

contingent, even before leaving Augsburg in December 1518, had already published twelve theses for the debate. In it he announced the debate and indicated that Leipzig would be its location. He had also sent these theses to Luther. Responding with a letter of January 7, Luther informed Eck that the Leipzig group had declined to host. Until this point there had been no discussion of Luther participating in the debate, and the acceptance of Leipzig was still being sought for the debate between Eck and Carlstadt.

This is where matters stood, with Luther remaining silent as agreed at Altenburg, provided that his opponents would remain silent as well. When he returned from Altenburg and saw Eck's theses he was stunned. In reality those theses were not against Carlstadt, but against Luther. The first eleven were directed against the very point that Luther had made in a number of his writings. It was only later that another item was added to the seventh which pointed directly at Carlstadt. Eck supposedly maintained that he had forgotten it in his hurry to get them out. But now, to top things off, it was made the final thesis. The point made in that thesis was one with which Carlstadt agreed at the time. It was Luther who had maintained deviations in regard to the point, both in his resolutions and in the epilog of his report about his dealings with Cajetan. This is what the thesis said, "We do not agree with the idea that before the time of Silvester the Roman church had not stood above other churches; rather, we have always regarded the one who sat upon Peter's throne as the successor of Peter and as steward of Christ." Contradicting this view Luther had pointed out in his resolutions that prior to the 7th century large areas of the Church had not recognized Rome's supremacy. And in his Augsburg statements he had maintained that the eastern and also the African Christians, who had never acknowledged the pope, dare not be cast out of the church and that even Gregory the Great ([540-604] 590 A.D. - dated from a recent almanac) had repeatedly rejected the title of universal bishop.

The fact that Eck had planned to attack Luther from the beginning became much clearer in a letter sent to Luther on February 19th. In it he without apology told Luther that he must have noticed that he, Eck, had directed his theses more against Luther than Carlstadt. It is also

understandable why Eck was more eager to do battle with Luther than Carlstadt. The polemicist of Ingolstadt had often faced off against opponents like Carlstadt, but never against someone like Luther. Luther's name had already gained wide renown, and in stepping forth as Rome's defender, Eck expected great reward from Rome. And so he sought and anticipated his victory over the man who had proven to be too strong for a cardinal.

It was soon apparent to Luther what he would have to do. In February 1519 he sent a letter to Carlstadt in which he declared his intention to participate in the debate. Moreover he wrote to his elector on March 13:

"Most Serene Highness,

"I had received a number of encouragements through Your Electoral Grace's chaplain, Mr. Magister Spalatin, reminding me of what the honorable Carolus v. Miltitz and Your Electoral Grace desired of me, namely, that from now on I would remain silent and start nothing new, as we had agreed at Altenburg. Now, God knows that such was my sincere intention and I was happy that the whole game would be ended as far as I was concerned. I even remained resolute to adhere to that agreement in dismissing Mr. Silvester Prierias Replicam, although I had ample justification to respond.* (Footnote: Prierias had published a response to some of Luther's writings). And even though I despised the mocking arrogance of my adversaries I remained silent, contrary to the advice of my friends. Thus our resolution still stood, as Mr. Carolus well knows, that I desired to remain silent, if my opponents also remained silent. But now Eck has attacked me without warning. Many people think that in doing so he seeks to bring disgrace and dishonor not to me, but to Your Electoral Grace and the University of Wittenberg. Thus it did not seem right for me to ignore such wind blown, treacherous tricks nor to allow the truth to be mired in such blasphemy. For if I were to sew my mouth shut and allow everyone else's to remain open, Your Electoral Grace can well expect that the one who would otherwise not wish to look at me would fall upon me as well. It is still my heartfelt desire to obediently follow Your Electoral Grace's advice

and remain silent in every way, if only they would remain silent as well. For truly I have many other things to do and take no pleasure in this matter. But if I do not remain silent I beg of Your Electoral Grace in all submission that you will not hold it against me, for I do not know how to allow my conscience to abandon the truth."

The elector then gave permission for Luther to participate in the debate. But this did not resolve the issue. Though the chancellor of the Leipzig University, Bishop Adolf of Merseburg, had agreed with the stance of The Leipzig University faculty to oppose that the debate be held in Leipzig, the same faculty of Leipzig finally gave their consent to the meeting between Eck and Carlstadt in Leipzig. In this they were obeying the wishes of Duke George, who had become strongly and personally involved. But when they read Luther's public response to Carlstadt that he also wanted to debate, they wrote to him immediately. They expressed their surprise at his desire to participate in the debate, since neither the duke nor the University had invited him to do so. When Luther then appealed to the duke, the duke referred him to Eck and left Luther's admission up to Eck's discretion. In his turn Eck, who delighted in embarrassing Luther, let Luther wait in vain for his decision, though he had received a letter from Count George in which he was fully informed about his answer to Luther.

Yet on March 14th Eck did issue a public response to Luther's public letter that he wished to debate with Luther. He stated that earlier, on the recommendation of a mutual friend, Scheurl, he had been friends with Luther. However, he could not remain so, not since he [Martin Luther] had revived heresies that had been dealt with long ago and had kindled a pile of ashes into a new flame. With those words he wished to imply what he would later say openly - that Luther was himself guilty of the heresy of John Hus.

Luther did not hesitate to answer the malicious letter that Eck had attached to his theses, which now numbered thirteen. He wrote that from now on no one could expect him to be patient any longer. His mild behavior would come to an end, and from now on he would aggressively bite and devour the Cajetans and the Ecks. The accusation that he was

guilty of Hus' heresy he dismissed as a guess. Still, he was not intimidated, for he sent Eck an equal number of responses to Eck's thirteen. In the last one he maintained that the teaching of the superior status of the Roman church was based on the papal decrees of only the previous four centuries and that this teaching stands in opposition to the witness of eleven centuries of history, Holy Scripture, and the Council of Nicea.

The one sentence was enough to command the papacy to get down from the position it had usurped, from which height she had lorded over the emperors and kings of the nations and had imposed untold burdens not only on treasuries but also on consciences. Luther was well aware that the manner in which the question on which Eck was pressing him was handled would have wide ranging importance. "This debate," he wrote to Staupitz, "will, if Christ so wills, deal a terrible blow against Roman rights and origins, the crutches on which Eck leans." He diligently prepared himself for battle. "I am now reading," he wrote, "a great deal for my debate. As I read the decrees of the popes (I whisper in your ear) I am now uncertain, whether the pope is the antichrist himself or is his apostle. That is the truth since Christ is so miserably crucified by him in those decrees."

Luther's studies led him to understand with increasing clarity what the church is and how the pope had enslaved her. His indignation grew along with his understanding. Even before the debate he brought the detailed resolution of his final thesis into the light. In it he identified the true Christian Church, referred to in the Apostles' Creed, as true Christians everywhere, where the Word and Sacraments are used, also outside of the papal church. He now began to denounce even the commands of the bishops when they attempted to usurp the God-ordained authority of other congregational shepherds and teachers.

This brave man's friends were concerned for him, as though he were standing under a stone archway that was starting to crumble. He, on his part, continued to plead with Duke George for permission to take part in the debate. But the Duke, as mentioned before, had deferred the final decision to Eck. Since Eck gave no direct response to Luther's request but merely provoked Luther with his published writings, the Duke chose to

permit Luther's presence in an indirect fashion. Since he cherished the idea of seeing Luther's defeat at his university, he stated in a letter to Carlstadt that he would welcome all those "whom he would bring along." As a result Luther could appear in Leipzig or choose to stay away. He did the former, placing himself under Carlstadt's wings, until the latter exercised his right to petition the duke to permit Luther's admission. In response the duke then personally granted Luther's admission to the debate.

As the date, which the duke had set for the debate, drew near extensive security measures were employed in Leipzig under Caesar Pflug, the duke's counselor, who served as the chief guardian in the name of the count. Throngs of guests of all professions arrived to attend the debate. Since the University had no audience hall large enough to accommodate so many, the duke allowed a large room in his castle, the Pleissenburg, to be equipped and prepared for the debate. So it would take place as Luther had originally suggested but Eck had decisively rejected: The debate would be held in a secular location. Quarters for the guests were provided by the city council and the residents took over the security.

Of the participants in the battle for which Leipzig had been prepared, Eck was the first to show his presence. He arrived accompanied by only one servant, and for Corpus Christi Day he walked along with the procession dressed for the mass. On the other hand, he conducted an in-depth examination in regard to the goodness of Sachsen beer by comparison with Bavarian beer and at the same time made acquaintance with the sinful women of the city. This can be gleaned from his own letters.

On the 24th of June the contingent arrived from Wittenberg. It included Carlstadt, Luther, Melancthon, Luther's friend, Lange, Nikolaus Amsdorf, three doctors of law, and an additional two hundred magisters and students. They entered through the Grimmisch city gate, their students accompanying their lords as they ran alongside the wagons with spears and halberds. Dr. Carlstadt rode in the first wagon, followed by Dr. Martinus and Philip in a similar rollwagon. None of the wagons were curtained or covered. The word that the Wittenbergers were arriving drew a large crowd of people. Carlstadt met with an accident when his wagon broke

down and he fell into the filthy street in full view of everyone, while Luther's wagon wheeled past him. This caused the people to immediately predict Luther's victory and Carlstadt's defeat.

With all of the attention focused on the Wittenbergers, an agent of the Bishop of Merseburg made the most of the confusion by posting a decree on the church doors. The decree forbade the debate alongside a copy of the bull regarding indulgences recently issued by the pope (which no one cared very much about). But even under such circumstances the documents were not permitted to shine very long on the church doors. They were torn down and the one who had posted them was imprisoned.

Leipzig had not seen such excitement for a long time. Everyone on the streets and in the homes was talking about the upcoming debate. Heated arguments and counter arguments could be heard in the inns. Arguments between the students of Leipzig and Wittenberg nearly turned into fist fights. A former colleague of Tetzl, magister Baumgaertner, became so angry at one of these quarrels that he died of rage. The Leipzig students were especially stirred up by Hieronymus Emser. He, who had been traveling around with an indulgence preacher, the cardinal's legate Raimond, had come to Leipzig for the express purpose of agitating for Eck.

As the anticipation was reaching its highest level, something happened that made it seem as though all the security precautions were for naught. Those who had longed to see the battle waged before their eyes feared that the cannons rolled up into position would be rolled away without firing a shot. Eck had previously agreed to the suggestion of the Wittenbergers that the arguments and counter arguments of the debate would be recorded by scribes. But now he, whose style of fencing involved confusing the issue with a flood of references from the ancient church father in a blustery and thundering manner, had a change of heart. In response to Eck's inciting the Leipzig doctors and directors of the festival, they took Carlstadt aside the Sunday before the debate. They attempted to talk him out of the requests he had made in matters of protocol. Although Carlstadt would not yield on the issue of the debate being recorded, they at

least got him to make the concession that the notes were not to be published until they had been approved by the judges.

But when they approached Luther on the Monday after the opening of the debate, he told them that he did not want to hear anything about those conditions.



Dr. Johannes Eck according to an old woodcut

He stated that if they would not allow the debates to be conducted freely, he would refrain from participating in them. Perhaps Eck did not mind this turn of events at that time. He may have later regretted that he had taken on such a dangerous opponent in this battle, but at the time it must have seemed as though all of the preconditions of the debate were shaping up in a way which would thoroughly disgust Luther or have him submit to disgrace at the hands of hostile minded judges. How could Luther expect a just verdict about the debate when even his friends thoughtfully shook their heads at his demands.

But it was Carlstadt who had accepted the conditions and the debate would proceed between him and Eck. The debate was begun with a welcome speech by the Leipzig Professor of Ethics, Simon Pistoris, given in the large university lecture hall on the morning of June 27th. From there the festive group proceeded to the St. Thomas Church for mass. The Leipzigers and Wittenbergers had lined up in pairs. The cantor and printer, George Rau, lent beauty to the service with a new twelve-voice choral work. From there the procession traveled to the castle, accompanied by a large crowd. A group of citizens equipped with weapons stood guard there. Then the gifted young scholar, Peter Schade, (so named from the area Mosellanus where he was born) gave a two hour Latin lecture about the proper way to debate. The whole assembly fell to their knees in respectful silence and listened to the triple presentation of the hymn, "Come, Holy Ghost, Creator God". Then, after dinner, they reassembled in the well decorated large chamber at 2:00 p.m. There were two lecterns facing each other in this chamber, in addition to many seats for the audience and tables for the scribes who were to record the debates. Eck stepped to the lectern decorated with a picture of St. George. The other one was occupied by Carlstadt. His was adorned with an image of St. Martin, another military saint. The actual debate had begun.

We shall not go into detailed reporting of the exchanges between Eck and Carlstadt. For the first two days Carlstadt presented volumes of material to occupy his opponent. Eck understood that the only way to avoid impending serious setback on Tuesday afternoon was by yielding a

portion of his response time. That afternoon he grasped a way to take advantage of the situation. He had a much better mind for memory and at the same time did not care whether the church fathers had actually said what he quoted them to have said. Carlstadt's memory was lacking and he had to have books and notes at hand. Eck also knew whom the judges of the debates favored – after all, he had chosen Leipzig for a reason – and before the end of the second day he demanded that the judges deny the use of books and notes.

The debate from the lecterns was recessed for the next two days, since they were church holidays. But it was noteworthy that a new voice appeared in the pulpit. At the request of the principal of the University of Wittenberg who was in attendance, Duke Barnim of Pomerania, Luther was to preach at the castle. Since the report of this decision attracted a large audience, Luther had to preach in the spacious debate hall instead of the castle chapel. In keeping with the festival pericope he preached on Matthew 16:13-19. His subjects were the two main points of the debate, the grace of God and the inability of man in spiritual matters and the primacy of Peter and the pope. His first part showed that flesh and blood are totally incapable in spiritual matters and that Christ would not acknowledge or accept anyone, in whom the Father has not produced such action, as he did in Peter's case. His second part showed that the Keys were not given to Peter as a person but were given to the church in Peter. They were given to comfort the poor troubled consciences, which would cling to the words of the absolution with strong faith and not dispute all that much about the power of the pope.

This sermon so raised the displeasure of the doctors of Leipzig that they asked Eck to preach against Luther four times in various churches throughout the city. At the same time, in spite of the desires of many in attendance, they arrogantly denied the use of a church to offer a contrary position. The counselor Caesar Pflug made his opposition clear when he said, "I wish that Luther would have saved his sermon for Wittenberg."

The debate between Carlstadt and Eck was resumed on July 1st. Though Carlstadt launched a sharply worded attack against his opponent in

the morning, by the afternoon he had been driven into a corner and could only help himself by denying what he had previously said. After the celebration of St. Mary's visitation had been observed on Saturday, the debate continued on Sunday, when Eck extended the thrust (with his so-called rapier) he had inflicted during the first few days.

While this was going on, Luther's refusal to submit to the conditions set up for the debate and his decision not to participate was foully interpreted as though he were afraid to debate. Since his friends were pressing him to submit to the conditions, he finally gave in to the rules, insofar as he understood the referral of the protocol to a deciding panel of judges. He signed his agreement, in which he expressly excluded Rome from the judge's bench and reserved for himself the right of appeal. This took place on July 4th, the day John Tetzel died in a nearby monastery.

Luther stepped up to the lectern on the designated date with a bouquet in hand. Those who saw the two opponents may have anticipated a lopsided battle. On the one side was the large, squarely built, long striding, well fed, screamer Eck, who paced back and forth during the debate. On the other side was the smaller, emaciated from worry and work, Augustinian monk of Wittenberg in opposition. But as the battle was waged, it soon became apparent that the deeper scholarship especially in the depth of Scriptural understanding, the greater strength and courage in spirit, and the better ability to debate were on the side of the man from Wittenberg.

With a pleasant and clear voice Luther's first words explained that he would have avoided this confrontation out of respect for the pope and the Roman church. He would have done so except that his opponent had forced him into it. After Eck contradicted him, the actual debate resumed at the point of contention, namely the theses of Eck and Luther in regard to the power of the pope as had been previously introduced. Luther did not attack the general authority of the pope. He only attacked the divine right of supreme papal power within the Church. As Peter had occupied first place among the other apostles, so the pope was granted first place in

comparison with all the other bishops. However, this was not in spiritual authority but in honor.

Later Luther expressed amazement as to the amount of respect he conceded to the pope at Leipzig. "Now look and learn," he wrote, "Christian reader, from my example, how hard it is to disengage or save oneself from such errors, errors which the whole world confirmed with her example and through time-worn habit. They have ingrained themselves into the very nature of living in this world. I had diligently read and taught Holy Scripture for seven years at home so that by this time I already had committed everything to memory. In addition to all this I had the first fruits of knowledge and faith in my Lord Christ. I knew that we are made righteous and saved through faith in the Lord Christ. Yes, I also defended my public declaration that the pope was not the head of the church by divine right. At the same time I could not yet see the logical progression, namely, that of necessity and certainty the pope had to be from the devil."

Evenso, what Luther did say on that 4th of July was enough to have him seem to stand in contradiction to the Roman doctrine of the papacy. Whereas, for example, Eck maintained straight out that he who does not obey the pope cannot be saved, Luther disagreed. He maintained that the true church existed also among those who in form had separated themselves from the Roman church. Those, like the Greek Church, were a part of the communion of saints. This Church needs no earthly supreme head, since Christ is the only head of this Church and has promised that he will be with her to the end of days.

Here in Leipzig was not the first time that these declarations, as Luther set forth, resulted in arousing opposition. But they had been condemned by a church council earlier in Kostnitz, where they had been presented by John Hus. Eck knew how to use this to his best advantage and presented it to Luther the next day with venomous words. However, to the amazement of those present, Luther not only held fast to his assertions, but fearlessly and directly explained that it didn't matter to him whether Hus or anyone else had made the statements. In any event they were true, and there were a number of declarations among those of the Hussites and

Bohemian which were downright Christian and evangelical, which dare not to be rejected.

In the view of those assembled something monstrous had occurred. This was a university that had been established in opposition to the Hussite movement. It was located not far from the Bohemian border. It had experienced the terror of the Hussite War. Yet in the presence of high counts and lords whose ancestors had shed their blood in bygone battles against Bohemians, Luther had dared to praise statements of John Hus as Christian and evangelical-- statements of a man who had been burned as a heretic and who had been rejected and condemned by a large, esteemed synod of the east. Duke George reacted with indignation. He got up, with hands set into his sides and elbows extended, shook his head, and aired his feelings. With a loud voice that could be heard throughout the hall he blasted forth this curse, "This is the way of the plague!" (or, "the rule of contagious disease" from "Das walt' die Sucht!")

Eck succeeded in what he had attempted. He had forced Luther to confess openly that he had things in common with Hus, which made Luther appear very dangerous. As soon as he had the floor again he drew such conclusions from Luther's words that Luther had to interrupt and accuse Eck of speaking downright lies. But Luther stuck with what he had said.

In the following days he always returned to his assertion that even councils can err and Holy Scripture alone is infallible. Whatever Scripture does not demand to be believed, no one has the right to impose on Christians as articles of faith. Yes, even later when issues like purgatory, indulgences, and repentance were being debated, Luther held firm to this point. As a result Eck realized he was being challenged, when Luther argued that purgatory cannot be proved from Scripture. Eck wanted to support his position with a proof passage from the second book of Maccabees. But Luther contradicted him, stating that this reference does not apply since it was taken from a non-canonical book. He added that even if the Roman church would recognize its validity, it did not compel him, for the church does not have the right to assign greater authority to a book than it

possesses within itself. And in regard to the three previously mentioned doctrines he would not allow any council resolutions to bind him either.

The fact that Eck was unable to properly apply the Scriptures was a final farewell word in his last speech on July 14th. He ended with these words, "I am saddened that the doctor delves into the Scriptures as deep as a water spider enters into water. Truly, it appears to flee from its reflection as the devil flees from the cross. This is why I judge the authority of Scripture as supreme, without any disrespect to the fathers. I offer this as food for thought to my future judges."

That is the way the debate between the two German farm boys came to an end at 8 a.m. on July 14th. While Eck immediately confronted Carlstadt again, exchanging argumentative ("nicht glaenzend") blows with him for the next two days, Luther left Leipzig immediately. After all, what was there to keep him in that hostile city? The Wittenbergers, and especially Luther, had been treated with contempt to the extent that even common hospitality had been denied them. Yet Eck had been celebrated in every way and was covered with honors. While the duke had often invited the Wittenbergers to dine, he always treated Luther in a hateful manner because of what he had written. He had even expressed the opinion that if anyone were to pray the Lord's Prayer as Luther advised he could hardly finish it in four days.

Only a few of the Leipzig doctors had deigned to share company with Luther, and even then timidly and secretly. "Summa Summarum," Luther wrote, "I have experienced jealousy and hatred, but never more insolent and more blatant jealousy."

In view of all of this it is clear enough how the debate was viewed in Leipzig. It was an event at which Eck glimmered as the pope's polemicist. What's more, many of the doctors and magisters, unable to be interested in the whole event, had slept through the debate, allowing themselves to be awakened when it was time to eat. But Amsdorf wrote to Spalatin about those who paid attention to the debate, "Simply put, everything that Eck wanted was right and soon granted, but whatever we asked and sought was

rejected as unreasonable and unseemly. As such we were in a most inconvenient and dangerous place, among the worst kind of enemies."

That is how it was. Eck was permitted to slander Luther as a heretic and patron of heretics, a heathen and a tax collector, without being reprimanded for being out of order. The Wittenbergers, on the other hand, were often directed to the rules which had been dictated by Eck. Eck always wanted to have the last word and was allowed to proceed boisterously, while the Wittenbergers were always held strictly to the clock. When the rules of protocol were being established by the judges, they rejected Luther's proposal to use the universities of Freiburg and Basel, and Paris and Erfurt were chosen instead. This resulted in the exclusion of the Augustinian monasteries of Erfurt, which prompted Luther to insist on the exclusion of the Franciscans and Dominicans as well. The duke also denied another of Luther's requests. He, who had the right to make the decision, chose to deny the request that the entire faculties, not only the theologians, would render the verdict. He did so in order to please Eck. All of these decisions proved to be of no consequence since none of the universities agreed to take up the requested assignment.

The debate was closed abruptly on July 15 with a speech by Professor Lange of Leipzig. The castle needed to be readied for the reception of a nobler guest, the Elector of Brandenburg.

Chapter 17

Consequences of the Debate at Leipzig and New Battles

So what fruits were to be gleaned from the battle which had been fought at the Pleissenburg in Leipzig? The doctors of Erfurt and Paris, who had been originally appointed to render a verdict, were not allowed to do so. That Eck appropriated this honor to himself is understandable for anyone who knows Eck. In a letter to the papal court he sang his own praises regarding his conquest of Carlstadt and Luther. As soon as the debate was ended and before the Wittenbergers could report to the elector, Eck wrote to the elector about what Luther had done, rubbing it in his face. He reported that Luther did not acknowledge the validity of the authority of the church fathers. In addition he presented himself as one who espoused the error of Hus, the heretic. This contradicted the decision of the Council of Kostnitz; and he denied that Christ established the primacy of Peter. In fact, he admonished the elector to consign to the pyre what Luther had written about the primacy of Peter.

Carlstadt responded with a writing, which the count shared with the Wittenbergers. He replied that Eck's outburst originated in the proven fact that he had falsely quoted the church fathers, resulting in his disgrace. He stated that he had no desire for further debate with such a boastful screamer.

The fact that his own Wittenberg colleagues did not grade Carlstadt's efforts highly can be gleaned from a letter written by Melancthon. In it he wrote that in observing Carlstadt and Eck he learned first hand what it means to actively engage in sophistry.

But Luther also reported to the elector that Eck had to openly concur with the central issue of Carlstadt's theses, abandoning his former position.

For Luther himself, however, the debate at Leipzig had very important consequences, his low opinion of the event notwithstanding. First of all, the fact that he stepped forward earned the respect, if not the approval, of many who previously despised him or had not known him. This was worrisome not only to Eck but also to Carlstadt. Carlstadt was plagued with jealousy and allowed himself to be estranged from Luther because his colleague received the higher praises from both friend and foe. It bothered Carlstadt to such an extent that he would accept no help from Luther during the ensuing war of words between Eck and Carlstadt, much to Luther's dismay.

But there was a much more important consequence beyond the fame Luther gained for the work he had begun in God's name. A few years before his death he put it this way, "We don't realize how good it is for us to have opponents and that heretics attack us with all their might, ... for when I began to write against indulgences, and the pope and Dr. Eck threw their weight against me, they woke me up. I wished with all my heart that he would have repented and thought straight, I would have given my fist (perhaps a slang expression for "yield" - "ich wollte die Faust drum Geben") for him to repent. But if he insisted on remaining as he was, then I wished him to become pope, for he had earned it. He forced me to begin to think in opposition to the pope, bringing me to a point I would never have reached otherwise."

That is how it was. Already at Leipzig Luther, being pressed by Eck, fought with increasing clarity and decisiveness for the majesty of the Word of God over and against all human teaching. Since he was not able to outline his arguments against the polemical barriers as thoroughly as he wished, upon his return to Wittenberg he issued explanations of his theses. In these he clarified a number of points. He conceded nothing he had said, but maintained all the more decisively and strongly that Holy Scripture was the only authority in matters of faith.

Eck, too, did not remain idle following the debate. What he had achieved in Leipzig and what he had failed to achieve drove him to further attacks against Luther. Even before the debate at Leipzig a Franciscan convent at Jueterbock attacked Luther and filed a complaint against him with the Bishop of Brandenburg. In response Luther threatened that if they did not retract their accusation he would take them down in disgrace. They found a patron in Eck who intervened on their behalf. He submitted a number of statements in distorted form to the bishop along with venomous explanations as basis for the accusation against Luther. When the bishop issued these without hesitation, Luther responded at once with a powerful exposition against them. It was to be expected that he would not spare Eck or the Franciscans in his reply. The prior, who desired to preserve his order's reputation, considered it important enough to ask Luther to hold off with his reply. Luther was willing to do so, if they would pay for the publisher's expense. However, it was too late. His response was already published.

Eck reacted with a "Cleansing Publication" full of slander against Luther in answer to Luther's exposition of his Leipzig theses, the addendum of which had been addressed to Spalatin. Luther had there made comments regarding Eck's conduct at the debate and after it. Luther fired back as he was reacting to that so-called "Cleansing Publication". He bade Eck a formal farewell, a farewell to a man who was full of lies and with whom he had been involved far too long already. He would now leave it to others to take on this insolent "Bramarbas" (from Spanish word for "screamer") and there were those who would do so in ways that would affect Eck in the most sensitive way.

Eck produced still another attack against Luther. He alleged in an addendum that Luther's addition consisted of thoughts which merely came from a few uneducated foundation lords. An anonymous author responded with a work entitled, "The Answer of the Uneducated Highly Learned Foundation Lords," * (Footnote: The preacher of the main church of Augsburg at that time, Johann Oekolampad, later admitted to be the author.) Accompanying the work was a lampoon with the title, "The

Planed-Down Eck" ("Der abgehobelte Eck"). It had as its main printer Bilibald Pirkheimer, whom we have already met, and it was produced in the same way as "The Letters of the Dark Men". This so plainly laid bare the "Planed-Down One" that he became a laughingstock. Even Luther expressed his displeasure with it. Eck seethed with anger and plotted his revenge. Only Reuchlin's intervention prevented him from beginning the New Year with a ritual burning of Luther's works in Ingolstadt. Then his anger together with his greed drove him to Rome.

Oekolampad had lowered his lance in the previously mentioned attack against Eck. Now Eck swiftly acquired his own spear-man to assist him, a soldier who outdid him in vileness. We met this person earlier when he agitated the Leipzig students to revolt. His name was Hieronymus Emser. He had played a cunning trick against Luther after the debate at Leipzig. He had written an open letter to the administrator of Prague, Johannes Zack. In it he seemed to defend Luther, lest the Bohemian heretics should believe that in the learned Luther they had found a patron. Luther at Leipzig had angrily rejected any connection with the Bohemians and had decisively condemned their separation from the Roman church. He stated that he would without a doubt abandon a stance that would give the appearance that he agreed with the Hussites.

Emser had laid a clever double trap for Luther. If Luther agreed, it would seem as though Luther had conceded his teaching. On the other hand if he renounced the praise, which Emser had here ascribed to Luther, he would rightly seem to be someone who confessed himself to be bound together with the famously hated Bohemians.

Thus it was right for Luther in the sharp response he fired at Emser to compare Emser's letter with the deed of Joab against Abner and with a Judas' kiss. But throughout he uprightly adhered to his theses and explained once again that he would not retract them just because the Bohemians were pleased with them. Indeed, he rejoiced that they were pleased and only wished that they would please the Jews and the Turks, and yes, even Eck and Emser. In reference to Emser's coat of arms which was printed on his work and featured a mountain ram (in German

“Emserbock”), he titled his writing, "Answer to the Emser Ram." In it he compared himself to a hunter who has loosed his hounds after the ram. But the vehemence with which he lashed out against Emser reflected the deep aversion Luther had for anyone who slyly tries to go behind one's back. Emser responded to this putdown with a venomous response in which he called Luther a dog theologian. He further posited that Luther's hatred of the pope stemmed from jealousy toward the indulgence preachers and their financial gains. Eck also entered the list of those against Luther in response to this correspondence with a work he titled, "Against Luther's Irrational Hunt." This work is noteworthy in that Luther's followers are called "Lutherans" for the first time.

New Battles

Another attack aimed at Luther's connection with the heresy of Hus came from a different direction. This was mounted under the clever calculations of Eck and the scheming malice of Emser. It involved a work that was published at the end of 1519 under the title, "A Sermon on the Highly Valued Sacrament of the Holy True Body of Christ." Among other subjects in this work Luther had asserted that it would be suitable and permissible for a council to resolve that in that holy evening meal instituted by the words of Christ both elements would be distributed not only to the priests but to all communicants. True, in this writing he had not yet gone as far as he later would, recognizing and explaining that depriving lay members of the cup according to the Roman custom was actually a sinful mutilation of the Sacrament. He could certainly have written more in his recommendation that both kinds be distributed, but not "for the simple reason that one kind would not suffice." Once again such a statement immediately aroused new opposition. Duke George had scarcely held the pamphlet in his hand when he directed a letter be sent to the elector warning him of this dangerous sort of writing. He pointed to the double danger that its content appeared to be the same as Prague held and that it was given to the people in German. In explaining his concern he cited how it had come to his notice that because of this sermon the number of people in Bohemia "under both kinds" had increased by six thousand. The two monsters with which the printer had decorated the sermon were providing proof for Luther's leanings toward the Bohemian heretics.

In the elector's reply he avoided the issue. He would not attempt to make a judgment about the pamphlet. However, he was hearing "that until this time the teachings of the same Martinus were honored and held to be Christian by many learned and understanding men." But Luther recognized that his writing had led to much bitterness. He had even heard that it was being said that it would not be a sin to kill him. And so it was declared: Luther was a Hus heretic, and Luther's point of view was incompatible with

that of a true Saxon. A story was being spread in all seriousness that Luther had been born in Prague and was raised by Hussites. It was claimed that his own father had confessed it to be true.

In response Luther felt compelled to give an answer to these attacks with a short work entitled, "An Explanation of Several Articles of Dr. Martin Luther in His Sermon of the Highly Valued Sacrament of the Holy and True Body of Christ." Concerning the distribution of the cup to the laity he went no further here than in his previous writing. "Therefore," he wrote, "I find fault with the Bohemians for not going along with the majority and obeying the ruling authority. Let one kind be enough for them." Since Luther himself had not yet come to a proper understanding of this doctrine he explained further, "To regard the appreciation of both kinds as a heresy is a disgrace to Christ and is blasphemy against the holy gospel and this Sacrament. For Christ instituted it in two kinds and it cannot be denied that the entire church throughout the world used both kinds for hundreds of years." But he proved that the Roman church had no reason to reproach Luther as he wrote, "But the fact that the Bohemians took both kinds in the sacrament is not the reason why they are reviled as heretics. For the Roman church never considered it to be heretical and was happy to hear someone offer a differing opinion, though he were educated as deeply and highly, as long and wide, as he might want to be. For the church permitted the Bohemian behavior long ago, as it is well known. What may be understood is that such usage never has been and never will be heresy, unless someone wanted to blame the Roman church for blasphemy, as though she commanded and permitted heretical teaching."

With great dexterity he led the blasphemers to the ignorance in their own theology when he said, "I also have noticed that the accusation of heresy comes from a number of ignorant individuals who were too weak in their knowledge of Scripture to debate with the Bohemians. Instead they resorted to avenge themselves with harsh accusations."

Luther demonstrated a very clever mind in the manner in which he used this work to address the accusation that he had been born a Bohemian. He wrote, "My friends seek such an accurate picture of me!

They shout that I was born in Bohemia, raised at Prague, instructed in Wycliffe's* doctrines (Footnote: John Wycliffe was a 14th century English theologian who translated the Bible into English and was a forerunner of the reformation as he fought against papal falsehoods and abuses. Hus was very grateful for his works.) and that my father has confessed to all of it. And so as to not omit anything they have interpreted my name, Luther, in Bohemian. Plus they explained in a manipulative way those two monsters published on my sermon pamphlet, as though I had given them as a sign to the Bohemians that they should retain the use of both kinds. On top of all that they show themselves to be so sharp-sighted that they have seen two geese in one monster, all because John Hus means John Goose in Bohemian."

"Where might I find two better looking carnival masks than these high-minded and depth seeing prophets claim? But because they are acting with such nobility and dedicated to the truth among the powerful, I had to have mercy on them and tell them about my birth:

"Dr. Martin Luther, born at Eisleben in the Earldom of Mansfeld."

"There is a noble, famous earldom located in the bishopric of Halberstadt and the principality of Saxony. Its name is Mansfeld. Nearly all of my gracious lords know my father and me personally. They include Count Guenther, Ernst, Hoyer, Gebhard, and Albrecht. So I was born in Eisleben, raised at Mansfeld, taught at Magdeburg and Eisenach, became a magister and an Augustinian at Erfurt, and am now a doctor in Wittenberg. I have not been in Bohemian territory near Dresden my entire life. Since I am in such a good mood, I could not withhold such information from my dear prophets, monster hunters and goose gagglers."

"Since these two monsters have been printed as they have, I plead with those who are high-minded to be gracious to me. For I truly have not the time to pay attention to what kind of picture, letters, ink, and paper my printer uses. It has never happened before nor have I ever expected that such things would be required of me."

"They also wrote that the Bohemians visited me and wrote to me. But I truly and heartily regret that the Bohemians have not come bravely to see me and have not written. I would happily and freely welcome them. In fact, I would do the same for everyone, Jews, Turks, the heathen, and yes, even you, my enemies. I hope that I would be acting properly and would not allow your poisonous breath to disturb a single hair."

At almost the same time as this defense of the sermon under attack was being offered, a new attack came against that same sermon. This was an attack of a much more serious nature in that it was the first official denunciation of Luther by a German bishop. It was prepared for publication in every way and it was officially posted. This was a declaration from the Bishop of Meissen, drawn up at the bishop's residence at Stolpen and discharged under the official seal of the spiritual court. In it Luther's pamphlet on the distribution of the Sacrament in both kinds was declared to be in opposition to the resolutions of the latest church decrees and this pamphlet was to be seized.

How should Luther respond to this latest attack? Should he proceed to oppose the bishop, thereby placing his forehead under his name against the whipping post? Or should he leave the bishop completely out of the matter and only attack the content? He chose the latter and issued a small pamphlet in German under the title, "Dr. Martin's Reply to the Slips of paper which Were Issued under the Official Seal of Stolpen." In it he chopped down on the decree so hard that the chips went flying. He explained that if he were a Bohemian and someone presented him with such a rotten and clumsily distorted face, he would not be able to refrain from thinking, "The Germans are drunk!" He also ventured the opinion that such a paper would be viewed, especially in Rome and before all reasonable men, as more clumsy than stupid (German: "mehr toelpisch denn stoelpisch").

"First," he continues, "the highly educated author of these slips of paper admits, and must admit, that I did not teach that both kinds should be extended, although it seems good to me. For I set forth my opinion as a rule or doctrine for no one. I have expressly stated my preference for a

common Christian council to deliberate this so that both elements could be distributed in obedience to the council's decrees. Since this paper-slip master has no basis for his position on this matter, I would gladly be instructed from his baseless wisdom why his council decision is better, while my council regulation is more scandalous. ... In addition this is not a small thing he has undertaken but a huge rupture of Roman authority and power regarding the Bohemian schism. The author of the poor, bare, naked slips of paper offers nothing as a basis for his position other than the latest Roman council. This council is not yet ten years old and is regarded as nothing in Rome itself and has achieved little respect in Germany and other countries. ... Then he draws in the Bible passage that obedience is better than sacrifice. That is exactly the same passage the Bohemians quote against us, and apply it more strongly. For they scold us as being disobedient to the gospel, in which both elements were ordained by Christ. But I notice that this master wants to teach us how to fence in this way, namely, that we give the Bohemians a sword in their hand and then strike blows against him with our bare head. I did write against the Bohemians and am still willing to write further, but the nice paper slip author crashes in on my work and paper slips me into confusion."

For the remainder of his response he ventured his opinion that in the end it takes no skill to knock down his writings and burn them. But refuting them takes brains, and there seems to be a shortage of them in the slip master. "Hence, burn away," he closed, "since you are surely the most alert and highly educated doctor and have solved everything with such little effort. With this move along, dear grudger, and remember that no matter how much you purr or growl, there are some who don't give a hoot."

Luther also issued a Latin response to the earlier German one that tore the decree into pieces. And to throw a new scare into his enemies, he declared that since the decree had already made his desire a crime, he tossed out the idea that a person might have a desire for a council to allow pastors once again to marry, the same permission that is granted to Greek pastors.

Luther's friends were terribly frightened as they watched that brave man aim his cannon and fire against an official decree of a high church court. When Spalatin seriously called to Luther's attention the danger he was throwing himself into, Luther answered that his enemies were in greater danger than he. He held that God's Word is a sword. It would not allow itself to be turned into a downy feather. He was not seeking anything, but there was One who was seeking something. Whether Luther himself stands or falls he gains or loses nothing. It was not his cause, but the gospel's cause, that he was pursuing.

What else the Meissner bishop might have done in reaction to Luther's response history will never know. For it happened that when Luther's answer to his slip of paper reached him he was sitting with Miltitz following the evening meal, "relaxing with a drink." Miltitz personally reported how he laughed lustily at the situation while the bishop was cursing away. The next day the bishop asked Miltitz to carry the pamphlet to Duke George. When he handed it to the duke, the duke read all of it and laughed "excessively" over it. This may have so halted the bishop that he stopped any further action against the pamphlet. The matter may have turned out differently if Eck had been present. He would have blown on the fire and added straw on top of it. Instead it was Miltitz who quickly poured water on the flames.

But Luther would get no rest because of it. A few weeks later he received the official condemning decisions from two universities, the one in Cologne and the one in Louvain. They had published and issued those judgments which required Luther's writings to be burned and Luther himself to be forced to recant. Printed along with them was an approval of those verdicts from the hand of Cardinal Hadrian of Torosa. But Luther soon paid the debt of a response. In his reply he exposed the pitiful behavior of his hasty and uncalled for judges, and said he would prove to them that he would take care of what they had left out. He stated that they had only condemned but not proven anything. He added that if he behaved as they had, there would be a fight. But it would be a fight such as women might have where one says, "No!" "It's true!" "It's not true!" "It is true!" In

conclusion he wrote, "It was not necessary for you to state openly that you did not like my concerns and that my concerns were in error. That I already knew and for that reason I let them be exposed. Nor did I have to search much deeper into the matter since you kept referring me to your authors as though they were unknown to me. But you must convince me from Scripture and powerful proof passages that what you are saying is true and what I am saying is not."

Luther had barely finished with the donkeys of Loewen and Cologne when he had to reach for defensive weapons anew. In May a publication from his old enemy, Silvester Prierias, was brought to him. In it Prierias was harping his song about the majesty of the pope on the same string but in a higher scale. This was really a portion of a writing he intended to be longer, but the rest never saw the light of day. Luther took this new publication to the whipping post with a new pamphlet complete with foreword, epilog, and marginal notes.

He had never before spoken of Rome as he did with these reactions to Silvester's writings. "If it is being held and taught," he wrote, "in these terms with the full knowledge of popes and cardinals—which I hope is not the case—then I state and testify freely with this publication that the true antichrist is sitting in the temple of God, Babel is ruling in it in gaudy reds and pinks, and the Roman court is Satan's synagogue."

"But should I offer even a small response to the apparent crazy insanity of these blaspheming devils? The best refutation is this that I merely allow his pamphlet to be published and disseminated as he has written it. It contains in itself a stronger refutation than any I could have desired."

"Hence read, dear reader, and weep that the glory of the Roman church has fallen to such depths. She not only conceives and consumes such heretical, blasphemous, satanic, and hellish poison, but she is also spreading it throughout the entire world. Let whoever wishes go and boast that the Roman church has never been stained with heresy. This individual

Silvester produces more than Arius, the Manichaeans, Pelagius, and all other heretics."

"If that is the faith of Rome, then blessed is Greece, blessed is Bohemia, blessed are all who have separated themselves from her and have left this Babylon. But all those who are in fellowship with her are damned. And I also personally declare that if the pope and the cardinals do not pluck out this blasphemous mouth of Satan and force him to recant, you may bear witness that I will not remain in the Roman church and will decry it, together with the pope and the cardinals, as the abomination that causes desolation, standing in the holy place. (Matthew 24:15)"

"Go on then, unblessed, damned, and blasphemous Rome. The wrath of God has finally come upon you as you have deserved. While so many prayers have been offered on your behalf, from day to day, you have striven to become more evil. We wanted to heal Babel, but she refused our help. May she then go on to be a house for the dragons, the unclean spirits, the goblins and monsters. And may she be, as she is called, a place of eternal confusion, filled to the brim with idols of greed, perjurers, apostates, Sodomites, sex-fiends ["Priapisten"], roving and prowling thieves, Simonists, and countless other prodigies, a new pantheon of godlessness. Take good care of yourself, dear reader. Apply some balm to my pain and don't neglect your compassion."

He ended the epilog with the following:

"I am exonerated and speak according to the words of Christ and Peter: If the count, the bishop, and every believing Christian do not admonish, punish, accuse, and correct the pope when he errs as a heathen, then they are all blasphemers of the way of the truth and deniers of Christ. They deserve to be eternally condemned along with the pope. I am finished."

Chapter 18

Rome before the Court of the Christian Laity

Dr. Eck had especially pressed Luther on the question of where the real church exists and what connection there is with the power of the pope. Luther had to have first sifted that question before the scholars. The conclusion of the previous chapter shows us how far the debate had taken him.

The Christian community needed to be instructed on what Luther had requested in his epilog to Prierius, namely that "every believing Christian" was to admonish and punish the pope and, wherever he did not improve, "hold him to be a heathen." Luther saw to it that this instruction took place, and again the enemy drove him to do so.

A new opponent came riding into battle on his high horse with much clattering and "seven swords." A Franciscan, Augustin von Alveld of Leipzig, burst onto the battlefield with Luther via a Latin work "from the apostolic seat." At first Luther did not deem it worth his while to make the effort to confront him. Instead he chose to hand the work over to one of his students to take him down a peg. But when that "Alved Ass" (in the sense of "donkey") translated his work into German, Luther himself wrote against him in German under the title, "From Popedom in Rome, against the Very Famous Roman in Leipzig." And so Luther now also brought before the people the matter, which von Alveld had dealt with in his work.

"Once again," he wrote in his foreword, "something new has come up on the plain. After all it has rained well this year, and many things have lately begun to sprout. Many have attacked me with disgraceful words and glorious lies and have not quite succeeded. Now at the head of those

attackers entering into the field are those brave heroes of Leipzig. Not only do they wish to be considered honorable, but they wish to conquer every challenger. They are quite well equipped. The likes of them have not attacked me before. With their helmets on their feet, their swords on top of their heads, their shields and breastplates on their backs, and their spears in their scabbards, their whole armor fits them quite well. It would be fair to think that a person would be afraid of them so that their efforts and intentions would not be in vain. If Leipzig produces such giants the soil must be rich indeed."

"But so that you understand my meaning, listen now: Silvester, Cajetan, Eck, Emser, and now Cologne and Lyon, earning honor and fame, have carried out their knightly quests against me. They would have been better advised to have tried to protect the pope and his indulgence from me in a different manner. As a last resort some have decided that their best strategy would be for them to attack me like the Pharisees attacked Christ. They would throw a single attacker against me. If he wins, we all win. If he loses, he alone has lost. That highly educated grudger thinks I won't catch on! Well then, in order that they don't fail in everything, I will pretend that I don't understand the game at all. In that way perhaps they will fail to notice that if I beat on the sack I had wanted to have the donkey as my target."

He then went on to plead that they might understand that he scoffs at this romanist and those behind him in holy sincerity and that he will confront such blasphemers only as they deserve.

Then he gets to the point, "For what is at stake is this," he wrote, "whether the papacy in Rome with its fraudulent power over all Christendom has, as they claim, arrived at this stage by divine order or by human order. And if that is so, whether one might truthfully say that all other Christians in the world are heretics and apostates, even though they profess a unity of spirit with us regarding the same baptism, sacrament, gospel, and all articles of faith. They differ only in that they do not allow their priests and bishops to be confirmed by Rome or, as so often happens now, to buy the office with money, as the Germans have allowed

themselves to be aped and fooled — I have contended and still contend that those people are not heretics and apostates but perhaps better Christians than we."

He then informs his Germans about what they have allowed the pope to do to them. "The Bishop of Mainz has purchased nearly eight bishop mantels from Rome, each one costing about 30,000 guilders, not to mention the countless bishoprics, prelacies, and fiefs. This is how they blow their noses at us German fools. Then they tell us according to divine command no one may have a bishop without the authority of Rome. I am amazed that Germany, although only one half is spiritual, would give one penny to those unspeakable, unaccountable, and unfaithful Roman thieves, bullies, and robbers. — The pope does not defend us from this blasphemous villainy, as anyone can see through his fingers. Still they regard such a worldly villain higher than the gospel of God and imply that we are damned fools. After all it is according to divine command that the pope has his hand in the entire brew and does what he wants with everyone, as though he were a god on this earth."

Then he delves a little deeper into Alveld's work. "I recognize three basic points," he wrote, "with which that prolific noble pamphlet of the Leipzig Romanist is attacking me. The first and strongest is that he defames me. He calls me heretical, insane, a blind fool, possessed, a snake, a poisoned worm, and many other such names. He does so not once but throughout the entire pamphlet on nearly every page. ... Since this Romanist himself asserts that the Jews conquered Christ on the cross with such defamation, I, too, must submit to being captured. I must further admit that so much defamation, condemnation, abuse, and blasphemy is valid. The Romanist doctor has overcome Luther, and I must allow this fundamental statement to stand."

"The second basic attack", he continued, "the Romanist derives from natural reason. He maintains that every community on earth must have a head and so Christianity must likewise have a head. Next he shows how foolish it would be to try to prove from reason that something exists by divine order. Then he destructively proves that his opponent's reasoning

cannot stand, even by the use of reason. He shows how the Romanist makes the big mistake when he concludes that the visible community is the church. I can well see," he kept writing, "that this poor dreamer would hold to his opinion that a Christian congregation is like any other worldly organization. Thus he makes it clear that he has never learned what Christianity or the Christian Church means. ... Therefore I must first explain to this uncouth brain and to the others who are misled by him what Christianity and the Head of Christianity truly are."

Thereafter Luther follows through with the concept that Christianity is a spiritual Church, the Communion of saints, which is united through faith. As Christ himself said, his kingdom is not of this world, and it does not come outwardly but is found inside of his people. "Therefore whoever says that an outward assembly or union constitutes Christianity, he is forcefully speaking his own opinion. And if anyone were to draw this teaching from Scripture, he would be leading divine truth to his lies and making God into a false witness. That is what this miserable Romanist is doing, when he submits everything that has been written about Christianity to the outward splendor of the Roman authority. Still he cannot deny the fact that the greater section of this mass of leaders, especially Rome itself, are not in spiritual unity, that is in true Christianity, because of their unbelief and evil way of life. ... From this it follows, as indeed it must, that just as being united with Rome does not make one a Christian, so being outside of Rome does not make one a heretic or unchristian. ... Therefore it must also be wrong to say that to be under the Roman church is a divine command."

After he explained what Christianity is, Luther also showed who her head is. He wrote that Christianity is a spiritual Church; therefore it cannot have a worldly head. Much more importantly the head of the church is Christ, and only Christ. The Apostle said this clearly (Ephesians 4:15, 16). But should one ask, who the prelates and the bishops are, even a lay member can answer and say with the Apostle: They are messengers and servants. Even here no one stands above another, as Christ sent out all of the apostles with equal authority. "The fact that the pope subjects all of those messengers under himself is the same as if a count's messenger were

to stop all the other messengers and send them out according to his own will, while he himself would go nowhere. Would that please the count? He would surely find out about it."

What Luther said he also proved from the Apostles' Creed. He wrote, "All this is confirmed through the Article: I believe in the Holy Spirit, a holy Christian Church, a Communion of saints. No one speaks as follows: I believe in the Holy Spirit, a holy Roman church, a communion of the Romans. Thus it is clear that the holy church is not bound to Rome but is as wide as the world. It is gathered together in one faith, spiritually, not physically. For what a person believes is neither physical nor visible. The outward signs by which one can recognize where that church exists in this world are baptism, the sacraments, and the gospel, not Rome or this or that place. For where there is baptism, the sacraments, and that gospel, saints will be present without a doubt, even if they were only a lot of children in their cribs. Therefore I advise this Romanist to go to school for another year and learn what Christendom and the head of Christianity are, before he tries to expel poor heretics with such deep, wide, and long dissertations."

The third point which the Leipzig "Alphabeter" set forth was this, that the Old Testament was a preview of the New Testament. Since the Old Testament is said to have had a physical high priest, therefore the New Testament also has to have one, since Christ says that, "Not the least stroke of a pen will be unfulfilled." Luther took him to task on this as well. He showed that, if the physical models of the Old Testament have to be filled physically down to the last detail, if the model of the Old Testament high priest is to be completely fulfilled, then the pope should also take a virgin for his wife, not allow his hair to be cut, own no land, obey the king, and let himself be circumcised, all things that the high priest did. Instead the pope despises and forbids marriage, has a bald head, has stolen land, cities, and estates, and wants to be the king of all kings. Where do you find any fulfillment in this?

Luther again took this opportunity to demonstrate how these matters had to be fulfilled spiritually and not outwardly or physically. He again made the point that Scripture had to be the source of understanding

rather than reason. In addition Scripture provides further information unknown to the Romanist. The Old Testament high priest was not a pre-figure for the pope, but a pre-figure for Christ, the true, spiritual, heavenly High Priest. "So what do you say to that, you highly educated Romanist?" he asked him. "Paul said that Christ was the extension of the high priest; you say St. Peter. Paul says that Christ did not enter a temporal tabernacle; you say he is in a temporal building in Rome. Paul says that Christ entered it once and had achieved eternal salvation. Thus he fulfills the image completely, spiritually and heavenly, which you still present as earthly and physical. What do you want to do now?"

"I'll give you a bit of advice: Take your fist and smash it into his mouth and tell him that he has lied, is a heretic, a poisoner, as you are doing to me. But if you claim that Peter was also foretold in Aaron along with Christ, I say why stop there? Why not go on to say that the Turk was foretold in Aaron; who can stop you, since you enjoy such useless prattle? But you have promised to fence on the basis of Scripture. Do so, and leave your dreams at home."

But that papists based their practice on the passage, Matthew 16:19, the Lord tells Peter, "I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth," etc., Luther rebuts by pointing out that the Lord gave this power to all the apostles in Matthew 18:18. Indeed, he had given it to the entire Communion of Saints. In addition he did the same in John 20:23, giving the power to all the disciples, and that the power to forgive and not to forgive sins on earth is lent to the entire Communion. In light of these other passages one must then interpret that just as Peter, in the name of all of the disciples, made his confession in answer to the question: "Who do you say I am?" so all are addressed to Peter. Truly he proves extensively that this passage, including the previous passage (Matthew 16:18, "You are Peter, and on this rock will I build my church" etc.), as well as the passage of John 20:15-17, which the popes had used to make their claims, "are stronger against the papacy than any other."

What stand should a Christian take over against the papacy? Let us hear what Luther had to say at that time.

"My opinion of the papacy is as follows: We see that the pope occupies the position of power over all of the bishops. He could not be in that position without the counsel of God (though I do not believe he received it from the gracious counsel of God but rather out of his wrathful counsel, the counsel that in addition to the world's plague God also permits people to oppress others). Since I do not want anyone to oppose divine counsel but to fear it, therefore honor that position and bear it with patience in the same way as if we were under the Turk. In that way you will do it no damage. But I would like to write about two points:

"The first: I will not tolerate it, that people establish new articles of faith and scold all other Christians throughout the world, blaspheme and condemn them as heretics, apostates, or unbelievers, just because they are not under the pope. It is not required that for his (the pope's) sake God and his saints on earth be blasphemed.

"The other: Everything else which the pope establishes, constructs, or does I will receive as follows: I shall first judge it on the basis of Scripture. As far as I am concerned he must submit to Christ and allow himself to be judged through Holy Scriptures.

"...When these two things are permitted to me I shall leave the pope alone, yes even help that he be held in as high of honor as is always desirable. Where these two things are not permitted to me, I shall want him neither as my pope nor as Christ. He who does not allow these things is making an idol; but I will not worship him.

"But I will allow as follows, that kings, counts, and other nobles agree that all appointments from the bully in Rome be denied and that bishops' cloaks and fiefs stay outside of the secular rule.

"It is a pity that kings and counts have such poor devotion to Christ and that his honor moves them so little that they allow this disgraceful ascendancy in Christendom to maintain the upper hand; at the same time that they see that those in Rome are not mindful except to evermore increase insanity and multiply misery on earth so that there is no hope

except by way of worldly power. If this Romanist comes again I will have more to say. This is enough for now. God help us that we just once open our eyes. Amen."

From these statements we recognize three things: first, that Luther wanted consciences set free from papal authority, and that in matters of faith and doctrine the pope has no authority at his disposal. second, that he wanted the people to respect the external order of things as they existed in church management at that time. He personally respected the papacy as a cross that had come upon the Western church and had to be borne since God was allowing it and the worldly governments were not stopping it; but third, that he considered it the duty of existing governments to put an end to this misbehavior, instead of supporting it as they had up to this time.

This was not some idea that he tossed out on the spur of the moment. At the end of the quotation is an indication that he had more in mind concerning this subject. That is how it was. He had wielded his pen to impress on the people the importance of the message of Scripture. He applied himself to that subject extensively in order to light several candles "in regard to the papacy at Rome." But as he wrote to Spalatin he was ordering his thoughts for a letter to the entire German nobility, who were still clanking about in the dark with their spurs.

So now we see Luther turning his attention to the "laity," the common people and the nobles. The failed attempts at reform from the previous century offered sufficient proof that there was no hope for a reformation led by clerics, the popes and bishops. What Luther had personally experienced up to this point was further proof. As long as the clergy kept enslaving poor consciences, the shackles which had been welded onto Christianity would not fall. Luther had recently experienced how little the high spiritual powers were ready or inclined to listen to the Spirit of God who was allowing himself to be proclaimed through the blasts from Luther's trumpet. He had also seen how they viewed the common man with fear and concern. After following Spalatin's advice he had turned to the Bishops of Mainz and Merseburg and received polite answers from them. But from those letters he learned that those high lords had little time

to pay attention to Luther's writings. They only feared that the people might read them and become unruly because of them. The Archbishop Albrecht of Mainz and Magdeburg, the highest ranking church official in Germany, was occupied more with his debts which were exceeding his income. He was more dedicated to the pursuit of pleasure than to deal with the questions of Luther. They may have kept Luther busy day and night, but the high lord described them in his letter as being trivial.

From this it can be easily understood why Luther was turning away from "the spiritual powers, which had become "very inattentive," to the "lay powers," hoping God might help his church through them.

But when one takes a look at these "lay people" one has to again admit that as they then existed, they in no way gave the impression that they were the people through whom a new and happy reformation would take place. The huge mass of people, existing in horrible ignorance, raw understanding, and spiritual ruin, first had to learn the language of Canaan, so to speak. If at this time a reformer had spoken to them as a nonsense spouting enthusiast, calling the people to action to throw off the disgraceful yoke of Roman slavery, he would only have produced bloody confusion. The result would have been a pitiable spiritual generation of homeless children, who either would have been miserably destroyed or at last happy to be again under papal rule. We shall get to know some such ill-favored reformers.

Here Luther proceeded differently. We have already noticed how with amazing energy from his pulpit in Wittenberg he worked hard to build up his congregation spiritually. He expanded that work during the time we are describing. In both Sunday and weekly sermons he proclaimed to the old and young alike those important truths of salvation, and he did so in a simple and thorough manner. He preached both Sunday and holiday texts from the established pericope. In addition he preached about entire books of the Bible, both, the Old and the New Testament. He also used the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer to especially instruct the young.

Smoothly, and with simple yet powerful words, Luther gave his numerous hearers the Word of life, which sets consciences free and builds the hearts on the one foundation already laid, Jesus Christ. And so he began to draw them away from that useless religion of salvation by good works, as they had been raised under the papacy. All this work, which would have been enough to keep one fully occupied, he carried out along with all of his other duties. He did it all without pay, only now and then receiving little gifts from his magistrate in recognition of his work.

Luther was also busy working in wider circles to have people grow spiritually. He accomplished this by producing more and more printed works for the common people as they flowed from his active and nimble pen. In these works he wrote in a simple style about the Ten Commandments, the Articles of Faith, the Lord's Prayer, Repentance, the Confession of Sins, Holy Baptism, Holy Communion, Good Works, and the Proper Way to Prepare for Death. It didn't bother him, as he knew that many of his German pamphlets were looked down upon as being too simple. That he was capable of producing works of scholarship, even better works than those were producing, who looked down on him, he had sufficiently proved and would continue to prove.

On the other hand, his enemies were incapable of producing simple pamphlets to counter those produced by Luther. Numerous copies of these small pamphlets, numbering at least 100 in 1520, were being dispersed in part by itinerant sellers. They offered no other books so that they would split up the people's attention. Some formed reading circles, in which they purchased copies jointly and circulated them. There were also pamphlet circles which obtained the new editions and spread them here and there throughout the country by way of those itinerant sellers. The one who was unable to read them himself would have others read them to him. Traveling students were especially useful for this purpose, for they entered the homes of citizens and farmers. As people's enjoyment of these works grew, so did their taste and their hunger for more. Luther, who said he would have been satisfied if he had been able to help only one individual improve, had become a leader of thousands as he brought them the

knowledge of salvation and guided them to the life that comes from God. He is the God, whom for such a long time the papists had allowed to wither away and die. So it happened that this Wittenberg doctor, having come from among the common people and possessing such a warm heart toward them, wrote them wonderful pamphlets in their own language. And he, in turn, became well-known, worthy, and dear to them.

Just as St. Paul had once drawn Timothy, Titus, and others to his side to help in the work entrusted to him, so Luther also strove to the goal of equipping others to bring the Gospel out of the thousand-year dust, back into daylight for the people. He did this by using his professorship at the university. He was instructing about 400 students who had flocked to his classroom at that time. He taught them Holy Scripture and drew for them a powerful theology from this well of the water of life. Since 1516 he had been explaining the letter to the Galatians to his students. He once again took up his lectures on the Book of Psalms. In order to be able to better qualify himself to interpret Scripture he applied more effort to his study of the original languages. This was especially true of the Greek language, since his colleague Melancthon was able to provide him with such excellent tutoring. Since he assigned such a high value to the study of languages and was diligent in his own studies, he also saw to it that his students would be well schooled in those languages as well. So that there would be no shortage of books to be used in the university, Luther took pains that a capable printer, the son of a Leipzig printer, Lotter, settled in Wittenberg and that he equipped his shop with German, Latin, and Greek letters.

But for those scholars who were not able to hear his verbal presentations, he issued in 1519 a Latin commentary of the letter to the Galatians and a treatment of a number of the Psalms. These works also found wide distribution. The commentary on Galatians was immediately translated in far away Spain into Spanish.

Luther's work was also receiving validation at other universities. For example, the younger generation of "the poets" at Erfurt began to read and study the New Testament. By this time Luther was no longer standing alone in the theological scholarship for serving the cause of the Reformation.

Melanchthon especially rendered valuable assistance at the university, and Luther rated him higher than anyone else. In addition to teaching Greek Melanchthon had also begun to serve as a teacher of theology. Through Luther's prompting he lectured on Paul's letter to the Romans for the first time in 1519. From these lectures grew the first comprehensive teaching manual for the Lutheran church. This textbook of the Christian faith was Melanchthon's "Loci." Almost against his will Magister Philippus was awarded the theological rank of Biblical Baccalaureus, a rank that satisfied him for the rest of his life. He also worked along with Luther by producing some small works in Latin. Luther boasted of him as the most powerful enemy of Satan and the scholastics, and that he was accomplishing as much as many Martins together. He claimed that "the little Greek" surpassed him in theology.

Luther did not only have his Timothy at his side in Wittenberg. By this time here and there preachers began to present gospel truth from their pulpits. Their parish children were amazed, receiving Gospel truths they had never heard before. Thus the new planting of Gospel teaching in Germany had a happy beginning, and care was being taken that this sowing would continue to be carried on by the hands of numerous sowers. As the planted seeds took root and grew toward maturity, so the Reformation was also prosperously moving on toward ripening.

The German nobility was an important component of the German laity. Luther was now bringing proud Rome before their court. With an eye on the conditions of that time he made the judgment to direct the efforts, which we have described, to them. Thus Luther directed a special Reformation work to them, as was just mentioned. In it he, more extensively and in greater detail than ever before, laid bare the harms being done by the papal church and gave instructions about what was needed to bring about a reformation.

Chapter 19

Luther and the German Nobility

The flower of German knighthood had been watching the activity of the Roman clergy with resentment for a long time. As they lived in their castles located on the heights behind thick walls and wide moats, they were often in isolation. But they observed the greed of the church impoverishing the old noble families while the high and low tonsured were growing wealthy off the fat of the land. They claimed one piece of land after another and annexed one vineyard after another. That foreign snake looped its coils tighter and narrower. Secular authorities of the kingdom had repeatedly brought charges against Rome, but always in vain.

Then Luther raised his voice, not from the spires of a castle built on the rocky crags along the Rhine River but from the fortress of God's Word. God's Word meant little to the knights. As a result it took some time for them to realize that Luther's uprising had a far deeper meaning than a monkish quarrel. Rome had thought the same at first. But the writing of the Wittenberg doctor, which had influenced the citizens and the farmers, would also influence the sturdy castles of the knights. After the Leipzig debate it appeared as though Luther would no longer be able to remain in Wittenberg. The leading noble of German knighthood offered him a place of refuge in his mighty castle. From there Luther would be able to continue scoffing at his enemies. And he was not the only one to have considered it an honor to have Luther under his protection.

However, it turned out that there was no pressing need for Luther to escape at that time. Although attempts were made by Rome to estrange the elector and his Doctor Martinus from one another by way of bribes and threats, the same attempts accomplished nothing. They failed because of the good opinion the elector had in his inner thoughts and because of the care the wise Frederick was taking to not do anything against the truth. In

addition he must have known that Luther's teaching had already sunk deep roots into the hearts of the people. And if he hadn't noticed, men like Spalatin would have told him.

That is the way he responded to Valentin Teutleben who had warned him from Rome that Luther's actions could become a problem for him. The elector wrote that Luther's teaching had already sunk deep root into the hearts of the German people, and a person should be on guard lest he attack Luther with power instead of good reason. If he did, the issue wouldn't be settled in Germany without unrest and rebellion. Indeed, the elector did not want to take responsibility for Luther's teachings. He repeatedly explained that he would not dare to render a verdict in such matters. But he wanted Luther to have the opportunity to defend his teachings before competent judges without personally endangering himself. So when he attended an election of the Caesar at a diet in Frankfurt, he met with the Archbishop of Trier, whom Miltitz had chosen as Luther's judge. In that meeting he agreed that he would bring Luther along to the next diet where he would receive a hearing.

Miltitz had not stopped his plotting. He attempted to endear himself to the elector by now formally presenting him with the consecrated rose. The elector, however, did not let himself to be bribed and accepted the gift in a cool manner. He did not permit any sort of ceremony but directed instead that the rose be handed over to his counselors. But when Miltitz again sought a meeting with Luther (which later took place at Lieberwerda), he consented and bade Luther to present himself, readily and willingly, for the meeting at which he would appear before the Archbishop of Trier. Luther would do so. But when Miltitz later alleged that Luther had promised to travel to Trier with him to carry out the elector's desires for this journey and insisted upon it, it was explained that it wasn't going to happen that way. Luther would not be permitted out of Germany without sufficient assurances of his safety. Instead Miltitz should have prevented Eck and others from attacking Luther and forcing him to continue the battle. So Luther left it up to the decision which the archbishop and the elector had

reached at Frankfurt, even though he would have been willing to take the risk of a journey to Trier, had his elector so commanded.

Of course the count encouraged Luther to keep himself under restraint, communicating this through Spalatin. Luther complied with the elector's desires as much as possible. That is why Luther, at the prompting of the elector, sent his letters to the Archbishop of Mainz and Magdeburg and to the Bishop of Merseburg. But Luther was comfortable enough with the elector to let him know that his restraint had boundaries, boundaries which he would cross if need be. That was the reply he gave to the elector when he was presented with the letters of admonition from Rome. Since he was already burdened with sin, he would not make himself further guilty by failing to carry out his office or denying the truth to the detriment of many thousands of souls by giving in at this time. He sought neither money nor honor and if he were forbidden to speak, then let them take away his office and allow him to live and die in some lonely corner. But if he were to stay in office, then he must also be allowed freedom to exercise that office. Therefore he publicly recognized what the elector had done and thanked him both privately and publicly. This he did, holding his elector in highest esteem, even though the elector could have intervened for the truth more strongly had he so desired.

When he was working on his interpretations of the Psalms in 1519, he dedicated the work to the count. He included the following as a portion of the dedication: "Your highness has garnered so many concerns, conditions, expenses, and dangers because of this monster, which was given birth through me because of this indulgence affair! The whole country knows that the count has shown more concern for me than I have for myself. In my boldness I have rolled the dice, prepared to go all out and fully expected the worst. I had hoped, if worse came to worst, to be excused from my task of instructing others. I could then find a corner and get away from this notoriety that I detest. But then your highness stepped in. While I was ready to endure whatever they chose to throw at me, your highness would not let them."

Earlier on Trinity Festival of 1518, as he wrote to the pope, Luther had referred to the elector with these words, "If I were really the person that they are trying to describe me to be, ... it would have been impossible for the highly eminent count Frederick, duke of Saxony, elector of the empire, etc., to allow such a plague in his university. He is the most zealous lover of catholic and apostolic truth."

At this time Luther did not have sufficient cause to accept any of the invitations extended to him. In addition he was surely wise to remain safely at his post in Wittenberg. Nevertheless, the invitations he received from such men proved very dear to him. One individual, whom we earlier referred to as the flower of German chivalry, was Franz von Sickingen.

This heroic knight first saw the light of this world at Ebernburg castle. He was a veteran who had led the way in many daring battles. The beat of his recruiting drum was answered by thousands, both lance-bearing knights and men of arms. As they fought under his coat of arms, he acquired the highest reputation for bravery as well as the respect of the most noble in the kingdom. His voice carried great weight in the leader's counsel. At the same time he kept an open mind when it came to the study of knowledge. He had recently demonstrated his ability to Luther's most vocal enemies, the Dominican monks. During the straining heresy trial of Reuchlin, the great uncle of Melancthon, he took them down a peg. The trial was an expensive one for the accused and the knight granted him 111 gold guilders for his defense.

At this time he was joined by another German knight, Ulrich von Hutten. A descendant of an ancient noble line, he came into the world in 1488 in the Steckelberg castle on the Main River. At the age of eleven he was placed in the monastery at Fulda. But with the help of a friend he made a clandestine escape from those hated monastic walls in 1504. He had studied in Cologne and then later in Frankfurt on the Oder River where he became Magister. After a number of cruises back and forth to Rostock he next worked as a teacher of ancient languages. He had come to Wittenberg in 1510 and from there traveled on until surfacing in Pavia. When this city was conquered his residence was plundered, although he

had only a few possessions. Then, after a short stay in Bologna, he became a soldier of Caesar because he faced such bitter poverty. After a short stay in his



Woodcut of Ulrich von Hutten

fatherland he traveled to Rome in order to study law. He returned to Germany in 1517 and was crowned as the Caesar's poet. Caesar crowned him in person before his court using the laurel wreath which had been woven by the Caesar's beautiful daughter. Finally, the next year he entered into service at the court of the wealthy Archbishop Albrecht von Mainz. He even traveled with him to the diet of Augsburg where Luther was to have his hearing before Cajetan. But if you were to conclude from his history that this man must have been an obedient, faithful, and submissive servant of the Roman court, you would be mistaken.

Even prior to his acceptance in the court of Mainz, Hutten had distinguished himself in a way that brought no honor to the papal clerics. In addition to some biting satires he reissued a work by the scholar, Laurentius Valla, who had died about a half century earlier. It was dealing with the fabricated, "Donation of Constantine."

This seven hundred year old document contained an important truth regarding the papacy. It declared that long ago the Caesar Constantine the Great had ceded his old eastern capital, Rome, to Pope Silvester. After a friend had sent this to Luther in February of 1520, Luther first recognized it as a lie. "Good God," Luther wrote to Spalatin after reading it, "How dark and worthless are the degenerated Romans! They have not only claimed but they have ruled under this for centuries already. One has to wonder about the judgment of God. ... I am so deeply troubled, that I hardly doubt any longer that the pope is truly the antichrist, for whom the world is waiting. His whole life, his actions, his speeches, and his judgments fit the description so closely."

Hutten had, in addition to this document, followed up with a number of his own pamphlets filled with biting sarcasm. He even continued his writing while serving at the court of Mainz. But soon complaints arrived from Rome. The court had to bid the unbridled and restless knight farewell. That is when Hutten found protection and lodging with Franz von Sickingen. As ever blacker storm clouds were filling the southern sky, Luther was anticipating the receipt of a papal ban. Hutten von Sickingen was given the task of sending an invitation to Luther. At the beginning Hutten did not

write to Luther directly. Instead he wrote to Melanchthon, informing him that the noble Sickingen was inviting Luther to accept his protection in case he was no longer safe in Wittenberg. Then a letter from Hutten was sent directly to Luther. In it the knight expressed his joy to the doctor that both of them had God on their side. He warned Luther to carefully keep his eyes open lest their good cause would lose him, their vigorous vanguard officer. He assured Luther that if his enemies came with force, his friends were ready and able to meet them with greater force.

At the same time Luther received similar offers and promises from the French knight, Silvester von Schauenburg, whose son was attending the University of Wittenberg. In his message he told Luther that he would find a welcome refuge with him if his own ruler withdrew his protecting hand. He also wrote that he intended, with the help of God, to gather 100 nobles who would protect Luther from his enemies until his cause had been decided by a reliable judge or Christian council.

And Luther? What did those promises, coming from castles built on rocky heights and issued by steel-clad heads of the knighthood of the German nobility accomplish before this German farmer- and miner-son of Wittenberg? Do you think he left his cell, his lectern, and his pulpit to take a place in the Ebernburg castle? No. Perhaps he declined the knightly offer in a spirit of pettiness? Again, no. On the contrary, he well knew how to understand the mindset which prompted their offers; and it is easy to see how he could appreciate the effect such offers had on his enemies. He immediately forwarded those letters to Spalatin with the encouragement that those Romish lords who were warning the elector to take action against Luther ought to reconsider. After all, if they should succeed in their plan to get Luther out of Wittenberg, their position would not improve but worsen. There were men in central Germany who were prepared to take him under their powerful protection. The result would be that he could attack Rome more fervently than at the present, when he had to be more circumspect because of the elector and university. He wrote obstinately, "Those gainsayers should know that they dare not take credit for what I have failed to do to them. I have spared them, and their tyranny, and their

reputations, not because of them but out of respect for the count's reputation and his connection with the university. So far as it concerns me, the die has been cast. I despise Rome's rage and its favor. I will not be reconciled with them, nor will I have fellowship with them. They may condemn and burn my writings. I, on the other hand, as long as I don't run out of fire, will condemn and publicly burn the entire papal delegation, that nest of vipers, and there will be an end to the meekness I have shown up to this point. The enemies of the gospel will no longer be puffed up by that meekness."

However, it was not the German knights who made Luther so confident and courageous. Rather, he wrote to Spalatin, "Though I do not despise their aid, I will rely on nothing but Christ's protection. He is the One who most likely gave such a spirit to Schauenberg." (*Perhaps in this context we realize why Luther called Psalm 118 his favored prayer.*) He did not want to hide under the wings of the nobility; no, he wanted to be the one who would elevate the German nobility. He wanted those nobles, who in their ignorance did not grasp what he was attempting, to soar high into the brilliant blue sky with the powerful wing-stroke of his eagle-like spirit, much rather, by the Spirit of God. For it was the Spirit of God who would lift him, so that they together might be seen plummeting down upon the devastators of the garden of the German church and nation. And so he quickly dipped his pen and wrote another strong work to that other part of the German laity, "To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation for the Improvement of Their Christian State."

"The time of staying silent has passed, " that is what he wrote in a letter to his friend and colleague, Nikolaus v. Amsdorf, dated June 23. "The time for speaking has come, as we read in Ecclesiastes. In keeping with our struggle I have gathered together several pieces which apply to the improvement of the Christian state. I bring them to the attention of the Christian nobles of the German nation to see whether God would help his church through those laymen, since the spiritual leaders who ought to be responsible have failed completely. I am sending all of this to you, so that you will use your abilities to judge the work and wherever necessary

improve it. I am well aware that I am not above reproach. I do not consider myself as being so lofty that I, a commoner of little regard, may be the only one to address important matters of such high and grand import. It is not as though there is no one else in the world besides Luther who can address the Christian state and give advice to such important people."

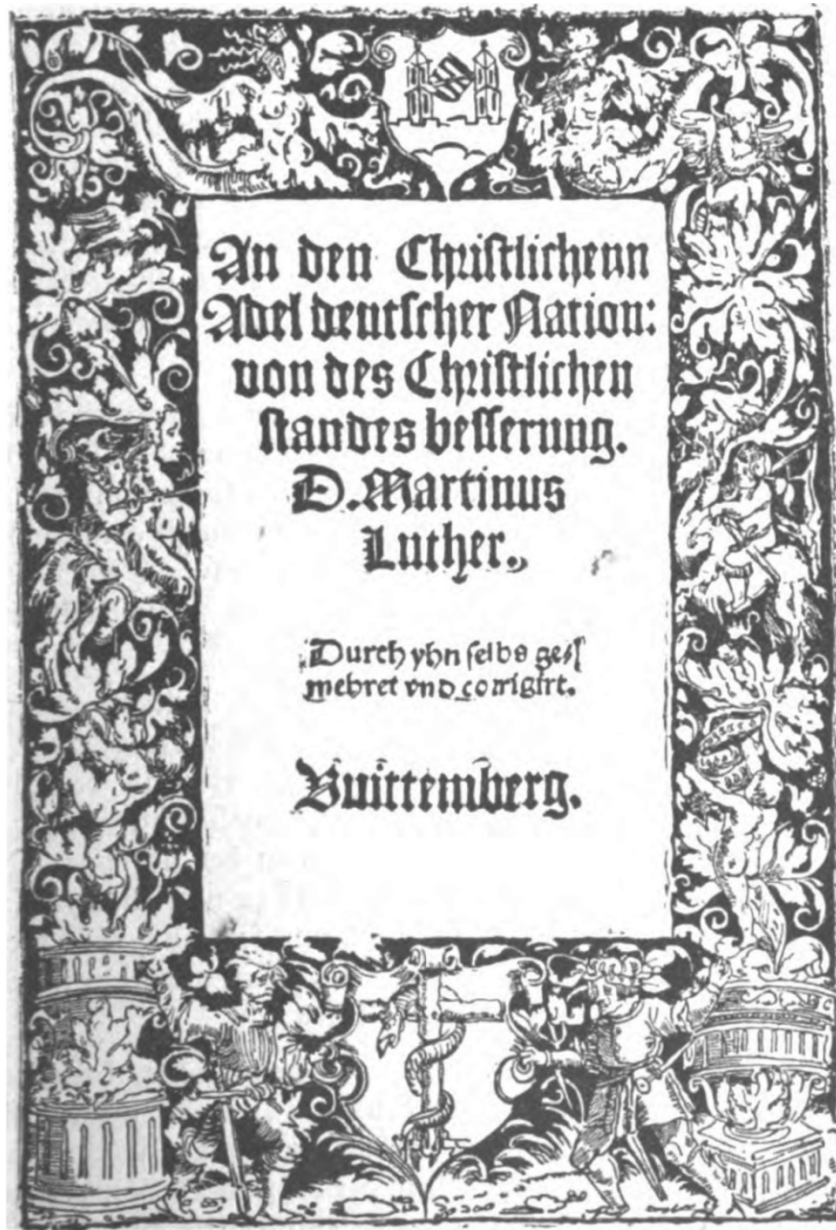
"I beg your pardon; let anyone who wishes reprehend me. Perhaps I still owe one foolish act to my God and to the world. This goal I have set for myself, should I succeed, to pay a debt verbally and at the same time become a court jester. If I do not succeed, I still have one thing going for me: No one shall buy a cap for me, or shear my head

"Also, because I am not only a court jester but also a doctor who has vowed to uphold Holy Scripture, I am glad for the opportunity I have been given to fulfill my vow in the same foolish courtly manner. I ask that you would excuse me among those who are of self-controlled learned rank; for I do not know how to earn the favor and grace of those who are very learned. I so often sought their favor and grace with much effort, but now no longer want or give heed to it. God help us so that we seek not our own honor, but his honor alone. Amen."

Luther turns to the "Most illustrious, highly powered majesty of Caesar and Christian Nobles of the German Nation" with his work. He explains that it was not indiscretion but the huge need of his misery-laden nation, which forced him to cry out. He desires, with the help of God, to illustrate the trickery and malice of those who are responsible for this misery. He adds, "God has given us a young and noble leader, so that many hearts may awake toward a good and growing hope. Along with this gift it is proper for us to add our efforts to make the best possible use of our time of grace."

For the "best possible use of our time of grace" Luther does not envision the plan that might be countered with might. And so he expands on what has just been quoted. "The first thing we need to do is that we begin in all sincerity, taking care not to put our trust in great power or logic,

as though all the authority in the world belongs to us. For it is not God's will to begin a good work by trusting in one's own power and reason, nor will he



Title page of the original second main edition of Luther's Address

"To the German nobility of the German Nation about the Improvement of the Christian Conditions"

allow for that. ... The matter has to be approached with despairing of our personal strength, humbly trusting in God, and sincere prayer of seeking God's help. We need to envision nothing else except the laments and needs of Christendom in its misery, without a thought of what the evil men deserve. If this is not the case then the entire game would start with a big show, but once started, the evil spirits would cause such a calamity that the whole world would float in blood, and nothing would be accomplished. Therefore let us handle the matter at hand with the fear of God and act wisely. The greater the power, the greater the misfortune, when matters are not handled with fear of God and in humility. Until now the popes and Romans with the help of the devil have caused confusion among the kings. They may well continue to do so if we try to do battle with our own power and skill without the help of God."

He follows by getting to the heart of the matter with which he is concerned and begins to "illuminate" the treachery and malice of the degenerate Romans. He writes:

"The Romanists have erected three walls around themselves in a skillful and clever manner. Those walls have so well protected them up to this day that no one wanted to reform them. The result was that Christendom has experienced a horrible fall.

"The first wall which they erected protected them when being pressured by the secular powers. They declared that secular power has no authority over them, but rather the spiritual is above the secular.

"The second wall they positioned when they were being taken to task by Holy Scripture. They declared that no one except the pope is allowed to interpret Holy Scripture.

"The third wall they invented when they were threatened with a Council. They asserted that no one could summon a council except the pope...

"May God now help us by giving us one of the trumpets which caused the walls of Jericho to tumble down, that we may also blow down these straw and paper walls."

We now turn to some excerpts from those writings in which Luther advised the majesty of Caesar and the Christian nobles of the German nation. He writes:

"It has been learned that pope, bishops, priests, and monastic residents are to be called the spiritual state. Counts, lords, common professionals and plowmen are the worldly state, which is a pretty fair assessment and worth noting. But no one should be intimidated by this for this reason: the spiritual state actually consists of all Christians. There is no difference among them except as to their office, ... for only these three, baptism, the gospel, and faith, determine what is spiritual and a part of Christendom. ... If a small group of upright Christian lay people were to be captured and carried into a desert without a priest consecrated by a bishop, the following would be possible. Considering their situation they could meet together and choose one of their number, married or not, and commit to him the office of baptizing, holding mass, absolving and preaching. That man would truly be as much of a priest as if all the bishops and popes had consecrated him.

"From this it is derived that in the case of an emergency anyone can baptize or grant absolution. Such a thing would not be possible if we were not all priests, ... though not everyone may be fit to hold such an office. For though we are all priests, no one is to put himself forward or establish himself without our approving and choosing him to be a priest. We all have equal power in this process. For no one may take for himself such a public position without the desires and direction of the congregation. What's more, if someone were elected to such an office only to be removed from that office because of his abuse of his position, he would be the same as he had been before. Therefore a priest in his position should be no different than any other office in Christendom. While he is in office he is above others; but when he has been removed, he is a farmer or citizen like everyone else.

"Hence, it follows that lay member, priest, count, bishop, as they are called, are not basically different from one another either in the spiritual or secular realm, except in regard to their office or work, but not on account of their status, for all of them are of an equal spiritual rank. Similarly, those who are called "spiritual", i.e., priests, bishops, or popes, are not to be set apart from other Christians into an elite group. They are no worthier, except in their duty to handle the Word and the Sacraments. That is their work and office. Thus the secular authority has the sword and the rod in his hand to punish the evil ones and to protect the upright. Therefore the secular Christian authority should carry out his office unhindered, regardless whether or not it pertains to pope, bishop, or priest. He who is guilty has to suffer. Whatever spiritual right is claimed to the contrary, is a lot of Roman dreamt up abuse.

"Thus, in my opinion, the first paper wall has come down. If we were to allow some human decision to put down divine command and truth, something which we had vowed in baptism to uphold with body and life, we would be held accountable for all the souls who would be abandoned and misled by it. The following declaration had to have been set up by the chief devil in person: It stands written in spiritual law that if the pope were so damagingly evil that he would lead a whole mass of souls to the devil, he could still not be deposed. In Rome they continue to build on this damned foundation of the devil and think that the whole world should be allowed to go to the devil rather than to take a stand against their bullying.

"The other wall is even weaker and more unfit, namely, that they alone want to be the master of Scripture. Even though throughout their entire lives they have learned nothing that it contains, they dare to assume that authority for themselves, dangling before us the vile claim that the pope cannot err in matters of faith, whether he is evil or holy ... and that they would make the decision as to what in Holy Scripture is needed or useful. Let us then burn the Scriptures and be satisfied with the ignorant lords of Rome. They have invented a fable in their malice. They cannot produce one letter whereby they can prove that the pope alone has the

right to interpret Scripture or to confirm its interpretation. They have claimed this authority for themselves. On top of all of this we are all priests, as was said before. We all have one faith, one gospel, one kind of sacrament. How should we not also have the power to test and judge what in our faith is right and what is false? Therefore it behooves every Christian to study his faith, to understand it, to defend it, and to condemn all false teaching.

"The third wall collapses by itself when the first two have fallen. For where the pope is acting contrary to Scripture, we owe it to Scripture to stand by the Bible, to punish the pope, and take steps against him according to the Word of God - Matthew 18.

Therefore, where the need demands it and the pope offends Christendom, anyone who is able should, as a faithful member of the entire body, begin to work toward a truly free Council. However there is no mention in Scripture (in German "geredt") of the fact of which they boast to have the power, namely that it is wrong to debate against them. There is no one in Christendom who has the power to do damage, or to forbid defending against damage. There is no power in the church except the power to improve. Therefore, let us hold on to this: Christian might cannot be used against Christ, as Paul says, "We cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth." (2 Cor. 13:8). But if Mother Church takes action against Christ, then it is the antichrist's or the devil's might, even if she should send downpours and hail in form of miracles and plagues.

"Herewith I hope that the false and fearful lies of the Romans are dismantled. They have been used by the Romans for a long time and have made consciences timid and weak. Those Romans are under the sword just as we are. They do not have the authority to interpret Scripture by their force and skill. They do not have the authority to prevent a council, or in connection with their recklessness to tax or bind one's conscience, or to take away freedom. When they do, they are truly the antichrist and the devil's synagogue and have nothing that is from Christ except the name.

"Now let us look at those issues which, if they love Christ and his Church, should receive just hearings in the councils and which should occupy popes, cardinals, bishops, and scholars day and night if they love the Church. But if they will not do so, then may the entire Church and the secular sword step in, despite their excommunicating and thundering.

"First, it is an abomination and frightening to watch how the holder of the highest office in Christendom boasts that he is Christ's vicar and St. Peter's successor. He lives in such a majestic fashion by worldly standards that no king or Caesar can equal him. The fact that he allows himself to be called the most holy and the most spiritual shows that he is more worldly than the world itself. He wears a threefold crown, while even the highest kings wear only one crown. If this is comparable to the poverty of Christ and St. Peter, then it stands as a new standard.

"They claim that he is a lord of the world. That is a lie. After all Christ, for whom he boasts to be the vicar and keeper of his office, said before Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world."

"Secondly, of what use are those people called cardinals in Christendom? I want you to know that Switzerland (including a section of France) and Germany had many rich monasteries, foundations, fiefs, and parishes. What is not known is that they could not simply be annexed to Rome. Cardinals were created and were given the bishoprics, monasteries, and prelates as their property and in this way trod divine service under foot. That is why one can now see that Switzerland is nearly empty. No Turk would have been able to ruin Switzerland that much and to stop the divine service. Now that Switzerland has been sucked dry, they have begun to come into the German nations, albeit gently; but watch and see how Germany will soon be like Switzerland. We already have several cardinals. The drunken Germans are not supposed to grasp what the Romans are looking for, until they no longer have a bishopric, monastery, parish, fief, dollar, or penny. As it is being declared, the antichrist must raise his treasures from the earth. How have we come to the point where we Germans must endure such theft and extortion of our possessions by the pope? ...

"Thirdly, if you were to take away 99 percent of the papal court and leave only one percent it would still be large enough. I believe that Germany is currently giving far more to the pope in Rome than was in the past given to Caesar. Indeed, some believe that every year 300,000 guilders leave Germany for Rome, purely without return, free and clear. We receive nothing in return except mockery and shame. Yet we are amazed that our counts, nobles, cities, foundations, land and people are becoming poor. We should be amazed that we still have food to eat.

"Some time ago the German Caesars and counts agreed to collect the first fruits of all fiefs for the pope. That amounted to one half of the tax of every fief for the first year. This agreement was reached as follows: with such large sums the pope was to gather a treasury with which to do battle against the Turk and unbelievers. In order that it would not be too difficult for the nobles to fight to protect Christendom on their own, the priesthood would also be contributing to the fight. So now they send out the message to gather money to fight against the Turk. Often indulgences are peddled with the same scheme, to fight against the Turk. Thus the stupid Germans should continue to stay dead stock fools to keep our agreement of giving, which agreement they have no intention of keeping so much as one hair's breadth. And this even though we can plainly see that, whether from the first fruits or the indulgence money or from any other income, not one dollar is used against the Turk. Instead it always goes into their bottomless sack. Afterwards it is claimed that the holy name of Christ and of St. Peter accomplished all of this. In this regard the German nation, bishops and counts should also conduct themselves as Christians and protect the people against such ravenous wolves--the people whom they are to rule in regard to their temporal and spiritual possessions. "

After this he pointed out individual instances of various ways the pope uses to rob the nations, he continues, "Insofar as I am too limited in my knowledge to offer suggested ways to improve such a dreadful state of existence, I yet want to sing out my fool's song. I will state, as far as my understanding allows, what is desired to happen and what should happen either through earthly might or common Council." Then he identifies 26

spiritual improprieties and recommends how to shut them down. A few examples might show how he proceeded. He writes:

"After this we come to the huge pile of those who promise much but adopt little. Don't become angry, noble lords, I mean it well. It is a bittersweet truth that the building of beggar monasteries should no longer be allowed. God help us! There are already far too many of them. Would to God that all of them could be gathered together from far and near to two or three locations! They do not do any good and will never do anything good. Therefore my advice is that ten of them, or however many are necessary, be combined into one location. If it receives sufficient support they would not need to go begging. ... They are to be exempted from preaching and hearing confessions, unless so called and desired by bishops, parishes, congregations, or the government to do so. In this way the various types of orders should be discontinued and that there would be the distinction of only one.

"According to my way of thinking it would be necessary to order, especially during our dangerous times, that all foundations and monasteries would be set up this way and that all of them would be free to remain there as long as they desired ...

"Fourteenth: We also see how the priesthood has fallen. Many a poor parson, overladen with woman and child, burdens his conscience as no one pitches in to help him. I do not know whether such a situation can still be helped or not. The bishops and pope let such things happen, whenever it happens, and let it spoil whatever spoils. So I shall clear my conscience and raise my voice, may it grieve pope, bishop, or whomever, and speak as follows:

"In accordance with the institution of Christ and the apostles each city should have one pastor or bishop. Paul clearly writes in Titus 1 that a pastor may have a wife, and not be forced to live without one. Should you complain that this is offensive and that the pope must first make dispensation, I say that whatever offense there is in this, the fault belongs

to the Roman throne that established such a law without any right and against God. It is not offensive to God and Holy Scripture."

"Sixteenth: Let New Year's Day, festivals, and masses for souls be discontinued or at least reduced. This is due to the fact that we can see with our own eyes that there is nothing left in them except mockery. Thus God is greatly angered with everything aimed only at money and excessive eating and drinking."

"Seventeenth: A number of penitential works, or penalties by way of spiritual law, would have to be discontinued. This especially applies to the interdict. The ban is not to be used in any way except the manner in which Scripture directs it to be used. It is to be used against those who do not believe correctly or who openly live in sin, not for acquiring temporal possessions.

"What also applies here is that fasting be left as a free choice for everyone and that all sorts of food be declared free as the Gospel allows. For even the Romans scoff the fasting. Let us in Rome devour oils that they may not use them to smear their shoes, since on top of that they sell us the freedom to use butter and all sorts of food, even though the holy Apostle says that we had received such freedom in those things through the gospel.

"In this vein you should either discontinue, or leave out, or make common for all the churches those things the pope sells on his carrion counter, including freedom and bulls. That is what I advise. But if such foolish operations are not discontinued, then let every Christian open his eyes. Let him not allow himself to be confused with Roman bull, seal, and hypocrisy. Let him stay at home in his own church, and let baptism, the gospel, faith, and God, who is the same in every location, be what is best for him. Let the pope remain a blind leader for the blind. Neither angel nor pope can give you as much as God gives you in your parish. Truly, he misleads you in respect to divine gifts, insisting that you buy from him those things that are free of charge. Thus he gives you lead for gold, fur for meat, rope for the purse, wax for honey, promises for possessions, and letters for the spirit. You see it in front of your eyes and still don't want to notice. If

you plan on traveling to heaven on his parchment and wax, your wagon will soon break down and you will be heading for hell but not by God's name."

"23rd: Continuing along the same line in regard to brotherhoods: drown and destroy all letters of indulgence, butter letters, mass letters, dispensations, and the like; these are no good at all ... next, all papal messengers and their entourages should be chased out of Germany. Their selling of their high priced wares amounts to bullying. They are only there to take our money, and they validate unjust possessions as good, dissolve vows, commitments, and promises. ... This information would be proof enough for anyone to confirm, if there were no other treacheries to be found, that the pope is truly the antichrist. O Christ, my Lord, look down! Let your day of judgment break forth and destroy the devil's nest in Rome! Here sits the man of whom Paul said that he would exalt himself above you and sit in your church, proclaiming himself to be God. He is the lawless one, the man doomed to destruction."

"25th: The universities are also in need of a good, strong reformation. I have to say it, no matter what grief it causes. No one may make me feel guilty for talking too much or rejecting what I know nothing about. Dear friend, I know very well what I am talking about. It would sit very well with me to keep Aristotle's books about logic, rhetoric, and poetry. Perhaps they could be prepared in a condensed form to make them easier to read and enable the young people to practice proper speaking and preaching. In addition I would desire that there be the languages; Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, plus the mathematical disciplines. I recommend that the histories would be made easier to understand. All this would happen on its own if a reformation were seriously desired."

"Truly much depends on this. For here our Christian youth and the nobility of Christendom should be taught and prepared. Concerning physicians I leave their reformation to their faculties. Lawyers and theologians I'll take. ... My dear theologians have excluded themselves from hard work, ignore the Bible, and read Sententias. This is what I mean: Young theologians begin the Sententiae. The Bibles are reserved for the doctors. This way, as it is now, is the completely turned-around procedure.

Instead, the Bible is to be first and continue to the Baccalaureus. The Sententiae are to be last. These should forever stay in the doctorate section. How can we be blessed, if we so wrongly proceed with our practice of putting the Bible, the holy Word, as last.

"The number of books would also have to be reduced, and the best ones picked out. It is not the number of books, nor the amount of reading, that leads to wisdom. Instead, read good books and read them often; for however small they may be, they make a person knowledgeable in Scripture and upright in behavior. Whether in higher or lower schools it is most important that the most preferred and common lessons should be from Holy Scripture. For young boys it would be the gospel. And, God willing, every city should also have a school for girls, in which girls could hear the gospel daily, may it be in German or Latin.

We should refrain from sending everyone to schools which are most concerned with large numbers. This is what everyone is interested in now, and everyone wants to be a doctor. We should send students to those higher schools which are diligent for studying Scriptures. That is where the most gifted who had been well trained in smaller schools are to be sent. But I advise no one to send his child to a place where Scripture does not rule. Everything that does not relentlessly pursue God's Word must face destruction."

In conclusion he writes, "I am aware that I have sung at a high pitch, have suggested many things which will be regarded as impossible, and have attacked many things too sharply. But how should I act? I am indebted to speak. If I could do it differently, I would. But I prefer that the world be angry with me rather than God. As far as I am concerned, the most that anyone can do is take my life. Up until this time I have offered peace to my enemies. But as I see it now, through them God has forced me to open my mouth ever wider. He has allowed me to bark at them, holler at them, and write enough to them, because they are too lazy to write. Oh yes, I know another song about Rome and them. If their ears are itching, I'll sing that one as well and set the notes at the highest pitch. Understand well, Rome, what I mean."

"Many times I have offered my writings to be studied and heard, but none of that helped. If my stance is correct I understand very well that it will be condemned on earth and will only be justified in heaven before Christ. May God give Christian understanding to us all, and may he especially give a true spiritual courage to the Christian nobles of the German nation, that they will do what is best for the church. Amen. At Wittenberg. The year of 1520."

What Luther did in this writing, explaining the individual points so thoroughly and at the same time gathering everything into a single framework, he had not previously done. Before he had witnessed the disorder which the papacy had brought to the nation of Germany, under which the Germans suffered. The high notes he sounded here rang out once again into the ears of his friends. They rang so loudly that in Erfurt Lange and Spalatin sent him a letter pleading that he not send out this writing. But it was too late. Four thousand copies had already been printed, and after a few days another edition had to be published which appeared in greater numbers. A letter from a frightened Melanchthon and a letter from Wildbrett, which at that time arrived from the elector's court, contained no objection to this penetrating work. Nor was there an objection in the news that this book was "not entirely displeasing" at the elector's court.

That bombs had exploded in Rome can be seen for what happened there. Already in the autumn a writing appeared produced by Thomas Rhadinus. He released it under the title, "Words to the Counts and People of Germany against the Heretic M. Luther, a Disgrace to the Honor of the Nation." This immediately went to press a second time in Leipzig. Emser also directed a work against the book, "To the German Nobility". While Luther left it up to Melanchthon to write a response to Rhadinus' work, all those polemical writings had now opened another door for more polemics. Luther, after receiving the first sheets from Emser, responded with a piece entitled, "To the Buck at Leipzig." To which Emser immediately returned, "To the Steer's Raging Reply at Wittenberg." Luther countered with "To the Reply of the Buck at Leipzig." And when Emser's book against "To the

German Nobility" appeared in full, Luther wrote his "Answer to the Excessively Christian, Excessively Spiritual, Excessively Artful God of the Buck Emser at Leipzig in which Murner, his Companion, is also Given Consideration." The Franciscan monk, Thomas Murner, ("Murnur" means "Tomcat") had also attacked Luther's book. Hence, he was being butchered together with the Emser "Buck". When Emser later replied once again, Luther bid him farewell with his "A Contradiction by Doctor Luther in regard to His Error, Forced Out by the Most Highly Intellectual Priest of God, Mr. H. Emser".

While Luther had been producing his book to the Nobility, the pens down in Rome had also been busy in another way. As the book to the Nobility made its way through the lands of Germany, it met on the way a papal bull with a ban, newly penned.

Chapter 20

The Papal Bull

Filled with rage because of the beating he had taken in Germany, Eck was heading for Rome to quench his thirst for revenge. To avoid coming empty handed he had put together a book on the primacy of the pope. In it he elevated the pope over all kings and caesars, his own subjects. Incurable papist that he was, he supported his "facts" with fabricated testimonials and various types of falsified documents. It was also said that the Fugger financiers, who had also taken their lumps in Luther's writing to the Nobility, had urged Eck to journey to Rome in haste lest they completely lose the profit they were making from the sale of indulgences. The result was that Eck's book was shining a bright light on the danger that threatened the threefold crown in Germany. A commission was immediately established which began to produce a banning bull at once.

A draft of that document against the monk on the other side of the mountains was completed as early as May. Cardinal Accolti had drawn up the draft. Yet the papists had learned to be somewhat cautious. Detail after detail was examined and filed in four ecclesiastical courts. The issue was so important that Cardinal de Vio, even though he was ill, had himself carried to the sessions. A smaller committee, attended by Eck and the pope himself, put the final touches on the document. The task was finally completed by June 16th.

The bull began with a prayer to God to rise up, judge, and save the situation. It also called upon St. Peter and St. Paul to defend the honor of the Roman church. Then it called upon all of the saints to bring peace to the church by interceding before God. Luther's 41 statements were condemned as heretical. Those statements included these: The pope was denied to be Christ's steward on earth over all of the churches of the world; it was not the will of the Holy Spirit to burn heretics; Purgatory could not be

proven from the canonical books of Scripture. The pope condemned these statements and forbade all Christians, under the penalty of the ban, to stand with Luther or to read his writings. He then commanded Luther to submit all of his writings to the bishops to be burned. He admonished Luther, whom he reminded of how gently he had been dealt with, to refrain from his errors, to stop preaching immediately, to retract his errors within sixty days, and within an additional sixty days allow credible proof of his retraction to reach Rome or to bring that proof to Rome in person. However if he should refuse, the pope declared that he was banned and commanded all spiritual and secular authorities to overpower him and his followers and send them to Rome. He also threatened anyone who would object to the publication of the bull with the ban, and all with whom Luther might find protection with an interdict.

The papal nuntius Aleander and Doctor Eck were entrusted with the enforcement of the bull. Aleander was a baptized Jew. Dr. Eck appeared in Germany and energetically applied himself to his new task under his new title of Papal Protonotarius and Nuntius. At the same time Eck was given full authority to place under the verdict of the bull the names of those he judged to be followers of Luther. Eck took advantage of this authority by including a number of names of those whom he didn't care for. Among these were Carlstadt and Feldkirchen of Wittenberg, and Pirkheimer and Spengler of Nuernberg, in spite of the failed intercession of the Bishop of Barnberg and Duke William of Bavaria. Finally he added the name of his monastic brother, Adelman. He had had a huge argument with him at dinner which almost had led to fisticuffs. Having argued about the different doctrines under discussion he would now have to clear himself of the suspicion that he was supporting Luther's heresy. He would have to do so by taking an oath. Pirkheimer and Spengler also succumbed to the bull and sent their submissive explanations to Rome. Yet Spengler, who would attend the Diet of Worms as a delegate, personally testified to the truth as the city scribe. Carlstadt and Feldkirchen stood firm against the attacks leveled at them by Eck.

Eck's posting of the bull met with mixed results elsewhere as well. The bull was accepted in the Bishoprics of Meissen and Merseburg as well as in Eichstadt and Augsburg. In Ingolstadt Luther's books were sequestered and sealed. In Lyon and Cologne they were burned. In Mainz, the spiritual capital of the kingdom, there was a growing resistance. The executer, after Luther's books had been piled up and were about to be set on fire, stepped onto the scaffold and asked whether the one whose books were to be burned had been legally and rightly condemned. The whole assembly shouted, "No!" Responding to this, the executer, declaring that he would destroy nothing in this world which had not been correctly judged according to the law, jumped down off the scaffold. The mass of people were jubilant. Aleander, who was personally present, had to depart rather quickly due to the shouts of: "Jew! Traitor! Bully!", lest he be pelted with excrement on the street.

Nevertheless he accomplished the burning of a few books during the following days. This was done by a grave digger with only the market women to watch. Meanwhile a mocking song about him was posted in all of the alleys and even on the door of his residence. It said that he had not burned Luther's books but those of Eck and Prierias. In other areas it was especially the students and the commoners who gave Eck pause. In Erfurt the professors refused to publish the bull. When Eck arrived in person and had a bookstore dealer distribute the bull, the students took all of the copies they could lay their hands on, either by purchasing or by force. They threw them into the water while scoffing, "Bulla est, in aqua natet." (It's a bubble, let it swim in water)! The academia took no action against them. Church authorities in other parts of Germany were also harboring doubts and said so. Duke William of Bavaria even went so far as to attempt to have the bull rescinded. German lawyers also spoke out against the serving of the bull, and Caesar's counsel, Hieronymus von Enndorf, offered his honest assessment to Caesar that he should not allow such an intrusion of the church authority into his secular rule. However, in Leipzig Eck succeeded in spreading the bull through city riders. Nevertheless, he personally met such danger in the city streets that he was forced to seek refuge in the Pauline monastery, and soon tried to travel by night. Starting something in

Wittenberg was futile. When Eck personally sent the bull to the rector of the university it was brought up for discussion. Luther and Carlstadt were present, and it was tabled. The few priests who left Wittenberg as a result were easily replaced with the great influx of new students who were arriving daily. Whenever Luther was preaching, the churches were filled like never before.

Most anxiously awaited was the reaction of Luther's elector. He had journeyed to Aachen for the crowning of Caesar. On the 4th of November he had arrived in Cologne on his journey home and was attending mass. There the papal delegates Aleander and Caraccioli approached him and handed him the pope's command to execute the bull. This upset the elector deeply. After all, the pope had issued his verdict in Rome. This was done in spite of the elector's request that Luther be given a hearing in Germany and in spite of the agreement that had been reached with the Archbishop of Trier. All further negotiations were cut off, as the venomous personal enemy of the unjustly condemned Luther had brought the bull into Germany during the duke's absence from his territory. At the same time this posed a considerable threat to his university. At first he would give absolutely no answer to the legate. Then, after fourteen days, he allowed a response to be given through his counselors in the presence of two bishops. He replied that he remained unconvinced that Luther's teachings, writings, and sermons were so dangerous that they were to be burned. He continued that, while he had no involvement with Luther's cause, nevertheless, he insisted that Doctor Martin be given a hearing before unbiased judges, with guards for security and in a suitable and safe location. He asked the legates to try to arrange such a meeting and stop the procedures which had burst upon Germany. The legates clenched their fists inside their pockets and retreated to a place where they believed they would find like-minded people. They did so while uttering threats. But the elector was determined not to give in and gave the legates no more of his time.

So what was Luther's personal reaction to the bull? Luther actually had been expecting it. For quite some time he had surmised that

something like this was in the works. Von Hutten had received a harsh letter through the Archbishop of Mainz in which he was forbidden to publish Luther's books. Von Hutten responded by printing the bull and accompanied the same with scathing commentary. Soon thereafter Luther learned that Eck had arrived with the bull.

But while Hutton tried to stomp armies out of the earth and raged like a boar which has been struck with a bullet, Luther remained calm. Even when the bull was presented to him on Oct. 11th, he calmly informed Spalatin about it as the business of the university and opined that the elector would do well to ignore it. Indeed, immediately after reporting to Spalatin he once again held out his hand in peace. Miltitz was clinging to that hand with fierce tenacity, even though Eck had personally handed him a copy in Leipzig.

Miltitz remained a serious contender. The reason for this was that he recognized that he had been called to an important task; or, perhaps he wanted to earn some great reward from the elector by accomplishing what the elector desired; or, perhaps he wanted to do away with all of Eck's work. In any event he hung on to his role as mediator, though he had been too late with trying to prevent the publishing of Luther's "To the Nobility."

Then through a convention of Augustinians at Eisleben, Miltitz together with Staupitz, Link and some others appealed to Luther, asking him to respond to the pope in writing. He was to assure the pope that he had never intended to attack him personally. Luther listened to the advice of his old fatherly friend, Staupitz, who after resigning his position as Vicar of the order at Eisleben had been replaced by Link. Staupitz had then retreated from the battlefield and had withdrawn completely into retirement at Salzburg. Luther had not declined this petition of Staupitz. Luther could also honestly have written such a letter without yielding anything regarding the main cause for which he had been fighting. Though he was ready to write the suggested letter to the pope, Luther was not about to yield anything in regard to the main issue of the conflict. What Luther actually thought about carrying out the advised action we can glean from the writings that continued to flow by way of his pen.



Picture of Luther on an engraved Copper Plate by Cranach in 1520

Back in the early days of distributing the Book to the Nobility Luther had written to the common laity, simply yet thoroughly, to go after the chief abomination of the papacy, the sacrifice of the mass. "Sermon of the New Testament, i.e., about Holy Mass," was the title he had given this pamphlet. In a very loving manner he instructed those Christians as to what the Holy Supper is and how a person is to properly prepare himself for receiving it worthily and with appreciation. He went on to describe what blessing is derived from this Sacrament, and how this healing Sacrament is so abominably treated by the papacy in the sacrifice for the living and the dead. In this connection he also addressed the universal priesthood of all Christians, thereby shattering the assumed priestly power of the Roman priests by which they enslaved consciences and filled their pockets with offerings.

At the end of his book to the nobility Luther had announced that he still had another short song to sing to the papists. Well, he struck up its prelude in the book, "Prelude of the Babylonian Captivity of the Church." He did not allow the news of the impending bull to rattle him as he sang. Instead at the beginning he testified to his opponents, Prierias, Eck, and Emser, that through them he was becoming more and more educated, whether that had been their intent or not. Two years earlier he had written about indulgences. At that time, still a captive of Roman idolatry, he believed that indulgences need not be completely rejected. But now, thanks to Silvester and his brothers, he had learned that indulgences are nothing other than a fraud perpetrated by the Romans. He wished that everyone, who had read his earlier writings would burn them and in their place adopt the motto: Indulgences are a disgrace of the flattering Romans.

Later Eck, Emser, and their co-conspirators, continued their instruction of Luther when they began to teach him about the primacy of the pope. Luther again learned much from them. Earlier he had accepted the premise that the papacy exists by human right. But now he knew for certain that the papacy is the kingdom of Babylon and has the power of Nimrod, that mighty hunter. Until now he had foolishly been of the opinion that it would have been good if a council had resolved that the Sacrament

be offered to the laity in both kinds. But now he had concluded from the clear passages of Scripture that it is ungodly and tyrannical to deny one of the elements, namely the cup, to the laity. No angel could forbid the cup, not to mention a pope or a council. The fact that the pope did so anyway was described by Luther as the first captivity of this Sacrament.

For Luther the second captivity was the Roman doctrine of transubstantiation, in which it was said that the bread and wine turn into the body and blood of Christ in the Sacrament. They didn't teach that the body and blood of Christ were received in, with, and under the bread and the wine, but that bread and wine were no longer present at all.

As the third and most ungodly, all-inclusive captivity of this Sacrament he names the manner in which the body and blood of Christ are presented as a sacrifice. From this teaching had flowed countless other errors. Then he set forth the true doctrine of Holy Communion from Scripture, the appreciation of it and the huge benefit to be derived from it.

He praised God that when it came to Baptism, that Sacrament at least remained preserved and not mutilated. But he lamented that its power and fruit, which affects the entire life of a Christian, had been depleted so much. This took place especially because of the high value that had been placed on the vows connected with the rite, which he stated should properly all be stopped.

He still allowed confession to stand as a sacrament. This was because the bestowal of grace rested on the application of the promise of God through the words of absolution. He allowed this, even though in the actual practice of confession the earthly element is lacking, meaning that its identity as a sacrament does not apply. But he laments again that because of the papacy, the main part of confession, namely the comforting promise of the forgiveness of sins received through faith, was allowed to fall away. Instead all value in confession depended upon the sinner being crushed, especially with the imposition of penitential works with the result that consciences were enslaved and the pouches filled with money.

Luther did not consider the other four sacraments of the papacy to be sacraments at all. Confirmation was not instituted by God. Marriage does not have a promise of salvation and a place in heaven. The ordination into the priesthood was not instituted by God. The same could be said for extreme unction. The apostle James didn't intend his words as an anointing of the dying but as a means for physical healing.

Luther understood very well that what he was saying would be displeasing to those who adopted their doctrine about the number and use of the sacraments from the Roman throne rather than Scripture. In his conclusion he wrote: "I'm hearing again that papal bulls and curses have been readied for me, which are supposed to force me to recant or be called a heretic. If that is true, then I would like this booklet to be a part of my future recanting, so they would not complain that they had boasted about their tyranny in vain. If Christ grants me his grace, I shall present the rest in such a form as the Roman throne has neither seen nor heard until now, and shall in this way richly bear witness to my obedience.

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen."

What scares you, hostile Herod, thus

That Christ, the Lord, is born to us?

He seeks no mortal kingdom. Why?

He brings his kingdom from on high!

This work had left the press a few days before the bull arrived in Wittenberg and Luther announced it to Spalatin as a "trumpet call to battle." In spite of this, at this very time Miltitz dared to remind him of the promise he had made to the brothers of his order. So in the midst of all of the ongoings with the bull, Luther traveled to Lichtenberg, accompanied by Melancthon. There he met with Miltitz in the monastery of Anthony, the place to which Miltitz had invited him. Even at this point in time Luther was actually of a mind to keep his promise. So that his latest writing would not

appear to have been prompted by the bull, it was dated retroactively to September 6. It was to appear in German and Latin. In addition Luther wanted to give him a brief doctrinal writing to take along. "If it works," he said, "good. If it does not work, also good; yet this is the way that is pleasing to God."

This is how he wrote to Leo. He had been pressed by a number of godless flatterers of the pope to the point that he requested a special council. But as far as he knew, he had said nothing disrespectful against Leo as a person. Rather, he sought to protect him against Silvester. It is true that he attacked the Roman throne again, but the pope himself had to admit that the Roman court was now worse than Sodom, Gomorrah, or Babylon ever were. The pope must have noticed that it could no longer be counseled or helped out of its evil. For a long time the only thing that has come out of Rome was harm for both body and soul. The Roman church had become a den of thieves and a kingdom of sin. "In the meantime," he continued, "you, holy father, are sitting as a sheep among wolves, as Daniel among the lions, as Ezekiel among scorpions. What can you accomplish against so many wild animals on your own?"

"Surely it is intended that you and the cardinals would work to defend against this wretchedness. But the disease scoffs at the medicine, and horse and wagon no longer care about the driver. That is the reason why I felt sorry through all of this that you, upright Leo, had to become the pope at this time, when you are worthy to be the pope during better times. The Roman throne is not worthy of you and others like you, but an evil spirit should be the pope since he rules in Babylon more than you. Would to God that you would be set free from that honor (as they, your destructive enemies, call it) and could support yourself from your prebendary and your father's inheritance! Hence, holy father Leo, I am coming now to lie at your feet and beg you to, if possible, lay your hand to the task of bridling those flatterers. They make believe that they want to achieve peace, but they are enemies of peace.

"But my recanting of our teaching will not happen, nor should anyone try to force me to do so, unless he desires to turn the entire matter

into even greater confusion. I, being an enemy to quarrels, on my part do not want to arouse or provoke anyone. But I also do not wish to be provoked. If I am provoked I will neither be speechless nor will my pen be stilled. May your holiness take on all of this quarreling yourself and exterminate it with simple and short words. In place of it bid silence and peace, which is what I have always wanted. Therefore, my Holy Father, may you not listen to those sweet voices who croon into your ears that you are not a mere human being but rather a mixture with God, who is in command over all things. It will not happen that way. Even you will accomplish nothing. You are a servant of all of the servants of God and are in a more dangerous and more miserable profession than anyone else on earth. Do not let yourself be betrayed by those who lie to you and in their hypocrisy tell you that you are the lord of the world who would not want to allow anyone to be a Christian unless they are placed under your rule.

"In conclusion I do not come before your holiness empty handed, but I am bringing along a pamphlet. This pamphlet has gone out under your name and for a good wish and beginning of peace and good hope, from which your holiness may derive a taste, with what procedure I greatly desire and also productively occupy myself, if that should be possible for me to do in the presence of your unchristian flatterers. It is only a small pamphlet, if one is only looking at the value of its paper. Yet it sums up the entire life of a Christian, if one understands its sense. I am poor. I do not have anything else with which I might express my service to you. And you may no longer be improved with anything else than with spiritual possessions. With this I commend myself to your holiness. May Jesus Christ preserve you eternally. Amen."

The work which Luther sent along to the pope with his letter appeared in Latin and German. It was entitled, "Concerning the Freedom of a Christian." Luther dedicated the German edition to the mayor of Zwickau, Hieronymus Muehlport.

"A Christian is free, lord over all things, and slave to no one."

"A Christian is slave to all things, and below everything and everyone."

Luther positioned those two statements prior to his interpretation of "The Whole Sum of a Christian Life" with 1 Cor. 9:19 and Rom. 13:8 as brief proof passages. To grasp such seeming contradictions as found in Scripture, one has to remember that each Christian has two natures: the spiritual, internal new man; and the fleshly, outward old man. "We take a look at the internal spiritual man in order to learn what he has done to be called a holy, free, Christian man and it becomes clear that nothing external can make him free or holy. The soul has nothing else, either in heaven or on earth, than the holy gospel. It lives in the gospel and is holy, free, and Christian by the gospel. "This is how we can be sure that the soul can get along without everything except the Word of God; and without the Word of God nothing can be beneficial for it. When the soul has the Word of God it needs nothing else but it has enough in the Word: food, joy, peace, light, skill, righteousness, truth, wisdom, freedom, and everything good in abundance. ... But you might ask, 'What is that word which bestows such grace, and how should I use it?' The answer: Nothing else has happened than the preaching of Christ, as the gospel contains in itself, which is designed and has produced that you hear God speaking to you that all your life and works are nothing before God, but that you are heading for eternal ruin with everything that is in you. This means, that if you believe properly as you should, that you have to despair on behalf of yourself and confess that the passage from Hosea is true: 'O Israel, there is nothing in you except destruction; your help is only from me.' But so that you may depart and remove yourself from your own destruction, God places before you his dear Son, Jesus Christ. Through his living, comforting Word he tells you to surrender yourself with firm faith to him and trust in him anew. Thus all your sins are forgiven through that same faith. All of your destruction has been overcome, and you are righteous, real, at peace, holy, and with all of the commandments fulfilled, free of all things. This is as St. Paul says in Romans 1, 'A righteous Christian lives only from his faith ('from', 'out of',—Greek: 'ek', which takes the genitive); and Romans 10: 'Christ is the end and fulfillment of all commandments for those who believe in him.'"