, a faithful member of the whole body, do what he can to bring about a truly free council.[29] No one can do this so well as the temporal authorities, especially since now they also are fellow-Christians, fellow-priests,

"fellow-spirituals,"[30] fellow-lords over all things, and whenever it is needful or profitable, they should give free course to office and work in which God has put them above every man. Would it not be an unnatural thing, if a fire broke out in a city, and everybody were to stand by and it burn on and on and consume everything that could burn, for the sole reason that nobody had the authority of the burgomaster, or because, perhaps, the fire broke in the burgomaster's house? In such case is it not the duty of every citizen to arouse and call the rest? How much more should this be done in the spiritual city of Christ, if a fire of offense breaks out, whether in the papal government, or anywhere else? In the same way, if the enemy attacks a city, he who first rouses the others deserves honor and thanks; why then should he not deserve honor who makes known the presence of the enemy from hell, awakens the Christians, and calls them together?

But all their boasts of an authority which dare not opposed amount to nothing after all. No one in Christendom has authority to do injury, or to forbid the resisting of injury. There is no authority in the Church save edification. Therefore, if the pope were to use his authority to prevent the calling of a free council, and thus became a hindrance to the edification of the Church, we should have regard neither for him nor for his authority; and if he were to hurl his bans and thunderbolts, we should despise his conduct as that of a madman, and relying on God, hurl back the ban on him, and coerce him as best we could. For this presumptuous authority of his is nothing; he has no such authority, and he is quickly overthrown by a text of Scripture; for Paul says to the Corinthians, II Corinthians 10:8 "God has given us authority not for the destruction, but for the edification of Christendom." Who is ready to overleap this text? It is only the power of the devil and of Antichrist which resists the things that serve for the edification of Christendom; it is, therefore, in no wise to be obeyed, but is to be opposed with life and goods and all our strength.

Even though a miracle were to be done in the pope's behalf against the temporal powers, or though someone were to be stricken with a plague -- which they boast has sometimes happened -- it should be considered only the work of the devil, because of the weakness of our faith in God. Christ Himself prophesied in Matthew 24:24: "There shall come in My Name false Christs and false prophets, and do signs and wonders, so as to deceive even the elect," and Paul says in II Thessalonians 2:9, that Antichrist shall, through the power of Satan, be mighty in lying wonders.

Let us, therefore, hold fast to this: No Christian authority can do anything against Christ; as St. Paul says, II Corinthians 13:8: "We can do nothing against Christ, but for Christ." Whatever does aught against Christ is the power of Antichrist and of the devil, even though it were to rain and hail wonders and plagues. Wonders and plagues prove nothing, especially in these last evil times, for which all the Scriptures prophesy

false wonders. Therefore we must cling with firm faith to the words of God, and then the devil will cease from wonders.

Thus I hope that the false, lying terror with which the Romans have this long time made our conscience timid and stupid, has been allayed. They, like all of us, are subject to the temporal sword; they have no power to interpret the Scriptures by mere authority, without learning; they have no authority to prevent a council or, in sheer wantonness, to pledge it, bind it, or take away its liberty; but if they do this, they are in truth the communion of Antichrist and of the devil, and have nothing at all of Christ except the name.

NOTES

[1] The term "Romanist" is applied by Luther to the champions of the extreme form of papal supremacy, Cf. Vol. I, p. 343 f.

[2] i.e., The three rods for the punishment of an evil pope. Vol. II, -- 5.

[3] **Spuknisse**, literally "ghosts." The gist of the sentence is, "the Romanists have frightened the world with ghost-stories."

[4] **Oelgotze** - "an image anointed with holy oil to make it sacred"; in modern German, "a blockhead."

[5] Lay-baptism in view of imminent death is a practice as old as the Christian Church. The right of the laity to administer baptism in such cases was expressly recognized by the Council of Elvira, in the year 306, and the decree of that Council became a part of the law of the Church. The right of the laity to give absolution in such cases rests on the principle that in the absence of the appointed official of the Church any Christian can do for any other Christian the things that are absolutely necessary for salvation, for "necessity knows no law." Cf. Vol. I, p. 30, note 2.

[6] The canon law, called by Luther throughout this treatise and elsewhere, the "spiritual law," is a general name for the decrees of councils ("cannons" in the strict sense) and decisions of the popes ("decretals," "constitutions," etc.), promulgated by authority of the popes, and collected in the so-called **Corpus juris canonici**. It comprised the whole body of Church law, and embodied in legal forms the medieval theory of papal absolutism, which accounts for the bitterness with which Luther speaks of it, especially in this treatise. The Corpus includes the following collections of canons and decretals: The Decretum of Gratian (1142), the Liber Extra (1234), the Liber Sextus (1298), the Constitutiones Clementinae (1318 or 1317), and the two

books of Extravagantes, -- the **Extravagantes of John XXIV**, and the **Extravagantes Communes**. The last pope whose decrees are included is Sixths IV (died 1484). See **Catholic Encyclo.**, IV, pp. 391 ff.

[7] Augustine, the master-theologian of the Ancient Church, bishop of Hippo in Africa from 395-430.

[8] Ambrose, bishop of Milan from 374-397, had not yet been baptized at the time of his election to the episcopate, which was forced upon him by the unanimous voice of the people of the city.

[9] Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, 247-258, is said to have consented to accept the office only when the congregation surrounded his house and besought him to yield to their entreaties.

[10] **Was ausz der Tauff krochen ist.**

[11] The character *indelebilis*, or "indelible mark," received authoritative statement in the bull *Exultate Deo* (1439). Eugenius IV, summing up the **Decrees of the Council of Florence**, says: "Among these sacraments there are three -- baptism, confirmation, and orders -- which indelibly impress upon the soul a character, i.e., a certain spiritual mark which distinguishes them from the rest." (MIRBT, Quellen, 2d ed., No. 150). The Council of Trent in its XXIII. Session, July 15, 1563. (MIRBT, No. 312), defined the correct Roman teaching as follows: "Since in the sacrament of orders, as in baptism and confirmation, a character is impressed which cannot be destroyed or taken away, the Holy Synod justly condemns the opinion of those who assert that the priests of the New Testament have only temporary power, and that those once rightly ordained can again be made laymen, if they do not exercise the ministry of the Word of God."

[12] i.e., They are all Christians, among whom there can be no essential difference.

[13] The sharp distinction which the Roman Church drew between clergy and laity found practical application in the contention that the clergy should be exempt from the jurisdiction of the civil courts, This is the so-called **privilegium fori**, "benefit of clergy." It was further claimed that the government of the clergy and the administration of Church property must be entirely in the hands of the Church authorities, and that no lay rulers might either make or enforce laws which in any way affected the Church. See **LEA, Studies in Church History**, 169-219 and **Prot. Realencyk.**, Vi, 594.

[14] It was the contention of the Church authorities that priests charged with infraction of the laws of the state should first be tried in the ecclesiastical courts. If found guilty, they were degraded from the priesthood and handed over to the state authorities for punishment. Formula for degradation in the canon law, c. 2 in VI, de poen. (V, 9). See **Prot. Realencyk.**, VI, 589.

[15] The interdict is the prohibition of the administration of the sacraments and of the other rites of the Church within the territory upon which the interdict is laid (**Realencyk.**, IX, 208 f.). Its use was not uncommon in the Middle Ages, and during the time that the power of the popes was at its height it proved an effective means of bringing refractory rulers to terms. A famous instance is the interdict laid upon the Kingdom of England by Innocent III in 1208. Interdicts of more limited local extent were quite frequent. The use of the interdict as punishment for trifling infractions of church law was a subject of complaint at the diets of Worms (1521) and Nurnberg (1524). See A. WREDE, **Deutsche Reichstagsaktenn unter Kaiser Karl V.**, II, pp. 685 f, III, 665.

[16] The statement of which Luther here complains is found in the **Decretum of Gratian**, Dist. XL, c. 6, Si papa. In his Epitome (see Introduction, p. 58), Prierias had quoted this canon against Luther, as follows: "A Pontifex indubitatus (i.e., a pope who is not accused of heresy or schism) cannot lawfully be deposed or judged either by a council or by the whole world, even if he is so scandalous as to lead people with him by crowds into the possession of hell." Luther's comment is: "Be astonished, O heaven; shudder, O earth! Behold, O Christians, what Rome is!" (Weimar Ed., VI, 336).

[17] Gregory the Great, pope 590-604. The passage is found in **MIGEN**, LXXVI, 203; LXXVII, 34.

[18] Antichrist, the incarnation of all that is hostile to Christ and His Kingdom. His appearance is prophesied in 2 Thess. 2:3-10 (the "man of sin, sitting in the temple of God"); 1 John 2:18, 22:4:3, and Rev. 13. In the early Church the Fathers sometimes thought the prophecies fulfilled in the person of some especially pestilent heretic. Wyclif applied the term to the pope, -- "the pope would seem to be not the vicar of Christ, but the vicar of Antichrist" (see LOOFS, **Dogmengeschichte**, 4th ed., p. 649).

[19] See above, p. 65.

[20] According to academic usage, the holder of a Master's degree was authorized to expound the subject named in the degree.

[21] The doctrine of papal infallibility was never officially sanctioned in the Middle Ages, but the claim of infallibility was repeatedly made by the champions of the more extreme view of papal power, e.g., Augustinus Triumphus (died 1328) in his **Summa de potestate Papae**. In his attack upon the XCV Theses (**Dialogus de potestate Papae**, Dec., 1517) Prierias had asserted, "The supreme pontiff (i.e., the pope) cannot err when giving a decision as pontiff, i.e., speaking officially (**ex officio**), and doing what in him lies to learn the truth"; and again, "Whoever does not rest upon the teaching of the Roman Church and the supreme pontiff as an infallible rule of faith, from which even Holy Scripture draws its vigor and authority, is a heretic" (Erl. Ed., op. Var./ arg., I, 348). In the Epitome he had said: "Even though the pope as an individual (**singularis persona**) can do wrong and hold a wrong faith, nevertheless as pope he cannot give a wrong decision" (Weimar Ed., VI, 337).

[22] Most recently in Prierias's Epitome. See preceding note.

[23] Luther had discussed the whole subject of the power of the keys in the Latin treatise, **Resolutio super propositione xiii. De potestate papae, of 1519** (Weimar Ed., II, pp. 185 ff., and in the German treatise The Papacy at Rome (Vol. I, pp. 337-394).

[24] Pp. 66 ff.

[25] Another contention of Prierias. In 1518 (Nov. 28th) Luther had appealed his cause from the decision of the pope, which he foresaw would be adverse, to the decision of a council to be held at some future time. In the **Epitome Prierias** discusses this appeal, asserting, among other things, that "when there is one undisputed pontiff, it belongs to him alone to call a council.", and that "the decrees of councils neither bind nor hold (**nullum ligant vel astringunt**) unless they are confirmed by authority of the Roman pontiff" (Weimar Ed., VI, 335).

[26] i.e., A mere gathering of people.

[27] The council of Nicaea, the first of the great councils of the Church, assembled in 325 for the settlement of the Arian controversy. Luther's statement that it was called by the Emperor Constantine, and that its decisions did not derive their validity from any papal confirmation, is historically correct. On Luther's statements about this council, see SCHAFFER, **Luther als Kirchenhistoriker**, pp. 291 ff.; KOHLER, **Luther und die Kg.**, pp. 148 ff.

[28] Luther is here referring to the earlier so-called "ecumenical" councils.

[29] i.e., A council which will not be subject to the pope. Cf. Erl. Ed., xxvi, III

[30] i.e., They belong to the "spiritual estate"; see above, p.69.

II

Abuses to Be Discussed in Councils

We shall now look at the matters which should be discussed in the councils, and with which popes, cardinals, bishops and all the scholars ought properly to be occupied day and night if they loved Christ and His Church. But if they neglect this duty, then let the laity[1] and the temporal authorities see to it, regardless of bans and thunders; for an unjust ban is better than ten just releases, and an unjust release worse than ten just bans. Let us, therefore, awake, dear Germans, and fear God rather than men, that we may not share the fate of all the poor souls who are so lamentably lost through the shameful and devilish rule of the Romans, in which the devil daily takes a larger and larger place, -- if, indeed, it were possible that such a hellish rule could grow worse, a thing I can neither conceive nor believe.

1. It is a horrible and frightful thing that the ruler of Christendom, who boasts himself vicar of Christ and successor of St. Peter, lives in such worldly splendor that in this regard no king nor emperor can equal or approach him, and that he who claims the title of "most holy" and "most spiritual" is more worldly than the world itself. He wears a triple crown, when the greatest kings wear but a single crown;[2] if that is like the poverty of Christ and of St. Peter, then it is a new kind of likeness. When a word is said against it, they cry out "Heresy!" but that is because they do not wish to hear how unchristian and ungodly such a practice is. I think, however, that if the pope were with tears to pray to God, he would have to lay aside these crowns, for our God can suffer no pride; and his office is nothing else than this, -- daily to weep and pray for Christendom, and to set an example of all humility.

However that may be, this splendor of his is an offense, and the pope is bound on his soul's salvation to lay it aside, because St. Paul says, I Thess. 5:21: "Abstain from all outward shows, which give offense," and in Romans 12:17, "We should provide good, not only in the sight of God, but also in the sight of all men." An ordinary bishop's crown would be enough for the pope; he should be greater than others in wisdom and holiness, and leave the crown of pride to Antichrist, as did his predecessors several centuries ago. They say he is a lord of the world; that is a lie; for Christ, Whose vicar and officer he boasts himself to be, said before Pilate, John 17:36, "My kingdom is not of this world," and no vicar's rule can go beyond his lord's. Moreover he is not the vicar of the glorified, but of the crucified Christ, as Paul says, I Cor 2:2, "I was willing to know nothing among you save Christ, and Him only as the Crucified"; and in Philippians 2:5, "So think of yourselves as ye see in Christ, Who emptied Himself and took upon Him the appearance of a servant"; and again in I Corinthians 1:23, "We

preach Christ, the Crucified." Now they make the pope a vicar of the glorified Christ in heaven, and some of them have allowed the devil to rule them so completely that they have maintained that the pope is above the angels in heaven and has authority over them.[3] These are indeed the very works of the very Antichrist.

What is the use in Christendom of those people who are called the cardinals? I shall tell you. Italy and Germany have many rich monasteries, foundations, benefices, and livings. No better way has been discovered to bring all these to Rome than by creating cardinals and giving them the bishoprics, monasteries and prelacies, and so overthrowing the worship of God. For this reason we now see Italy a very wilderness - monasteries in ruins, bishoprics devoured, the prelacies and the revenues of all the churches drawn to Rome, cities decayed, land and people laid waste, because there is no more worship or preaching. Why? The cardinals must have the income.[4] No Turk could have so devastated Italy and suppressed the worship of God.

Now that Italy is sucked dry, they come into Germany,[5] and begin oh, so gently. But let us beware, or Germany will soon become like Italy. Already we have some cardinals; what the Romans seek by that the "drunken Germans" are not to understand until we have not a bishopric, a monastery, a living, a benefice, a heller or a pfennig left. Antichrist must take the treasures of the earth, as it was prophesied. So it goes on. They skim the cream off the bishoprics, monasteries and benefices, and because they do not yet venture to turn them all to shameful use, as they have done in Italy, they only practice for the present the sacred trickery of coupling together ten or twenty prelacies and taking a yearly portion from each of them, so as to make a tidy sum after all. The priory of Wurzburg yields a thousand gulden; that of Bamberg something; Mainz, Trier and the others, something more; and so from one to ten thousand gulden might be got together, in order that a cardinal might live at Rome like a rich king.

"After they are used to this, we will create thirty or forty cardinals in a day,[6] and give to one Mount St. Michael at Bamberg[7] and the bishopric of Wurzburg to boot, hang on to these a few rich livings, until churches and cities are waste, and after that we will say, 'We are Christ's vicars and shepherds of Christ's sheep; the mad, drunken Germans must put up with it.'"

I advise, however, that the number of the cardinals be reduced, or that the pope be made to keep them at his own expense. Twelve of them would be more than enough, and each of them might have an income of a thousand gulden a year.[8] How comes it that we Germans must put up with such robbery and such extortion of our property, at the hands of the pope? If the Kingdom of France has prevented it,[9] why do we Germans let them make such fools and apes of us? It would all be more bearable if in this way they only stole our property; but they lay waste the churches and rob Christ's sheep of their pious shepherds, and destroy the worship and the Word of God. Even if

there were not a single cardinal, the Church would not go under. As it is they do nothing for the good of Christendom; they only wrangle about the incomes of bishoprics and prelacies, and that any robber could do.

If ninety-nine parts of the papal court[10] were done away and only the hundredth part allowed to remain, it would still be large enough to give decisions in matters of faith. Now, however, there is such a swarm of vermin yonder in Rome, all boasting that they are "papal," that there was nothing like it in Babylon. There are more than three thousand papal secretaries alone; who will count the other offices, when they are so many that they scarcely can be counted? And they all lie in wait for the prebends and benefices of Germany as wolves lie in wait for the sheep. I believe that Germany now gives much more to the sheep. I believe that Germany now gives much more to the pope at Rome than it gave in former times to the emperors. Indeed, some estimate that every year more than three hundred thousand gulden find their way from Germany to Rome, quite uselessly and fruitlessly; we get nothing for it but scorn and contempt. And yet we wonder that princes, nobles, cities, endowments, land and people are impoverished! We should rather wonder that we still have anything to eat!

Since we here come to the heart of the matter, we will pause a little, and let it be seen that the Germans are not quite such gross fools as not to note or understand the sharp practices of the Romans. I do not now complain that at Rome God's command and Christian law are despised; for such is the state of Christendom, and particularly of Rome, that we may not now complain of such high matters. Nor do I complain that natural or temporal law and reason count for nothing. The case is worse even than that. I complain that they do not keep their own self-devised canon law, though it is, to be sure, mere tyranny, avarice and temporal splendor, rather than law. Let us see!

In former times German emperors and princes permitted the pope to receive the annates from all the benefices of the German nation, i.e., the half of the first year's revenues from each benefice.[11] This permission was given, however, in order that by means of these large sums of money, the pope might accumulate a treasure for fighting against the Turks and infidels in defense of Christendom, so that the burden of the war might not rest too heavily upon the nobility, but that the clergy also should contribute something toward it. This single-hearted devotion of the German nation the popes have so used, that they have received this money for more than a hundred years, have now made of it a binding tax and tribute, and have not only accumulated no treasure, but have used the money to endow many orders and offices at Rome, and to provide these offices with salaries, as though the annates were a fixed rent. When they pretend that they are about to fight against the Turks, they send out emissaries to gather money. Oft-times they issue an indulgence on this same pretext of fighting the Turks,[12] for they think the mad Germans are forever to remain utter and arrant fools, give them money without end, and satisfy their unspeakable greed; though we

clearly see that not a heller of the annates or of the indulgence-money or of all the rest, is used against the Turks, but all of it goes into the bottomless bag. They lie and deceive, make laws and make agreements with us, and they do not intend to keep any of them. All this must be counted the work of Christ and St. Peter! Now, in this matter the German nation, bishops and princes, should consider that they too are Christians, and should protect the people, whom they are set to rule and guard in things temporal and spiritual, against these ravening wolves who, in sheep's clothing, pretend to be shepherds and rulers; and, since the annates are so shamefully abused and the stipulated conditions are not fulfilled, they should not permit their land and people to be so sadly robbed and ruined, against all justice; but by a law of the emperor or of the whole nation, they should either keep the annates at home or else abolish them again.[13] For since the Romans do not keep the terms of the agreement, they have no right to the annates. Therefore the bishops and princes are bound to punish or prevent; such thievery and robbery, as the law requires.

In this they should aid the pope and support him, for he is perchance too weak to prevent such an abuse all by himself; or if he were to undertake to defend and maintain this practice, they ought resist him and fight against him as against a wolf and a tyrant, for he has no authority to do or to defend evil. Moreover, if it were ever desired to accumulate such a treasure against the Turks, we ought in the future to have sense enough to see that the German nation would be a better custodian for it than the pope; for the German nation has people enough for the fighting, if only the money is forthcoming. It is with the annates as it has been with many another Roman pretence. Again, the year has been so divided between the pope and the ruling bishops and canons,[14] that the pope has six months in the year -- every other month -- in which to bestow the benefices which fall vacant in his months.[15] In this way almost all the benefices are absorbed by Rome, especially the very best livings and dignities,[16] and when once they fall into the hands of Rome, they never come out of them again, though a vacancy may never again occur in the pope's month. Thus the canons are cheated. This is a genuine robbery, which intends to let nothing escape. Therefore it is high time that the "papal months" be altogether abolished, and that everything which they have brought to Rome be taken back again. For the princes and nobles should take measures that the stolen goods be returned, the thieves punished, and those who have abused privilege be deprived of privilege. If it is binding and valid when the pope on the day after his election makes, in his chancery, rules and laws whereby our foundations and livings are robbed, -- a thing which he has no right to do; then it should be still more valid if the Emperor Charles on the day after his coronation[17] were to make rules and laws that not another benefice or living in all Germany shall be allowed to come into the hands of Rome by means of the "papal months," and that the livings which have already fallen into its hands shall be released, and redeemed from the Roman robbers; for he has this right by virtue of his office and his sword.

But now the Roman See of Avarice and Robbery has not been able to await the time when all the benefices, one after another, would, by the "papal months," come into its power, but hastens, with insatiable appetite, to get possession of them all as speedily as possible; and so besides the annates and the "months" it has hit upon a device by which benefices and livings fall to Rome in three ways:

First, If any one who holds a free [18] living dies at Rome or on the way to Rome, his living must forever belong to the Roman-I should rather say the robbing-See;[19] and yet they will not be called robbers; though they are guilty of such robbery as no one has ever heard or read about.

Second, In case any one who belongs to the household of the pope or of the cardinals[20] holds or takes over a benefice, or in case one who already holds a benefice afterwards enters the "household" of the pope or of a cardinal; but who can count the "household" of the pope and of the cardinals, when the pope, if he only goes on a pleasure-ride, takes with him three or four thousand mule-riders, eclipsing all emperors and kings? Christ and St. Peter went on foot in order that their vicars might have the more pomp and splendor. Now avarice has cleverly thought out another scheme, and brings it to pass that even here many; have the name of "papal servant," just as though they were in Rome; all in order that in every place the mere rascally little word "papal servant" may bring all benefices to Rome and tie them fast there forever. Are not these vexatious and devilish inventions? Let us beware! Soon Mainz; Madgeburg and Halberstadt will gently pass into the hands of Rome, and the cardinalate will be paid for dearly enough.[21] "Afterwards we will make all the German bishops cardinal so that there will be nothing left outside."

Third, When a contest has started at Rome over a benefice.[22] This I hold to be almost the commonest and widest road for bringing livings to Rome. For when there is no contest at home, unnumbered knaves will be found at Rome to dig up contests out of the earth and assail livings at their will. Thus many a good priest has to lose his living, or settle the contest for a time by the payment of a sum of money.[23] Such a living rightly or wrongly contested must also belong forever to the Roman See. It would be no wonder if God were to rain from heaven fire and brimstone and to sink Rome in the abyss, as He did Sodom and Gomorrah of old. Why should there be a pope in Christendom, if his power is used

for nothing else than such archknavery, and if he protects and practices it? O noble princes and lords, how long will ye leave your lands and people naked to these ravening wolves!

Since even these practices were not enough, and Avarice grew impatient at the long time it took to get hold of all the bishoprics, therefore my Lord Avarice devised the fiction that the bishoprics should be nominally abroad, but that their land and soil should be at Rome, and no bishop can be confirmed unless with a great sum of money he buy the pallium,[24] and bind himself with terrible oaths to the pope's servant.[25] This is the reason that no bishop ventures to act against the pope. That, too, is what the Romans were seeking when they imposed the oath, and thus the very richest bishoprics have fallen into debt and ruin. Mainz pays, as I hear, 20,000 gulden. These be your Romans! To be sure they decreed of old in the canon law that the pallium should be bestowed gratis, the number of papal servants diminished, the contest lessened, the chapters[26] and bishops allowed their liberty. But this did not bring in money, and so they turned over a new leaf, and all authority was taken from the bishops and chapters; they are made ciphers, and have no office nor authority nor work, but everything is ruled by the archknives at Rome; soon they will have in hand even the office of sexton and bell-ringer in all the churches. All contests are brought to Rome, and by authority of the pope everyone does as he likes.

What happened this very year? The Bishop of Strassburg[27] wished to govern his chapter properly and to institute reforms in worship, and with this end in view made certain godly and Christian regulations. But my dear Lord Pope and the Holy Roman See, at the instigation of the priests, overthrew and altogether condemned this holy and spiritual ordinance. This is called "feeding the sheep of Christ!" Thus priests are to be encouraged against their own bishop, and their disobedience to divine law is to be protected! Antichrist himself, I hope, will not dare to put God to such open shame! There you have your pope after your own heart! Why did he do this? Ah! if one church were reformed, it would be a dangerous departure; Rome's turn too might come! Therefore it were better that no priest should be left at peace with another, that kings and princes should be set at odds, as has been the custom heretofore, and the world filled with the blood of Christians, only so the concord of Christians should not trouble the Holy Roman See with a reformation. So far we have been getting an idea of how they deal with livings which become vacant. But for tender-hearted Avarice the vacancies are too few, and so he brings his foresight to bear upon the benefices which are still occupied by their incumbents, so that they must be unfilled., even they are not unfilled.[28] And this he does in many ways, as follows: First, He lies in wait for fat prebends or bishoprics which are held by an old or a sick man, or by one with an alleged disability. To such an incumbent, without his desire or consent, the Holy See gives a coadjutor's i.e., an "assistant," for the coadjutor's benefit, because he is

"papal servant," or has paid for the position, or has earned it by some other ignoble service to Rome. In this case the rights of the chapter or the rights of him who has the bestowal of the living[29] must be surrendered, and the whole thing fall into the hands of Rome. Second, There is a little word commend,[30] by which the pope entrusts the keeping of a rich, fat monastery or church to a cardinal or to another of his people, just as though I were to give you a hundred gulden to keep. This is not called the giving or bestowing of the monastery nor even its destruction, or the abolition of the worship of God, but only "giving it into keeping"; not that he to whom it is entrusted is to care for it, or build it up, but he is to drive out the incumbent, to receive the goods and revenues, and to install some apostate, renegade monk,[31] who accepts five or six gulden a year and sits in the church all day selling pictures and images to the pilgrims, so that henceforth neither prayers nor masses are said there. If this were to be called destroying monasteries and abolishing the worship of God, then the pope would have to be called a destroyer of Christendom and an abolisher of God's worship, because this is his constant practice. That would be a hard saying at Rome, and so we must call it a commend or a "command to take charge" of the monastery. The pope can every year make commends out of four or more of these monasteries, a single one of which may have an income of more than six thousand gulden. This is the way the Romans increase the worship of God and preserve the monasteries. The Germans also are beginning to find it out. Third, There are some benefices which they call **incompatibilia**,[32] and which, according to the ordinances of the canon law, cannot be held by one man at the same time, as for instance, two parishes, two bishoprics and the like. In these cases the Holy Roman See of Avarice evades the canon law by making "glosses,"[33] called unio and incorporatio, i.e., by "incorporating" many **incompatibilia**, so that each becomes a part of every other and all of them together are looked upon as though they were one living. They are then no longer "incompatible," and the holy canon law is satisfied, in that it is no longer binding, except upon those who do not buy these "glosses"[34] from the pope or his datarius.[35] The **unio**, i.e., "uniting," is of the same nature. The pope binds many such benefices together like a bundle of sticks, and by virtue of this bond they are all regarded as one benefice. So there is at Rome one courtesan[36] who holds, for himself alone, 22 parishes, 7 priories and 44 canonries besides, -- all by the help of that masterly "gloss," which holds that this is not illegal. What cardinals and other prelates have, everyone may imagine for himself. In this way the Germans are to have their purses eased and their itch cured. Another of the "glosses" is the **administratio**, i.e., a man may have beside his bishopric, an abbacy or a dignity,[37] and possess all the property which goes with it, only he has no other title than that of "administrator." [38] For at Rome it is sufficient that words are changed and not the things they stand for; as though I were to teach that a bawdy-house keeper should have the name of "burgomaster's wife," and yet continue to ply her trade. This kind of Roman rule St. Peter foretold when he said, in II Peter 2:3: "There shall come false

teachers, who in covetousness, with feigned words, shall make merchandise of you, to get their gains." Again, dear Roman Avarice has invented the custom of selling and bestowing livings to such advantage that the seller or disposer retains reversionary rights,[39] upon them; to wit, if the incumbent dies, the benefice freely reverts to him who previously sold, bestowed or surrendered it. In this way they have made livings hereditary property, so that henceforth no one can come into possession of them, except the man to whom the seller is willing to dispose of them, or to whom he bequeaths his rights at death. Besides, there are many who transfer to others the mere title to a benefice from which those who get the title derive not a heller of income. It is now an old custom, too, to give another man a benefice and to reserve a certain part out of the annual revenue.[40] In olden times this was simony.[41] Of these things there are so many more that they cannot all be counted. They treat livings more shamefully than the heathen beneath the cross treated the garments of Christ. Yet all that has hitherto been said is ancient history and an every-day occurrence at Rome. Avarice has devised one thing more, which may, I hope, be his last morsel, and choke him. The pope has a noble little device called **pectoralis reservatio**, i.e., his "mental reservation," and **proprius motus**, i.e., the "arbitrary will of his authority." [42] It goes like this. When one man has gotten a benefice at Rome, and the appointment has been regularly signed and sealed, according to custom, and there comes another, who brings money, or has laid the pope under obligation in some other way, of which we will not speak, and desires of the pope the same benefice, then the pope takes it from the first man and gives it to the second.[43] If it is said that this is unjust, then the Most Holy Father must make some excuse, that he may not be reproved for doing such open violence to the law, and says that in his mind and heart he had reserved that benefice to himself and his own plenary disposal, although he had never before in his whole life either thought or heard of it. Thus he has now found a little "gloss" by which he can, in his own person, lie and deceive, and make a fool and an ape of anybody -- all this he does brazenly and openly, and yet he wishes to be the head of Christendom, though with his open lies he lets the Evil Spirit rule him. This arbitrary will and lying "reservation" of the pope creates in Rome a state of affairs which is unspeakable. There is buying, selling, bartering, trading, trafficking, lying, deceiving, robbing, stealing, luxury, harlotry, knavery, and every sort of contempt of God, and even the rule of Antichrist could not be more scandalous. Venice, Antwerp, Cairo[44] are nothing compared to this fair which is held at Rome and the business which is done there, except that in those other places they still observe and reason. At Rome everything goes as the devil wills, and out of this ocean like virtue flows into all the world. Is it a wonder that such people fear a reformation and a free council, and prefer to set all kings and princes at enmity rather than have them unite and bring about a council? Who could bear to have such knavery exposed if it were his own? Finally, for all this noble commerce the pope has built a warehouse, namely, the house of the datarius,[45] in Rome. Thither all must come who deal after this fashion in benefices

and livings. From him they must buy their "glosses"[46] and get the power to practice such archknavery. In former times Rome was generous, and then justice had either to be bought or else suppressed with money, but now she has become exorbitant, and no one dare be a knave unless with a great sum he has first bought the right. If that is not a brothel above all the brothels one can imagine, then I do not know what brothel means. If you have money in this house, then you can come by all the things I have said; and not only these, but all sort of usury[47] are here made honest, for a consideration, and the possession of all property acquired by theft or robbery is legalized. Here vows are dissolved; here monks at granted liberty to leave their orders; here marriage is on sale to the clergy; here bastards can become legitimate; here all dishonor and shame can come to honor; all ill repute and stigma of evil are here knighted and ennobled here is permitted the marriage which is within the forbidden degrees or has some other defect.[48] Oh! what a taxing and a robbing rules there! It looks as though all the laws of the Church were made for one purpose only -- to be nothing but so many money-snares, from which a man must extricate himself,[49] if he would be a Christian. Yea, here the devil becomes a saint, and a god to boot. What heaven and earth cannot, that this house can do! They call them compositions[50]! "Compositions" indeed! rather "confusions"! Oh, what a modest tax is the Rhine-toll,[51] compared with the tribute taken by this holy house! Let no one accuse me of exaggeration! It is all so open that even at Rome they must confess the evil to be greater and more terrible than any one can say. I have not yet stirred up the hell-broth of personal vices, nor do I intend to do so. I speak of things which are common talk, and yet I have not words to tell them all. The bishops, the priests and, above all, the doctors in the universities, who draw their salaries for this purpose, should have done their duty and with common consent have written and cried out against these things; but they have done the very opposite.[52] There remains one last word, and I must say that too. Since boundless Avarice has not been satisfied with all these treasures, which three great kings might well think sufficient, he now begins to transfer this trade and sell it to Fugger of Augsburg,[53] so that the lending and trading and buying of bishoprics and benefices, and the driving of bargains in spiritual goods has now come to the right place, and spiritual and temporal goods have become one business. And now I would fain hear of a mind so lofty that it could imagine what this Roman Avarice might yet be able to do and has not already done; unless Fugger were to transfer or sell this combination of two lines of business to somebody else. I believe we have reached the limit. As for what they have stolen in all lands and still steal and extort, by means of indulgences, bulls, letters of confession,[54] "butter-letters" [55] and other **confessionalia**,[56] -- all this I consider mere patch-work, and like casting a single devil more into hell.[57] Not that they bring in little, for a mighty king could well support himself on their returns, but they are not to be compared with the streams of treasure above mentioned. I shall also say nothing at present of how this indulgence money has been applied. Another time I shall inquire about that, for Campoflore,[58]

and Belvidere[59] and certain other places probably know something about it. Since, then, such devilish rule is not only open robbery and deceit, and the tyranny of the gates of hell, but also ruins Christendom in body and soul, it is our duty to use all diligence in protecting Christendom against such misery and destruction. If we would fight the Turks, let us make a beginning here, where they are at their worst. If we justly hang thieves and behead robbers, why should we let Roman Avarice go free? For he is the greatest thief and robber that has come or can come into the world, and all in the holy Name of Christ and of St. Peter! Who can longer endure it or keep silence? Almost everything he owns has been gotten by theft and robbery; that is the truth, and all history shows it. The pope never got by purchase such great properties that from his office[60] alone he can raise about a million ducats, not to mention the mines of treasure named above and the income of his lands. Nor did it come to him by inheritance from Christ or from St. Peter; no one ever loaned it or gave it to him; it has not become his by virtue of immemorial use and enjoyment. Tell me, then, whence he can have it? Learn from this what they have in mind when they send out legates to collect money for use against the Turks.

NOTES:

[1] **Der Haufe**, i.e. Christians considered **en masse**, without regard to official position in the Church.

[2] The papal crown dates from the XI Century: the triple crown, or tiara, from the beginning of the XIV. It was intended to signify that very superiority of the pope to be rulers of this world, of which Luther here complains. See **Realencyk.**, X, 532, and literature there cited.

[3] A statement made by Augustinus Triumphus. See above, p.73, note 5; and below, p. 246. Vol. II.-6.

[4] The Cardinal della Rovere, afterwards Pope Julius II, held at one time the archbishopric of Avignon, the bishoprics of Bologna, Lausanne, Coutances, Viviers, Mende, Ostia and Velletri, and the abbacies of Nonantola, and Grottaferrata. This is but one illustration of the scandalous pluralism practiced by the cardinals. Cf. LEA, in Cambridge Mod. Hist., I, pp. 659 f.

[5] The complaint that the cardinals were provided with incomes by appointment to German benefices goes back to the Council of Constance (1415). Cf. **BENRATH**, p. 87, note 17.

[6] The creation of new cardinals was a lucrative proceeding for the popes. On July 31, 1517, Leo X created thirty-one cardinals, and is said to have received from the new appointees about 300,000 ducats. Needless to say, the cardinals expected to make up the fees out of the income of their livings. See Weimar Ed., VI, 417, note I, and **PASTOR, Gesch. der Papste IV**, I, 137. Cf. Hutten's **Vadiscus** (Bocking IV, 188).

[7] The famous Benedictine monastery just outside the city of Bamberg.

[8] The proposal made at Constance (see above, p. 82, note 2) was more generous. It suggested a salary of three to four thousand gulden.

[9] As early as the XIV Century both England and France had enacted laws prohibiting the very practices of which Luther here complains. It should be noted, however, that these laws were enforced only occasionally, and never very strictly.

[10] The papal court or curia consisted of all the officials of various sorts who were employed in the transaction of papal business, including those who were in immediate attendance upon the person of the pope, the so-called "papal family." On the number of such officials in the XVI Century, see **BENRATH**, p. 88, note 18, where reference is made to 949 offices, exclusive of those which had to do with the administration of the city of Rome and of the States of the Church, and not including the members of the pope's "family." The Gravamina of 1521 complain that the increase of these offices in recent years has added greatly to the financial burdens of the German Church (**WREDE, Deutsche Reichstagsakten unter Kaiser Karl V**, II, 675).

[11] On the annates, see Vol. I, p. 383, note I. Early in their history, which dates from the beginning of the XIV Century, the annates (**fructus medii temporis**) had become a fixed tax on all the Church offices which fell vacant, and the complaint of extortion in their appraisal and collection was frequently raised. The Council of Constance restricted the obligation to bishoprics and abbeys, and such other benefices as had a yearly income of more than 24 gulden. The Council of Basel (1439) resolved to abolish them entirely, but the resolution of the Council was inoperative, and in the Concordat of Vienna (1448) the German nation agreed to abide by the decision of Constance. On the use of the term "annates" to include other payments to the curia, especially the **servitia**, see **Catholic Encyclopedia**, I, pp. 537 f. Luther here alleges that the annates are not applied to their ostensible purpose, viz., the Crusade. This charge is repeated in the **Gravamina of the German Nation presented to the Diet of Worms** (1521), with the additional allegation that the amount demanded in the way of annates has materially increase (A. **WREDE, Deutsche Reichstagsakten unter Kaiser Karl V.**, II, pp. 675 f.). Similar complaints had been made at the Diet of Augsburg (1518), and were repeated at the Diet of Nurnberg (**WREDE**, op. Cit., III,

660). Hutten calls the annates "a good fat robbery" (ed. Bocking, IV, 207). In England the annates were abolished by Act of Parliament (April 10, 1532)

[12] On the crusading -- indulgences, see Vol. I, p. 18.

[13] i.e., As was done by the Council of Basel. See above, p. 84, note 1.

[14] The canons are the clergy attached to a cathedral church who constituted the "chapter" of that cathedral, and to whom the right to elect the bishop normally belonged.

[15] This whole section deals with the abuse of the "right of reservation," i.e., the alleged right of the pope to appoint directly to vacant church positions. According to papal theory the right of appointment belonged absolutely to the pope, who graciously yielded the right to others under certain circumstances, reserving it to himself in other cases. The practice of reserving the appointments seems to date from the XII Century, and was originally an arbitrary exercise of papal authority. The rules which came to govern the reservation of appointments were regarded as limitations upon the authority of the pope. The rule of the "papal months," as it obtained in Germany in Luther's time, is found in the Concordat of Vienna of 1448 (MIRBT, Quellen, 2d ed., NO. 261, pp. 167 f.). It provides that livings, with the exception of the higher dignities in the cathedrals and the chief posts in the monasteries, which fall vacant in the months of February, April, June, August, October and December, shall be filled by the ordinary methods--elections, presentation, appointment by the bishop, etc. - but that vacancies occurring in the other months shall be filled by appointment of the pope.

[16] i.e., Church offices which carried with them certain rights of jurisdiction and gave their possessors a certain honorary precedence over other officials of the Church. See MEYER in Realencyk., IV, 658.

[17] Charles V, though elected emperor, was not crowned until October 22d.

[18] i.e., A living which has not hitherto been filled by papal appointment.

[19] This rule, like that of the "papal months," is found in the Concordat of Vienna. Luther's complaint is reiterated in the Gravamina of 1521. (WREDE, Deutsche Reichstagsakten, etc., II, 673.)

[20] Des Papstes und der Cardinale Gesinde, i.e., all those who were counted members of the "family" or "household" (called Dienstverwandte in the Gravamina of 1521) of the pope or of any of the cardinals. The term included those who were in immediate attendance upon the pope or the cardinals, and all those to whom, by virtue

of any special connection with the curia, the name "papal servant" could be made to apply. These are the "courtesans" to whom Luther afterwards refers.

[21] In 1513 Albrecht of Brandenburg was made Archbishop of Madgeburg and later in the same year Administrator of Halberstadt; in 1514 he became Archbishop of Mainz as well. In 1518 he was made cardinal.

[22] This rule, like the others mentioned above, is contained in the Concordat of Vienna.

[23] Cf. The Gravamina of 1521, NO. 20, **Von anfechtung der cordissanen** (see above, p.88, note 3), where the name **cordissei** is applied to the practice of attacking titles to benefices. (WREDE, op. Cit., II, pp. 677 f.)

[24] The **pallium** is a woolen shoulder-cape which is the emblem of the archbishop's office, and which must be secured from Rome. The bestowal of the pallium by the pope is a very ancient custom. Gregory I (590-604) mentions it as **prisca consuetude** (Dist., C.c. 3). The canon law prescribes (Dist. C.c. 1) that the archbishop-elect must secure the pallium from Rome within three months of his election; otherwise he is forbidden to discharge any of the duties of his office. It is regarded as the necessary complement of his election and consecration, conferring the "plenitude of the pontifical office," and the name of archbishop. Luther's charge that it had to be purchased "with a great sum of money" is substantiated by similar complaints from the XII Century on, though the language of the canon law makes it evident that Luther's other contention is also correct, viz., that the pallium was originally bestowed **gratis**. The sum required from the different archbishops varied with the wealth of their see, and was a fixed sum in each case. The Gravamina of 1521 complain that the price has been raised "Although according to ancient ordinance the bishoprics of Mainz, Cologne, Salzburg, etc., were bound to pay for the pallium about 10,000 gulden and no more, they can now scarcely get a pallium from Rome for 20 or 24 thousand gulden." (WREDE, op. Cit., II, 675.)

[25] The oath of allegiance to the pope was required before the pallium could be bestowed (Dist. C.c. 1). The canon law describes this oath as one "of allegiance, obedience and unity" (X, I, 6, c. 4).

[26] See above, p.86. note 2.

[27] cf. Luther to Spalatin, June 25, 152. (ENDERS, II, 424; SMITH, NO. 271).

[28] i.e., The benefices are treated as though they were vacant.

[29] In the case of certain endowed benefices the right of nominate the incumbent was vested in individuals, usually of the nobility, and was hereditary in their family. This is the so-called **jus patronum**, or "right of patronage. The complaint that this right is disregarded is frequent in the *Gravamina* of 1521.

[30] Commendation was one of the practices by which the pope evaded the provision of the canon law which prescribed that the same man should not hold two livings with the cure of souls. The man who received an office in **icommendam** was not required to fulfill the duties attached to the position and when a living or an abbacy was granted in this way during the incumbency of another, the recipient received its entire income during a subsequent vacancy. The practice was most common in the case of abbacies. At the Diet of Worms (1521), Duke George of Saxony, an outspoken opponent of Luther, was as emphatic in his protest against this practice as Luther himself (WREDE, op. cit., II, 665); his protest was incorporated in the **Gravamina** (ibid., 672), and reappears in the Appendix (ibid., 708).

[31] A monk who deserted his monastery was known as an "apostate."

[32] i.e., Offices which cannot be united in the hands of one man. See e.g., note 3, p. 91.

[33] A gloss is a note explanatory of a word or passage of doubtful meaning. The glosses are the earliest form of commentary on the Bible. The glosses of the canon law are the more or less authoritative comments of the teachers, and date from the time when the study of the canon law became a part of the theological curriculum. Their aim is chiefly to show how the law applies to practical case which may arise. The so-called glossa **ordinaria** had in Luther's time an authority almost equal to that of the **corpus juris** itself. Cf. **Cath. Encyc.**, Vi, pp. 588f.

[34] The thing which was bought was, of course, the dispensation, or permission to avail oneself of the gloss.

[35] Dataria is the name for that department of the curia which had to deal with the granting of dispensations and the disposal of benefices. Datarius is the title of the official who presided over this department.

[36] See above, p.88, note 2. For a catalogue of papal appointments bestowed upon two "courtesans," **Johannes Zink und Johannes Ingenwinkel**, see SCHULTE, **Die Fugger in Rom**, I, pp. 282 ff. Between 1513 and 1521, Zink received 56 appointments, and Ingenwinkel received, between 1496 and 1521, no fewer than 106.

[37] See above, p. 87, note 1.

[38] So Albrecht of Mainz bore the title of "administrator" of Halberstadt.

[39] The name of this practice was "regression" (**regressus**).

[40] The complaint was made at Worms (1521) that it was impossible for a German to secure a clear title to a benefice at Rome unless he applied for it in the name of an Italian, to whom he was obliged to pay a percentage of the income, a yearly pension, or a fixed sum of money for the use of his name (WREDE, *op. Cit.*, II, 712).

[41] Simony -- the sin of Simon Magus (Acts 8:18-20) -- the sin committed by the sale or the purchase of an office or position which is formally conferred by a ritual act of the Church. In the ancient and earlier medieval Church the use of money to secure preferment was held to invalidate the title of the guilty party to the position thus secured, and the acceptance of money for such a purpose was an offense punishable by deposition and degradation. The "heresy of Simon" was conceived to be the greatest of all heresies. The traffic in Church offices, which became a flagrant abuse from the time of John XXII (1316-1334), would have been regarded in earlier days as the most atrocious simony.

[42] The **reservatio mentalis** or **in pectore** is the natural consequence of the papal theory that the right of appointment to all Church offices of every grade belongs to the pope (see above, p. 86, note 3.) According to the theory of the canonists (LANCELOTTI, **Institutiones juris canonici**, Lib. I, Tit. XXVII) this right is exercised either per **petitionem alterius**, i.e., by confirmation of the election, appointment, etc., of others, or **proprio motu**, i.e., "on his own motion." In ordinary cases the exercise of the appointing power was limited by rules, which though bitterly complained of (see above, pp. 86 ff. and notes), were generally understood, but the theory allowed any given case to be made an exception to the rules. Of such a case it was said that it was "reserved in the heart of the Pope," and the appointment was then made "on his own motion." Hutten says of this reservation in **pectore** that "it is an easy, agile and slippery thing, and bears no comparison to any other form of cheating" (ed. Bocking, IV, 215).

[43] For a similar instances quoted at Worms (1521), see WREDE, *op. Cit.*, II, 710.

[44] The three chief centers of foreign commerce in the XV and the early XVI Century. The annual fairs (**Jahrmarkt**), held at stated times in various cities, brought great numbers of merchants together from widely distant points, and were the times when the greater part of the wholesale business for the year was done.

[45] Built by Innocent VIII (1484-1490).

[46] See above, p. 93, note 2.

[47] The Church law forbade the taking of interest on loans of money.

[48] During the Middle Ages all question touching marriage and divorce, including, therefore, the question of the legitimacy of children, were governed by the laws of the Church, on the theory that marriage was a sacrament.

[49] i.e., By buying dispensations.

[50] The sums paid for special dispensations were so called.

[51] The toll which the "robber-barons" of the Rhine levied upon merchants passing through their domains.

[52] **Ja wend das blat umb szo findistu es** -- The translators have adopted the interpretation of O. CLEMEN, L's. Werke, I, 383.

[53] The Fuggers of Augsburg were the greatest of the German capitalists in the XVI Century. They were international bankers, "the Rothschilds of the XVI Century" Their control of large capital enabled them to advance large sums of money to the territorial rulers, who were in a chronic state of need. In return for these favors they received monopolistic concessions by which their capital was further increased. The spiritual, as well as the temporal lords, availed themselves regularly of the services of this accommodating firm. They were the pope's financial representatives in Germany. On their connection with the indulgence against which Luther protested, see Vol. I, p. 21; on their relations with the papacy, see SCHULTE, **Die Fugger in Rom**, 2 Vols., Leipzig, 1904. Vol. II.-7

[54] Certificates entitling the holder to choose his own confessor and authorizing the confessor to absolve him from certain classes of "reserved" sins; referred to in the **XCV Theses as confessionalia**. Cf. Vol. I, p.22.

[55] Certificates granting their possessor permission to eat milk, eggs, butter and cheese on fast days.

[56] The word is used here in the broad sense, and means dispensations of all sorts, including those just mentioned, relating to penance.

[57] Equivalent to "carrying coals to Newcastle."

[58] The Campo di Fiore, a Roman market-place, restored and adorned at great expense by Eugenius IV (1431-1447), and his successors.

[59] A part of the Vatican palace notorious as the banqueting-hall of Alexander VI (1492-1503), turned by Julius II (1503-1513) into a museum for the housing of his wonderful and expensive collection of ancient works of art. Luther is hinting that the indulgence money has been spent on these objects rather than on the maintenance of the Church. Cf. CLEMEN, I, 384, note 15.

[60] i.e., The offices and positions in Rome which were for sale. See BENRATH, p. 88, note 18; p. 95, note 36.

Proposals for Reform Part I

Now, although I am too small a man to make propositions which might effect a reform in this dreadful state of things, nevertheless I may as well sing my fool's song to the end, and say, so far as I am able, what could and should be done by the temporal authorities or by a general council.

1. Every prince, nobleman and city should boldly forbid their subjects to pay the annates to Rome and should abolish them entirely;[1] for the pope has broken the compact and made the annates a robbery, to the injury and shame of the whole German nation. He gives them to his friends, sells them for large amounts of money, and uses them to endow offices. He has thus lost his right to them, and deserves punishment. It is therefore the duty of the temporal authorities to protect the innocent and prevent injustice, as Paul teaches in Romans 13:4, and St. Peter in I Peter 2:14, and even the canon law in Case 16, Question 7 **de filiis**. [2] Thus it has come about that men are saying to the pope and his followers, T u o r a, "Thou shalt pray"; to the emperor and his followers, Tu protege, "Thou shalt guard"; to the common man, **Tu labora**, "Thou shalt work." Not, however, as though everyone were not to pray, guard and work; for the man who is diligent in his calling is praying, guarding and working in all that he does, but everyone should have his own especial task.

2. Since the pope with his Roman practices -- his commends, [3] **adjutories**; [4] reservations, [5] **gratiae expectativae**, [6] papal months, [7] incorporations, [8] unions, [9] pallia, [10] rules in chancery, [11] and such like knavery -- usurps all the German foundations without authority and right, and gives and sells them to foreigners at Rome, who do nothing in German lands to earn them; and since he thereby robs the ordinaries [12] of their rights, makes the bishops mere ciphers and figure-heads, and acts against his own canon law, against nature and against reason,

until it has finally gone so far that out of sheer avarice the livings and benefices are sold to gross, ignorant asses and knaves at Rome, while pious and learned folk have no profit of their wisdom and merit, so that the poor people of the German nation have to go without good and learned prelates and thus go to ruin.

Therefore, the Christian nobility should set itself against the pope as against a common enemy and destroyer of Christendom, and should do this for the salvation of the poor souls who must go to ruin through his tyranny. They should. ordain, order, and decree, that henceforth no benefice shall be drawn into the hands of Rome, and that hereafter no appointment shall be obtained there in any manner whatsoever, but that the benefices shall be brought out and kept out from under this tyrannical authority; and they should restore to the ordinaries the right and office of ordering these benefices in the German nation as best they may. And if a "courtesan" were to come from Rome, he should receive a strict command either to keep his distance, or else to jump into the Rhine or the nearest river, and take the Roman ban, with its seals and letters, to a cold bath. They would then take note at Rome that the Germans are not always mad and drunken, but that they have really become Christians, and intend to permit no longer the mockery and scorn of the holy name of Christ, under which all this knavery and destruction of souls goes on, but have more regard to God and His glory than to the authority of men.

3. An imperial law should be issued, that no bishop's cloak[13] and no confirmation of any dignity[14] whatsoever shall henceforth be secured from Rome, but that the ordinance of the most holy and most famous Council of Nicaea[15] shall be restored, in which it is decreed that a bishop shall be confirmed by the two nearest bishops or by the archbishop. If the pope will break the statutes of this and of all other councils, what is the use of hiding councils; or who has given him the authority thus to despise and break the rules of councils?

If he has this power then we should depose all bishops, archbishops and primates[16] and make them mere parish-priests, so that the pope alone may be over them, as he now is. He leaves to bishops, archbishops and primates no regular authority or office, usurps everything for himself, and lets them keep only the name and empty title. It has gone so far that by his "exemptions"[17] the monasteries, the abbots and the prelates are withdrawn from the regular authority of the bishops, so that there is no longer any order in Christendom. From this must follow what has followed -- relaxation of discipline and license to do evil everywhere -- so that I verily fear the pope can be called the "man of sin." There is in Christendom no discipline, no rule, no order; and who is to blame except the pope? This usurped authority of his he applies strictly to all the prelates, and takes away their rods; and he is generous to all subjects, giving them or selling them their liberty.

Nevertheless, for fear he may complain that he is robbed of his authority, it should be decreed that when the primates or archbishops are unable to settle a case, or when a controversy arises among themselves, such a case must be laid before the pope, but not every little matter.[19] Thus it was done in olden times, and thus the famous Council of Nicaea decreed.[20] If a case can be settled without the pope, then his Holiness should not be troubled with such minor matters, but give himself to that prayer, meditation and care for all Christendom, of which he boasts. This is what the Apostles did. They said, Acts 6:2, "It is not meet that we should leave the Word of God and serve tables, but we will keep to preaching and prayer and set others over the work." But now Rome stands for nothing else than the despising of the Gospel and of prayer, and for the serving of "tables," i.e., of temporal affairs, and the rule of the Apostles and of the pope agree as Christ agrees with Lucifer, heaven with hell, night with day; yet he is called "Vicar of Christ and Successor of the Apostles."

4. It should be decreed that no temporal matter shall be taken to Rome,[21] but that all such cases shall be left to the temporal authorities, as the Romans themselves decree in that canon law of theirs, which they do not keep. For it from the should be the duty of the pope, as the man most learned in the Scriptures and most Holy, not in name only, but in truth, to administer affairs which concern the faith and holy life of Christians, to hold the primates and arch-bishops to these things, and to help them in dealing with and caring for these matters. So St. Paul teaches in Corinthians 6:7, and takes the Corinthians severely to task for their concern with worldly things. For it works intolerable injury to all lands that such cases are tried at Rome. It increases the costs, and moreover the judges do not know the manners, laws and customs of the various countries, so that they often do violence to the facts and base their decisions on their own laws and opinions, and thus injustice is inevitably done the contestants.

Moreover, the outrageous extortion practiced by the officiales[22] must be forbidden in all the dioceses, so that they may attend to nothing else than matters of faith and good morals, and leave to the temporal judges the things that concern money, property, life and honor. The temporal authorities, therefore, should not permit sentences of ban or exile when faith or right life is not concerned. Spiritual authorities should have rule over spiritual goods, as reason teaches; but spiritual goods are not money, nor anything pertaining to the body, but they are faith and good works.

Nevertheless it might be granted that cases which concern benefices or livings should be tried before bishops, archbishops and primates. Therefore, in order to decide contests and contentions, it might be possible for the Primate of Germany to maintain a general consistory, with auditors and chancellors, which should have control over the **signaturae gratiae** and **signaturae justitiae**,[23] that are now controlled at Rome, and which should be the final court of appeal for German cases. The officers of this consistory must not, however, be paid, as at Rome, by chance presents and gifts, and

thereby acquire the habit of selling justice and injustice, which they now have to do at Rome because the pope gives them no remuneration, but allows them to fatten themselves on presents. For at Rome no one cares what is right or not right, but only what is money or not money. This court might, however, be paid out of the annates, or some other way might easily be devised, by those who are more intelligent and who have more experience in these matters than I. All I wish to do is to arouse and set to thinking those who have the ability and the inclination to help the German nation become once more free and Christian, after the wretched, heathenish and unchristian rule of the pope.

5. No more reservations should be valid, and no more benefices should be seized by Rome, even if the incumbent dies, or there is a contest, or the incumbent is a "servant" of a cardinal or of the pope;[24] and it should be strictly forbidden and prevented that any "courtesan"[25] should institute a contest over any benefice, so as to cite pious priests to Rome, harass them and drive them into lawsuits. If, in consequence of this prohibition, there should come from Rome a ban or an ecclesiastical censure, it should be disregarded, just as though a thief were to lay a man under the ban because he would not let him steal. Indeed they should be severely punished because they so blasphemously misuse the ban and the name of God to support their robbery, and with falsely devised threats would drive us to endure and to praise such blasphemy of God's name and such abuse of Christian authority, and thus to become, in the sight of God, partakers in their rascality; it is our duty before God to resist it, for St. Paul, in Romans 1:32, reproves as guilty of death not only "those who do such things," but also those who consent to such things and allow them to be done. Most unbearable of all is the lying **reservatio pectoralis**,[26] whereby Christendom is so scandalously and openly put to shame and scorn, because its head deals in open lies, and out of love for the accursed money, shamelessly deceives and fools everybody.

6. The **casus reservati**,[27] the "reserved cases," should also be abolished, for not only are they the means of extorting much money from the people, but by means of them the ravening tyrants ensnare and confuse many poor consciences to the intolerable injury of their faith in God. This is especially true of the ridiculous and childish cases about which they make so much ado in the **Bull Coena Domini**,[28] and which are not worth calling daily sins, still less cases so grave that the pope may not remit them by any indulgence; as for example, hindering a pilgrim on his way to Rome, furnishing weapons to the Turks, or tampering with papal letters. With such gross, crazy, clumsy things do they make fools of us! Sodom and Gomorrah, and all the sins which are committed and can be committed against the commandments of God are not reserved cases; but sins against what God has never commanded and what they have themselves devised, these must be reserved cases, solely that no one be hindered in bringing money to Rome, in order that, safe from the Turks, they may live

in luxury and keep the world under their tyranny with their wanton, useless bulls and braves.[29]

All priests ought rightly to know, or else there should be a public ordinance to that effect, that no secret sin, of which a man has not been publicly accused, is a reserved case, and that every priest has the power to remit all sorts of sins, however they may be called, so long as they are secret; moreover that no abbot, bishop or pope has the power to reserve any such case to himself.[30] If they attempt it, their reservation does not hold and is not valid, and they should be reprov'd, as men who without authority interfere in God's judgment, and without cause ensnare and burden poor, ignorant consciences. But if great public sins are committed, especially sins against God's commandments, then there is indeed a reason for reserved cases, but even then there should not be too many of them, and they should not be reserved arbitrarily and without cause; 1 Peter 5:3, for Christ has set in His Church not tyrants, but shepherds, as saith St. Peter.

7. The Roman See should also do away with the **officia**, and diminish the swarm of vermin at Rome, so that the pope's household can be supported by the pope's own purse. The pope should not allow his court to surpass in pomp and extravagance the courts of all kings, seeing that such a condition not only has never been serviceable to the cause of Christian faith, but the courtiers have been kept thereby from study and prayer, until they are scarce able to speak about the faith at all. This they proved quite plainly at the last Roman Council,[32] in which, amongst many other childish and frivolous things, they decreed that the soul of man is immortal and that every priest must say his prayers once a month on pain of losing his benefice. How shall matters which concern faith and the Church be decided by people so hardened and blinded by great avarice, wealth and worldly splendor, that they have only now decreed that the soul is immortal? It is no small shame to all Christians that at Rome they deal so disgracefully with the faith. If they had less wealth and pomp, they could pray and study better, and so become worthy and able to deal with matters of faith, as was the case in olden times when they were bishops, and did not presume to be kings over all kings.

8. The hard and terrible oaths should be abolished, which the bishops are wrongfully compelled to render to the pope,[33] and by which they are bound like servants, as that worthless and unlearned chapter, **Significasti**,[34] arbitrarily and most stupidly decrees. It is not enough that they burden us in body, soul and property with their many mad laws, by which faith is weakened and Christendom ruined; but they seize upon the person and office and work of the bishops, and now upon the **investiture**[35] also, which was in olden times the right of the German emperors, and in France and other kingdoms still belongs to the kings.

On this point they had great wars and disputes with the emperors,[36] until at last, with impudent authority, they took the right and have kept it until now; just as though the Germans, above all the Christians on earth, had to be the puppets of the pope and the Roman See and do and suffer what no one else will do and suffer. Since, then, this is sheer violence and robbery, hindering the regular authority of the bishops and injuring poor souls, therefore the emperor and

9. The pope should have no authority over the emperor, except that he anoints and crowns him at the altar, just as a bishop anoints and crowns a king;[37] and we should not henceforth yield to that devilish pride which compels the emperor to kiss the pope's feet or sit at his feet, or, as they claim, hold his stirrup or the bridle of his mule when he mounts for a ride; still less should he do homage and swear faithful allegiance to the pope, as the popes have shamelessly ventured to demand as if they possessed that right. The chapter "Solite,"[38] in which the papal authority is raised above the imperial authority, is not worth a heller, nor are any of those who rest upon it or fear it; for it does nothing else than force the holy words of God out of their true meaning, and wrest them to human dreams, as I have showed in a Latin treatise.[39]

Such extravagant, over-presumptuous, and more than wicked doings of the pope have been devised by the devil, in order that under their cover he may in time bring in Antichrist, and raise the pope above God, as many are ready doing and have done. It is not proper for the pope to exalt himself above the temporal authorities, save only in spiritual offices such as preaching and absolving. In other things he is to be subject, as Paul and Peter teach, in Romans 13:1, and 1 Peter 2:13, and as I have said above. His nobles are in duty bound to prevent and punish such tyranny. He is not vicar of Christ in heaven, but of Christ as He walked on earth.[41] For Christ in heaven, in the form of a ruler, needs no vicar, but He sits and sees, does, and knows all things, and has all power. But He needs a vicar in the form of a servant, in which He walked on earth, toiling, preaching, suffering and dying. Now they turn it around, take from Christ the heavenly form of ruler and give it to the pope, leaving the form of a servant to perish utterly. He might almost be the "Counter-Christ" whom the Scriptures call Antichrist, for all his nature, work and doings are against Christ, for the destruction of Christ's nature and work.

It is also ridiculous and childish that the pope, with such perverted and deluded reasoning, boasts in his decretal **Pastoralis**,[42] that he is rightful heir to the Empire, in case of a vacancy. Who has given him this right? Did Christ, when He said, Luke 22:25, "The princes of the Gentiles are lords, but ye shall not be so"? Did St. Peter will it to him? It vexes me that we must read and learn such shameless, gross, crazy lies in the canon law, and must even hold them for Christian doctrine, when they are devilish lies.

Of the same sort is also that unheard-of lie about the "Donation of Constantine." [43] It must have been some special plague of God that so many people of understanding have let themselves be talked into accepting such lies as these, which are so manifest and clumsy that I should think any drunken peasant could lie more adroitly and skillfully. How can a man rule an empire and at the same time continue to preach, pray, study and care for the poor? Yet these are the duties which properly and peculiarly belong to the pope, and they were imposed by Christ (Matthew 10:10) in such earnest that He even forbade His disciples to take with them cloak or money, since these duties can scarcely be performed by one who has to rule even a single household. Yet the pope would rule an empire and continue to be pope! This is a device of the knaves who would like, under the pope's name, to be lords of the world, and by means of the pope and the name of Christ, to restore the Roman Empire to its former state.

10. The pope should restrain himself, take his fingers out of the pie, and claim no title to the Kingdom of Naples and Sicily. [44] He has exactly as much right to that kingdom as I have, and yet he wishes to be its overlord. It is plunder got by violence, like almost all his other possessions. The emperor, therefore, should not grant him this fief, and if it has been granted, he should no longer give his consent to it, and should point him instead to the Bible and the prayer-books, so that he may preach and pray, and leave to temporal lords the ruling of lands and peoples, especially when no one has given them to him.

The same opinion should hold as regards Bologna, Imola, Vicenza, Ravenna and all the territories in the Mark of Ancona, in Romagna, and in other Italian lands, which the pope has taken by force and possesses without right. [45] Moreover, he has meddled in these things against all the commands of Christ and of St. Paul. For thus saith St. Paul, 2 Timothy 2:3, "No one entangleth himself with worldly affairs, whose business it is to wait upon the divine knighthood". [46] Now the pope should be the head and front of this knighthood, yet he meddles in worldly affairs more than any emperor or king. Why then he must be helped out of them and allowed to attend to his knighthood. Christ also, Whose vicar he boasts himself to be, was never willing to have aught to do with temporal rule; indeed, to one who asked of him a decision respecting his brother, He said, Luke 12:14, "Who made Me a judge over you?" But the pope rushes in unbidden, and boldly takes hold of everything as though he were a god, until he no longer knows what Christ is, Whose vicar he pretends to be.

11. The kissing of the pope's feet [47] should take place no more. It is an unchristian, nay, an anti-Christian thing for a poor sinful man to let his feet be kissed by one who is a hundred times better than himself. If it is done in honor of his authority, why does not the pope do the same to others in honor of their holiness? Compare the two -- Christ and the pope! John 13:1 ff., Christ washed His disciples' feet and dried them,

and the disciples never washed His feet; the pope, as though he were higher than Christ, turns things around and, as a great favor, allows people to kiss his feet, though he ought properly to use all his power to prevent it, if anyone wished to do it; like Paul and Barnabas, who would not let the people of Lystra pay them divine honor, but said, Acts 14:11-16, "We are men like you." But our sycophants have gone so far as to make for us an idol, and now no one fears God so much as he fears the pope, no one pays Him such ceremonious honor. That they can endure! What they cannot endure is that a hair's-breadth should be taken away from the proud estate of the pope. Now if they were Christians, and held God's honor above their own, the pope would never be happy while he knew that God's honor was despised and his own exalted, and he would let no man pay him honor until he saw that God's honor was again exalted and was greater than his own.

[48] It is another piece of the same scandalous pride, that the pope is not satisfied to ride or to be driven in a vehicle, but although he is strong and in good health, he has himself borne by men, with unheard-of splendor, like an idol. How, pray, does such satanic pride agree with the example of Christ, Who went on foot, as did all His disciples? Where has there ever been a worldly monarch who went about in such worldly glory as he who wishes to be the head of all those who are to despise and flee worldly glory, i.e., of Christians? Not that this in itself should give us very much concern, but we should rightly fear the wrath of God, if we flatter this kind of pride and do not show our indignation. It is enough that the pope should rant and play the fool in this wise; but that we should approve it and tolerate it, -- this too much.

For what Christian heart can or ought to take pleasure in seeing that when the pope wishes to receive the communion, he sits quiet, like a gracious lord, and has the sacrament passed to him on a golden rod by a bowing cardinal on bended knee? As though the holy sacrament were no worthy that a pope, a poor stinking sinner, should rise to show God honor, when all other Christians, who are much more holy than the Most Holy Father, the pope, receive it with all reverence! Would it be a wonder if God were to send a plague upon us all because we suffer such dishonor to be done Him by our prelates, and approve it, and by our silence or our flattery make ourselves partakers of such damnable pride?

It is the same way when he carries the sacrament in procession. He must be carried, but the sacrament is set before him, like a can of wine on the table. In short, at Rome Christ counts for nothing, the pope counts for everything; and yet they would compel us with threats to approve, and praise and honor such antichristian sins, though this is against God and against all Christian doctrine. Now God help a free Council to teach the pope that he too is a man, and is not more than God, as he presumes to be.

12. Pilgrimages to Rome[49] should either be abolished, or else no one should be allowed to make such a pilgrimage out of curiosity or because of a pious impulse, unless it is first recognized by his parish-priest, his town authorities or his overlord, that he has good and sufficient reason for it. I say this not because pilgrimages are bad, but because they are at this time ill-advised. For men see at Rome no good example, but only that which offends; and they have themselves made the proverb, "The nearer Rome, the worse Christians." [50] Men bring back with them contempt for God and His commandments. It is said: "The first time one goes to Rome he seeks a rascal, the second time he finds him, the third time he brings him home with him." [51] Now, however, they have become so clever that they make the three journeys at once, and they have verily brought back from Rome such pretty things that it were better never to have seen or known Rome.

Even if this reason did not exist, there is still another and a better: to wit, that by these pilgrimages men are led away into a false conceit and a misunderstanding of the divine commandments; for they think that this going on pilgrimage is a precious, good work, and this is not true. It is a very small good work, oftentimes an evil, delusive work, for God has not commanded it. But He has commanded that a man shall care for his wife and children, and look after such other duties as belong to the married state, and besides this, to serve and help his neighbor. Now it comes to pass that a man makes a pilgrimage to Rome when no one has commanded him to do so, spends fifty or a hundred gulden, more or less, and leaves his wife and child, or at least his neighbor, at home to suffer want. Yet the foolish fellow thinks to gloss over such disobedience and contempt of the divine commandments with his self-willed pilgriming, when it is really only curiosity or devilish delusion which leads him to it. The popes have helped this along with their false, feigned, foolish, "golden years," [52] by which the people are excited, stirred up, torn away from God's commandments, and drawn toward their own deluded undertakings. Thus they have accomplished the very thing they should have forbidden; but it has brought in money and strengthened false authority, therefore it has had to continue, though it is against God and the salvation of souls.

In order to destroy in simple Christians this false, seductive faith, and to restore a true understanding of good works, all pilgrimages should be given up; for there is in them nothing good -- no commandment, no obedience -- but, on the contrary, numberless occasions for sin and for the despising of God's commandments. Hence come the many beggars, who by this pilgriming carry on endless knaveries and learn the habit of begging when they are not in want. Hence, too, come vagabondage, and many other ills which I shall not now recount.

If any one, now, wishes to go on pilgrimage or take a pilgrim's vow, he should first show his reasons to his parish-priest or to his lord. If it turns out that he wishes to do it

for the sake of the good work, the priest or lord should boldly tread the vow and good work under foot, as though it were a lure of the devil, and show him how to apply the money and labor necessary for the pilgrimage to the keeping of God's commandments and to works a thousandfold better, viz., by spending it on his own family or on his poor neighbors. But if he wishes to make the pilgrimage out of curiosity, to see new lands and cities, he may be allowed to do as he likes. If, however, he has made the vow while ill, then such vows ought to be forbidden and canceled, and the commandments of God exalted, and he ought to be shown that he should henceforth be satisfied with the vow he made in baptism,[53] to keep the commandments of God. And yet, in order to quiet his conscience, he may be allowed this once to perform his foolish vow. No one wants to walk in the straight and common path of God's commandments; everyone makes himself new roads and new vows, as though he had fulfilled all the commandments of God.

13. Next we come to that great crowd who vow much and keep little. Be not angry, dear lords! Truly, I mean it well. It is the truth, and bitter-sweet, and it is this, -- the building of mendicant-houses[54] should no more be permitted. God help us, there are already far too many of them! Would to God they were all done away, or at least given over to two or three orders! Wandering about the land has never brought any good, and never I bring any good. It is my advice, therefore, to put together ten of these houses, or as many as may be necessary, and out of them all to make one house, which will be well provided and need no more begging. It is much more important to consider what the common people need for their salvation, than what St. Francis, Dominic, St. Augustine[55] or any other man has decreed; especially since things have not turned out as they expected.

The mendicants should also be relieved of preaching and hearing confession, except when they are called to this work by the express desire of bishops, parishes, congregations or the temporal authorities. Out of their preaching and shriving there has come nothing but hatred and envy between priests and monks, and great offense and hindrance to the common people. For this reason it should properly and deservedly cease, because it can well be dispensed with.[56] It looks suspiciously as though it were not for nothing that the Holy Roman See has increased this army, so that the priests and bishops, tired of its tyranny, might not some time become too strong for it and begin a reformation which would not be to the liking of his Holiness.

At the same time the manifold divisions and differences within one and the same order should be abolished. These divisions have at times arisen for small reason and maintained themselves for still smaller, combating one another with unspeakable hatred and envy.[57] Nevertheless the Christian faith, which can well exist without any of these distinctions, is lost by both sides, and a good Christian life is valued and sought after only in outward laws, works and forms; and this results only in the

devising of hypocrisy and the destruction of souls, as everyone may see with his own eyes.

The pope must also be forbidden to found and confirm any more of these orders; nay, he must be commanded to abolish some of them and reduce their number, since the faith of Christ, which is alone the highest good and which exists without any orders, is in no small danger, because these many different works and forms easily mislead men into living for them instead of giving heed to the faith. Unless there are in the monasteries wise prelates, who preach and who concern themselves with faith more than with the rules of the orders, the order cannot but harm and delude simple souls who think only of works.

In our days, however, the prelates who have had faith and who founded the orders have almost all passed away. Just as in olden days among the children of Israel, when the fathers, who knew God's works and wonders, had passed away, the children, from ignorance of God's works and of faith, immediately became idolatrous and set up their own human works; so now, alas! these orders have lost the understanding of God's works and of faith, and only torture themselves pitifully, with labor and sorrow, in their own rules, laws and customs, and withal never come to a right understanding of a good spiritual life, as the Apostle declared when he said in 2 Timothy 3:5, 7: "They have the appearance of a spiritual life, yet there is nothing back of it; they are ever and ever learning, but they never come to a knowledge of what a true spiritual life is." There should be no monastery unless there were a spiritual prelate, learned in the Christian faith, to rule it, for no other kind of prelate can rule without injury and ruin, and the holier and better he appears to be in his outward works and life, the more injury and ruin he causes.

To my way of thinking it would be a necessary measure, especially in these perilous times of ours, that all foundations and monasteries should be re-established as they were at the first, in the days of the Apostles and for a long time afterwards, when they were all open to every man, and every man might remain in them as long as he pleased. For what were the foundations and monasteries except Christian schools in which the Scriptures and Christian living were taught, and people were trained to rule and to preach? So we read that St. Agnes[58] went to school, and we still see the same practice in some of the nunneries, like that at Quedlinburg[59] and others elsewhere. And in truth all monasteries and convents ought to be so free that God is served in them with free will and not with forced avarice. Afterward, however, they hedged them about with vows and turned them into a lifelong prison, so that these vows are thought to be of more account than the vows of baptism. What sort of fruit this has borne, we see, hear, read and learn more and more every day.

I suppose this advice of mine will be regarded as the height of foolishness; but I am not concerned about that just now. I advise what I think best; let him reject it who will! I see how the vows are kept, especially the vow of chastity, which has become so universal through these monasteries and yet is not commanded by Christ; on the contrary, it is given to very few to keep it, as He himself says, and St. Paul. (Matt. 19:11 ff., 1 Cor. 7:7, Col. 2:20) I would have all men to be helped, and not have Christian souls caught in human, self-devised customs and laws.

14. We also see how the priesthood has fallen, and how many a poor priest is overburdened with wife and child, and his conscience troubled, yet no one does anything to help him though he might easily be helped. Though pope and bishops may let things go as they go, and let them go to ruin if they will, I will save my conscience and open my mouth freely, whether it vex pope, bishops or any one else.

Wherefore I say that according to the institution of Christ and the Apostles every city should have a priest or bishop, as St. Paul clearly says in Titus 1:6; and this priest should not be compelled to live without a wedded wife, but should be permitted to have one, as St. Paul says in I Timothy 3:2, and Titus 1:6, "A bishop should be a man who is blameless, and the husband of but one wedded wife, whose children are obedient and virtuous," etc. For with St. Paul a bishop and a priest are one and the same thing, as witness also St. Jerome.[60] But of bishops as they now are; the Scriptures know nothing; they have been appointed by the ordinance of the Christian Church, that one of them may rule over many priests.

So then we clearly learn from the Apostle that it should be the custom for every town to choose out of the congregation[61] a learned and pious citizen, entrust to him the office of the ministry, and support him at the expense of the community, leaving him free choice to marry or not. He should have with him several priests or deacons, who might also be married or not, as they chose, to help him rule the people of the community[62] by means of preaching and the sacraments, as is still the practice in the Greek Church. At a later time,[63] when there were so many persecutions and controversies with heretics, there were many holy fathers who of their own accord abstained from matrimony, to the end that they might the better devote themselves to study and be prepared at any time for death or for controversy. Then the Roman See interfered, out of sheer wantonness, and made a universal commandment forbidding priests to marry.[64] This was done at the bidding of the devil, as St. Paul declares in I Timothy 4, "There shall come teachers who bring doctrines of devils, and forbid to marry." From this has arisen so much untold misery, occasion was given for the withdrawal of the Greek Church,[65] and division, sin, shame and scandal were increased without end, - which is the result of everything the devil does.

What, then, shall we do about it? My advice is that matrimony be again made free,[66] and that every one be left free choice to marry or not to marry. In that case, however, there must be a very different government and administration of Church property, the whole canon law must go to pieces and not many benefices find their way to Rome.[67] I fear that greed has been a cause of this wretched unchaste chastity, and as a result of greed every man has wished to become a priest and everyone wants his son to study for the priesthood, not with the idea of living in chastity, for that could be done outside the priesthood, but of being supported in temporal things without care or labor, contrary to the command of God in Genesis 3:19, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat thy bread." They have construed this to mean that their labor was to pray and say mass.

I am not referring here to popes, bishops, canons and monks. God has not instituted these offices. They have taken burdens on themselves; let them bear them. I would speak only of the ministry which God has instituted[68] and which is to rule a congregation by means of preaching and sacraments, whose incumbents are to live and be at home among the people. Such ministers should be granted liberty by a Christian council to marry, for the avoidance of temptation and sin. Gal. 1:8, For since God has not bound them, no one else ought to bind them or can bind them, even though he were an angel from heaven, still less if he be only a pope; and everything that the canon law decrees to the contrary is mere fable and idle talk.

Furthermore, I advise that henceforth neither at his consecration to the priesthood nor at any other time shall any one under any circumstances promise the bishop to live in celibacy, but shall declare to the bishop that he has no authority to demand such a vow, and that to demand it is the devil's own tyranny.

But if anyone is compelled to say or wishes to say, as do some, "so far as human frailty permits,"[69] let everyone frankly interpret these words negatively, to mean "I do not promise chastity." [70] For human frailty does not permit a chaste life,[71] but only angelic power and celestial might. 2 Pet. 2:11.[72] Thus he should keep his conscience free from all vows.

On the question whether those who are not yet married should marry or remain unmarried, I do not care to give advice either way. I leave that to common Christian order and to everyone's better judgment. But as regards the wretched multitude who now sit in shame and heaviness of conscience because their wives are called "priests' harlots" and their children "priests' children" I will not withhold my faithful counsel nor deprive them of the comfort which is their due, I say this boldly by my jester's right.[73]

You will find many a pious priest against whom no one has anything to say except that he is weak and has come to shame with a woman, though both parties may be minded with all their heart to live always together in wedded love and troth, if only they could do it with a clear conscience, even though they might have to bear public shame. Two such persons are certainly married before God. And I say that where they are thus minded, and so come to live together, they should boldly save their consciences; let him take and keep her as his wedded wife, and live honestly with her as her husband, caring nothing whether the pope will have it so or not, whether it be against canon law or human law. The salvation of your soul is of more importance than tyrannical, arbitrary, wicked laws, which are not necessary for salvation and are not commanded by God. Ex. 12:35 f. You should do like the children of Israel, who stole from the Egyptians the hire they had earned, or like a servant who steals from his wicked master the wages he has earned. In like manner steal thou from the pope thy wife and child! Let the man who has faith enough to venture this, boldly follow me; I shall not lead him astray. Though I have not the authority of a pope, I have the authority of a Christian to advise and help my neighbor against sins and temptations; and that, not without cause and reason.

First, not every priest can do without a woman, not only on account of the weakness of the flesh, but much more because of the necessities of the household. If he, then, may have a woman, and the pope grants him that, and yet may not have her in marriage, -- what is that but leaving a man and a woman alone and forbidding them to fall? It is as though one were to put fire and straw together and command that it shall neither smoke nor burn.

Second, The pope has as little power to command this, as he has to forbid eating, drinking, the natural movement of the bowels or growing fat. No one, therefore, is bound to keep it, but the pope is responsible for all the sins which are committed against this ordinance, for all the souls which are lost thereby, for all the consciences which are thereby confused and tortured; and therefore he has long deserved that some one should drive him out of the world, so many wretched souls has he strangled with this devil's snare; though I hope that there are many to whom God has been more gracious at their last hour than the pope has been in their life. Nothing good has ever come out of the papacy and its laws, nor ever will.

Third, Although the law of the pope is against it, nevertheless, when the estate of matrimony has been entered against the pope's law, then his law is at an end, and is no longer valid; for the

commandment of God, which decrees that no one shall put man and wife asunder, takes precedence of the law of the pope; and the commandments of God must not be broken and neglected for the sake of the pope's commandment, though many mad jurists, in the papal interest, have devised "impediments"[74] and have prevented, destroyed and confused the estate of matrimony, until by their means God's commandment has been altogether destroyed. To make a long story short, there are not in the whole "spiritual" law of the pope two lines which could be instructive to a pious Christian, and there are, alas! So many mistaken and dangerous laws that the best thing would be to make a bonfire of it.[75]

But if you say that this[76] would give offense, and the pope must first grant dispensation, I reply that whatever offense is in it, is the fault of the Roman See, which has established such laws without right and against God; before God and the Scriptures it is no offense. Moreover, if the pope can grant dispensations from his avaricious and tyrannical laws for money's sake, then every Christian can grant dispensations from them -- for the sake of God and the salvation of souls. For Christ has set us free from all human laws, especially when they are opposed to God and the salvation of souls, as St. Paul teaches in Galatians 5:1 and 1 Corinthians 9:4 ff.; 10:23.

NOTES:

[1] See [nobility.05; note 11], p. 84, note 1.

[2] The passage is chapter 31, **Filiis vel nepotibus**. It provides that in case the income of endowments bequeathed to the Church is misused, and appeals to the bishop and archbishop fail to correct the misuse, the heirs of the testator may appeal to the royal courts. Luther wishes this principle applied to the annates.

[3] See above, pp. 91 f.

[4] See above, p. 91.

[5] See above, p. 94.

[6] i.e., Promises to bestow on certain persons livings not yet vacant. Complaint of the evils arising out of the practice was continually heard from the year 1416. For the complaints made at Worms (1521), see WREDE, *op. cit.*, II, 710.

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[7] See above, pp. 86 f.

[8] See above, pp. 92 f.

[9] See above, p. 93.

[10] See above, p. 89.

[11] Rules for the transaction of papal business, including such matters as appointments and the like. At Worms (1521) the Estates complain that these rules are made to the advantage of the "courtesans" and the disadvantage of the Germans. (WREDE, op. Cit., II, pp. 675f.)

[12] The local Church authorities, here equivalent to "the bishops." On use of term see **Realencyk.**, XIV, 424.

[13] The sign of the episcopal office; as regards archbishops, the pallium; see above, p. 89, and note.

[14] See above, p. 87, note 1.

[15] The first of the ecumenical councils (A. D. 325). The decree to which Luther here refers is canon IV of that Council. Cf. KOHLER, L. **Und die Kg.**, pp. 139 ff.

[16] The primate is the ranking archbishop of a country.

[17] "Exemption" was the practice by which monastic houses were withdrawn from the jurisdiction of the bishops and made directly subject to the pope. The practice seems to have originated in the X Century with the famous monastery of Cluny (918), but it was almost universal in the case of the houses of the mendicant orders. The bishops made it a constant subject of complaint, and the Lateran Council (Dec. 19, 1516) passed a decree abolishing all monastic exemptions, though the decree does not seem to have been effective. See CREIGHTON, **History of the Papacy**, V, 266.

[18] i.e., Antichrist. See above, p. 73, note 2.

[19] The papal interference in the conduct of the local Church courts was as flagrant as in the appointments, of which Luther has heretofore spoken. At Worms (1521) it was complained that cases were cited to Rome as a court of first instance, and the demand was made that a regular course of appeals should be re-established. WREDE, op. cit., I, 672,718.

[20] The reference is Canon V of the Council of Sardica (A. D. 343), incorporated in the canon law as a canon of Nicaea (Pt. II, qu. 6, c.5). See KOHLER, L. **Und die Kg.**, 151.

[21] i.e., Appealed to Rome for decision. This is the subject of the first of the 102 Gravamina of 1521 (WREDE, op. cit., II 672).

[22] The judges in the bishops' courts. The complaint is that they interfere with the administration of justice by citing into their courts cases which properly belong in the lay courts, and enforce their verdicts (usually fines) by means of ecclesiastical censures. The charges against these courts are specified in the Gravamina of 1521, Nos. 73-100 (WREDE, op. cit., II 694-703).

[23] The **signaturae gratiae** and the **signaturae justitiae** were the bureaus through which the pope regulated those matters of administration which belonged to his own special prerogative.

[24] See above, pp. 88 f.

[25] See above, p. 88, note 3.

[26] See above, p. 94.

[27] i.e., The cases in which a priest was forbidden to give absolution. The reference here is to cases in which only the pope could absolve. Cf. The XCV Theses, Vol. I, p. 30.

[28] A papal bull published annually at Rome on Holy Thursday. It was directed against heretics, but to the condemnation of the heretics and their heresies was added a list of offenses which could be received absolution only from the pope, or by his authorization. In 1522 Luther translated this bull into German as a New Year present for the pope. (Weimar Ed., VIII, 691). On Luther's earlier utterances concerning it, see KOHLER, L. **u. die Kg.**, pp. 59 ff.

[29] The breve is a papal decree, of equal authority with the bull, but differing from it in form, and usually dealing with matters of smaller importance.

[30] Cf. Luther's earlier statement to the same effect in **A Discussion of Confession**, Vol. I, pp. 96.f.

[31] See above, p. 99.

[32] The Fifth Lateran Council (1512-17).

[33] See above, p. 90, note 1.

[34] In the canon law, Decretal. Greg. Lib. I, tit. 6, cap. 4. The decretal forbids the bestowing of the pallium (see above, p. 89, note 3) on an archbishop elect, until he shall first have sworn allegiance to the Holy See.

[35] The induction of Church officials into office. The term was used particularly of the greater offices -- those of bishop and abbot. These offices carried with them the enjoyment of certain incomes, and the possession of certain temporal powers. For this reason the right of investiture was a bone of contention between popes and emperors during the Middle Ages.

[36] Especially in the time of the Emperors Henry IV and V (1056-1125).

[37] The German Empire was regarded during the Middle Ages as a continuation of the Roman Empire. (See below, p. 153.) The right to crown an emperor was held to be the prerogative of the pope; until the pope bestowed the imperial crown, the emperor bore the title, "King of the Romans."

[38] In the canon law, Decretal. Greg. Lib. I, tit. 33, cap. 6.

[39] In the treatise, **Resolutio Lutheriana super propositione XIII, de potestate papae** (1520). Weimar Ed., II, pp. 217 ff.; Erl. Ed., op. var. Arg., III, pp. 293 ff.

[40] See p. 70.

[41] Cf. The Papacy at Rome, Vol. I, pp. 357 f.

[42] A decree of Pope Clement V of 1313, incorporated subsequently in the canon law, Clement. lib. ii, tit. II, cap. 2.

[43] A forged document of the VIII Century, professing to come from the hand of the Emperor Constantine (306-337). The Donation conveyed to the pope title to the city of Rome (the capital had been removed to Constantinople), certain lands in Italy and "the islands of the sea." It was used by the popes of the Middle Ages to support their claims to worldly power, and its genuineness was not disputed. In 1440, however, Laurentius Valla, an Italian humanist, published a work in which he proved that the Donation was a forgery. This work was republished in Germany by Ulrich von Hutten in 1517, and seems to have come to Luther's attention in the early part of 1520, just before the composition of the present treatise (Cf. ENDERS II, 332). Luther

subsequently (1537) issued an annotated translation of the text of the Donation (Erl. Ed., XXV, pp. 176 ff.).

[44] The papal claim to temporal sovereignty over this little kingdom, which comprised the island of Sicily and certain territories in Southern Italy, goes back to the XI Century, and was steadily asserted during the whole of the later Middle Ages. It was one of the questions at issue in the conflict between the Emperor Frederick II (1200-1260) and the popes, and played an important part in the history of the stormy times which followed the fall of the Hohenstaufen. The popes claimed the right to award the kingdom to a ruler who would swear allegiance to the Holy See. The right to the kingdom was at this time contested between the royal houses of France and of Spain, of which latter house the Emperor Charles V was the head.

[45] The popes claimed temporal sovereignty over a strip territory in Italy, beginning at Rome and stretching in a northeasterly direction across the peninsula to a point on the Adriatic south of Venice, including the cities and lands which Luther mentions. This formed the so-called "States of the Church." The attempt to consolidate the States and make the papal sovereignty effective involved Popes Alexander VI (1492-1503) and Julius II (1503-1513) in war and entangled them in political alliances with the European powers and petty Italian states. It resulted at last in actual war between Pope Clement VII and the Emperor Charles V (1526-1527). See **Cambridge Modern History**, I, 104-143; 219-252, and literature cited pp. 706-713; 727 f.

[46] A free translation of the **Vulgate, Nemo militans Deo.**

[47] The kissing of the pope's feet was a part of the "adoration" which he claimed as his right. See above, p. 108.

[48] The three paragraphs enclosed in brackets were added by Luther to the 2nd edition; see Introduction, p. 59.

[49] The holy places of Rome had long been favorite objects of pilgrimage, and the practice had been zealously fostered by the popes through the institution of the "golden" or "jubilee years." Cf. Vol. I, p. 18, and below, p. 114.

[50] Cf. The Italian proverb, "God is everywhere except at Rome; there He has a vicar."

[51] Cf. Hutten's saying in *Vadiscus*: "Three things there are which those who go to Rome usually bring home with the, a bad conscience, a ruined stomach and an empty purse." (ed. BOCKING, IV, p. 169.) Vol., III. - 8

[52] The "golden" or "jubilee years" were the years when special rewards were attached to worship at the shrines of Rome. The custom was instituted by Boniface VIII in 1300, and it was the intention to make every hundredth year a jubilee. In 1343 the interval between jubilees was fixed at fifty, in 1389 at thirty-three, in 1473 at twenty-five years. Cf. Vol. I, p. 18.

[53] Cf. The statements in the **Treatise on Baptism and the Discussion of Confession**, Vol. I, pp. 68 ff., 98.

[54] The houses, or monasteries, of the mendicant or "begging" orders -- the "friars." The members of these orders were sworn to support themselves on the alms of the faithful.

[55] The three leading mendicant orders were the Franciscan (the Minorities, or "little brothers"), founded by St. Francis of Assisi (died 1226), the Dominican (the "preaching brothers"), founded by St. Dominic (died 1221), and the Augustinians Hermits, to which Luther himself belonged, and which claimed foundation by St. Augustine (died 430).

[56] The interference of the friars in the duties of the parish clergy was a continual subject of complaint through this period.

[57] By the middle of the XV Century there were eight distinct sects within the Franciscan order alone (See Realencyk., Vi, pp. 212 ff.), and Luther had himself taken part in a vigorous dispute between two parties in the Augustinian order.

[58] St. Agnes the Martyr, put to death in the beginning of the IV Century, one of the favorite saints of the Middle Ages. See SCHAFFER, L. als Kirchenhistoriker, p. 235.

[59] One of the most famous of the German convents, founded in 936.

[60] The celebrated Church Father (died 420). The passages referred to are in **Migne**, XXII, 656, and XXVI, 562.

[61] Or "community" (Gemeine). Cf. **The Papacy at Rome**, Vol. I, p. 345, note 4. See also **Dass eine christl. Gemeine Recht und Mach habe**, etc. Weimar Ed. XI, pp. 408 ff.

[62] Or "congregation." See note 2.

[63] i.e., At a time later than that of the Apostles.

[64] The first absolute prohibition of marriage to the clergy is contained in a decree of Pope Siricius and dated 385. See H. C. LEA, **History of Sacerdotal Celibacy**, 3d ed. (1907), I, pp. 59 ff.

[65] The priests of the Greek Church are required to marry, and the controversy over celibacy was involved in the division between the Greek and Roman Churches.

[66] Cf. Hutten's **Vadiscus** (BOCKING, IV, 199).

[67] i.e., Lie in Roman appointment.

[68] i.e., The ministry in the congregation. See above, p. 119.

[69] **Quantum fragilitas humana permittit.** A qualification of the vow.

[70] i.e., Celibacy. **Non promitto castitatem.**

[71] **Fragilitas humana non permittit caste vivere.**

[72] **Angelica fortitudo et coelestis virtus.**

[73] The court-jester was allowed unusual freedom of speech. See "Prefatory Letter" above, p. 62.

[74] The laws governing marriage were entirely the laws of the Church. The canon law prohibited marriage of blood-relatives as far as the seventh degree of consanguinity. In 1204 the prohibition was restricted to the first four degrees; lawful marriage within these degrees was possible only by dispensation, which was not all too difficult to secure, especially by those who were will willing to pay for it (see above, p. 96). The relation of god-parents to god-children was also held to establish a "spiritual consanguinity" which might serve as a bar to lawful marriage. See BENRATH, p. 103, note 74, and in the Babylonian Captivity, below, p. 265.

[75] This Luther actually did. When he burned the papal bull of excommunication (Dec. 10, 1520) a copy of the canon law was also given to the flames.

[76] i.e., The marriage of the clergy.

Proposals for Reform Part II

15. Nor must I forget the poor convents! The evil spirit, who by human laws now confuses all estates in life, and has made them unbearable, has taken possession of certain abbots, abbesses and prelates also, and causes them so to govern their brethren and sisters as to send them the more speedily to hell, and make them lead a wretched life even here; for such is the lot of all the devil's martyrs. That is to say, they have reserved to themselves in confession, all, or at least some, of the mortal sins which are secret, so that no brother, on his obedience and on pain of the ban, can absolve another from these sins.[1] Now we do not always find angels everywhere, but we find also flesh and blood, which suffers all bannings and threatenings rather than confess secret sins to the prelates and the appointed confessors. Thus they go to the sacrament with such consciences that they become "irregular"[2] and all sorts of other terrible things. O blind shepherds! O mad prelates! O ravening wolves!

To this I say: If a sin is public or notorious, then it is proper that the prelate alone should punish it, and of these sins only and no others he may make exceptions, and reserve them to himself over secret sins he has no authority, even though they were the worst sins that are or ever can be found, and if the prelate makes exceptions of these sins, he is a tyrant, for he has no such right and is interfering in the judgment of God.

And so I advise these children, brethren and sisters: If your superiors are unwilling to grant you permission to confess your secret sins to whomever you wish, then take them to whatever brother or sister you will and confess them, receive absolution, and then go and do whatever you wish and ought to do; only believe firmly that you are absolved, and nothing more is needed. And do not allow yourself to be troubled by ban, "irregularity," or any of the other things they threaten; these things are valid only in the case of public or notorious sins which one is unwilling to confess; they do not affect you at all. Why do you try by your threatenings, O blind prelate, to prevent secret sins? Let go what you cannot publicly prove, so that God's judgment and grace may also have its work in your subjects! He did not give them so entirely into your hands as to let them go entirely out of His own! Nay, what you have under your rule is but the smaller part. Let your statutes be statutes, but do not exalt them to heaven, to the judgment-seat of God.

16. It were also necessary to abolish all anniversary mortuary and "soul" masses,[3] or at least to diminish their number, since we plainly see that they have become nothing but a mockery, by which God is deeply angered, and that their only purpose is money-getting, gorging and drunkenness. What kind of pleasure should God have in such a miserable gabbling or wretched vigils and masses, which is neither reading nor praying, and even when prayed,[4] they are performed not for God's sake and out of willing love, but for money's sake and because they are a bounden duty. Now it is not possible that any work not done out of willing love can please God or obtain anything

from Him. And so it is altogether Christian to abolish, or at least diminish, everything which we see growing into an abuse, and which angers rather than reconciles God. It would please me more -- nay, it would be more acceptable to God and far better -- that a foundation, church or monastery should put all its anniversary masses and vigils together, and on one day, with hearty sincerity, devotion and faith, hold a true vigil and mass for all its benefactors, rather than hold them by the thousand every year, for each benefactor a special mass, without this devotion and faith. O dear Christians! God cares not for much praying, but for true praying! Nay, He condemns the many and long prayers, and says in Matthew 6:7; 23:14, they will only earn more punishment thereby. But avarice, which cannot trust God, brings such things to pass, fearing that otherwise it must die of hunger!

17. Certain of the penalties or punishments of the canon law should also be abolished, especially the interdict, which is, beyond all doubt, an invention of the evil Spirit. It is not a devil's work to try to atone for one sin with many greater sins? And yet, to put God's Word and worship to silence, or to do away with them, is a greater sin than strangling twenty popes at once, and far greater than killing a priest or keeping back some Church property. This is another of the tender virtues taught in the "spiritual law." For one of the reasons why this law is called "spiritual" is because it comes from the Spirit; not, however, from the Holy Spirit, but from the evil spirit.

The ban[6] is to be used in no case except where the Scriptures prescribe its use, i.e., against those who do not hold the true faith, or who live in open sin; it is not to be used for the sake of temporal possessions. But now it is the other way around. Everyone believes and lives as he pleases, most of all those who use the ban to plunder and defame other people, and all the bans are now laid only on account of temporal possessions, for which we have no one to thank but the holy "spiritual lawlessness." [7] Of this I have previously said more in the Discourse.[8]

The other punishments and penalties, -- suspension, irregularity, aggravation, reagravation, deposition, lightnings, thunderings, cursings, damnings and the rest of these devices, -- should be buried ten fathoms deep in the earth, so that there should be neither name nor memory of them left on earth. The evil spirit, who has been let loose by the "spiritual law" has brought this terrible plague and misery into the heavenly kingdom of the holy Church, and has accomplished by it nothing else than the destruction and hindrance of souls, so that the word of Christ may well be applied to them[9]; Matthew 23:13: "Woe unto you scribes! Ye have taken upon your the authority to teach, and ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men. Ye go not in yourselves, and ye suffer not them that are entering."

18. All festivals[10] should be abolished, and Sunday alone retained. If it were desired, however, to retain the festivals of Our Lady and of the greater saints, they

should be transferred to Sunday, or observed only by a morning mass, after which all the rest of the day should be a working-day. The reason is this: The feast-days are now abused by drinking, gaming, idleness and all manner of sins, so that on the holy days we anger God more than on other days, and have altogether turned things around; the hold days are not holy and the working days are holy, and not only is no service done to God and His saints by the many holy days, but rather great dishonor. There are, indeed, some mad prelates who think they are doing a good work if they make a festival in honor of St. Otilia or St. Barbara or some other saint, according to the promptings of their blind devotion; but they would be doing a far better work if they honored the saint by turning a saint's-day into a working day.

Over and above the spiritual injury, the common man receives two material injuries from this practice, i.e., he neglects his work and he spends more than at other times; nay, he also weakens his body and unfits it for work. We see this every day, yet no one thinks to make it better. We ought not to consider whether or not the pope has instituted the feasts, and whether we must have dispensation and permission to omit them. If a thing is opposed to God, and harmful to man in body and soul, any community,[11] council[12] or government has not only the right to abolish it and put a stop to it, without the will or knowledge of pope or bishop, but they are bound on their souls' salvation to prevent it, even against the will of pope and bishop, though these ought to be themselves the first to forbid it.

Above all, we ought utterly to abolish the consecration days,[13] since they have become nothing else than taverns, fairs and gaming places,[14] and serve only to the increase of God's dishonor and to the damnation of souls. All the pretence about the custom having had a good beginning and being a good work is of no avail. Did not God Himself set aside His own law, which He had given from heaven, when it was perverted and abused? And does He not still daily overturn what He has appointed and destroy what He has made, because of such perversion and abuse? As it is written of Him in Psalm 18:27, "With the perverted Thou wilt show Thyself perverse."

19. The grades or degrees within which marriage is forbidden should be changed, as, for instance, the sponsorships and the third and fourth degrees and if the pope can grant dispensation in these matters for money and for the sake of the shameful traffic,[15] then every parish priest may give the same dispensations gratis and for the salvation of souls. Yea, would to God that all the things which we must buy at Rome to free ourselves from that money-snare, the canon law, -- such things as indulgences, letters or indulgence, "butter-letters,"[16] "mass-letters,"[17] and all the rest of the **confessionalia**[18] and knaveries for the sale at Rome, with which the poor folk are deceived and robbed of their money; would to God, I say, that any priest could, without payment, do and omit all these things! For if the pope has the authority to sell

his snares for money and his spiritual nets (I should say laws),[19] surely any priest has much more authority to rend his nets and for God's sake to tread them under foot. But if he has not this right, neither has the pope the right to sell them at his shameful fair.[20]

This is the place to say too that the fasts should be matters of liberty, and all sorts of food made free, as the Gospel makes them. (Matthew 15:11) For at Rome they themselves laugh at the fasts, making us foreigners eat the oil with which they would not grease their shoes, and afterwards selling us liberty to eat butter and all sorts of other things; yet the holy Apostle says that in all these things we already have liberty through the Gospel. (1 Cor. 10:25 ff.) But they have caught us with their canon law and stolen our rights from us, so that we may have to buy them back with money. Thus they have made our consciences so timid and shy that it is no longer easy to preach about this liberty because the common people take such great offense, thinking it is a greater sin to eat butter than to lie, to swear, or even to live unchastely. Nevertheless, what men have decreed, that is the work of man; put it where you will,[21] nothing good ever comes out of it.

20. The forest chapels and rustic churches[22] must be utterly destroyed, -- those, namely, to which the recent pilgrimages have been directed, -- Wilsnack,[23] Sternberg,[24] Trier,[25] the Grimmenthal,[26] and now Regensburg[27] and a goodly number of others. Oh, what a terrible and heavy account will the bishops have to render, who permit this devilish deceit and receive its profits.[28] They should be the first to forbid it, and yet they think it a divine and holy thing, and do not see that it is the devil's doing, to strengthen avarice, to create a false, feigned faith, to weaken the parish churches, to multiply taverns and harlotry, to waste money and labor, and to lead the poor folk by the nose. If they had only read the Scriptures to as good purpose as they have read their damnable canon law, they would know well how to deal with this matter.

That miracles are done at these places does not help things, for the evil spirit can do miracles, as Christ has told us in Matthew 24:24. If they took the matter seriously and forbade this sort of thing, the miracles would quickly come to an end; (Acts 5:39) on the other hand, if the thing were of God their prohibition would not hinder it. And if there were no other evidence that it is not of God, this would be enough, -- that people run to these places in excited crowds, as though they had lost their reason, like herds of cattle; for this cannot possibly be the God. Moreover, God has commanded nothing of all this; there is neither obedience nor merit in it; the bishops, therefore, should boldly step in and keep the folk away. For what is not commanded -- and is concerned for self rather than for the commands of God -- that is surely the devil himself. Then, too, the parish churches receive injury, because they are held in smaller honor. In short, these things are signs of great unbelief among the people; if they truly believed,

they would have all that they need in their own churches, for to them they are commanded to go.

But what shall I say? Every one^[29] plans only how he may establish and maintain such a place of pilgrimage in his diocese and is not at all concerned to have the people believe and live aright; the rulers are like the people; one blind man leads another. (Matthew 13:14) Nay, where pilgrimages are not successful, they begin to canonize saints,^[30] not in honor of the saints -- for they are sufficiently honored without canonization -- but in order to draw crowds and bring in money. Pope and bishop help along; it rains indulgences; there is always money enough for that. But for what God has commanded no one provides; no one runs after these things; there is no money for them. Alas, that we should be so blind! We not only give the devil his own way in his tricks, but we even strengthen him in his wantonness and increase his pranks. I would that the dear saints were left in peace, and the poor folk not lead astray! What spirit has given the pope the authority to canonize the saints? Who tells him whether they are saints or not? Are there not already sins enough on earth, that we too must tempt God, interfere in His judgment and set up the dear saints as lures for money?

Therefore I advise that the saints be left to canonize themselves. Yea, it is God alone who should canonize them. And let every man stay in his own parish, where he finds more than in all the shrines of pilgrimage, even though all the shrines were one. Here we find baptism, the sacrament, preaching and our neighbor, and these are greater things, than all the saints in heaven, for it is by God's Word and sacrament that they have all been made saints. So long as we despise such great things God is just in the wrathful judgment by which He appoints the devil to lead us hither and thither, to establish pilgrimages, to found churches and chapels, to secure the canonization of saints, and to do other such fool's-works, by which we depart from true faith into new, false misbelief. This is what he did in olden times to the people of Israel, when he led them away from the temple at Jerusalem to countless other places, though he did it in the name of God and under the plausible guise of holiness, though all the prophets preached against it and were persecuted for so doing. But now no one preaches against it, perhaps for fear that pope, priests and monks would persecute him also. In this way St. Antoninus of Florence^[31] and certain others must now be made saints and canonized, that their holiness, which would otherwise have served only for the glory of God and as a good example, may serve to bring in fame and money.

Although the canonizing of saints may have been good in olden times, it is not good now; just as many other things were good in olden times and are now scandalous and injurious, such as feast-days, church-treasures and church-adornment. For it is evident that through the canonizing of saints neither God's glory nor the improvement of Christians is sought, but only money and glory, in that one church wants to be something more and have something more than others, and would be sorry if another

had the same thing and its advantage were common property. So entirely, in these last, evil days, have spiritual goods been misused and applied to the gaining of temporal goods, that everything, even God Himself, has been forced into the service of avarice. And even these special advantages lead only to dissensions, divisions and pride, in that the churches, differing from one another, hold each other in contempt, and exalt themselves one above another, though all the gifts which God bestows are the common and equal property of all churches and should only serve the cause of unity. The pope, too, is glad for the present state of affairs; he would be sorry if all Christians were equal and were at one.

This is the place to speak of the church licenses, bulls and other things which the pope sells at his flaying-place in Rome. We should either abolish them or disregard them, or at least make them the common property of all churches. For if he sells or gives away licenses and privileges, indulgences, graces, advantages, faculties[32] to Wittenberg, to Halle, to Venice and, above, all to his own Rome, why does he not give these things to all churches alike? Is he not bound to do for all Christians, gratis and for God's sake, everything that he can, and even to shed his blood for them? Tell me, then, why he gives or sells to one church and not to another? Or must the accursed money make, in the eyes of His Holiness, so great a difference among Christians, who all have the same baptism, Word, faith, Christ, God and all things? (Eph. 4:4 f.) Are we to be blind while we have eyes to see, fools while we have our reason, that they expect us to worship such greed, knavery and humbug? He is a shepherd, -- yes, so long as you have money, and no longer! And yet they are not ashamed of their knavery, leading us hither and yon with their bulls! Their one concern is the accursed money, and nothing else!

My advice is this: If such fool's-work cannot be abolished, then every pious Christian man should open his eyes, and not be misled by the hypocritical Roman bulls and seals, stay at home in his own church and be content with his baptism, his Gospel, his faith, his Christ and with God, Who is everywhere the same; and let the pope remain a blind leader of the blind. (Matt. 15:4) Neither angel nor pope can give you as much as God gives you in your parish-church. Nay, the pope leads you away from the gifts of God, which you have without pay, to his gifts, which you must buy; and he have without pay, to his gifts, which you must buy; and he gives you lead[33] for gold, hide for meat, the string for the purse, wax for honey, words for goods, the letter for the spirit. You see this before your very eyes, but you are unwilling to notice it. If you are to ride to heaven on his wax and parchment, your chariot will soon go to pieces, and you will fall into hell, not in God's name!

Let this be your fixed rule: What you must buy from the pope is neither good nor of God; for what is from God, to wit, the Gospel and the works of God; for what is from God, to wit, the Gospel and the works of God, is not only given without money, but

the whole world is punished and damned because it has not been willing to receive it as a free gift. We have deserved of God that we should be so deceived, because we have despised His holy Word and the grace of baptism, as St. Paul says: 2 Thess. 2:11 f.: "God shall send a strong delusion upon all those who have not received the truth to their salvation, to the end that they may believe and follow after lies and knavery," which serves them right.

21. One of our greatest necessities is the abolition of all begging throughout Christendom. Among Christians no one ought to go begging! It would also be easy to make a law, if only we had the courage and the serious intention, to the effect that every city should provide for its own poor, and admit no foreign beggars by whatever name they might be called, whether pilgrims or mendicant monks. Every city could support its own poor, and if it were too small, the people in the surrounding villages also should be exhorted to contribute, since in any case they have to feed so many vagabonds and knaves in the guise of mendicants. In this way, too, it could be known who were really poor and who not.

There would have to be an overseer or warden who knew all the poor and informed the city council or the priests what they needed; or some other better arrangement might be made. In my judgment there is no other business in which so much knavery and deceit are practiced as in begging, and yet it could all be easily abolished. Moreover, this free and universal begging hurts the common people. I have considered that each of the five or six mendicant orders[34] visits the same place more than six or seven times every year; besides these there are the common beggars, the "stationaries"[35] and the palmers,[36] so that it has been reckoned that every town is laid under tribute about sixty times a year, not counting what is given to the government in taxes, imposts and assessments, what is stolen by the Roman See with its wares, and what is uselessly consumed. Thus it seems to me one of God's greatest miracles that we can continue to support ourselves.

To be sure, some think that in this way[37] the poor would not be so well provided for and that not so many great stone houses and monasteries would be built. This I can well believe. Nor is it necessary. He who wishes to be poor should not be rich; and if he wishes to be rich, let him put his hand to the plow and seek his riches in the earth! It is enough if the poor are decently cared for, so that they do not die of hunger or of cold. It is not fitting that one man should live in idleness on another's labor, or be rich and live comfortably at the cost of another's discomfort, according to the present perverted custom; for St. Paul says, 2 Thess. 3:10: "If a man will not work, neither shall he eat." God has not decreed that any man shall live from another's goods save only the priests, who rule and preach, and these because of their spiritual labor, as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 9:14, and Christ also says to the Apostles, Luke 10:7: "Every laborer is worthy of his hire."

22. It is also to be feared that the many masses which are endowed in the foundation sand monasteries are not only of little use, but greatly arouse the wrath of God. It would therefore be profitable not to endow any more, but rather to abolish many that are already endowed, since we see that they are regarded only as sacrifices and good works,[39] though they are really sacraments, just like baptism and penance,[40] which profit only those who receive them, and no others. But now the custom has crept in, that masses are said for the living and the dead, and all hopes are built upon them; for this reason so many of them have been founded and the present state of affairs has come about.

My proposal is perhaps too novel an daring, especially for those who fear that through the discontinuance of these masses their trade and livelihood may be destroyed, and so I must refrain from saying more about it until we have come back to a correct understanding of what the mass is and what it is good for. These many years, alas, it has been made a trade practiced for a temporal livelihood, so that I would henceforth advise a man to become a shepherd or to seek some other trade rather than become a shepherd or to seek some other trade rather than become a priest or a monk, unless he first knows well what it is to celebrate mass.

I am not speaking, however, of the old foundations and cathedrals, which were doubtless established in order that the children of the nobility (since, according to the customs of the German nation not all of them can become heirs or rulers), might be provided for in these foundations, and there be free to serve God, to study, to become scholars and to make scholars. But I am speaking of the new foundations, which have been established only for the saying of prayers and masses; for after their example, even the old foundations have been burdened with like prayers and masses, so that they are of little or no profit; though it is also of God's grace that they too come at last, as they deserve, to the dregs, i.e., to the wailing of organs and of choral singers, and to dead, cold masses, by which the incomes of the worldly endowments are gotten and spent. Such things pope, bishops and doctors should examine and proscribe: but now it is they who are most given to them. They let everything pass, if only it brings in money; one blind man is always leading another. This is the work of avarice and of the spiritual law.

Again, no one person should be allowed any longer to hold more than one canonry or prebend. He must be content with a modest position, that some one else may also have something. This would do away with the excuses of those who say that they must hold more than one such office to "maintain a proper station." A "proper station" might be so broadly interpreted that a whole land would not be enough to maintain it! Moreover avarice and veiled distrust of God assuredly go with it, so that what is alleged to be the need of "a proper station" is often nothing else than avarice and distrust.

23. Sodalities,[41] indulgences, letters of indulgence, "butter-letter,"[42] mass-letters,[43] dispensations, and everything else of the sort, are to be drowned and destroyed. There is nothing good in them. If the pope has the power to grant you dispensation to eat butter and to absent yourself from mass, then he ought also be able to leave this power to the priests, from whom, indeed, he has no right to take it. I speak especially of those fraternities in which indulgences, masses and good works are portioned out. Dear friend, in your baptism you entered into a fraternity with Christ, all the angels, saints and Christians on earth. Hold to this fraternity and live up to its demands, and you have fraternities enough. The others -- let them glitter as they will -- are but as counters compared with guildens. But if there were a fraternity which contributed money to feed the poor or to help somebody in some other way, such a one would be good, and would have its indulgence and its merit in heaven. Now, however, they have become excuses for gluttony and drunkenness.

Above all, we should drive out of German lands the papal legates with their "faculties,"[45] which they sell us for large sums of money, though that is sheer knavery. For example, in return for money they legalize unjust gains, dissolve oaths, vows and agreements, break and teach men to break the faith and fealty which they have pledged to one another; and they say the pope has the authority to do this. It is the evil Spirit who bids them say this. Thus they sell us a doctrine of devils, and take money for teaching us sin and leading us to hell.

If there were no other evil wiles to prove the pope the true Antichrist, yet this one thing were enough to prove it. Hearst thou this, O pope, not most holy, but most sinful? O that God from heaven would soon destroy thy throne and sink it in the abyss of hell! Who hath given thee authority to exalt thyself above thy God, to break and to loose His commandments, and to teach Christians, especially the German nation, praised in all history for its nobility, its constancy and fidelity, to be inconstant, perjurers, traitors, profligates, faithless? God hath commanded to keep oath and faith even with an enemy, and thou undertakest to loose this His commandment, and ordainest in thine heretical, antichristian decretals that thou hast His power. Thus through thy throat and through thy pen the wicked Satan doth lie as he hath never lied before. O Christ, my Lord, look down, let the day of thy judgment break, and destroy the devil's nest at Rome! Here sitteth the man of whom St. Paul hath said (2 Thess. 2:3 f.) that he shall exalt himself above Thee, sit in Thy Church and set himself up as God, -- the man of sin and the son of perdition! What else is the papal power than only the teaching and increasing of sin and evil, the leading of souls to damnation under Thy name and guise?

In olden times the children of Israel had to keep the oath which they had unwittingly been deceived into giving to their enemies, the Gibeonites, and King Zedekiah was miserably lost, with all his people, because he broke this oath to the King of Babylon.

(Josh. 9:19 ff.; 2 Kings 24:20; 25:4 ff.) Even among us, a hundred years ago, that fine king of Hungary and Poland, Wladislav,[46] was slain by the Turk, with so many noble people, because he allowed himself to be deceived by the papal legate and cardinal, and broke the good and advantageous treaty which he had sworn with the Turk. The pious Emperor Sigismund had no good fortune after the Council of Constance, when allowed the knaves to break the safe-conduct which had been given to John Hus and Jerome,[47] and all the trouble between us and the Bohemians was the consequence. Even in our own times, God help us! How much Christian blood has been shed over the oath and alliance which Pope Julius made between the Emperor Maximilian and King Louis of France,[48] and afterwards broke? How could I tell all the troubles which the popes have stirred up by the devilish presumption with which they annul oaths and vows which have been made between great princes, making a jest of these things, and taking money for it. I have hopes that the judgment day is at the door; nothing can possibly be worse than the Roman See. He suppresses God's commandment, he exalts his own commandment over it; if he is not Antichrist, then let some one else tell who he can be! But more of this another time, and better.

24. It is high time that we seriously and honestly consider the case of the Bohemians,[49] and come into union with them so that the terrible slander, hatred and envy on both sides may cease. As befits my folly, I shall be the first to submit an opinion on this subject, with due deference to every one who may understand the case better than I.

First, We must honestly confess the truth, stop justifying ourselves, and grant the Bohemians that John Hus and Jerome of Prague were burned at Constance in violation of the papal, Christian, imperial safe-conduct and oath; whereby God's commandment was sinned against and the Bohemians were given ample cause for bitterness; and although they ought to have been perfect and to have patiently endured this great injustice and disobedience of God on our part, nevertheless they were not bound to approve of it and to acknowledge that it was well done. Nay, even to-day they should give up life and limb rather than confess that it is right to violate an imperial, papal Christian safe-conduct, and faithlessly to act contrary to it. So then, although it is the impatience of the Bohemians which is at fault, yet the pope and his followers are still more to blame for all the trouble, error and loss of souls that have followed upon that council.

I have no desire to pass judgment at this time upon John Hus's articles or to defend his errors, though I have not yet found any errors in his writings, and I am quite prepared to believe that it was neither fair judgment nor honest condemnation which was passed by those who, in their faithless dealing, violated a Christian safe-conduct and a commandment of God. Beyond doubt they were possessed rather by the evil spirit than by the Holy Spirit. No one will doubt that the Holy Spirit does not act contrary to

the commandment of God; and no one is so ignorant as not to know that the violation of faith and of a safe-conduct is contrary to the commandment of God, even though they had been promised to the devil himself, still more when the promise was made to a mere heretic. It is also quite evident that such a promise was made to John Hus and the Bohemians and was not kept, but that he was burned in spite of it. I do not wish, however, to make John Hus a saint or a martyr, as do some of the Bohemians, though I confess that injustice was done him, and that his books and doctrines were unjustly condemned; for the judgments of God are secret and terrible, and no one save God alone should undertake to reveal or utter them.

All I wish to say is this: though he were never so wicked a heretic, nevertheless he was burned unjustly and against God's commandment, and the Bohemians should not be forced to approve of such conduct, or else we shall never come into unity. Not obstinacy but the open admission of truth must make us one. It is useless to pretend, as was done at the time, that a safe-conduct given to a heretic need not be kept.[50] That is as much as to say that God's commandments are not to be kept to the end that God's commandments may be kept. The devil made them mad and foolish, so that they did not know what they were saying or doing. God has commanded that a safe-conduct shall be kept. This commandment we should keep though the world fall. How much more, when it is only a question of freeing a heretic! We should vanquish heretics with books, not with burning; for so the ancient fathers did. If it were a science to vanquish the heretics with fire, then the hangmen would be the most learned doctors on earth; we should no longer need to study, but he who overcame another by force might burn him at the stake.

Second, The emperor and the princes should send to the Bohemians some pious and sensible bishops and scholars; but by no means a cardinal or papal legate or inquisitor, for those people are utter ignoramuses as regards things Christian; they seek not the welfare of souls but, like all the pope's hypocrites, only their own power, profit and glory' indeed, they were the prime movers in this miserable business at Constance. The men thus sent into Bohemia should inform themselves about the faith of the Bohemians, and whether it be possible to unite all their sects. Then the pope should, for their souls' sake, lay aside his supremacy for the time being, and, according to the decree of the most Christian Council of Nicaea,[51] allow the Bohemians to choose one of their number to be Archbishop of Prague,[52] and he should be confirmed by the bishop of Olmutz in Moravia, or the bishop of Gran in Hungary, or the bishop of Gnesen in Poland, or the bishop of Magdeburg in Germany.[53] It will be enough if he is confirmed by one or two of these, as was the custom in the time of St. Cyprian.[54] The pope has no right to oppose such an arrangement, and if he does oppose it, he becomes a wolf and a tyrant; no one should follow him and his ban should be met with a counter-ban.

If, however, it were desired, in honor of the See of St. Peter, to do this with the pope's consent, I should be satisfied, provided it does not cost the Bohemians a heller and the pope does not bind them at all nor make them subject to his tyrannies by oaths and obligations, as he does all other bishops, in despite of God and of justice. If he will not be satisfied with the honor of having his consent asked, then let them not bother any more about him[55] and his rights, laws and tyrannies; let the election suffice, and let the blood of all the souls which are endangered cry out against him, for no one should consent to injustice; it is enough to have offered tyranny an honor. If it cannot be otherwise, then an election and approval by the common people can even now be quite as valid as a confirmation by a tyrant; but I hope this will not be necessary. Some of the Romans or the good bishops and scholars will sometime mare and oppose papal tyranny.

I would also advise against compelling them to abolish both kinds in the sacrament,[56] since that is neither unchristian nor heretical, but they should be allowed to retain their own practice, if they wish. Yet the new bishop should be careful that no discord arise because of such a practice is wrong;[57] just as it ought not to cause dissension that the clergy differ from the laity in manner of life and in dress. In like manner if they were unwilling to receive the Roman canon law, they should not be forced to do so, but we should first make sure that they live in accordance with faith and with the Scriptures. For Christian faith and life can well exist without the intolerable laws of the pope, nay, they cannot well exist unless there be fewer of these Roman laws, or none at all. In baptism we have become free and have been made subject to God's Word only; why should any man ensnare us in his words? As St. Paul says, 1 Cor. 7:23 and Gal. 5:1: "Ye have become free, be not servants of men," i.e. of those who rule with man-made laws.

If I knew that the Picards[58] held no other error touching the sacrament of the altar except that they believe that the bread and wine are present in their true nature, but that the body and blood of Christ are truly present under them, then I would not condemn them, but would let them enter the obedience of the bishop of Prague. For it is not an article of faith that bread and wine are not essentially and naturally in the sacrament, but this is an opinion of St. Thomas[59] and the pope. On the other hand, it is an article of faith that in the natural bread and wine the true natural body and blood of Christ are present.[60] And so we should tolerate the opinions of both sides until they come to an agreement, because there is no danger in believing that bread is there or is not there. For we have to endure many practices and ordinances so long as they are not harmful to faith. On the other hand, if they had a different faith,[61] I would rather have them outside the Church; yet I would teach them the truth.

Whatever other errors and schisms might be discovered in Bohemia should be tolerated until the archbishop had been restored and had gradually brought all the

people together again in one common doctrine. They will assuredly never be united by force, nor by defiance, nor by haste; it will take time and forbearance. Had not even Christ to tarry with His disciples a long while and bear with their unbelief, until they believed His resurrections? If they but had again a regular bishop and church order, without Roman tyranny, I could hope that things would soon be better.

The restoration of the temporal goods which formerly belonged to the Church should not be too strictly demanded, but since we are Christians and each is bound to help the rest, it is in our power, for the sake of unity, to give them these things and let them keep them in the sight of God and men. For Christ says, Matt. 18:19 f.: "Where two are at one with each other on earth, there am I in the midst of them." Would to God that on both sides we were working toward this unity, offering our hands to one another in brotherly humility, and not standing stubbornly on our powers or rights! Love is greater and more necessary than the papacy at Rome, for there can be papacy without love and love without papacy.

With this counsel I shall have done what I could. If the pope or his followers hinder it, (Phil. 2:4), they shall render an account for seeking their own things rather than the things of their neighbor, contrary to the love of God. The pope ought to give up his papacy and all his possessions and honors, if he could by that means save one soul; but now he would let the world go to destruction rather than yield a hair's-breadth of his presumptuous authority. And yet he would be the "most holy"! Here my responsibility ends.

NOTES:

[1] On this sort of reserved cases see **Discussion of Confession**, Vol. I, pp. 96 ff.

[2] "Irregularity" is the condition of any member of a monastic order who has violated the prescriptions of the order and been deprived, in consequence, of the benefits enjoyed by those who live under the **regula**, viz., the rule of the order.

[3] The three kinds of masses are really but one thing, viz., masses for the dead, celebrated on certain fixed days in each year, in consideration of the enjoyment of certain incomes, received either out of bequeathed endowments or from the heirs of the supposed beneficiaries.

[4] i.e., Even when the mass is decently said.

[5] See above, p. 72, note 1.

[6] See above, p. 104.

[7] **Das geistliche Unrecht.**

[8] The **Treatise concerning the Ban**, above, pp. 33 ff.

[9] i.e., To those who teach enforce the canon law.

[10] Luther means the saint's-days and minor religious holidays. See also the "Discourse on Good Works", Vol. I, pp. 240 f.

[11] Or "congregation."

[12] i.e., City-council.

[13] **Kirchweihen**, i.e., the anniversary celebration of the consecration of a church. These days had become feast days for the parish, and were observed in anything but a spiritual fashion.

[14] i.e., Occasions for drunkenness, gain and gambling.

[15] See above, pp. 96 f.

[16] See above, p. 98, note 2

[17] Letters entitling their holder to the benefits of the masses founded by the sodalities or confraternities. See Benrath, p. 103.

[18] See above, p. 98, and Vol. I, p. 22.

[19] The pun is untranslatable, -- **Netz, Gesetz solt ich sagen.**

[20] What the pope sold was release from the "snares" and "nets," viz., dispensation.

[21] i.e., Even into the law of the church.

[22] **Die wilden Kapellen und Feldkirchen**, i.e., churches which are built in the country, where there are no congregations.

[23] A little town in East Prussia, where was displayed a sacramental wafer, said to have been miraculously preserved from a fire which destroyed the church in 1383. It was alleged that at certain times this wafer exuded drops of blood, revered as the blood of Christ, and many miracles were said to have been performed by it. Wilsnack

early became a favorite resort for pilgrims. In 1412 the archbishop of Prague, at the instigation of John Hus, forbade the Bohemians to go there. Despite the protests of the Universities of Leipzig and Erfurt, Pope Eugenius IV in 1446 granted special indulgences for this pilgrimage, and the popularity of the shrine was undiminished until the time the Reformation. Cf. Realencyk, xxi, pp. 347 ff.

[24] In Meckleburg, where another relic of "the Holy Blood" was displayed after 1491. Cf. Benrath, pp. 104 f.

[25] The "Holy Coat of Trier" was believed by the credulous to be the seamless coat of Christ, which the soldiers did not rend. It was first exhibited in 1512, but was said to have been presented to the cathedral church of Trier by the Empress Helena, mother of Constantine the Great.

[26] Pilgrimage to the Grimmenthal in Meiningen began in 1449. An image of the Virgin, declared to have been miraculously created, was displayed there, and was alleged to work wonderful cures, especially of syphilis.

[27] The "Fair Virgin (**die schone Maria**) of Regensburg" was an image of the Virgin similar to that exhibited in the Grimmenthal. The shrine was opened March 45, 1519, and within a month 50,000 pilgrims are said to have worshipped there. (Weimar Ed., VI, 447, note 1). For another explanation see Benrath, p. 105.

[28] The pilgrimages were a source of large revenue, derived from the sale of medals which were worn as amulets, the fees for masses at the shrines, and the free-will offerings of the pilgrims. A large part of this revenue accrued to the bishop of the diocese, though the popes never overlooked the profits which the sale of indulgences for worship at these shrines could produce. In the Gravamina of 1521 complaint is made that the bishops demand at least 25 to 33 per cent of the offerings made at shrines of pilgrimage (WREDE, op. cit., II, 687).

[29] i.e., Every bishop.

[30] The possession of a saint gave a church a certain reputation and distinction, which was sufficiently coveted to make local Church authorities willing to pay roundly for the canonization of a departed bishop or other local dignitary. Cf. Hutten's **Vadiscus** (Bocking, IV, 232).

[31] Archbishop of Florence (died 1459). He was canonized, May 31, 1523, by Pope Hadrian VI. When Luther wrote this the process of canonization had already begun.

[32] **Indulta**, i.e., grants of special privilege.

[33] "Lead," the leaden seal attached to the bull; "hide", the parchment on which it is written; "the string," the ribbon or silken cord from which the seals depend; "wax," the seal holding the cord to the parchment.

[34] Franciscans, Dominicans, Augustinians, Carmelites and Servites.

[35] **Botschaften**, interpreted by Benrath (p. 105), Clemen (I, 406, note) and Weimar Ed. (VI, 406, note 1) as a reference to the **stationarii**. They were wandering beggars who, for an alms, would enroll the contributor in the list of beneficiaries of their patron saint, an alleged insurance against disease, accident, etc. They were classified according to the names of their patron saints, St. Anthony, St. Hurbert, St. Valentine, etc. Protest against their operations were raised at the Diets of Worms (1521) and Nurnberg (1523). Included in these protests are the **terminarii**, i.e., the collectors of alms sent out by the mendicant orders. See WREDE, op. cit., II, 678, 688, III, 651, and Benrath, loc. cit.

[36] **Wallbruder**, the professional pilgrims who spent their lives in wandering from one place of pilgrimage to another and subsisted on the alms of the faithful.

[37] i.e., If the plan above proposed were adopted.

[38] See above, p. 129, note 1.

[39] See **Treatise on the New Testament**, Vol. I, pp. 308 ff.

[40] In the Babylonian Captivity (below, pp. 291 f.) Luther definitely excludes penance from the number of sacraments, but see also p. 177.

[41] The **sodalities** ("fraternities," "confraternities"), still an important institution in the Roman Church, flourished especially in the XVI Century. They are associations for devotional purposes. The members of the sodalities are obligated to the recitation of certain prayers and the attendance upon certain masses at stipulated times. By virtue of membership in the association each member is believed to participate in the benefits accruing from these "good works" of all the members. In the case of most of the **sodalities** membership entitled the member to the enjoyment of certain indulgences. In 1520 Wittenberg boasted of 20 fraternities, Cologne of 80, Hamburg of more than 100 (Realencyk., III, 437). In 1519 Degenhard Peffinnger, of Wittenberg, was a member of 8 such fraternities in his home city, and of 27 in other places. For Luther's view of the **sodalities** see above, pp. 8, 26 ff. On the whole subject see Benrath, pp. 106 f.; KOLDE in Realencyk., III, pp. 434 ff.; LEA, **Hist. Of Conf. And Indulg**, III, pp. 470 ff.

[42] See above, p. 98, note 2.

[43] See above, p. 128, note 5.

[44] The excesses committed at the feasts of the religious societies were often a public scandal. See LEA, **Hist. of Conf. and Indulg**, III, pp. 437 ff.

[45] "Faculties" were extraordinary powers, usually for the granting of indulgences and of absolution in "reserved cases" (see above, p. 105, note 3). They were bestowed by the pope and could be revoked by him at any time. Sometimes they were given to local Church officials, but were usually held by the legates or commissaries sent from Rome. Complaints were made at the Diet of Worms (1520) and Nurnberg (1523) that the papal commissaries and legates interfered with the ordinary methods of ecclesiastical jurisdiction and appointment. See WREDE, *op. cit.*, II, 673, III, 653.

[46] Wladislav I forced the Sultan to sue for peace in 1443. At the instigation of the papal legate, Cardinal Caesarini, who represented that the treaty had not been approved by the pope, and absolved the king from the fulfillment of its conditions he renewed the war in 1444. At the battle of Varna, Nov. 10th, 1444, the Hungarians were decisively defeated, and Wladislav and Caesarini both killed. See CREIGHTON, **Hist. of the Papacy**, III, 67.

[47] John Hus and Jerome of Prague were convicted of heresy by the Council of Constance and burned at the stake, the former July 6th, 1415, the latter May 30th, 1416. Hus had come to Constance under the safe-conduct of the Emperor Sigismund. Luther is in error when he assumes that Jerome had a similar safe-conduct. In September, 1415, the Council passed a decree which asserted that "either by natural, divine or human law was any promise to be observed to the prejudice of the catholic faith." On the whole matter of the safe-conduct and its violation see LEA, **Hist. of the Inquisition in the MA**, II, pp. 453 ff.

[48] The League of Cambray, negotiated in 1508 for war against Venice. In 1510 Venice made terms with the pope and detached him from the alliance, and the result was war between the pope and the King of France. See **Cambridge Modern History**, I, pp. 130 ff., and literature there cited.

[49] i.e., The Hussites. After the martyrdom of Hus his followers maintained for a time a strong organization in Bohemia, and resisted with arms all attempts to force them into conformity with the Roman Church. The Council of Basel succeeded (1434) in reconciling the more moderate party among the Bohemians (the Calixtines) by allowing the administration of the cup to the laity. The more extreme party, however, refused to subscribe the Compactata of Basel. Though they soon ceased to be a factor

in the political situation, they remained outside the Church and perpetuated the teachings of Hus in sectarian organizations. The most important of these, the so-called Bohemian Brethren, had extended into Poland and Prussia before Luther's time. See Realencyk., III, 465-467.

[50] See above, p. 140, note 1.

[51] See KOHLER, L. **Und die Kirchengesch.**, 139, 151.

[52] The Archbishop of Prague was primate of the Church in Bohemia.

[53] The dioceses of these bishops were contiguous to that the Archbishop of Prague.

[54] Bishop of Carthage, 249-258 A.D.

[55] **Lass man ihn ein gut jar haben**, literally, "'Bid him good-day."

[56] One of the chief points of controversy between the Roman Church and the Hussites. The Roman Church administered to the laity only the bread, the Hussites used both elements. See below, pp. 178 f.

[57] Luther had not yet reached the conviction that the administration of the cup to the laity was a necessity, but see the argument in the Babylonian Captivity, below, pp. 178 ff.

[58] The Bohemian Brethren, who are here distinguished from the Hussites, Cf. Realencyk., III, 452, 49.

[59] St. Thomas Aquinas, the great Dominican theologian of the XIII. Century (1225-74), whose influence is still dominant in Roman theology.

[60] The view of the sacramental presence adopted by William of Occam. For Luther's own view at this time, see below, pp. 187 ff.

[61] i.e., If they did not believe in the real presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper.

Proposals for Reform Part III

25. The universities also need a good, thorough reformation -- I must say it no matter whom it vexes -- for everything which the papacy has instituted and ordered is

directed only towards the increasing of sin and error. What else are the universities, if their present condition remains unchanged, than as the book of Maccabees says, 2 Macc. 4:9, 12: **Gymnasia Epheborum et Graecae gloriae**, [1] in which loose living prevails, the Holy Scriptures and the Christian faith are little taught, and the blind, heathen master Aristotle [2] rules alone, even more than Christ. In this regard my advice would be that Aristotle's **Physics, Metaphysics, On the Soul, Ethics**, which have hitherto been thought his best books, should be altogether discarded, together with all the rest of his books which boast of treating the things of nature, although nothing can be learned from the either of the things of nature or the things of the Spirit. Moreover no one has so far understood his meaning, and many souls have been burdened with profitless labor and study, at the cost of much precious time. I venture to say that any potter has more knowledge of nature than is written in these books. It grieves me to the heart that this damned, conceited, rascally heathen has with his false words deluded and made fools of so many of the best Christians. God has sent him as a plague upon us for our sins.

Why, this wretched man, in his best book, **On the Soul**, teaches that the soul dies with the body, although many have tried with vain words to save his reputation. As though we had not the Holy Scriptures, in which we are abundantly instructed about all things, and of them Aristotle had not the faintest inkling! And yet this dead heathen has conquered and obstructed and almost suppressed the books of the living God, so that when I think of this miserable business I can believe nothing else than that the evil spirit has introduced the study of Aristotle.

Again, his book on **Ethics** is the worst of all books. It flatly opposes divine grace and all Christian virtues, and yet it is considered one of his best works. Away with such books! Keep them away from all Christians! Let no one accuse me of exaggeration, or of condemning what I do not understand! My dear friend, I know well whereof I speak. I know my Aristotle as well as you or the likes of you. I have lectured on him [3] and heard lectures on him, and I understand him better than do St. Thomas or Scotus. [4] This I can say without pride, and if necessary I can prove it. I care not that so many great minds have wearied themselves over him for so many hundred years. Such objections do not disturb me as once they did; for it is plain as day that other errors have remained for even more centuries in the world and in the universities.

I should be glad to see Aristotle's books on **Logic, Rhetoric** and **Poetics** retained or used in an abridged form as text-books for the profitable training of young people in speaking and preaching. But the commentaries and notes should be abolished, and as Cicero's **Rhetoric** is read without commentaries and notes, so Aristotle's Logic should be read as it is, without such a mass of comments. But now neither speaking nor preaching is learned from it, and it has become nothing but a disputing and a weariness to the flesh.

Besides this there are the languages -- Latin, Greek and Hebrew -- the mathematical disciplines and history. But all this I give over to the specialists, and, indeed, the reform would come of itself, if we were only seriously bent upon it. In truth, much depends upon it; for it is here[5] that the Christian youth and the best of our people, with whom the future of Christendom lies, are to be educated and trained. Therefore I consider that there is no work more worthy of pope or emperor than a thorough reformation of the universities, and there is nothing worse or more worthy of the devil than unreformed universities.

The medical men I leave to reform their own faculties; the jurists and theologians I take as my share, and I say, in the first place, that it were well if the canon law, from the first letter to the last, and especially the decretals, were utterly blotted out. The Bible contains more than enough directions for all our living, and so the study of the canon law only stands in the way of the study of the Holy Scriptures; moreover, it smacks for the most part of mere avarice and pride. Even though there were much in it that is good, it might as well be destroyed, for the pope has taken the whole canon law captive and imprisoned it in the "chamber of his hear,[6] so that the study of it is henceforth a waste of time and a farce. At present the canon law is not what is in the books, but what is in the sweet will of the pope and his flatterers. Your cause may be thoroughly established in the canon law; still the pope has his **scrinium pectoris**,[7] and all law and the whole world must be guided by that. Now it is oft times a knave, and even the devil himself, who rules this scrinium, and they boast that it is ruled by the Holy Spirit! Thus they deal with Christ's unfortunate people. They give them many laws and themselves keep none of them, but others they compel either to keep them or else to buy release.

Since, then, the pope and his followers have suspended the whole canon law, and since they pay no heed to it, but regard their own wanton will as a law exalting them above all the world, we should follow their example and for our part also reject these books. Why should we waste our time studying them? We could never discover the whole arbitrary will of the pope, which has now become the canon law. The canon law has arisen in the devil's name, let it fall in the name of God, and let there be no more **doctores decretorum**[8] in the work, but only **doctores scrinii papalis**, that is, "hypocrites of the pope"! It is said that there is no better temporal rule anywhere than among the Turks, who have neither spiritual nor temporal law, but only their Koran; and we must confess that there is no more shameful rule than among us, with our spiritual and temporal law, so that there is no estate which lives according to the light of nature, still less according to Holy Scripture.

The temporal law, -- God help us! What a wilderness it has become![9] Though it is much better, wiser and more rational than the "spiritual law" which has nothing good about it except the name, still there is far too much of it. Surely the Holy Scriptures

and good rulers would be law enough; as St. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 6:1: "Is there no one among you can judge his neighbor's cause, that ye must go to law before heathen courts?" It seems just to me that territorial laws and territorial customs should take precedence of the general imperial laws, and the imperial laws be used only in case of necessity. Would to God that as every land has its own peculiar character, so it were ruled by its own brief laws, as the lands were ruled before these imperial laws were invented, and many lands are still ruled without them! These diffuse and far-fetched laws are only a burden to the people, and hinder causes more than they help them. I hope, however, that others have given this matter more thought and attention than I am able to do.

My friends the theologians have spared themselves pains and labor; they leave the Bible in peace and read the Sentences. I should think that the Sentences[10] ought to be the first study of young students in theology and the Bible ought to be the study for the doctors. But now it is turned around; the Bible come first, and is put aside when the bachelor's degree is reached, and the Sentences come last. They are attached forever to the doctorate, and that with such a solemn obligation that a man who is not a priest may indeed read may indeed the Bible, but the Sentences a priest must read. A married man, I observe, could be a Doctor of the Bible, but under no circumstances a Doctor of the Sentences. What good fortune can we expect if we act so perversely and in this way put the Bible, the holy Word of God, so far to the rear? Moreover the pope commands, with many severe words, that his laws are to be read and used in the schools and the courts, but little is said of the Gospel. Thus it is the custom that in the schools and the courts the Gospel lies idle in the dust under the bench,[11] to the end that the pope's harmful laws may rule alone.

If we are called by the title of teachers[12] of Holy Scripture, then we ought to be compelled, in accordance with our name, to teach the Holy Scriptures and nothing else, although even this title is too proud and boastful and no one ought to be proclaimed and crowned teacher of Holy Scripture. Yet it might be suffered, if the work justified the name; but now, under the despotism of the Sentences, we find among the theologians more of heathen and human opinion than of the holy and certain doctrine of Scripture. What, then, are we to do? I know of no other way than humbly to pray God to give us Doctors of Theology. Pope, emperor and universities may make Doctors of Arts, of Medicine, of Laws, of the Sentences; but be assured that no one will make a Doctor of Holy Scripture, save only the Holy Ghost from heaven, as Christ says in John 6:45: "They must all be taught of God Himself." Now the Holy Ghost does not concern Himself about red or brown birettas[13] or other decorations, nor does He ask whether one is old or young, layman or priest, monk or secular, virgin or married; nay He spake of old by an ass, against the prophet who rode upon it. (Number 22:28). Would God that we were worthy to have such doctors

given us, whether they were layman or priests, married or virgin. True, they now try to force the Holy Ghost into pope, bishops and doctors, although there is no sign or indication whatever that He is in them.

The number of theological books must also be lessened, and a selection made of the best of them. For it is not many books or much reading that makes men learned; but it is good things, however little of them, often read, that make men learned in the Scriptures, and make them godly, too. Indeed the writings of all the holy fathers should be read only for a time, in order that through them we may be led to the Holy Scriptures. As it is, however, we read them only to be absorbed in them and never come to the Scriptures. We are like men who study the sign-posts and never travel the road. The dear fathers wished, by their writings, to lead us to the Scriptures, but we so use them as to be led away from the Scriptures, though the Scriptures alone are our vineyard in which we ought to work and toil.

Above all, the foremost and most general subject of study, both in the higher and the lower schools, should be the Holy Scriptures, and for the young boys the Gospel. And would to God that every town had a girl's school also, in which the girls were taught the Gospel for an hour each day either in German or Latin. Indeed the schools, monasteries and nunneries began long ago with that end in view, and it was a praiseworthy and Christian purpose, as we learn from the story of St. Agnes[14] and other of the saints. That was the time of holy virgins and martyrs, and then it was well with Christendom; but now they[15] have come to nothing but praying and singing. Ought not every Christian at his ninth or tenth year to know the entire holy Gospel from which he derives his name[16] and his life? A spinner or a seamstress teaches her daughter the trade in her early years; but now even the great, learned prelates and bishops themselves do not know the Gospel.

O how unjustly we deal with these poor young people who are committed to us for direction and instruction! We must give a terrible accounting for our neglect to set the Word of God before them. They fare as Jeremiah says in Lamentations 2:11 ff.: "Mine eyes are grown weary with weeping, my bowels are terrified, my liver is poured out upon the ground, because of the destruction of the daughter of my people, for the youth and the children perish in all the streets of the whole city; they said to their mothers, "Where is bread and wine? And they swooned as the wounded in the streets of the city and gave up the ghost in their mothers' bosom." This pitiful evil we do not see, -- how even now the young folk in the midst of Christendom languish and perish miserably for want of the Gospel, in which we ought to be giving them constant instruction and training.

Moreover, if the universities were diligent in the study of Holy Scripture, we should not send everybody there, as we do when all we ask is numbers, and everyone wishes

to have a doctor's degree; but we should send only the best qualified students, who have previously been well trained in the lower schools. A prince or city council ought to see to this, and permit only the well qualified to be sent. But where the Holy Scriptures do not rule, there I advise no one to send his son. Everyone not unceasingly busy with the Word of God must become corrupt; that is why the people who are in the universities and who are trained there are the kind of people they are. For this no one is to blame with the training of the youth. For the universities ought to turn out only men who are experts in the Holy Scriptures, who can become bishops and priests, leaders in the fight against heretics, the devil and all the world. But where do you find this true? I greatly fear that the universities are wide gates of hell, if they do not diligently teach the Holy Scriptures and impress them on the youth.

26. [17]I know full well that the Roman crowd will make pretensions and great boasts about how the pope took the Holy Roman Empire from the Greek Emperor[18] and bestowed it on the Germans, for which honor and benevolence he is said to have justly deserved and obtained from the Germans submission and thanks and all good things. For this reason they will, perhaps, undertake to throw to the winds all attempts to reform them, and will not allow us to think about anything but the bestowal of the Roman Empire. For this cause they have heretofore persecuted and oppressed many a worthy emperor so arbitrarily and arrogantly that it is pity to tell of it, and with the same adroitness they have made themselves overlords of all the temporal powers and authorities, contrary to the Holy Gospel. Of this too I must therefore speak.

There is no doubt that the true Roman Empire, which the writings of the prophets foretold in Numbers 24:24 and in Daniel 2:39 ff., has long since been overthrown and brought to an end, as Balaam clearly prophesied in Numbers 24:24:, when he said: "The Romans shall come and overthrow the Jews; and afterwards they also shall be destroyed." That was brought to pass by the Goths,[19] but especially when the Turkish Empire arose almost a thousand years ago,[20] then in time Asia and Africa fell away, and finally Venice arose, and there remained to Rome nothing of its former power.

Now when the pope could not subdue to his arrogant will the Greeks and the emperor at Constantinople, who was hereditary Roman Emperor, he bethought himself of this device, viz., to rob him of his empire and his title and turn it over to the Germans, who were at that time warlike and of good repute, so as to bring the power of the Roman Empire under his control and give it away as a fief. So too it turned out. It was taken away from the emperor at Constantinople and its name and title were given to us Germans. Thereby we became the servants of the pope, and there is now a second Roman Empire, which the pope has built upon the Germans; for the other, which was first, has long since fallen, as I have said.

So then the Roman See has its will. It has taken possession of Rome, driven out the German Emperor and bound him with oaths not to dwell at Rome. He is to be Roman Emperor, and yet he is not to have possession of Rome, and besides he is at all times to be dependent upon the caprice of the pope and his followers, so that we have the name and they have the land and cities. They have always abused our simplicity to serve their own arrogance and tyranny, and they call us mad Germans, who let ourselves be made apes and fools at their bidding.

Ah well! For God the Lord it is a small thing to toss empires and principalities to and fro! He is so generous with them that once in a while He gives a kingdom to a knave and takes it from a good man, sometimes by the treachery of wicked, faithless men and sometimes by heredity, as we read of the Kingdoms of Persia and Greece, and of almost all kingdoms; and Daniel 2:21 and 4:14 says: "He Who ruleth over all things dwelleth in heaven, and it is He alone Who changeth kingdoms, tosseth them to and fro, and maketh them." Since, therefore, no one can think it a great thing to have a kingdom given him, especially if he is a Christian, we Germans too cannot be puffed up because a new Roman Empire is bestowed on us; for in His eyes it is a trifling gift, which He often gives to the most unworthy, as Daniel 4:35 says: "All who dwell upon the earth are in His eyes as nothing, and He has power in all the kingdoms of men, to give them to whomsoever He will."

But although the pope unjustly and by violence robbed the true emperor of his Roman Empire, or of its name, and gave it to us Germans, it is certain, nevertheless, that in this matter God has used the pope's wickedness to give such an empire to the German nation, and after the fall of the first Roman Empire, to set up another, which still exists. And although we gave no occasion to this wickedness of the popes, and did not understand their false aims and purposes, nevertheless, through this papal trickery and roguery, we have already paid too dearly for our empire, with incalculable bloodshed, with the suppression of our liberty, with the risk of robbery of all our goods, especially the goods of the churches and canonries, and with the suffering of unspeakable deception and insult. We have the name of the empire, but the pope has our wealth, honor, body, life, soul and all that is ours. So we Germans are to be cheated in the trade.[21] What the popes sought was to be emperors, and since they could not manage that, they at least succeeded in setting themselves over the emperors.

Because then, the empire has been given us without our fault, by the providence of God and the plotting of evil men, I would not advise that we give it up, but rather that we rule it wisely and in the fear of God, so long as it shall please Him. For, as has been said, it matters not to Him where an empire comes from; it is His will that it shall be ruled. Though the popes took it dishonestly from others, nevertheless we did not get it dishonestly. It is given us by the will of God through evil-minded men; and we

have more regard for God's will than for the treacherous purpose of the popes, who, in bestowing it, wished to be emperors themselves, and more than emperors, and only to fool and mock us with the name. The King of Babylon also seized his empire by robbery and force; yet it was God's will that it should be ruled by the holy princes, Daniel, Hananiah, Azariah and Mishael; much more then is it His will that this empire be ruled by the Christian princes of Germany, regardless whether the pope stole it, or got it by robbery, or made it anew. It is all God's ordering, which came to pass before we knew of it.

Therefore the pope and his followers may not boast that they have done a great favor to the German nation by the bestowal of this Roman Empire. First, because they did not mean it for our good, but were rather taking advantage of our simplicity in order to strengthen themselves in their proud designs against the Roman Emperor at Constantinople, from whom the pope godlessly and lawlessly took this empire, a thing which he had no right to do. Second, because the pope's intention was not to give us the empire, but to get it for myself, that he might bring all our power, our freedom, wealth, body and soul into subjection to himself and use us (if God had not prevented) to subdue all the world. He clearly says so himself in his decretals, and he has attempted it, by many evil wiles, with a number of the German emperors. How beautifully we Germans have been taught our German! When we thought to be lords, we became slaves of the most deceitful tyrants; we have the name, title and insignia of the empire, but the pope has its treasures, its authority, its law and its liberty. So the pope gobbles the kernel, and we play with the empty hulls.

Now may God, Who by the wiles of tyrants has tossed this empire into our lap, and charged us with the ruling of it, help us to live up to the name, title and insignia, to rescue our liberty, and to show the Romans, for once, what it is that we, through them, have received from God! They boast that they have bestowed on us an empire. So be it, then! If it is true, then let the pope give us Rome and everything else which he has got from the empire; let him free our land from his intolerable taxing and robbing, and give us back our liberty, authority, wealth, honor, body and soul; let the empire be what an empire should be, and let his words and pretensions be fulfilled!

If he will not do that, then why all this shamming, these false and lying words and juggler's tricks? Is he not satisfied with having so rudely led this noble nation by the nose these many hundred years without ceasing? It does not follow that the pope must be above an emperor because he makes or crowns him. The prophet Samuel at God's command anointed and crowned Kings Saul and David, and yet he was their subject (1 Samuel 10:1; 16:13); and the prophet Nathan anointed King Solomon, but was not set over him on that account (1 Kings 1:38 f.); Elisha too had one of his servants anoint Jehu King of Israel, and yet they remained obedient and subject to him (2 Kings 9:1 ff.). Except in the case of the pope, it has never happened in all the world's

history that he who consecrated or crowned the king was over the king. He lets himself be crowned pope by three cardinals, who are under him, and he is nevertheless their superior. Why then should he, contrary to the example which he himself sets, and contrary to the custom and teaching of all the world and of the Scriptures, exalt himself above temporal authorities, or the empire, simply because he crowns or consecrates the emperor? It is enough that he should be the emperor's superior in divine things, to wit, in preaching, teaching and administering the sacraments, in which things, indeed, any bishop or priest is over every other man, as St. Ambrose in his See was over the emperor Theodosius,[22] and the prophet Nathan over David, and Samuel over Saul. Therefore, let the German Emperor be really and truly emperor, and let not his authority or his sword be put down by this blind pretension of papal hypocrites, as though they were to be excepted from his dominion and themselves direct the temporal sword in all things.

27. Enough has now been said about the failings of the clergy, though more of them can and will be found if these are properly considered. We would say something too about the failings of the temporal estate.

1. There is great need of a general law and decree of the German nation against the extravagance and excess in dress, by which so many nobles and rich men are impoverished.[23] God has given to us, as to other lands, enough wool, hair, flax and everything else which properly serves for the seemly and honorable dress of every rank, so that we do not need to spend and waste such enormous sums for silk and velvet and golden ornaments and other foreign wares. I believe that even if the pope had not robbed us Germans with his intolerable exactions, we should still have our hands more than full with these domestic robbers, the silk and velvet merchants.[24] In the matter of clothes, as we see, everybody wants to be equal to everybody else, and pride and envy are aroused and increased among us, as we deserve. All this and much more misery would be avoided if our curiosity would only let us be thankful, and be satisfied with the goods which God has given us.

2. In like manner it is also necessary to restrict the spice-traffic[25] which is another of the great ships in which money is carried out of German lands. There grows among us, by God's grace, more to eat and drink than in any other land, and just as choice and good. Perhaps the proposals that I make may seem foolish and impossible and give the impression that I want to suppress the greatest of all trades, that of commerce; but I am

doing what I can. If reforms are not generally introduced, then let every one who is willing reform himself. I do not see that many good customs have ever come to a land through commerce, and in ancient times God made His people of Israel dwell away from the sea on this account, and did not let them engage much in commerce.

3. But the greatest misfortune of the German nation is certainly the traffic in annuities[26]. If that did not exist many a man would have to leave unbought his silk, velvets, golden ornaments, spices and ornaments of every sort. It has not existed much over a hundred years, and has already brought almost all princes, cities, endowed institutions, nobles and their heirs to poverty, misery and ruin; if it shall continue for another hundred years Germany cannot possibly have a pfennig left and we shall certainly have to devour one another. The devil invented the practice, and the pope, by confirming it,[27] has injured the whole world.

Therefore I ask and pray that everyone open his eyes to see the ruin of himself, his children and his heirs, which not only stands before the door, but already haunts the house, and that emperor, princes, lords and cities do their part that this trade be condemned as speedily as possible, and henceforth prevented, regardless whether or not the pope, with all his law and unlaw, is opposed to it, and whether or not benefices or church foundations are based upon it. It is better that there should be in a city one living based on an honest freehold or revenue, than a hundred based on an annuity; indeed a living based on an annuity is worse and more grievous than twenty based on freeholds. In truth this traffic in rents must be a sign and symbol that the world, for its grievous sins, has been sold to the devil, so that both temporal and spiritual possessions must fail us, and yet we do not notice it at all.

Here, too, we must put a bit in the mouth of the Fuggers and similar corporations;[29] and that, too, by another way than agriculture or cattle-raising, in which increase of wealth depends not on human wits, but on God's blessing. I commend this to the men of affairs. I am a theologian, and find nothing to blame in it except its evil and offending appearance, of which St. Paul says, 1 Thess. 5:22: "Avoid every appearance or show of evil." This I know well, that it would be much more pleasing to God if we increased agriculture and diminished commerce, and that they do

much better who, according to the Scriptures, till the soil and seek their living from it, as was said to us and to all men in Adam, Gen. 3:17 ff.: "Accursed be the earth when thou laborest therein, it shall bear thee thistles and thorns, and in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat thy bread." There is still much land lying untilled.

4. Next comes the abuse of eating and drinking[30] which gives us Germans a bad reputation in foreign lands, as though it were our special vice. Preaching cannot stop it; it has become too common, and has got too firmly the upper hand. The waste of money which it causes would be a small thing, were it not followed by other sins, -- murder, adultery, stealing, irreverence and all the vices. The temporal sword can do something to prevent it; or else it will be as Christ says: Luke 21:34 f.: "The last day shall come like a secret snare, when they shall be eating and drinking, marrying and wooing, building and planting, buying and selling." It is so much like that now that I verily believe the judgment day is at the door, though men are thinking least of all about it.

5. Finally is it not a pitiful thing that we Christians should be maintain among us open and common houses of prostitution, though all of us are baptized unto chastity? I know very well what some say to this, to wit, that it is not the custom of any one people, that it is hard to break up, that it is better that there should be such houses than that married women, or maidens, or those of more honorable estate should be outraged. But should not the temporal, Christian government consider that in this heathen way the evil is not to be controlled? If the people of Israel could exist without such an abomination, why could not Christian people do as much? Nay, how do many cities, towns and villages exist without such houses? Why should not great cities exist without them?

In this, and in the other matters above mentioned, I have tried to point out how many good works the temporal government could do, and what should be the duty of every government, to the end that every one may learn what an awful responsibility it is to rule, and to have high station. What good would it do that an overlord were in his own life as holy as St. Peter, if he have not the purpose diligently to help his subjects in these matters? His very authority will condemn him! For it is the duty of the authorities to seek the highest good of their subjects. But if the authorities were to consider how the young people might be brought together in marriage, the hope of

entering the married state would greatly help every one to endure and to resist temptation.

But now every man is drawn to the priesthood or the monastic life, and among them, I fear, there is not one in a hundred who has any other reason than that he seeks a living, and doubts that he will ever be able to support himself in the estate of matrimony. Therefore they live wildly enough beforehand, and wish, as they say, to "wear out their lust," but rather wear it in,[31] as experience shows. I find the proverb true, "Despair makes most of the monks and priests"[32]; and so things are as we see them.

My faithful counsel is that, in order to avoid many sins which have become very common, neither boy nor maid should take the vow of chastity, or of the "spiritual life," before the age of thirty years.[33] It is, as St. Paul says, a peculiar gift. Therefore let him whom God does not constrain (1 Cor. 7:7), put off becoming a cleric and taking the vows. Nay, I will go farther and say, If you trust God so little that you are not willing to support yourself as a married man, and wish to become a cleric only because of this distrust, then for the sake of your own soul, I beg of you not to become a cleric, but rather a farmer, or whatever else you please. For if to obtain your temporal support you must have one measure of trust in God, you must have ten measures of trust to continue in the life of cleric. If you do not trust God to support you in the world, how will you trust him to support you in the Church? Alas, unbelief and distrust spoil everything and lead us into all misery, as we see in every estate of life!

Much could be said of this miserable condition. The young people have no one to care for them. They all do as they please, and the government is of as much use to them as if it did not exist; and yet this should be the chief concern of pope, bishops, lords and councils. They wish to rule far and wide, and yet to help on one. O, what a rare bird will a lord and ruler be in heaven just on this account, even though he build a hundred churches for God and raise up all the dead!

[Let this suffice for this time! Of what the temporal powers and the nobility ought to do, I think I have said enough in the little book, **On Good Works**. [34] There is room for improvement in their lives and in their rule, and yet the abuses of the temporal power are not to be compared with those of the spiritual power, as I have there shown.] [35]

I think too that I have pitched my song in a high key, have made many propositions which will be thought impossible and have attacked many things too sharply. But what am I to do? I am in duty bound to speak. If I were able, these are the things I should wish to do. I prefer the wrath of the world to the wrath of God; they can do no

more than take my life.[36] Many times heretofore I have made overtures of peace to my opponents; but as I now see, God has through them compelled me to open my mouth wider and wider and give them enough to say, bark, shout and write, since they have nothing else to do. Ah well, I know another little song about Rome and about them![37] If their ears itch for it I will sing them that sing too, and pitch the notes to the top of the scale. Understandest thou, dear Rome, what I mean?

I have many times offered my writings for investigation and judgment, but it has been of no use. To be sure, I know that if my cause is just, it must be condemned on earth, and approved only by Christ in heaven; for all the Scriptures show that the cause of Christians and of Christendom must be judged by God alone. Such a cause has never yet been approved by men on earth, but the opposition has always been too great and strong. It is my greatest care and fear that my cause may remain uncondemned, by which I should know for certain that it was not yet pleasing to God.

Therefore let them boldly go to work, -- pope, bishop, priest, monk and scholar! They are the right people to persecute the truth, as they have ever done.

God give us all a Christian mind, and especially to the Christian nobility of the German nation a right spiritual courage to do the best that can be done for the poor Church. Amen.

Wittenberg, 1520.

NOTES:

[1] Places for training youths in Greek glory.

[2] The philosophy of Aristotle dominated the mediaeval universities. It not only provided the forms in which theological and religious truth came to expression, but it was the basis of all scientific study in every department. The man who did not know Aristotle was an ignoramus.

[3] Or, "I have read him." Luther's *lesen* allows of either interpretation.

[4] Duns Scotus, died 1308. In the XV and XVI Centuries he was regarded as the rival of Thomas Aquinas for first place among the theological teachers of the Church.

[5] i.e., In the universities.

[6] See above, pp. 94 f.

[7] i.e., "The chamber of his heart." Boniface VIII (1294-1303) had decreed, **Romanus Pontifex jura omnia in scrinio pectoris sui censetur habere**, "the Roman pontiff has all laws in the chamber of his heart." This decree was received into the canon law (c. I, de const. In VI to (I, 2)).

[8] **Doctores decretorum**, "Doctor of Decrees," an academic degree occasionally given to professors of Canon Law doctor **scrinii papalis**, "Doctor of the Papal Heart."

[9] The introduction of Roman law into Germany, as the accepted law of the empire, had begun in the XII Century. With the decay of the feudal system and the increasing desire of the rulers to provide their government with some effective legal system, its application became more widespread, until by the end of the XV Century it was the accepted system of the empire. The attempt to apply this ancient law to conditions utterly different from those of the time when it was formulated, and the continual conflict between the Roman law, the feudal customs and the remnants of Germanic legal ideas, naturally gave rise to a state of affairs which Luther could justly speak of as "a wilderness."

[10] "Sentences" (Sententiae, libri sententiarum) was the title of the text-books in theology. Theological instruction was largely by way of comment on the most famous book of Sentences, that of Peter Lombard.

[11] Cf. Vol. 1, p. 7.

[12] i.e., Doctors.

[13] The head-dress of the doctors.

[14] See above, p. 118, note 2.

[15] i.e., The monasteries and nunneries.

[16] i.e., The name of Christian.

[17] This section did not appear in the first edition; see Introduction, p. 59.

[18] Charles the Great, King of the Franks, was crowned Roman Emperor by Pope Leo III in the year 800 AD. He was a German, but regarded himself successor to the line of emperors who had ruled at Rome. The fiction was fostered by the popes, and the German kings, after receiving the papal coronation, were called Roman Emperors.

From this came the name of the German Empire of the Middle Ages, "the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation." The popes of the later Middle Ages claimed that the bestowal of the imperial dignity lay in the power of the pope, and Pope Clement V (1313) even claimed that in the event of a vacancy the pope was the possessor of the imperial power (cf. above, p. 109). On the whole subject see BRYCE, **Holy Roman Empire**, 2d ed. (1904), and literature there cited.

[19] The city of Rome was sacked by the Visigoths in 410.

[20] Luther is characteristically careless about his chronology. By the "Turkish Empire" he means the Mohammed power.

[21] **So sol man die Deutschen teuschen und mit teuschen teuschenn**, i.e., made Germans (Deutsche) by cheating (teuschen) them.

[22] See Cambridge **Mediaeval History**, I (1911), pp. 244 f.

[23] Such a law as Luther here suggests was proposed to the Diet of Worms (1521). Text in WREDE, **Reichstagsakten**, II, 335-341.

[24] Cf. Luther's Sermon **von Kaufbandlung und Wuche** of 1524. (Weim. Ed. XV, pp. 293 ff.)

[25] Spices were one of the chief articles of foreign commerce in the XVI Century. The discovery of the cape-route to India had given the Portuguese a practical monopoly of this trade. A comparative statement of the cost of spices for a period of years was reported to the Diet of Nurnberg (1523). See WREDE, *op. cit.*, III, 576.

[26] The **Zinskauf** or **Rentenkauf** was a means for evading the prohibition of usury. The buyer purchased an annuity, but the purchase price was not regarded as a loan, for it could not be recalled, and the annual payments could not therefore be called interest.

[27] The practice was legalized by the Lateran Council, 1512.

[28] The XVI Century was the hey-day of the great trading-companies, among which the Fuggers of Augsburg (see above, p. 97, note 5) easily took first place. The effort of these companies was directed toward securing monopolies in the staple articles of commerce, and their ability to finance large enterprises made it possible for them to gain practical control of the home markets. The sharp rise in the cost of living which took place on the first half of the XVI Century was laid at their door. The Diet of Cologne (1522) had passed a stringent law against monopolies the subject

(WREDE, **Reichstagsakten**, II, pp. 355 ff.) "in somewhat heated language" (ibid., 842), but failed to agree upon methods of suppression. The subject was discussed again at the Diet of Nurnberg (1523) and various remedies were proposed (ibid., III, 556-599).

[29] The profits of the trading-companies were enormous. The 9 percent annually of the Welser (EHRENBERG, **Zeitalter der Fugger**, I, 195), pales into insignificance beside the 1634 percent by which the fortune of the Fuggers grew in twenty-one years (SCHULTE, **Die Fugger in Rom**, I, 3). In 1511 a certain Bartholomew Rem invested 900 gulden in the Hochstetter company of Augsburg; by 1517 he claimed 33,000 gulden profit. The company was willing to settle at 26,000 and the resulting litigation caused the figures to become public (WREDE, op. cit., II, 842, note 4; III pp. 574 f.). On Luther's view of capitalism see ECK, **Introduction to the Sermon von Kaufshandlung und Wucher**, in Berl. Ed., VII, 494-513.

[30] The Diets of Augsburg (1500) and Cologne (1512) had passed edicts against drunkenness. A committee of the Diet of Worms (1521) recommended that these earlier edicts be reaffirmed (WREDE, op. cit., II, pp. 343f.), but the Diet adjourned without acting on the recommendation (ibid., 737) Vol. II-11

[31] **Sie wollen ausbuben, so sich's vielmehr hineinbubt.**

[32] Cf. MULLER, **Luther's theol. Quellen**, 1912, ch. I.

[33] In the **Conitendi Ratio** Luther had set the age for men at eighteen to twenty, for the women at fifteen to sixteen years. See Vol. I, p. 100.

[34] Translated in this edition, Vol. I, pp. 184 ff.; see especially pp. 266 ff.

[35] These sentences did not appear in the first edition.

[36] See Letter to Staupitz, Vol. I, p. 43.

[37] This "little song" is the Prelude on the Babylonian Captivity of the Church. See below, pp. 170 ff.

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On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church

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The Babylonian Captivity of the Church – Martin Luther

**MARTIN LUTHER, *FIRST PRINCIPLES OF THE
REFORMATION, OR THE 95
THESES AND THE THREE PRIMARY WORKS OF DR. MARTIN
LUTHER (1883)***

ON THE BABYLONISH CAPTIVITY OF THE CHURCH

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The Babylonian Captivity of the Church – Martin Luther

III ON THE BABYLONISH CAPTIVITY OF THE CHURCH

Martin Luther, of the Order of St. Augustine, salutes his friend Hermann Tulichius. Whether I will or not, I am compelled to become more learned day by day, since so many great masters vie with each other in urging me on and giving me practice. I wrote about indulgences two years ago, but now I extremely regret having published that book. At that time I was still involved in a great and superstitious respect for the tyranny of Rome, which led me to judge that indulgences were not to be totally rejected, seeing them, as I did, to be approved by so general a consent among men. And no wonder, for at that time it was I alone who was rolling this stone. Afterwards, however, with the kind aid of Sylvester and the friars, who supported indulgences so strenuously, I perceived that they were nothing but mere impostures of the flatterers of Rome, whereby to make away with the faith of God and the money of men. And I wish I could prevail upon the booksellers, and persuade all who have read them, to burn the whole of my writings on indulgences, and in place of all I have written about them to adopt this proposition: Indulgences are

wicked devices of the flatterers of Rome.

After this, Eccius and Emser, with their fellow-conspirators, began to instruct me concerning the primacy of the Pope. Here too, not to be ungrateful to such learned men, I must confess that their works helped me on greatly; for, while I had denied that the Papacy had any divine right, I still admitted that it had a human right. But after hearing and reading the super-subtle subtleties of those coxcombs, by which they so ingeniously set up their idol—my mind being not entirely unteachable in such matters—I now know and am sure that the Papacy is the kingdom of Babylon, and the power of Nimrod the mighty hunter. Here moreover, that all may go prosperously with my friends, I entreat the booksellers, and entreat my readers, to burn all that I have published on this subject, and to hold to the following proposition:

The Papacy is the mighty hunting of the Bishop of Rome.

This is proved from the reasonings of Eccius, of Emser, and of the Leipzig lecturer on the Bible.

At the present time they are playing at schooling me concerning communion in both kinds, and some other subjects of the greatest importance. I must take pains not to listen in vain to these philosophical guides of mine. A certain Italian friar of Cremona has written a “Revocation of Martin Luther to the Holy See”—that is to say, not that I revoke, as the words imply, but that he revokes me. This is the sort of Latin that the Italians nowadays are beginning to write. Another friar, a German of Leipzig, Lecturer, as you know, on the whole canon of the Bible, has written against me concerning the Sacrament in both kinds, and is about, as I hear, to do still greater and wonderful wonders. The Italian indeed has cautiously concealed his name; perhaps alarmed by the examples of Cajetan and Sylvester. The man of Leipzig, however, as befits a vigorous and fierce German, has set forth in a number of verses on his title-page, his name, his life, his *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church – Martin Luther* sanctity, his learning, his office, his glory, his honour, almost his very shoe-lasts. From him no doubt I shall learn not a little, since he writes a letter of dedication to the very Son of God; so familiar are these saints with Christ, who reigns in heaven. In short, three magpies seem to be addressing me, one, a Latin one, well; another, a Greek one, still better; the third, a Hebrew one, best of all. What do you think I have to do now, my dear Hermann, but to prick up my ears? The matter is handled at Leipzig by the Observants of the Holy Cross.

Hitherto I have foolishly thought that it would be an excellent thing, if it were determined by a General Council, that both kinds in the Sacrament should be administered to the laity. To correct this opinion, this more than most learned friar says that it was neither commanded nor decreed, whether by Christ or by the Apostles, that both kinds should be administered to the laity; and that it has therefore been left to the judgment of the Church, which we are bound to obey, what should be done or left undone on this point. Thus speaks he. You ask, perhaps, what craze has possession of the man, or against whom he is writing; since I did not condemn the use of one kind, and did leave it to the judgment of the Church to ordain the use of both kinds. And this he himself endeavours to assert, with the object of combating me by this very argument. I reply, that this kind of argument is a familiar one with all who write against Luther; namely, either to assert the very thing which they attack, or to set up a figment that they may attack it. Thus did Sylvester, Eccius, Emser, the men of Cologne too, and those of Louvain. If this friar had gone back

from their spirit, he would not have written against Luther.

A greater piece of good fortune, however, has befallen this man than any of the others. Whereas he intended to prove that the use of one kind had neither been commanded nor decreed, but left to the decision of the Church, he brings forward Scriptures to prove that, by the command of Christ, the use of one kind was ordained for the laity. Thus it is true, according to this new interpreter of Scripture, that the use of one kind was not commanded, and at the same time was commanded, by Christ. You know how specially those logicians of Leipzig employ this new kind of argument. Does not Emser also, after having professed in his former book to speak fairly about me, and after having been convicted by me of the foulest envy and of base falsehoods, confess, when about to confute me in his later book, that both were true, and that he had written of me in both an unfair and a fair spirit? A good man indeed, as you know!

But listen to our specious advocate of one species, in whose mind the decision of the Church and the command of Christ are the same thing; and again the command of Christ and the absence of his command are the same thing. With what dexterity he proves that only one kind should be granted to the laity, by the command of Christ, that is, by the decision of the Church! He marks it with capital letters in this way, “AN INFALLIBLE FOUNDATION.” Next he handles with incredible wisdom the sixth chapter of the Gospel of St. John, in which Christ speaks of the bread of heaven and the bread of life, which is Himself. These words this most learned man not only misapplies to the Sacrament of the Altar, but goes farther, and, because Christ said: “I am the living bread,” and not: “I am the living cup,” he concludes that in that passage the sacrament in only one kind was appointed for the laity. But the words that follow: “My flesh is meat *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church – Martin Luther* indeed, and my blood is drink indeed;” and again, “Unless ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood”—since it was evident to this friar’s brains that they tell irrefutably in favour of reception in both kinds, and against that in one kind—he evades very happily and learnedly in this way: “That Christ meant nothing else by these words, than that he who should receive one kind, should receive under this both the body and the blood.” This he lays down as his infallible foundation of a structure so worthy of holy and heavenly reverence.

Learn now, along with me, from this man, that in the sixth chapter of St. John Christ commands reception in one kind, but in such a manner that this commanding means leaving the matter to the decision of the Church; and further, that Christ in the same chapter speaks of the laity only, not of the presbyters. For to us this living bread from heaven, that is, the sacrament in one kind, does not belong, but perchance the bread of death from hell. Now what is to be done with the deacons and sub-deacons? As they are neither laymen nor priests, they ought, on this distinguished authority, to use neither one nor both kinds. You understand, my dear Tulichius, this new and *observant* manner of handling Scripture. But you must also learn this, that Christ, in the sixth chapter of St. John, is speaking of the sacrament of the Eucharist; though He Himself teaches us that He is speaking of faith in the incarnate word, by saying: “This is the work of God, that ye believe in him whom He hath sent.” But this Leipzig professor of the Bible must be permitted to prove whatever he pleases out of any passage of Scripture he pleases. For he is an Anaxagorean, nay, an Aristotelian theologian, to whom names and words when transposed mean the same things and everything. Throughout his whole book he so fits

together the testimonies of Scripture, that, if he wishes to prove that Christ is in the sacrament, he ventures to begin thus: “The Lesson of the book of the Revelation of the blessed John.” And as suitably as this would be said, so suitably does he say everything, and thinks, like a wise man, to adorn his ravings by the number of passages he brings forward.

I pass over the rest, that I may not quite kill you with the dregs of this most offensive drain. Lastly he adduces Paul (1 Cor. xi.), who says that he had received from the Lord and had delivered to the Corinthians the use both of the bread and of the cup. Here again, as everywhere else, our advocate of one species handles the Scriptures admirably, and teaches that in that passage Paul permitted—not “delivered”—the use of both kinds. Do you ask how he proves it? Out of his own head, as in the case of the sixth chapter of John; for it does not become this lecturer to give a reason for what he says, since he is one of those whose proofs and teachings all come from their own visions. Here then we are taught that the Apostle in that passage did not write to the whole church of Corinth, but only to the laity, and that therefore he gave no permission to the priests, but that they were deprived of the whole sacrament; and next, that, by a new rule of grammar, “I have received from the Lord” means the same thing as “It has been permitted by the Lord;” and “I delivered to you” the same thing as “I permitted to you.” I beg you especially to note this. For it follows hence that not only the Church, but every worthless fellow anywhere will be at liberty, under the teaching of this master, to turn into permissions the whole body of the commandments, institutions, and ordinances of Christ and the Apostles.

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I see that this man is possessed by an angel of Satan, and that those who act in collusion with him are seeking to obtain a name in the world through me, as being worthy to contend with Luther. But this hope of theirs shall be disappointed, and, in my contempt for them, I shall leave them for ever unnamed, and shall content myself with this one answer to the whole of their books. If they are worthy that Christ should bring them back to a sound mind, I pray him to do so in his mercy. If they are not worthy of this, then I pray that they may never cease to write such books, and that the enemies of the truth may not be permitted to read any others. It is a common and true saying: “This I know for certain, that if I fight with filth, whether I conquer or am conquered, I am sure to be defiled.” In the next place, as I see that they have plenty of leisure and of paper, I will take care that they shall have abundant matter for writing, and will keep in advance of them, so that while they, in the boastfulness of victory, are triumphing over some one heresy of mine, as it seems to them, I shall meanwhile be setting up a new one. For I too am desirous that these illustrious leaders in war should be adorned with many titles of honour. And so, while they are murmuring that I approve of communion in both kinds, and are most successfully engaged on this very important subject, so worthy of themselves, I shall go farther, and shall now endeavour to show that all who deny to the laity communion in both kinds are acting impiously. To do this the more conveniently, I shall make a first essay on the bondage of the Church of Rome; with the intention of saying very much more in its own proper time, when those most learned papists shall have got the better of this book.

This, moreover, I do in order that no pious reader who may meet with my book may be disgusted at the dross I have handled, and have reason to complain that he finds nothing

to read which can cultivate or instruct his mind, or at least give occasion for instructive reflection. You know how dissatisfied my friends are that I should occupy myself with the paltry twistings of these men. They say that the very reading of their books is an ample confutation of them, but that from me they look for better things, which Satan is trying to hinder by means of these men. I have determined to follow the advice of my friends, and to leave the business of wrangling and inveighing to those hornets.

Of the Italian friar of Cremona I shall say nothing. He is a simple and unlearned man, who is endeavouring to bring me back by some thongs of rhetoric to the Holy See, from which I am not conscious of having ever withdrawn, nor has any one proved that I have. His principal argument in some ridiculous passages is, that I ought to be moved for the sake of my profession, and of the transfer of the imperial power to the Germans. He seems indeed altogether to have meant not so much to urge my return as to write the praises of the French and of the Roman pontiff, and he must be allowed to testify his obsequiousness to them by this little work, such as it is. He neither deserves to be handled severely, since he does not seem to be actuated by any malice, nor to be learnedly confuted, since through pure ignorance and inexperience he trifles with the whole subject. To begin. I must deny that there are seven Sacraments, and must lay it down, for the time being, that there are only three, baptism, penance, and the bread, and that by the Court of Rome all these have been brought into miserable bondage, and the Church despoiled of all her liberty. And yet, if I were to speak according to the usage of Scripture, I should

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hold that there was only one sacrament, and three sacramental signs. I shall speak on this point more at length at the proper time; but now I speak of the sacrament of the bread, the first of all sacraments.

I shall say then what advance I have made as the result of my meditations in the ministry of this sacrament. For at the time when I published a discourse on the Eucharist I was still involved in the common custom, and did not trouble myself either about the rightful or the wrongful power of the Pope. But now that I have been called forth and become practised in argument, nay, have been dragged by force into this arena, I shall speak out freely what I think. Let all the papists laugh or lament against me alone.

In the first place, the sixth chapter of John must be set aside altogether, as not saying a single syllable about the sacrament; not only because the sacrament had not yet been instituted, but much more because the very sequence of the discourse and of its statements shows clearly that Christ was speaking—as I have said before—of faith in the incarnate Word. For He says: “My words, they are spirit and they are life;” showing that He was speaking of that spiritual eating, wherewith he who eats, lives; while the Jews understood Him to speak of a carnal eating, and therefore raised a dispute. But no eating gives life, except the eating of faith, for this is the really spiritual and living eating; as Augustine says: “Why dost thou get ready thy stomach and thy teeth? Believe, and thou hast eaten.” A sacramental eating does not give life, for many eat unworthily, so that Christ cannot be understood to have spoken of the sacrament in this passage.

There are certainly some who have misapplied these words to the sacrament, as did the writer of the decretals some time ago, and many others. It is one thing, however, to misapply the Scriptures, and another to take them in their legitimate sense; otherwise when Christ says: “Except ye eat my flesh, and drink my blood, ye have no life in you,” He would be condemning all infants, all the sick, all the absent, and all who were

hindered in whatever manner from a sacramental eating, however eminent their faith, if in these words He had meant to enjoin a sacramental eating. Thus Augustine, in his second book against Julianus, proves from Innocentius that even infants, without receiving the sacrament, eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ; that is, partake in the same faith as the Church. Let this then be considered as settled, that the sixth chapter of John has nothing to do with the matter. For which reason I have written elsewhere that the Bohemians could not rightfully depend upon this passage in their defence of reception in both kinds.

CONCERNING THE LORD'S SUPPER

There are two passages which treat in the clearest manner of this subject, and at which we shall look,—the statements in the Gospels respecting the Lord's Supper, and the words of Paul. (1 Cor. xi.) Matthew, Mark, and Luke agree that Christ gave the whole sacrament to all His disciples; and that Paul taught both parts of it is so certain, that no one has yet been shameless enough to assert the contrary. Add to this, that according to the relation of Matthew, Christ did not say concerning the bread, "Eat ye all of this," but did say concerning the cup, "Drink ye all of this." Mark also does not say, "they all ate," but *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church – Martin Luther* "they all drank of it." Each writer attaches the mark of universality to the cup, not to the bread; as if the Spirit foresaw the schism that should come, and should forbid to some that communion in the cup which Christ would have common to all. How furiously would they rave against us, if they had found the word "all" applied to the bread, and not to the cup. They would leave us no way of escape, would clamour us down, pronounce us heretics, condemn us as schismatics. But when the word stands on our side against them, they allow themselves to be bound by no laws of logic, these men of freest will, while they change, and change again, and throw into utter confusion even the things which are of God.

But suppose me to be standing on the other side and questioning my lords the papists. In the Supper of the Lord, the whole sacrament, or the sacrament in both kinds, was either given to the presbyters alone, or at the same time to the laity. If to the presbyters alone (for thus they will have it to be), then it is in no wise lawful that any kind should be given to the laity; for it ought not to be rashly given to any, to whom Christ did not give it at the first institution. Otherwise, if we allow one of Christ's institutions to be changed, we make the whole body of His laws of no effect; and any man may venture to say that he is bound by no law or institution of Christ. For in dealing with Scripture one special exception does away with any general statement. If on the other hand it was given to the laity as well, it inevitably follows, that reception in both kinds ought not to be denied to the laity; and in denying it to them when they seek it, we act impiously, and contrary to the deed, example, and institution of Christ.

I confess that I have been unable to resist this reasoning, and have neither read, heard of, nor discovered anything to be said on the other side, while the words and example of Christ stand unshaken, who says—not by way of permission, but of commandment—"Drink ye all of this." For if all are to drink of it, and this cannot be understood as said to the presbyters alone, then it is certainly an impious deed to debar the laity from it when they seek it, were it even an angel from heaven who did so. For what they say of its being left to the decision of the Church which kind should be administered, is said without

rational ground, is alleged without authority, and is as easily contemned as proved; nor can it avail against an adversary who opposes to us the word and deed of Christ, and whose blows must therefore be returned with the word of Christ; and this we have not on our side.

If, however, either kind can be denied to the laity, then by the same decision of the Church a part of baptism or of penance might be taken from them, since in each case the reason of the matter and the power are alike. Therefore as the whole of baptism and the whole of absolution are to be granted to all the laity, so is the whole sacrament of the bread, if they seek it. I am much astonished, however, at their assertion that it is wholly unlawful, under pain of mortal sin, for presbyters to receive only one kind in the mass; and this for no other reason than that (as they all unanimously say) the two kinds form one full sacrament, which ought not to be divided. Let them tell me, then, why it is lawful to divide it in the case of the laity, and why they alone should not be granted the entire sacrament. Do they not admit, on their own showing, that either both kinds ought to be granted to the laity, or that it is no lawful sacrament which is granted to them under one

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kind? How can the one kind be a full sacrament in the case of the laity, and not a full one in the case of the presbyters? Why do they vaunt the decision of the Church and the power of the Pope in this matter? The words of God and the testimonies of truth cannot thus be done away with.

It follows further that, if the Church can take from the laity the one kind, the wine, she can also take from them the other kind, the bread, and thus might take from the laity the whole Sacrament of the Altar, and deprive the institution of Christ of all effect in their case. But, I ask, by what authority? If, however, she cannot take away the bread, or both kinds, neither can she the wine. Nor can any possible argument on this point be brought against an opponent, since the Church must necessarily have the same power in regard to either kind as in regard to both kinds; if she has it not as regards both kinds, she has it not as regards either. I should like to hear what the flatterers of Rome may choose to say on this point.

But what strikes me most forcibly of all, and thoroughly convinces me, is that saying of Christ: “This is my blood, which is shed for you and for many, for the remission of sins.” Here you see most clearly that the blood is given to all for whose sins it is shed. Now who will dare to say that it was not shed for the laity? Do you not see who it is that He addresses as He gives the cup? Does He not give it to all? Does He not say that it was shed for all? “For you,” He says. Let us grant that these are priests. “And for many,” He continues. These cannot be priests; and yet He says: “Drink ye all of it.” I also could easily trifle on this point, and turn the words of Christ into a mockery by my words, as that trifler my opponent does. But those who rest upon the Scriptures in arguing against us, must be refuted by the Scriptures. These are the reasons which have kept me from condemning the Bohemians, who, whether they be good or bad men, certainly have the words and deeds of Christ on their side, while we have neither, but only that idle device of men: “The Church hath thus ordered it;” while it was not the Church, but the tyrants of the churches, without the consent of the Church, that is, of the people of God, who have thus ordered it.

Now where, I ask, is the necessity, where is the religious obligation, where is the use, of denying to the laity reception in both kinds, that is, the visible sign, when all men grant

them the reality of the sacrament without the sign? If they grant the reality, which is the greater, why do they not grant the sign, which is the less? For in every sacrament the sign, in so far as it is a sign, is incomparably less than the reality itself. What then, I ask, should hinder the granting of the lesser thing, when the greater is granted; unless indeed, as it seems to me, this has happened by the permission of God in His anger, to be the occasion of a schism in the Church; and to show that, having long ago lost the reality of the sacrament, we are fighting on behalf of the sign, which is the lesser thing, against the reality, which is the greatest and only important thing; just as some persons fight on behalf of ceremonies against charity. This monstrous perversion appears to have begun at the same time at which we began in our folly to set Christian charity at nought for the sake of worldly riches, that God might show by this terrible proof that we think signs of greater consequence than the realities themselves. What perversity it would be, if you *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church – Martin Luther* were to concede that the faith of baptism is granted to one seeking baptism, and yet deny him the sign of that very faith, namely, water.

Last of all stand the irrefutable words of Paul, which must close every mouth (1 Cor. xi.): “I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you.” He does not say, as this friar falsely asserts out of his own head, “I permitted to you.” Nor is it true that he granted the Corinthians reception in both kinds on account of the contentions among them. In the first place, as the text itself shows, the contention was not about the reception in both kinds, but about the contemptuousness of the rich and the envy of the poor, as is clear from the text, which says: “One is hungry and another is drunken,” and, “Ye shame them that have not.” Then too he is not speaking of what he delivered as if it were for the first time. He does not say: “I receive from the Lord and I deliver to you,” but “I have received and I have delivered,” namely, at the beginning of his preaching, long before this contention arose, thus signifying that he had delivered to them the reception in both kinds. This “delivering” means “enjoining,” as he elsewhere uses the same word. Thus the smoke clouds of assertion which this friar heaps together concerning permission, without Scripture, without reason, and without cause, go for nothing. His opponents do not ask what his dreams are, but what the judgment of Scripture is on these points; and out of it he can produce not a tittle in support of his dream, while they can bring forward so many thunderbolts in defence of their belief. Rise up then in one body, all ye flatterers of the Pope, be active, defend yourselves from the charge of impiety, tyranny, and treason against the Gospel, and wrongful calumnation of your brethren, ye who proclaim as heretics those who cannot approve of the mere dreams of your brains, in opposition to such plain and powerful Scriptures. If either of the two are to be called heretics and schismatics, it is not the Bohemians, not the Greeks, since they take their stand on the Gospels; but you Romans who are heretics and impious schismatics, you who presume upon your own figments alone, against the manifest teaching of the Scriptures of God.

But what can be more ridiculous, or more worthy of the head of this friar, than to say that the Apostle wrote thus and gave this permission to a particular church, that of Corinth, but not to the universal Church? Whence does he prove this? Out of his usual store—his own impious head. When the universal Church takes this epistle as addressed to itself, reads it, and follows it in every respect, why not in this part of it? If we admit that any one epistle of Paul, or one passage in any one epistle, does not concern the universal

Church, we do away with the whole authority of Paul. The Corinthians might say that what he taught concerning faith, in writing to the Romans, did not concern them. What could be more blasphemous or more mad than this mad idea? Far be it from us to imagine that there can be one tittle in the whole of Paul, which the whole of the universal Church ought not to imitate and keep. Not thus thought the Fathers, nor any until these perilous times, in which Paul foretold that there should be blasphemers, blind and senseless men; among whom this friar is one, or even the foremost.

But let us grant this intolerably wild assertion. If Paul gave permission to a particular church, then, on your own showing, the Greeks and the Bohemians are acting rightly, for *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church – Martin Luther* they are particular churches, and therefore it is enough that they are not acting against the teaching of Paul, who at least gives them permission. Furthermore, Paul had not power to permit of anything contrary to the institution of Christ. Therefore, on behalf of the Greeks and the Bohemians, I set up these sayings of Christ and of Paul against thee, Rome, and all thy flatterers; nor canst thou show that power has been given thee to change these things by one hair's breadth; much less to accuse others of heresy, because they disregard thy presumptuous pretensions. It is thou who deservest to be accused of impiety and tyranny.

We also read the words of Cyprian, who by himself is powerful enough to stand against all the Romanists, and who testifies in his discourse concerning the lapsed in the fifth book, that it had been the custom in that church for both kinds to be administered to laymen and even to children; yea, for the body of the Lord to be given into their hands; as he shows by many instances. Among other things he thus reproves some of the people: "And because he does not immediately receive the body of the Lord with unclean hands, or drink the blood of the Lord with polluted mouth, he is angry with the priests as sacrilegious." You see that he is here speaking of certain sacrilegious laymen, who wished to receive from the priests the body and the blood. Have you here, wretched flatterer, anything to gabble? Say that this holy martyr, this teacher of the Church, so highly endowed with the apostolic spirit, was a heretic, and availed himself of a permission in his particular church!

He relates in the same place an incident which had occurred in his own sight and presence, when he writes in the plainest terms that as deacon he had given the cup to an infant girl, and when the child struggled against it, had even poured the blood of the Lord into its mouth. We read the same thing of St. Donatus, whose broken cup how dully does this wretched flatterer try to get rid of. "I read," he says, "that the cup was broken, I do not read that the blood was given." What wonder that he who perceives in the Holy Scriptures what he wills to perceive, should also read in historical narratives what he wills to read! But can he in this way at all establish the power of the Church to decide, or can he thus confute heretics? But enough said on this subject; for I did not begin this treatise in order to answer one who is unworthy of an answer, but in order to lay open the truth of the matter.

I conclude, then, that to deny reception in both kinds to the laity is an act of impiety and tyranny, and one not in the power of any angel, much less of any Pope or Council whatever. Nor do I care for the Council of Constance, for, if its authority is to prevail, why should not also that of the Council of Basle, which decreed on the other hand that the Bohemians should be allowed to receive in both kinds? a point which was carried

there after long discussion, as the extant annals and documents of that Council prove. This fact that ignorant flatterer brings forward on behalf of his own dreams, so wisely does he handle the whole matter.

The first bondage, then, of this sacrament is as regards its substance or completeness, which the tyranny of Rome has wrested from us. Not that they sin against Christ, who use one kind only, since Christ has not commanded the use of any, but has left it to the choice of each individual, saying: "This do ye, as oft as ye shall do it, in remembrance of me;" but they sin who forbid that both kinds should be given to those who desire to use this freedom of choice, and the fault is not in the laity, but in the priests. The sacrament does not belong to the priests, but to all; nor are the priests lords, but servants, whose duty it is to give both kinds to those who seek them, as often as they seek them. If they have snatched this right from the laity, and forcibly denied it to them, they are tyrants, and the laity are free from blame, whether they go without one or both kinds; for meanwhile they will be saved by their faith, and by their desire for a complete sacrament. So too the ministers themselves are bound to grant baptism and absolution to him who seeks them; if they do not grant them, the seeker has the full merit of his own faith, while they will be accused before Christ as wicked servants. Thus of old the holy Fathers in the desert passed many years without communicating in either kind of the sacrament.

I am not, therefore, advocating the seizing by force on both kinds, as if we were of necessity commanded and compelled to receive them, but I am instructing the conscience, that every man may endure the tyranny of Rome, knowing that he has been forcibly deprived of his right in the sacrament on account of his sins. This only I would have, that none should justify the tyranny of Rome, as if she had done right in denying one kind to the laity, but that we should abhor it, and withhold our consent from it, though we may bear it, just as if we were in bondage with the Turk, where we should not be at liberty to use either kind. For this reason I have said that it would be a fine thing, in my opinion, if this bondage were done away with by the decree of a general council, and Christian liberty restored to us out of the hands of the tyrant of Rome; and if to each man were left his own free choice about seeking and using it, as it is left in the case of baptism and penance. Now, however, by the same tyranny, he compels one kind to be received year by year; so extinct is the liberty granted us by Christ, and such are the deserts of our impious ingratitude.

The other bondage of the same sacrament is a milder one, inasmuch as it regards the conscience, but one which it is by far the most perilous of all things to touch, much more to condemn. Here I shall be a Wickliffite, and a heretic under six hundred names. What then? Since the Bishop of Rome has ceased to be a bishop and has become a tyrant, I fear absolutely none of his decrees, since I know that neither he, nor even a general council, has power to establish new articles of the faith.

Formerly, when I was imbibing the scholastic theology, my lord the Cardinal of Cambray gave me occasion for reflection, by arguing most acutely, in the fourth book of the Sentences, that it would be much more probable, and that fewer superfluous miracles would have to be introduced, if real bread and real wine, and not only their accidents, were understood to be upon the altar, unless the Church had determined the contrary. Afterwards, when I saw what the church was, which had thus determined, namely, the Thomistic, that is, the Aristotelian Church, I became bolder, and whereas I had been

before in great straits of doubt, I now at length established my conscience in the former opinion, namely, that there were real bread and real wine, in which were the real flesh and real blood of Christ, in no other manner and in no less degree than the other party assert them to be under the accidents. And this I did, because I saw that the opinions of *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church – Martin Luther* the Thomists, whether approved by the Pope or by a council, remained opinions, and did not become articles of the faith, even were an angel from heaven to decree otherwise. For that which is asserted without the support of the Scriptures, or of an approved revelation, it is permitted to hold as an opinion, but it is not necessary to believe. Now this opinion of Thomas is so vague, and so unsupported by the Scriptures, or by reason, that he seems to me to have known neither his philosophy nor his logic. For Aristotle speaks of accidents and subject very differently from St. Thomas; and it seems to me that we ought to be sorry for so great a man, when we see him striving, not only to draw his opinions on matters of faith from Aristotle, but to establish them upon an authority whom he did not understand; a most unfortunate structure raised on a most unfortunate foundation.

I quite consent then that whoever chooses to hold either opinion should do so. My only object now is to remove scruples of conscience, so that no man may fear being guilty of heresy, if he believes that real bread and real wine are present on the altar. Let him know that he is at liberty, without peril to his salvation, to imagine, think, or believe in either of the two ways, since here there is no necessity of faith. In the first place, I will not listen to those, or make the slightest account of them, who will cry out that this doctrine is Wickliffite, Hussite, heretical, and opposed to the decisions of the Church. None will do this but those whom I have convicted of being themselves in many ways heretical, in the matter of indulgences, of free will and the grace of God, of good works and sins, etc. If Wickliff was once a heretic, they are themselves ten times heretics, and it is an excellent thing to be blamed and accused by heretics and perverse sophists, since to please them would be the height of impiety. Besides, they can give no other proof of their own opinions, nor have they any other way of disproving the contrary ones, than by saying: “This is Wickliffite, Hussite, heretical.” This feeble argument, and no other, is always at the tip of their tongue; and if you ask for Scripture authority, they say: “This is our opinion, and the Church has decided it thus.” To such an extent do men who are reprobate concerning the faith, and unworthy of belief, dare to propose to us their own fancies, under the authority of the Church, as articles of the faith.

There is, however, very much to be said for my opinion; in the first place this—that no violence ought to be done to the words of God, neither by man, nor by angel, but that, as far as possible, they ought to be kept to their simplest meaning, and not to be taken, unless the circumstances manifestly compel us to do so, out of their grammatical and proper signification, that we may not give our adversaries any opportunity of evading the teaching of the whole Scriptures. For this reason the ideas of Origen were rightly rejected, when, in contempt of the plain grammatical meaning, he turned the trees, and all other objects described as existing in Paradise, into allegories; since hence it might be inferred that trees were not created by God. So in the present case, since the Evangelists write clearly that Christ took bread and blessed it, and since the book of Acts and the Apostle Paul also call it bread, real bread and real wine must be understood, just as the cup was real. For even these men do not say that the cup is transubstantiated. Since then it is not necessary to lay it down that a transubstantiation is effected by the operation of

divine power, it must be held as a figment of human opinion; for it rests on no support of Scripture or of reason. It is forcing on us a novel and absurd usage of words, to take bread as meaning the form or accidents of bread, and wine as the form or accidents of wine.

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Why do they not take all other things as forms or accidents? Even if everything else were consistent with this idea, it would not be lawful thus to enfeeble the word of God, and to deprive it so unjustly of its proper meaning.

The Church, however, kept the right faith for more than twelve centuries, nor did the holy Fathers ever or anywhere make mention of this transubstantiation (a portentous word and dream indeed), until the counterfeit Aristotelian philosophy began to make its inroads on the Church within these last three hundred years, during which many other erroneous conclusions have also been arrived at, such as:—that the Divine essence is neither generated nor generates; that the soul is the substantial form of the human body; and other like assertions, which are made absolutely without reason or cause, as the Cardinal of Cambray himself confesses.

They will say, perhaps, that we shall be in peril of idolatry if we do not admit that bread and wine are not really there. This is truly ridiculous, for the laity have never learnt the subtle philosophical distinction between substance and accidents; nor, if they were taught it, could they understand it; and there is the same peril, if we keep the accidents, which they see, as in the case of the substance, which they do not see. For if it is not the accidents which they adore, but Christ concealed under them, why should they adore the substance, which they do not see?

But why should not Christ be able to include His body within the substance of bread, as well as within the accidents? Fire and iron, two different substances, are so mingled in red-hot iron, that every part of it is both fire and iron. Why may not the glorious body of Christ much more be in every part of the substance of the bread?

Christ is believed to have been born of the inviolate womb of his mother. In this case too let them say that the flesh of the Virgin was for a time annihilated; or, as they will have it to be more suitably expressed, transubstantiated, that Christ might be enwrapped in its accidents, and at length come forth through its accidents. The same will have to be said respecting the closed door and the closed entrance of the tomb, through both of which He entered, and went out without injury to them. But hence has sprung that Babylon of a philosophy concerning continuous quantity, distinct from substance, till things have come to such a point, that they themselves do not know what are accidents, and what is substance. For who has ever proved to a certainty that heat and cold, colour, light, weight, and form are accidents? Lastly they have been driven to pretend that God creates a new substance additional to those accidents on the altar, on account of the saying of Aristotle, that the essence of an accident is to be *in* something; and have been led to an infinity of monstrous ideas, from all of which they would be free, if they simply allowed the bread on the altar to be real bread. I rejoice greatly, that at least among the common people there remains a simple faith in this sacrament. They neither understand nor argue whether there are accidents in it or substance, but believe with simple faith that the body and blood of Christ are truly contained in it, leaving to these men of leisure the task of arguing as to what it contains.

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But perhaps they will say that we are taught by Aristotle that we must take the subject

and predicate of an affirmative proposition to signify the same thing; or, to quote the words of that monster himself in the 6th book of his Metaphysics, “An affirmative proposition requires the composition of the extremes;” which they explain as their signifying the same thing. Thus in the words, “This is my body,” they say that we cannot take the subject to signify the bread, but the body of Christ.

What shall we say to this? Whereas we are making Aristotle and human teachings the censors of such sublime and divine matters, why do we not rather cast away these curious enquiries; and simply adhere to the words of Christ, willing to be ignorant of what is done in this sacrament, and content to know that the real body of Christ is present in it by virtue of the words of consecration? Is it necessary to comprehend altogether the manner of the Divine working?

But what do they say to Aristotle, who applies the term “subject” to all the categories of accidents, although he takes the substance to be the first subject? Thus, in his opinion, “this white,” “this great,” “this something,” are subjects, because something is predicated of them. If this is true, and if it is necessary to lay down a doctrine of transubstantiation in order that it may not be asserted of the bread that it is the body of Christ; why, I ask, is not a doctrine of transaccidentation also laid down, that it may not be affirmed of an accident that it is the body of Christ? For the same danger remains, if we regard “this white thing,” or “this round thing” as the subject. On whatever principle transubstantiation is taught, on the same ought transaccidentation to be taught, on account of the two terms of the proposition, as is alleged, signifying the same thing.

If, however, by a high effort of understanding, you make abstraction of the accident, and refuse to regard it as signified by the subject in saying: “This is my body,” why can you not as easily rise above the substance of the bread, and refuse to let it be understood as signified by the subject; so that “this is my body” may be true in the substance no less than in the accident? Especially so since this is a divine work of almighty power, which can operate to the same extent and in the same way in the substance, as it can in the accident.

But, not to philosophize too far, does not Christ appear to have met these curious enquiries in a striking manner, when He said concerning the wine, not, “*Hoc est sanguis meus,*” but “*Hic est sanguis meus.*” He speaks much more clearly still when He brings in the mention of the cup, saying: “This cup is the New Testament in my blood.” (1 Cor. xi.) Does He not seem to have meant to keep us within the bounds of simple faith, just so far as to believe that His blood is in the cup? If, for my part, I cannot understand how the bread can be the body of Christ, I will bring my understanding into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and firmly believe, in simple adherence to His word, not only that the body of Christ is in the bread, but that the bread is the body of Christ. For so shall I be kept safe by his words, where it is said: “Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and said, Take, eat, this (that is, this bread, which He had taken and broken) is my body.” Paul also says: “The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?” He does not say that the communion is in the bread, but that the bread itself is

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the communion of the body of Christ. What if philosophy does not understand these things? The Holy Spirit is greater than Aristotle. Does it even understand the transubstantiation which these men speak of, seeing that they themselves confess that all philosophy breaks down on this point? The reason why, in the Greek and Latin, the

pronoun *this* is referred to the body, is that the genders are alike; but in the Hebrew, where there is no neuter gender, it is referred to the bread; so that we might properly say: “This (bread) is my body.” Both the usage of language and common sense prove that the subject points to the bread, and not to the body, when He says, *Hoc est corpus meum*, that is, this bread is my body.

As then the case is with Christ Himself, so is it also with the sacrament. For it is not necessary to the bodily indwelling of the Godhead that the human nature should be transubstantiated, that so the Godhead may be contained beneath the accidents of the human nature. But each nature is entire, and we can say with truth: This man is God; this God is man. Though philosophy does not receive this, yet faith receives it, and greater is the authority of the word of God, than the capacity of our intellect. Thus too in the sacrament, it is not necessary to the presence of the real body and real blood, that the bread and wine should be transubstantiated, so that Christ may be contained beneath the accidents; but while both bread and wine continue there, it can be said with truth, “this bread is my body, this wine is my blood,” and conversely. Thus will I understand this matter in honour of the holy words of God, which I will not allow to have violence done them by the petty reasonings of men, or to be distorted into meanings alien to them. I give leave, however, to others to follow the other opinion, which is distinctly laid down in the decretal, provided only (as I have said) they do not press us to accept their opinions as articles of faith.

The third bondage of this same sacrament is that abuse of it—and by far the most impious—by which it has come about that at this day there is no belief in the Church more generally received or more firmly held than that the mass is a good work and a sacrifice. This abuse has brought in an infinite flood of other abuses, until faith in the sacrament has been utterly lost, and they have made this divine sacrament a mere subject of traffic, huckstering, and money-getting contracts. Hence communions, brotherhoods, suffrages, merits, anniversaries, memorials, and other things of that kind are bought and sold in the Church, and made the subjects of bargains and agreements; and the entire maintenance of priests and monks depends upon these things.

I am entering on an arduous task, and it may perhaps be impossible to uproot an abuse which, strengthened by the practice of so many ages, and approved by universal consent, has fixed itself so firmly among us, that the greater part of the books which have influence at the present day must needs be done away with, and almost the entire aspect of the churches be changed, and a totally different kind of ceremonies be brought in, or rather, brought back. But my Christ lives, and we must take heed to the word of God with greater care, than to all the intellects of men and angels. I will perform my part, will bring forth the subject into the light, and will impart the truth freely and ungrudgingly as I have received it. For the rest, let every one look to his own salvation; I will strive, as in the

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presence of Christ my judge, that no man may be able to throw upon me the blame of his own unbelief and ignorance of the truth.

Concerning the Sacrament of the Altar. To begin,—if we wish to attain safely and prosperously to the true and free knowledge of this sacrament, we must take the utmost care to put aside all that has been added by the zeal or the notions of men to the primitive and simple institution; such as vestments, ornaments, hymns, prayers, musical instruments, lamps, and all the pomp of visible things; and must turn our eyes and our

attention only to the pure institution of Christ; and set nothing else before us but those very words of Christ, with which He instituted and perfected that sacrament, and committed it to us. In that word, and absolutely in nothing else, lies the whole force, nature, and substance of the mass. All the rest are human notions, accessory to the word of Christ; and the mass can perfectly well subsist and be kept up without them. Now the words in which Christ instituted this sacrament are as follows:—While they were at supper Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to His disciples, and said: “Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you.” And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying: “Drink ye all of this; this cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins; do this in remembrance of me.”

These words the Apostle Paul (1 Cor. xi.) also delivers to us and explains at greater length. On these we must rest, and build ourselves up as on a firm rock, unless we wish to be carried about with every wind of doctrine, as we have hitherto been, through the impious teachings of men who pervert the truth. For in these words nothing has been omitted which pertains to the completeness, use, and profit of this sacrament; and nothing laid down which it is superfluous or unnecessary for us to know. He who passes over these words in his meditations or teachings concerning the mass will teach monstrous impieties; as has been done by those who have made an *opus operatum* and a sacrifice of it.

Let this then stand as a first and infallible truth, that the mass or Sacrament of the Altar is the testament of Christ, which He left behind Him at His death, distributing an inheritance to those who believe in Him. For such are His words: “This cup is the new testament in my blood.” Let this truth, I say, stand as an immovable foundation, on which we shall erect all our arguments. You will see how we shall thus overthrow all the impious attacks of men on this sweetest sacrament. The truthful Christ, then, says with truth, that this is the new testament in His blood, shed for us. It is not without cause that I urge this; the matter is no small one, but must be received into the depths of our minds. If then we enquire what a testament is, we shall also learn what the mass is; what are its uses, advantages, abuses. A testament is certainly a promise made by a man about to die, by which he assigns his inheritance and appoints heirs. Thus the idea of a testament implies, first, the death of the testator, and secondly, the promise of the inheritance, and the appointment of an heir. In this way Paul (Rom. iv.; Gal. iii., iv.; Heb. ix.) speaks at some length of testaments. We also see this clearly in those words of Christ. Christ testifies of His own death, when He says: “This is my body which is given; this is my blood which is shed.” He assigns and points out the inheritance, when He says: “For the remission of sins.” And He appoints heirs when He says: “For you and for many;” that is, for those who accept and believe the promise of the testator; for it is faith which makes us heirs, as we shall see.

You see then that the mass—as we call it—is a promise of the remission of sins, made to us by God; and such a promise as has been confirmed by the death of the Son of God. For a promise and a testament only differ in this, that a testament implies the death of the promiser. A testator is a promiser who is about to die; and a promiser is, so to speak, a testator who is about to live. This testament of Christ was prefigured in all the promises of God from the beginning of the world; yea! whatsoever value the ancient promises had,

lay in that new promise which was about to be made in Christ, and on which they depended. Hence the words, “agreement, covenant, testament of the Lord,” are constantly employed in the Scriptures; and by these it was implied that God was about to die. “For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.” (Heb. ix. 16.) God having made a testament, it was necessary that He should die. Now He could not die, unless He became a man; and thus in this one word “testament” the incarnation and the death of Christ are both comprehended.

From all this it is now self-evident what is the use, and what the abuse, of the mass; what is a worthy or an unworthy preparation for it. If the mass is a promise, as we have said, we can approach to it by no works, no strength, no merits, but by faith alone. For where we have the word of God who promises, there we must have faith on the part of man who accepts; and it is thus clear that the beginning of our salvation is faith, depending on the word of a promising God, who, independently of any efforts of ours, prevents us by His free and undeserved mercy, and holds out to us the word of His promise. “He sent His word and healed them.” (Ps. cvii. 20.) He did not receive our works and so save us. First of all comes the word of God; this is followed by faith, and faith by love, which in its turn does every good work, because it worketh no evil, yea, it is the fulfilling of the law. There is no other way in which man can meet or deal with God but by faith. It is not man by any works of his, but God, who by His own promise is the author of salvation; so that everything depends, is contained, and preserved in the word of His power, by which He begot us, that we might be a kind of first-fruits of His creation.

Thus, when Adam was to be raised up after the fall, God gave him a promise, saying to the serpent: “I will place enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; she shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise her heel.” In this word of promise, Adam with his posterity was, as it were, borne in the bosom of God, and preserved by faith in Him; waiting patiently for the woman who should bruise the head of the serpent, as God had promised. In this faith and waiting he died; not knowing when and how the promise would be accomplished, but not doubting that it would be accomplished. For such a promise, being the truth of God, preserves even in hell those who believe and wait for it. This promise was followed by another, made to Noah; the bow in the cloud being given as a sign of the covenant, believing in which he and his posterity found God propitious. After this, God promised to Abraham that in his seed all the kindreds of the earth should be blessed. This is that bosom of Abraham into which his *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church – Martin Luther* posterity have been received. Lastly to Moses, and to the children of Israel, especially to David, God gave a most distinct promise of Christ; and thus at length revealed what had been the meaning of the promise made to them of old time.

Thus we come to the most perfect promise of all, that of the new Testament, in which life and salvation are freely promised in plain words, and are bestowed on those who believe the promise. Christ conspicuously distinguishes this testament from the old one, by calling it the “New Testament.” The old testament given by Moses was a promise, not of remission of sins, nor of eternal blessings, but of temporal ones, namely, those of the land of Canaan; and by it no one could be renewed in spirit, and fitted to receive a heavenly inheritance. Hence it was necessary that, as a figure of Christ, an unreasoning lamb should be slain, in the blood of which the same testament was confirmed; thus, as is the blood, so is the testament; as is the victim, so is the promise. Now Christ says, “The new

testament in my blood,” not in another’s, but in His own blood, by which grace is promised through the Spirit for the remission of sins, that we may receive the inheritance. The mass then, as regards its substance, is properly nothing else than the aforesaid words of Christ, “Take, eat,” etc. He seems to say:—“Behold, O man, sinner and condemned as thou art, out of the pure and free love with which I love thee, according to the will of the Father of mercies, I promise to thee in these words, antecedently to any merits or prayers of thine, remission of all thy sins, and eternal life. That thou mayest be most certain of this, my irrevocable promise, I will confirm it by my very death; I will give my body and shed my blood, and will leave both to thee, as a sign and memorial of this very promise. As often as thou shalt receive them, remember me; declare and praise my love and bounty to thee; and give thanks.”

From this you see that nothing else is required for a worthy reception of the mass than faith, resting with confidence on this promise, believing Christ to be truthful in these words of His, and not doubting that these immeasurable blessings have been bestowed upon us. On this faith a spontaneous and most sweet affection of the heart will speedily follow, by which the spirit of the man is enlarged and enriched; that is, love, bestowed through the Holy Spirit on believers in Christ. Thus the believer is carried away to Christ, that bounteous and beneficent testator, and becomes altogether another and a new man. Who would not weep tears of delight, nay, almost die for joy in Christ, if he believed with unhesitating faith that this inestimable promise of Christ belongs to him? How can he fail to love such a benefactor, who of His own accord offers, promises, and gives the greatest riches and an eternal inheritance to an unworthy sinner, who has deserved very different treatment?

Our one great misery is this, that while we have many masses in the world, few or none of us recognise, consider, or apprehend the rich promises set before us in them. Now in the mass the one thing that demands our greatest, nay, our sole attention, is to keep these words and promises of Christ, which indeed constitute the mass itself, constantly before our eyes; that we should meditate on and digest them, and exercise, nourish, increase, and strengthen our faith in them by this daily commemoration. This is what Christ commands when He says, “Do this in remembrance of me.” It is the work of an evangelist faithfully

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to present and commend that promise to the people and to call forth faith in it on their part. As it is—to say nothing of the impious fables of those who teach human traditions in the place of this great promise—how many are there who know that the mass is a promise of Christ? Even if they teach these words of Christ, they do not teach them as conveying a promise or a testament, and therefore call forth no faith in them.

It is a deplorable thing in our present bondage, that nowadays the utmost care is taken that no layman should hear those words of Christ, as if they were too sacred to be committed to the common people. We priests are so mad that we arrogate to ourselves alone the right of secretly uttering the words of consecration—as they are called; and that in a way which is unprofitable even to ourselves, since we never look at them as promises or a testament for the increase of faith. Under the influence of some superstitious and impious notion we do reverence to these words instead of believing them. In this our misery Satan so works among us that, while he has left nothing of the mass to the Church, he yet takes care that every corner of the earth shall be full of masses, that is, of abuses and mockeries of the testament of God; and that the world shall be more and more

heavily loaded with the gravest sins of idolatry, to increase its greater damnation. For what more grievous sin of idolatry can there be, than to abuse the promises of God by our perverse notions, and either neglect or extinguish all faith in them.

God (as I have said) never has dealt, or does deal, with men otherwise than by the word of promise. Again, we can never deal with God otherwise than by faith in the word of His promise. He takes no heed of our works, and has no need of them,—though it is by these we deal with other men and with ourselves;—but He does require to be esteemed by us truthful in His promises, and to be patiently considered as such, and thus worshipped in faith, hope, and love. And thus it is that He is glorified in us, when we receive and hold every blessing not by our own efforts, but from His mercy, promise, and gift. This is that true worship and service of God, which we are bound to render in the mass. But when the words of the promise are not delivered to us, what exercise of faith can there be? And without faith who can hope? who can love? without faith, hope, and love, what service can there be? There is no doubt therefore that, at the present day, the whole body of priests and monks, with their bishops and all their superiors, are idolaters, and living in a most perilous state, through their ignorance, abuse, and mockery of the mass, or sacrament, or promise of God.

It is easy for any one to understand that two things are necessary at the same time, the promise and faith. Without a promise we have nothing to believe; while without faith the promise is useless, since it is through faith that it is established and fulfilled. Whence we easily conclude that the mass, being nothing else than a promise, can be approached and partaken of by faith alone; without which whatever prayers, preparations, works, signs, or gestures are practised, are rather provocations to impiety than acts of piety. It constantly happens that when men have given their attention to all these things they imagine that they are approaching the altar lawfully; and yet, in reality, could never be more unfit to approach it, because of the unbelief which they bring with them. What a number of sacrificing priests you may daily see everywhere, who if they have committed some trifling error, by unsuitable vestments, or unwashed hands, or by some hesitation in the *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* – *Martin Luther* prayers, are wretched, and think themselves guilty of an immense crime! Meanwhile, as for the mass itself, that is, the divine promise, they neither heed nor believe it; yea, are utterly unconscious of its existence. O, unworthy religion of our age, the most impious and ungrateful of all ages!

There is then no worthy preparation for the mass, or rightful use of it, except faith, by which it is believed in as a divine promise. Wherefore let him who is about to approach the altar, or to receive the sacrament, take care not to appear before the Lord his God empty. Now he will be empty, if he has not faith in the mass, or New Testament; and what more grievous impiety can he commit against the truth of God than by this unbelief? As far as in him lies, he makes God a liar, and renders His promises idle. It will be safest then to go to the mass in no other spirit than that in which thou wouldst go to hear any other promise of God; that is, to be prepared, not to do many works, and bring many gifts, but to believe and receive all that is promised thee in that ordinance, or is declared to thee through the ministry of the priest as promised. Unless thou comest in this spirit, beware of drawing near; for thou wilt surely draw near unto judgment.

I have rightly said then, that the whole virtue of the mass consists in those words of Christ, in which He testifies that remission is granted to all who believe that His body is

given and His blood shed for them. There is nothing then more necessary for those who are about to hear mass than to meditate earnestly and with full faith on the very words of Christ; for unless they do this, all else is done in vain. It is certainly true that God has ever been wont, in all His promises, to give some sign, token, or memorial of His promise; that it might be kept more faithfully and tell more strongly on men's minds. Thus when He promised to Noah that the earth should not be destroyed by another deluge, He gave His bow in the cloud, and said that He would thus remember His covenant. To Abraham, when He promised that his seed should inherit the earth, He gave circumcision as a seal of the righteousness which is by faith. Thus to Gideon He gave the dry and the dewy fleece, to confirm His promise of victory over the Midianites. Thus to Ahaz He gave a sign through Isaiah, to confirm his faith in the promise of victory over the kings of Syria and Samaria. We read in the Scriptures of many such signs of the promises of God.

So too in the mass, that first of all promises, He gave a sign in memory of so great a promise, namely, His own body and His own blood in the bread and wine, saying, "Do this in remembrance of me." Thus in baptism He adds to the words of the promise the sign of immersion in water. Whence we see that in every promise of God two things are set before us, the word and the sign. The word we are to understand as being the testament, and the sign as being the sacrament; thus, in the mass, the word of Christ is the testament, the bread and wine are the sacrament. And as there is greater power in the word than in the sign, so is there greater power in the testament than in the sacrament. A man can have and use the word or testament without the sign or sacrament. "Believe," saith Augustine, "and thou hast eaten;" but in what do we believe except in the word of Him who promises? Thus I can have the mass daily, nay hourly; since, as often as I will, I can set before myself the words of Christ, and nourish and strengthen my faith in them; and this is in very truth the spiritual eating and drinking.

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Here we see how much the theologians of the Sentences have done for us in this matter. In the first place, not one of them handles that which is the sum and substance of the whole, namely, the testament and word of promise; and thus they do away with faith and the whole virtue of the mass. In the next place, the other part of it, namely, the sign or sacrament, is all that they deal with; but they do not teach faith even in this, but their own preparations, *opera operata*, participations and fruits of the mass. At length they have reached the very depth of error, and have involved themselves in an infinity of metaphysical triflings concerning transubstantiation and other points; so that they have done away with all faith, and with the knowledge and true use as well of the testament as of the sacrament; and have caused the people of Christ—as the prophet says—to forget their God for many days. But do thou leave others to recount the various fruits of hearing mass, and apply thy mind to saying and believing with the prophet, that God has prepared a table before thee in the presence of thine enemies—a table at which thy faith may feed and grow strong. Now it is only on the word of the divine promise that thy faith can feed; for man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. (Matt. iv. 4.) Wherefore, in the mass, thou must look above all things most closely to the word of promise as to a most sumptuous banquet, full of every kind of food and holy nourishment for thy soul; this thou must esteem above all things; in this thou must place all thy trust, and cleave firmly to it, even in the midst of death and all thy sins.

If thou dost this, thou wilt possess not only those drops as it were and littlenesses of the fruits of the mass, which some have superstitiously invented, but the main fount of life itself, namely, that faith in the word from which every good thing flows; as Christ said, “He that believeth on me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” (John vii. 38); and again, “Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” (John iv. 14.)

There are two difficulties which are wont to beset us, and prevent our receiving the benefits of the mass. The one is, that we are sinners and unworthy, from our utter vileness, of such great blessings. The other is—even if we were worthy—the very greatness of the blessings themselves, which are such that weak nature cannot dare to seek or hope for them. Who would not be struck in the first place with amazement rather than with the desire for the remission of sins and eternal life, if he rightly estimates the greatness of the blessings which come through these—namely, the having God as his Father, and being a child of God, and heir of all good things? To meet this double weakness of nature, thou must take hold of the word of Christ, and fix thine eyes much more strongly on it, than on these cogitations of thine own infirmity. For the works of the Lord are great, and He is mighty to give, beyond all that we can seek or comprehend. Indeed, unless His works surpassed our worthiness, our capacity, our whole comprehension, they would not be divine. Thus too Christ encourages us, saying: “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” (Luke xii. 32.) This incomprehensible exuberance of God’s mercy, poured out on us through Christ, makes us, in our turn, to love Him above all things, to cast ourselves upon Him with the most perfect trust, to despise all things, and be ready to suffer all things for Him. Hence this sacrament has been rightly called the fountain of love.

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Here we may draw an example from human affairs. If some very rich lord were to bequeath a thousand pieces of gold to any beggar, or even to an unworthy and bad servant, such a one would certainly demand and receive them confidently, without regard either to his own unworthiness or to the greatness of the legacy. If any one were to set these before him as objections, what do you think he would reply? He would certainly answer: “What is that to you? It is not by my deserving, nor by any right of my own, that I receive what I do receive. I know that I am unworthy of it, and that I am receiving much more than I deserve; nay, I have deserved the very contrary. But what I claim, I claim by right of a testament, and of the goodness of another; if it was not an unworthy act to leave such a legacy to me who am so unworthy, why should my unworthiness make me hesitate to accept it? Nay, the more unworthy I am, the more readily do I embrace this free favour from another.” With such reasonings we must arm our own consciences against all their scruples and anxieties, that we may hold this promise of Christ with unhesitating faith. We must give the utmost heed not to approach in any confidence in our own confessions, prayers, and preparations; we must despair of all these and come in a lofty confidence in the promise of Christ—since it is the word of promise which alone must reign here—and in pure faith, which is the one and sole sufficient preparation.

We see from all this, how great the wrath of God has been which has permitted our impious teachers to conceal from us the words of this testament, and thus, as far as in them lay, to extinguish faith itself. It is self-evident what must necessarily follow this

extinction of faith, namely, the most impious superstitions about works. For when faith perishes and the word of faith is silent, then straightway works, and traditions of works, rise up in its place. By these we have been removed from our own land, as into bondage at Babylon, and all that was dear to us has been taken from us. Even thus it has befallen us with the mass, which, through the teaching of wicked men, has been changed into a good work, which they call *opus operatum*, and by which they imagine that they are all powerful with God. Hence they have gone to the extreme of madness; and, having first falsely affirmed that the mass is of avail through the force of the *opus operatum*, they have gone on to say, that even if it be hurtful to him who offers it impiously, yet it is none the less useful to others. On this basis they have established their applications, participations, fraternities, anniversaries, and an infinity of lucrative and gainful business of that kind.

You will scarcely be able to stand against these errors, many and strong as they are, and deeply as they have penetrated, unless you fix what has been said firmly in your memory, and give the most stedfast heed to the true nature of the mass. You have heard that the mass is nothing else than the divine promise or testament of Christ, commended to us by the sacrament of His body and blood. If this is true, you will see that it cannot in any way be a *work*, nor can any work be performed in it, nor can it be handled in any way but by faith alone. Now faith is not a work, but the mistress and life of all works. Is there any man so senseless as to call a promise he has received, or a legacy that has been bestowed on him, a good work done on his part towards the testator? What heir is there, who thinks that he is doing a service to his father when he receives the testamentary documents along with the inheritance bequeathed to him? Whence then this impious rashness of ours, that we come to receive the testament of God as if we were doing a good work towards Him? *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church – Martin Luther*

Is not such ignorance of that testament, and such a state of bondage of that great sacrament, a grief beyond all tears? Where we ought to be grateful for blessings bestowed on us, we come in our pride to give what we ought to receive, and make a mockery, with unheard-of perversity, of the mercy of the Giver. We give to Him as a work of ours what we receive as a gift from Him; and we thus make the testator no longer the bestower of His good gifts on us, but the receiver of ours. Alas for such impiety!

Who has ever been so senseless as to consider baptism a good work? What candidate for baptism has ever believed he was doing a work which he might offer to God on behalf of himself and others? If then in one sacrament and testament there is no good work communicable to others, neither can there be any in the mass, which is itself nothing but a testament and a sacrament. Hence it is a manifest and impious error, to offer or apply the mass for sins, for satisfactions, for the dead, or for any necessities of our own or of others. The evident truth of this statement you will easily understand, if you keep closely to the fact, that the mass is a divine promise, which can profit no one, be applied to no one, be communicated to no one, except to the believer himself; and that solely by his own faith. Who can possibly receive or apply for another a promise of God, which requires faith on the part of each individual? Can I give another man the promise of God, if he does not believe it? or can I believe for another man? or can I make another believe? Yet all this I must be able to do if I can apply and communicate the mass to others; for there are in the mass only these two things, God's promise, and man's faith which receives that promise. If I can do all this, I can also hear and believe the gospel on behalf

of other men, I can be baptized for another man, I can be absolved from sin for another man, I can partake of the Sacrament of the Altar for another man; nay, to go through the whole list of their sacraments, I can also marry for another man, be ordained priest for another man, be confirmed for another man, receive extreme unction for another man. Why did not Abraham believe on behalf of all the Jews? Why was every individual Jew required to exercise faith in the same promise which Abraham believed? Let us keep to this impregnable truth:—where there is a divine promise, there every man stands for himself; individual faith is required; every man shall give account for himself, and shall bear his own burdens; as Christ says: “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” (Mark xvi. 16.) Thus every man can make the mass useful only to himself, by his own faith, and can by no means communicate it to others; just as a priest cannot administer a sacrament to any man on behalf of another, but administers the same sacrament to each individual separately. The priests in their work of consecration and administration act as ministers for us; not that we offer up any good work through them, or communicate actively; but by their means we receive the promise and its sign, and communicate passively. This idea continues among the laity; for they are not said to do a good work, but to receive a gift. But the priests have gone after their own impieties and have made it a good work that they communicate and make an offering out of the sacrament and testament of God, whereas they ought to have received it as a good gift.

But you will say: “What? will you ever overthrow the practices and opinions which, for so many centuries, have rooted themselves in all the churches and monasteries; and all *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church – Martin Luther* that superstructure of anniversaries, suffrages, applications, and communications, which they have established upon the mass, and from which they have drawn the amplest revenues?” I reply: It is this which has compelled me to write concerning the bondage of the Church. For the venerable testament of God has been brought into a profane servitude to gain, through the opinions and traditions of impious men, who have passed over the Word of God, and have set before us the imaginations of their own hearts, and thus have led the world astray. What have I to do with the number or the greatness of those who are in error? Truth is stronger than all. If you can deny that Christ teaches that the mass is a testament and a sacrament, I am ready to justify those men. Again, if you can say that the man who receives the benefit of a testament, or who uses for this purpose the sacrament of promise, is doing a good work, I am ready and willing to condemn all that I have said. But since neither is possible, why hesitate to despise the crowd which hastens to do evil, whilst you give glory to God and confess His truth, namely, that all priests are perversely mistaken, who look on the mass as a work by which they may aid their own necessities, or those of others, whether dead or alive? My statements, I know, are unheard of and astounding. But if you look into the true nature of the mass, you will see that I speak the truth. These errors have proceeded from that over-security, which has kept us from perceiving that the wrath of God was coming upon us.

This I readily admit, that the prayers which we pour forth in the presence of God, when we meet to partake of the mass, are good works or benefits, which we mutually impart, apply, and communicate, and offer up for one another; as the Apostle James teaches us to pray for one another that we may be saved. Paul also exhorts that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in

authority. (1 Tim. ii. 1, 2.) These things are not the mass, but works of the mass;—if, indeed, we can call the prayers of our hearts and our lips works—because they spring from the existence and growth of faith in the sacrament. The mass or promise of God is not completed by our prayers, but only by our faith; and in faith we pray and do other good works. But what priest sacrifices with the intention and idea of only offering up prayers? They all imagine that they are offering Christ himself to God the Father as an all-sufficient victim; and that they are doing a good work on behalf of all men, who, as they allege, will profit by it. They trust in the *opus operatum*, and do not attribute the effect to prayer. Thus, by a gradual growth of error, they attribute to the sacrament the benefit which springs from prayer; and they offer to God what they ought to receive as a gift from Him.

We must therefore make a clear distinction between the testament and sacrament itself, and the prayers which we offer at the same time. And not only so, but we must understand that those prayers are of no value at all, either to him who offers them, or to those for whom they are offered, unless the testament has been first received by faith, so that the prayer may be that of faith, which alone is heard, as the Apostle James teaches us. So widely does prayer differ from the mass. I can pray for as many persons as I will; but no one receives the mass unless he believes for himself; and that only so far as he believes; nor can it be given either to God or to men, but it is God alone who by the ministry of the priest gives it to men, and they receive it by faith alone, without any works or merits. No one would be so audaciously foolish as to say that, when a poor and

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needy man comes to receive a benefit from the hand of a rich man, he is doing a good work. Now the mass is the benefit of a divine promise, held forth to all men by the hand of the priest. It is certain, therefore, that the mass is not a work communicable to others, but the object of each man's individual faith, which is thus to be nourished and strengthened.

We must also get rid of another scandal, which is a much greater and a very specious one; that is, that the mass is universally believed to be a sacrifice offered to God. With this opinion the words of the canon of the mass appear to agree, such as—“These gifts; these offerings; these holy sacrifices;” and again, “this oblation.” There is also a very distinct prayer that the sacrifice may be accepted like the sacrifice of Abel. Hence Christ is called the victim of the altar. To this we must add the sayings of the holy Fathers, a great number of authorities, and the usage that has been constantly observed throughout the world.

To all these difficulties, which beset us so pertinaciously, we must oppose with the utmost constancy the words and example of Christ. Unless we hold the mass to be the promise or testament of Christ, according to the plain meaning of the words, we lose all the gospel and our whole comfort. Let us allow nothing to prevail against those words, even if an angel from heaven taught us otherwise. Now in these words there is nothing about a work or sacrifice. Again, we have the example of Christ on our side. When Christ instituted this sacrament and established this testament in the Last Supper, he did not offer himself to God the Father, or accomplish any work on behalf of others, but, as he sat at the table, he declared the same testament to each individual present and bestowed on each the sign of it. Now the more any mass resembles and is akin to that first mass of all which Christ celebrated at the Last Supper, the more Christian it is. But that mass of

Christ was most simple; without any display of vestments, gestures, hymns, and other ceremonies; so that if it had been necessary that it should be offered as a sacrifice, His institution of it would not have been complete.

Not that any one ought rashly to blame the universal Church, which has adorned and extended the mass with many other rites and ceremonies; but we desire that no one should be so deceived by showy ceremonies, or so perplexed by the amount of external display, as to lose the simplicity of the mass, and in fact pay honour to some kind of transubstantiation; as will happen if we pass by the simple substance of the mass, and fix our minds on the manifold accidents of its outward show. For whatever has been added to the mass beyond the word and example of Christ, is one of its accidents; and none of these ought we to consider in any other light than we now consider monstrances—as they are called—and altar cloths, within which the host is contained. It is a contradiction in terms that the mass should be a sacrifice; since we receive the mass, but give a sacrifice. Now the same thing cannot be received and offered at the same time, nor can it be at once given and accepted by the same person. This is as certain as that prayer and the thing prayed for cannot be the same; nor can it be the same thing to pray and to receive what we pray for.

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What shall we say then to the canon of the mass and the authority of the Fathers? First of all I reply:—If there were nothing to be said, it would be safer to deny their authority altogether, than to grant that the mass is a work or a sacrifice, and thus to deny the word of Christ and to overthrow faith and the mass together. However, that we may keep the Fathers too, we will explain (1 Cor. xi.) that the believers in Christ, when they met to celebrate the mass, were accustomed to bring with them portions of food and drink, called “collects,” which were distributed among the poor, according to the example of the Apostles (Acts iv.), and from which were taken the bread and wine consecrated for the sacrament. Since all these gifts were sanctified by the word and prayer after the Hebrew rite, in accordance with which they were lifted on high, as we read in Moses, the words and the practice of elevation, or of offering, continued in the Church long after the custom had died out of collecting and bringing together the gifts which were offered or elevated. Thus Hezekiah (Isaiah xxxvii. 4) bids Isaiah to lift his prayer for the remnant that is left. Again, the Psalmist says: “Lift up your hands to the holy place;” and—“To thee will I lift up my hands;” and again—“That men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands.” (1 Tim. ii. 8.) Hence the expressions “sacrifice” or “oblation” ought to be referred, not to the sacrament and testament, but to the “collects” themselves. Hence too the word collect has remained in use for the prayers said in the mass.

For the same reason the priest elevates the bread and the cup as soon as he has consecrated them; but the proof that he is not therein offering anything to God is that in no single word does he make mention of a victim or an oblation. This too is a remnant of the Hebrew rite, according to which it was customary to elevate the gifts which, after being received with giving of thanks, were brought back to God. Or it may be considered as an admonition to us, to call forth our faith in that testament which Christ on that occasion brought forward and set before us; and also as a display of its sign. The oblation of the bread properly corresponds to the words: “This is my body;” and Christ, as it were, addresses us bystanders by this very sign. Thus too the oblation of the cup properly corresponds to these words: “This cup is the New Testament in my blood.” The priest

ought to call forth our faith by the very rite of elevation. And as he openly elevates the sign or sacrament in our sight, so I wish that he also pronounced the word or testament with loud and clear voice in our hearing; and that in the language of every nation, that our faith might be more efficaciously exercised. Why should it be lawful to perform mass in Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, and not also in German, or in any other language?

Wherefore, in this abandoned and most perilous age, let the priests who sacrifice take heed in the first place that those words of the major and minor canon, with the collects, which speak only too plainly of a sacrifice, are to be applied, not to the sacrament, but either to the consecration of the bread and wine themselves, or to their own prayers. For the bread and wine are presented beforehand to receive a blessing, that they may be sanctified by the word and prayer. But after being blessed and consecrated, they are no longer offered, but are received as a gift from God. And in this matter let the priest consider that the gospel is to be preferred to all canons and collects composed by men; but the gospel, as we have seen, does not allow the mass to be a sacrifice.

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In the next place, when the priest is performing mass publicly, let him understand that he is only receiving and giving to others the communion in the mass; and let him beware of offering up at the same moment his prayers for himself and others, lest he should seem to be presuming to offer the mass. The priest also who is saying a private mass must consider himself as administering the communion to himself. A private mass is not at all different from, nor more efficient than, the simple reception of the communion by any layman from the hand of the priest, except for the prayers, and that the priest consecrates and administers it to himself. In the matter itself of the mass and the sacrament, we are all equal, priests and laymen.

Even if he is requested by others to do so, let him beware of celebrating votive masses—as they are called—and of receiving any payment for the mass, or presuming to offer any votive sacrifice; but let him carefully refer all this to the prayers which he offers, whether for the dead or the living. Let him think thus:—I will go and receive the sacrament for myself alone, but while I receive it I will pray for this or that person, and thus, for purposes of food and clothing, receive payment for my prayers, and not for the mass. Nor let it shake thee in this view, though the whole world is of the contrary opinion and practice. Thou hast the most certain authority of the gospel, and relying on this, thou mayest easily condemn the ideas and opinions of men. If however, in despite of what I say, thou wilt persist in offering the mass, and not thy prayers only, then know that I have faithfully warned thee, and that I shall stand clear in the day of judgment, whilst thou wilt bear thine own sin. I have said what I was bound to say to thee, as a brother to a brother, for thy salvation; it will be to thy profit if thou take heed to my words, to thy hurt if thou neglect them. And if there are some who will condemn these statements of mine, I reply in the words of Paul: “Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.” (2 Tim. iii. 13.)

Hence any one may easily understand that often-quoted passage from Gregory, in which he says that a mass celebrated by a bad priest is not to be considered of less value than one by a good priest, and that one celebrated by St. Peter would not have been better than one celebrated by the traitor Judas. Under cover of this saying some try to shelter their own impiety, and have drawn a distinction between the *opus operatum* and the *opus operans*; that they might continue secure in their evil living, and yet pretend to be

benefactors to others. Gregory indeed speaks the truth, but these men pervert his meaning. It is most true that the testament and sacrament are not less effectively given and received at the hands of wicked priests than at those of the most holy. Who doubts that the gospel may be preached by wicked men? Now the mass is a part of the gospel; nay, the very sum and compendium of the gospel. For what is the whole gospel but the good news of the remission of sins? Now all that can be said in the most ample and copious words concerning the remission of sins and the mercy of God, is all briefly comprehended in the word of the testament. Hence also sermons to the people ought to be nothing else but expositions of the mass, that is, the setting forth of the divine promise of this testament. This would be to teach faith, and truly to edify the Church. But those who now expound the mass make a sport and mockery of the subject by figures of speech derived from human ceremonies.

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As therefore a wicked man can baptize, that is, can apply the word of promise and the sign of water to the person baptized, so can he also apply and minister the promise of this sacrament to those who partake of it, and partake himself with them, as the traitor Judas did in the supper of the Lord. Still the sacrament and testament remains always the same; it performs in the believer its own proper work, in the unbeliever it performs a work foreign to itself. But in the matter of oblations the case is quite different; for since it is not the mass but prayers which are offered to God, it is evident that the oblations of a wicked priest are of no value. As Gregory himself says, when we employ an unworthy person as an advocate, the mind of the judge is prejudiced against us. We must not therefore confound these two things, the mass and prayer, sacrament and work, testament and sacrifice. The one comes from God to us through the ministry of the priest, and requires faith on our part; the other goes forth from our faith to God through the priest, and requires that He should hear us; the one comes down, the other goes upwards. The one therefore does not necessarily require that the minister should be worthy and pious, but the other does require it, because God does not hear sinners. He knows how to do us good by means of wicked men, but He does not accept the works of any wicked man, as He showed in the case of Cain. It is written: “The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord.” (Prov. xv. 8); and again: “Whatsoever is not of faith is sin.” (Rom. xiv. 23.) We shall now make an end of this first part of the subject, but I am ready to produce further arguments when any one comes forward to attack these. From all that has been said we see for whom the mass was intended, and who are worthy partakers of it; namely, those alone who have sad, afflicted, disturbed, confused, and erring consciences. For since the word of the divine promise in this sacrament holds forth to us remission of sins, any man may safely draw near to it who is harassed either by remorse for sin, or by temptation to sin. This testament of Christ is the one medicine for past, present, and future sins; provided thou cleavest to it with unhesitating faith, and believest that that which is signified by the words of the testament is freely given to thee. If thou dost not so believe, then nowhere, never, by no works, by no efforts, wilt thou be able to appease thy conscience. For faith is the sole peace of conscience, and unbelief the sole disturber of conscience.

CONCERNING THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to the riches of His mercy has at least preserved this one sacrament in His Church uninjured and

uncontaminated by the devices of men, and has made it free to all nations and to men of every class. He has not suffered it to be overwhelmed with the foul and impious monstrosities of avarice and superstition; doubtless having this purpose, that He would have little children, incapable of avarice and superstition, to be initiated into this sacrament, and to be sanctified by perfectly simple faith in His word. To such, even at the present day, baptism is of the highest advantage. If this sacrament had been intended to be given to adults and those of full age, it seems as if it could have hardly preserved its efficacy and its glory, in the presence of that tyranny of avarice and superstition which has supplanted all divine ordinances among us. In this case too, no doubt, fleshly wisdom would have invented its preparations, its worthinesses, its reservations, its restrictions, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church – Martin Luther* and other like nets for catching money; so that the water of baptism would be sold no cheaper than parchments are now.

Yet, though Satan has not been able to extinguish the virtue of baptism in the case of little children, still he has had power to extinguish it in all adults; so that there is scarcely any one nowadays who remembers that he has been baptized, much less glories in it; so many other ways having been found of obtaining remission of sins and going to heaven.

Occasion has been afforded to these opinions by that perilous saying of St. Jerome, either misstated or misunderstood, in which he calls penitence the second plank of safety after shipwreck; as if baptism were not penitence. Hence, when men have fallen into sin, they despair of the first plank, or the ship, as being no longer of any use, and begin to trust and depend only on the second plank, that is, on penitence. Thence have sprung those infinite loads of vows, religious dedications, works, satisfactions, pilgrimages, indulgences, and systems; and from them those oceans of books and of human questionings, opinions, and traditions, which the whole world nowadays cannot contain. Thus this tyranny possesses the Church of God in an incomparably worse form than it ever possessed the synagogue, or any nation under heaven.

It was the duty of Bishops to remove all these abuses, and to make every effort to recall Christians to the simplicity of baptism; that so they might understand their own position, and what as Christians they ought to do. But the one business of Bishops at the present day is to lead the people as far as possible away from baptism and to plunge them all under the deluge of their own tyranny; and thus, as the prophet says, to make the people of Christ forget Him for ever. Oh wretched men who are called by the name of Bishops! they not only do nothing and know nothing which Bishops ought, but they are even ignorant what they ought to know and do. They fulfil the words of Isaiah: "His watchmen are blind; they are all ignorant; they are shepherds that cannot understand; they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter." (Is. lvi. 10, 11.)

The first thing then we have to notice in baptism is the divine promise, which says: He who believes and is baptized shall be saved. This promise is to be infinitely preferred to the whole display of works, vows, religious orders, and whatever has been introduced by the invention of man. On this promise depends our whole salvation, and we must take heed to exercise faith in it, not doubting at all that we are saved, since we have been baptized. Unless this faith exists and is applied, baptism profits us nothing; nay, it is hurtful to us, not only at the time when it is received, but in the whole course of our after life. For unbelief of this kind charges the divine promise with falsehood; and to do this is the greatest of all sins. If we attempt this exercise of faith, we shall soon see how difficult

a thing it is to believe this divine promise. For human weakness, conscious of its own sinfulness, finds it the most difficult thing in the world to believe that it is saved, or can be saved; and yet, unless it believes this, it cannot be saved, because it does not believe the divine truth which promises salvation.

This doctrine ought to have been studiously inculcated upon the people by preaching; this promise ought to have been perpetually reiterated; men ought to have been constantly reminded of their baptism; faith ought to have been called forth and nourished. When this *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church – Martin Luther*

divine promise has been once conferred upon us, its truth continues even to the hour of our death; and thus our faith in it ought never to be relaxed, but ought to be nourished and strengthened even till we die, by a perpetual recollection of the promise made to us in baptism. Thus, when we rise out of our sins and exercise penitence, we are simply reverting to the efficacy of baptism and to faith in it, whence we had fallen; and we return to the promise then made to us, but which we had abandoned through our sin. For the truth of the promise once made always abides, and is ready to stretch out the hand and receive us when we return. This, unless I mistake, is the meaning of that obscure saying, that baptism is the first of sacraments and the foundation of them all, without which we can possess none of the others.

Thus it will be of no little profit to a penitent, first of all to recall to mind his own baptism, and to remember with confidence that divine promise which he had deserted; rejoicing that he is still in a fortress of safety, in that he has been baptized; and detesting his own wicked ingratitude in having fallen away from the faith and truth of baptism. His heart will be marvellously comforted, and encouraged to hope for mercy, if he fixes his eyes upon that divine promise once made to him, which could not lie, and which still continues entire, unchanged, and unchangeable by any sins of his; as Paul says: “If we believe not, yet He abideth faithful; He cannot deny Himself.” (2 Tim. ii. 13.) This truth of God will preserve him; and even if all other hopes perish, this, if he believes it, will not fail him. Through this truth he will have something to oppose to the insolent adversary; he will have a barrier to throw in the way of the sins which disturb his conscience; he will have an answer to the dread of death and judgment; finally, he will have a consolation under every kind of temptation, in being able to say: God is faithful to His promise; and in baptism I received the sign of that promise. If God is for me, who can be against me?

If the children of Israel, when returning to God in repentance, first of all called to mind their exodus from Egypt, and in remembrance of this turned back to God, who had brought them out—a remembrance which is so often inculcated on them by Moses, and referred to by David—how much more ought we to remember our exodus from Egypt, and in remembrance of it to return to Him who brought us out through the washing of the new birth. Now this we can do most advantageously of all in the sacrament of the bread and wine. So of old these three sacraments, penitence, baptism, and the bread, were often combined in the same act of worship; and the one added strength to the other. Thus we read of a certain holy virgin who, whenever she was tempted, relied on her baptism only for defence, saying, in the briefest words: “I am a Christian.” The enemy forthwith felt the efficacy of baptism, and of the faith which depended on the truth of a promising God, and fled from her.

We see then how rich a Christian, or baptized man, is; since, even if he would, he cannot

lose his salvation by any sins however great, unless he refuses to believe; for no sins whatever can condemn him, but unbelief alone. All other sins, if faith in the divine promise made to the baptized man stands firm or is restored, are swallowed up in a moment through that same faith; yea, through the truth of God, because He cannot deny Himself, if thou confess Him, and cleave believingly to His promise. Whereas contrition, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church – Martin Luther*

and confession of sins, and satisfaction for sins, and every effort that can be devised by men, will desert thee at thy need, and will make thee more miserable than ever, if thou forgettest this divine truth and puffest thyself up with such things as these. For whatever work is wrought apart from faith in the truth of God is vanity and vexation of spirit. We also see how perilous and false an idea it is that penitence is a second plank of refuge after shipwreck; and how pernicious an error it is to suppose that the virtue of baptism has been brought to an end by sin, and that this ship has been dashed to pieces. That ship remains one, solid, and indestructible, and can never be broken up into different planks. In it all are conveyed who are carried to the port of salvation, since it is the truth of God giving promises in the sacraments. What certainly does happen is that many rashly leap out of the ship into the sea and perish; these are they who abandon faith in the promise and rush headlong into sin. But the ship itself abides, and passes on safely in its course; and any man who, by the grace of God, returns to the ship, will be borne on to life, not on a plank, but on the solid ship itself. Such a man is he who returns by faith to the fixed and abiding promise of God. Thus Peter charges those who sin with having forgotten that they were purged from their old sins (2 Peter i. 9); doubtless meaning to reprove their ingratitude for the baptism they had received, and the impiety of their unbelief.

What profit then is there in writing so much about baptism, and yet not teaching faith in the promise? All the sacraments were instituted for the purpose of nourishing faith, and yet so far are they from attaining this object, that men are even found impious enough to assert that a man ought not to be sure of the remission of sins, or of the grace of the sacraments. By this impious doctrine they deprive the whole world of its senses, and utterly extinguish, or at least bring into bondage that sacrament of baptism, in which the first glory of our conscience stands. Meanwhile they senselessly persecute wretched souls with their contritions, their anxious confessions, their circumstances, satisfactions, works, and an infinity of such trifles. Let us then read with caution, or rather despise the Master of Sentences (Book iv.) with all his followers; who, when they write their best, write only about the matter and form of the sacraments, and so handle only the dead and perishing letter of those sacraments, while they do not even touch upon their spirit, life, and use; that is, the truth of the divine promise, and faith on our part.

See then that thou be not deceived by the display of works, and by the fallacies of human traditions, and so wrong the truth of God and thy own faith. If thou wilt be saved, thou must begin by faith in the sacraments, without any works. Thy faith will be followed by these very works, but thou must not hold faith cheap, for it is itself the most excellent and most difficult of all works, and by it alone thou wilt be saved, even if thou wert compelled to be destitute of all other works. For it is a work of God, not of man, as Paul teaches. All other works He performs with us, and by us; this one work He performs in us and without us.

From what has been said we may clearly distinguish the difference between man the minister and God the Author of baptism. Man baptizes and does not baptize; he baptizes,

because he performs the work of dipping the baptized person; he does not baptize, because in this work he does not act upon his own authority, but in the place of God.

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Hence we ought to receive baptism from the hand of man just as if Christ Himself, nay, God Himself, were baptizing us with His own hands. For it is not a man's baptism, but that of Christ and God; though we receive it by the hand of a man. Even so any other creature which we enjoy through the hand of another is really only God's. Beware then of making any such distinction in baptism, as to attribute the outward rite to man, and the inward blessing to God. Attribute both of them to God alone, and consider the person of him who confers baptism in no other light than as the vicarious instrument of God, by means of which the Lord sitting in heaven dips thee in the water with His own hands, and promises thee remission of sins upon earth, speaking to thee with the voice of a man through the mouth of His minister.

The very words of the minister tell thee this, when he says: "I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen." He does not say: "I baptize thee in my name;" but says, as it were: "What I do, I do not by my own authority, but in the place and in the name of God; and thou must look upon it as if the Lord Himself did it in visible shape. The Author and the minister are different, but the work of both is the same; nay, rather it is that of the Author alone through my ministry." In my judgment the expression, "In the name," relates to the person of the Author, so that not only is the name of the Lord brought forward and invoked in the doing of the work, but the work itself is performed, as being that of another, in the name and in the place of another. By the like figure Christ says: "Many shall come in my name." (Matt. xxiv. 5.) And again: "By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name." (Rom. i. 5.)

I most gladly adopt this view; because it is a thing most full of consolation, and an effective aid to faith, to know that we have been baptized, not by a man, but by the very Trinity Itself through a man, who acts towards us in Its name. This brings to an end that idle contention which is carried on about the "form" of baptism—as they call the words themselves—the Greeks saying: "Let the servant of Christ be baptized;" the Latins: "I baptize." Others also, in their pedantic trifling, condemn the use of the expression: "I baptize thee in the name of Jesus Christ"—though it is certain that the Apostles baptized in this form, as we read in the Acts of the Apostles—and will have it that no other form is valid than the following: "I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen." But they strive in vain; they prove nothing; they only bring forward their own dreams. In whatever manner baptism is administered, provided it is administered, not in the name of a man, but in the name of the Lord, it truly saves us. Nay, I have no doubt that if a man received baptism in the name of the Lord, even from a wicked minister who did not give it in the name of the Lord, he would still be truly baptized in the name of the Lord. For the efficacy of baptism depends not so much on the faith of him who confers it, as of him who receives it. Thus we read an instance of a certain player who was baptized in jest. These and similar narrow questions and disputes have been raised for us by those who attribute nothing to faith, and everything to works and ceremonies. On the contrary, we owe nothing to ceremonies, and everything to faith alone, which makes us free in spirit from all these scruples and fancies.

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Another thing which belongs to baptism is the sign or sacrament, which is that dipping into water whence it takes its name. For in Greek to baptize signifies to dip, and baptism is a dipping. We have said already that, side by side with the divine promises, signs also are given us, to represent by a figure the meaning of the words of the promise; or, as the moderns say, the sacrament has an effectual significance. What that significance is we shall see. Very many have thought that in the word and the water there is some occult spiritual virtue, which works the grace of God in the soul of the recipient. Others deny this, and declare that there is no virtue in the sacraments, but that grace is given by God alone, who, according to His covenant, is present at the sacraments instituted by Himself. All however agree in this, that the sacraments are effectual signs of grace. They are led to this conclusion by this one argument, that it does not otherwise appear what preeminence the sacraments of the new law would have over those of the old, if they were only signs. Hence they have been driven to attribute such efficacy to the sacraments of the new law, that they have stated them to be profitable even to those who are in mortal sin; and have declared that neither faith nor grace are requisite, but that it is sufficient that we do not place any impediment in the way, that is, any actual purpose of sinning afresh. We must carefully avoid and fly from these doctrines, for they are impious and unbelieving, repugnant to faith and to the nature of the sacraments. It is a mistake to suppose that the sacraments of the new law differ from the sacraments of the old law as regards the efficacy of their significance. Both are on an equality in their significance; for the same God who now saves us by baptism and the bread, saved Abel by his sacrifice, Noah by the Ark, Abraham by circumcision, and all the other Patriarchs by their own proper signs. There is no difference then between a sacrament of the old and of the new law, as regards their significance; provided we understand by the old law all the dealings of God with the Patriarchs and other Fathers in the time of the law. For those signs which were given to the Patriarchs and Fathers are completely distinct from the legal figures which Moses instituted in his law; such as the rites of the priesthood, in relation to vestments, vessels, food, houses, and the like. These are as different as possible, not only from the sacraments of the new law, but also from those signs which God gave from time to time to the Fathers who lived under the law; such as that given to Gideon in the fleece, to Manoah in his sacrifice; such also as that which Isaiah offered to Ahaz. In all these cases alike, some promise was given which required faith in God.

In this then the figures of the law differ from signs new or old, that the figures of the law have no word of promise annexed to them, requiring faith, and therefore are not signs of justification, inasmuch as they are not sacraments of faith, which alone justify, but only sacraments of works. Their whole force and nature lay in works, not in faith; for he who did them fulfilled them, even if his work was without faith. Now our signs or sacraments and those of the Fathers have annexed to them a word of promise, which requires faith, and can be fulfilled by no other work. Thus they are signs or sacraments of justification, because they are sacraments of justifying faith and not of works; so that their whole efficacy lies in faith itself, not in working. He who believes them fulfils them, even though he do no work. Hence the saying: It is not the sacrament, but faith in the sacrament which justifies. Thus circumcision did not justify Abraham and his seed; and yet the Apostle calls it a seal of the righteousness of faith, because faith in that promise *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church – Martin Luther* with which circumcision was connected did justify, and fulfilled the meaning of

circumcision. Faith was that circumcision of the heart in spirit, which was figured by the circumcision of the flesh in the letter. Thus it was evidently not the sacrifice of Abel which justified him, but the faith by which he offered himself entirely to God; of which faith the outward sacrifice was a figure.

Thus it is not baptism which justifies any man, or is of any advantage; but faith in that word of promise to which baptism is added; for this justifies, and fulfils the meaning of baptism. For faith is the submerging of the old man, and the emerging of the new man. Hence it cannot be that the new sacraments differ from the ancient sacraments, for they both alike have divine promises and the same spirit of faith; but they differ incomparably from the ancient *figures*, on account of the word of promise, which is the sole and most effective means of difference. Thus at the present day the pomp of vestments, localities, meats, and an infinite variety of ceremonies, doubtless figure excellent works to be fulfilled in the spirit; and yet, since no word of divine promise is connected with them, they can in no way be compared with the signs of baptism and the bread. Nor can they justify men nor profit them in any way, since their fulfilment lies in the very practice or performance of them without faith; for when they are done or performed, they are fulfilled. Thus the Apostle speaks of those things, “which all are to perish with the using; after the commandments and doctrines of men.” (Col. ii. 22.) Now the sacraments are not fulfilled by being done, but by being believed.

Thus it cannot be true that there is inherent in the Sacraments a power effectual to produce justification, or that they are efficacious signs of grace. These things are said in ignorance of the divine promise and to the great detriment of faith; unless indeed we call them efficacious in this sense, that, if along with them there be unhesitating faith, they do confer grace most certainly and most effectually. But that it is not this kind of efficacy which those writers attribute to them is evident from this, that they assert them to be profitable to all men, even the wicked and unbelieving, provided they put no obstacle in the way; as if unbelief itself were not the most persistent of all obstacles, and the most hostile to grace. Thus they have endeavoured to make out of the sacrament a precept, and out of faith a work. For if a sacrament confers grace on me, merely because I receive it, then it is certainly by my own work and not by faith that I obtain grace; nor do I apprehend any promise in the sacrament, but only a sign instituted and commanded by God. It is evident from this how utterly the sacraments are misunderstood by these theologians of the Sentences, inasmuch as they make no account either of faith or of the promise in the sacraments, but cleave only to the sign and the use of the sign, and carry us away from faith to works, from the word to the sign. Thus, as I have said, they have not only brought the sacraments into bondage, but, as far as in them lay, have entirely done away with them.

Let us then open our eyes, and learn to look more to the word than the sign, more to faith than to the work or use of the sign; and let us understand that wherever there is a divine promise, there faith is required; and that both of these are so necessary that neither can be of any effect without the other. We can neither believe unless we have a promise, nor is the promise effectual unless it is believed; while if these two act reciprocally, they

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produce a real and sure efficacy in the sacraments. Hence to seek efficacy in the sacrament independently of the promise and of faith is to strive in vain and to fall into condemnation. Thus Christ says: “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he

that believeth not shall be damned.” (Mark xvi. 16.) Thus He shows that in the sacrament faith is so necessary that it can save us even without the sacrament; and on this account when He says: “He that believeth not,” He does not add: “and is not baptized.”

Baptism then signifies two things, death and resurrection; that is, full and complete justification. When the minister dips the child into the water, this signifies death; when he draws him out again, this signifies life. Thus Paul explains the matter: “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” (Rom. vi. 4.)

This death and resurrection we call a new creation, a regeneration, and a spiritual birth; and these words are not only to be understood allegorically, as they are by many, of the death of sin and the life of grace, but of a real death and resurrection. For baptism has no fictitious meaning, nor does sin die or grace rise fully within us, until the body of sin which we bear in this life is destroyed; for, as the Apostle says, as long as we are in the flesh, the desires of the flesh work in us and are worked upon. Hence when we begin to believe, we begin at the same time to die to this world, and to live to God in a future life; so that faith is truly a death and resurrection; that is, that spiritual baptism in which we are submerged and emerge.

When then the washing away of sins is attributed to baptism, it is rightly so attributed; but the meaning of the phrase is too slight and weak to fully express baptism, which is rather a symbol of death and resurrection. For this reason I could wish that the baptized should be totally immersed, according to the meaning of the word and the signification of the mystery; not that I think it necessary to do so, but that it would be well that so complete and perfect a thing as baptism should have its sign also in completeness and perfection, even as it was doubtless instituted by Christ. For a sinner needs not so much to be washed as to die, that he may be altogether renewed into another creature, and that there may thus be a correspondence in him to the death and resurrection of Christ along with whom he dies and rises again in baptism. For though we may say that Christ was washed from His mortality when He died and rose again, yet it is a weaker expression than if we said that He was totally changed and renewed; and so there is more intensity in saying that death and resurrection to eternal life are signified to us by baptism, than that we are washed from sin.

Here again we see that the sacrament of baptism, even in respect to the sign, is not the mere business of a moment, but has a lasting character. For though the transaction itself passes quickly, the thing signified by it lasts even until death, yea, till the resurrection at the last day. For as long as we live we are always doing that which is signified by baptism; that is, we are dying and rising again. We are dying, I say, not only in our affections and spiritually, by renouncing the sins and vanities of the world, but in very deed we are beginning to leave this bodily life and to apprehend the future life, so that there is a real (as they call it) and also a bodily passing out of this world to the Father.

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We must therefore keep clear of the error of those who have reduced the effect of baptism to such small and slender dimensions that, while they say that grace is infused by it, they assert that this grace is afterwards, so to speak, effused by sin; and that we must then go to heaven by some other way, as if baptism had now become absolutely useless. Do not thou judge thus, but understand that the significance of baptism is such that thou mayest live and die in it; and that neither by penitence nor by any other way canst thou do aught

but return to the effect of baptism, and do afresh what thou wert baptized in order to do, and what thy baptism signified. Baptism never loses its effect, unless in desperation thou refuse to return to salvation. Thou mayst wander away for a time from the sign, but the sign does not on that account lose its effect. Thus thou hast been baptized once for all sacramentally, but thou needest continually to be baptized by faith, and must continually die and continually live. Baptism hath swallowed up thy whole body and given it forth again; and so the substance of baptism ought to swallow up thy whole life, in body and in soul, and to give it back in the last day, clothed in the robe of brightness and immortality. Thus we are never without the sign as well as the substance of baptism; nay, we ought to be continually baptized more and more, until we fulfil the whole meaning of the sign at the last day.

We see then that whatever we do in this life tending to the mortifying of the flesh and the vivifying of the spirit is connected with baptism; and that the sooner we are set free from this life, the more speedily we fulfil the meaning of our baptism; and the greater the sufferings we endure, the more happily do we answer the purpose of baptism. The Church was at its happiest in those days when martyrs were daily put to death and counted as sheep for the slaughter; for then the virtue of baptism reigned in the Church with full power, though now we have quite lost sight of it for the multitude of human works and doctrine. The whole life which we live ought to be a baptism, and to fulfil the sign or sacrament of baptism; since we have been set free from all other things and given up to baptism alone, that is, to death and resurrection.

To whom can we assign the blame that this glorious liberty of ours and this knowledge of baptism are nowadays in bondage, except only to the tyranny of the Roman Pontiff? He most of all men, as becomes a chief shepherd, ought to have been the preacher and the asserter of this liberty and this knowledge; as Paul says: "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God." (1 Cor. iv. 1.) But his sole object is to oppress us by his decrees and laws, and to ensnare us into bondage to his tyrannical power. Not to speak of the impious and damnable way in which the Pope fails to teach these mysteries, by what right, I ask, has he established laws over us? Who has given him authority to bring into bondage this liberty of ours, given us by baptism? One purpose, as I have said, we ought to carry out in our whole lives, namely, to be baptized, that is, to be mortified, and to live by faith in Christ. This faith alone ought to have been taught, above all by the chief shepherd. But now not a word is said about faith, but the Church is crushed by an infinite number of laws concerning works and ceremonies; the virtue and knowledge of baptism are taken away; the faith of Christ is hindered.

I say then, neither Pope, nor bishop, nor any man whatever has the right of making one syllable binding on a Christian man, unless it is done with his own consent. Whatever is *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church – Martin Luther*

done otherwise is done in a spirit of tyranny; and thus the prayers, fastings, almsgiving, and whatever else the Pope ordains and requires in the whole body of his decrees, which are as many as they are iniquitous, he has absolutely no right to require and ordain; and he sins against the liberty of the Church as often as he attempts anything of the kind.

Hence it has come to pass that while the churchmen of the present day are strenuous defenders of church liberty, that is, of wood, stone, fields, and money (for in this day things ecclesiastical are synonymous with things spiritual), they yet, by their false teaching, not only bring into bondage the true liberty of the Church, but utterly destroy it;

yea, more than the Turk himself could; contrary to the mind of the Apostle, who says: “Be not ye the servants of men.” (1 Cor. vii. 23.) We are indeed made servants of men, when we are subjected to their tyrannical ordinances and laws.

This wicked and flagitious tyranny is aided by the disciples of the Pope, who distort and pervert to this end the saying of Christ: “He who heareth you heareth me.” They swell out these words into a support for their own traditions; whereas this saying was addressed by Christ to the Apostles when they were going forth to preach the gospel, and therefore ought to be understood as referring to the gospel alone. These men, however, leave the gospel out of sight, and make this saying fit in with their own inventions. Christ says: “My sheep hear my voice, but they know not the voice of strangers.” For this cause the gospel was bequeathed to us, that the pontiffs might utter the voice of Christ; but they utter their own voice, and are determined to be heard. The Apostle also says of himself that he was not sent to baptize, but to preach the gospel; and thus no man is bound to receive the traditions of the pontiff, or to listen to him, except when he teaches the gospel and Christ; and he himself ought to teach nothing but the freest faith. Since, however, Christ says: “he who hears you hears me,” why does not the Pope also hear others? Christ did not say to Peter alone: “he who hears thee.” Lastly, where there is true faith, there must also of necessity be the word of faith. Why then does not the unbelieving Pope listen to his believing servant who has the word of faith? Blindness, blindness reigns among the pontiffs.

Others however, far more shamelessly, arrogate to the Pope the power of making laws; arguing from the words: “Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” (Matt. xvi. 19.) Christ is speaking there of the binding and loosing of sins, not of bringing the whole Church into bondage and making laws to oppress it. Thus the papal tyranny acts in all things on its own false maxims; while it forcibly wrests and perverts the words of God. I admit indeed that Christians must endure this accursed tyranny, as they would any other violence inflicted on them by the world, according to the saying of Christ: “Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.” (Matt. v. 39.) But I complain of this, that wicked pontiffs boast that they have a rightful power to act thus, and pretend that in this Babylon of theirs they are providing for the interests of Christendom; an idea which they have persuaded all men to adopt. If they did these things in conscious and avowed impiety and tyranny, or if it were simple violence that we endured, we might meanwhile quietly reckon up the advantages thus afforded us for the mortification of this life and the fulfilment of baptism, and should retain the full right of glorying in conscience at the wrong done us. As it is, they desire so to ensnare our *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church – Martin Luther* consciences in the matter of liberty that we should believe all that they do to be well done, and should think it unlawful to blame or complain of their iniquitous actions. Being wolves, they wish to appear shepherds; being antichrists, they wish to be honoured like Christ.

I cry aloud on behalf of liberty and conscience, and I proclaim with confidence that no kind of law can with any justice be imposed on Christians, whether by men or by angels, except so far as they themselves will; for we are free from all. If such laws are imposed on us, we ought so to endure them as still to preserve the consciousness of our liberty. We ought to know and stedfastly to protest that a wrong is being done to that liberty,

though we may bear and even glory in that wrong; taking care neither to justify the tyrant nor to murmur against the tyranny. “Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?” (1 Peter iii. 13.) All things work together for good to the elect of God. Since, however, there are but few who understand the glory of baptism and the happiness of Christian liberty, or who can understand them for the tyranny of the Pope—I for my part will set free my own mind and deliver my conscience, by declaring aloud to the Pope and to all papists, that, unless they shall throw aside all their laws and traditions, and restore liberty to the churches of Christ, and cause that liberty to be taught, they are guilty of the death of all the souls which are perishing in this wretched bondage, and that the papacy is in truth nothing else than the kingdom of Babylon and of very Antichrist. For who is the man of sin and the son of perdition, but he who by his teaching and his ordinances increases the sin and perdition of souls in the Church; while he yet sits in the Church as if he were God? All these conditions have now for many ages been fulfilled by the papal tyranny. It has extinguished faith, darkened the sacraments, crushed the gospel; while it has enjoined and multiplied without end its own laws, which are not only wicked and sacrilegious, but also most unlearned and barbarous.

Behold then the wretchedness of our bondage. “How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people! How is she become as a widow! She that was great among the nations, and princess among the provinces, how is she become tributary! Among all her lovers she hath none to comfort her; all her friends have dealt treacherously with her.” (Lam. i. 1, 2.)

There are at this day so many ordinances, so many rites, so many parties, so many professions, so many works to occupy the minds of Christians, that they forget their baptism. For this multitude of locusts, caterpillars, and cankerworms, no man is able to remember that he was baptized, or what it was that he obtained in baptism. We ought to have been like babes when they are baptized, who, being preoccupied by no zeal and by no works, are free for all things, at rest and safe in the glory of their baptism alone. We also ourselves are babes in Christ, unremittingly baptized.

In opposition to what I have said, an argument will perhaps be drawn from the baptism of infants, who cannot receive the promise of God, or have faith in their baptism; and it will be said that therefore either faith is not requisite, or infants are baptized in vain. To this I reply, what all men say, that infants are aided by the faith of others, namely, that of those who bring them to baptism. For as the word of God, when it is preached, is powerful enough to change the heart of a wicked man, which is not less devoid of sense and feeling than any infant, so through the prayers of the Church which brings the child in faith, to

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which prayers all things are possible, the infant is changed, cleansed, and renewed by faith infused into it. Nor should I doubt that even a wicked adult, if the Church were to bring him forward and pray for him, might undergo a change in any of the sacraments; just as we read in the gospel that the paralytic man was healed by the faith of others. In this sense too I should readily admit that the sacraments of the new law are effectual for the bestowal of grace, not only on those who do not place any obstacle in the way, but on the most obstinate of those who do. What difficulty cannot the faith of the Church and the prayer of faith remove, when Stephen is believed to have converted the Apostle Paul by this power? But in these cases the sacraments do what they do, not by their own virtue, but by that of faith; without which, as I have said, they have no effect at all.

A question has been raised whether a child yet unborn, but of which only a hand or a foot

appears, can be baptized. On this point I would give no hasty judgment, and I confess my own ignorance. Nor do I know whether the reason on which they base their opinion is sufficient, namely, that the whole soul exists in every part of the body; for it is not the soul, but the body, which is outwardly baptized. On the other hand, I cannot pronounce that, as some assert, he who has not yet been born, cannot be born again; though it is a very strong argument. I leave this question to the decision of the Spirit, and meanwhile would have every man to be fully persuaded in his own mind.

I will add one thing, of which I wish I could persuade every one; that is, that all vows, whether those of religious orders, or of pilgrimages, or of works of any kind, should be entirely done away with, or at least avoided, and that we should remain in the liberty of baptism, full as it is of religious observances and of good works. It is impossible to express to what an extent this far too much extolled belief in vows detracts from baptism, and obscures the knowledge of Christian liberty; not to mention the unspeakable and infinite danger to souls which is daily increased by this immoderate passion for vows, and thoughtless rashness in making them. Oh ye most wicked Bishops and most unhappy pastors, who slumber at your ease and disport yourselves with your own desires, while ye have no pity for the grievous and perilous affliction of Joseph!

It would be well either to do away by a general edict with all vows, especially those which are perpetual, and to recall all men to their baptismal vows, or at least to admonish all to take no vow rashly; and not only to invite no vows, but to place delays and difficulties in the way of their being taken. We make an ample vow at baptism, a greater one than we can fulfil; and we shall have enough to do if we give all our efforts to this alone. But now we compass sea and land to make many proselytes; we fill the world with priests, monks, and nuns; and we imprison all these in perpetual vows. We shall find those who will argue on this point, and lay it down that works performed under the sanction of a vow are better than those performed independently of vows, and will be preferred in heaven and meet with far higher reward. Blind and impious Pharisees! who measure righteousness and holiness by the greatness and number of works, or by some other quality in them; while in God's sight they are measured by faith alone; since in His sight there is no difference between works, except so far as there is a difference in faith.

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By this inflated talk wicked men create a great opinion of their own inventions, and puff up human works, in order to allure the senseless multitude, who are easily led by a specious show of works; to the great ruin of faith, forgetfulness of baptism, and injury to Christian liberty. As a vow is a sort of law and requires a work, it follows that, as vows are multiplied, so laws and works are multiplied; and by the multiplication of these, faith is extinguished, and the liberty of baptism is brought into bondage. Not content with these impious allurements, others go further, and assert that entrance into a religious order is like a new baptism, which may be successively renewed, as often as the purpose of a religious life is renewed. Thus these devotees attribute to themselves alone righteousness, salvation, and glory, and leave to the baptized absolutely no room for comparison with them. The Roman pontiff, that fountain and author of all superstitions, confirms, approves, and embellishes these ideas by grandly worded bulls and indulgences; while no one thinks baptism worthy even of mention. By these showy displays they drive the easily led people of Christ into whatever whirlpools of error they will; so that, unthankful for their baptism, they imagine that they can do better by their

works than others by their faith.

Wherefore God also, who is froward with the froward, resolving to avenge Himself on the pride and unthankfulness of these devotees, causes them either to fail in keeping their vows, or to keep them with great labour and to continue immersed in them, never becoming acquainted with the grace of faith and of baptism. As their spirit is not right with God, He permits them to continue to the end in their hypocrisy, and to become at length a laughing-stock to the whole world, always following after righteousness, and never attaining to it; so that they fulfil that saying: "Their land also is full of idols." (Is. ii. 8.)

I should certainly not forbid or object to any vow which a man may make of his own private choice. I do not wish altogether to condemn or depreciate vows; but my advice would be altogether against the public establishment or confirmation of any such mode of life. It is enough that every man should be at liberty to make private vows at his own peril; but that a public system of living under the constraint of vows should be inculcated, I consider to be a thing pernicious to the Church and to all simple souls. In the first place, it is not a little repugnant to the Christian life, inasmuch as a vow is a kind of ceremonial law, and a matter of human tradition or invention; from all which the Church has been set free by baptism, since the Christian is bound by no law, except that of God. Moreover there is no example of it in the Scriptures, especially of the vow of perpetual chastity, obedience, and poverty. Now a vow of which we have no example in the Scriptures is a perilous one, which ought to be urged upon no man, much less be established as a common and public mode of life; even if every individual must be allowed to venture upon it at his own peril, if he will. There are some works which are wrought by the Spirit in but few, and these ought by no means to be brought forward as an example, or as a manner of life.

I greatly fear, however, that these systems of living under vows in the religious, are of the number of those things of which the Apostle foretold: "Speaking lies in hypocrisy; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* – Martin Luther be received with thanksgiving." (1 Tim. iv. 2, 3.) Let no one cite against me the example of St. Bernard, St. Francis, St. Dominic, and such like authors or supporters of religious orders. God is terrible and wonderful in His dealings with the children of men. He could preserve Daniel, Ananias, Azarias, and Misael holy, even as ministers of the kingdom of Babylon, that is, in the very midst of wickedness; He may also have sanctified the men of whom I have spoken in their perilous mode of life, and have guided them by the special working of His Spirit; while yet He would not have this made an example for other men. It is certain that not one of these men was saved by his vows or his religious order, but by faith alone, by which all men are saved, but to which these showy servitudes of vows are especially hostile.

In this matter let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. I shall carry out my undertaking, and speak on behalf of the liberty of the Church and of the glory of baptism; and I shall state for the general benefit what I have learnt under the teaching of the Spirit. And first I counsel those who are in high places in the Church to do away with all those vows and the practice of living under vows, or, at the least, not to approve or extol them. If they will not do this, then I earnestly advise all who desire to make their salvation the safer—particularly growing youths and young men—to keep aloof from all vows,

especially from such as are extensive and life-long. I give this advice in the first place because this mode of life, as I have already said, has no evidence or example in the Scriptures, but rests only on the bulls of the pontiffs, who are but men; and secondly, because it tends to lead men into hypocrisy through its singularity and showy appearance, whence arise pride and contempt of the ordinary Christian life. If there were no other cause for doing away with these vows, this one by itself would have weight enough, that by them faith and baptism are depreciated, and works are magnified. Now these cannot be magnified without ruinous consequences, for among many thousands there is scarcely one who does not look more to his works as a member of a religious order, than to faith; and under this delusion they claim superiority over each other as being stricter or laxer, as they call it.

Hence I advise no man, yea, I dissuade every man from entering into the priesthood or any religious order, unless he be so fortified with knowledge as to understand that, however sacred and lofty may be the works of priests or of the religious orders, they differ not at all in the sight of God from the works of a husbandman labouring in his field, or of a woman attending to her household affairs, but that in His eyes all things are measured by faith alone; as it is written: "In all thy work believe with the faith of thy soul, for this is the keeping of the commandments of God." (Eccles. xxxii. 23.) Nay, it very often happens that the common work of a servant or a handmaiden is more acceptable to God than all the fastings and works of a monk or a priest, when they are done without faith. Since, then, it is likely that at the present day vows only tend to increase men's pride and presumption in their own works, it is to be feared that there is nowhere less of faith and of the Church than in priests, monks, and bishops; and that these very men are really Gentiles and hypocrites, who consider themselves to be the Church, or the very heart of the Church, spiritual persons, and rulers of the Church, when they are very far indeed from being so. These are really the people of the captivity,

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among whom all the free gifts bestowed in baptism have been brought into bondage; while the poor and slender remnant of the people of the land appear vile in their eyes. From this we perceive two conspicuous errors on the part of the Roman Pontiff. The first is, that he gives dispensations in the matter of vows, and does this as if he alone possessed authority beyond all other Christians. So far does the rashness and audacity of wicked men extend. If a vow can be dispensed with, any brother can dispense for his neighbour, or even for himself. If he cannot grant such dispensations, neither has the Pope any right to do so. Whence has he this authority? From the keys? They are common to all, and only have power over sins. But since the Pope himself confesses that vows have a divine right, why does he cheat and ruin wretched souls by giving dispensations in a matter of divine right, which admits of no dispensation? He prates of the redemption of vows, and declares that he has power to change vows, just as under the law of old the first-born of an ass was exchanged for a lamb; as if a vow, which requires to be fulfilled everywhere and constantly, were the same thing with the first-born of an ass; or as if, because God in His own law ordered an ass to be exchanged for a lamb, therefore the Pope, who is but a man, had the same power with respect to a law which is not his, but God's. It was not a pope who made this decretal, but an ass which had been exchanged for a pope, so utterly mad and impious was he.

The Pope commits a second great error again, in decreeing that the bond of marriage may

be broken through, if one of the parties, even against the will of the other, desires to enter a monastery, provided the marriage has not yet been consummated. What devil inspires this portentous decree of the Pope? God commands men to keep faith and observe truth towards one another, and that every man should bring gifts out of his own substance; for He hates robbery for burnt-offering, as He declares by the mouth of Isaiah. Now husband and wife owe fidelity to each other by their compact, a fidelity which can be dissolved by no law. Neither can say: "I belong to myself," or can do without robbery whatever is done against the will of the other. Else why not also have a rule that a man who is in debt, if he enter into a religious order, shall be freed from his debts, and be at liberty to deny his bond? Ye blind! ye blind! Which is greater—good faith, which is a command of God, or a vow, invented and chosen by men? Art thou a shepherd of souls, O Pope? Are ye doctors of sacred theology, who teach in this way? Why do ye teach thus? Because ye extol a vow as being a better work than marriage; but it is not faith, which itself alone can magnify anything, that ye magnify, but works, which in the sight of God are nothing, or at least all equal as concerns their merit.

I cannot doubt then that from such vows as it is right to make, neither men nor angels can give a dispensation. But I have not been able to convince myself that all the vows made in these days fall under the head of rightful vows; such as that ridiculous piece of folly, when parents devote their child yet unborn, or an infant, to a life of religion or to perpetual chastity. Nay it is certain that this is no rightful vow; it appears to be a mockery of God, since the parents vow what it is in no wise in their power to perform. I come now to members of the religious orders. The more I think of their three vows, the less I understand them, and the more I wonder how the exaction of such vows has grown upon us. Still less do I understand at what period of life such vows can be taken, so as to be *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church – Martin Luther*

legitimate and valid. In this all are agreed, that such vows, taken before the age of puberty, are not valid. And yet in this matter they deceive a great number of youths, who know as little of their own age as of what it is they are vowing. The age of puberty is not looked to when the vows are taken, but consent is supposed to follow afterwards, and the professed are held in bondage and devoured by dreadful scruples of conscience; as if a vow in itself void could become valid by the progress of time.

To me it seems folly that any limit to a legitimate vow should be laid down by others, who cannot lay one down in their own case. Nor do I see why a vow made in a man's eighteenth year should be valid, but not if made in his tenth or twelfth year. It is not enough to say that in his eighteenth year a man feels the impulses of the flesh. What if he scarcely feels them in his twentieth or thirtieth year; or feels them more strongly in his thirtieth year than in his twentieth? Why, again, is not a similar limitation placed on the vows of poverty and obedience? What time shall we assign for a man to feel himself avaricious or proud, when even the most spiritually minded men have a difficulty in detecting these affections in themselves? There will never be any sure and legitimate vow, until we shall have become thoroughly spiritual, and so have no need of vows. We see then that vows are most uncertain and perilous things. It would be a salutary course to leave this lofty manner of living under vows free to the spirit alone, as it was of old, and by no means to convert it into a perpetual mode of life. We have now, however, said enough on the subject of baptism and liberty. The time will perhaps come for treating more fully of vows, and in truth they greatly need to be treated of.

CONCERNING THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE

In this third part I shall speak of the sacrament of penance. By the tracts and disputations which I have published on this subject I have given offence to very many, and have amply expressed my own opinions. I must now briefly repeat these statements, in order to unveil the tyranny which attacks us on this point as unsparingly as in the sacrament of the bread. In these two sacraments gain and lucre find a place, and therefore the avarice of the shepherds has raged to an incredible extent against the sheep of Christ; while even baptism, as we have seen in speaking of vows, has been sadly obscured among adults, that the purposes of avarice might be served.

The first and capital evil connected with this sacrament is, that they have totally done away with the sacrament itself, leaving not even a vestige of it. Whereas this, like the other two sacraments, consists of the word of the divine promise on one side and of our faith on the other, they have overthrown both of these. They have adapted to the purposes of their own tyranny Christ's word of promise, when He says: "Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. xvi. 19); and: "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. xviii. 18); and again: "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." (John xx. 23.) These words are meant to call forth the faith of penitents, that they may seek and obtain remission of their sins. But these men, in all their books, writings, and discourses, have not made it their object to *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church – Martin Luther*

explain to Christians the promise conveyed in these words, and to show them what they ought to believe, and how much consolation they might have, but to establish in the utmost length, breadth and depth their own powerful and violent tyranny. At last some have even begun to give orders to the angels in heaven, and to boast, with an incredible frenzy of impiety, that they have received the right to rule in heaven and on earth, and have the power of binding even in heaven. Thus they say not a word about the saving faith of the people, but talk largely of the tyrannical power of the pontiffs; whereas Christ's words do not deal at all with power, but entirely with faith.

It was not principalities, powers, and dominions that Christ instituted in His Church, but a ministry, as we learn from the words of the Apostle: "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God." (1 Cor. iv. 1.) When Christ said: "Whosoever believeth and is baptized shall be saved," He meant to call forth faith on the part of those seeking baptism; so that, on the strength of this word of promise, a man might be sure that, if he believed and were baptized, he would obtain salvation. No sort of power is here bestowed on His servants, but only the ministry of baptism is committed to them. In the same way, when Christ says: "Whatsoever ye shall bind," etc., He means to call forth the faith of the penitent, so that, on the strength of this word of promise, he may be sure that, if he believes and is absolved, he will be truly absolved in heaven. Evidently nothing is said here of power, but it is the ministry of absolution which is spoken of. It is strange enough that these blind and arrogant men have not arrogated to themselves some tyrannical power from the terms of the baptismal promise. If not, why have they presumed to do so from the promise connected with penitence? In both cases there is an equal ministry, a like promise, and the same character in the sacrament; and it cannot be denied that, if we do not owe baptism to Peter alone, it

is a piece of impious tyranny to claim the power of the keys for the Pope alone. Thus also when Christ says: "Take, eat, this is my body which is given for you; this is the cup in my blood," He means to call forth faith in those who eat, that their conscience may be strengthened by faith in these words, and that they may feel sure that, when they believe eat, they receive remission of sins. There is nothing here which speaks of power, but only of a ministry. The promise of Baptism has remained with us, at least in the case of infants, but the promise of the Bread and the Cup has been destroyed, or brought into servitude to avarice, and faith has been turned into a work and a testament into a sacrifice. Thus also the promise of Penance has been perverted into a most violent tyranny, and into the establishment of a dominion that is more than temporal. Not content with this, our Babylon has so utterly done away with faith as to declare with shameless front that it is not necessary in this sacrament; nay, in her antichristian wickedness, she pronounces it a heresy to assert the necessity of faith. What more is there that that tyranny could do, and has not done? Verily "by the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down; yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof." (Psalm cxxxvii. 1, 2.) May the Lord curse the barren willows of those rivers! Amen. The promise and faith having been blotted out and overthrown, let us see what they have substituted for them. They have divided penitence into three parts, contrition, confession, and satisfaction; but in doing this they have taken *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* – Martin Luther away all that was good in each of these, and have set up in each their own tyranny and caprice.

In the first place, they have so taught contrition as to make it prior to faith in the promise, and far better as not being a work of faith, but a merit; nay, they make no mention of faith. They stick fast in works and in examples taken from the Scriptures, where we read of many who obtained pardon through humility and contrition of heart, but they never think of the faith which wrought this contrition and sorrow of heart; as it is written concerning the Ninevites: "The people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth." (Jonah iii. 5.) These men, worse and more audacious than the Ninevites, have invented a certain "attrition," which, by the virtue of the keys (of which they are ignorant), may become contrition; and this they bestow on the wicked and unbelieving, and thus do away entirely with contrition. O unendurable wrath of God, that such things should be taught in the Church of Christ! So it is that, having got rid of faith and its work, we walk heedlessly in the doctrines and opinions of men, or rather perish in them. A contrite heart is a great matter indeed, and can only proceed from an earnest faith in the Divine promises and threats—a faith which, contemplating the unshakeable truth of God, makes the conscience to tremble, terrifies and bruises it, and, when it is thus contrite, raises it up again, consoles, and preserves it. Thus, the truth of the threatening is the cause of contrition, and the truth of the promise is the cause of consolation, when they are believed; and by this faith a man merits remission of sins. Therefore faith above all things ought to be taught and called forth; when faith is produced, contrition and consolation will follow of their own accord by an inevitable consequence.

Hence, although there is something in the teaching of those who assert that contrition is to be brought about by the collection—as they call it—and contemplation of our own sins, still theirs is a perilous and perverse doctrine, because they do not first teach the origin and cause of contrition, namely, the unshakeable truth of the Divine threatenings

and promises, in order to call forth faith; that so men might understand that they ought to look with much more earnest attention to the truth of God, by which to be humbled and raised up again, than to the multitude of their own sins, which, if they be looked at apart from the truth of God, are more likely to renew and increase the desire for sin, than to produce contrition. I say nothing of that insurmountable chaos of labour which they impose upon us, namely, that we are to frame a contrition for all our sins, for this is impossible. We can know but a small part of our sins; indeed even our good works will be found to be sins; as it is written: "Enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified." (Psalm cxliii. 2.) It is enough that we sorrow for those sins which vex our conscience at the present moment, and which are easily recognised by an effort of our memory. He who is thus disposed will without doubt be ready to feel sorrow and fear on account of all his sins, and will feel sorrow and fear when in future they are revealed to him.

Beware then of trusting in thine own contrition, or attributing remission of sins to thy own sorrow. It is not because of these that God looks on thee with favour, but because of the faith with which thou hast believed His threatenings and promises, and which has wrought that sorrow in thee. Therefore whatever good there is in penitence is due, not to *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church – Martin Luther*

the diligence with which we reckon up our sins, but to the truth of God and to our faith. All other things are works and fruits which follow of their own accord, and which do not make a man good, but are done by a man who has been made good by his faith in the truth of God. Thus it is written: "Because he was wroth, there went up a smoke in his presence." (Psalm xviii. 8.) The terror of the threatening comes first, which devours the wicked; but faith, accepting the threatening, sends forth contrition as a cloud of smoke. Contrition, though it has been completely exposed to wicked and pestilent doctrines, has yet given less occasion to tyranny and the love of gain. But confession and satisfaction have been turned into the most noted workshops for lucre and ambition. To speak first of confession. There is no doubt that confession of sins is necessary, and is commanded by God. "They were baptized of John in Jordan, confessing their sins." (Matt. iii. 6.) "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." (1 John i. 9, 10.) If the saints must not deny their sin, how much more ought those who are guilty of great or public offences to confess them. But the most effective proof of the institution of confession is given when Christ tells us that an offending brother must be told of his fault, brought before the Church, accused, and finally, if he neglect to hear the Church, excommunicated. He "hears" when he yields to reproof, and acknowledges and confesses his sin.

The secret confession, however, which is now practised, though it cannot be proved from Scripture, is in my opinion highly satisfactory, and useful or even necessary. I could not wish it not to exist; nay, I rejoice that it does exist in the Church of Christ, for it is the one great remedy for afflicted consciences; when, after laying open our conscience to a brother, and unveiling all the evil which lay hid there, we receive from the mouth of that brother the word of consolation sent forth from God; receiving which by faith we find peace in a sense of the mercy of God, who speaks to us through our brother. What I protest against is the conversion of this institution of confession into a means of tyranny and extortion by the bishops. They reserve certain cases to themselves as secret, and then order them to be revealed to confessors named by themselves, and thus vex the

consciences of men; filling the office of bishop, but utterly neglecting the real duties of a bishop, which are, to preach the gospel and to minister to the poor. Nay, these impious tyrants principally reserve to themselves the cases which are of less consequence, while they leave the greater ones everywhere to the common herd of priests,—cases such as the ridiculous inventions of the bull “In Coena Domini.” That their wicked perverseness may be yet more manifest, they do not reserve those things which are offences against the worship of God, against faith, and against the chief commandments, but even approve and teach them; such as those journeyings hither and thither on pilgrimage, the perverted worship of saints, the lying legends of saints, the confidence in and practice of works and ceremonies; by all which things the faith of God is extinguished, and idolatry is nourished, as it is at this day. The pontiffs we have nowadays are such as those whom Jeroboam established at Dan and Beersheba as ministers of the golden calves—men who are ignorant of the law of God, of faith, and of all that concerns the feeding of the sheep of Christ, and who only thrust their own inventions upon the people by terror and power.

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Although I exhort men to endure the violence of these reservers, even as Christ bids us to endure all the tyrannical conduct of men, and teaches us to obey such extortioners; still I neither admit nor believe that they have any right of reservation. By no jot or tittle can they prove this; while I can prove the contrary. In the first place, if, in speaking of public offences, Christ says that we have gained our brother, if he hears us when told of his fault, and that he is not to be brought before the Church, unless he has refused to hear us, and that offences may thus be set right between brethren; how much more true will it be concerning private offences, that the sin is taken away, when brother has voluntarily confessed it to brother, so that he need not bring it before the Church, that is, before a prelate or priest, as these men say in their foolish interpretation. In support of my opinion we have again the authority of Christ, when he says in the same passage: “Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” (Matt. xviii. 18.) This saying is addressed to all Christians and to every Christian. Once more he says to the same effect: “Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.” (Matt. xviii. 19.) Now a brother, laying open his secret sins to a brother and seeking pardon, certainly agrees on earth with that brother in the truth, which is Christ. In confirmation of what he had said before, Christ says still more clearly in the same passage: “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” (Matt. xviii. 20.)

From all this I do not hesitate to say that whosoever voluntarily confesses his sins privately, in the presence of any brother, or, when told of his faults, asks pardon and amends his life, is absolved from his secret sins, since Christ has manifestly bestowed the power of absolution on every believer in Him, with whatever violence the pontiffs may rage against this truth. Add also this little argument, that, if any reservation of hidden sins were valid, and there could be no salvation unless they were remitted, the greatest hindrance to salvation would lie in those things which I have mentioned above—even those good works and idolatries which we are taught at the present day by the pontiffs. While, if these most weighty matters are not a hindrance, with how much less reason are those lighter offences so foolishly reserved! It is by the ignorance and blindness of the pastors that these portents are wrought in the Church. Wherefore I would warn these

princes of Babylon and bishops of Beth-aven to abstain from reserving cases of any kind whatever, but to allow the freest permission to hear confessions of secret sins to all brethren and sisters; so that the sinner may reveal his sin to whom he will, with the object of seeking pardon and consolation, that is, the word of Christ uttered by the mouth of his neighbour. They effect nothing by their rash presumption, but to ensnare needlessly the consciences of the weak, to establish their own wicked tyranny, and to feed their own avarice on the sins and perdition of their brethren. Thus they stain their hands with the blood of souls, and children are devoured by their parents, and Ephraim devours Judah, and Syria Israel, as Isaiah says.

To these evils they have added circumstances—mothers, daughters, sisters, relatives, branches, fruits of sins, all devised at complete leisure by the most subtle of men, who have set up, even in the matter of sins, a sort of tree of consanguinity and affinity. So fertile of results are ignorance and impiety; for these devices of some worthless fellow *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church – Martin Luther*

have passed into public law, as has happened in many other cases. So vigilantly do the shepherds watch over the Church of Christ, that whatever dreams of superstition or of new works these senseless devotees indulge, they forthwith bring forward, and dress them up with indulgences, and fortify them with bulls. So far are they from prohibiting these things, and protecting the simplicity of faith and liberty for the people of God; for what has liberty to do with the tyranny of Babylon?

I should advise the total neglect of all that concerns circumstances. Among Christians there is but one circumstance, and that is, that a brother has sinned. No character is to be compared to Christian brotherhood; nor has the observation of places, times, days, and persons, or any other such superstitious exaggeration, any effect but to magnify things which are nothing, at the expense of those things which are everything. As if there could be anything greater or more weighty than the glory of Christian brotherhood, they so tie us down to places and days and persons, that the name of brother is held cheap, and instead of being freemen we are slaves in bondage—we to whom all days, places, persons, and all other outward things, are equal.

How unworthily they have treated the matter of satisfaction. I have abundantly shown in the case of indulgences. They have abused it notably, to the destruction of Christians in body and in soul. In the first place, they have so taught it that the people have not understood the real meaning of satisfaction, which is a change of life. Furthermore, they so urge it and represent it as necessary, that they leave no room for faith in Christ; but men's consciences are most wretchedly tortured by scruples on this point. One runs hither, another thither; one to Rome, another into a convent, another to some other place; one scourges himself with rods, another destroys his body with vigils and fasting; while all, under one general delusion, say: Here is Christ, or there; and imagine that the kingdom of God, which is really within us, will come with observation. These monstrous evils we owe to thee, See of Rome, and to thy homicidal laws and rites, by which thou hast brought the world to such a point of ruin, that they think they can make satisfaction to God for their sins by works, while it is only by the faith of a contrite heart that He is satisfied. This faith thou not only compellest to silence in the midst of these tumults, but strivest to destroy, only in order that thy avarice, that insatiable leech, may have some to whom to cry: Bring, bring; and may make a traffic of sins.

Some have even proceeded to such a length in framing engines of despair for souls, as to

lay it down that all sins, the satisfaction enjoined for which has been neglected, must be gone over afresh in confession. What will not such men dare, men born for this end, to bring everything ten times over into bondage? Moreover, I should like to know how many people there are who are fully persuaded that they are in a state of salvation, and are making satisfaction for their sins, when they murmur over the prayers enjoined by the priest with their lips alone, and meanwhile do not even think of any amendment of life. They believe that by one moment of contrition and confession their whole life is changed, and that there remains merit enough over and above to make satisfaction for their past sins. How should they know better, when they are taught nothing better? There is not a thought here of mortification of the flesh; the example of Christ goes for nothing; who, when he absolved the woman taken in adultery, said to her: "Go, and sin no more;"

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thereby laying on her the cross of mortification of the flesh. No slight occasion has been given to these perverted ideas by our absolving sinners before they have completed their satisfaction; whence it comes that they are more anxious about completing their satisfaction, which is a thing that lasts, than about contrition, which they think has been gone through in the act of confession. On the contrary, absolution ought to follow the completion of satisfaction, as it did in the primitive Church, whence it happened that, the work being over, they were afterwards more exercised in faith and newness of life. On this subject, however, it must suffice to have repeated so far what I have said at greater length in writing on indulgences. Let it also suffice for the present to have said this much in the whole respecting these three sacraments, which are treated of and not treated of in so many mischievous books of Sentences and of law. It remains for me to say a few words about the remaining sacraments also, that I may not appear to have rejected them without sufficient reason.

OF CONFIRMATION.

It is surprising that it should have entered any one's mind to make a Sacrament of Confirmation out of that laying on of hands which Christ applied to little children, and by which the apostles bestowed the Holy Spirit, ordained presbyters, and healed the sick; as the Apostle writes to Timothy: "Lay hands suddenly on no man." (1 Tim. v. 22.) Why not also make a confirmation out of the sacrament of bread, because it is written: "And when he had received meat, he was strengthened" (Acts ix. 19); or again: "Bread which strengtheneth man's heart?" (Ps. civ. 15.) Thus confirmation would include three sacraments, of bread, of orders, and of confirmation itself. But if whatever the apostles did is a sacrament, why has not preaching rather been made into a sacrament?

I do not say this, because I condemn the seven sacraments, but because I deny that they can be proved from the Scriptures. I wish there were in the Church such a laying on of hands as there was in the time of the Apostles, whether we chose to call it confirmation or healing. As it is, however, none of it remains, except so much as we have ourselves invented in order to regulate the duties of the bishops, that they may not be entirely without work in the Church. For when they had left the sacraments which involved labour, along with the word, to their inferiors, as being beneath their attention (on the ground, forsooth, that whatever institutions the Divine majesty has set up must needs be an object of contempt to men), it was but right that we should invent some easy duty, not too troublesome for the daintiness of these great heroes, and by no means commit it to inferiors, as if it were of little importance. What human wisdom has ordained ought to be

honoured by men. Thus, such as the priests are, such should be the ministry and office which they hold. For what is a bishop who does not preach the gospel, or attend to the cure of souls, but an idol in the world, having the name and form of a bishop?

At present, however, we are enquiring into the sacraments of divine institution; and I can find no reason for reckoning confirmation among these. To constitute a sacrament we require in the very first place a word of divine promise, on which faith may exercise itself. But we do not read that Christ ever gave any promise respecting confirmation, although he himself laid hands upon many, and although he mentions among the signs

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that should follow them that believe: “They shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.” (Mark xvi. 18.) No one, however, has interpreted these words of a sacrament, or could do so. It is enough then to consider confirmation as a rite or ceremony of the Church; of like nature to those other ceremonies by which water and other things are consecrated. For if every other creature is sanctified by the word and prayer, why may not man much more be sanctified by the same means, even though they cannot be called sacraments of faith, inasmuch as they contain no divine promise? Neither do these work salvation; while sacraments save those who believe in the divine promise.

OF MATRIMONY.

It is not only without any warrant of Scripture that matrimony is considered a sacrament, but it has been turned into a mere mockery by the very same traditions which vaunt it as a sacrament. Let us look a little into this. I have said that in every sacrament there is contained a word of divine promise, which must be believed in by him who receives the sign; and that the sign alone cannot constitute a sacrament. Now we nowhere read that he who marries a wife will receive any grace from God; neither is there in matrimony any sign of divine institution, nor do we anywhere read that it was appointed of God to be a sign of anything; although it is true that all visible transactions may be understood as figures and allegorical representations of invisible things. But figures and allegories are not sacraments, in the sense in which we are speaking of sacraments.

Furthermore, since matrimony has existed from the beginning of the world, and still continues even among unbelievers, there are no reasons why it should be called a sacrament of the new law, and of the Church alone. The marriages of the patriarchs were not less marriages than ours, nor are those of unbelievers less real than those of believers; and yet no one calls them a sacrament. Moreover there are among believers wicked husbands and wives, worse than any Gentiles. Why should we then say there is a sacrament here, and not among the Gentiles? Shall we so trifle with baptism and the Church as to say, like those who rave about the temporal power existing only in the Church, that matrimony is a sacrament only in the Church? Such assertions are childish and ridiculous, and by them we expose our ignorance and rashness to the laughter of unbelievers.

It will be asked however: Does not the Apostle say that “they two shall be one flesh,” and that “this is a great sacrament;” and will you contradict the plain words of the Apostle? I reply that this argument is a very dull one, and proceeds from a careless and thoughtless reading of the original. Throughout the holy Scriptures this word “*sacramentum*,” has not the meaning in which we employ it, but an opposite one. For it everywhere signifies, not the sign of a sacred thing, but a sacred thing which is secret and hidden. Thus Paul says: “Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries

(that is, sacraments) of God.” (1 Cor. iv. 1.) Where we use the Latin term “sacrament,” in Greek the word “mystery” is employed; and thus in Greek the words of the Apostle are: “They two shall be one flesh; this is a great mystery.” This ambiguity has led men to consider marriage as a sacrament of the new law, which they would have been far from doing, if they had read the word “mystery,” as it is in the Greek.

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Thus the Apostle calls Christ himself a “sacrament,” saying: “And without controversy great is the sacrament (that is, mystery) of godliness. God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.” (1 Tim. iii. 16.) Why have they not deduced from this an eighth sacrament of the new law, under such clear authority from Paul? Or, if they restrained themselves in this case, where they might so suitably have been copious in the invention of sacraments, why are they so lavish of them in the other? It is because they have been misled by their ignorance as well of things as of words; they have been caught by the mere sound of the words and by their own fancies. Having once, on human authority, taken a sacrament to be a sign, they have proceeded, without any judgment or scruple, to make the word mean a sign, wherever they have met with it in the sacred writings. Just as they have imported other meanings of words and human habits of speech into the sacred writings, and transformed these into dreams of their own, making anything out of anything. Hence their constant senseless use of the words: good works, bad works, sin, grace, righteousness, virtue, and almost all the most important words and things. They use all these at their own discretion, founded on the writings of men, to the ruin of the truth of God and of our salvation.

Thus sacrament and mystery, in Paul’s meaning, are the very wisdom of the Spirit, hidden in a mystery, as he says: “Which none of the princes of this world knew; for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.” (1 Cor. ii. 8.) There remains to this day this folly, this stone of stumbling and rock of offence, this sign which shall be spoken against. Paul calls preachers the stewards of these mysteries, because they preach Christ, the power and wisdom of God; but so preach him that unless men believe, they cannot understand. Thus a sacrament means a mystery and a hidden thing, which is made known by words, but is received by faith of heart. Such is the passage of which we are speaking at present: “They two shall be one flesh; this is a great mystery.” These men think that this was said concerning matrimony; but Paul brings in these words in speaking of Christ and the Church, and explains his meaning clearly by saying: “I speak concerning Christ and the Church.” See how well Paul and these men agree! Paul says that he is setting forth a great mystery concerning Christ and the Church; while they set it forth as concerning male and female. If men may thus indulge their own caprices in interpreting the sacred writings, what wonder if anything can be found in them, were it even a hundred sacraments?

Christ then and the Church are a mystery, that is, a great and hidden thing, which may indeed and ought to be figured by matrimony, as in a sort of real allegory; but it does not follow that matrimony ought to be called a sacrament. The heavens figuratively represent the apostles; the sun Christ; the waters nations; but these things are not therefore sacraments; for in all these cases the institution is wanting and the divine promise; and these it is which make a sacrament complete. Hence Paul is either, of his own spirit, applying to Christ the words used in Genesis concerning matrimony, or else he teaches

that, in their general sense, the spiritual marriage of Christ is also there declared, saying: “Even as the Lord cherisheth the Church; for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery, but I speak

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concerning Christ and the Church.” (Eph. v. 29–32.) We see that he means this whole text to be understood as spoken by him about Christ. He purposely warns the reader to understand the “Sacrament” as in Christ and the Church, not in matrimony.

I admit, indeed, that even under the old law, nay, from the beginning of the world, there was a sacrament of penitence; but the new promise of penitence and the gift of the keys are peculiar to the new law. As we have baptism in the place of circumcision, so we now have the keys in the place of sacrifices or other signs of penitence. I have said above that, at different times, the same God has given different promises and different signs for the remission of sins and the salvation of men, while yet it is the same grace that all have received. As it is written: “We, having the same spirit of faith, believe, and therefore speak.” (2 Cor. iv. 13.) “Our fathers did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ.” (1 Cor. x. 3, 4.) “These all died in faith, not having received the promises; God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.” (Heb. xi. 13, 40.) For Christ himself, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever, is the head of his Church from the beginning even to the end of the world. There are then different signs, but the faith of all believers is the same; since without faith it is impossible to please God, and by it Abel pleased Him.

Let then matrimony be a figure of Christ and the Church, not however a sacrament divinely instituted, but one invented in the Church by men led astray by their ignorance alike of things and of words. So far as this invention is not injurious to the faith, it must be borne with in charity; just as many other devices of human weakness and ignorance are borne with in the Church, so long as they are not injurious to faith and to the sacred writings. But we are now contending for the firmness and purity of faith and of Scripture; lest, if we affirm anything to be contained in the sacred writings and in the articles of our faith, and it is afterwards proved not to be so contained, we should expose our faith to mockery, be found ignorant of our own special business, cause scandal to our adversaries and to the weak, and fail to exalt the authority of holy Scripture. For we must make the widest possible distinction between those things which have been delivered to us from God in the sacred writings, and those which have been invented in the Church by men, of however eminent authority from their holiness and their learning.

Thus far I have spoken of matrimony itself. But what shall we say of those impious human laws by which this divinely appointed manner of life has been entangled and tossed up and down? Good God! it is horrible to look upon the temerity of the tyrants of Rome, who thus, according to their own caprices, at one time annul marriages and at another time enforce them. Is the human race given over to their caprice for nothing but to be mocked and abused in every way, and that these men may do what they please with it for the sake of their own fatal gains?

There is a book in general circulation and held in no slight esteem, which has been confusedly put together out of all the dregs and filth of human traditions, and entitled the Angelic Summary; while it is really a more than diabolical summary. In this book, among

an infinite number of monstrous statements, by which confessors are supposed to be *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church – Martin Luther* instructed, while they are in truth most ruinously confused, eighteen impediments to matrimony are enumerated. If we look at these with the just and free eye of faith, we shall see that the writer is of the number of those of whom the Apostle foretold that they should “give heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; forbidding to marry.” (1 Tim. iv. 1–3.) What is forbidding to marry, if this is not forbidding it—to invent so many impediments, and to set so many snares, that marriages cannot be contracted, or, if they are contracted, must be dissolved? Who has given this power to men? Granted that such men have been holy and led by a pious zeal; why does the holiness of another encroach upon my liberty? Why does the zeal of another bring me into bondage? Let whosoever will be as holy and as zealous as he will, but let him not injure others, or rob me of my liberty.

I rejoice, however, that these disgraceful laws have at length attained the glory they deserve, in that by their aid the men of Rome have nowadays become common traders. And what do they sell? The shame of men and women; a merchandise worthy of these traffickers, who surpass all that is most sordid and disgusting in their avarice and impiety. There is not one of those impediments, which cannot be removed at the intercession of Mammon; so that these laws seem to have been made for no other purpose than to be nets for money and snares for souls in the hands of those greedy and rapacious Nimrods; and in order that we might see in the holy place, in the Church of God, the abomination of the public sale of the shame and ignominy of both sexes. A business worthy of our pontiffs, and fit to be carried on by men who, with the utmost disgrace and baseness, are given over to a reprobate mind, instead of that ministry of the gospel which, in their avarice and ambition, they despise.

But what am I to say or do? If I were to enter upon every particular, this treatise would extend beyond all bounds; for the subject is in the utmost confusion, so that no one can tell where he is to begin, how far he is to go, or where he is to stop. This I know, that no commonwealth can be prosperously administered by mere laws. If the magistrate is a wise man, he will govern more happily under the guidance of nature than by any laws; if he is not a wise man, he will effect nothing but mischief by laws, since he will not know how to use them, or to adapt them to the wants of the time. In public matters, therefore, it is of more importance that good and wise men should be at the head of affairs, than that any laws should be passed; for such men will themselves be the best of laws, since they will judge cases of all kinds with energy and justice. If, together with natural wisdom, there be learning in divine things, then it is clearly superfluous and mischievous to have any written laws; and charity above all things has absolutely no need of laws. I say, however, and do all that in me lies, admonishing and entreating all priests and friars, if they see any impediment with which the Pope can dispense, but which is not mentioned in Scripture, to consider all those marriages valid which have been contracted, in whatever way, contrary to ecclesiastical or pontifical laws. Let them arm themselves with the Divine law which says: What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. The union of husband and wife is one of divine right, and holds good, however much against the laws of men it may have taken place, and the laws of men ought to give place to it, without any scruple. For if a man is to leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife, how much more ought he to tread under foot the frivolous and unjust laws of men, that he

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may cleave to his wife? If the Pope, or any bishop or official, dissolves any marriage, because it has been contracted contrary to the papal laws, he is an antichrist, does violence to nature, and is guilty of treason against God; because this sentence stands: Whom God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

Besides this, man has no right to make such laws, and the liberty bestowed on Christians through Christ is above all the laws of men, especially when the divine law comes in, as Christ says: “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath; therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath.” (Mark ii. 27–28.) Again, such laws were condemned beforehand by Paul, when he foretold that those should arise who would forbid to marry. Hence in this matter all those rigorous impediments derived from spiritual affinity, or legal relationship and consanguinity, must give way, as far as is permitted by the sacred writings, in which only the second grade of consanguinity is prohibited, as it is written in the book of Leviticus, where twelve persons are prohibited, namely:—mother, step-mother, full sister, half sister by either parent, grand-daughter, father’s sister, mother’s sister, daughter-in-law, brother’s wife, wife’s sister, stepdaughter, uncle’s wife. In these only the first grade of affinity and the second of consanguinity are prohibited, and not even these universally, as is clear when we look carefully at the subject; for the daughter and grand-daughter of a brother and sister are not mentioned as prohibited, though they are in the second grade. Hence, if at any time a marriage has been contracted outside these grades, than which no others have ever been prohibited by God’s appointment, it ought by no means to be dissolved on account of any laws of men. Matrimony, being a divine institution, is incomparably above all laws, and therefore it cannot rightfully be broken through for the sake of laws, but rather laws for its sake.

Thus all those fanciful spiritual affinities of father, mother, brother, sister, or child, ought to be utterly done away with in the contracting of matrimony. What but the superstition of man has invented that spiritual relationship? If he who baptizes is not permitted to marry her whom he has baptized, or a godfather his god-daughter, why is a Christian man permitted to marry a Christian woman? Is the relationship established by a ceremony or by the sign of the sacrament stronger than that established by the substance itself of the sacrament? Is not a Christian man the brother of a Christian sister? Is not a baptized man the spiritual brother of a baptized woman? How can we be so senseless? If a man instructs his wife in the gospel and in the faith of Christ, and thus becomes truly her father in Christ, shall it not be lawful for her to continue his wife? Would not Paul have been at liberty to marry a maiden from among those Corinthians, all of whom he declares that he had begotten in Christ? See, then, how Christian liberty has been crushed by the blindness of human superstition!

Much more idle still is the doctrine of legal relationship; and yet they have raised even this above the divine right of matrimony. Nor can I agree to that impediment which they call disparity of religion, and which forbids a man to marry an unbaptized woman, neither simply, nor on condition of converting her to the faith. Who has prohibited this, God or man? Who has given men authority to prohibit marriages of this kind? Verily the spirits that speak lies in hypocrisy, as Paul says; of whom it may be truly said: The wicked have *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church – Martin Luther* spoken lies to me, but not according to thy law. Patricius, a heathen, married Monica, the

mother of St. Augustine, who was a Christian; why should not the same thing be lawful now? A like instance of foolish, nay wicked rigour is the impediment of crime; as when a man marries a woman previously polluted by adultery, or has plotted the death of a woman's husband, that he may be able to marry her. Whence, I ask, a severity on the part of men against men, such as even God has never exacted? Do these men pretend not to know that David, a most holy man, married Bathsheba the wife of Uriah, though both these crimes had been committed; that is, though she had been polluted by adultery and her husband had been murdered? If the divine law did this, why do tyrannical men act thus against their fellow servants?

It is also reckoned as an impediment when there exists what they call a bond; that is, when one person is bound to another by betrothal. In this case they conclude that if either party have subsequently had intercourse with a third, the former betrothal comes to an end. I cannot at all receive this doctrine. In my judgment, a man who has bound himself to one person is no longer at his own disposal, and therefore, under the prohibitions of the divine right, owes himself to the former, though he has not had intercourse with her, even if he have afterwards had intercourse with another. It was not in his power to give what he did not possess; he has deceived her with whom he has had intercourse, and has really committed adultery. That which has led some to think otherwise is that they have looked more to the fleshly union than to the divine command, under which he who has promised fidelity to one person is bound to observe it. He who desires to give, ought to give of that which is his own. God forbid that any man should go beyond or defraud his brother in any matter; for good faith ought to be preserved beyond and above all traditions of all men. Thus I believe that such a man cannot with a safe conscience cohabit with a second woman, and that this impediment ought to be entirely reversed. If a vow of religion deprives a man of his power over himself, why not also a pledge of fidelity given and received; especially since the latter rests on the teaching and fruits of the Spirit (Gal. v.), while the former rests on human choice? And if a wife may return to her husband, notwithstanding any vow of religion she may have made, why should not a betrothed man return to his betrothed, even if connexion with another have followed? We have said, however, above that a man who has pledged his faith to a maiden is not at liberty to make a vow of religion, but is bound to marry her, because he is bound to keep his faith, and is not at liberty to abandon it for the sake of any human tradition, since God commands that it should be kept. Much more will it be his duty to observe his pledge to the first to whom he has given it, because it was only with a deceitful heart that he could give it to a second; and therefore he has not really given it, but has deceived his neighbour, against the law of God. Hence the impediment called that of error takes effect here, and annuls the marriage with the second woman.

The impediment of holy orders is also a mere contrivance of men, especially when they idly assert that even a marriage already contracted is annulled by this cause, always exalting their own traditions above the commands of God. I give no judgment respecting the order of the priesthood, such as it is at the present day; but I see that Paul commands that a bishop should be the husband of one wife, and therefore the marriage of a deacon, of a priest, of a bishop, or of a man in any kind of orders, cannot be annulled; although *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church – Martin Luther*

Paul knew nothing of that kind of priests and those orders which we have at the present day. Perish then these accursed traditions of men, which have come in for no other end

than to multiply perils, sins, and evils in the Church! Between a priest and his wife, then, there is a true and inseparable marriage, approved by the divine command. What if wicked men forbid or annul it of their own mere tyranny? Be it that it is unlawful in the sight of men; yet it is lawful in the sight of God, whose commandment, if it be contrary to the commandments of men, is to be preferred.

Just as much a human contrivance is the so-called impediment of public propriety, by which contracted marriages are annulled. I am indignant at the audacious impiety which is so ready to separate what God has joined together. You may recognise Antichrist in this opposition to everything which Christ did or taught. What reason is there, I ask, why, on the death of a betrothed husband before actual marriage, no relative by blood, even to the fourth degree, can marry her who was betrothed to him? This is no vindication of public propriety, but mere ignorance of it. Why among the people of Israel, which possessed the best laws, given by God himself, was there no such vindication of public propriety? On the contrary, by the very command of God, the nearest relative was compelled to marry her who had been left a widow. Ought the people who are in Christian liberty to be burdened with more rigid laws than the people who were in legal bondage? And to make an end of these figments rather than impediments, I will say that at present it is evident to me that there is no impediment which can rightfully annul a marriage already contracted, except physical unfitness for cohabiting with a wife, ignorance of a marriage previously contracted, or a vow of chastity. Concerning such a vow, however, I am so uncertain even to the present moment, that I do not know at what time it ought to be reckoned valid; as I have said above in speaking of baptism. Learn then, in this one matter of matrimony, into what an unhappy and hopeless state of confusion, hindrance, entanglement, and peril all things that are done in the Church have been brought by the pestilent, unlearned, and impious traditions of men! There is no hope of a remedy, unless we can do away once for all with all the laws of all men, call back the gospel of liberty, and judge and rule all things according to it alone. Amen.

It is necessary also to deal with the question of physical incapacity. But be it premised that I desire what I have said about impediments to be understood of marriages already contracted, which ought not to be annulled for any such causes. But with regard to the contracting of matrimony I may briefly repeat what I have said before, that if there be any urgency of youthful love, or any other necessity, on account of which the Pope grants a dispensation, then any brother can also grant a dispensation to his brother, or himself to himself, and thus snatch his wife, in whatever way he can, out of the hands of tyrannical laws. Why is my liberty to be done away with by another man's superstition and ignorance? Or if the Pope gives dispensation for money, why may not I give a dispensation to my brother or to myself for the advantage of my own salvation? Does the Pope establish laws? Let him establish them for himself, but let my liberty be untouched. The question of divorce is also discussed, whether it be lawful. I, for my part, detest divorce, and even prefer bigamy to it; but whether it be lawful I dare not define. Christ himself, the chief of shepherds, says: "Whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church – Martin Luther* cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery; and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery." (Matt. v. 32.) Christ therefore permits divorce only in the case of fornication. Hence the Pope must necessarily be wrong, as often as he permits divorce for other reasons, nor ought any man forthwith to consider himself safe, because

he has obtained a dispensation by pontifical audacity rather than power. I am more surprised, however, that they compel a man who has been separated from his wife by divorce to remain single, and do not allow him to marry another. For if Christ permits divorce for the cause of fornication, and does not compel any man to remain single, and if Paul bids us rather to marry than to burn, this seems plainly to allow of a man's marrying another in the place of her whom he has put away. I wish that this subject were fully discussed and made clear, that provision might be made for the numberless perils of those who at the present day are compelled to remain single without any fault of their own; that is, whose wives or husbands have fled and deserted their partner, not to return for ten years, or perhaps never. I am distressed and grieved by these cases, which are of daily occurrence, whether this happens by the special malice of Satan, or from our neglect of the word of God.

I cannot by myself establish any rule contrary to the opinion of all; but for my own part, I should exceedingly wish at least to see applied to this subject the words: "But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases" (1 Cor. vii. 15). Here the Apostle permits that the unbelieving one who departs should be let go, and leaves it free to the believer to take another. Why should not the same rule hold good, if a believer, that is, a nominal believer, but in reality just as much an unbeliever, deserts husband or wife, especially if with the intention of never returning? I cannot discover any distinction between the two cases. In my belief, however, if in the Apostle's time the unbeliever who had departed had returned, or had become a believer, or had promised to live with the believing wife, he would not have been received, but would himself have been authorised to marry another woman. Still, I give no definite opinion on these questions, though I greatly wish that a definite rule were laid down, for there is nothing which more harasses me and many others. I would not have any rule on this point laid down by the sole authority of the Pope or the bishops; but if any two learned and good men agreed together in the name of Christ, and pronounced a decision in the spirit of Christ, I should prefer their judgment even to that of councils, such as are assembled nowadays, which are celebrated simply for their number and authority, independently of learning and holiness. I therefore suspend my utterances on this subject, until I can confer with some better judge.

OF ORDERS.

Of this sacrament the Church of Christ knows nothing; it was invented by the church of the Pope. It not only has no promise of grace, anywhere declared, but not a word is said about it in the whole of the New Testament. Now it is ridiculous to set up as a sacrament of God that which can nowhere be proved to have been instituted by God. Not that I consider that a rite practised for so many ages is to be condemned; but I would not have human inventions established in sacred things, nor should it be allowed to bring in anything as divinely ordained, which has not been divinely ordained; lest we should be *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* – Martin Luther objects of ridicule to our adversaries. We must endeavour that whatever we put forward as an article of the faith should be certain and uncorrupt and established by clear proofs from Scripture; and this we cannot show even in the slightest degree in the case of the present sacrament.

The Church has no power to establish new divine promises of grace, as some senselessly assert, who say that, since the Church is governed by the Holy Spirit, whatever she

ordains has no less authority than that which is ordained of God. The Church is born of the word of promise through faith, and is nourished and preserved by the same word; that is, she herself is established by the promises of God, not the promise of God by her. The word of God is incomparably above the Church, and her part is not to establish, ordain, or make anything in it, but only to be established, ordained, and made, as a creature. What man begets his own parent? Who establishes the authority by which he himself exists? This power the Church certainly has—that she can distinguish the word of God from the words of men. So Augustine confesses that his motive for believing the gospel was the authority of the Church, which declared it to be the gospel. Not that the Church is therefore above the gospel; for, if so, she would also be above God, in whom we believe, since she declares Him to be God; but, as Augustine says elsewhere, the soul is so taken possession of by the truth, that thereby it can judge of all things with the utmost certainty, and yet cannot judge the truth itself, but is compelled by an infallible certainty to say that this is the truth. For example, the mind pronounces with infallible certainty that three and seven are ten, and yet can give no reason why this is true, while it cannot deny that it is true. In fact the mind itself is taken possession of, and, having truth as its judge, is judged rather than judges. Even such a perception is there in the Church, by the illumination of the Spirit, in judging and approving of doctrines; a perception which she cannot demonstrate, but which she holds as most sure. Just as among philosophers no one judges of those conceptions which are common to all, but everyone is judged by them, so is it among us with regard to that spiritual perception which judgeth all things, yet is judged of no man, as the Apostle says.

Let us take it then for certain that the Church cannot promise grace, to do which is the part of God alone, and therefore cannot institute a sacrament. And even, if she had the most complete power to do so, it would not forthwith follow, that orders are a sacrament. For who knows what is that Church which has the Spirit, when only a few bishops and learned men are usually concerned in setting up these laws and institutions? It is possible that these men may not be of the Church, and may all be in error; as councils have very often been in error, especially that of Constance, which has erred the most impiously of all. That only is a proved article of the faith which has been approved by the universal Church, and not by that of Rome alone. I grant therefore that orders may be a sort of church rite, like many others which have been introduced by the Fathers of the Church, such as the consecration of vessels, buildings, vestments, water, salt, candles, herbs, wine, and the like. In all these no one asserts that there is any sacrament, nor is there any promise in them. Thus the anointing of a man's hands, the shaving of his head, and other ceremonies of the kind, do not constitute a sacrament, since nothing is promised by these

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things, but they are merely employed to prepare men for certain offices, as in the case of vessels or instruments.

But it will be asked: What do you say to Dionysius, who reckons up six sacraments, among which he places Orders, in his Hierarchy of the Church? My answer is: I know that he is the only one of the ancient authorities who is considered as holding seven sacraments, although, by the omission of matrimony, he has only given six. We read nothing at all in the rest of the Fathers about these sacraments, nor did they reckon them under the title of sacrament, when they spoke of these things, for the invention of such sacraments is a modern one. Then too—if I may be rash enough to say so—it is

altogether unsatisfactory that so much importance should be attributed to this Dionysius, whoever he was, for there is almost nothing of solid learning in him. By what authority or reason, I ask, does he prove his inventions concerning angels in his *Celestial Hierarchy*, a book on the study of which curious and superstitious minds have spent so much labour? Are they not all fancies of his own, and very much like dreams, if we read them and judge them freely? In his mystic theology indeed, which is so much cried up by certain very ignorant theologians, he is even very mischievous, and follows Plato rather than Christ, so that I would not have any believing mind bestow even the slightest labour on the study of these books. You will be so far from learning Christ in them that, even if you know Him, you may lose Him. I speak from experience. Let us rather hear Paul, and learn Jesus Christ and Him crucified. For this is the way, the truth, and the life; this is the ladder by which we come to the Father, as it is written: "No man cometh unto the Father, but by Me."

So in his *Hierarchy of the Church*, what does he do but describe certain ecclesiastical rites, amusing himself with his own allegories, which he does not prove, just as has been done in our time by the writer of the book called the *Rationale of Divine things*? This pursuit of allegories is only fit for men of idle minds. Could I have any difficulty in amusing myself with allegories about any created thing whatever? Did not Bonaventura apply the liberal arts allegorically to theology? It would give me no trouble to write a better *Hierarchy* than that of Dionysius, as he knew nothing of popes, cardinals, and archbishops, and made the bishops the highest order. Who, indeed, is there of such slender wits that he cannot venture upon allegory? I would not have a theologian bestow any attention upon allegories, until he is perfectly acquainted with the legitimate and simple meaning of Scripture; otherwise, as it happened to Origen, his theological speculations will not be without danger.

We must not then immediately make a sacrament of anything which Dionysius describes; otherwise why not make a sacrament of the procession which he describes in the same passage, and which continues in use even to the present day? Nay, there will be as many sacraments as there are rites and ceremonies which have grown up in the Church.

Resting, however, on this very weak foundation, they have invented and attributed to this sacrament of theirs certain indelible characters, supposed to be impressed on those who receive orders. Whence, I ask, such fancies? By what authority, by what reasoning are they established? Not that we object to their being free to invent, learn, or assert whatever they please; but we also assert our own liberty, and say that they must not arrogate to

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themselves the right of making articles of the faith out of their own fancies, as they have hitherto had the presumption to do. It is enough that, for the sake of concord, we submit to their rights and inventions, but we will not be compelled to receive them as necessary to salvation, when they are not necessary. Let them lay aside their tyrannical requirements, and we will show a ready compliance with their likings, that so we may live together in mutual peace. For it is a disgraceful, unjust, and slavish thing for a Christian man, who is free, to be subjected to any but heavenly and divine traditions.

After this they bring in their very strongest argument, namely, that Christ said at the last supper: "Do this in remembrance of me." "Behold!" they say, "Christ ordained them as priests." Hence, among other things, they have also asserted that it is to priests alone that both kinds should be administered. In fact they have extracted out of this text whatever

they would; like men who claim the right to assert at their own free choice whatsoever they please out of any words of Christ, wherever spoken. But is this to interpret the words of God? Let us reply to them that in these words Christ gives no promise, but only a command that this should be done in remembrance of Him. Why do they not conclude that priests were ordained in that passage also where Christ, in laying upon them the ministry of the word and of baptism, said: “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost”? It is the peculiar office of priests to preach and to baptize. Again, since at the present day it is the very first business of a priest, and, as they say, an indispensable one, to read the canonical Hours; why have they not taken their idea of the sacrament of orders from those words in which Christ commanded His disciples—as he did in many other places, but especially in the garden of Gethsemane—to pray that they might not enter into temptation? Unless indeed they evade the difficulty by saying that it is not commanded to pray, for it suffices to read the canonical Hours; so that this cannot be proved to be a priestly work from any part of Scripture, and that consequently this praying priesthood is not of God; as indeed it is not.

Which of the ancient Fathers has asserted that by these words priests were ordained? Whence then this new interpretation? It is because it has been sought by this device to set up a source of implacable discord, by which clergy and laity might be placed farther asunder than heaven and earth, to the incredible injury of baptismal grace and confusion of evangelical communion. Hence has originated that detestable tyranny of the clergy over the laity, in which, trusting to the corporal unction by which their hands are consecrated, to their tonsure, and to their vestments, they not only set themselves above the body of lay Christians, who have been anointed with the Holy Spirit, but almost look upon them as dogs, unworthy to be numbered in the Church along with themselves. Hence it is that they dare to command, exact, threaten, drive, and oppress, at their will. In fine, the sacrament of orders has been and is a most admirable engine for the establishment of all those monstrous evils which have hitherto been wrought, and are yet being wrought, in the Church. In this way Christian brotherhood has perished; in this way shepherds have been turned into wolves, servants into tyrants, and ecclesiastics into more than earthly beings.

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How if they were compelled to admit that we all, so many as have been baptized, are equally priests? We are so in fact, and it is only a ministry which has been entrusted to them, and that with our consent. They would then know that they have no right to exercise command over us, except so far as we voluntarily allow of it. Thus it is said: “Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation.” (1 Pet. ii. 9.) Thus all we who are Christians are priests; those whom we call priests are ministers chosen from among us to do all things in our name; and the priesthood is nothing else than a ministry. Thus Paul says: “Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.” (1 Cor. iv. 1.)

From this it follows that he who does not preach the word, being called to this very office by the Church, is in no way a priest, and that the sacrament of orders can be nothing else than a ceremony for choosing preachers in the Church. This is the description given of a priest: “The priest’s lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts.” (Malachi ii. 7.) Be sure then that he

who is not a messenger of the Lord of hosts, or who is called to anything else than a messengership—if I may so speak—is certainly not a priest; as it is written: “Because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me.” (Hosea iv. 6.) They are called pastors because it is their duty to give the people pasture, that is, to teach them. Therefore those who are ordained only for the purpose of reading the canonical Hours and offering up masses are popish priests indeed, but not Christian priests, since they not only do not preach but are not even called to be preachers; nay, it is the very thing intended, that a priesthood of this kind shall stand on a different footing from the office of preacher. Thus they are priests of Hours and missals, that is, a kind of living images, having the name of priests, but very far from being really so; such priests as those whom Jeroboam ordained in Beth-aven, taken from the lowest dregs of the people, and not from the family of Levi.

See then how far the glory of the Church has departed. The whole world is full of priests, bishops, cardinals, and clergy; of whom however, (so far as concerns their official duty) not one preaches—unless he be called afresh to this by another calling besides his sacramental orders—but thinks that he amply fulfils the purposes of that sacrament if he murmurs over, in a vain repetition, the prayers which he has to read, and celebrates masses. Even then, he never prays these very Hours, or, if he does pray, he prays for himself; while, as the very height of perversity, he offers up his masses as a sacrifice, though the mass is really the use of the sacrament. Thus it is clear that those orders by which, as a sacrament, men of this kind are ordained to be clergy, are in truth a mere and entire figment, invented by men who understand nothing of church affairs, of the priesthood, of the ministry of the word, or of the sacraments. Such as is the sacrament, such are the priests it makes. To these errors and blindnesses has been added a greater degree of bondage, in that, in order to separate themselves the more widely from all other Christians, as if these were profane, they have burdened themselves with a most hypocritical celibacy.

It was not enough for their hypocrisy and for the working of this error to prohibit bigamy, that is, the having two wives at the same time, as was done under the law—for we know *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church – Martin Luther*

that that is the meaning of bigamy—but they have interpreted it to be bigamy, if a man marries two virgins in succession, or a widow once. Nay, the most sanctified sanctity of this most sacrosanct sacrament goes so far, that a man cannot even become a priest if he have married a virgin, as long as she is alive as his wife. And, in order to reach the very highest summit of sanctity, a man is kept out of the priesthood, if he have married one who was not a pure virgin, though it were in ignorance and merely by an unfortunate chance. But he may have polluted six hundred harlots, or corrupted any number of matrons or virgins, or even kept many Ganymedes, and it will be no impediment to his becoming a bishop or cardinal, or even Pope. Then the saying of the Apostle: “the husband of one wife,” must be interpreted to mean: “the head of one church;” unless that magnificent dispenser the Pope, bribed with money or led by favour—that is to say, moved by pious charity, and urged by anxiety for the welfare of the churches—chooses to unite to one man three, twenty, or a hundred wives, that is, churches.

O pontiffs, worthy of this venerable sacrament of orders! O princes not of the Catholic churches, but of the synagogues of Satan, yea, of very darkness! We may well cry out with Isaiah: “Ye scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem” (Isaiah xxviii.

14); and with Amos: “Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria, which are named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel came!” (Amos vi. 1.) O what disgrace to the Church of God from these monstrosities of sacerdotalism! Where are there any bishops or priests who know the gospel, not to say preach it? Why then do they boast of their priesthood? why do they wish to be thought holier and better and more powerful than other Christians, whom they call the laity? What unlearned person is not competent to read the Hours? Monks, hermits, and private persons, although laymen, may use the prayers of the Hours. The duty of a priest is to preach, and unless he does so, he is just as much a priest as the picture of a man is a man. Does the ordination of such babbling priests, the consecration of churches and bells, or the confirmation of children, constitute a bishop? Could not any deacon or layman do these things? It is the ministry of the word that makes a priest or a bishop. Fly then, I counsel you; fly, young men, if ye wish to live in safety; and do not seek admission to these holy rites, unless ye are either willing to preach the gospel, or are able to believe that ye are not made any better than the laity by this sacrament of orders. To read the Hours is nothing. To offer the mass is to receive the sacrament. What then remains in you, which is not to be found in any layman? Your tonsure and your vestments? Wretched priesthood, which consists in tonsure and vestments! Is it the oil poured on your fingers? Every Christian is anointed and sanctified in body and soul with the oil of the Holy Spirit, and formerly was allowed to handle the sacrament no less than the priests now do; although our superstition now imputes it as a great crime to the laity, if they touch even the bare cup, or the corporal; and not even a holy nun is allowed to wash the altar cloths and sacred napkins. When I see how far the sacrosanct sanctity of these orders has already gone, I expect that the time will come when the laity will not even be allowed to touch the altar, except when they offer money. I almost burst with anger when I think of the impious tyrannies of these reckless men, who mock and ruin the liberty and glory of the religion of Christ by such frivolous and puerile triflings.

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Let every man then who has learnt that he is a Christian recognise what he is, and be certain that we are all equally priests; that is, that we have the same power in the word, and in any sacrament whatever; although it is not lawful for any one to use this power, except with the consent of the community, or at the call of a superior. For that which belongs to all in common no individual can arrogate to himself, until he be called. And therefore the sacrament of orders, if it is anything, is nothing but a certain rite by which men are called to minister in the Church. Furthermore, the priesthood is properly nothing else than the ministry of the word—I mean the word of the gospel, not of the law. The diaconate is a ministry, not for reading the gospel or the epistle, as the practice is nowadays, but for distributing the wealth of the Church among the poor, that the priests may be relieved of the burden of temporal things, and may give themselves more freely to prayer and to the word. It was for this purpose, as we read in the Acts of the Apostles, that deacons were appointed. Thus he who does not know the gospel, or does not preach it, is not only to priest or bishop, but a kind of pest to the Church, who, under the false title of priest or bishop, as it were in sheep’s clothing, hinders the gospel, and acts the part of the wolf in the Church.

Wherefore those priests and bishops with whom the Church is crowded at the present day, unless they work out their salvation on another plan—that is, unless they

acknowledge themselves to be neither priests nor bishops, and repent of bearing the name of an office the work of which they either do not know, or cannot fulfil, and thus deplore with prayers and tears the miserable fate of their hypocrisy—are verily the people of eternal perdition, concerning whom the saying will be fulfilled: “My people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge; and their honourable men are famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst. Therefore hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure; and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it.” (Isaiah v. 13, 14.) O word of dread for our age, in which Christians are swallowed up in such an abyss of evil!

As far then as we are taught from the Scriptures, since what we call the priesthood is a ministry, I do not see at all for what reason a man who has once been made priest cannot become a layman again, since he differs in no wise from a layman, except by his ministerial office. But it is so far from impossible for a man to be set aside from the ministry, that even now this punishment is constantly inflicted on offending priests, who are either suspended for a time, or deprived for ever of their office. For that fiction of an indelible character has long ago become an object of derision. I grant that the Pope may impress this character, though Christ knows nothing of it, and for this very reason the priest thus consecrated is the lifelong servant and bondsman, not of Christ, but of the Pope, as it is at this day. But, unless I deceive myself, if at some future time this sacrament and figment fall to the ground, the Papacy itself will scarcely hold its ground, and we shall recover that joyful liberty in which we shall understand that we are all equal in every right, and shall shake off the yoke of tyranny and know that he who is a Christian has Christ, and he who has Christ has all things that are Christ’s, and can do all things—on which I will write more fully and more vigorously when I find that what I have here said displeases my friends the papists.

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ON THE SACRAMENT OF EXTREME UNCTION.

To this rite of anointing the sick our theologians have made two additions well worthy of themselves. One is, that they call it a sacrament; the other, that they make it extreme, so that it cannot be administered except to those who are in extreme peril of life. Perhaps—as they are keen dialecticians—they have so made it in relation to the first unction of baptism, and the two following ones of confirmation and orders. They have this, it is true, to throw in my teeth, that, on the authority of the Apostle James, there are in this case a promise and a sign, which two things, I have hitherto said, constitute a sacrament. He says: “Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.” (James v. 14, 15.) Here, they say, is the promise of remission of sins, and the sign of the oil.

I, however, say that if folly has ever been uttered, it has been uttered on this subject. I pass over the fact that many assert, and with great probability, that this epistle was not written by the Apostle James, and is not worthy of the apostolic spirit; although, whosoever it is, it has obtained authority by usage. Still, even if it were written by the Apostle James, I should say that it was not lawful for an apostle to institute a sacrament by his own authority; that is, to give a divine promise with a sign annexed to it. To do this belonged to Christ alone. Thus Paul says that he had received the sacrament of the

Eucharist from the Lord; and that he was sent, not to baptize, but to preach the gospel. Nowhere, however, in the gospel do we read of this sacrament of extreme unction. But let us pass this over, and let us look to the words themselves of the Apostle, or of whoever was the author of this Epistle, and we shall at once see how those men have failed to observe their true meaning, who have thus increased the number of sacraments.

In the first place—if they think the saying of the Apostle true and worthy to be followed, by what authority do they change and resist it? Why do they make an extreme and special unction of that which the Apostle meant to be general? The Apostle did not mean it to be extreme, and to be administered only to those about to die. He says expressly: “Is any sick among you?” He does not say: “Is any dying?” Nor do I care what Dionysius’s Ecclesiastical Hierarchy may teach about this; the words of the Apostle are clear, on which he and they alike rest, though they do not follow them. Thus it is evident that, by no authority, but at their own discretion, they have made, out of the ill-understood words of the Apostle, a sacrament and an extreme unction; thus wronging all the other sick, whom they have deprived on their own authority of that benefit of anointing which the Apostle appointed for them.

But it is even a finer argument, that the promise of the Apostle expressly says: “The prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up.” The Apostle commands the use of anointing and prayer for the very purpose that the sick man may be healed and raised up, that is, may not die, and that the unction may not be extreme. This is proved by the prayers which are used even at this day during the ceremony of anointing, and in which we ask that the sick man may be restored. They say, on the

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contrary, that unction should not be administered except to those on the point of departing; that is, that they may not be healed and raised up. If the matter were not so serious, who could refrain from laughing at such fine, apt, and sound comments on the words of the Apostle? Do we not manifestly detect here that sophistical folly which, in many other cases as well as in this, affirms what Scripture denies, and denies what it affirms? Shall we not render thanks to these distinguished teachers of ours? I have said rightly then, that nowhere have they displayed wilder folly than in this instance.

Further—if this unction is a sacrament, it must be beyond doubt an effectual sign (as they say) of that which it seals and promises. Now it promises health and restoration to the sick, as the words plainly show: “The prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up.” Who does not see, however, that this promise is seldom, or rather never fulfilled? Scarcely one among a thousand is restored; and even this no one believes to be effected by the sacrament, but by the help of nature or of medicine; while to the sacrament they attribute a contrary effect. What shall we say then? Either the Apostle is deceiving us in this promise, or this unction is not a sacrament; for a sacramental promise is sure, while this in most cases disappoints us. Nay—to recognise another example of the prudence and carefulness of these theologians—they will have it to be extreme unction in order that that promise may not stand; that is, that the sacrament may not be a sacrament. If the unction is extreme, it does not heal, but yields to the sickness; while if it heals, it cannot be extreme. Thus, according to the interpretation of these teachers, James must be understood to have contradicted himself, and to have instituted a sacrament, on purpose not to institute a sacrament; for they will have it to be extreme unction, in order that it may not be true that the sick are healed by it, which is what the Apostle ordained. If this

is not madness, what, I ask, is madness?

The words of the Apostle: “Desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm” (1 Tim. i. 7.), apply to these men; with so little judgment do they read and draw conclusions. With the same stupidity they have inferred the doctrine of auricular confession from the words of the Apostle James: “Confess your faults one to another.” They do not even observe the command of the Apostle, that the elders of the Church should be called for, and that they should pray over the sick. Scarcely one priest is sent now, though the Apostle would have many to be present, not for the purpose of anointing, but for that of prayer; as he says: “The prayer of faith shall save the sick.” Moreover, I am not sure that he means priests to be understood in this case, since he says elders, that is, seniors in age. Now it does not follow that an elder must be a priest or a minister, and we may suspect that the Apostle intended that the sick should be visited by the men of greater age and weightier character in the Church, who should do this as a work of mercy, and heal the sick by the prayer of faith. At the same time it cannot be denied, that of old the churches were ruled by the older men, chosen for this purpose on account of their age and long experience of life, without the ordinations and consecrations now used.

I am therefore of opinion that this is the same anointing as that used by the Apostles, of whom it is written: “They anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them.” (Mark vi. 13.) It was a rite of the primitive Church, long since obsolete, by which they *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church – Martin Luther* did miracles for the sick; just as Christ says of them that believe: “They shall take up serpents; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.” (Mark xvi. 18.) It is astonishing that they have not made sacraments out of these words also; since they have a like virtue and promise with those words of James. This pretended extreme unction, then, is not a sacrament, but a counsel of the Apostle James, taken, as I have said, from the Gospel of Mark; and one which any one who will may follow. I do not think that it was applied to all sick persons, for the Church glories in her infirmities, and thinks death a gain; but only to those who bore their sickness impatiently and with little faith, and whom the Lord therefore left, that on them the miraculous power and the efficacy of faith might be conspicuously shown.

James, indeed, has carefully and intentionally provided against this very mistake, in that he connects the promise of healing and of remission of sins, not with the anointing, but with the prayer of faith; for he says: “The prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.” (James v. 15.) Now a sacrament does not require prayer or faith on the part of him who administers it, for even a wicked man may baptize and consecrate the elements without prayer; but it rests solely on the promise and institution of God, and requires faith on the part of him who receives it. But where is the prayer of faith in our employment of extreme unction at the present day? Who prays over the sick man with such faith as not to doubt of his restoration? Such is the prayer of faith which James here describes; that prayer of which he had said at the beginning of the epistle: “Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering;” and of which Christ says: “What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.” (Mark xi. 24.)

There is no doubt at all that, if even at the present day such prayer were made over the sick—that is, by grave and holy elders, and with full faith—as many as we would might

be healed. For what cannot faith do? We, however, leave out of sight that faith which apostolic authority requires in the very first place; and moreover by elders, that is, men superior to the rest in age and in faith, we understand the common herd of priests. Furthermore, out of a daily or free anointing we make an extreme unction; and lastly, we not only do not ask and obtain that result of healing promised by the Apostle, but we empty the promise of its meaning by an opposite result. Nevertheless we boast that this sacrament, or rather figment, of ours, is founded on and proved by the teaching of the Apostle, from which it is as widely separated as pole from pole. Oh, what theologians! Therefore, without condemning this our sacrament of extreme unction, I steadily deny that it is that which is enjoined by the Apostle James, of which neither the form, nor the practice, nor the efficacy, nor the purpose, agrees with ours. We will reckon it, however, among those sacraments which are of our own appointing, such as the consecration and sprinkling of salt and water. We cannot deny that, as the Apostle Paul teaches us, every creature is sanctified by the word of God and prayer; and so we do not deny that remission and peace are bestowed through extreme unction; not because it is a sacrament divinely instituted, but because he who receives it believes that he obtains these benefits. For the faith of the receiver does not err, however much the minister may err. For if he who baptizes or absolves in jest—that is, does not absolve at all, as far as the minister's *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church – Martin Luther* part is concerned—yet does really absolve or baptize, if there be faith on the part of the absolved or baptized person, how much more does he who administers extreme unction bestow peace; even though in reality he bestows no peace, if we look to his ministry, since there is no sacrament. The faith of the person anointed receives that blessing which he who anointed him either could not, or did not intend, to give. It is enough that the person anointed hears and believes the word; for whatever we believe that we shall receive, that we do really receive, whatever the minister may do or not do, whether he play a part, or be in jest. For the saying of Christ holds good: “All things are possible to him that believeth;” and again: “As thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee.” Our sophists, however, make no mention of this faith in treating of the sacraments, but give their whole minds to frivolous discussions on the virtues of the sacraments themselves; ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

It has been of advantage, however, that this unction has been made extreme, for, thanks to this, it has been of all sacraments the least harassed and enslaved by tyranny and thirst for gain; and this one mercy has been left to the dying, that they are free to be anointed, even if they have not confessed or communicated. Whereas if it had continued to be of daily employment, especially if it had also healed the sick, even if it had not taken away sins, of how many worlds would not the pontiffs by this time have been masters—they who, on the strength of the one sacrament of penance, and by the power of the keys, and through the sacrament of orders, have become such mighty emperors and princes? But now it is a fortunate thing that, as they despise the prayer of faith, so they heal no sick, and, out of an old rite, have formed for themselves a new sacrament.

Let it suffice to have said thus much concerning these four sacraments. I know how much it will displease those who think that we are to enquire about the number and use of the sacraments, not from the holy Scriptures, but from the See of Rome; as if the See of Rome had given us those sacraments, and had not rather received them from the schools of the Universities; to which, without controversy, it owes all that it has. The tyranny of

the popes would never have stood so high if it had not received so much help from the Universities; for among all the principal sees, there is scarcely any other which has had so few learned bishops. It is by force, fraud, and superstition alone that it has prevailed over the rest; and those who occupied that see a thousand years ago are so widely diverse from those who have grown into power in the interim, that we are compelled to say that either the one or the other were not pontiffs of Rome.

There are besides some other things, which it may seem that we might reckon among sacraments—all those things, namely, to which a divine promise has been made, such as prayer, the word, the cross. For Christ has promised in many places to hear those that pray; especially in the eleventh chapter of the Gospel of St. Luke, where he invites us to prayer by many parables. Of the word he says: “Blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it.” (Luke xi. 28.) And who can reckon up how often he promises succour and glory to those who are in tribulation, suffering, and humiliation? Nay, who can count up all the promises of God? For it is the whole object of all Scripture to lead us to faith; on the one side urging us with commandments and threatenings, on the other side inviting us by promises and consolations. Indeed all Scripture consists of either commandments

The Babylonian Captivity of the Church – Martin Luther

or promises. Its commandments humble the proud by their requirements; its promises lift up the humble by their remissions of sin.

It has seemed best, however, to consider as sacraments, properly so called, those promises which have signs annexed to them. The rest, as they are not attached to signs, are simple promises. It follows that, if we speak with perfect accuracy, there are only two sacraments in the Church of God, Baptism and the Bread; since it is in these alone that we see both a sign divinely instituted and a promise of remission of sins. The sacrament of penance, which I have reckoned along with these two, is without any visible and divinely appointed sign; and is nothing else, as I have said, than a way and means of return to baptism. Not even the schoolmen can say that penitence agrees with their definition; since they themselves ascribe to every sacrament a visible sign, which enables the senses to apprehend the form of that effect which the sacrament works invisibly. Now penitence or absolution has no such sign; and therefore they will be compelled by their own definition either to say that penitence is not one of the sacraments, and thus to diminish their number, or else to bring forward another definition of a sacrament.

Baptism, however, which we have assigned to the whole of life, will properly suffice for all the sacraments which we are to use in life; while the bread is truly the sacrament of the dying and departing, since in it we commemorate the departure of Christ from this world, that we may imitate Him. Let us then so distribute these two sacraments that baptism may be allotted to the beginning and to the whole course of life, and the bread to its end and to death; and let the Christian, while in this vile body, exercise himself in both, until, being fully baptized and strengthened, he shall pass out of this world, as one born into a new and eternal life, and destined to eat with Christ in the kingdom of his Father, as he promised at the Last Supper, saying: “I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God shall come.” (Luke xxii. 18.) Thus it is evident that Christ instituted the sacrament of the bread that we might receive the life which is to come; and then, when the purpose of each sacrament shall have been fulfilled, both baptism and the bread will cease.

I shall here make an end of this essay, which I readily and joyfully offer to all pious

persons, who long to understand Scripture in its sincere meaning, and to learn the genuine use of the sacraments. It is a gift of no slight importance to “know the things that are freely given to us of God,” and to know in what manner we ought to use those gifts. For if we are instructed in this judgment of the Spirit, we shall not deceive ourselves by leaning on those things which are opposed to it. Whereas our theologians have not only nowhere given us the knowledge of these two things, but have even darkened them, as if of set purpose, I, if I have not given that knowledge, have at least succeeded in not darkening it, and have given others an inducement to think out something better. It has at least been my endeavour to explain the meaning of both sacraments, but we cannot all do all things. On those impious men, however, who in their obstinate tyranny press on us their own teachings as if they were God’s, I thrust these things freely and confidently, caring not at all for their ignorance and violence. And yet even to them I will wish sounder sense, and will not despise their efforts, but will only distinguish them from those which are legitimate and really Christian.

The Babylonian Captivity of the Church – Martin Luther

I hear a report that fresh bulls and papal curses are being prepared against me, by which I am to be urged to recant, or else be declared a heretic. If this is true, I wish this little book to be a part of my future recantation, that they may not complain that their tyranny has puffed itself up in vain. The remaining part I shall shortly publish, Christ being my helper, and that of such a sort as the See of Rome has never yet seen or heard, thus abundantly testifying my obedience in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Hostis Herodes impie,

Christum venire quid times?

Non arripit mortalia

Qui regna dat coelestia.

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Concerning Christian Liberty

<http://www.projectwittenberg.org/pub/resources/text/wittenberg/luther/web/cclib-1.html>

Concerning Christian Liberty

by Martin Luther (1483-1546)

Letter of Martin Luther to Pope Leo X

Concerning Christian Liberty

by Martin Luther (1520)

Translation by R. S. Grignon

The Prince by Niccolo Machiavelli;

Utopia by Sir Thomas More;

Ninety-Five Theses; Address to the German Nobility; Concerning Christian Liberty by

Martin Luther,

With Introductions and Notes.

The Five-Foot Shelf of Books, "The Harvard Classics",

Volume 36

(New York: P. F. Collier & Son, 1910)

Pages 353-397.

Part 1

Letter of Martin Luther to Pope Leo X

CONCERNING CHRISTIAN LIBERTY

LETTER OF MARTIN LUTHER TO POPE LEO X

Among those monstrous evils of this age with which I have now for three years been waging war, I am sometimes compelled to look to you and to call you to mind, most blessed father Leo. In truth, since you alone are everywhere considered as being the cause of my engaging in war, I cannot at any time fail to remember you; and although I have been compelled by the causeless raging of your impious flatterers against me to appeal from your seat to a future council--fearless of the futile decrees of your predecessors Pius and Julius, who in their foolish tyranny prohibited such an action--yet I have never been so alienated in feeling from your Blessedness as not to have

sought with all my might, in diligent prayer and crying to God, all the best gifts for you and for your see. But those who have hitherto endeavoured to terrify me with the majesty of your name and authority, I have begun quite to despise and triumph over. One thing I see remaining which I cannot despise, and this has been the reason of my writing anew to your Blessedness: namely, that I find that blame is cast on me, and that it is imputed to me as a great offence, that in my rashness I am judged to have spared not even your person.

Now, to confess the truth openly, I am conscious that, whenever I have had to mention your person, I have said nothing of you but what was honourable and good. If I had done otherwise, I could by no means have approved my own conduct, but should have supported with all my power the judgment of those men concerning me, nor would anything have pleased me better, than to recant such rashness and impiety. I have called you Daniel in Babylon; and every reader thoroughly knows with what distinguished zeal I defended your conspicuous innocence against Silvester, who tried to stain it. Indeed, the published opinion of so many great men and the repute of your blameless life are too widely famed and too much revered throughout the world to be assailable by any man, of however great name, or by any arts. I am not so foolish as to attack one whom everybody praises; nay, it has been and always will be my desire not to attack even those whom public repute disgraces. I am not delighted at the faults of any man, since I am very conscious myself of the great beam in my own eye, nor can I be the first to cast a stone at the adulteress.

I have indeed inveighed sharply against impious doctrines, and I have not been slack to censure my adversaries on account, not of their bad morals, but of their impiety. And for this I am so far from being sorry that I have brought my mind to despise the judgments of men and to persevere in this vehement zeal, according to the example of Christ, who, in His zeal, calls His adversaries a generation of vipers, blind, hypocrites, and children of the devil. Paul, too, charges the sorcerer with being a child of the devil, full of all subtlety and all malice; and defames certain persons as evil workers, dogs, and deceivers. In the opinion of those delicate-eared persons, nothing could be more bitter or intemperate than Paul's language. What can be more bitter than the words of the prophets? The ears of our generation have been made so delicate by the senseless multitude of flatterers that, as soon as we perceive that anything of ours is not approved of, we cry out that we are being bitterly assailed; and when we can repel the truth by no other pretence, we escape by attributing bitterness, impatience, intemperance, to our adversaries. What would be the use of salt if it were not pungent, or of the edge of the sword if it did not slay? Accursed is the man who does the work of the Lord deceitfully.

Wherefore, most excellent Leo, I beseech you to accept my vindication, made in this letter, and to persuade yourself that I have never thought any evil concerning your

person; further, that I am one who desires that eternal blessing may fall to your lot, and that I have no dispute with any man concerning morals, but only concerning the word of truth. In all other things I will yield to any one, but I neither can nor will forsake and deny the word. He who thinks otherwise of me, or has taken in my words in another sense, does not think rightly, and has not taken in the truth.

Your see, however, which is called the Court of Rome, and which neither you nor any man can deny to be more corrupt than any Babylon or Sodom, and quite, as I believe, of a lost, desperate, and hopeless impiety, this I have verily abominated, and have felt indignant that the people of Christ should be cheated under your name and the pretext of the Church of Rome; and so I have resisted, and will resist, as long as the spirit of faith shall live in me. Not that I am striving after impossibilities, or hoping that by my labours alone, against the furious opposition of so many flatterers, any good can be done in that most disordered Babylon; but that I feel myself a debtor to my brethren, and am bound to take thought for them, that fewer of them may be ruined, or that their ruin may be less complete, by the plagues of Rome. For many years now, nothing else has overflowed from Rome into the world--as you are not ignorant--than the laying waste of goods, of bodies, and of souls, and the worst examples of all the worst things. These things are clearer than the light to all men; and the Church of Rome, formerly the most holy of all Churches, has become the most lawless den of thieves, the most shameless of all brothels, the very kingdom of sin, death, and hell; so that not even antichrist, if he were to come, could devise any addition to its wickedness.

Meanwhile you, Leo, are sitting like a lamb, like Daniel in the midst of lions, and, with Ezekiel, you dwell among scorpions. What opposition can you alone make to these monstrous evils? Take to yourself three or four of the most learned and best of the cardinals. What are these among so many? You would all perish by poison before you could undertake to decide on a remedy. It is all over with the Court of Rome; the wrath of God has come upon her to the uttermost. She hates councils; she dreads to be reformed; she cannot restrain the madness of her impiety; she fills up the sentence passed on her mother, of whom it is said, "We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed; let us forsake her." It had been your duty and that of your cardinals to apply a remedy to these evils, but this gout laughs at the physician's hand, and the chariot does not obey the reins. Under the influence of these feelings, I have always grieved that you, most excellent Leo, who were worthy of a better age, have been made pontiff in this. For the Roman Court is not worthy of you and those like you, but of Satan himself, who in truth is more the ruler in that Babylon than you are.

Oh, would that, having laid aside that glory which your most abandoned enemies declare to be yours, you were living rather in the office of a private priest or on your paternal inheritance! In that glory none are worthy to glory, except the race of Iscariot, the children of perdition. For what happens in your court, Leo, except that, the more

wicked and execrable any man is, the more prosperously he can use your name and authority for the ruin of the property and souls of men, for the multiplication of crimes, for the oppression of faith and truth and of the whole Church of God? Oh, Leo! in reality most unfortunate, and sitting on a most perilous throne, I tell you the truth, because I wish you well; for if Bernard felt compassion for Eugenius III, formerly abbot of St. Anastasius his Anastasius at a time when the Roman see, though even then most corrupt, was as yet ruling with better hope than now, why should not we lament, to whom so much further corruption and ruin has been added in three hundred years?

Is it not true that there is nothing under the vast heavens more corrupt, more pestilential, more hateful, than the Court of Rome? She incomparably surpasses the impiety of the Turks, so that in very truth she, who was formerly the gate of heaven, is now a sort of open mouth of hell, and such a mouth as, under the urgent wrath of God, cannot be blocked up; one course alone being left to us wretched men: to call back and save some few, if we can, from that Roman gulf.

Behold, Leo, my father, with what purpose and on what principle it is that I have stormed against that seat of pestilence. I am so far from having felt any rage against your person that I even hoped to gain favour with you and to aid you in your welfare by striking actively and vigorously at that your prison, nay, your hell. For whatever the efforts of all minds can contrive against the confusion of that impious Court will be advantageous to you and to your welfare, and to many others with you. Those who do harm to her are doing your office; those who in every way abhor her are glorifying Christ; in short, those are Christians who are not Romans.

But, to say yet more, even this never entered my heart: to inveigh against the Court of Rome or to dispute at all about her. For, seeing all remedies for her health to be desperate, I looked on her with contempt, and, giving her a bill of divorcement, said to her, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still," giving myself up to the peaceful and quiet study of sacred literature, that by this I might be of use to the brethren living about me.

While I was making some advance in these studies, Satan opened his eyes and goaded on his servant John Eccius, that notorious adversary of Christ, by the unchecked lust for fame, to drag me unexpectedly into the arena, trying to catch me in one little word concerning the primacy of the Church of Rome, which had fallen from me in passing. That boastful Thraso, foaming and gnashing his teeth, proclaimed that he would dare all things for the glory of God and for the honour of the holy apostolic seat; and, being puffed up respecting your power, which he was about to misuse, he looked forward with all certainty to victory; seeking to promote, not so much the primacy of Peter, as his own pre-eminence among the theologians of this age; for he thought it would

contribute in no slight degree to this, if he were to lead Luther in triumph. The result having proved unfortunate for the sophist, an incredible rage torments him; for he feels that whatever discredit to Rome has arisen through me has been caused by the fault of himself alone.

Suffer me, I pray you, most excellent Leo, both to plead my own cause, and to accuse your true enemies. I believe it is known to you in what way Cardinal Cajetan, your imprudent and unfortunate, nay unfaithful, legate, acted towards me. When, on account of my reverence for your name, I had placed myself and all that was mine in his hands, he did not so act as to establish peace, which he could easily have established by one little word, since I at that time promised to be silent and to make an end of my case, if he would command my adversaries to do the same. But that man of pride, not content with this agreement, began to justify my adversaries, to give them free licence, and to order me to recant, a thing which was certainly not in his commission. Thus indeed, when the case was in the best position, it came through his vexatious tyranny into a much worse one. Therefore whatever has followed upon this is the fault not of Luther, but entirely of Cajetan, since he did not suffer me to be silent and remain quiet, which at that time I was entreating for with all my might. What more was it my duty to do?

Next came Charles Miltitz, also a nuncio from your Blessedness. He, though he went up and down with much and varied exertion, and omitted nothing which could tend to restore the position of the cause thrown into confusion by the rashness and pride of Cajetan, had difficulty, even with the help of that very illustrious prince the Elector Frederick, in at last bringing about more than one familiar conference with me. In these I again yielded to your great name, and was prepared to keep silence, and to accept as my judge either the Archbishop of Treves, or the Bishop of Naumburg; and thus it was done and concluded. While this was being done with good hope of success, lo! that other and greater enemy of yours, Eccius, rushed in with his Leipsic disputation, which he had undertaken against Carlstadt, and, having taken up a new question concerning the primacy of the Pope, turned his arms unexpectedly against me, and completely overthrew the plan for peace. Meanwhile Charles Miltitz was waiting, disputations were held, judges were being chosen, but no decision was arrived at. And no wonder! for by the falsehoods, pretences, and arts of Eccius the whole business was brought into such thorough disorder, confusion, and festering soreness, that, whichever way the sentence might lean, a greater conflagration was sure to arise; for he was seeking, not after truth, but after his own credit. In this case too I omitted nothing which it was right that I should do.

I confess that on this occasion no small part of the corruptions of Rome came to light; but, if there was any offence in this, it was the fault of Eccius, who, in taking on him a

burden beyond his strength, and in furiously aiming at credit for himself, unveiled to the whole world the disgrace of Rome.

Here is that enemy of yours, Leo, or rather of your Court; by his example alone we may learn that an enemy is not more baneful than a flatterer. For what did he bring about by his flattery, except evils which no king could have brought about? At this day the name of the Court of Rome stinks in the nostrils of the world, the papal authority is growing weak, and its notorious ignorance is evil spoken of. We should hear none of these things, if Eccius had not disturbed the plans of Miltitz and myself for peace. He feels this clearly enough himself in the indignation he shows, too late and in vain, against the publication of my books. He ought to have reflected on this at the time when he was all mad for renown, and was seeking in your cause nothing but his own objects, and that with the greatest peril to you. The foolish man hoped that, from fear of your name, I should yield and keep silence; for I do not think he presumed on his talents and learning. Now, when he sees that I am very confident and speak aloud, he repents too late of his rashness, and sees--if indeed he does see it--that there is One in heaven who resists the proud, and humbles the presumptuous.

Since then we were bringing about by this disputation nothing but the greater confusion of the cause of Rome, Charles Miltitz for the third time addressed the Fathers of the Order, assembled in chapter, and sought their advice for the settlement of the case, as being now in a most troubled and perilous state. Since, by the favour of God, there was no hope of proceeding against me by force, some of the more noted of their number were sent to me, and begged me at least to show respect to your person and to vindicate in a humble letter both your innocence and my own. They said that the affair was not as yet in a position of extreme hopelessness, if Leo X., in his inborn kindness, would put his hand to it. On this I, who have always offered and wished for peace, in order that I might devote myself to calmer and more useful pursuits, and who for this very purpose have acted with so much spirit and vehemence, in order to put down by the strength and impetuosity of my words, as well as of my feelings, men whom I saw to be very far from equal to myself--I, I say, not only gladly yielded, but even accepted it with joy and gratitude, as the greatest kindness and benefit, if you should think it right to satisfy my hopes.

Thus I come, most blessed Father, and in all abasement beseech you to put to your hand, if it is possible, and impose a curb to those flatterers who are enemies of peace, while they pretend peace. But there is no reason, most blessed Father, why any one should assume that I am to utter a recantation, unless he prefers to involve the case in still greater confusion. Moreover, I cannot bear with laws for the interpretation of the word of God, since the word of God, which teaches liberty in all other things, ought not to be bound. Saving these two things, there is nothing which I am not able, and most heartily willing, to do or to suffer. I hate contention; I will challenge no one; in

return I wish not to be challenged; but, being challenged, I will not be dumb in the cause of Christ my Master. For your Blessedness will be able by one short and easy word to call these controversies before you and suppress them, and to impose silence and peace on both sides--a word which I have ever longed to hear.

Therefore, Leo, my Father, beware of listening to those sirens who make you out to be not simply a man, but partly a god, so that you can command and require whatever you will. It will not happen so, nor will you prevail. You are the servant of servants, and more than any other man, in a most pitiable and perilous position. Let not those men deceive you who pretend that you are lord of the world; who will not allow any one to be a Christian without your authority; who babble of your having power over heaven, hell, and purgatory. These men are your enemies and are seeking your soul to destroy it, as Isaiah say, "My people, they that call thee blessed are themselves deceiving thee." They are in error who raise you above councils and the universal Church; they are in error who attribute to you alone the right of interpreting Scripture. All these men are seeking to set up their own impieties in the Church under your name, and alas! Satan has gained much through them in the time of your predecessors.

In brief, trust not in any who exalt you, but in those who humiliate you. For this is the judgment of God: "He hath cast down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble." See how unlike Christ was to His successors, though all will have it that they are His vicars. I fear that in truth very many of them have been in too serious a sense His vicars, for a vicar represents a prince who is absent. Now if a pontiff rules while Christ is absent and does not dwell in his heart, what else is he but a vicar of Christ? And then what is that Church but a multitude without Christ? What indeed is such a vicar but antichrist and an idol? How much more rightly did the Apostles speak, who call themselves servants of a present Christ, not the vicars of an absent one!

Perhaps I am shamelessly bold in seeming to teach so great a head, by whom all men ought to be taught, and from whom, as those plagues of yours boast, the thrones of judges receive their sentence; but I imitate St. Bernard in his book concerning *Considerations* addressed to Eugenius, a book which ought to be known by heart by every pontiff. I do this, not from any desire to teach, but as a duty, from that simple and faithful solicitude which teaches us to be anxious for all that is safe for our neighbours, and does not allow considerations of worthiness or unworthiness to be entertained, being intent only on the dangers or advantage of others. For since I know that your Blessedness is driven and tossed by the waves at Rome, so that the depths of the sea press on you with infinite perils, and that you are labouring under such a condition of misery that you need even the least help from any the least brother, I do not seem to myself to be acting unsuitably if I forget your majesty till I shall have fulfilled the office of charity. I will not flatter in so serious and perilous a matter; and

if in this you do not see that I am your friend and most thoroughly your subject, there is One to see and judge.

In fine, that I may not approach you empty-handed, blessed Father, I bring with me this little treatise, published under your name, as a good omen of the establishment of peace and of good hope. By this you may perceive in what pursuits I should prefer and be able to occupy myself to more profit, if I were allowed, or had been hitherto allowed, by your impious flatterers. It is a small matter, if you look to its exterior, but, unless I mistake, it is a summary of the Christian life put together in small compass, if you apprehend its meaning. I, in my poverty, have no other present to make you, nor do you need anything else than to be enriched by a spiritual gift. I commend myself to your Paternity and Blessedness, whom may the Lord Jesus preserve for ever. Amen.

Wittenberg, 6th September, 1520.

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Luther's Tower Experience

<http://www.projectwittenberg.org/pub/resources/text/wittenberg/luther/tower.txt>

Luther's Tower Experience:

Martin Luther Discovers the True Meaning of Righteousness

An Excerpt From:

Preface to the Complete Edition of Luther's Latin Works
(1545)

by Dr. Martin Luther, 1483-1546

Translated by Bro. Andrew Thornton, OSB
from the

"Vorrede zu Band I der Opera Latina der Wittenberger Ausgabe. 1545"
in vol. 4 of *Luthers Werke in Auswahl*, ed. Otto Clemen, 6th ed.,
(Berlin: de Gruyter. 1967). pp. 421-428.

Translator's Note: The material between square brackets is explanatory in nature and is not part of Luther's preface. The terms "just, justice, justify" in the following reading are synonymous with the terms "righteous, righteousness, make righteous." Both sets of English words are common translations of the Latin "justus" and related words. A similar situation exists with the word "faith"; it is synonymous with "belief." Both words can be used to translate Latin "fides." Thus, "We are justified by faith" translates the same original Latin sentence as does "We are made righteous by belief."

Meanwhile in that same year, 1519, I had begun interpreting the Psalms once again. I felt confident that I was now more experienced, since I had dealt in university courses with St. Paul's Letters to the Romans, to the Galatians, and the Letter to the Hebrews. I had conceived a burning desire to understand what Paul meant in his Letter to the Romans, but thus far there had stood in my way, not the cold blood around my heart, but that one word which is in chapter one: "The justice of God is revealed in it." I hated that word, "justice of God," which, by the use and custom of all my teachers, I had been taught to understand philosophically as referring to formal or active justice, as they call it, i.e., that justice by which God is just and by which he punishes sinners and the unjust.

But I, blameless monk that I was, felt that before God I was a sinner with an extremely troubled conscience. I couldn't be sure that God was appeased by my satisfaction. I did not love, no, rather I hated the just God who punishes sinners. In silence, if I did not blaspheme, then certainly I grumbled vehemently and got

angry at God. I said, "Isn't it enough that we miserable sinners, lost for all eternity because of original sin, are oppressed by every kind of calamity through the Ten Commandments? Why does God heap sorrow upon sorrow through the Gospel and through the Gospel threaten us with his justice and his wrath?" This was how I was raging with wild and disturbed conscience. I constantly badgered St. Paul about that spot in Romans 1 and anxiously wanted to know what he meant.

I meditated night and day on those words until at last, by the mercy of God, I paid attention to their context: "The justice of God is revealed in it, as it is written: 'The just person lives by faith.'" I began to understand that in this verse the justice of God is that by which the just person lives by a gift of God, that is by faith. I began to understand that this verse means that the justice of God is revealed through the Gospel, but it is a passive justice, i.e. that by which the merciful God justifies us by faith, as it is written: "The just person lives by faith." All at once I felt that I had been born again and entered into paradise itself through open gates. Immediately I saw the whole of Scripture in a different light. I ran through the Scriptures from memory and found that other terms had analogous meanings, e.g., the work of God, that is, what God works in us; the power of God, by which he makes us powerful; the wisdom of God, by which he makes us wise; the strength of God, the salvation of God, the glory of God.

I exalted this sweetest word of mine, "the justice of God," with as much love as before I had hated it with hate. This phrase of Paul was for me the very gate of paradise. Afterward I read Augustine's "On the Spirit and the Letter," in which I found what I had not dared hope for. I discovered that he too interpreted "the justice of God" in a similar way, namely, as that with which God clothes us when he justifies us. Although Augustine had said it imperfectly and did not explain in detail how God imputes justice to us, still it pleased me that he taught the justice of God by which we are justified.

This translation was made by Bro. Andrew Thornton, OSB, for the Saint Anselm College Humanities Program.

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Text of the Papal Bull Exsurge Domine

<https://www.ewtn.com/library/PAPALDOC/L10EXDOM.HTM>

EXSURGE DOMINE Condemning The Errors Of Martin Luther Pope Leo X

Bull issued June 15, 1520

Arise, O Lord, and judge your own cause. Remember your reproaches to those who are filled with foolishness all through the day. Listen to our prayers, for foxes have arisen seeking to destroy the vineyard whose winepress you alone have trod. When you were about to ascend to your Father, you committed the care, rule, and administration of the vineyard, an image of the triumphant church, to Peter, as the head and your vicar and his successors. The wild boar from the forest seeks to destroy it and every wild beast feeds upon it.

Rise, Peter, and fulfill this pastoral office divinely entrusted to you as mentioned above.

Give heed to the cause of the holy Roman Church, mother of all churches and teacher of the faith, whom you by the order of God, have consecrated by your blood. Against the Roman Church, you warned, lying teachers are rising, introducing ruinous sects, and drawing upon themselves speedy doom. Their tongues are fire, a restless evil, full of deadly poison. They have bitter zeal, contention in their hearts, and boast and lie against the truth.

We beseech you also, Paul, to arise. It was you that enlightened and illuminated the Church by your doctrine and by a martyrdom like Peter's. For now a new Porphyry rises who, as the old once wrongfully assailed the holy apostles, now assails the holy pontiffs, our predecessors.

Rebuking them, in violation of your teaching, instead of imploring them, he is not ashamed to assail them, to tear at them, and when he despairs of his cause, to stoop to insults. He is like the heretics "whose last defense," as Jerome says, "is to start spewing out a serpent's venom with their tongue when they see that their causes are about to be condemned, and spring to insults when they see they are vanquished." For although you have said that there must be heresies to test the faithful, still they must be destroyed at their very birth by your intercession and help, so they do not grow or wax strong like your wolves. Finally, let the whole church of the saints and the rest of the universal church arise. Some, putting aside her true interpretation of Sacred Scripture, are blinded in mind by the father of lies. Wise in their own eyes, according to the ancient practice of heretics, they interpret these same Scriptures

otherwise than the Holy Spirit demands, inspired only by their own sense of ambition, and for the sake of popular acclaim, as the Apostle declares. In fact, they twist and adulterate the Scriptures. As a result, according to Jerome, "It is no longer the Gospel of Christ, but a man's, or what is worse, the devil's."

Let all this holy Church of God, I say, arise, and with the blessed apostles intercede with almighty God to purge the errors of His sheep, to banish all heresies from the lands of the faithful, and be pleased to maintain the peace and unity of His holy Church.

For we can scarcely express, from distress and grief of mind, what has reached our ears for some time by the report of reliable men and general rumor; alas, we have even seen with our eyes and read the many diverse errors. Some of these have already been condemned by councils and the constitutions of our predecessors, and expressly contain even the heresy of the Greeks and Bohemians. Other errors are either heretical, false, scandalous, or offensive to pious ears, as seductive of simple minds, originating with false exponents of the faith who in their proud curiosity yearn for the world's glory, and contrary to the Apostle's teaching, wish to be wiser than they should be.

Their talkativeness, unsupported by the authority of the Scriptures, as Jerome says, would not win credence unless they appeared to support their perverse doctrine even with divine testimonies however badly interpreted. From their sight fear of God has now passed.

These errors have, at the suggestion of the human race, been revived and recently propagated among the more frivolous and the illustrious German nation. We grieve the more that this happened there because we and our predecessors have always held this nation in the bosom of our affection. For after the empire had been transferred by the Roman Church from the Greeks to these same Germans, our predecessors and we always took the Church's advocates and defenders from among them. Indeed it is certain that these Germans, truly germane to the Catholic faith, have always been the bitterest opponents of heresies, as witnessed by those commendable constitutions of the German emperors in behalf of the Church's independence, freedom, and the expulsion and extermination of all heretics from Germany. Those constitutions formerly issued, and then confirmed by our predecessors, were issued under the greatest penalties even of loss of lands and dominions against anyone sheltering or not expelling them. If they were observed today both we and they would obviously be free of this disturbance.

Witness to this is the condemnation and punishment in the Council of Constance of the infidelity of the Hussites and Wyclifites as well as Jerome of Prague. Witness to this is the blood of Germans shed so often in wars against the Bohemians. A final witness is the refutation, rejection, and condemnation—no less learned than true and holy—of the above errors, or many of them, by the universities of Cologne and Louvain, most devoted and religious cultivators of the Lord's field. We could allege

many other facts too, which we have decided to omit, lest we appear to be composing a history.

In virtue of our pastoral office committed to us by the divine favor we can under no circumstances tolerate or overlook any longer the pernicious poison of the above errors without disgrace to the Christian religion and injury to orthodox faith. Some of these errors we have decided to include in the present document; their substance is as follows:

1. It is a heretical opinion, but a common one, that the sacraments of the New Law give pardoning grace to those who do not set up an obstacle.
2. To deny that in a child after baptism sin remains is to treat with contempt both Paul and Christ.
3. The inflammable sources of sin, even if there be no actual sin, delay a soul departing from the body from entrance into heaven.
4. To one on the point of death imperfect charity necessarily brings with it great fear, which in itself alone is enough to produce the punishment of purgatory, and impedes entrance into the kingdom.
5. That there are three parts to penance: contrition, confession, and satisfaction, has no foundation in Sacred Scripture nor in the ancient sacred Christian doctors.
6. Contrition, which is acquired through discussion, collection, and detestation of sins, by which one reflects upon his years in the bitterness of his soul, by pondering over the gravity of sins, their number, their baseness, the loss of eternal beatitude, and the acquisition of eternal damnation, this contrition makes him a hypocrite, indeed more a sinner.
7. It is a most truthful proverb and the doctrine concerning the contritions given thus far is the more remarkable: "Not to do so in the future is the highest penance; the best penance, a new life."
8. By no means may you presume to confess venial sins, nor even all mortal sins, because it is impossible that you know all mortal sins. Hence in the primitive Church only manifest mortal sins were confessed.
9. As long as we wish to confess all sins without exception, we are doing nothing else than to wish to leave nothing to God's mercy for pardon.
10. Sins are not forgiven to anyone, unless when the priest forgives them he believes they are forgiven; on the contrary the sin would remain unless he believed it was

forgiven; for indeed the remission of sin and the granting of grace does not suffice, but it is necessary also to believe that there has been forgiveness.

11. By no means can you have reassurance of being absolved because of your contrition, but because of the word of Christ: "Whatsoever you shall loose, etc." Hence, I say, trust confidently, if you have obtained the absolution of the priest, and firmly believe yourself to have been absolved, and you will truly be absolved, whatever there may be of contrition.

12. If through an impossibility he who confessed was not contrite, or the priest did not absolve seriously, but in a jocular manner, if nevertheless he believes that he has been absolved, he is most truly absolved.

13. In the sacrament of penance and the remission of sin the pope or the bishop does no more than the lowest priest; indeed, where there is no priest, any Christian, even if a woman or child, may equally do as much.

14. No one ought to answer a priest that he is contrite, nor should the priest inquire.

15. Great is the error of those who approach the sacrament of the Eucharist relying on this, that they have confessed, that they are not conscious of any mortal sin, that they have sent their prayers on ahead and made preparations; all these eat and drink judgment to themselves. But if they believe and trust that they will attain grace, then this faith alone makes them pure and worthy.

16. It seems to have been decided that the Church in common Council established that the laity should communicate under both species; the Bohemians who communicate under both species are not heretics, but schismatics.

17. The treasures of the Church, from which the pope grants indulgences, are not the merits of Christ and of the saints.

18. Indulgences are pious frauds of the faithful, and remissions of good works; and they are among the number of those things which are allowed, and not of the number of those which are advantageous.

19. Indulgences are of no avail to those who truly gain them, for the remission of the penalty due to actual sin in the sight of divine justice.

20. They are seduced who believe that indulgences are salutary and useful for the fruit of the spirit.

21. Indulgences are necessary only for public crimes, and are properly conceded only to the harsh and impatient.

22. For six kinds of men indulgences are neither necessary nor useful; namely, for the dead and those about to die, the infirm, those legitimately hindered, and those who have not committed crimes, and those who have committed crimes, but not public ones, and those who devote themselves to better things.
23. Excommunications are only external penalties and they do not deprive man of the common spiritual prayers of the Church.
24. Christians must be taught to cherish excommunications rather than to fear them.
25. The Roman Pontiff, the successor of Peter, is not the vicar of Christ over all the churches of the entire world, instituted by Christ Himself in blessed Peter.
26. The word of Christ to Peter: "Whatsoever you shall loose on earth," etc., is extended merely to those things bound by Peter himself.
27. It is certain that it is not in the power of the Church or the pope to decide upon the articles of faith, and much less concerning the laws for morals or for good works.
28. If the pope with a great part of the Church thought so and so, he would not err; still it is not a sin or heresy to think the contrary, especially in a matter not necessary for salvation, until one alternative is condemned and another approved by a general Council.
29. A way has been made for us for weakening the authority of councils, and for freely contradicting their actions, and judging their decrees, and boldly confessing whatever seems true, whether it has been approved or disapproved by any council whatsoever.
30. Some articles of John Hus, condemned in the Council of Constance, are most Christian, wholly true and evangelical; these the universal Church could not condemn.
31. In every good work the just man sins.
32. A good work done very well is a venial sin.
33. That heretics be burned is against the will of the Spirit.
34. To go to war against the Turks is to resist God who punishes our iniquities through them.
35. No one is certain that he is not always sinning mortally, because of the most hidden vice of pride.

36. Free will after sin is a matter of title only; and as long as one does what is in him, one sins mortally.

37. Purgatory cannot be proved from Sacred Scripture which is in the canon.

38. The souls in purgatory are not sure of their salvation, at least not all; nor is it proved by any arguments or by the Scriptures that they are beyond the state of meriting or of increasing in charity.

39. The souls in purgatory sin without intermission, as long as they seek rest and abhor punishment.

40. The souls freed from purgatory by the suffrages of the living are less happy than if they had made satisfactions by themselves.

41. Ecclesiastical prelates and secular princes would not act badly if they destroyed all of the money bags of beggary.

No one of sound mind is ignorant how destructive, pernicious, scandalous, and seductive to pious and simple minds these various errors are, how opposed they are to all charity and reverence for the holy Roman Church who is the mother of all the faithful and teacher of the faith; how destructive they are of the vigor of ecclesiastical discipline, namely obedience. This virtue is the font and origin of all virtues and without it anyone is readily convicted of being unfaithful.

Therefore we, in this above enumeration, important as it is, wish to proceed with great care as is proper, and to cut off the advance of this plague and cancerous disease so it will not spread any further in the Lord's field as harmful thorn-bushes. We have therefore held a careful inquiry, scrutiny, discussion, strict examination, and mature deliberation with each of the brothers, the eminent cardinals of the holy Roman Church, as well as the priors and ministers general of the religious orders, besides many other professors and masters skilled in sacred theology and in civil and canon law. We have found that these errors or theses are not Catholic, as mentioned above, and are not to be taught, as such; but rather are against the doctrine and tradition of the Catholic Church, and against the true interpretation of the sacred Scriptures received from the Church. Now Augustine maintained that her authority had to be accepted so completely that he stated he would not have believed the Gospel unless the authority of the Catholic Church had vouched for it. For, according to these errors, or any one or several of them, it clearly follows that the Church which is guided by the Holy Spirit is in error and has always erred. This is against what Christ at his ascension promised to his disciples (as is read in the holy Gospel of Matthew): "I will be with you to the consummation of the world"; it is against the determinations of the holy Fathers, or the express ordinances and canons of the councils and the supreme pontiffs. Failure to comply with these canons,

according to the testimony of Cyprian, will be the fuel and cause of all heresy and schism.

With the advice and consent of these our venerable brothers, with mature deliberation on each and every one of the above theses, and by the authority of almighty God, the blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, and our own authority, we condemn, reprobate, and reject completely each of these theses or errors as either heretical, scandalous, false, offensive to pious ears or seductive of simple minds, and against Catholic truth. By listing them, we decree and declare that all the faithful of both sexes must regard them as condemned, reprobated, and rejected.... We restrain all in the virtue of holy obedience and under the penalty of an automatic major excommunication....

Moreover, because the preceding errors and many others are contained in the books or writings of Martin Luther, we likewise condemn, reprobate, and reject completely the books and all the writings and sermons of the said Martin, whether in Latin or any other language, containing the said errors or any one of them; and we wish them to be regarded as utterly condemned, reprobated, and rejected. We forbid each and every one of the faithful of either sex, in virtue of holy obedience and under the above penalties to be incurred automatically, to read, assert, preach, praise, print, publish, or defend them. They will incur these penalties if they presume to uphold them in any way, personally or through another or others, directly or indirectly, tacitly or explicitly, publicly or occultly, either in their own homes or in other public or private places.

Indeed immediately after the publication of this letter these works, wherever they may be, shall be sought out carefully by the ordinaries and others [ecclesiastics and regulars], and under each and every one of the above penalties shall be burned publicly and solemnly in the presence of the clerics and people.

As far as Martin himself is concerned, O good God, what have we overlooked or not done? What fatherly charity have we omitted that we might call him back from such errors? For after we had cited him, wishing to deal more kindly with him, we urged him through various conferences with our legate and through our personal letters to abandon these errors. We have even offered him safe conduct and the money necessary for the journey urging him to come without fear or any misgivings, which perfect charity should cast out, and to talk not secretly but openly and face to face after the example of our Savior and the Apostle Paul. If he had done this, we are certain he would have changed in heart, and he would have recognized his errors. He would not have found all these errors in the Roman Curia which he attacks so viciously, ascribing to it more than he should because of the empty rumors of wicked men. We would have shown him clearer than the light of day that the Roman pontiffs, our predecessors, whom he injuriously attacks beyond all decency, never erred in their canons or constitutions which he tries to assail. For, according to the prophet, neither is healing oil nor the doctor lacking in Galaad.

But he always refused to listen and, despising the previous citation and each and every one of the above overtures, disdained to come. To the present day he has been contumacious. With a hardened spirit he has continued under censure over a year.

What is worse, adding evil to evil, and on learning of the citation, he broke forth in a rash appeal to a future council. This to be sure was contrary to the constitution of Pius II and Julius II our predecessors that all appealing in this way are to be punished with the penalties of heretics. In vain does he implore the help of a council, since he openly admits that he does not believe in a council.

Therefore we can, without any further citation or delay, proceed against him to his condemnation and damnation as one whose faith is notoriously suspect and in fact a true heretic with the full severity of each and all of the above penalties and censures.

Yet, with the advice of our brothers, imitating the mercy of almighty God who does not wish the death of a sinner but rather that he be converted and live, and forgetting all the injuries inflicted on us and the Apostolic See, we have decided to use all the compassion we are capable of. It is our hope, so far as in us lies, that he will experience a change of heart by taking the road of mildness we have proposed, return, and turn away from his errors. We will receive him kindly as the prodigal son returning to the embrace of the Church.

Therefore let Martin himself and all those adhering to him, and those who shelter and support him, through the merciful heart of our God and the sprinkling of the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ by which and through whom the redemption of the human race and the upbuilding of holy mother Church was accomplished, know that from our heart we exhort and beseech that he cease to disturb the peace, unity, and truth of the Church for which the Savior prayed so earnestly to the Father. Let him abstain from his pernicious errors that he may come back to us. If they really will obey, and certify to us by legal documents that they have obeyed, they will find in us the affection of a father's love, the opening of the font of the effects of paternal charity, and opening of the font of mercy and clemency.

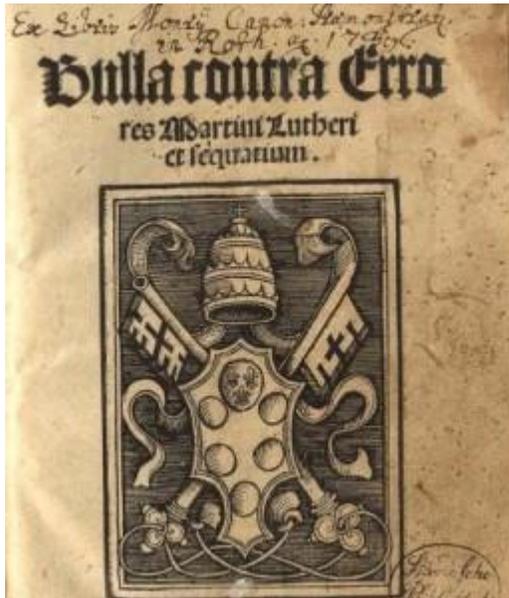
We enjoin, however, on Martin that in the meantime he cease from all preaching or the office of preacher....

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Bull Exsurge Domine proclaimed in Rome

<http://reformation500.csl.edu/timeline/bull-exsurge-domine-proclaimed-in-rome/>

Bull “Exsurge Domine” proclaimed in Rome



The bull threatening Luther with excommunication, *Exsurge Domine* (“Arise, O Lord”), was published on June 15, 1520. It represented the culmination of several precipitating factors. First, the initial charges against Luther demanding that he recant of his opinions in the indulgence controversy were never laid aside. Despite the requirement that he answer for his opinions in Rome or recant of them before Cardinal Cajetan in Rome, the controversy continued and Luther’s criticisms only sharpened. Second, the selection of a new emperor freed Rome to shift its attention from political concerns

back to Luther. Third, the Leipzig Debate with John Eck in the summer of 1519 raised the question of papal authority more directly and necessitated a response from Rome. At the time, Luther was still relying on the protection of Frederick the Wise in Wittenberg. With the election and pending coronation of Charles V, Frederick had lost some of his bargaining power with Rome, as well as his status as “imperial vicar” during the interregnum. For the elector, there was the possibility that he and his university might be excommunicated or even receive the imperial interdict if he were found guilty of harboring a noted heretic. As a result, he sought the legal opinion of his jurists and laid the groundwork for how he might defend himself against the accusation.

In several meetings during the winter months of 1520, the case against Luther began to take shape. A consultation that included Cajetan was formed in February and began to detail Luther’s errors, though distinguishing between his teaching and his person. This would provide room to recant rather condemning him personally. When Eck arrived in Rome in the spring of 1520, he became a leading contributor in the formation of the bull. He reported on Luther’s more fervent opposition to papal authority and drafted a list of forty-one errors Luther held, which were added to the draft already produced by a

committee in Rome charged with addressing the issue. It was Eck who later delivered a final draft of the bull to Leo X for his signature while the pope was out hunting.

Exsurge Domine famously referred to Luther as a “wild boar from the forest,” an unsubtle statement of the tensions between Rome and Germany. The list of forty-one charges ranged from Luther’s doctrine of penance that brought him into the public eye down to the Eucharist, the keys, papal authority, and purgatory. The bull laid out the efforts on the part of Rome to deal with Luther previously, proscribed the reading of all his works—even those lacking his noted errors—and commanded him to cease preaching immediately. It concluded with a call for Luther to recant of his condemned opinions within sixty days or face excommunication. Two nuncios, Eck and Jerome Aleander, were commissioned with spreading the bull throughout German lands.

While the bull itself did not technically excommunicate Luther, it came with significant ecclesiastical and political consequences. Rome mandated that all in the church reject Luther’s teachings or face excommunication themselves. This extended even to books that did not contain errors because they were associated with Luther as an accused heretic. There was also the possibility that princes supporting Luther, in particular Frederick the Wise, would be subject to imperial edict, or the “greater excommunication” that carried with it civil as well as ecclesiastical penalties. Upon receiving the bull, Luther did not offer a defense. Instead, on the sixtieth day after its receipt, by which time he was to stand trial or be excommunicated, Luther ceremonially burned the bull along with the books of canon law, which included traditional church decrees and papal bulls, as well as the glosses of medieval jurists. In this Luther symbolically rejected the ecclesiastical and legal system he saw supporting papal authority.

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Charles V

<http://reformation500.csl.edu/bio/charles-v/>

Charles V



Born in 1500, Charles I of Spain was successor of the Austrian Habsburg dynasty and ruled the majority of Europe during the Reformation as Emperor Charles V. On the side of his father, Philip of Burgundy, were the Habsburg Austrian Maximilian and Mary of Burgundy. On the side of his mother, Joana “The Mad” of Castile, were Ferdinand and Isabella, who had united the Spanish crowns of Aragon and Castile. This made Charles the heir to numerous lands that he began to inherit at the age of sixteen. Raised in French Burgundy, his first language was French and he was steeped in the diplomacy of Burgundy politics. Adrian of Utrecht, who would briefly become pope in 1522 before dying a year later, was a member of his court. Between 1516 and the death of his emperor father in 1519, Charles successively inherited the Austrian duchies of Austria, Carinthia, Moravia, Tyrol, and Styria; the Netherlands along with France-Comte from the Burgundy line; and Spain and the Spanish territories abroad, including Milan, Naples, Sicily, Sardinia, and the growing expansion of the New World in Central and South America. The massive land and financial holdings associated with this expansive empire led to grandiose visions of political domination on his part that would result in conflict throughout Europe.

The final step for Charles was election as Holy Roman Emperor over the German territories and the imperial free cities. When Charles’ father Maximilian died, the then-King of Spain was the most likely candidate. While Henry VIII of England and Frederick the Wise of Saxony were early competitors, Francis I of France emerged as the primary opposition. Francis was of the French Valois line that had been at odds with the Austrian Habsburgs. The papacy supported Francis due to growing monarchy of the Habsburgs and its encroachment onto Italian soil, but Charles had something the fiscally strapped papacy did not: recourse to immense funds, including the backing of

the Fugger House of Augsburg, to bribe the electors into selecting him. The cost to Charles was 850,000 florins, 500,000 of which were subsidized with a loan from the Fuggers. Charles I of Spain was elected emperor in June 1519 and coronated Charles V in October 1520 at Aix-la-Chapelle, an imperial free city in Germany. He would receive his imperial crown from Pope Clement VII in 1520 at Bologna, the last emperor to be so crowned by a pope.

There were three challenges facing Charles upon taking the mantle of emperor: rivalry with the French Valois, war with the Turks on the eastern edge of the Empire, and the growing Protestant movement. The first two were intertwined and distracted him from addressing the third. The Habsburg-Valois rivalry commanded the most attention during the first decade of his reign. Intermittent war with France led to Charles' defeat of Francis in 1525. He took the French king prisoner and forced him to sign the 1526 Peace of Madrid, which surrendered French lands in Burgundy and Italy and included an agreement with Francis to marry Charles' sister, Eleanor. Once back on Spanish soil, Francis rejected the pact claiming it had come under duress and renewed war against imperial troops. Throughout the Habsburg-Valois wars, the papacy had remained on the side of Francis out of fear of Charles' excursions onto Italian soil, leading Clement VII to join the defensive League of Cognac with France, Venice, Florence, and Milan. In response, Charles conscripted imperial troops to Italy, where they eventually sacked Rome in 1527—on their own initiative, not the emperor's—and virtually imprisoned the pope until 1528. The Peace of Cambrai in 1529 put an end to the episode so France and the Empire could address more pressing issues, primarily war with the Turks. France would later break with Charles again to make an alliance with the Turks, but eventually reversed course and in 1544 forged the Peace of Cr py with the Empire to stand as a united front against the Turks, in exchange for either Milan or the Netherlands and this time the marriage of a son of Charles to Francis' daughter.

The complexities of the Habsburg-Valois contest and the Turkish front distracted Charles from what would become the defining feature of his reign: the growth of Protestantism. The emperor had been crowned for only three months when the fateful Diet of Worms convened in January 1521. At Worms, Luther made his famous confession before the emperor that he would not recant of his writings and was subsequently hidden at Frederick the Wise's behest in the Wartburg Castle. In the meantime, Charles executed the Edict of Worms making Luther an outlaw in the empire and proscribing all public teaching of his views. The Edict of Worms, however, evoked

criticism from Rome. Papal legate Jerome Aleander questioned why an imperial edict was needed if Luther had already been subject to the ban by verdict of the papal bull of excommunication drafted earlier in 1521, *Decet Romanem Pontificem*. This only served to increase tensions with Rome politically, even though Charles considered himself a devout Catholic and supporter of the papacy who took it as a personal goal to protect church orthodoxy against Luther.

One further complicating factor in Charles' relationship to the Protestant Reformation was the hesitancy on the part of Rome to call a council. It was never the emperor's aim to circumvent the ecclesiastical system, but he had anticipated a general council that would rule on Luther's doctrine and bring peace to the church. Consequently, the 1526 Diet of Speyer passed the recess of the Edict of Worms allowing all princes and cities in the empire to practice religion as they saw fit pending a general council to resolve the theological questions. The 1529 Diet of Speyer revoked the recess and led to the 1530 Diet of Augsburg, where the German princes presented the Lutheran Augsburg Confession and the southern Germans their Tetropolitana, after which the Catholic contingent responded with a hastily written reply of the Roman Confutation. Charles accepted the Confutation and promised to enforce the prohibition of Lutheran doctrine as protector of the church. Nevertheless, he still oversaw several attempts at reconciliation between the two parties over the years. The first came at Augsburg itself following the public presentation of the confessions. Then later, from 1539 to 1541, Charles directed a series of three colloquies in Hagenau, Worms, and Regensburg to reach agreement between Catholics and Protestants in the empire, all with limited results and no lasting impact. Repeated papal promises of a council led him to support the conciliar solution, which finally came to realization with the 1543 convocation of Trent. The actual convening of the council was finally made possible after the 1544 Peace of Crépy brought truce to the war with France and combined support of both Habsburg and Valois rulers for the Tridentine assembly.

After the first sessions of Trent closed, Charles made one final attempt at restoring religious peace within the empire. The 1548 Augsburg Interim gave small concessions to the Protestants, such as clerical marriage and communion in both kinds, but left much of Catholic doctrine largely unchanged. Charles then sought to impose it on the empire until a general council could enforce it more broadly, though numerous German territories vigorously rejected the measures. The religious conflict under Charles' watch was not resolved until the 1555 Peace of Augsburg, which established the right of both

Lutheran and Catholic territories to choose which religion they would follow. The agreement itself was brokered by Ferdinand, the emperor's younger brother, to whom he had deputed all governing affairs in Germany by 1553.

Charles progressively abdicated his position until finally stepping down in 1556. His younger brother, Ferdinand, succeeded him as emperor. Ferdinand had governed Habsburg lands in Germany and Austria since 1521 and the Hungary and Bohemia since 1526 and had also been named King of the Romans, an honorific designating him as next pope over Charles' own son Philip II. Philip instead took over the Spanish and Burgundy territories of his father. Charles would spend the remaining two years of his life in Spain, at a villa near the monastery of St. Juste. He died in September 1558.

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Luther Appears before the Emperor at Worms

<http://reformation500.csl.edu/timeline/luther-appears-before-the-emperor-at-worms/>

Luther appears before the emperor at Worms



The Diet of Worms officially convened in January 1521. The system of imperial diets was set up by Emperor Maximilian to settle disputes and regulate affairs among imperial states and free cities, though the states and in particular the seven electors had the greatest influence. Luther's theology was not the reason for the gathering of the diet, though the newly crowned emperor, Charles V, was expected to address the issue. On the eve of Worms, Luther was officially excommunicated through the papal bull *Decet Romanem Pontificem* and Rome wanted Charles to place the imperial interdict—a civil penalty—on him. Because of the excommunication, Charles revoked Luther's right to defend himself, but Frederick the Wise attempted to persuade the emperor otherwise. His efforts resulted in the March summons for Luther to appear in April.

In the period between January and April, the Roman and German sides were at odds preparing for Luther's hearing. The German imperial states, led by Frederick the Wise, sought a fair trial for Luther before an impartial body of judges. Their motivation was the reform of the church. The imperial states had repeatedly delivered a list of

grievances against Rome, or *Gravamina*, at imperial diets and many of their concerns regarding Roman interference in German churches were reflected in Luther's *Address to the Christian Nobility*. Rome, on the other hand, did not believe ecclesiastical decisions should be left to an imperial council and instead wanted the emperor to place the interdict on Luther if he were unwilling to recant. Charles sided with the Germans and Frederick secured from him a promise of safe conduct. When Luther received the summons, he believed a fair trial and an open debate awaited him in Worms.

Luther arrived in April to a different setting than he had expected. When he finally stood before the imperial council on April 17, a stack of his books was laid out on a table and a representative of the archbishop of Trier asked him whether the books were his and, if so, whether he would recant of their teachings. Luther himself was flustered at the absence of the debate he anticipated and after a mumbled response asked for more time to consider his answer. After a long day of imperial business, Luther appeared again before the council the following evening. In response to his interrogator, he affirmed his authorship of all the books and placed his writings in three categories. The first group dealt with piety and morals and he deemed them generally uncontested, even by the papal bull excommunicating him. The second group was directed at the errors of the papacy which he believed threatened the faithful and so he refused to recant of them. The third set of writings included those Luther had directed against supporters of the papacy who defended the errors he criticized in the second category, and he likewise would not retract those. His interrogator was not satisfied with the response and demanded Luther provide a direct answer "without horns" to the question of whether he recanted of the arguments in his books. Luther then uttered his famous reply that unless he were convinced by Scripture or clear reason, he was bound to the Word of God and his conscience captive to it.

The fallout from Luther's stand was immediate. He expected death, while Rome pressed for the same. On April 26, he and his traveling companions left on their return journey to Wittenberg. However, Frederick the Wise had arranged discreetly to stage a surprise attack on the party, where armed soldiers would seize Luther and relocate him to an unspecified location for his own protection. The destination was the Wartburg Castle, where he would stay for the next ten months until problems in Wittenberg demanded his return. During his seclusion, Charles V published the Edict of Worms, which supported the bull of excommunication and declared Luther an outlaw.

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