

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 364b Copyright 2021 The Trinity Foundation Post Office Box 68, Unicoi, Tennessee 37692 July-August 2021
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A Warning to My Dear German People, Part 2

By Martin Luther

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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.

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

We must not let everything be considered rebellious which the bloodhounds designate as such. For in that way they want to silence the lips and tie the hands of the entire world, so that no one may either reprove them with preaching or defend himself with his fist, while they keep their mouth open and their hands free. Thus, they want to frighten and ensnare all the world with the name “insurrection,” and at the same time comfort and reassure themselves. No, dear fellow, we must submit to you a different interpretation and definition of that term. To act contrary to law is not rebellion; otherwise, every violation of the law would be rebellion. No, he is an insurrectionist who refuses to submit to government and law, who attacks and fights against them, and attempts to overthrow them with a view to making himself ruler and establishing the law, as Münzer did; that is the true definition of a rebel. *Aliud est invasor, aliud transgressor.*¹ In accordance with this definition, self-defense against the bloodhounds cannot be rebellious. For the papists are deliberately starting the war; they refuse to keep the peace, they do not let others rest who would like to live in peace. Thus, the papists are much closer to the name and the quality which is termed rebellion.

For they have no law, either divine or human, on their side; rather they act out of malice, like murderers and villains, in violation of all divine and human law. That can easily be proved; for they themselves know that our doctrine is correct, and yet they want to exterminate it. Thus, a great Nicholas bishop² declared in Augsburg that

¹ “An invader is one thing; a transgressor is another.”

² Luther sometimes referred to the Roman Catholic bishops as “Nicholas bishops” when he wanted to stress the dubiousness of their calling. A “Nicholas” was a comic figure in children's games and also a term of contempt for a peasant. Compare *LW* 39, 252, note 8. Melancthon and Jonas attributed a statement of

he could tolerate it if everyone believed as they do in Wittenberg; but what he could not tolerate was that such a doctrine should originate in and emanate from such a remote nook and corner. What do you think? Are those not fine episcopal words? The papal legate, Cardinal Campeggio,³ confessed similarly that he could easily accept such a teaching. However, this would establish a bad precedent, and one would then have to accord other nations and kingdoms the same privilege, which would be out of the question. Another important bishop declared of their scholars: “Our scholars do a fine job of defending us. They themselves concede that our cause is not based on Scripture.”⁴ Thus they are well aware that our doctrine is not wrong, but that it is founded on the Scriptures. Yet they condemn us arbitrarily and try to exterminate this doctrine in contravention of divine law and truth.

It is also obvious that they are acting contrary to imperial and to natural law; for in the first place, they hardly gave our side a hearing, and then, when they delivered their tardy, flimsy confutation orally, they simply refused to hand us a copy of it, nor did they give us an opportunity to make reply.⁵ To the present day they shun the light like bats. It is, of course, in accord with divine, imperial, and natural law, as the heathen Porcius Festus also held in the controversy between the Jews and St. Paul [*Acts* 25:16], not to condemn a man without a hearing. Even God did not condemn Adam until he first gave him a chance to reply. We appeared voluntarily at Augsburg and offered humbly and eagerly to render an account. This, however, was maliciously and arbitrarily denied us. Nor did they give us their confutation, no matter how often and how much we pleaded for it. Yet we were condemned by the holy fathers in God and by the Christian princes. O excellent teachers! O fine judges, who force all the world to believe and still dare not to publish what is to be believed! I am expected to believe without knowing what to believe. I am told that I am in error, but I am not shown in what I err!

O all you unfortunate people who sided with the pope at Augsburg! All your descendants will forever have to be ashamed of you. They will be unhappy to hear that they had such miserable ancestors. If we had shunned

the light and refused to give answer, you would have compelled us to do so. Now we come along, not only willing and glad to give an account, but we plead, implore, and clamor for a chance to do this. We go to great expense to do so, neglect many things, and suffer every indignity, mockery, contempt, and danger, and you shamefully and maliciously refuse our request. If we had not asked for or desired to have your bat or night owl, that is, your confutation, you would have transmitted it to us against our wishes. Now that we ask for it, complain, and persist in demanding it, you deny us your confutation and refuse to receive our reply.

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

However, I am very willing to believe that a special portion of shrewdness prompts them to hold back their confutation and their fine little booklet. Their conscience must sense instinctively that it is a flimsy, empty, and meaningless thing of which they would have to be ashamed if it were made public and examined in the light of day, or if it were to be answered. For I know those highly learned doctors very well who no doubt brewed and stewed over it for six weeks. Perhaps with their babbling they can impress those unfamiliar with the subject; but when it is put on paper, it has neither hands nor feet, and lies there confounded and confused, as though a drunkard had spewed it forth. This is especially apparent in the writings of Dr. Schmid⁶ and Dr. Eck.⁷ There is neither head nor tail to it when they commit things to writing. For that reason, they apply themselves so much the more to shouting and chattering.

this nature to Matthew Lang, the archbishop of Salzburg, and it is he to whom Luther is referring. Compare *WA* 30^{III}, 261–262, and 283, note 2, as well as *LW* 34, 102.

³ Cardinal Lorenzo Campeggio, papal legate at the diet in Augsburg.

⁴ Conrad Cordatus, one of the Lutheran theologians at the diet, attributed such statements to Albert, archbishop of Mainz, and to John Eck. Compare *WA* 30^{III}, 284, note 1.

⁵ See note 6 from Part 1.

⁶ Schmid (“Smith”) was Luther’s name for John Faber, or Fabri (1478–1541), the archbishop of Vienna and one of the principal authors of the Roman Catholic confutation. Faber was the son of a blacksmith.

⁷ John Eck (1486–1543), the Roman Catholic theologian who was Luther’s opponent in the Leipzig Debate (1519) and a leading Roman Catholic participant at Augsburg.

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

It is easy to see that they were very confident when they arranged for this diet and were convinced that our side would lack the courage to appear. They thought that when they brought the emperor in person to Germany, all would be frightened and say, "Gracious lords, what is your wish?" When they proved mistaken in this and the elector of Saxony was the very first to make his appearance, my heavens, how they soiled their breeches in their trepidation! How all their confidence vanished! How they put their heads together, took secret counsel with one another and whispered! No one—not Christ himself, or even I—was permitted to know what it was all about, just as little as we knew about the princes' plotting prior to this year.⁸ In the final analysis they were trying to find ways and means to avoid giving our people an opportunity to be heard, for our people were the first to arrive, and they appeared to be very bold and cheerful. As this was impossible, they nevertheless did themselves the honor in the end of refusing to hand us their vapid confutation and to give us an opportunity to make reply.

Their insolent mouthpiece and bloodthirsty sophist, Dr. Eck, one of their foremost advisers, declared openly within the hearing of our people that if the emperor had followed the resolution arrived at in Bologna⁹ and

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

Someone may interpose that the emperor was willing to hand us their confutation if we had promised not to make it public. That is true; this was suggested to our side.¹⁰ But here let everyone feel and grope, even if he cannot see and hear, to learn what kind of people they are who do not wish or dare to have their cause exposed to the light of day. If it is really such a precious thing and so well grounded in the Scriptures, as they shout and boast, why does it shun the light? What good does it do to conceal such public matters from us and from everyone? After all, they must be taught and observed by them. But if it is unfounded and without meaning, why then did they have the elector of Brandenburg proclaim and publish in writing at the time of the first recess that our confession was refuted by Scripture and sound reason?¹¹ If that were true and if their own conscience did not give them the lie, they would not only have had such a precious and well-documented confutation read, but they would also have handed it to us in writing, saying, "There you have it. We challenge anyone to refute that." That is what we did, and still do, with our confession.

However, Christ must remain truthful when he says: "For every one who does evil hates the light, and does

⁸ In the spring of 1528 Otto von Pack, an official of Duke George of Saxony, reported to Philip of Hesse the existence of a league of Roman Catholic princes and bishops which proposed to attack and destroy the supporters of the Reformation. It was soon ascertained that Pack's story was a hoax and that his documents were forgeries. Luther, however, continued to believe Pack's account. Compare Smith and Jacobs, *Luther's Correspondence*, II, 435.

⁹ It was in the Treaty of Barcelona, June 29, 1529, between the pope and the emperor, that Charles agreed to take forcible measures to suppress the Reformation in Germany. Compare Ludwig Pastor, *History of the Popes* (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1923), X, 57. This matter may also have been discussed when the

pope and emperor met in Bologna (November 1529–March 1530) to work out a peace treaty and to crown the emperor.

¹⁰ Compare note 6 from Part 1.

¹¹ On September 22, 1530, the emperor proclaimed an imperial recess, and the elector of Brandenburg read the emperor's verdict that the "views and confession of the elector of Saxony and his associates...have been refuted and rejected on the basis of the Gospel and the Scriptures with sound reason." Compare WA 30^{III}, 287, note 4; Reu, *The Augsburg Confession*, 391; and Luther's *Commentary on the Alleged Imperial Edict*, LW 34, 63–104. See especially LW 34, 68, note 5.

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

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

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

Yes, you will say, but even though they did not issue their confutation or allow it to be answered, they did appoint instead a committee composed of several princes and scholars from each side and ordered them to discuss the matter at issue in a friendly manner. Little kitten, clean and groom yourself, we are going to have company!¹² How stupid and foolish is that poor man Christ, not to notice such cunning. The committee did convene, that is true; but what was discussed? Nothing at all about their confutation or refutation; that remained in the dark. The committee had to help in preserving appearances, so as to provide some pretense for keeping the inane confutation under cover and not making it public. For it was not their confutation that was submitted in the committee meeting, but our confession. Their deliberations with our people revolved about such

¹² When a cat washed itself, it was supposed to mean that guests were coming. Luther uses this proverb in the sense of putting on a false front.

questions as how much of our confession we were willing to drop and withdraw, or how they interpreted it, or how we could make it harmonize with their views. Their one aim and objective was to enable them to make a fine pretense and to raise the hue and cry: “You see, dear people, listen, all the world, and hear how stubborn and stiff-necked the Lutherans are! In the first place, their confession was disproven with Scripture and with well-founded reasons, and then we engaged in friendly discussions with them. What more can we do? They refuse to yield, whether they are overcome or whether instructed in a friendly manner.”

All right, we must put up with their clamor and their lies; however, I know that this will not help them. God, too, has already given them and their boasting the lie. For when this recess was announced by the elector of Brandenburg and it was proclaimed that our confession had been refuted with the Scriptures and with valid reason, our people did not accept it, nor did they keep silent, but boldly and publicly contradicted it before the emperor and the empire and affirmed that our confession had not been refuted, but that it was ordered and founded in such a way that even the gates of Hell could not prevail against it. They had to swallow this discomfiture again. For, bluntly stated, what the elector of Brandenburg read out in proclaiming the recess is not true; it is a lie. That is correct, for their well-grounded confutation has not yet been brought to light. It is perhaps still slumbering with old Tannhäuser in the Venusberg.¹³

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

The friendly intentions which they had regarding the committee are also very evident from the one point which they dared, among other articles, to propose to our

¹³ The Tannhäuser legend combined elements from the life of a thirteenth-century German minnesinger with those of a legendary knight who, after many wanderings, gave himself up to a life of sensual passion with Lady Venus on the Venusberg, a mountain near Eisenach.

people, namely, that we should teach that in addition to taking the sacrament in two kinds, it was not wrong but right to administer and take it also in only one kind.¹⁴ If we consented to that, they would also make a concession and permit us to teach that the sacrament might be taken and given in both kinds. Does that not betoken a great friendship? Who might have looked for such love from these people? Until now they persecuted as heretics all who took the sacrament in both lands and tormented them in every way. And now they are ready to adjudge this as correct and Christian and let it pass as such, if we but admit that they in turn also do the correct and Christian thing when they take the sacrament in one kind. That is, in plain words, speaking out of both sides of your mouth.¹⁵ It is wrong, and yet it is accounted right, depending upon their whims and will. Yet this dare not be called a lie.

If our side had agreed to this and accepted their proposal, then they really would have boasted and shouted throughout the whole world: “See, dear people, the Lutherans are recanting their doctrine. Formerly they taught that it was wrong to take the sacrament in one kind, and now they teach that it is right. Now you note that we taught correctly, and they are found to be in error in their own confession.” In that way they tried to confirm all their abominations and devil’s tomfoolery in the eyes of the faithful, simple folk and to arraign us as recanters of all our teaching. Furthermore, they would thus have established their pernicious doctrine in our churches by our own lips and at the same time suppressed our doctrine with might in their churches. They would not at all have taught our doctrine among themselves. In that way they wanted to penetrate and entrench themselves in our churches by means of our own lips and, simultaneously, exclude us from their churches. Are these not fine, friendly, fitting means, well suited to friendly dealings?

As the confutation is, so is the committee. The confutation is a dark night owl, reluctant to face the light; the committee is sheer cunning and deception. The boast that they tried friendly measures with us is just as truthful and sincere as their boast that they refuted our confession with Holy Scripture and sound reason—both are sheer lying and deceit. To be sure, they would not

like to be treated that way by us. However, at present I do not propose to write about the actions of this diet, nor to attack their confutation (though both shall yet be attended to if God wills),¹⁶ but at present I merely wish to show that the papists do not want to have peace, truth, or tranquility, but insist on enforcing their will and thus are bringing about either a war or an insurrection, whether we like it or not. Nothing will restrain them. We, however, will have to take the risk and await the outcome, since our offers, pleas, and cries for peace are unheeded and our humility and patience go for nought. Let come what cannot be prevented!

But since I am the “prophet of the Germans”¹⁷—for this haughty title I will henceforth have to assign to myself, to please and oblige my papists and asses—it is fitting that I, as a faithful teacher, warn my dear Germans against the harm and danger threatening them and impart Christian instruction to them regarding their conduct in the event that the emperor, at the instigation of his devils, the papists, issues a call to arms against the princes and cities on our side. It is not that I worry that His Imperial Majesty will listen to such spiteful people and initiate such an unjust war, but I do not want to neglect my duty. I want to keep my conscience clean and unsullied at all events. I would much rather compose a superfluous and unnecessary admonition and warning and impart needless instruction than to neglect my duty and then find, if things go contrary to my expectations, that I am too late and have no other consolation than the words *non putassem*, I did not intend this. The sages suggest making provision for things even if everything is secure. How much less may we trust any wind and weather, no matter how pleasant it may appear, in these difficult times when the papists’ raging provokes God’s wrath so terribly! Moreover, in *Romans* 12 Paul commands those who preside over others to look out for them.

Any German who wants to follow my sincere counsel may do so; and whoever does not want to may disregard it. I am not seeking my own benefit in this, but the welfare and salvation of you Germans. Nothing better could happen to my person than that the papists devour me, tear me, or bite me to pieces, or help me out of this

¹⁴ This proposal was made on August 19, 1530, and the answer from the Lutherans was given on the next day. Luther had discussed “both kinds in the sacrament” in his *Exhortation to All Clergy Assembled at Augsburg*, LW 34, 38–40. He also dealt with the matter in his letter of August 26 to Elector John of Saxony, WA, Br 5, 572–574; translated in Reu, *Augsburg Confession*, Second Part, 383ff.

¹⁵ Proverbial expression which literally says, “to blow hot and cold at the same time.” Compare Ernst Thiele, *Luther’s Sprichwörterammlung* (Weimar, 1900), No. 136.

¹⁶ Luther’s *Commentary on the Alleged Imperial Edict* (LW 34, 63–104) appears to be the fulfillment of this intention. Written some months after his *Warning*, it was published almost simultaneously with it due to the delay of the latter in the press.

¹⁷ Justus Jonas had referred to Luther in such terms in correspondence with him during his sojourn at Coburg, complimenting him on his steadfastness in the face of controversy, and Melancthon was to use similar phraseology in his oration at Luther’s funeral. Compare Julius Köstlin, *Martin Luther: Sein Leben und seine Schriften* (2 volumes; Berlin, 1903), II, 215, 625–626.

sinful, mortal bag of maggots in any other way. No matter how angry they are, I will say to them: “Dear Sirs, if you are angry, step away from the wall, do it in your underwear, and hang it around your neck!”¹⁸ In brief, I will not have them boast to me and defy me. For I know—God be praised—what my position is and where I shall stay. If they do not want to accept my service for their own good, then may the vile devil thank them if they show me a dribble of love or grace. If they do not need my doctrine, I need their grace still less, and I will let them rage and rant in the name of all devils, while I laugh in the name of God.

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

In the first place, I must say a word in defense of dear Emperor Charles’ person. For he has to date, also at the diet, conducted himself in such a way that he has gained the favor and affection of all the world and is worthy of being spared all grief. Our people, too, have nothing but praise for his imperial virtues.¹⁹ Let me cite just a few examples to demonstrate this. It demonstrates a wonderful and rare gentleness of character that His Imperial Majesty refused to condemn our doctrine even though he was vehemently incited and urged on by both the spiritual and secular princes, with unrelenting insistence, even before he left Spain. However, His Majesty stood his ground as firmly as a rock. He hurried to the diet and issued a gracious invitation, wanting to discuss matters in a kind and friendly spirit. He is also reported to have declared: “This cannot be such an

utterly evil doctrine, since so many great, exalted, learned, and honest people accept it.”

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

And although the diet involved a great expenditure of money and it seems that nothing was accomplished there, I nevertheless will say for myself that even if it had consumed twice as much money, all is richly compensated for and enough has been achieved, for Sir Envy and Master Liar were disgraced in their envying and lying. They had to see and hear that our doctrine was not found to be contrary to the Scriptures or the articles of faith. For prior to this, their lies and envy portrayed our doctrine everywhere, through their writings, their sermons, and their slander, as more horrible than any other that has ever seen the light of day. This envy, I say, was put to shame at the diet, and these lies were disclosed. Therefore, we must be kindly disposed toward our dear Emperor Charles and thank him for this benefit, that God through him initially adorned our doctrine and delivered it from the false and ridiculous labels of heresy and of other shameful names, and that he thus administered a sound slap on the mouth of these lying and envious people. Of course, they are brazen-faced and unshamed. But this does not matter; the beginning is good enough for us, and, I suppose, things will also improve.

Furthermore, His Imperial Majesty is reported to have said that if the priests were godly, they would not need a Luther. What else does that mean other than what Solomon said: “Inspired decisions are on the lips of a king” [*Proverbs* 16:10]. His Majesty wishes to indicate that Luther is the priests’ scourge, that they are well deserving of this, and that their conduct is reprehensible. They themselves have admitted that often enough. For the bishop of Salzburg remarked to Master Philip: “Alas, why do you propose to reform us priests? We priests

¹⁸ A proverbial expression; compare Thiele, *Luther’s Sprichwörterammlung*, No. 90.

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

never have been any good.” See and hear those godly people! They know and they confess that they are evil and that they are in error; moreover, they want to stay that way, remain unreformed, and not yield to the acknowledged truth. Yet they clamor and call upon the emperor and all princes to go to war for them and to protect them. What else does that mean than this: Dear Emperor, dear Germans, wage war, shed your blood, stake all your property, your life, your wife and child on protecting us in our shameful, devilish life against the truth. Certainly, we know the truth, but we cannot stomach it; nor do we want to mend our ways. What do you think? If you go to war and shed your blood for such people, are you not a fine martyr, and do you not invest your blood and your property very wisely?

Furthermore, when our people wanted to hand His Imperial Majesty their answer to the sophists’ confutation—as much of it as had been retained after the reading—and His Imperial Majesty extended his hand to receive it, King Ferdinand pulled the hand of His Imperial Majesty back, restraining him from accepting it.²⁰ This again reveals the identity of the people who vent their hatred and their envy under the name of His Imperial Majesty; for the latter was minded and inclined otherwise.

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

²⁰ The answer that Luther is referring to here is the *Apology of the Augsburg Confession*, which the elector of Saxony’s chancellor, Gregory Brück, tried to hand to the emperor after the recess of the diet had been announced. King Ferdinand, who kept the emperor from accepting the *Apology*, was the archduke of Austria; in 1556 he succeeded Charles as emperor and reigned until 1564.

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

But the dear emperor must share the experience of all godly princes and lords. For whenever a prince is not half a devil and wishes to govern with mildness, the greatest rogues and villains inevitably gain a place in the government and the offices and do as they like under the ruler’s name. They need not fear because they know that the prince is gentle and is ready to give them an ear. What can this godly emperor do among so many rogues and villains, especially over against that arch-villain, Pope Clement,²¹ who is full of all kinds of malice, which he has to date amply demonstrated to the emperor? I, Dr. Luther, am better versed in Scripture than the emperor, and also more experienced in practical daily life, but still I fear that if I were to dwell among so many rogues and constantly heard their venomous tongues, without any information to the contrary, I would also be too gentle for them and they would overwhelm me in some matters. In fact, this has often happened to me at the hands of certain spirits and wisecracks.

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

²¹ Clement VII (Giulio de’ Medici), cousin of Leo X (Giovanni de’ Medici), reigned as pope from 1523 to 1534.

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

The first reason why you must not obey the emperor and make war in such an instance as this is that you, as well as the emperor, vowed in baptism to preserve the Gospel of Christ and not to persecute it or oppose it. Now you are, of course, aware that in this case the emperor is being incited and duped by the pope to fight against the Gospel of Christ, because our doctrine was publicly proved at Augsburg to be the true Gospel and Holy Scripture. Therefore, this must be your reply to the emperor's or your prince's summons to arms: "Indeed, dear Emperor, dear prince, if you keep your oath and pledge made in baptism, you will be my dear lord, and I will obey you and go to war at your command. But if you will not keep your baptismal pledge and Christian covenant made with Christ, but rather deny them, then may a rascal obey you in my place. I refuse to blaspheme my God and deny his Word for your sake; nor will I impudently rush to spring into the abyss of Hell with you."

This first reason has awesome, far-reaching implications. For he who fights and contends against the Gospel necessarily fights simultaneously against God, against Jesus Christ, against the Holy Spirit, against the precious blood of Christ, against his death, against God's Word, against all the articles of faith, against all the sacraments, against all the doctrines which are given, confirmed, and preserved by the Gospel, for example, the doctrine regarding government, regarding worldly peace, worldly estates, in brief, against all angels and saints, against Heaven and Earth and all creatures. For he who fights against God must fight against all that is of God or that has to do with God. But you would soon discover what kind of end that would lead to! What is even worse, such fighting would be done consciously; for these people know and admit that this teaching is the

Gospel. The Turks and the Tartars, of course, do not know that it is God's Word. Therefore, no Turk can be as vile as you, and you must be damned to Hell ten times more deeply than all Turks, Tartars, heathen, and Jews.

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

The second reason is this: Even if our doctrine were false—although everyone knows it is not—you should still be deterred from fighting solely by the knowledge that by such fighting you are taking upon yourself a part of the guilt before God of all the abominations which have been committed and will yet be committed by the whole papacy. This reason encompasses innumerable loathsome deeds and every vice, sin, and harm. In brief, the bottomless Hell itself is found here, with every sin, all of which you share in if you obey the emperor in this instance. We shall enumerate a few of these and bring them into view, lest they be too easily forgotten.²² For the papists would like to cover themselves and hide such abominations, unrepented and unreformed, until such a time as they can bring them into the open again and restore them.

Part 3 will conclude in the next Trinity Review.

New Trinity Foundation Radio Podcast
Join host Steve Matthews as he interviews Dr. Wilbur N. Pickering on his work with original source texts of the New Testament.

²² Luther gives in the following pages a "catalog of vices" of the papacy and the Roman church which in the severity of its indictment and the exuberance of its language is equaled by few other passages in Luther's writings. Compare the comments to this effect by Kurt Aland, *Luther Deutsch*, IV, 370–371, 373, note to 246.