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For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare [are] not fleshly but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. And they will be ready to punish all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled. (2 Corinthians 10:3-6)

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A Warning to My Dear German People

By Martin Luther

Translated by Martin H. Bertram

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I issued an urgent and sincere admonition publicly to the clerical members of the Diet of Augsburg in which I implored them not to let the diet—on which all the world set such great hopes and toward which it looked with longing—adjourn inconclusively, but rather work toward the establishment of peace, the cessation of some of their abominations, and freedom for the Gospel.¹ I also strove and sighed for these things with all my might in my prayers before God, as did all good Christians. However, since neither our diligent prayer to God nor our sincere warning to them availed, one can readily infer what this means: namely, that God considers them to be hardened and blinded; they are guilty of so much innocent blood, blasphemy, and shameful, impenitent living, that he does not consider that they are worthy to receive a single good thought or emotion or that they will pay any attention to a word of wholesome and peaceful admonition. Their condition is like that of the Jews at the time of Jeremiah, when God said to him (*Jeremiah* 15 [1]): “Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my heart would not turn to this people. Send them out of my sight, and let them go!” And in *Jeremiah* 7 [16] he

said, “As for you, do not pray for this people, or lift up cry or prayer for them, and do not intercede with me, for I do not hear you.”

My colleagues and I must now issue this same answer and apply it to ourselves. We have prayed in vain for the clergy. With his actions, God is demonstrating mightily that he does not want to hear our intercession in their behalf, but he is letting them go and sin against the Holy Spirit, as Pharaoh did, until they are beyond hope of repentance and reform. If anything could have been attained through prayer before God and anything achieved with the clergy through admonition, pleas, humility, patience, friendly advances, truth, justice, a good muse, *etc.*, it surely would have been accomplished now at the diet. For I know how earnestly the Christians prayed, what great humility, patience, and fervor was demonstrated there, and what a good and just cause they championed.

But now that they not only have let the diet disband without bearing any fruit and without peace but have even confirmed the discord and concluded with defiant threats,² my followers and I will also withdraw our prayers in compliance with God's command and, as St. John teaches [*1 John* 5:16], not pray for the sin unto death. Rather we shall see how God will baptize the hardened Pharaoh in the Red Sea. Our prayers and supplications for peace, even though lost on the impenitent, will help us all the more. In fact, they have already performed great miracles at Augsburg. And by the grace of God, they will also succeed in the end. For

¹ Compare Luther's *Exhortation to All Clergy Assembled at Augsburg*, LW 34, 3–61.

² Luther discusses some of these threats in this treatise: *e.g.*, that of John Eck: (see below, 23–24) and that of Elector Joachim of Brandenburg (in a treatise delivered on August 7, 1530; see below 33).

we were heard and must be heard. Our prayers have not failed us in the past, nor will they fail us now—that I know for a certainty. Amen! It will happen as Jesus said, that whenever the apostles' greetings or peace found no reception or no children of peace in a house, their peace returned again to them [*Matthew* 10:13; *Luke* 10:6]. So too in this case, since the clergy heed neither prayer nor peace, both prayer and peace will not be lost on that account but will revert to us.³ And in place of prayers, nothing but curses, in place of peace nothing but discord, and both in abundance, will be the clergy's lot. Amen.

Therefore, because their plans are built exclusively on force and their cause relies on the power of the fist, over against the manifest and known truth of God, no one need fear them. Let everyone be of good cheer and unafraid before such raging foes of God; for they do not cry or pray to God, nor are they able to pray in view of their bad conscience and cause. Out of pride and spite they attack flesh and blood; to do this they need no God, nor do they dare to ask him whether he desires what they are thinking. God surely loves this and takes great delight in it; such defiance and contempt of his grace are most pleasing to him. He makes a practice of rewarding such defiance and arrogance with good fortune and victory—so that both horse and rider lie drowned in the Red Sea and everything is overturned, and no one survives. We, however, are quite convinced that their mad undertaking does not rest in their might, but in the hand of God, and that their aims will not so soon be accomplished. He will want to be a Lord over them too, as has always been the case in the past. This they shall indeed experience. But for the present I will assume that there is no God, I will just imagine as in a dream that their plans and plots will proceed and prosper mightily.

If worse comes to worst, then one of two things will happen: either a war or a rebellion will occur, perhaps both at the same time. For there is indeed danger—we are now speaking as in a dream, as if there were no God—that if they initiate a war, an armed troop will organize and a mob band together, perhaps even among their own people, so that both they and we will perish. For in such an event they cannot rely on our teaching and take it for granted that no one will attack them, just because we wrote and taught so emphatically not to resort to rebellion, but to suffer the madness even of tyrants, and

not to defend oneself.⁴ This is what I teach, but I cannot create the doers of this teaching, since they esteem so little all the other articles of our teaching. If now the masses should reject our teaching against rebellion, especially if they were provoked by such a godless outrage and wanton war, then the devil would make real fools of them and expose them very nicely and neatly. I am still speaking in a dream. But let them see to it that the dream does not come true. The dream does not harm me, but if it hits them, so be it.

All right, if a war or a rebellion should break out as I fear (for God's wrath will have to take its course), I wish to testify before God and all the world here in this writing that we, who are derisively called "Lutherans," neither counseled it or consented to it, nor, indeed, gave any cause for it; rather, we constantly and ceaselessly pleaded and called for peace. The papists themselves know and have to admit that we have preached peace up till now and have also kept the peace, and that peace was also our ardent desire now at the diet. Consequently, if a war or a rebellion should break out, it can under no circumstances be said, "See, that is the fruit of Lutheran teaching." It will rather have to be said, "See, that is the papists' teaching and its fruit; they want peace neither for themselves nor for others." Until now we have taught and lived quietly. We drew no sword and did not burn, murder, or rob anyone, as they have done in the past and still do; rather, we endured their murder and pillage, their raving and raging with the greatest patience.

Furthermore, when our people were threatened and challenged, defied, jeered, and mocked at the diet by the papists, they humbled themselves most abjectly and let themselves simply be trampled underfoot. Despite all, they asked and pleaded for peace, and they offered to do all that God might want. That would have been more than enough, even if our party were mere beggars, to say nothing of the fact that they are great princes, lords, and godly and honorable people. Therefore, I believe that there have been but few instances of such a confession and of such humility and of such patience as long as Christendom has existed, and I trust this will not be exceeded before the Last Day. Yet all of this was of no avail. Münzer⁵ and the insurrectionists did not act thus; they did what the papists are doing now. They, too, neither wanted to have peace nor would they grant it to

³ In his *Exhortation to All Clergy* Luther had written that he and his followers were praying for the success of the diet and for the enlightenment of the opposition. But he also warned: "...may God grant that you do not set yourselves stubbornly against it, so that our prayer must again return into our bosom, as lost and scorned by you [*Matthew* 10:13]" *LW* 34, 11.

⁴ Compare Introduction to "Dr. Martin Luther's Warning to His Dear German People," *LW* 47:6.

⁵ Thomas Münzer (c. 1488–1525), radical reformer and a leader in the Peasants' Revolt of 1525. For Luther's view of him, see *Letter to the Princes of Saxony Concerning the Rebellious Spirit* (1524), *LW* 40, 45–59. For a recent study of Münzer, see Eric W. Gritsch, *Reformer Without a Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967).

others. They resorted to violence; they listened to no mediation and no overtures but insisted on having their own way. Moreover, they refused to submit their teaching to a hearing as our people now have done at Augsburg, but without further ado they condemned all other teaching and exalted their own by every means. In the same way the papists now refuse to make their document public, and yet they condemn our teaching.⁶ We shall hear more of that later. In brief, we cannot be blamed or accused either before God or before the world of fomenting war or insurrection.

Since our conscience is clear and pure and assured in this matter, and that of the papists must be guilty and impure and filled with misgiving, let come what may, even the worst, be it war or rebellion—whatever God’s wrath decrees. If an uprising should result, my God and Lord Jesus Christ is well able to save me and mine, as he rescued dear Lot in Sodom, and as he saved me in the recent uprising when I was in danger of life and limb more than once.⁷ And yet this is the thanks I earned by my efforts from those incorrigible scoundrels; I mean the papists. If God does not see fit to rescue me, I will nonetheless praise and thank him. I have lived long enough, I have certainly earned death, and I have begun to avenge my Lord Jesus properly on the papacy. Only after my death will they begin really to take Luther seriously.⁸ Even now, if I were to be murdered in such a papist and clerical uprising, I would take a throng of bishops, priests, and monks with me, so that people would say that Doctor Martin had been escorted to his grave in a grand procession. For he was a great doctor over all bishops, priests, and monks; therefore, it is fitting that they go to the grave with him, lying on their backs. People will sing and talk about it. Thus, in the end we will undertake a little pilgrimage together—they, the papists, into the abyss of Hell to their god of lies and murder, whom they served with lies and murder; I to my Lord Jesus Christ, whom I served in truth and peace.

⁶ On August 3, 1530, the Roman Catholic *Confutation* (*Confutatio Pontificia*) was publicly read. The evangelical representatives were not given a copy of this document beforehand; afterward they were to receive a copy of it only if they promised to accept its conclusions and not to hand it around. This the evangelicals refused to do. Melancthon therefore had to present his reply to the *Confutation* (the *Apology of the Augsburg Confession*) without access to its text.

⁷ Luther is referring to his experiences in May 1525, during the Peasants’ Revolt, when he traveled through some of the possessions of the count of Mansfeld and through Thuringia.

⁸ A variation of a saying with which Luther taunted the papacy; he quoted it in either German or Latin. It is translated in *LW* 34, 49, as: “If I live I shall be your plague. If I die, I shall be your death.” Compare also *LW* 54, 227.

For it is easy to figure out that whoever kills Doctor Luther in an uprising will not spare many of the priests either. Thus, we shall go to our death together, they to Hell in the name of all devils, I to Heaven in the name of God. No one can harm me, that I know; nor do I desire to do harm to anyone else. But whatever evil they inflict on me, I will outdo them. No matter how hard their heads may be, they will find mine still harder. Even if they had not only Emperor Charles on their side but also the emperor of the Turks, they would not intimidate or frighten me; rather I will intimidate and frighten them. In the future they will yield to me; I will not yield to them. I will survive, they will perish. They have miscalculated grievously, for my life will be their hangman, my death will be their devil.⁹ This is what they will discover, nothing else; just let them laugh impudently about it now.

On the other hand, if this ends in a war, I will again have to resign myself to it, together with my followers, and await what our God will advise and decree in this matter. He has always faithfully assisted and never forsaken us. Here again we enjoy a great advantage. In the first place, it will not harm us if we die or come to grief, for it is written, “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake” [*Matthew* 5:10]. We are convinced that he who says that does not lie. The papists themselves know and confess—and may the devil thank them if they should say otherwise—that our teaching is contrary neither to any article of the Creed nor to the Holy Scriptures;¹⁰ rather it is contrary to the customs of their church and the laws of the popes. Therefore, they cannot revile us as heretics without giving their own heart and mouth the lie, since no one may be dubbed a heretic who does not teach contrary to Holy Scripture or the articles of faith. Much less may they punish us or wage war against us as heretics. As liars against themselves, as assassins and traitors, they have hitherto defamed Leonard Keiser¹¹ and his like as heretics, burned them at the stake, murdered and persecuted them. And they have not yet shown any

⁹ Compare note 8 above.

¹⁰ Justus Jonas had written Luther (June 30 [?], 1530) that after the reading of the *Augsburg Confession* the bishop of Augsburg, Christoph von Stadion, had shouted out, “This is pure truth; we cannot deny it!” Compare *Weimarer Ausgabe* (Weimar Edition – WA hereafter) 30^{II}, 400, note 2.

¹¹ Leonard Keiser, who had studied at the university in Wittenberg for a year and a half, was burned as a heretic, because of his Lutheran views, on August 16, 1527, in Schärding, Bavaria. Compare Luther’s treatise, *Concerning Leonard Keiser of Bavaria, Burned for the Sake of the Gospel, 1527* (*Von Lenhard Keiser in Baiern, um des Euangelii willen verbrannt*), WA 30^{II}, 452–476.

contrition or repentance for this but remain hardened in such blood and lies. Who should be afraid of such warriors?

In the second place, we know that they are unable to begin such a war in the name of God, nor are they able to pray for it and invoke God's help. And I challenge them all, collectively and individually, to say to God with a sincere heart: "Help us, God, to fight in defense of this cause!" For their conscience is too burdened, not only with lying, blaspheming, blood, murder, and all other abominations but, over and above all this, with hardened and impenitent hearts and sins against the Holy Spirit. Consequently, since they wage war with a bad conscience for a blasphemous cause, good fortune and success cannot attend them. Therefore, we will speak a blessing over them, which will read as follows: "May God give you success and victory in proportion to your uprightness before God and the goodness of your cause! Amen!" You will fare as we Germans did when we ventured to break the peace with St. John Huss and fought against the Bohemians.¹² On that occasion the pope also handed us over to the slaughter, so that we had to satisfy his pleasure with our blood and heads, and we fought against truth and justice. Now you are doing the same thing, and so the pope, this most holy father and kind shepherd of our souls, will again have occasion to laugh up his sleeve if he can stir up such a welcome bloodbath among us. However, God can easily raise up a Judas Maccabeus¹³ (even if my followers and I sit by quietly and suffer) who will smash Antiochus with his army and teach him real warfare, as he taught us how to wage war and how to keep the peace through the Bohemians.

Nor will my followers and I leave off praying and imploring God to give them a despondent, timid, and craven heart when on the battlefield, to prick the conscience of one and then another and prompt them to say: "Alas! Alas! I am engaged in a perilous war. We are espousing an evil cause and fighting against God and his Word. What will be our fate? Where are we going?" And when they see a Maccabean warrior coming at them, they will disperse and scatter like chaff before the wind. Do you not believe that God is still able to do this? He says to his people, "I will send faintness into your hearts, so that when you go out one way against your enemies, you shall flee seven ways before them; the sound of a

driven leaf shall put you to flight" [*Leviticus* 26:36; *Deuteronomy* 28:25]. Truly, that is what he also did to the obdurate Egyptians in the Red Sea. They were probably as obstinate and secure as the papists are. Yet when the hour came that their conscience smote them, they cried, "Alas, let us flee, for the Lord is fighting against us" [*Exodus* 14:25]. Let him who does not know what it means to wage war with a bad conscience and a despondent heart try it now. If the papists wage war, he will experience it, just as our ancestors did in a similar situation against the Bohemians and Zizka.¹⁴ And we will not suppress our prayer but will offer it publicly; it will be the seventh psalm, which in its first combat slew all of Israel, so that twenty thousand men, together with Absalom, lay dead on the battlefield, slain by a small number.¹⁵ For it has a sufficient stock of guns, powder, and armor—that I know for a certainty.

In the third place, it is not fitting for me, a preacher, vested with the spiritual office, to wage war or to counsel war or incite it, but rather to dissuade from war and to direct to peace, as I have done until now with all diligence. All the world must bear witness to this. However, our enemies do not want to have peace, but war. If war should come now, I will surely hold my pen in check and keep silent and not intervene as I did in the last uprising.¹⁶ I will let matters take their course, even though not a bishop, priest, or monk survives, and I myself also perish. For their defiance and boasting are intolerable to God; their impenitent heart is carrying things too far. They were begged, they were admonished, they were implored for peace beyond all reasonable measure. They insist on forcing the issue with flesh and blood; so I, too, will force the issue with them through the Spirit and through God and henceforth set not one or two papists but the entire papacy against me, until the Judge in Heaven intervenes with signs. I will not and cannot be afraid of such miserable enemies of God. I disdain their defiance, and I laugh at their wrath. They can do no more than deprive me of a sack of

¹⁴ John Zizka (1376–1424) was the great military leader of the Hussites; he successfully defied Sigismund, king of the Germans and king of Hungary, and others who led crusades against the followers of John Huss after the death of Huss in 1415. Compare F. G. Heymann, *John Zizka and the Hussite Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955).

¹⁵ Compare 2 *Samuel* 18:7.

¹⁶ *I.e.*, the Peasants' Revolt of 1525. Compare Luther's writings on the subject in LW 46, 17–85: *Admonition to Peace, A Reply to the Twelve Articles of the Peasants in Swabia, 1525; Against the Robbing and Murdering Hordes of Peasants, 1525; and An Open Letter on the Harsh Book Against the Peasants, 1525.*

¹² Luther is referring to the unsuccessful attempts which were made to root out the Hussites after Huss was burned as a heretic by the Council of Constance in 1415. Compare below, note 14.

¹³ The reference is to the heroic Jewish figure who led the Jews in 166–160 BC during their struggle against the Syrian king Antiochus Epiphanes and his successors.

ailing flesh. But they shall soon discover of what I am able to deprive them.

Furthermore, if war breaks out—which God forbid—I will not reprove those who defend themselves against the murderous and bloodthirsty papists, nor let anyone else rebuke them as being seditious, but I will accept their action and let it pass as self-defense. I will direct them in this matter to the law and to the jurists. For in such an instance, when the murderers and bloodhounds wish to wage war and to murder, it is in truth no insurrection to rise against them and defend oneself. Not that I wish to incite or spur anyone on to such self-defense, or to justify it, for that is not my office; much less does it devolve on me to pass judgment or sentence on him. A Christian knows very well what he is to do—namely, to render to God the things that are God’s and to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s [Matthew 22:21], but not to render to the bloodhounds the things that are not theirs. I want to make a distinction between sedition and other acts and to deprive the bloodhounds of the pretext of boasting that they are warring against rebellious people and that they were justified according to both human and divine law; for so the little kitten is fond of grooming and adorning itself. Likewise, I do not want to leave the conscience of the people burdened by the concern and worry that their self-defense might be rebellious. For such a term would be too evil and too harsh in such a case. It should be given a different name, which I am sure the jurists can find for it.

We must not let everything be considered rebellious which the bloodhounds designate as such. For in that way they want to silence the lips and tie the hands of the entire world, so that no one may either reprove them with preaching or defend himself with his fist, while they keep their mouth open and their hands free. Thus, they want to frighten and ensnare all the world with the name “insurrection,” and at the same time comfort and reassure themselves. No, dear fellow, we must submit to you a different interpretation and definition of that term. To act contrary to law is not rebellion; otherwise, every violation of the law would be rebellion. No, he is an insurrectionist who refuses to submit to government and law, who attacks and fights against them, and attempts to overthrow them with a view to making himself ruler and establishing the law, as Münzer did; that is the true definition of a rebel. *Aliud est invasor, aliud transgressor.*¹⁷ In accordance with this definition, self-defense against the bloodhounds cannot be rebellious. For the papists are deliberately starting the war; they refuse to keep the peace, they do not let others rest who would like to live in peace. Thus, the papists are much

closer to the name and the quality which is termed rebellion.

For they have no law, either divine or human, on their side; rather they act out of malice, like murderers and villains, in violation of all divine and human law. That can easily be proved; for they themselves know that our doctrine is correct, and yet they want to exterminate it. Thus, a great Nicholas bishop¹⁸ declared in Augsburg that he could tolerate it if everyone believed as they do in Wittenberg; but what he could not tolerate was that such a doctrine should originate in and emanate from such a remote nook and corner. What do you think? Are those not fine episcopal words? The papal legate, Cardinal Campeggio,¹⁹ confessed similarly that he could easily accept such a teaching. However, this would establish a bad precedent, and one would then have to accord other nations and kingdoms the same privilege, which would be out of the question. Another important bishop declared of their scholars: “Our scholars do a fine job of defending us. They themselves concede that our cause is not based on Scripture.”²⁰ Thus they are well aware that our doctrine is not wrong, but that it is founded on the Scriptures. Yet they condemn us arbitrarily and try to exterminate this doctrine in contravention of divine law and truth.

It is also obvious that they are acting contrary to imperial and to natural law; for in the first place, they hardly gave our side a hearing, and then, when they delivered their tardy, flimsy confutation orally, they simply refused to hand us a copy of it, nor did they give us an opportunity to make reply.²¹ To the present day they shun the light like bats. It is, of course, in accord with divine, imperial, and natural law, as the heathen Porcius Festus also held in the controversy between the Jews and St. Paul [Acts 25:16], not to condemn a man without a hearing. Even God did not condemn Adam until he first gave him a chance to reply. We appeared voluntarily at Augsburg and offered humbly and eagerly to render an account. This, however, was maliciously and arbitrarily denied us. Nor did they give us their

¹⁸ Luther sometimes referred to the Roman Catholic bishops as “Nicholas bishops” when he wanted to stress the dubiousness of their calling. A “Nicholas” was a comic figure in children’s games and also a term of contempt for a peasant. Compare *LW* 39, 252, note 8. Melancthon and Jonas attributed a statement of this nature to Matthew Lang, the archbishop of Salzburg, and it is he to whom Luther is referring. Compare *WA* 30^{III}, 261–262, and 283, note 2, as well as *LW* 34, 102.

¹⁹ Cardinal Lorenzo Campeggio, papal legate at the diet in Augsburg.

²⁰ Conrad Cordatus, one of the Lutheran theologians at the diet, attributed such statements to Albert, archbishop of Mainz, and to John Eck. Compare *WA* 30^{III}, 284, note 1.

²¹ See note 6 above.

¹⁷ “An invader is one thing; a transgressor is another.”

confutation, no matter how often and how much we pleaded for it. Yet we were condemned by the holy fathers in God and by the Christian princes. O excellent teachers! O fine judges, who force all the world to believe and still dare not to publish what is to be believed! I am expected to believe without knowing what to believe. I am told that I am in error, but I am not shown in what I err!

O all you unfortunate people who sided with the pope at Augsburg! All your descendants will forever have to be ashamed of you. They will be unhappy to hear that they had such miserable ancestors. If we had shunned the light and refused to give answer, you would have compelled us to do so. Now we come along, not only willing and glad to give an account, but we plead, implore, and clamor for a chance to do this. We go to great expense to do so, neglect many things, and suffer every indignity, mockery, contempt, and danger, and you shamefully and maliciously refuse our request. If we had not asked for or desired to have your bat or night owl, that is, your confutation, you would have transmitted it to us against our wishes. Now that we ask for it, complain, and persist in demanding it, you deny us your confutation and refuse to receive our reply.

Shame on this diet for its disgraceful action! The like of it was never held or heard of before and never will be held or heard of again. It must be an eternal blemish on all princes and the whole empire and makes all of us Germans blush with shame before God and all the world. What will the Turk and his whole realm say when they hear of such an unparalleled action of our empire? What will the Tartars and the Muscovites say to this? Who under Heaven will henceforth fear us Germans or regard us as honorable when they hear that we permit the accursed pope and his masks to hoax and dupe us, to treat us as children, yes, as dolts and clods, that we, for the sake of their blasphemous, sodomitic, shameful teaching and life, act so disgracefully, so very, very shamefully and contrary to law and truth in a public diet? Every German should on this account rue having been born a German and being called a German.

However, I am very willing to believe that a special portion of shrewdness prompts them to hold back their confutation and their fine little booklet. Their conscience must sense instinctively that it is a flimsy, empty, and meaningless thing of which they would have to be ashamed if it were made public and examined in the light of day, or if it were to be answered. For I know those highly learned doctors very well who no doubt brewed and stewed over it for six weeks. Perhaps with their babbling they can impress those unfamiliar with the subject; but when it is put on paper, it has neither hands nor feet, and lies there confounded and confused, as

though a drunkard had spewed it forth. This is especially apparent in the writings of Dr. Schmid²² and Dr. Eck.²³ There is neither head nor tail to it when they commit things to writing. For that reason, they apply themselves so much the more to shouting and chattering.

I also heard that many of our opponents were astonished when our confession was read and admitted that it was the simple truth and could not be refuted with Scripture. On the other hand, when their confutation was read, they hung their heads and admitted by their expressions that it was a flimsy and empty thing compared with our confession. Our people and many godly hearts rejoiced greatly and were wonderfully strengthened when they heard that the opponents with the utmost might and skill they could muster at the time could produce no more than this empty confutation, which—God be praised—a woman, a child, a layman, a peasant is now able to refute, buttressed with good arguments from the Scriptures and from truth. That is the true and real reason why they declined to hand us their confutation. Those fugitive, bad consciences shudder at themselves and are not prepared for truth's reply.

It is easy to see that they were very confident when they arranged for this diet and were convinced that our side would lack the courage to appear. They thought that when they brought the emperor in person to Germany, all would be frightened and say, "Gracious lords, what is your wish?" When they proved mistaken in this and the elector of Saxony was the very first to make his appearance, my heavens, how they soiled their breeches in their trepidation! How all their confidence vanished! How they put their heads together, took secret counsel with one another and whispered! No one—not Christ himself, or even I—was permitted to know what it was all about, just as little as we knew about the princes' plotting prior to this year.²⁴ In the final analysis they were trying to find ways and means to avoid giving our people an opportunity to be heard, for our people were the first to arrive, and they appeared to be very bold and

²² Schmid ("Smith") was Luther's name for John Faber, or Fabri (1478–1541), the archbishop of Vienna and one of the principal authors of the Roman Catholic confutation. Faber was the son of a blacksmith.

²³ John Eck (1486–1543), the Roman Catholic theologian who was Luther's opponent in the Leipzig Debate (1519) and a leading Roman Catholic participant at Augsburg.

²⁴ In the spring of 1528 Otto von Pack, an official of Duke George of Saxony, reported to Philip of Hesse the existence of a league of Roman Catholic princes and bishops which proposed to attack and destroy the supporters of the Reformation. It was soon ascertained that Pack's story was a hoax and that his documents were forgeries. Luther, however, continued to believe Pack's account. Compare Smith and Jacobs, *Luther's Correspondence*, II, 435.

cheerful. As this was impossible, they nevertheless did themselves the honor in the end of refusing to hand us their vapid confutation and to give us an opportunity to make reply.

Their insolent mouthpiece and bloodthirsty sophist, Dr. Eck, one of their foremost advisers, declared openly within the hearing of our people that if the emperor had followed the resolution arrived at in Bologna²⁵ and attacked the Lutherans promptly and swiftly with the sword upon his entry into Germany, beheading one after the other, then the problem would have been solved; but all that had come to nought when he permitted the elector of Saxony to speak and defend himself through his chancellor. What do you think of such doctors and holy fathers? How imbued with love and truth they are! Thus, the secret deliberations had to come to light which the papal holiness had conducted in Bologna with the emperor. What a fine spectacle would have evolved if the emperor had followed such papistic and devilish advice and initiated this event with murder! That would have resulted in such a diet that not a fingernail either of the bishops or of the princes would have remained. And all this in these perilous times when everything is so unsettled and confused and when all the world was looking forward to a benevolent diet, as the summons had intimated and asserted. However, the expectations were not fulfilled.

Someone may interpose that the emperor was willing to hand us their confutation if we had promised not to make it public. That is true; this was suggested to our side.²⁶ But here let everyone feel and grope, even if he cannot see and hear, to learn what kind of people they are who do not wish or dare to have their cause exposed to the light of day. If it is really such a precious thing and so well grounded in the Scriptures, as they shout and boast, why does it shun the light? What good does it do to conceal such public matters from us and from everyone? After all, they must be taught and observed by them. But if it is unfounded and without meaning, why then did they have the elector of Brandenburg proclaim and publish in writing at the time of the first recess that our confession was refuted by Scripture and sound

reason?²⁷ If that were true and if their own conscience did not give them the lie, they would not only have had such a precious and well-documented confutation read, but they would also have handed it to us in writing, saying, “There you have it. We challenge anyone to refute that.” That is what we did, and still do, with our confession.

However, Christ must remain truthful when he says: “For every one who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does what is true comes to the light, that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been wrought in God” [*John* 3:20–21]. In accord with this judgment of Christ, God permitted our people to come away from this diet decked with such eternal glory that even our adversaries have to confess that we did not avoid the light but most boldly and cheerfully sought out and expected it. They, on the other hand, were left there covered with such eternal disgrace that they avoided and shunned the light most shamefully and obviously like night owls and bats, yes, like their father of lies and murder, and were unable to expect or tolerate a rejoinder to their loose, hollow, and obscure prattle.

It is also an indication of a fine Christian attitude that they asked our people to pledge themselves to prevent the precious knowledge and well-grounded wisdom of their confutation from leaking out and becoming public. How thoroughly God has blinded and abased the papists, so that they no longer have either reason or shame! How is it possible—to leave aside the question of whether it is right—to promise to keep such a document secret, which had passed through so many hands and had already been read once before the diet? Then if it would have been made public later on by their own faction, we would have been blamed for it.

Godless reason must take recourse to such cleverness and petty artifices because it cannot bear the truth and the light; nor can it find a better excuse for remaining in the dark and refusing to publish its confutation. Well and good, let it remain in the dark where it is; moreover, it shall ever remain in the eternal hellish darkness. But on the day of judgment, if not before, it will come into the light only too clearly.

²⁵ It was in the Treaty of Barcelona, June 29, 1529, between the pope and the emperor, that Charles agreed to take forcible measures to suppress the Reformation in Germany. Compare Ludwig Pastor, *History of the Popes* (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1923), X, 57. This matter may also have been discussed when the pope and emperor met in Bologna (November 1529–March 1530) to work out a peace treaty and to crown the emperor.

²⁶ Compare note 6 above.

²⁷ On September 22, 1530, the emperor proclaimed an imperial recess, and the elector of Brandenburg read the emperor’s verdict that the “views and confession of the elector of Saxony and his associates...have been refuted and rejected on the basis of the Gospel and the Scriptures with sound reason.” Compare *WA* 30^{III}, 287, note 4; Reu, *The Augsburg Confession*, 391; and Luther’s *Commentary on the Alleged Imperial Edict*, *LW* 34, 63–104. See especially *LW* 34, 68, note 5.

Yes, you will say, but even though they did not issue their confutation or allow it to be answered, they did appoint instead a committee composed of several princes and scholars from each side and ordered them to discuss the matter at issue in a friendly manner. Little kitten, clean and groom yourself, we are going to have company!²⁸ How stupid and foolish is that poor man Christ, not to notice such cunning. The committee did convene, that is true; but what was discussed? Nothing at all about their confutation or refutation; that remained in the dark. The committee had to help in preserving appearances, so as to provide some pretense for keeping the inane confutation under cover and not making it public. For it was not their confutation that was submitted in the committee meeting, but our confession. Their deliberations with our people revolved about such questions as how much of our confession we were willing to drop and withdraw, or how they interpreted it, or how we could make it harmonize with their views. Their one aim and objective was to enable them to make a fine pretense and to raise the hue and cry: “You see, dear people, listen, all the world, and hear how stubborn and stiff-necked the Lutherans are! In the first place, their confession was disproven with Scripture and with well-founded reasons, and then we engaged in friendly discussions with them. What more can we do? They refuse to yield, whether they are overcome or whether instructed in a friendly manner.”

All right, we must put up with their clamor and their lies; however, I know that this will not help them. God, too, has already given them and their boasting the lie. For when this recess was announced by the elector of Brandenburg and it was proclaimed that our confession had been refuted with the Scriptures and with valid reason, our people did not accept it, nor did they keep silent, but boldly and publicly contradicted it before the emperor and the empire and affirmed that our confession had not been refuted, but that it was ordered and founded in such a way that even the gates of Hell could not prevail against it. They had to swallow this discomfiture again. For, bluntly stated, what the elector of Brandenburg read out in proclaiming the recess is not true; it is a lie. That is correct, for their well-grounded confutation has not yet been brought to light. It is perhaps still slumbering with old Tannhäuser in the Venusberg.²⁹

²⁸ When a cat washed itself, it was supposed to mean that guests were coming. Luther uses this proverb in the sense of putting on a false front.

²⁹ The Tannhäuser legend combined elements from the life of a thirteenth-century German minnesinger with those of a legendary knight who, after many wanderings, gave himself

Since it is evident that they are keeping their confutation secret and have not yet brought it to light on their own, their allegation that our confession had been refuted with the Scriptures and with sound reason is not only a manifest and impudent lie, but it represents the devil’s own lie when they boast in the bargain and put up a good front and dare to cry that we are defeated but will not retract. This they do though their conscience mightily convicts them of such lies. So it is obvious that they had to resort to this pretense, as do all those who have a bad cause. They cover up miserably and hatch all sorts of dodges to keep their bad cause from coming to light. In brief, it is plain that they, despairing of their cause, expected nothing less than that our people would appear on the scene. They relied entirely on sheer force and were not at all prepared for truth and light.

The friendly intentions which they had regarding the committee are also very evident from the one point which they dared, among other articles, to propose to our people, namely, that we should teach that in addition to taking the sacrament in two kinds, it was not wrong but right to administer and take it also in only one kind.³⁰ If we consented to that, they would also make a concession and permit us to teach that the sacrament might be taken and given in both kinds. Does that not betoken a great friendship? Who might have looked for such love from these people? Until now they persecuted as heretics all who took the sacrament in both lands and tormented them in every way. And now they are ready to adjudge this as correct and Christian and let it pass as such, if we but admit that they in turn also do the correct and Christian thing when they take the sacrament in one kind. That is, in plain words, speaking out of both sides of your mouth.³¹ It is wrong, and yet it is accounted right, depending upon their whims and will. Yet this dare not be called a lie.

If our side had agreed to this and accepted their proposal, then they really would have boasted and shouted throughout the whole world: “See, dear people, the Lutherans are recanting their doctrine. Formerly they taught that it was wrong to take the sacrament in one

up to a life of sensual passion with Lady Venus on the Venusberg, a mountain near Eisenach.

³⁰ This proposal was made on August 19, 1530, and the answer from the Lutherans was given on the next day. Luther had discussed “both kinds in the sacrament” in his *Exhortation to All Clergy Assembled at Augsburg*, LW 34, 38–40. He also dealt with the matter in his letter of August 26 to Elector John of Saxony, WA, Br 5, 572–574; translated in Reu, *Augsburg Confession*, Second Part, 383ff.

³¹ Proverbial expression which literally says, “to blow hot and cold at the same time.” Compare Ernst Thiele, *Luther’s Sprichwörterammlung* (Weimar, 1900), No. 136.

kind, and now they teach that it is right. Now you note that we taught correctly, and they are found to be in error in their own confession.” In that way they tried to confirm all their abominations and devil’s tomfoolery in the eyes of the faithful, simple folk and to arraign us as recanters of all our teaching. Furthermore, they would thus have established their pernicious doctrine in our churches by our own lips and at the same time suppressed our doctrine with might in their churches. They would not at all have taught our doctrine among themselves. In that way they wanted to penetrate and entrench themselves in our churches by means of our own lips and, simultaneously, exclude us from their churches. Are these not fine, friendly, fitting means, well suited to friendly dealings?

As the confutation is, so is the committee. The confutation is a dark night owl, reluctant to face the light; the committee is sheer cunning and deception. The boast that they tried friendly measures with us is just as truthful and sincere as their boast that they refuted our confession with Holy Scripture and sound reason—both are sheer lying and deceit. To be sure, they would not like to be treated that way by us. However, at present I do not propose to write about the actions of this diet, nor to attack their confutation (though both shall yet be attended to if God wills),³² but at present I merely wish to show that the papists do not want to have peace, truth, or tranquility, but insist on enforcing their will and thus are bringing about either a war or an insurrection, whether we like it or not. Nothing will restrain them. We, however, will have to take the risk and await the outcome, since our offers, pleas, and cries for peace are unheeded and our humility and patience go for nought. Let come what cannot be prevented!

But since I am the “prophet of the Germans”³³—for this haughty title I will henceforth have to assign to myself, to please and oblige my papists and asses—it is fitting that I, as a faithful teacher, warn my dear Germans against the harm and danger threatening them and impart Christian instruction to them regarding their conduct in the event that the emperor, at the instigation

of his devils, the papists, issues a call to arms against the princes and cities on our side. It is not that I worry that His Imperial Majesty will listen to such spiteful people and initiate such an unjust war, but I do not want to neglect my duty. I want to keep my conscience clean and unsullied at all events. I would much rather compose a superfluous and unnecessary admonition and warning and impart needless instruction than to neglect my duty and then find, if things go contrary to my expectations, that I am too late and have no other consolation than the words *non putassem*, I did not intend this. The sages suggest making provision for things even if everything is secure. How much less may we trust any wind and weather, no matter how pleasant it may appear, in these difficult times when the papists’ raging provokes God’s wrath so terribly! Moreover, in *Romans* 12 Paul commands those who preside over others to look out for them.

Any German who wants to follow my sincere counsel may do so; and whoever does not want to may disregard it. I am not seeking my own benefit in this, but the welfare and salvation of you Germans. Nothing better could happen to my person than that the papists devour me, tear me, or bite me to pieces, or help me out of this sinful, mortal bag of maggots in any other way. No matter how angry they are, I will say to them: “Dear Sirs, if you are angry, step away from the wall, do it in your underwear, and hang it around your neck!”³⁴ In brief, I will not have them boast to me and defy me. For I know—God be praised—what my position is and where I shall stay. If they do not want to accept my service for their own good, then may the vile devil thank them if they show me a dribble of love or grace. If they do not need my doctrine, I need their grace still less, and I will let them rage and rant in the name of all devils, while I laugh in the name of God.

This is my sincere advice: If the emperor should issue a call to arms against us on behalf of the pope or because of our teaching, as the papists at present horribly gloat and boast—though I do not yet expect this of the emperor—no one should lend himself to it or obey the emperor in this event. All may rest assured that God has strictly forbidden compliance with such a command of the emperor. Whoever does obey him can be certain that he is disobedient to God and will lose both body and soul eternally in the war. For in this case the emperor would not only act in contravention of God and divine law but also in violation of his own imperial law, vow, duty, seal, and edicts. And lest you imagine that this is just my own idea or that such advice is dictated by my

³² Luther’s *Commentary on the Alleged Imperial Edict* (LW 34, 63–104) appears to be the fulfillment of this intention. Written some months after his *Warning*, it was published almost simultaneously with it due to the delay of the latter in the press.

³³ Justus Jonas had referred to Luther in such terms in correspondence with him during his sojourn at Coburg, complimenting him on his steadfastness in the face of controversy, and Melancthon was to use similar phraseology in his oration at Luther’s funeral. Compare Julius Köstlin, *Martin Luther: Sein Leben und seine Schriften* (2 volumes; Berlin, 1903), II, 215, 625–626.

³⁴ A proverbial expression; compare Thiele, *Luthers Sprichwörtersammlung*, No. 90.

fancy, I shall submit clear and strong reasons and arguments to convince you that this is not my own counsel, but God's earnest, manifold, and stringent command. Before his anger you surely ought to be terrified and, in the end, must be terrified.

In the first place, I must say a word in defense of dear Emperor Charles' person. For he has to date, also at the diet, conducted himself in such a way that he has gained the favor and affection of all the world and is worthy of being spared all grief. Our people, too, have nothing but praise for his imperial virtues.³⁵ Let me cite just a few examples to demonstrate this. It demonstrates a wonderful and rare gentleness of character that His Imperial Majesty refused to condemn our doctrine even though he was vehemently incited and urged on by both the spiritual and secular princes, with unrelenting insistence, even before he left Spain. However, His Majesty stood his ground as firmly as a rock. He hurried to the diet and issued a gracious invitation, wanting to discuss matters in a kind and friendly spirit. He is also reported to have declared: "This cannot be such an utterly evil doctrine, since so many great, exalted, learned, and honest people accept it."

And this was borne out at Augsburg. When our confession was read before His Imperial Majesty, the opposition itself discovered that this teaching was not as evil as it had been pictured by their venomous preachers and sycophants and hateful princes. Indeed, they had not expected that it was such sound doctrine. Many of them confessed that it was pure Scripture, that it could not be refuted by Holy Scripture, and that previously they had been entirely misinformed. That is also the reason why permission to read the confession was granted so reluctantly; for the envious princes and the virulent liars were indeed worried that their vile lies would be put to shame if it was read. It was their wish that His Imperial Majesty should condemn everything at once, unread and unheard. But since His Imperial Majesty could not have it read publicly in the presence of all, he at least had it read and heard before the imperial estates, no matter how the other princes and bishops and sophists opposed this and were bitterly vexed by it.

And although the diet involved a great expenditure of money and it seems that nothing was accomplished there, I nevertheless will say for myself that even if it had consumed twice as much money, all is richly compensated for and enough has been achieved, for Sir Envy and Master Liar were disgraced in their envying and lying. They had to see and hear that our doctrine was not found to be contrary to the Scriptures or the articles

of faith. For prior to this, their lies and envy portrayed our doctrine everywhere, through their writings, their sermons, and their slander, as more horrible than any other that has ever seen the light of day. This envy, I say, was put to shame at the diet, and these lies were disclosed. Therefore, we must be kindly disposed toward our dear Emperor Charles and thank him for this benefit, that God through him initially adorned our doctrine and delivered it from the false and ridiculous labels of heresy and of other shameful names, and that he thus administered a sound slap on the mouth of these lying and envious people. Of course, they are brazen-faced and unashamed. But this does not matter; the beginning is good enough for us, and, I suppose, things will also improve.

Furthermore, His Imperial Majesty is reported to have said that if the priests were godly, they would not need a Luther. What else does that mean other than what Solomon said: "Inspired decisions are on the lips of a king" [*Proverbs* 16:10]. His Majesty wishes to indicate that Luther is the priests' scourge, that they are well deserving of this, and that their conduct is reprehensible. They themselves have admitted that often enough. For the bishop of Salzburg remarked to Master Philip:³⁶ "Alas, why do you propose to reform us priests? We priests never have been any good." See and hear those godly people! They know and they confess that they are evil and that they are in error; moreover, they want to stay that way, remain unreformed, and not yield to the acknowledged truth. Yet they clamor and call upon the emperor and all princes to go to war for them and to protect them. What else does that mean than this: Dear Emperor, dear Germans, wage war, shed your blood, stake all your property, your life, your wife and child on protecting us in our shameful, devilish life against the truth. Certainly, we know the truth, but we cannot stomach it; nor do we want to mend our ways. What do you think? If you go to war and shed your blood for such people, are you not a fine martyr, and do you not invest your blood and your property very wisely?

Furthermore, when our people wanted to hand His Imperial Majesty their answer to the sophists' confutation—as much of it as had been retained after the reading—and His Imperial Majesty extended his hand to receive it, King Ferdinand pulled the hand of His Imperial Majesty back, restraining him from accepting it.³⁷ This again reveals the identity of the people who

³⁶ Philip Melancthon.

³⁷ The answer that Luther is referring to here is the *Apology of the Augsburg Confession*, which the elector of Saxony's chancellor, Gregory Brück, tried to hand to the emperor after the recess of the diet had been announced. King Ferdinand, who kept the emperor from accepting the *Apology*, was the

³⁵ Compare, for example, Melancthon's letter of June 19, 1530, to Luther: "Nor is anyone in the whole hall milder than the emperor himself" WA 30^{III}, 291, note 4.

vent their hatred and their envy under the name of His Imperial Majesty; for the latter was minded and inclined otherwise.

Furthermore, when the elector of Brandenburg in the recess argued with fine and high-sounding and haughty words that His Imperial Majesty, the princes, and the estates of the empire had leagued together and were staking land and people, life and property and blood on this, he wanted to intimidate our people with these words. But he failed to add “if God wills,” so his words remained mere words and died as soon as they were spoken. When the sound had faded away, no one was afraid. Here His Imperial Majesty again interposed a word. To be sure, he did not say that the speaker was lying, but that he had made an overstatement. Many other great princes and lords were nonplussed and were at a loss to know how to interpret these words. Several suggested that they meant that if our side would attack any of their members by force, then they would ally themselves and come to the defense with life and goods, with blood, land, and people. However, our people never thought of doing that, but always asked and pleaded for peace, as all know very well. Several declared openly before the emperor that they did not concur in this speech of the margrave and that it did not at all reflect their opinion.

It is easy to talk about land and people; but it is another question if anyone has such power over them that he can wager blood, life, and property needlessly and against God and his law. Experience should be able to answer this question. It seems to me that the people will, at least, first have to be consulted, and that one cannot embark on such a venture without announcing it. It should also be remembered that God must not always grant and do what we may venture to think and say. I am sure that the mouths of greater lords have been found to lie miserably and that their schemes thoroughly put them to shame. But the best part of this is that they fail to invoke God in this and that they fail to bear him in mind when they brag so defiantly. However, one can sense the emperor’s sentiments in this matter. He is not such a mad bloodhound, and these defiant words do not please him.

But the dear emperor must share the experience of all godly princes and lords. For whenever a prince is not half a devil and wishes to govern with mildness, the greatest rogues and villains inevitably gain a place in the government and the offices and do as they like under the ruler’s name. They need not fear because they know that the prince is gentle and is ready to give them an ear.

What can this godly emperor do among so many rogues and villains, especially over against that arch-villain, Pope Clement,³⁸ who is full of all kinds of malice, which he has to date amply demonstrated to the emperor? I, Dr. Luther, am better versed in Scripture than the emperor, and also more experienced in practical daily life, but still I fear that if I were to dwell among so many rogues and constantly heard their venomous tongues, without any information to the contrary, I would also be too gentle for them and they would overwhelm me in some matters. In fact, this has often happened to me at the hands of certain spirits and wiseacres.

Therefore no one need be astonished or alarmed if prohibitions or edicts are issued under the emperor’s name which are contrary to God and justice. He cannot prevent this. Rather he may be assured that all of this is a scheme of the supreme rogue in the world, the pope, who instigates this through his tonsured goats and hypocrites in an attempt to initiate a bloodbath among us Germans so that we may perish. And I for one believe that if he fails to accomplish his end through this emperor, he will join with the Turkish emperor and set him upon us. That is where we will then find the money which we have poured into the pope’s treasury these many years for his indulgences and business deals to finance the war against the Turks.

Let this suffice for the time being as an apology for the emperor. Now we want to issue a warning, giving reasons why everyone should rightly beware and fear to obey the emperor in such an instance and to wage war against our side. I repeat what I said earlier, that I do not wish to advise or incite anyone to engage in war. My ardent wish and plea is that peace be preserved and that neither side start a war or give cause for it. For I do not want my conscience burdened, nor do I want to be known before God or the world as having counseled or desired anyone to wage war or to offer resistance except those who are enjoined and authorized to do so (*Romans* 13). But wherever the devil has so completely possessed the papists that they cannot and will not keep or tolerate peace, or where they absolutely want to wage war or provoke it, that will rest upon their conscience. There is nothing I can do about it, since my remonstrances are ignored and futile.

The first reason why you must not obey the emperor and make war in such an instance as this is that you, as well as the emperor, vowed in baptism to preserve the Gospel of Christ and not to persecute it or oppose it. Now you are, of course, aware that in this case the emperor is being incited and duped by the pope to fight

archduke of Austria; in 1556 he succeeded Charles as emperor and reigned until 1564.

³⁸ Clement VII (Giulio de’ Medici), cousin of Leo X (Giovanni de’ Medici), reigned as pope from 1523 to 1534.

against the Gospel of Christ, because our doctrine was publicly proved at Augsburg to be the true Gospel and Holy Scripture. Therefore, this must be your reply to the emperor's or your prince's summons to arms: "Indeed, dear Emperor, dear prince, if you keep your oath and pledge made in baptism, you will be my dear lord, and I will obey you and go to war at your command. But if you will not keep your baptismal pledge and Christian covenant made with Christ, but rather deny them, then may a rascal obey you in my place. I refuse to blaspheme my God and deny his Word for your sake; nor will I impudently rush to spring into the abyss of Hell with you."

This first reason has awesome, far-reaching implications. For he who fights and contends against the Gospel necessarily fights simultaneously against God, against Jesus Christ, against the Holy Spirit, against the precious blood of Christ, against his death, against God's Word, against all the articles of faith, against all the sacraments, against all the doctrines which are given, confirmed, and preserved by the Gospel, for example, the doctrine regarding government, regarding worldly peace, worldly estates, in brief, against all angels and saints, against Heaven and Earth and all creatures. For he who fights against God must fight against all that is of God or that has to do with God. But you would soon discover what kind of end that would lead to! What is even worse, such fighting would be done consciously; for these people know and admit that this teaching is the Gospel. The Turks and the Tartars, of course, do not know that it is God's Word. Therefore, no Turk can be as vile as you, and you must be damned to Hell ten times more deeply than all Turks, Tartars, heathen, and Jews.

It is indeed terrible that things have come so far among Christians that this warning becomes necessary, just as though they themselves did not realize how abominable and horrible it is knowingly to contend against God and his Word. This indicates that among Christians there are few real Christians and that there must be far worse Turks in their number than are found in Turkey, or even in Hell. The true Christians, however few they are, know this very well themselves and do not need such a warning; but the papists do need it. Though they bear the name and the outward appearance of Christians, they disgrace them and are ten times worse than the Turks. They must be warned. If it helps, good and well; if it does not help, we, at least, are blameless, and their punishment will be so much more severe. The Turk is not so mad as to fight and to rage against his Muhammad or against his Koran, as our devils, the papists, do when they rave and rage against their own gospel, which they acknowledge to be true. Such an

action makes the Turk, by comparison, a pure saint, and they thereby make themselves true devils.

The second reason is this: Even if our doctrine were false—although everyone knows it is not—you should still be deterred from fighting solely by the knowledge that by such fighting you are taking upon yourself a part of the guilt before God of all the abominations which have been committed and will yet be committed by the whole papacy. This reason encompasses innumerable loathsome deeds and every vice, sin, and harm. In brief, the bottomless Hell itself is found here, with every sin, all of which you share in if you obey the emperor in this instance. We shall enumerate a few of these and bring them into view, lest they be too easily forgotten.³⁹ For the papists would like to cover themselves and hide such abominations, unrepented and unreformed, until such a time as they can bring them into the open again and restore them.

Here you will first have to take upon yourself the whole of the shameful life which they have led and still lead. They do not intend to mend this; however, you are to shed your blood and risk your life for the protection and preservation of their accursed, shameless life. Then all the whoring, adultery, and fornication rampant in the cathedrals and convents will be on your neck and on your conscience. Your heart will have the honor and glory of having fought for the greatest and most numerous whoremongers and knaves to be found on the Earth and for endorsing their life of whoring and knavery. You will make yourself a partaker of all of that. Oh, that will be a great honor and a fine reason for risking your life and for serving God. For they will not reform such a life, nor can they reform it, since it is impossible that so many thousands of people should live a chaste life in the way that they try to do it.

Over and above that, you must also burden yourself with the chastity of popes and cardinals. This is a special kind of chastity, transcending the common, spiritual type. In Italian it is termed *buseron*, which is the chastity of Sodom and Gomorrah. For God was constrained to blind and to plague his enemy and adversary, the pope and the cardinals, above others, so that they did not remain worthy of sinning with wenches in a natural way, but, in accord with their merited reward, they had to dishonor their own body and person through themselves and to sink into such perversion and impenitence that they no longer considered this to be sin, but jested about

³⁹ Luther gives in the following pages a "catalog of vices" of the papacy and the Roman church which in the severity of its indictment and the exuberance of its language is equaled by few other passages in Luther's writings. Compare the comments to this effect by Kurt Aland, *Luther Deutsch*, IV, 370–371, 373, note to 246.

it as though it were a game of cards about which they might laugh and joke with impunity. Oh, this beer is good and strong,⁴⁰ and so it is foaming and casting up all their shame and vice, as Jude says [*Jude* 13]. Now go and risk your life and fight for these impenitent, shameless Sodomites who even laugh and jest about such blasphemous sins.

I am not lying to you. Whoever has been in Rome knows that conditions are unfortunately worse there than anyone can say or believe. When the last Lateran council was to be concluded in Rome under Pope Leo, among other articles it was decreed that one must believe the soul to be immortal.⁴¹ From this one may gather that they make eternal life an object of sheer mockery and contempt. In this way they confess that it is a common belief among them that there is no eternal life, but that they now wish to proclaim this by means of a bull. More remarkable yet, in the same bull they decided that a cardinal should not keep as many boys in the future. However, Pope Leo commanded that this be deleted; otherwise, it would have been spread throughout the whole world how openly and shamelessly the pope and the cardinals in Rome practice sodomy. I do not wish to mention the pope, but since the knaves will not repent, but condemn the Gospel, blaspheme and revile God's word, and excuse their vices, they, in turn, will have to take a whiff of their own terrible filth. This vice is so prevalent among them that recently a pope caused his own death by means of this sin and vice.⁴² In fact, he died on the spot. All right now, you popes, cardinals, papists, spiritual lords, keep on persecuting God's Word and defending your doctrine and your churches!

No pope, cardinal, bishop, doctor, priest, monk, or nun will condemn such an obviously disgraceful life; rather they laugh about it, excuse it, and gloss over it. They incite kings, princes, country, and people to defend such knaves with life and property, with land and people, and faithfully to protect them so that such vices might not be

⁴⁰ Luther uses a German proverb, *O dem bier ist recht gegeben*. Literally it says that the beer has been generously malted. Thiele, *Luther's Sprichwörterammlung*, No. 64, says that this proverb is used when a know-it-all has been rebuffed or put in his place.

⁴¹ The Fifth Lateran Council held sessions in Rome at various intervals from 1512 to 1517 under popes Julius II (1503–1513) and Leo X (1513–1521). At the eighth session, on December 19, 1513, *Apostolici Regiminis* reaffirmed the doctrine of the immortality of the soul over against the teaching of some Averroists or neo-Aristotelians who taught that the human soul was mortal. Compare Denzinger-Schönmetzer, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, Barcelona, 1967, Nos. 1440–1441, 738.

⁴² It is not clear to whom Luther is referring, or what basis in fact or rumor there may have been for his assertion.

repented of and reformed, but rather strengthened, sanctioned, and approved. Now you are to hazard blood, body, and life just for the sake of saddling your neck and conscience with this. I could easily mention more examples of such abominations, but it is too shameful; I fear that our German soil would have to tremble before it. But if an impudent popish ass should come along and dispute this, he will find me ready to do him battle, and it will be quite a battle! If admonition and warning will bring about repentance, these have been and still are being sufficiently administered. However, this will not help. Today it has become a commendable and common practice, almost equal to a great virtue, completely to disregard repentance. In fact, the emperor and you are to protect and preserve them in this, so that their example may be emulated and spread also to other countries, as, alas, has already too obviously happened.

Furthermore, you will have to encumber yourself with all the greed, robbery, and thievery of the entire papacy, the countless sums they have acquired falsely and fraudulently by means of indulgences.⁴³ Is it not sheer shameful robbery and thievery throughout all Christendom? Is not the incalculable wealth which they raked in through their false and fabricated purgatory sheer shameful robbery and thievery throughout the whole world? The incalculable wealth they have accumulated with their usurious masses and sacrificial masses, is it not sheer shameful robbery and thievery throughout the whole world? The incalculable wealth they procured through licenses to eat butter during Lent, through pilgrimages, the worship of the saints, and innumerable other deceptions, is it not sheer shameful robbery and thievery throughout the whole world? Where did the pope, cardinals, and bishops acquire kingdoms and principalities? How did they become the secular lords of all the world? Is it not entirely through their infinitely shameful robbery and thievery? What else are they than the greatest robbers and thieves on the face of the Earth? And yet you find here no thought of repentance or restitution. Indeed, there is not enough good blood in their veins to enable them to administer their office a little, to give their possession of such property at least a slight semblance of honor. Instead, they condemn, revile, and persecute God's name, his Word and work. And now they come and demand that you defend such thieves and robbers with your blood, so that they may not only go uncorrected but may also be encouraged to practice this kind of thing all the more. Consider what a great, mighty thief and rogue, robber and traitor you become and are if you assist and protect

⁴³ Luther's position on indulgences was spelled out early in his career. See *Ninety-five Theses* (1517), *LW* 31, 17–33; and *Explanation of the Ninety-five Theses* (1518), *LW* 31, 77–252.

such robbers and thieves with your blood and life; for you will burden yourself with all of this and share in their guilt.

Then you must also burden yourself with all the blood the pope has shed, with all the murders and all the wars he has instigated, all the misery and grief he has caused throughout the world. Who can relate all the blood, murders, and wretchedness which the pope and his followers have occasioned? Some have computed that for the pope's sake alone eleven hundred thousand men have been slain since the papacy elevated itself above the empire. Some set the figure higher.⁴⁴ How will you bear so many murders and so much blood on your conscience, since one single murder is unbearable, and since Christ condemns even anger in one's heart to hellfire, *Matthew* 5 [:22]? What then are you doing if you risk your life for such murderers? You share in the guilt of all of this and accord the pope your aid and approval, enabling him to do such things forever with security. For there is no sign of repentance among them; indeed, they regard this as honorable and virtuous, so that we cannot possibly hope for reform. Nor do they desire improvement. But they want you to help protect them, to enable them to murder, to shed blood, and to fill the world with misery, as they have done to date and still do without interruption, restraint, or fear. You see, these are the most holy fathers, the holy cardinals, bishops, and priests who presume to be judges over the Gospel and who teach and rule the world.

I will say nothing here about the other vices, how they administer poison and engage in treason and in all that pertains to hatred and envy. Who can tell completely the shameful life in the papacy? The aforementioned items and the everyday examples demonstrate sufficiently what their life is like. For it [the papacy] is to be the Antichrist and to be against Christ in all things. Therefore, it must follow that as Christ led and taught a beautiful, splendid, chaste, decent, holy, heavenly, and godly life, the Antichrist must lead and teach a correspondingly shameful, blasphemous, unchaste, accursed, hellish, and devilish life. How else could he be Christ's foe or the Antichrist? All of this might be tolerated if they did not presume to defend it and insist with force on being in the right. But all that we have thus far mentioned is, so to speak, sport and jest. We now want to point out the true dregs and the chief abominations with all of which he must burden himself who protects the pope or who helps to preserve and

strengthen him in his impenitent, hardened, anti-Christian status and conduct.

One might tolerate an evil life; but one can and must not tolerate, much less help to defend, a person who condemns doctrine and God's Word and who elevates himself over God. They have disseminated so many doctrinal abominations within Christendom that these cannot be numbered. They repent of none of them, nor do they want to change them, but they openly defend them all and rigorously insist on being in the right. All of that would rest on your neck and conscience. You would make yourself a partner of all such abominations and you would be guilty if you helped to defend them. Let us mention just a few. How can your conscience bear the shameful, lying fraud of indulgences, with which they scandalously misled so many thousands of souls, yes, all of Christendom and all the world, deceiving them and defrauding them of their money and property? Yet they do not repent of this, nor do they intend to abrogate⁴⁵ this practice, although they are well aware of the great villainy they have committed thereby. They taught the people to place their trust in indulgences, and to die in that belief. This in itself is so atrocious and terrible that if they were otherwise as holy and pure as St. John the Baptist, they should properly be condemned to the depths of Hell just for this; they should not be worthy that the Earth bear them or the Sun shine down on them, much less that we fight for them or defend them.

Think for yourself what a supreme villainy indulgences are. Whoever has comforted himself with and relied on indulgences and has died or lived thus, thereby has forfeited the Savior Jesus Christ; he has denied and forgotten him, and he renounces all comfort from him. For whoever places his consolation in anything other than in Jesus Christ can have no consolation in Christ. Of course, we all know, and their books also prove this incontrovertibly, that they taught us to place our reliance on indulgences. Otherwise, who would have paid them any heed or bought them? Furthermore, like the devil's messengers and rogues they kept shamefully silent about faith in Christ, yes, even suppressed and exterminated it. For whoever knows that his comfort and his reliance are based on Christ cannot tolerate indulgences or any other object of trust. When will they make amends or restitution for such endless harm? Make amends indeed! Hardened in such malice, they even want to force you to defend them with life and blood and burden yourself with it all. If they were not entirely possessed and mad, they would be at least a little ashamed to ask for such defense in view of all their

⁴⁴ Heinrich von Kettenbach, for example, in a comparison of Christ and the pope (1523), wrote: "It has been calculated that because of the pope's arrogance and wantonness over one million two hundred thousand Christians have been put to death in eight hundred years." Compare WA 30^{III}, 307, note 2.

⁴⁵ *Ablassen*, a play on the word *Ablass* ("indulgence").

unrepentant, shameless, blasphemous wickedness. That really does go to show that “priests are no good.”⁴⁶

Furthermore, how will your conscience bear the blasphemous fraud of purgatory, with which they also treacherously duped and falsely frightened all the world and appropriated almost all its property and splendor by lying and thievery?⁴⁷ For with this they also completely extinguished that one and only comfort and trust in Christ and taught Christians to place their attention and expectation and reliance in the bequests which they trust will follow them.⁴⁸ Whoever looks to and hopes in the bequests or works that follow him at death—as they taught and as they all did—must dismiss Christ from his mind and forget him. Therefore, if God had not especially preserved his own, in death they would have plunged unawares into Hell’s abyss, together with the Jews and heathen. It is the same as when a person falls headlong from a high mountain; he thinks that he is treading on a solid pathway and then steps aside into the air and plunges down into the valley or the sea. Oh, what murderers of souls they are! Before the day of judgment no human heart will know what great murder they have committed on souls with their purgatory. Much less can the damage and the abominable blasphemy be estimated which they thereby have inflicted on faith and confidence in Christ. Yet there is no repentance for this or any end to it. Instead, they demand that you protect them and help defend them in it.

Furthermore, you have to load yourself down with all the abominations and blasphemies they committed, and still daily commit, throughout the entire papacy with the dear mass, with buying and selling, and with innumerable other desecrations of the holy sacrament, in which they sacrifice God’s Son to him continually as though they were better and holier than God’s Son. They do not let the sacrament be a gift of God, to be received through faith, but convert it into a sacrifice and a work with which they atone for themselves and for other people and acquire all sorts of grace and aid. Thus, they appoint a separate mass for each saint, indeed, for each cause or need. In all their books and teachings, you will not find as much as a letter alluding to faith. Everything says and sings that the mass is a sacrifice and a work. Yet nowhere else should faith be taught and practiced as firmly and diligently as in the mass or the sacrament, since Christ instituted it in remembrance of himself. It

should be an occasion for proclaiming him, remembering him, and believing in him. However, instead of this, they preach their sacrifice and their work; moreover, they sell them most shamefully. There is no repentance there, but only hardened and dreadful wickedness and the attempt to defend themselves and to protect themselves with your life and limb.

The crude, outward misuse [of the sacrament] was atrocious enough in itself. This was seen in the priests’ flippant treatment of the sacrament at masses for the dead, the dedication of churches, or festivals of patron saints. They dealt with it as though it were buffoonery. In a vulgar and impudent way, they flocked together for the purpose of gorging and swilling and for the sake of money. Then they became intoxicated, vomited, gained, and brawled. All the villages were full of this shameful abuse. Of this they never repented, nor has it ever been reformed, nor is it acknowledged to be sin by these incorrigible popish asses. However, this is as nothing in comparison with the fine abuse by which they perverted and transformed the sacrament from the common sacrament of the common faith into a private work and sacrifice of certain persons, namely, the priests. That is so terrible that I do not like to reflect on it; such thoughts might well kill a person. But even this abomination is surpassed in their concealment and suppression of the words of the sacrament and faith, so that, as already said, not a letter, not an iota, of it remained in the entire papacy in all the masses and books. This vice beggars description by word and thought. To eternity, no one will be able to rebuke and reprove this sufficiently. Any other vice has its own devil or band of devils to promote it; but I believe that the sacrificial mass is the common work of all the devils, in which they pool all hands, all counsel, all ideas, all wickedness and roguery and in that way have instituted and preserved this abomination. This is evident from the fact that wherever poltergeists have appeared as dead souls throughout the world, they have all asked for the mass.⁴⁹ No soul ever asked for or desired Christ; all asked for the mass. So this is a strong indication that the devils have their being nowhere else as markedly as in their servants of the mass, where they dwell shamefully with all lewdness, greed, blasphemy, and every vice. This will surely rank as God’s greatest and ultimate wrath on Earth prior to the day of judgment; for there can be no wrath to exceed this. There you have the true virtue of the papacy in behalf of which you are to go to war and to shed your blood for the impenitent blasphemers, soul-murderers, and malefactors.

⁴⁶ Compare page 32.

⁴⁷ Purgatory was a very current concern for Luther. He had been distressed that the *Augsburg Confession* had failed to take a clear stand on this question, so in the summer of 1530 he had filled in this gap with his own *Disavowal of Purgatory* (*Widerruf vom Fegefeuer*), WA 30^{III}, 367–390.

⁴⁸ Compare *Revelation* 14:13.

⁴⁹ Luther refers to such phenomena also in his treatise *The Misuse of the Mass*, LW 36, 190–198, and in *Disavowal of Purgatory*, WA 30^{II}, 385.

Here someone will perhaps object that I am too free with my name calling and that I can do no more than to scold and abuse people. I should like to reply, first of all, that such scolding is nothing in comparison with the inexpressible baseness in question. For what sort of scolding is it when I call the devil a murderer, a villain, a traitor, a blasphemer, a liar? It is just as though a little breeze were striking him. But what are the popish asses other than devils incarnate who have no repentance but only hardened hearts, who knowingly defend such public blasphemy and who ask for protection in this from the emperor and you? My dear man, abuse and call a popish ass whatever you will or can—it rolls off him like water off a duck’s back.⁵⁰ He has overdone matters and has far, far, far outstripped your ability to abuse him adequately. Call him a papist and you have hit the mark; then you have said more than the world can comprehend. You cannot call him anything worse. Call him anything else and it is just like pricking a bear with a straw or striking a boulder with a feather.

I reply, in the second place, that the two cardinals, Campeggio and Salzburg,⁵¹ advised and urged me to do this, in that the former said that he would rather have himself torn to pieces than to alter or abolish the mass, while the latter remarked that “priests are no good” and that they should be left unreformed.⁵² These two are among the leading papists, and as they speak and believe, so the pope and all the papists surely speak and believe. Since they themselves say that they are desperate villains and want to remain villains, and that they would rather be torn to pieces than to desist from their blasphemies, I would do them an injustice before God and the world if I called them by any other name than that which they assign to themselves. If I were to address them as most reverend holy fathers in Christ, no one would recognize them, and they themselves would not know of whom I am speaking, since these names are unknown to them and since they are and remain hardened villains and blasphemers. Therefore, my scolding is no scolding. It is no different from when I call a turnip a turnip; apples, apples; and pears, pears.

Furthermore, how will you endure their terrible idolatries? It was not enough that they venerated the saints and praised God in them, but they actually made them into gods. They put that noble child, the mother Mary, right into the place of Christ. They fashioned Christ into a judge and thus devised a tyrant for anguished consciences, so that all comfort and confidence was transferred from Christ to Mary, and

then everyone turned from Christ to his particular saint. Can anyone deny this? Is it not true? Did we not all, alas, at one time try this and experience it? Are not books extant—especially those of the shabby Barefoot Friars and of the Preaching Friars⁵³—which teem with idolatries, such as the *Marialia*, *Stellaria*, *Rosaria*, *Coronaria*, and they may as well be *Diabolaria* and *Satanaria*.⁵⁴ Still there is no sign of repentance or improvement, but they obstinately and impudently insist that all this must be defended, and they ask for your body and life for its protection.

Here I must call attention to an incident that occurred at the diet in Augsburg, to show what a precious reason they have for such holy idolatry. When the article regarding the invocation of the saints was being discussed in the committee, Dr. Eck cited the words found in *Genesis* 48 [:16], where Jacob says of Ephraim and Manasseh, “And my name shall be invoked upon those children.”⁵⁵ When, after many words by Master Philip, John Brenz⁵⁶ said casually that nothing about calling on the saints could be found in Scripture, Dr. Cochlaeus,⁵⁷ to expedite matters, blurted out—profound thinker that he is—that the saints had not been invoked in the Old Testament because at the time they were not yet in Heaven but in the anteroom of Hell. Then my gracious lord, Duke John Frederick, duke of Saxony, *etc.*, tightened the noose on both of them and said to Dr. Eck: “Dr. Eck, there you find the verse answered which you quoted from the Old Testament.” So sure are they of themselves, so nicely do they agree with one another—these precious writers of contradictions!⁵⁸ The one says that the saints were not invoked in the Old Testament, the other says that they were. They cite verses from the Old Testament, just as if we did not know that God performed all the great miracles in the Old Testament for

⁵³ *I.e.*, the Franciscans and the Dominicans, respectively.

⁵⁴ *Marialia* is a medieval term for a work of Marian devotion. *Stellaria* may refer to devotions to Mary as the Star, *Coronaria* to devotions to the Crown of Mary, both being forms of the rosary (*Rosarium*).

⁵⁵ *Et invocetur nomen meum super pueros istos.*

⁵⁶ John Brenz (1499–1570) was one of the leading Lutheran theologians at the Diet of Augsburg. He was the pastor at Schwäbisch-Hall from 1522 to 1548 and later provost of the Collegiate Church at Stuttgart.

⁵⁷ John Cochlaeus (1479–1552) was, along with John Eck and John Faber, one of the authors of the Roman Catholic *Confutation* and a bitter critic of Luther whose polemical writings established the traditional Roman Catholic interpretation of the Reformer.

⁵⁸ John Faber had presented to the emperor a collection of contradictions found in Luther’s writings, entitling the work *Antilogiarum, hoc est contradictionum M. Lutheri babylonica, ex eiusdem apostatae libris, per Ioh. Fabri excerpta.*

⁵⁰ Literally, “It is as though a goose honked at him.”

⁵¹ Matthew Lang, archbishop of Salzburg. On Campeggio, compare note 19.

⁵² Compare page 32.

the sake of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as he himself often declares, and that he did not perform one-half, indeed, not one-tenth, as many in the New Testament for the sake of any saint. Like fools, they spit out the first thing that comes into their mouth. Yet all this must be accounted true and be the basis of the articles of faith. All of this goes unrepented; moreover, it is defended. People are condemned and executed over it, and for this you are to war and fight, *etc.*

So that we may have at least one illustration in this long sermon, I shall give one—out of many thousands of such examples—which is taken from a book of devotion to Mary, and which tells how the Virgin Mary must be venerated with sacrifices. There was a robber, or highwayman who had not performed a single good deed in his whole life except that one day he strayed into a church by chance; it was the Candlemas of Our Lady,⁵⁹ and he noticed that people were offering pennies and candles on the altar, whereupon he did the same. Later he was arrested and hanged. Now the devils wanted to take his soul to Hell, but a good angel intervened and said, “Why do you devils take him away, although you have no right to him?” They replied, “He committed many evil deeds and not a single good one.” Then they all went before the judgment seat of God. Here the devils accused the robber, saying that he had performed no good work; but the good angel brought out the penny stamped with the cross⁶⁰ and the candle which he had offered on the altar. Now the Judge pronounced sentence: “The robber shall defend himself against the devils.” The angel advised him to hold the penny in his left hand as a shield and the candle in his right hand as a sword or a spear, and thus fight against the devils, executing nothing but cross blows. That he did and thus repulsed the devils. His soul re-entered his body, and he was taken from the gallows and lived happily ever after. That’s the story.⁶¹

Who could think this up if it were not true? The monks and priests have scribbled so many books full of such outrageous and lying fables that they have inundated Christendom as with a flood. Never did a pope, bishop, or doctor pay this any heed or attention. But now that we preach that Christ is our Savior, they become mad and

raving. However, if one preaches that a candle or coin offered to our dear Lady can save an impenitent rogue and murderer, without Christ and without faith, and can repel all the devils, and if one blasphemes and suppresses Christ’s suffering and life, then all sermons are good and precious; then there are no heretics. All of this comes under the heading: “Priests never were any good.”

Again: How will your conscience endure the great evil, the torment, and the violence they have done to all the world by means of their agonizing confession? They have driven so many souls to despair with this and have deprived and robbed despondent consciences of all Christian comfort; for they concealed and hushed up the power of absolution and faith treacherously and maliciously and insisted solely on the intolerable torment and impossible toil of relating one’s sins and of feeling contrition for them. They promised grace and salvation in return for such contrition and recounting of sin as our own work. Thus, they pointed and directed us away from Christ to ourselves. In brief, all that they do and teach is directed toward leading us away from Christ and to their own work and ours. There is no letter in their doctrine so insignificant and no work so petty that it does not deny and blaspheme Christ and defame faith in him, leading the poor heart to impossibilities and to despair. This is entirely in keeping with the true Antichrist. As implied by his name, he must live and teach in direct opposition to Christ and exalt himself over God and his Word. We find this more obviously fulfilled in the papacy than we can understand. Still all of this goes unrepented. They defend this confession to the present day. Moreover, they want you to help fight for the maintenance of such torment, distress, despair, and all the plagues of this confession, and to burden yourself with the misery of all souls.

Furthermore, you have to burden yourself with the baleful misery and accursed abuse of the ban and of the office of the keys.⁶² This abuse in itself would be sufficient reason for us to let the papacy perish, to say nothing of fighting for it and confirming and fortifying the abuse. How furiously and madly the pope has employed this against emperors, kings, and all the world, yes, against God himself and his holy Word! Whatever thoughts the devil suggested to his heart had to be accounted right and good. How many wars and how much bloodshed did he incite with this in all the world! Who can enumerate all the abominations? Whatever he wanted to see regarded as sin, that had to be sin, in name and in reality. What he wished to have accounted as holy, that had to be holy. In that way he became a

⁵⁹ The feast celebrated on February 2 in commemoration of the presentation of Christ in the temple and the purification of the Virgin Mary. This feast was also the occasion for the consecration and sale of candles which were to be used throughout the year, hence the name Candlemas.

⁶⁰ The coin known as a *Creutzer* had a cross stamped on it; this is apparently the type of coin referred to here.

⁶¹ The exact source of this legend has not been located. However, similar legends about Mary and the saints were common.

⁶² Compare Luther’s treatise, also written in 1530, entitled *The Keys* (LW 40, 321–377), as well as his comments on the ban in *Exhortation to All Clergy* (LW 34, 32ff.).

terrible lord over the whole world, over body, soul, property, country, and people, over purgatory, Hell, devil, Heaven, angels, over God, and over all. He unlocked and locked Heaven, he closed and opened Hell to whomsoever he chose. He either took away or let a man retain his life, property, honor, land, empire, wife, child, house and home, money, and everything, entirely as he willed. What would the papacy amount to without the abuse of the keys?

All of this they did out of sheer caprice and without any authority, for the sake of their stomach and their dominion. And what is the worst of all, they misused God's name for this most flagrantly. For they committed all these inexpressible outrages, all this raving and raging, under the name of God, without the slightest intention of reforming matters. No, like a hard anvil, they impenitently let the blows rain down on them, meanwhile remaining adamant in their intentions. Moreover, they want to see all of this defended and strengthened with your blood and protection. It is surprising that heaven and earth do not break and tear apart in the face of such incorrigible, defiant wickedness, and that God tolerates such incessant wickedness, such defiance and unabashed resistance so long. I believe if the Turk knew himself to be in the wrong as the papists know themselves to be such incorrigible villains, he would not be so obstinate and defy God so impudently with his wickedness. For I think that the Turk would never say, "We Turks were never any good," as our papists say, "We priests were never any good." In brief, only the devil does that; he, too, knows that he is wicked and, in addition, wants to defend his wickedness. The papacy imitates his example. It recognizes its terrible wickedness, but wants to leave it unreformed; in fact, it wants you to confirm and defend it with your life and blood. If you feel any desire to fight, here you find a fine cause, for the most holy and spiritual people! But if you reflect on only the hundred-thousandth part of the wickedness of which you would make yourself a partner, your desire to engage in such a fight will surely vanish, and you will say, "Such impenitent arch-villains could endure the fire of Hell's abyss before I would move a finger in their behalf, much less risk body and life for them."

Furthermore, you must burden yourself with and aid the terrible, fraudulent, shameful tomfoolery of the devil which they have promoted with relics and pilgrimages, and which they by no means intend to discontinue. O God, how it has snowed and rained in this respect. What a sheer cloudburst of lies and fraud has broken upon us! How the devil extolled dead bones, garments, and utensils as the saints' limbs and utensils! How confidently people believed all the liars! How they

flocked to join pilgrimages! All of this was approved by pope, bishops, priests, and monks; or at least, they said nothing and left the people in error and took their money and goods. How much that new deception at Trier with Christ's coat alone must have netted them!⁶³ What a great fair the devil held with this throughout the world, selling innumerable pseudo-miracles! Oh, what all might be said about this! If all foliage and grass could speak, they could not even express fully this knavery. Yet we have to witness that they do not confess and quit this villainy, but want to preserve it, confirm it, and increase it. Moreover, they want to accomplish this with your body and blood.

The very worst feature of all is that they misled the people with it and diverted them from Christ, persuading them to trust and rely on such falsehoods. For no one resorted to relics and pilgrimages without relying and depending on them. He forsook his Christ, the Gospel, and faith and, in addition, despised his own vocation and thought it was worthless. The papists not only failed to fend off such seduction of souls, such denial of Christ and contempt for him and his faith, but they took delight and joy in this and embellished and strengthened it with indulgences and graces, and fattened themselves well with it, fleecing and flaying the whole world. Yet there is no sign of their repenting or reforming, but only a defiant resolution to expand and fortify all of this and to tolerate no change whatsoever. The golden year⁶⁴ is part and parcel of this, invented by those arch-liars, the popes, who have even ordered the angels to take the souls of the pilgrims to Heaven.⁶⁵ But all of this is too high and too much; it beggars all description and all imagination. It is called the *abominatio in loco sancto*, "the desolating sacrilege standing in the holy place" [Matthew 24:15]. That is how Christ described the papacy with plain and yet incomprehensible words.

I truly believe that the papacy is an abomination not only by reason of such particular evils, but also because of its impenitence, because it declines reform in these matters and rather wants to see them defended. Thus, the

⁶³ The first exhibition of the Holy Coat of Trier, alleged to be the seamless robe of Christ, took place in 1512. Compare Luther's *Exhortation to All Clergy*, LW 34, 25, and WA 30^{II}, 297, note 2.

⁶⁴ During a jubilee year special indulgences were granted. Compare *Exhortation to All Clergy*, LW 34, 16, note 14.

⁶⁵ When a large number of pilgrims died in the jubilee year 1500 while making a pilgrimage to Rome, a bull was published (ostensibly by Pope Clement VI, though its authenticity is uncertain) commanding the angels to carry the souls of such pilgrims to Heaven. Compare Henry Charles Lea, *History of Auricular Confession and Indulgences in the Latin Church* (Philadelphia: Lea, 1896), III, 203, and WA 30^{II}, 282, note 2.

papacy not only sins in its deeds, but confirms its sin with impenitence, that is, with the sin against the Holy Spirit. This cannot be surpassed; it cannot become worse, for the devil himself can commit no higher or worse sin. You see, these are the fellows who presume to be judges of God's Word. They dare to demand that we recant and repent of our doctrine and that we venerate all such abominations as God's Word and work. But they insist on remaining unreformed; in brief, they will not tolerate any renewal. If that is not inciting to sedition, then what do you call inciting to sedition? If that is not provoking pestilence, famine, Turks, war, murder, and all of God's wrath and plague, what might be evil enough to provoke these? However, I must stop here with the enumeration of these abominations, though there are many more, such as the religious fraternities, the vows to the saints, and the great fair at which priests and monks sell their good works and their cowls to the whole world, vesting people with them at death and thereby leading them to Heaven.⁶⁶ If I were to continue, it might rob and bereave one of his senses. Unfortunately, one half of a single item of these is too much.

The third reason why you must refuse obedience to the emperor in such a call to arms is this: if you did otherwise you would not only burden yourself with all these abominations and help strengthen them, but you would also lend a hand in overthrowing and exterminating all the good which the dear Gospel has again restored and established. For those villains are not satisfied with preserving such devilries and outrages; as the edict states, they will tolerate no changes but will eradicate and utterly destroy all that we have ever taught, lived for, and done, and still live for and do. This reason also encompasses a great deal; for our Gospel has, thanks be to God, accomplished much good. Previously no one knew the real meaning of the Gospel, Christ, baptism, confession, the sacrament [of the altar], faith, Spirit, flesh, good works, the Ten Commandments, the Our Father, prayer, suffering, comfort, temporal government, the state of matrimony, parents, children, masters, manservant, mistress, maidservant, devils, angels, world, life, death, sin, justice, forgiveness, God, bishop, pastor, church, a Christian, or the cross.⁶⁷ In brief, we were totally ignorant about all that it is necessary for a Christian to know. All of this was obscured and suppressed by the popish asses. They are, as you know, just that—great, coarse, ignorant asses in

Christian affairs. For I too was one, and I know that I am telling the truth on this matter. All devout hearts will bear witness to this; for they would gladly have been instructed about even one of these items, but they were held captive by the pope as I was and could gain neither the opportunity nor the permission to be instructed. We did not know otherwise than that priests and monks alone were everything, and that we relied on their works and not on Christ.

But now—praise be to God—it has come to pass that man and woman, young and old, know the catechism; they know how to believe, to live, to pray, to suffer, and to die. Consciences are well instructed about how to be Christians and how to recognize Christ. We preach the truth about faith and good works. In brief, the aforementioned items have again come to light, and pulpit, altar, and baptismal font have been restored to their proper place, so that—thank God—the form of a Christian church can again be recognized. But you will have to assist in the extermination and destruction of all of this if you fight for the papists. For they will not tolerate that any of these doctrines should be taught and established by us, but, as they say, they want to restore the *status quo ante*, the old state of things, and not permit a single change. You will have to help burn all the German books, New Testaments, psalters, prayer books, hymnals, and all the good things we wrote, and which they themselves admit to be good. You will have to help keep everyone ignorant about the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, and the Creed; for this is the way it used to be. You will have to help keep everyone from learning anything about baptism, the sacrament, faith, government, matrimony, or the Gospel. You will have to help keep everyone from knowing Christian liberty. You will have to help keep people from placing their trust in Christ and deriving their comfort from him. For all of that was nonexistent before; all of it is something new.

Furthermore, you will have to help to condemn and disgrace the children of our pastors and preachers, poor forsaken orphans, as the children of whores. You will have to help people to rely again on the works of monks and priests instead of on Christ, and on buying their merits and their cowls for the hour of death. You will have to help them fill Christendom again with whoring, adultery, and other unnatural, shameful vices, instead of getting married. You will have to help restore the atrocious carnival of the sacrificial mass. You will have to help in the defense of all their avarice, robbery, and thievery, by means of which they acquire their riches. But why should I enlarge on this? You will have to help in the destruction of Christ's Word and his whole kingdom and in the rebuilding of the kingdom of the

⁶⁶ Luther is referring to the practice of burying a layman in a monk's cowl, thereby supposedly assuring his salvation. Cf. *Exhortation to All Clergy*, LW 34, 21.

⁶⁷ Compare the parallel list in Luther's *Exhortation to All Clergy*, LW 34, 53.

devil. For that is the aim of the scoundrels who are bent on restoring the *status quo ante*, the old state of things. They are of the Antichrist, or Counter-Christ; therefore they can only do what is against Christ, especially in the cardinal doctrine according to which our heart is to look to Christ alone for consolation and assurance and not to look to our own works; that is, we are to be delivered from sin and to be justified by faith alone, as is written in *Romans* 10 [:10], “For man believes with his heart and so is justified.”

This doctrine, I say, they will not tolerate under any circumstances. We are able to forego it just as little; for if this doctrine vanishes, the church vanishes. Then no error can any longer be resisted, because the Holy Spirit will not and cannot dwell with us apart from this doctrine. For he is to glorify Christ to us [*John* 16:14]. The world has often gone to wrack and ruin over this doctrine by deluge, tempest, flood, war, and other plagues. On account of this doctrine Abel and all the saints were slain; on account of this, too, all Christians must die. Yet it has remained, and it must remain, and the world must continue to perish on account of it. Thus, the world must also submit to it now and be overthrown on account of it. No matter how the world rages and rants, it must let this doctrine stand, and it must fall into the depths of Hell on account of it! Amen. So reflect on this and examine yourself closely. If you fight against God and his Word and against all that is of God, if you burden yourself with all the abominations of the papacy, with all the innocent blood that has been shed, beginning with Abel’s, if you help to exterminate all the benefits which we have gained from the Gospel and ultimately help to destroy Christ’s kingdom and rebuild the devil’s—just think what sort of victory you will gain and with what kind of conscience you will obey the emperor’s summons!

If you are open to advice, this warning against obeying the emperor and your prince in such circumstances will suffice. As the apostles say, “We must obey God rather than men” [*Acts* 5:29]. If you accept this advice, good; If not, never mind—go ahead and fight confidently. Christ will not be afraid of you and will also (God willing) stand his ground against you. But if he does, you will have quite a battle on your hands. In the meantime, we shall be watching to see who will overwhelm the other with his defiance and hold the field.

These things I wanted to say to my dear Germans by way of warning. And as I did above,⁶⁸ I testify here again that I do not wish to incite or spur anyone to war or rebellion or even self-defense, but solely to peace. But if the papists—our devil—refuse to keep the peace, and,

impenitently raging against the Holy Spirit with their persistent abominations, insist on war, and thereby get their heads bloodied or even perish, I want to witness publicly here that this was not my doing, nor did I give any cause for it. It is they who want to have it that way. May their blood be on their heads! I am exonerated; I have done my duty faithfully. Henceforth I shall let Him judge who will, must, and also is able to do so. He will not tarry, nor will he fail. To him be praise and honor, thanks and glory in eternity! Amen.

⁶⁸ Compare pages 13–14, 18, 34.