

THE TRINITY REVIEW

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

Number 364c Copyright 2021 The Trinity Foundation Post Office Box 68, Unicoi, Tennessee 37692 Sept.-Oct. 2021
Email: tjtrinityfound@aol.com Website: www.trinityfoundation.org Telephone: 423.743.0199 Fax: 423.743.2005

A Warning to My Dear German People, Part 3

By Martin Luther

Translated by Martin H. Bertram

Editor's note: Page numbers in notes refer to Luther's Works (LW hereafter), Volume 47: The Christian in Society IV, J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald, & H. T. Lehmann, Editors, 3–55, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1999, and is reproduced with permission from Fortress Press. Footnotes are from this edition, and it is slightly edited in format for The Trinity Review.

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

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

this to be sin, but jested about it as though it were a game of cards about which they might laugh and joke with impunity. Oh, this beer is good and strong,¹ and so it is foaming and casting up all their shame and vice, as Jude says [*Jude* 13]. Now go and risk your life and fight for these impenitent, shameless Sodomites who even laugh and jest about such blasphemous sins.

I am not lying to you. Whoever has been in Rome knows that conditions are unfortunately worse there than anyone can say or believe. When the last Lateran council was to be concluded in Rome under Pope Leo, among other articles it was decreed that one must believe the soul to be immortal.² From this one may gather that they make eternal life an object of sheer mockery and contempt. In this way they confess that it is a common belief among them that there is no eternal life, but that they now wish to proclaim this by means of a bull. More remarkable yet, in the same bull they decided that a cardinal should not keep as many boys in the future. However, Pope Leo commanded that this be deleted; otherwise, it would have been spread throughout the whole world how openly and shamelessly the pope and the cardinals in Rome practice sodomy. I do not wish to mention the pope, but since the knaves will not

¹ Luther uses a German proverb, *O dem bier ist recht gegeben*. Literally it says that the beer has been generously malted. Thiele, *Luther's Sprichwörterammlung*, No. 64, says that this proverb is used when a know-it-all has been rebuffed or put in his place.

² The Fifth Lateran Council held sessions in Rome at various intervals from 1512 to 1517 under popes Julius II (1503–1513) and Leo X (1513–1521). At the eighth session, on December 19, 1513, *Apostolici Regiminis* reaffirmed the doctrine of the immortality of the soul over against the teaching of some Averroists or neo-Aristotelians who taught that the human soul was mortal. Compare Denzinger-Schönmetzer, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, Barcelona, 1967, Nos. 1440–1441, 738.

repent, but condemn the Gospel, blaspheme and revile God's word, and excuse their vices, they, in turn, will have to take a whiff of their own terrible filth. This vice is so prevalent among them that recently a pope caused his own death by means of this sin and vice.³ In fact, he died on the spot. All right now, you popes, cardinals, papists, spiritual lords, keep on persecuting God's Word and defending your doctrine and your churches!

No pope, cardinal, bishop, doctor, priest, monk, or nun will condemn such an obviously disgraceful life; rather they laugh about it, excuse it, and gloss over it. They incite kings, princes, country, and people to defend such knaves with life and property, with land and people, and faithfully to protect them so that such vices might not be repented of and reformed, but rather strengthened, sanctioned, and approved. Now you are to hazard blood, body, and life just for the sake of saddling your neck and conscience with this. I could easily mention more examples of such abominations, but it is too shameful; I fear that our German soil would have to tremble before it. But if an impudent popish ass should come along and dispute this, he will find me ready to do him battle, and it will be quite a battle! If admonition and warning will bring about repentance, these have been and still are being sufficiently administered. However, this will not help. Today it has become a commendable and common practice, almost equal to a great virtue, completely to disregard repentance. In fact, the emperor and you are to protect and preserve them in this, so that their example may be emulated and spread also to other countries, as, alas, has already too obviously happened.

Furthermore, you will have to encumber yourself with all the greed, robbery, and thievery of the entire papacy, the countless sums they have acquired falsely and fraudulently by means of indulgences.⁴ Is it not sheer shameful robbery and thievery throughout all Christendom? Is not the incalculable wealth which they raked in through their false and fabricated purgatory sheer shameful robbery and thievery throughout the whole world? The incalculable wealth they have accumulated with their usurious masses and sacrificial masses, is it not sheer shameful robbery and thievery through-out the whole world? The incalculable wealth they procured through licenses to eat butter during Lent, through pilgrimages, the worship of the saints, and innumerable other deceptions, is it not sheer shameful robbery and thievery throughout the whole world? Where did the pope, cardinals, and bishops acquire kingdoms and principalities? How did they become the secular lords of all the world? Is it not entirely through their infinitely shameful robbery and thievery? What else are they than the

greatest robbers and thieves on the face of the Earth? And yet you find here no thought of repentance or restitution. Indeed, there is not enough good blood in their veins to enable them to administer their office a little, to give their possession of such property at least a slight semblance of honor. Instead, they condemn, revile, and persecute God's name, his Word and work. And now they come and demand that you defend such thieves and robbers with your blood, so that they may not only go uncorrected but may also be encouraged to practice this kind of thing all the more. Consider what a great, mighty thief and rogue, robber and traitor you become and are if you assist and protect such robbers and thieves with your blood and life; for you will burden yourself with all of this and share in their guilt.

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

I will say nothing here about the other vices, how they administer poison and engage in treason and in all that pertains to hatred and envy. Who can tell completely the shameful life in the papacy? The aforementioned items and the everyday examples demonstrate sufficiently what their life is like. For it [the papacy] is to be the Antichrist and to be against Christ in all things. Therefore, it must follow that as Christ led and taught a beautiful, splendid, chaste, decent, holy, heavenly, and godly life, the Antichrist must lead and teach a correspondingly shameful, blasphemous,

³ It is not clear to whom Luther is referring, or what basis in fact or rumor there may have been for his assertion.

⁴ Luther's position on indulgences was spelled out early in his career. See *Ninety-five Theses* (1517), *LW* 31, 17–33; and *Explanation of the Ninety-five Theses* (1518), *LW* 31, 77–252.

⁵ Heinrich von Kettenbach, for example, in a comparison of Christ and the pope (1523), wrote: "It has been calculated that because of the pope's arrogance and wantonness over one million two hundred thousand Christians have been put to death in eight hundred years." Compare *WA* 30^{III}, 307, note 2.

unchaste, accursed, hellish, and devilish life. How else could he be Christ's foe or the Antichrist? All of this might be tolerated if they did not presume to defend it and insist with force on being in the right. But all that we have thus far mention-ed is, so to speak, sport and jest. We now want to point out the true dregs and the chief abominations with all of which he must burden himself who protects the pope or who helps to preserve and strengthen him in his impenitent, hardened, anti-Christian status and conduct.

One might tolerate an evil life; but one can and must not tolerate, much less help to defend, a person who condemns doctrine and God's Word and who elevates himself over God. They have disseminated so many doctrinal abominations within Christendom that these cannot be numbered. They repent of none of them, nor do they want to change them, but they openly defend them all and rigorously insist on being in the right. All of that would rest on your neck and conscience. You would make yourself a partner of all such abominations and you would be guilty if you helped to defend them. Let us mention just a few. How can your conscience bear the shameful, lying fraud of indulgences, with which they scandalously misled so many thousands of souls, yes, all of Christendom and all the world, deceiving them and defrauding them of their money and property? Yet they do not repent of this, nor do they intend to abrogate⁶ this practice, although they are well aware of the great villainy they have committed thereby. They taught the people to place their trust in indulgences, and to die in that belief. This in itself is so atrocious and terrible that if they were otherwise as holy and pure as St. John the Baptist, they should properly be condemned to the depths of Hell just for this; they should not be worthy that the Earth bear them or the Sun shine down on them, much less that we fight for them or defend them.

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

a little ashamed to ask for such defense in view of all their unrepentant, shameless, blasphemous wickedness. That really does go to show that "priests are no good."⁷

Furthermore, how will your conscience bear the blasphemous fraud of purgatory, with which they also treacherously duped and falsely frightened all the world and appropriated almost all its property and splendor by lying and thievery?⁸ For with this they also completely extinguished that one and only comfort and trust in Christ and taught Christians to place their attention and expectation and reliance in the bequests which they trust will follow them.⁹ Whoever looks to and hopes in the bequests or works that follow him at death—as they taught and as they all did—must dismiss Christ from his mind and forget him. Therefore, if God had not especially preserved his own, in death they would have plunged unawares into Hell's abyss, together with the Jews and heathen. It is the same as when a person falls headlong from a high mountain; he thinks that he is treading on a solid pathway and then steps aside into the air and plunges down into the valley or the sea. Oh, what murderers of souls they are! Before the day of judgment no human heart will know what great murder they have committed on souls with their purgatory. Much less can the damage and the abominable blasphemy be estimated which they thereby have inflicted on faith and confidence in Christ. Yet there is no repentance for this or any end to it. Instead, they demand that you protect them and help defend them in it.

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

⁷ Compare page 32.

⁸ Purgatory was a very current concern for Luther. He had been distressed that the *Augsburg Confession* had failed to take a clear stand on this question, so in the summer of 1530 he had filled in this gap with his own *Disavowal of Purgatory* (*Widerruf vom Fegefeuer*), WA 30^{III}, 367–390.

⁹ Compare *Revelation* 14:13.

⁶ *Ablassen*, a play on the word *Abläss* ("indulgence").

moreover, they sell them most shamefully. There is no repentance there, but only hardened and dreadful wickedness and the attempt to defend themselves and to protect them-selves with your life and limb.

The crude, outward misuse [of the sacrament] was atrocious enough in itself. This was seen in the priests' flippant treatment of the sacrament at masses for the dead, the dedication of churches, or festivals of patron saints. They dealt with it as though it were buffoonery. In a vulgar and impudent way, they flocked together for the purpose of gorging and swilling and for the sake of money. Then they became intoxicated, vomited, gained, and brawled. All the villages were full of this shameful abuse. Of this they never repented, nor has it ever been reformed, nor is it acknowledged to be sin by these incorrigible popish asses. However, this is as nothing in comparison with the fine abuse by which they perverted and transformed the sacrament from the common sacrament of the common faith into a private work and sacrifice of certain persons, namely, the priests. That is so terrible that I do not like to reflect on it; such thoughts might well kill a person. But even this abomination is surpassed in their concealment and suppression of the words of the sacrament and faith, so that, as already said, not a letter, not an iota, of it remained in the entire papacy in all the masses and books. This vice begs a description by word and thought. To eternity, no one will be able to rebuke and reprove this sufficiently. Any other vice has its own devil or band of devils to promote it; but I believe that the sacrificial mass is the common work of all the devils, in which they pool all hands, all counsel, all ideas, all wickedness and roguery and in that way have instituted and preserved this abomination. This is evident from the fact that wherever poltergeists have appeared as dead souls throughout the world, they have all asked for the mass.¹⁰ No soul ever asked for or desired Christ; all asked for the mass. So this is a strong indication that the devils have their being nowhere else as markedly as in their servants of the mass, where they dwell shamefully with all lewdness, greed, blasphemy, and every vice. This will surely rank as God's greatest and ultimate wrath on Earth prior to the day of judgment; for there can be no wrath to exceed this. There you have the true virtue of the papacy in behalf of which you are to go to war and to shed your blood for the impenitent blasphemers, soul-murderers, and malefactors.

Here someone will perhaps object that I am too free with my name calling and that I can do no more than to scold and abuse people. I should like to reply, first of all, that such scolding is nothing in comparison with the inexpressible baseness in question. For what sort of scolding is it when I call the devil a murderer, a villain, a traitor, a blasphemer, a liar? It is just as though a little

breeze were striking him. But what are the popish asses other than devils incarnate who have no repentance but only hardened hearts, who knowingly defend such public blasphemy and who ask for protection in this from the emperor and you? My dear man, abuse and call a popish ass whatever you will or can—it rolls off him like water off a duck's back.¹¹ He has overdone matters and has far, far, far outstripped your ability to abuse him adequately. Call him a papist and you have hit the mark; then you have said more than the world can comprehend. You cannot call him anything worse. Call him anything else and it is just like pricking a bear with a straw or striking a boulder with a feather.

I reply, in the second place, that the two cardinals, Campeggio and Salzburg,¹² advised and urged me to do this, in that the former said that he would rather have himself torn to pieces than to alter or abolish the mass, while the latter remarked that “priests are no good” and that they should be left unreformed.¹³ These two are among the leading papists, and as they speak and believe, so the pope and all the papists surely speak and believe. Since they themselves say that they are desperate villains and want to remain villains, and that they would rather be torn to pieces than to desist from their blasphemies, I would do them an injustice before God and the world if I called them by any other name than that which they assign to themselves. If I were to address them as most reverend holy fathers in Christ, no one would recognize them, and they themselves would not know of whom I am speaking, since these names are unknown to them and since they are and remain hardened villains and blasphemers. Therefore, my scolding is no scolding. It is no different from when I call a turnip a turnip; apples, apples; and pears, pears.

Furthermore, how will you endure their terrible idolatries? It was not enough that they venerated the saints and praised God in them, but they actually made them into gods. They put that noble child, the mother Mary, right into the place of Christ. They fashioned Christ into a judge and thus devised a tyrant for anguished consciences, so that all comfort and confidence was transferred from Christ to Mary, and then everyone turned from Christ to his particular saint. Can anyone deny this? Is it not true? Did we not all, alas, at one time try this and experience it? Are not books extant—especially those of the shabby Barefoot Friars and of the Preaching Friars¹⁴—which teem with idolatries, such as the *Marialia*, *Stellaria*, *Rosaria*, *Coronaria*, and they may as well be *Diabolaria* and *Satanaria*.¹⁵ Still there is no sign of repentance or

¹¹ Literally, “It is as though a goose honked at him.”

¹² Matthew Lang, archbishop of Salzburg. On Campeggio, compare note 19.

¹³ Compare page 32.

¹⁴ *I.e.*, the Franciscans and the Dominicans, respectively.

¹⁵ *Marialia* is a medieval term for a work of Marian devotion. *Stellaria* may refer to devotions to Mary as the Star,

¹⁰ Luther refers to such phenomena also in his treatise *The Misuse of the Mass*, LW 36, 190–198, and in *Disavowal of Purgatory*, WA 30^{II}, 385.

improvement, but they obstinately and impudently insist that all this must be defended, and they ask for your body and life for its protection.

Here I must call attention to an incident that occurred at the diet in Augsburg, to show what a precious reason they have for such holy idolatry. When the article regarding the invocation of the saints was being discussed in the committee, Dr. Eck cited the words found in *Genesis* 48 [:16], where Jacob says of Ephraim and Manasseh, “And my name shall be invoked upon those children.”¹⁶ When, after many words by Master Philip, John Brenz¹⁷ said casually that nothing about calling on the saints could be found in Scripture, Dr. Cochlaeus,¹⁸ to expedite matters, blurted out—profound thinker that he is—that the saints had not been invoked in the Old Testament because at the time they were not yet in Heaven but in the anteroom of Hell. Then my gracious lord, Duke John Frederick, duke of Saxony, *etc.*, tightened the noose on both of them and said to Dr. Eck: “Dr. Eck, there you find the verse answered which you quoted from the Old Testament.” So sure are they of themselves, so nicely do they agree with one another—these precious writers of contradictions!¹⁹ The one says that the saints were not invoked in the Old Testament, the other says that they were. They cite verses from the Old Testament, just as if we did not know that God performed all the great miracles in the Old Testament for the sake of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as he himself often declares, and that he did not perform one-half, indeed, not one-tenth, as many in the New Testament for the sake of any saint. Like fools, they spit out the first thing that comes into their mouth. Yet all this must be accounted true and be the basis of the articles of faith. All of this goes unrepented; moreover, it is defended. People are condemned and executed over it, and for this you are to war and fight, *etc.*

So that we may have at least one illustration in this long sermon, I shall give one—out of many thousands of such examples—which is taken from a book of devotion to Mary, and which tells how the Virgin Mary must be venerated with sacrifices. There was a robber, or

Coronaria to devotions to the Crown of Mary, both being forms of the rosary (*Rosarium*).

¹⁶ *Et invocetur nomen meum super pueros istos.*

¹⁷ John Brenz (1499–1570) was one of the leading Lutheran theologians at the Diet of Augsburg. He was the pastor at Schwäbisch-Hall from 1522 to 1548 and later provost of the Collegiate Church at Stuttgart.

¹⁸ John Cochlaeus (1479–1552) was, along with John Eck and John Faber, one of the authors of the Roman Catholic *Confutation* and a bitter critic of Luther whose polemical writings established the traditional Roman Catholic interpretation of the Reformer.

¹⁹ John Faber had presented to the emperor a collection of contradictions found in Luther’s writings, entitling the work *Antilogiarum, hoc est contradictionum M. Lutheri babylonica, ex eiusdem apostatae libris, per Ioh. Fabri excerpta.*

highwayman who had not performed a single good deed in his whole life except that one day he strayed into a church by chance; it was the Candlemas of Our Lady,²⁰ and he noticed that people were offering pennies and candles on the altar, whereupon he did the same. Later he was arrested and hanged. Now the devils wanted to take his soul to Hell, but a good angel intervened and said, “Why do you devils take him away, although you have no right to him?” They replied, “He committed many evil deeds and not a single good one.” Then they all went before the judgment seat of God. Here the devils accused the robber, saying that he had performed no good work; but the good angel brought out the penny stamped with the cross²¹ and the candle which he had offered on the altar. Now the Judge pronounced sentence: “The robber shall defend himself against the devils.” The angel advised him to hold the penny in his left hand as a shield and the candle in his right hand as a sword or a spear, and thus fight against the devils, executing nothing but cross blows. That he did and thus repulsed the devils. His soul re-entered his body, and he was taken from the gallows and lived happily ever after. That’s the story.²²

Who could think this up if it were not true? The monks and priests have scribbled so many books full of such outrageous and lying fables that they have inundated Christendom as with a flood. Never did a pope, bishop, or doctor pay this any heed or attention. But now that we preach that Christ is our Savior, they become mad and raving. However, if one preaches that a candle or coin offered to our dear Lady can save an impenitent rogue and murderer, without Christ and without faith, and can repel all the devils, and if one blasphemes and suppresses Christ’s suffering and life, then all sermons are good and precious; then there are no heretics. All of this comes under the heading: “Priests never were any good.”

Again: How will your conscience endure the great evil, the torment, and the violence they have done to all the world by means of their agonizing confession? They have driven so many souls to despair with this and have deprived and robbed despondent consciences of all Christian comfort; for they concealed and hushed up the power of absolution and faith treacherously and maliciously and insisted solely on the intolerable torment and impossible toil of relating one’s sins and of feeling contrition for them. They promised grace and salvation in return for such contrition and recounting of sin as our own work. Thus, they pointed and directed us away from Christ to ourselves.

²⁰ The feast celebrated on February 2 in commemoration of the presentation of Christ in the temple and the purification of the Virgin Mary. This feast was also the occasion for the consecration and sale of candles which were to be used throughout the year, hence the name Candlemas.

²¹ The coin known as a *Creutzer* had a cross stamped on it; this is apparently the type of coin referred to here.

²² The exact source of this legend has not been located. However, similar legends about Mary and the saints were common.

In brief, all that they do and teach is directed toward leading us away from Christ and to their own work and ours. There is no letter in their doctrine so insignificant and no work so petty that it does not deny and blaspheme Christ and defame faith in him, leading the poor heart to impossibilities and to despair. This is entirely in keeping with the true Antichrist. As implied by his name, he must live and teach in direct opposition to Christ and exalt himself over God and his Word. We find this more obviously fulfilled in the papacy than we can understand. Still all of this goes unrepented. They defend this confession to the present day. Moreover, they want you to help fight for the maintenance of such torment, distress, despair, and all the plagues of this confession, and to burden yourself with the misery of all souls.

Furthermore, you have to burden yourself with the baleful misery and accursed abuse of the ban and of the office of the keys.²³ This abuse in itself would be sufficient reason for us to let the papacy perish, to say nothing of fighting for it and confirming and fortifying the abuse. How furiously and madly the pope has employed this against emperors, kings, and all the world, yes, against God himself and his holy Word! Whatever thoughts the devil suggested to his heart had to be accounted right and good. How many wars and how much bloodshed did he incite with this in all the world! Who can enumerate all the abominations? Whatever he wanted to see regarded as sin, that had to be sin, in name and in reality. What he wished to have accounted as holy, that had to be holy. In that way he became a terrible lord over the whole world, over body, soul, property, country, and people, over purgatory, Hell, devil, Heaven, angels, over God, and over all. He unlocked and locked Heaven, he closed and opened Hell to whomsoever he chose. He either took away or let a man retain his life, property, honor, land, empire, wife, child, house and home, money, and everything, entirely as he willed. What would the papacy amount to without the abuse of the keys?

All of this they did out of sheer caprice and without any authority, for the sake of their stomach and their dominion. And what is the worst of all, they misused God's name for this most flagrantly. For they committed all these inexpressible outrages, all this raving and raging, under the name of God, without the slightest intention of reforming matters. No, like a hard anvil, they impenitently let the blows rain down on them, mean-while remaining adamant in their intentions. Moreover, they want to see all of this defended and strengthened with your blood and protection. It is surprising that heaven and earth do not break and tear apart in the face of such incorrigible, defiant wickedness, and that God tolerates such incessant wickedness, such defiance and unabashed resistance so long. I believe if the

Turk knew himself to be in the wrong as the papists know them-selves to be such incorrigible villains, he would not be so obstinate and defy God so impudently with his wickedness. For I think that the Turk would never say, "We Turks were never any good," as our papists say, "We priests were never any good." In brief, only the devil does that; he, too, knows that he is wicked and, in addition, wants to defend his wickedness. The papacy imitates his example. It recognizes its terrible wickedness, but wants to leave it unreformed; in fact, it wants you to confirm and defend it with your life and blood. If you feel any desire to fight, here you find a fine cause, for the most holy and spiritual people! But if you reflect on only the hundred-thousandth part of the wickedness of which you would make yourself a partner, your desire to engage in such a fight will surely vanish, and you will say, "Such impenitent arch-villains could endure the fire of Hell's abyss before I would move a finger in their behalf, much less risk body and life for them."

Furthermore, you must burden yourself with and aid the terrible, fraudulent, shameful tomfoolery of the devil which they have promoted with relics and pilgrimages, and which they by no means intend to discontinue. O God, how it has snowed and rained in this respect. What a sheer cloudburst of lies and fraud has broken upon us! How the devil extolled dead bones, garments, and utensils as the saints' limbs and utensils! How confidently people believed all the liars! How they flocked to join pilgrimages! All of this was approved by pope, bishops, priests, and monks; or at least, they said nothing and left the people in error and took their money and goods. How much that new deception at Trier with Christ's coat alone must have netted them!²⁴ What a great fair the devil held with this throughout the world, selling innumerable pseudo-miracles! Oh, what all might be said about this! If all foliage and grass could speak, they could not even express fully this knavery. Yet we have to witness that they do not confess and quit this villainy, but want to preserve it, confirm it, and increase it. Moreover, they want to accomplish this with your body and blood.

The very worst feature of all is that they misled the people with it and diverted them from Christ, persuading them to trust and rely on such falsehoods. For no one resorted to relics and pilgrimages without relying and depending on them. He forsook his Christ, the Gospel, and faith and, in addition, despised his own vocation and thought it was worthless. The papists not only failed to fend off such seduction of souls, such denial of Christ and contempt for him and his faith, but they took delight and joy in this and embellished and strengthened it with indulgences and graces, and fattened themselves well with

²⁴ The first exhibition of the Holy Coat of Trier, alleged to be the seamless robe of Christ, took place in 1512. Compare Luther's *Exhortation to All Clergy*, LW 34, 25, and WA 30^{ll}, 297, note 2.

²³ Compare Luther's treatise, also written in 1530, entitled *The Keys* (LW 40, 321–377), as well as his comments on the ban in *Exhortation to All Clergy* (LW 34, 32ff.).

it, fleecing and flaying the whole world. Yet there is no sign of their repenting or reforming, but only a defiant resolution to expand and fortify all of this and to tolerate no change whatsoever. The golden year²⁵ is part and parcel of this, invented by those arch-liars, the popes, who have even ordered the angels to take the souls of the pilgrims to Heaven.²⁶ But all of this is too high and too much; it beggars all description and all imagination. It is called the *abominatio in loco sancto*, “the desolating sacrilege standing in the holy place” [Matthew 24:15]. That is how Christ described the papacy with plain and yet incomprehensible words.

I truly believe that the papacy is an abomination not only by reason of such particular evils, but also because of its impenitence, because it declines reform in these matters and rather wants to see them defended. Thus, the papacy not only sins in its deeds, but confirms its sin with impenitence, that is, with the sin against the Holy Spirit. This cannot be surpassed; it cannot become worse, for the devil himself can commit no higher or worse sin. You see, these are the fellows who presume to be judges of God’s Word. They dare to demand that we recant and repent of our doctrine and that we venerate all such abominations as God’s Word and work. But they insist on remaining unreformed; in brief, they will not tolerate any renewal. If that is not inciting to sedition, then what do you call inciting to sedition? If that is not provoking pestilence, famine, Turks, war, murder, and all of God’s wrath and plague, what might be evil enough to provoke these? However, I must stop here with the enumeration of these abominations, though there are many more, such as the religious fraternities, the vows to the saints, and the great fair at which priests and monks sell their good works and their cowls to the whole world, vesting people with them at death and thereby leading them to Heaven.²⁷ If I were to continue, it might rob and bereave one of his senses. Unfortunately, one half of a single item of these is too much.

The third reason why you must refuse obedience to the emperor in such a call to arms is this: if you did otherwise you would not only burden yourself with all these abominations and help strengthen them, but you would also

lend a hand in overthrowing and exterminating all the good which the dear Gospel has again restored and established. For those villains are not satisfied with preserving such devilries and outrages; as the edict states, they will tolerate no changes but will eradicate and utterly destroy all that we have ever taught, lived for, and done, and still live for and do. This reason also encompasses a great deal; for our Gospel has, thanks be to God, accomplished much good. Previously no one knew the real meaning of the Gospel, Christ, baptism, confession, the sacrament [of the altar], faith, Spirit, flesh, good works, the Ten Commandments, the Our Father, prayer, suffering, comfort, temporal government, the state of matrimony, parents, children, masters, manservant, mistress, maidservant, devils, angels, world, life, death, sin, justice, forgiveness, God, bishop, pastor, church, a Christian, or the cross.²⁸ In brief, we were totally ignorant about all that it is necessary for a Christian to know. All of this was obscured and suppressed by the popish asses. They are, as you know, just that—great, coarse, ignorant asses in Christian affairs. For I too was one, and I know that I am telling the truth on this matter. All devout hearts will bear witness to this; for they would gladly have been instructed about even one of these items, but they were held captive by the pope as I was and could gain neither the opportunity nor the permission to be instructed. We did not know otherwise than that priests and monks alone were everything, and that we relied on their works and not on Christ.

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

²⁵ During a jubilee year special indulgences were granted. Compare *Exhortation to All Clergy*, LW 34, 16, note 14.

²⁶ When a large number of pilgrims died in the jubilee year 1500 while making a pilgrimage to Rome, a bull was published (ostensibly by Pope Clement VI, though its authenticity is uncertain) commanding the angels to carry the souls of such pilgrims to Heaven. Compare Henry Charles Lea, *History of Auricular Confession and Indulgences in the Latin Church* (Philadelphia: Lea, 1896), III, 203, and WA 30^{II}, 282, note 2.

²⁷ Luther is referring to the practice of burying a layman in a monk’s cowl, thereby supposedly assuring his salvation. Compare *Exhortation to All Clergy*, LW 34, 21.

²⁸ Compare the parallel list in Luther’s *Exhortation to All Clergy*, LW 34, 53.

deriving their comfort from him. For all of that was nonexistent before; all of it is something new.

Furthermore, you will have to help to condemn and disgrace the children of our pastors and preachers, poor forsaken orphans, as the children of whores. You will have to help people to rely again on the works of monks and priests instead of on Christ, and on buying their merits and their cowls for the hour of death. You will have to help them fill Christendom again with whoring, adultery, and other unnatural, shameful vices, instead of getting married. You will have to help restore the atrocious carnival of the sacrificial mass. You will have to help in the defense of all their avarice, robbery, and thievery, by means of which they acquire their riches. But why should I enlarge on this? You will have to help in the destruction of Christ's Word and his whole kingdom and in the rebuilding of the kingdom of the devil. For that is the aim of the scoundrels who are bent on restoring the *status quo ante*, the old state of things. They are of the Antichrist, or Counter-Christ; therefore they can only do what is against Christ, especially in the cardinal doctrine according to which our heart is to look to Christ alone for consolation and assurance and not to look to our own works; that is, we are to be delivered from sin and to be justified by faith alone, as is written in *Romans* 10 [:10], "For man believes with his heart and so is justified."

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

If you are open to advice, this warning against obeying the emperor and your prince in such circumstances will suffice. As the apostles say, "We must obey God rather than men" [*Acts* 5:29]. If you accept this advice, good; If not, never mind—go ahead and fight confidently. Christ

will not be afraid of you and will also (God willing) stand his ground against you. But if he does, you will have quite a battle on your hands. In the meantime, we shall be watching to see who will overwhelm the other with his defiance and hold the field.

These things I wanted to say to my dear Germans by way of warning. And as I did above,²⁹ I testify here again that I do not wish to incite or spur anyone to war or rebellion or even self-defense, but solely to peace. But if the papists—our devil—refuse to keep the peace, and, impenitently raging against the Holy Spirit with their persistent abominations, insist on war, and thereby get their heads bloodied or even perish, I want to witness publicly here that this was not my doing, nor did I give any cause for it. It is they who want to have it that way. May their blood be on their heads! I am exonerated; I have done my duty faithfully. Henceforth I shall let Him judge who will, must, and also is able to do so. He will not tarry, nor will he fail. To him be praise and honor, thanks and glory in eternity! Amen.

²⁹ Compare pages 13–14, 18, 34.