

A Response to Luther

Book 1

Page and line numbers correspond to
The Complete Works of St. Thomas More
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Side-glosses are given as footnotes.

A complete concordance to this work can be found at
www.thomasmorestudies.org/publications.html#Concordance.

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The choice, learned, witty, pious work of the most learned William Ross in which he very admirably exposes and refutes the frantic calumnies with which that most foul buffoon, Luther, attacks the invincible king of England and France, Henry the eighth of that name, the defender of the faith, renowned no less for his learning than for his royal power. Printed again with the utmost care and divided into chapters, with indices added through the work of the very learned John Carcellius.

London, a.d.,
1523

JOHN CARCELLIUS
TO THE HONORABLE READER,
GREETINGS.

3

The other day I went to a printer's shop to visit and converse with the man. After we had chatted together for some time on a variety of topics and especially on books and writing, I finally asked him whether he was engaged in any new work. He showed me one little book brought to him from Spain, written by Ferdinand Baravellus, a man very outstanding in theology. In this book he answers the insane ravings with which Martin Luther had so violently and shamelessly, indeed, so scurrilously raged against a king most distinguished by all the noble qualities of a most exalted prince. The writer was led to do this partly from motives of religion, since he perceived that the Church and religion of Christ were everywhere being weakened by the factions and dissensions of wicked heretics; partly from vexation that a most vile man was falsely using the pretext of holiness and the name of Christian religion, while in fact being led on by foolish conceit and a greedy desire for renown to slander whomever he pleased, with no regard for the rank of anyone. 5 10 15

The printer said that he was planning to reprint this work for the handsome profit which he hoped to gain from it since that copy was the only one in the country, and it was the kind of work he was sure everyone would be eager to buy. I promised my help also in the project, in case there were any service I could render. I asked to borrow the book for a few days; he willingly granted me this, asking moreover that if I could add to the value of the work in any way, I should render him that service so that the book might be more favorably received when it was published from his shop. Therefore, after I had read through a good part of the work very carefully and found it to my liking, I thought it would not be useless, since the author had written the whole work straight through without interruption, to divide the work into chapters with a title added to each chapter, and to add an index so that single items might be found more readily by the reader. This would likewise be useful in case further copies were imported later, which was likely to happen, seeing that printers do not 20 25 30 35

publish books for just one region. Moreover, the contents of the book were such that it seemed to be just what all the people were looking for, both because of the significance of the controversy and because of the reputation of the men who engage in it. What more serious cause can be handled than that in which the religion of God all good and great is concerned? Or what cause can be defended under more honorable patronage than that which the greatest princes, laying aside their proper pursuits, take up before the eyes of all the world? Not to mention all the other men of every rank, Henry VIII, king of England, justly called the Defender of the Faith, did not at all shrink from joining battle in the cause of Christ with a mean and base little friar. When the latter had repaid the king's wholesome admonitions and sound counsel with nothing but scurrilous jeers and violent abuse, and the high-minded king did not honor the vile charlatan with a second response, this man of whom I speak, Baravellus, a Spaniard remarkably learned in every branch of learning, considering it shameful that a despised wretch should with impunity insult not only men but even the saints themselves, represented and exposed the wretch before all the world in such a way that no mirror can give a clearer image of the body than this work enables one to perceive the execrable soul of Luther. 5

As I said, if further copies of the work should be imported, still the copies which would be enhanced by my plan would assure a better sale to the printer whom I most favored. Since I was not able to do this without making some changes and without occasionally adding some comments of my own, I must beg of you, honorable reader, if I have given you any satisfaction by the one part of my labor, as I have certainly sought to do, to forgive me for the other part in that I have boldly laid hands on the writing of another person. Moreover, as for the book itself, you need not look to me to praise it highly, for it will immediately provide evidence concerning its own worth. This I certainly do promise, that if you read it through, you will regret neither the effort nor the time so spent, provided you are inspired by a love of religion or by desire for learning, or delight in a charming disposition or a witty style. 10 15 20 25 30 35

FERDINAND BARAVELLUS
OF THE ANCIENT NOBILITY
SENDS GREETINGS TO THE
MOST ILLUSTRIOUS FRANCIS LUCELLUS

7

Have you ever heard, distinguished Sir, with what artifice I was 5
tricked into writing this work by that most honorable man and the
glory of his country, your uncle?¹ Indeed,
though by nature I always shrink from
every kind of contention, I particularly
shrink from that kind where I have to contend with a person who, 10
sensing that he has been overcome by
reason, turns wholly to wrangling.² Well, as
I was returning home from the university, I
stopped off from my journey at the castle of
your uncle so that, before any of my own family, I might visit the 15
man to whom I owed almost more than to my whole family. As
various topics came up in the conversation, then, he deliberately, but
as it were incidentally, threw in a mention of Luther, inquiring what
our university thought about the books of this man. I told him the 20
facts: that in the beginning there were various reactions, some men
captivated by novelty, others unaware of the new ideas; many
thought that some things were not badly written and were handled
with some skill, but that time alone, with the growing output of his
books, would show what spirit inspired the man. Nor was that 25
surmise wrong. For when one book after another appeared un-
interruptedly, each one worse than the last,³ there finally appeared the
Babylon, truly that tower of Babel which
was built up against heaven,⁴ from which
the impious fellow undertook to destroy the 30
heavenly sacraments of Christ. As soon as that work was read
through and circulated among the people, no one was found so
senseless as not to realize what spirit inspired the madman. As a
result, many men were already intending to write against his
blasphemies, when behold there shortly appeared that most 35
learned book of the most noble king of
England, such a work indeed that, so far as
that problem was concerned, it deprived

¹ In these footnotes are given translations of the side-glosses that appeared in More's Latin text. The first is: How the author was prevailed on to write this work.

² He says he shrinks from contending with wranglers. Such is Luther

³ Luther always appeared to surpass himself in malice

⁴ The spirit that governs Luther is evident from his *Babylon*

everyone else of a reason for writing. For he attacked, stormed, overthrew that Babylon, the stronghold of impious heresies, so thoroughly that it did not seem worth while for anyone to take up arms again against a fortress that was overthrown and destroyed from its very foundation.

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At this point your uncle lit on what he had been looking for, that is, a place for catching me. “They say,” he remarked, “that Luther has answered the king.”

“Answered?” I replied. “Shameless as he is, surely he will not, by trying that, act in such a way as to make more clear what a godless and stupid cause he is supporting, one which has no means of defense.”

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“But what if it should perchance happen,” he said, “that instead of a defense he employs insolence, and though saying nothing is still not quiet; will I then be able to persuade you to expose and restrain with your pen the madness of the shameless fellow?”

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I, not at all suspecting that this would ever happen, said: “I promise, and very willingly. For a crane suffices against a dwarf.⁵ If Luther were stronger than Hercules, his cause certainly renders him more feeble than a dead man.”

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Then, turning around for a few moments into the window-recess, he brought out a book. “Here is the book, Ferdinand,” he said. And, smiling pleasantly, he added, “Now see to it that you carry out diligently what you have pledged easily.”

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Then I said, “What sort of pledge are you talking about? As if the law held valid a pledge drawn out of me by an evil deception.”

He answered, “Let it be deception, if you will; but how can it be evil when it proposes nothing else but that you benefit and profit all good men?”

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Why say more? I again promised, this time seriously, that I would do it. So I was escorted to my chamber, for he would not hear of my departing that night. As soon as possible I began to read Luther’s book, so eager was I to see whether he had found any means of rendering probable any of those arguments which I felt that the king had already refuted quite clearly, quite forcefully both from scripture and from reason. When I began to read—good God, what an ocean of nonsense, what a bottomless pit of madness presented itself! But on

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⁵ Luther a pygmy

the actual subject I seldom read any argument which I did not remember the king to have neatly solved; except that in a few passages Luther seemed not altogether to miss the mark with his taunts. I was wondering to myself why I had not earlier carefully pondered the possibility of such an interpretation and why so important a passage had been left unnoticed by the king, who is as shrewd as he is learned. So I sent a servant to your uncle to ask that if he had the book of the king in his possession he would please let me have it. The servant immediately brought the book and I examined the passages. But then, strange to say, the joke immediately began to fall completely flat, seeing that it sprang not from the words of the prince but from the fact that Luther had twisted them in the telling, so that through fraud he could appear to the reader as witty. On the following day, therefore, as I was on the point of departing, I again excused myself, saying that nothing of significance had been omitted by the king and nothing new added by Luther; that if the matter were otherwise, I was not so cowardly as to refuse to engage in such an easy struggle, either at his urging or for the sake of the common good; but that now my sense of honor could hardly bear that I should respond to the sheer brawling, the sheer wrangling, the sheer raving of this man who presents no argument, no reasoning at all. It would be as though, to quote Horace, Messius were to join battle with Sarmentus.

“Away with those excuses,” he said. “I want you not only to answer him, but even to answer at length, presenting from both sides the words of each one and subjoining your own comments in which this observation of yours will become obvious to everyone. Indeed, I want you for a short time to do violence to your excessively modest nature until you also throw back at him and return in kind that abuse itself, not so much that the scoundrel may hear what he has deserved as that what many find their sole pleasure in him may come to delight them on the other hand when it is read about him.⁶ Should you perhaps be afraid that the encounter will cast the stain of wantonness on you if you should contend a little less restrainedly with this scoundrel, I indeed think far otherwise, my dear Ferdinand. Since this frenzied friarlet could not at all restrain himself from vomiting out such continuous, such senseless abuse against the bishops, the princes, against the vicar of Christ, against the whole company of holy fathers, against the entire church, what reader will

⁶ Why the author at times jokes rather freely in this work

be so unjust as to consider that man wanton, indeed as not to approve
 and extol that man who attacks such a wretch with words he
 deserves,⁷ especially when the man answers□ 13
 that book which contains nothing else but□
 the most foolish wranglings with which the completely mad buffoon 5
 raves wildly against the most illustrious king who is fully adorned
 with all noble qualities of body and mind.”

What would you have me say more? Since there was no refusing,
 I promised, as I was bidding him farewell and departing, that I
 would write the book. And so I wrote it as you see it. But because God 10
 took your uncle away from us and while removing his body worn out
 with the feebleness of age rewarded with immortality the virtues of
 his soul, I felt that I could do nothing more fitting than to pay to the
 nephew what I had promised to the uncle, especially to such a 15
 nephew who, while he succeeds to the material possessions of his
 uncle on the latter’s dying childless, can likewise be thought to have
 acquired as though by hereditary right his uncle’s remarkable learn-
 ing and outstanding virtues. May you then, most noble Sir, accept
 this work, and accept it with all its leaves, lest you be unaware that,
 as whatever I have written ought to be credited to your uncle, so any 20
 profit that comes from it ought to be credited to you alone. Farewell,
 most honored Sir, and embrace with your usual favor Baravellus who
 is more than wholly yours. From our university. February 11.

⁷ Luther’s petulance

WILLIAM ROSS
TO HIS FRIEND JOHN CARCELLIUS,
GREETINGS

15

My dear John, I hope that you are well, as I am. But I am afraid that
I would not have been feeling quite so well had I not hurriedly rushed
out of the city to the country. For the plague had not only begun to
break out at Rome, but also to grow in virulence, when I, who had as
yet hardly settled down there, was forced to withdraw in fresh alarm
and anxiety to this place about twenty miles distant. I was welcomed
and entertained here by a most gracious host. Toward the whole
English race in particular, to which he traces his paternal ancestry,
he shows a friendliness that is almost beyond belief. While I was
staying here, my host one day said, "Here, my dear Ross, is a book
recently sent to me from the city, which I think you will very much
wish to see, since it is that in which Luther answers your king."
"Really?" I said. "Indeed, there is nothing I would rather read.
The prince's book I read and reread already a year ago at Venice.
Several of us thought it so thorough that I concluded Luther would
never be so stupid as to render evident by answering it how wicked
and ridiculous a cause he was defending, one that could not at all
admit of any sort of defense which would be thought creditable."
With this remark I eagerly seized and opened the book. When I
began to read—good God, what a pit of raving madness, what an
abyss of violent passion I discovered! I'll be hanged if among the
dense and uninterrupted darkness of Lutheran madness I could dis-
cover any interval of lucidity. He talks nonsense, he wrangles, he
plays the buffoon, he laughs; but laughs like a Sardonian, aware of
course that not in the book of the king but in his own pin-head does
he find anything to laugh at. For at times I caught him falsely adding
certain points so that in attacking them he could appear witty.
My host listened to me reading for a long time, meanwhile fre-
quently and openly displaying his disgust, for he was no stranger to
learning and had a fine sense of propriety and above all of reverence
for religion. Then he said: "My dear Ross, why do you allow that
worthless fellow to express those blasphemies with impunity? He not
only assails your king with his foolish abuse. Against the emperor also
and the pope, against all the princes of Germany, against all good and

learned men, and finally against all the saints this impious hangdog inveighs with his disgusting taunts. Will you allow this buffoon to say such things with impunity?"

"How with impunity," I answered, "since he takes everyone else's place in avenging himself? What harsher vengeance can be desired than that he has been driven so mad that, impiously aroused by his raging sense of guilt, out of his mind, and powerless to conceal his madness, he is so violently carried away that with his own hand he writes on every page and almost every wall that the most insane scoundrel and the most shameless buffoon is Luther. My prince, against whom especially this mad scoundrel plays the buffoon, is of too majestic a spirit and too considered a judgment to be at all disturbed by the nonsense of a raving buffoon. If the book of Luther would have in it anything worthy of an answer, I have no doubt that the king who is most illustrious for the remarkable learning which is added to the other distinctions of his royal majesty like a kind of special splendor and grace, would easily answer the man in such a way that everyone would understand that, saving the reverence due his dignity, this excellent and very learned king had handled a pious cause vigorously and an impious scoundrel wittily. When Luther recognized this fact from the book which the king wrote against him to the great applause of all good men, to the great vexation of wicked men, he deliberately prepared his own book in such a manner that no mortal, still less the prince, would honor such crazy nonsense with any written answer. Thus he would be taking the last stand in the fight, doubtless appearing as the victor and conqueror."

"But," said my host, "I would like to see him deceived in that hope of his."

"What is the point?" I asked. "What will the one who answers him do but display to the world that Luther is a crafty buffoon? But this he himself has long ago proclaimed. What else has he proclaimed in his work against Catharinus? What else against other learned men, against well-known schools? What else against the princes of Germany? Against the emperor, the king, the pope? What else has he proclaimed to the whole world from his Babylonian tower as from the loftiest height but that he is dedicated to hell, hateful to heaven, a noxious wretch to the human race, and finally of all mortals the most insolent and the most pestilential buffoon? For this reason I am wholly in agreement with the very sound counsel of that very shrewd

cardinal who persuaded the present pontiff, truly the holiest of men, that he should amend the decree of his predecessor Leo concerning the suppression of Luther's books in such a way as to forbid to the church completely the reading of those books which under the guise of holiness and moderation commend to good and simple men secretly implanted heresies. But the *Babylon* and books of that scurf, which contain nothing else but truly scurrilous railing and heresies abhorrent to the ears of all good men, the pope should permit to be sold and read everywhere. There is no danger whatever that any good man will be misled by a book of this sort which wrangles without reason and which lists rather than proves all the most impious doctrines and those most condemned by the common agreement of the Christian world. Indeed, this advantage would result, that all the worst men, whom no edict can restrain from reading the works of heretics, will stop imposing on the unwary, whom at present they cleverly persuade—whenever they perceive that some point is offensive to good men—that Luther either did not write it or did not really mean it, but that he is an innocent man subject to false calumny by the ill will of envious men. I ask you: What will be the reaction of anyone on reading that work in which the scoundrel replies to the king, when he finds in it nothing rational, when he sees that all the arguments of the prince stand firm, when he observes that the fellow distorts many arguments, falsely concocts many, conceals the strongest ones, treats all of them jeeringly? Do you think that he will still desire any response to show the madness of the rascal; as though he should demand that a lamp be lighted to help him gaze at the sun?"

"I grant you, my dear Ross," he said, "that the work does not require an answer if one considers both sides of the question. But how many persons do you think will be so diligent in reading the work of Luther that they will detect his trickery by examining the book of the prince as well and comparing the actual words of each writer? Will they not rather from the work of one man pass judgment on the work of both, being persuaded that no one would be such a shameless buffoon that he would deliberately distort the words of his opponent as this fellow continually does? We suspect this so much the less because such a trick can be easily exposed and because, once detected, it brands its author with the deepest disgrace and indelible dishonor. Accordingly, if you will listen to me, you will not only reply but reply

fully. You will faithfully quote and compare the words of each writer; 21
in your own comments you will render the virtues of Luther
conspicuous so that every passage will stand out in which he either
errs unconsciously, or slanders deliberately, or dissimulates stupidly,
or plays the buffoon basely, or raves scurrilously, or lies shamelessly, or 5
wrangles violently, or blasphemes impiously, or laughs frenziedly,
or snarls in vexation, or bursts with rage, or sottishly sleeps, or when
drunk snores deeply, or when sober and wakeful acts the madman.
Nor do you have any reason to fear, my dear Ross, that, while you
clean out the dungy writings of Luther like the Augean stable and cast 10
his own filth back on him, you will at the same time defile your own
name and fall into the danger of appearing to have had too little
sense of honor and principle of moderation. For in the case of such an
intemperate scoundrel who cannot restrain himself from scurrilous
ranting either against men or against the saints, if anyone, instead of 15
treating him in turn as he deserves should answer him with modera-
tion and restraint, every just and God-fearing reader, believe me, will
consider such moderation exceedingly ostentatious and completely
immoderate. I know that you do not care a straw if the scoundrel
should turn his pen against you.”□ 20

“That is true,” I replied, “for I am not so foolish as to think it
would be more praiseworthy for me to be praised by a praiseworthy
man than for a man unworthy of praise to rave against me and bark
at me with the same gaping jaws with which he rabidly barks at the
saints.” 25

“Why not, then,” he said, “attack the work, relying on God. You
will be doing something to gall wicked men, delight good men. You
will not only manifest your sense of duty toward your prince, whose
character, eloquence, learning, prudence, incomparable gifts of body
and lofty powers of mind the Christian world regards with admiration 30
and looks up to as the absolute model of royal distinction; but you
will also gain great favor with Christ the Savior, whose name and
faith this buffoon strives to destroy utterly under the pious pretence of
defending them.”

What would you have more, my dear John? He did not leave off 35
urging me until he prevailed upon me. And so I promised I would
do it; I did it; I showed it to him. He praised it beyond its deserved
measure. He begged my permission to show it to several of his learned
friends. I agreed, provided that no one would hurry it into publication

without my permission. I had determined not to take decisive steps on the matter for several months, so that I might investigate certain points more precisely, since I had completed the work in the country hastily without the assistance of books. Besides there had meanwhile appeared a copy of a letter written by the king to the dukes of Saxony from which I had begun to fear that the prince would not put up with it if any other Englishman should try his strength with that scoundrel. My host assured me that the work would remain in my control. He borrowed it, showed it to his friends, returned it to me, exhorted me not to delay publishing it. He said that the men to whom he had shown it, very learned men, had insisted forcefully to him that an edition should be hurried out without my knowledge or consent, but that he had kept his word. Still he urged, advised, begged me not to delay yielding to the entreaties of the learned men nor to allow the scoundrel any longer to abuse the ignorance and inexperience of simple men. On the supposition that there might perhaps be some men who would think the nonsense that he wrote to be of some worth, I promised to attend to it. I determined to send the book to you at once so that on the question of publishing or suppressing this work I might have the benefit of your judgment, since I had found your advice helpful on many other occasions. Accordingly, I turned the book over to Herman of Prague, a young man once very much attached to you when he was studying in England. He had seen that England had been a profitable place for his teacher. So, although it did not seem either proper or useful to leave his own country immediately, he decided to return to Britain, being determined and resolved to establish residence there. For several months after his departure, therefore, I was in suspense, waiting from day to day for your reply about my work. But when I realized from the letter which you sent here on May 23 that the book had not been delivered and that its bearer had not reached England, fearing that something had happened to the young man—for of his trustworthiness I have no doubt even yet—I was preparing another copy so that I might send it to you there at the first opportunity, when, behold, in the meantime it was reported here that my book was already out for sale and—what amazes me—that someone has been found who has acknowledged the work unpolished as it was and produced it as his own. This business was perhaps carried out the more boldly since I, in sending the work to you as from one acquaintance to another, had not affixed my name

to the work. This is how I think it happened that a compassionate
man received it as a child cast off by an unknown father and brought
it out as his own. But now I beg you, my dear John: see to it that the
child is recognized there, but not the father until you have carefully
observed in the meantime what hope it offers its parent concerning
itself. If good men disapprove of it, or if the prince is vexed that any-
one else from England engages in combat with that buffoon, let him
who acknowledged the work enjoy that effect. But if, as we hope,
learned and good men are pleased with it, and you sense that the
king will not be vexed that we too have thoroughly flogged the
scoundrel, then, my dear John, I beg of you that, without any re-
proach for him who as it were received the orphan, you lay claim to
and restore again to me, its father, my offspring which was never
exposed by me but by some fortune or other was shipwrecked on some
unknown shore. Farewell from the city; for I returned here yesterday
to set my affairs in order. Again farewell and God bless you. August 3.

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JOHN CARCELLIUS
SENDS BEST GREETINGS
TO HIS FRIEND WILLIAM ROSS

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On the tenth of September, your letter was delivered to me. I was
very pleased to receive it and read it through carefully again and
again. Your letters, indeed, never fail to please me, but this time it
was even a delight, in so far as one can feel delight in my situation. 5
First of all it provided me with the news I most longed to hear; that is,
that you who are dearer to me than anyone are safe and well, even
though somewhat disturbed by fear of the plague which is raging 10
there and growing more virulent everywhere, and that you have found
in Italy also persons who recognize your virtues, and admire them,
and honor them with the favor they deserve. Secondly, having satisfied
by the reading of your letter my long-felt desire of knowing what you
were doing, with which I was tortured before as with a prolonged 15
thirst, my mind was somewhat at ease. For I was terribly afraid that
some misfortune had befallen you, since for so many months I had
received no word from you. Indeed it is almost a year since I received
from you the letter in which you informed me of your trip to Rome.
And now for the first time since then I hear where you are, what you 20
are doing, and how you are feeling. This fact was quite distressing to
me, as it should have been, considering our mutual affection. And I
was the more worried about you because I could not learn anything
from the public couriers from your area, although when it came to all 25
our other countrymen they could tell me where each one was staying.
You write that you gave Herman a letter and a book for me. Indeed,
he has not come here, and I have never heard what has happened to
him since his departure from us, which was immediately after the
death of his teacher, although I have often inquired about him from 30
those who studied together with him—there are several of them here
at London. And indeed I was certainly fond of the young man on
account of his unusually fine character, his considerable learning, and
above all his singular and proven loyalty, which made him very dear
to his teacher. If he had remained or returned here I would have
found him some satisfactory position. Now I am afraid that some 35
more serious reason than his own unwillingness has kept such a
worthy young man from keeping his promise. Nonetheless, your

book was finally delivered; I wish it had arrived earlier! To tell the truth I was astounded by it, because the name of another author had already fixed itself in the belief of everyone who had seen the work, to say nothing of myself. Even when I held your sheets in my hands I could still hardly recognize my dear Ross in them. I was like men who are suddenly thrown into consternation by the great and unexpected novelty of some incident, whether good or bad. They hang in doubt for a long time and cannot quickly convince themselves of a fact which is either more disagreeable than they would wish or more delightful than they could hope. In the same way it seemed to me amazing and almost unbelievable that the claim to this most excellent work had been transferred so unexpectedly, so suddenly to a new owner, and that to a person whom I was least expecting, though I was particularly desirous that he be the author of such an illustrious work, both for the sake of our common fatherland and for the sake of our personal friendship. Of course I knew and others judged that you are quite equal to and even superior to your elders, but as I have said, another person had so shrewdly insinuated himself into this possession as though it had been abandoned that it seemed with perfect justice to be his.

Now, as for the work itself, the many learned and good men to whom I showed it judged it to be of such value that, with the greatest interest on the part of everyone, it has been printed again in this country. I personally liked it so much—if my judgment is of any value to you—that, since it was written straight through without interruption, I divided it into chapters, adding titles to each, wrote marginal glosses, and added an index so that single details might be found more easily by the readers. Thus I relieve you of your worry as to what the judgment of the learned would be about the work. Indeed, they urged me no less earnestly to publish here than, as I understand from your letter, you were persuaded to do there. Some, of their own accord, even promised to subsidize its publication, since the printers are reluctant to undertake a project if there is no one to underwrite the expense of it for them. As for the king, we have nothing to fear. Since he is a man of remarkable learning and most refined judgment, I do not doubt that he will have the same opinion of your book as other men of learning have had. When Luther's book was first brought here and shown to him, he did nothing but laugh at the scoundrel's foolish and scurrilous abuse. When asked what he

thought of that fellow who was not only impious but raving mad as well, he answered that he indeed thought Luther deserved to pay the price for his wantonness and wickedness, and to be brought out at every banquet so that the arrant fool might entertain the banqueters. As for answering the fellow's whorish railing, however, he would not so defile his own person as to engage the fellow in a contest of abuse nor would he so waste his time and trouble on trifles as to deal moderately and reasonably with one who had declared war on all reason and moderation. But neither would he urge anyone to engage in further personal combat with the man. Still, if anyone wished to refute his madness and to bridle his unbridled tongue, the prince would not forbid it.

And so I have taken care of publishing the book in your name, and of claiming it for its own author as if by right of recovery. Moreover, I carefully compared the copy I received from you with other copies, and where I found something either changed or further added by you which was not contained in our copies, I arranged to have it added. Of those details which I myself had already carefully worked out I changed nothing, lest dropping them would involve a great expense to me and the printer. Nor will I change them after this if you approve what I have done. If you think otherwise, however, I will confirm whatever you decide. In addition, I have set at the beginning, in place of a preface, the letter which you sent to me and in which you present the book to me; such is your love for me. To it I have added this letter of mine, so that later readers also may understand how much I owe to you. Good-bye. Greet for me our common friends there. Again, good-bye. September 17.

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The preface written by Luther
to a certain Bohemian noble,
in which he betrays his malice and spite toward the pope,
as well as toward the emperor
and all the princes of Germany, 5
all of whom the shameless fellow
assails with the most shameless
railing and reviling.

To the Eminent and Noble
Lord Sebastian Schlick,
Count of Bassano, Lord of Elbogen, etc. 10
and his elder in Christ, Martin Luther,
the Ecclesiastes of Wittenberg.

Grace and peace in Christ. For more than three years, noble count,
the raging rabble of papists have been accusing me of a flight to 15
Bohemia. They have a surprising thirst to hear this charge, being of
course pretty fellows, and are ready at this sole rumor to triumph, to
boast, to proclaim: “We have conquered,
the heretic has fled to the heretics.”⁸ That
brainless and illiterate beast in papist form is thus tormented and 20
galled to see itself conquered by learning and truth and the whole
filthy pack of its asses unable to stand against Luther alone. Gasping
out with every breath that I flee into Bohemia, they try to solace
themselves at least with the opprobrium of another’s name, and they
make themselves out to be frightful Emims, though because of their 25
stupidity and bad conscience they dare not appear anywhere. I have
appeared before them for the third time now; in fact, I entered
Worms even though I knew that the safe-conduct promised me had
been violated by the emperor. For the
princes of Germany, once a race most 30
highly praised for its fidelity, have now
learned nothing more in subservience to
the Roman idol than to contemn fidelity,
to the lasting ignominy of the nation.⁹ Thus Luther dared, though
exiled and fearful, to leap into the circle of the Behemoth’s teeth. But 35
what did those dreaded giants do?

⁸ Spoken most truly

⁹ The most perfidious scoundrel fixes on the emperor the brand of perfidy. That the princes of Germany contemn fidelity

During this whole period of three years, there has not been found
one man who would come to us at Wittenberg and stand before us
also, although they are most assured of security and defense. They
would of course be doing everything under the protection of their
emperor. Even yet these effeminate and senseless men dare to hope
for triumph from my flight, intending to credit their own most
shameful ignominy, which proclaims throughout the world that
because of their ignorance and fearfulness of spirit they dare not
present themselves before Luther alone. What do you think these
fragile bubbles would do if they themselves were forced to take a
stand before a hostile emperor and overpowering enemies? These
wretched fellows would undoubtedly flee into a thousand alleys, who
now like shrew-mice chatter in their holes: "Luther plans flight."
So also the king of England in this book gibbers a lot of drivel about
my flight into Bohemia; a wise man, indeed, who believes that his
book is victorious and fitly written, if Luther has fled to the Bohemians.
So silly and womanish is the spite of the doltish king. But however
much my soul longs to see Bohemia and the
religion so hateful to the papist monsters,¹⁰
nevertheless I have till now refrained and
I will refrain from doing so. It is not that I fear the opprobrium of
the name which the vilest dregs of men, the papists, have branded
with supreme perfidy and injustice on a most honored nation.
With very just reason did the Bohemians desert these murderers
and Antichrist papists when the latter,
themselves sevenfold heretics, burned the
innocent John Hus and sacrilegiously con-
demned the communion under both kinds
instituted by Christ.¹¹ Such are the causes of the papist hatred for this
nation, nor do the bastards of that purple harlot ever admit their
cruel murder and the sacrilege of condemning the gospel; rather,
they proceed to defend their madness and to impose on another and
innocent people the opprobrium with which they themselves are
marked before God.
I do not, therefore, fear the opprobrium of the Bohemian name,
which is a glory before God; rather, Christ has placed me here to
torment the papist monsters, while they can find nothing against me
such as they would like to flaunt in breathing out their unbelievable
spite. Christ wishes them to be tortured by their own spite and to

¹⁰ Luther's partiality to the Bohemians

¹¹ He accuses everyone of heresy except himself and Hus, the most notorious heretics

burst with their own malice. Therefore, I look out for them here, and I will look out for their most violent hatred; I intend to exasperate them thoroughly and torment them as long as I live. But if they slay me. I will torture them so much the more. For I have been given to them as a sign by my Lord Christ, so that whether they let me live or whether they slay me,¹² their raging conscience will have no grace, no peace, no comfort. Thus they will be consumed by a twofold grief, and through the torture of their present spite they will merit the eternal torment of gehenna. The death of the abominable papacy is imminent; its ineluctable fate besets it. As Daniel said, "It has come to its end and no one will help it." Thus, we rush to the battle from both sides, they with extreme madness, I with supreme contempt, and my boldness shall conquer in Christ their final madness,¹³ even now pale with death.

As a matter of fact, I am contemplating a different kind of flight into Bohemia, so that the prophecy of the papist pythons may not be completely false; but from this flight they will suffer a greater spirit of remorse, in accordance with Moses' words: "I will arouse them to anger among a people not a nation, and I will incite them to envy among a foolish people." Through the mercy of Christ I shall shortly accomplish so much by my books that, with the Bohemians free from their disgrace, the papists alone will be a name of abomination in the world, so that it will be a curse and anathema to be a papist.¹⁴ Not that I approve the Bohemians in every respect, since I am unacquainted with their teachings and I hear that there are sects among them; but that compared to them the papist rabble will be a stinking nausea in the whole world. These latter are nothing but sects, so much so that the Franciscans alone are divided among themselves into about six sects.

I write these things to you, noble sir, in order to secure the beginning of my flight with you who govern on the borders of Bohemia next to Germany, so that through you and your authority I may advance into all Bohemia. The king, a layman, wrote to his most

¹² He threatens to be a cacodaemon

¹³ This so-called devout man professes himself contemptuous and bold

¹⁴ How shrewdly he praises when he is eager to flatter

holy pontiff; it was fitting that I, once a
 cleric by the favor of the pope, should write
 to a most Christian layman.¹⁵ I hear that
 you are inflamed with extraordinary zeal for the pure truth of the
 gospel and that everywhere in your domain you are utterly destroying 5
 the abominations and scandals of the Roman pestilence. Continue
 courageously, noble sir; in this way the disgrace of the Bohemian
 name will be abolished, and the sludge of the harlot's lies and whor-
 ings shall return into her bosom, so that her infamy shall be revealed
 to the world, to her everlasting shame. Let this be the beginning of 10
 my flight, this hope of an excellent model for the rest of the Bohemian
 lords and magistrates to imitate. Thus, I will not only have fled into
 Bohemia, but I shall have dwelt there, even if the rage of the ignoble
 harlot shall have burned me here. Her spite, nevertheless, I shall at
 the same time kindle and conquer in Christ. She shall no longer 15
 prosper. Christ has so decreed. Amen. The grace of our Lord Jesus
 Christ forever preserve and bless you, most noble sir. Amen.
 Wittenberg, July 5, 1522.

¹⁵ All the men most alienated from the church are most Christian to Luther

AN ANSWER IS MADE TO LUTHER'S EPISTLE
WRITTEN AT THE BEGINNING OF THE WORK.
CHAPTER 1

This whole epistle breathes Luther's Thrasonic vainglory and the scoundrel's malicious spite toward the authority of the Roman See. 5
Not long ago he execrated the condemned heresies of the Bohemians. Now, consumed by spite, himself subject to execration, and condemned by his own judgment of himself, he applauds the Bohemians and pretends to be ignorant of their heresies; a man either so unfair that he censures their teachings before knowing them, or of such a weak memory that he has now suddenly forgotten all those teachings which he so recently condemned with such severity. And yet, since his main purpose is to flatter them, this wise man, after some words of praise, finally promises them—good God, what an honor!—the glory of Sodom and Gomorrha.¹⁶ For as the conduct of these cities was justified by comparison with that of Jerusalem, so Luther will justify the heresies of the Bohemians by comparing them, indeed, with the faith of Christ. That he may the more freely attack and blaspheme this faith, he everywhere refers to it as “papist,” substituting for the faith of Christ his own lack of faith. For since he scorns the Jewish faith, mocks that of the pagans, vacillates on that of the Bohemians, hardly allows that of the Turks, and condemns altogether the Catholic faith, what has he finally left fixed and unwavering but his own faithlessness? He so proudly exults in this and insults everyone that no one can doubt how completely he breathes out upon earth the hellish spirit of him whom a similar pride cast down from heaven to hell. 10 15 20 25

But it will be worth while to consider the boastful bombast of that epistle. From the very beginning he rails at the emperor and the German princes; he boasts of his own courage in daring to go to Worms, knowing that his safe-conduct had been violated;¹⁷ clearly a man with spirit set on martyrdom for the sake of his faithlessness without charity, without which, as Paul testifies, not even for the true faith would martyrdom have had value. He pompously taunts all whose judgment does not coincide with his own; that is, all good men, saying that no 30 35

¹⁶ What sort of praise Luther gives the Bohemians

¹⁷ Luther's boasting

one dares go to Wittenberg to stand before his majesty, although of course they are most assured of security and defense, for, as he says, they would be doing everything under the protection of the emperor. As if there were no robbers on the way, almost the only bodyguard which Luther has, who would not hesitate for the sake of their faction to destroy through ambush in defiance of public protection those who would come to dispute with Luther, doing this in the same spirit with which for the sake of their own gain they rob and cut down travellers in defiance of public law. 5

When he came to Worms, he had nothing to fear. He had come, as he admits, under safe-conduct. If, as the scoundrel pretends, the emperor had violated this safe-conduct, by what protection would the friarlet most deserving of every punishment, with the emperor hostile to him, with the German princes, as he complains, betraying him, after journeying so many miles by carriage along a public highway, openly, in broad daylight, have thus escaped unharmed? No doubt he wishes us to think that it was of him the text was written: "God has given His angels charge over you, lest perhaps you dash your foot against a stone." On the contrary, the wicked were protecting the wicked, and the good were unwilling to violate the safe-conduct. On the other hand, those who would come to oppose Luther need fear only the wicked and treacherous men whom no obligation of a safe-conduct restrains from crime, against whom no provision for a body-guard can afford sufficient protection on such a long journey. Since this is so, it is surely strange that, although Luther dared at no danger to himself to come to Worms into the presence of the princes, so that he might safely report home to his pot-fellows the triumph of his obstinate madness, yet no one, on the other hand, dares to come at the peril of his life to Wittenberg, especially since he can expect such great results. He will contend with the scoundrel in his own theater, where the seats have been packed with scoundrels who, as their heresiarch twists the words of scripture to an adulterated meaning,¹⁸ as he jeers at the authority of all the learned men of antiquity, as he hisses at the public faith of so many ages, and as he curses all that is holy, at each blasphemy will applaud and repeat, "Bravo!" But at each word of the one who would come to dispute with Luther,¹⁹ with shouting, grimacing, stomping, pounding, they will 10 15 20 25 30 35

¹⁸ How fruitless it is to dispute with Luther personally

¹⁹ How much danger he undertakes who would dispute with Luther

interrupt him, hoot at him, hiss him off the stage. If he will persist in the face of all this and overcome their shouts with reason, they will finally kill him on his departure.

Things are not what they were once, when Eck was disputing. For then, because the movement was still at the stage when men strongly favored their own sect and did not yet clearly realize what a bad cause they were fostering, they used to listen more quietly and eagerly because they were hoping to hear what they were very eager to hear.□ But that disputation in no way answered their hopes, although nevertheless there were certain points apparently not altogether unacceptable. Now that they see he has later in his madness added such points as he can in no way defend, they despair of a victory of reason and place their triumph in unreason, unwilling to listen with unprejudiced ears to anything which contradicts their prejudiced minds. And yet, I do not deny that in the very city in which he has chosen his hiding place there are many very honorable men, many good and pious women; but in times of unrest the mad rabble of trouble-makers stands out more than the even greater number of good and peace-loving citizens. Luther laments that,²⁰□ despite the books he has published, his mad□ heresies have been so overwhelmed and□ refuted that he never hears himself acclaimed as victor among his own followers without at the same time being inwardly rent by the consciousness of his own disgrace. He knows that all peoples everywhere, by comparing the books from either side, perceive with utter clarity how shamefully overthrown and prostrate he lies. Wearied at last, and shrinking from a public trial, yet intending to fight, he challenges his foes cock-like to his own dung hill, where he may crow before his hens.

But I think no one is so senseless as to enter the place to which his enemy summons him for a fight, since there cannot be a more level plain for the struggle, or one less exposed to ambush, than a controversy carried on by means of published books,²¹ in which neither side can pretend, either that any point was falsely kept from the record by the secretaries, or later corrupted by forgers, or that anything had escaped him unforeseen in□ the heat of a hurried disputation. Rather, what he will have brought forward in the most ordered fashion—whatever he is able to bring

²⁰ Why Luther challenges men to dispute with him in person

²¹ Why the disputation should be carried on in writing rather than in person

forward at his leisure in accordance with the merits of the case—that will with honest fidelity appear in public. From these considerations, it is now most clearly evident, and from day to day will become more evident, how the glorious conqueror and victor, Luther, lies prostrate in foul filth, smeared with mud, coated with dung. Although the king’s book has accomplished this result so thoroughly that nothing has ever goaded Luther to an equal frenzy, I will make all Lutherans understand from the present book how doltish a heresiarch they have, who has accomplished nothing else by his wisdom than to fix more deeply with his own hands the weapon thrust into him by his opponent. Before I take up the book, however, I should like for a short time to return with Luther to Worms. By his boastful mention of this city he has recalled a certain incident to my memory, from which one instance the whole world can judge the doltish character and the ambition-crazed mind of this most conceited scoundrel.

Luther’s foolish vanity is exposed from his exaggerated praise of himself under an assumed name.

Chapter 2

There has been published a booklet entitled: *The Acts and Proceedings of the Honored Martin Luther, Augustinian, at the Diet of the Princes at Worms*. This booklet does not indicate where it was printed nor by whom it was compiled. But it is quite clear from the very course of the narration that the author was someone very devoted to Luther. That it was not compiled by Luther himself, however, there are very certain indications. For example, whereas the emperor is everywhere designated simply as “Charles,” Luther is never named except in a reverent manner as “THE HONORED MARTIN” in capital letters, clearly indicating a great hero. At times he is referred to as, “Luther, the man of God.” And whereas those who address him are said to break out into virulent words, Luther himself is described as follows: “But the honored Martin in his extraordinary gentleness and goodness answered mildly.” And in this way:²² “The most forbearing father answered very modestly.” And like a *gloria patri* the whole book of that psalm is closed with this flourish: “Therefore may God for a very long time preserve

²² Note this

for His church together with His word this most pious man born to defend and teach the gospel. Amen.”

49

What man has ever been born so suspicious as to be able to suspect that the man who wrote such words about Luther was himself

Luther? What Thrason was ever so vainglorious that he would not be ashamed even

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to think in such a manner about himself?²³ But please observe, reader, how completely the titillation of vainglory has driven out the man’s memory and mind. When the whole work has been so handled that one can consider it the work of some other person, suddenly the shrewmouse betrays itself by its squeak.²⁴

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For forgetting himself, he says in a certain passage:

At these words, the speaker for the emperor, as though rebuking me, said that I had not answered to the point and that things should not be called into doubt which had once been condemned and defined in councils; therefore I was asked to give a simple, not a sophistical, answer to the question whether I was willing to retract or not. To this I replied: Since the emperor’s majesty etc.

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Here you see, reader, from the proceedings at Worms, that extraordinary modesty of the most gentle father, who under the mask of another trumpeter so modestly trumpets his own praise.²⁵ You see the admirable

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shrewdness of the man who in so slight a book could not avoid betraying a design so foolish that even a fool would be ashamed of it.

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With such blindness and madness has our

Lord Jesus Christ stricken that whole

realm of papist abomination that for three whole years now these innumerable crowds of Cyclopes fighting with Luther alone cannot yet understand why I am at war with them.

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²³ Luther’s Thrasonic vainglory

²⁴ Luther forgets himself

²⁵ Luther’s modesty

²⁶ Luther’s words

Luther's mad intention and design
are revealed. Chapter 3.

He says of all those who acknowledge the pope, that is, all the Italians,
Spaniards, French, Germans, and all Christian people everywhere, 5
all of whom he calls Cyclopes, that although they have been fighting
so long with Luther alone, a Ulysses indeed
of consummate shrewdness,²⁷ they have their
eyes gouged out like Polyphemus so that,
despite the many books he has published, they still cannot
determine where he is heading. What a difficult matter! It would 10
require, not an eyeless Cyclops, but some many-eyed Argos and
Lynceus to trace Luther's paths. It would perhaps be a difficult
matter to trace the path of a snake over the ground, except that by its
offensive odor breaking out wherever it turns and creeps along and by
its loathsome corruption infecting the earth it betrays itself only too 15
well. Neither, then, is any one of these Cyclopes so blind that he
cannot detect the tricks and shifts of this fellow, with what a worthless
subterfuge he prepares himself for flight from Aetna so that, having
escaped from this island of the Cyclopes, as he calls them, he heads
straight for hell.²⁸ But from there no Tiresias 20
may lead him back.

They do not understand, he says.²⁹ In vain
have I published so many books plainly
testifying that I seek only that the divine scriptures should have 25
sole rule, as is meet and just, but that human inventions and traditions
should be abolished as most pernicious scandals, or with their poison
cut out and their sting removed, that is, with their power of forcing
and commanding and ensnaring consciences taken away, they should
be tolerated freely as things neither good nor bad, just as with any 30
other plague or misfortune of the world. These people, violently
agitated by incessant madness, advance no argument against me but
the decrees of men, the glosses of the fathers, and the practices or
customs of the ages; in other words, those very things which I reject
and impugn, which even they themselves admit are untrustworthy. I 35
argue *de jure*; they answer me *de facto*. I seek a reason; they show me a
work. I ask: "By what power do you do this?" They answer: "Because
this is the way we are doing it, and this is the way we have done it."

²⁷ Luther is indeed another Ulysses

²⁸ Where Luther is heading

²⁹ Luther's words

Let will take the place of reason, observance the place of authority, custom the place of law, and that in matters pertaining to God. These men have in their schools a most corrupt manner of disputing, which they call “begging the question.” This the wretched men learn and teach even to gray hairs, even to the grave, with extreme effort and expense. 53

And of the king shortly after:

But this god, growing shockingly arrogant in his new divinity and certain that whatever he has said ought to happen or has happened, goes further and explicitly testifies that he wishes to dismiss my fundamental principle, leaving it for others to attack, and to overthrow only the superstructure; that is, to fight with straw and hay against the rock of God’s word. You would not know whether madness itself could be so mad or dullness itself so dull as is our blockhead Henry. Perhaps this is to verify the proverb: “Kings and fools are born—not made.” What fool would say: “I declare that there are seven sacraments, but I shall leave untouched the principal argument of my opponent”? You would think this book were published by a noted enemy of the king to the king’s lasting disgrace. 10

A summary of the matter to be treated in the whole work. Chapter 4. 20

These very words of Luther, reader, on which he so excessively plumes himself, not only are absolutely false but contain almost as many errors as there are words. A little later when I come to what he calls his general response I will demonstrate this fact according to proofs taken from the king’s book, so that anyone may readily perceive it. Besides this, I will show not only that the scoundrel does away with all the traditions of men, even those which he ought to obey, but also that he does away with the traditions of God. And nevertheless not content with this, he attacks by means of every possible stratagem those very scriptures of God for the sovereign authority of which he pretends to fight. In that passage I will make clear how foolishly he ridicules the royal majesty’s method of disputing, which consists of opposing to the authority of a single buffoon the authority of so many holy fathers, the custom of so many centuries and the public faith of 25

the whole Church. At the same time I will also make clear that the faulty method of disputing by begging the question, which he attributes to others with so much insolence, is his own sole and almost only form of disputing. Moreover, I will show that he falls into this practice especially in the very passages in which he most fiercely reproaches and upbraids others for it. Then, at the point suited to the purpose, we shall winnow those words in which he boasts of himself so inordinately that he overwhelms his readers with darkness, and we shall scatter with the winnowing wind this chaff that he labors to sell for grain.³⁰ This obviously witty and facetious fellow jeers at the king for explicitly testifying, when about to defend the sacraments, that he will leave Luther's chief foundation for others to attack and that he himself will tear down only the superstructure built on that foundation. This will be touched on in the only passage which suits it, where Luther keeps repeating the same argument seasoned always with a similar salt; that is, where we will treat the argument that for Luther the mass cannot be a good work, an oblation, or a sacrifice, because it is, as he says, a testament. There you will see, reader, that the witless witticisms of this man of such merry humor make sport of Luther alone. I set down as separate points these things that I now promise to do for you, so that you can require each of them from me in its own place. I put myself in your debt for them, so that if I do not discharge in this booklet all that I have promised I may be thought to have discharged nothing at all, content to have Luther chant over and over at me these words of Horace: "What will this braggart produce worthy of such pompous language?"

He answers Luther's pretense of not believing that the king's book was written by the king himself, and at the same time he shows what distinguished authors the book of Luther has. Chapter 5.

Meanwhile I shall briefly run through those incidental objections to Luther from which the wise man makes such efforts to extricate himself that in doing so he more and more implicates and involves himself. But first, the following.

³⁰ He compares Luther's doctrines to chaff

He thought he would doubtless exasperate the king exceedingly if he pretended not to believe that the book published by the king was the king's own, but clearly Lee's, or some phlegmatic sophist's, as he calls him. As if anyone were so phlegmatic, Luther, as not to prefer the phlegm of any person whatever who is not completely raving to your raving bile.

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This scoundrel is painfully tormented by the fact that the royal majesty's learning in almost all disciplines and especially in theology is too well known and, in other lands besides Britain, too celebrated for the dolt to be able to persuade anyone that the most wise king wished to seek renown through another man's book at the expense of a frenzied friarlet. I think the king would rather consider it inglorious to contend with him than glorious to conquer him, especially in such a contest as, while it would always be intrinsically noteworthy, he yet new would be rendered notorious by the folly of his opponent. Nor, I think, would the prince have written anything at all against such a buffoon except that for the honor of Christ he considered nothing a dishonor to himself;³¹ but just as for the honor of Christ's name he would not decline to fight against the basest of infidels, if that were his fortune, so for the faith of Christ he deigned to fight with his pen against the most foolish of heretics.

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But I see what Luther wants: he wishes everyone to believe about the king's book what he is aware of with regard to his own, and what everyone knows was done in his own book. For who does not know that this fellow's response was not the labor of any one man? What single head could ever have begotten such a great mass of follies? By heaven, frenzy itself would have been exhausted from giving birth incessantly to so much crazy nonsense. But, as is quite well known, the lusts of many madly raving scoundrels have engendered this shapeless and monstrous offspring of Luther. As at their drinking bouts each one is accustomed to pay his scot, so into this book, a farrago of follies, each of the foolish triflers by common design contributed his own foolish expression. When Luther had received the king's book and had tasted some of it, the wholesome food began to grow bitter to his perverted taste. Since he was not able to gulp it down, wishing then to get rid of its bitterness by tipping, he convoked an assembly of his fellow-tiplers.³² There, although he would have preferred the work to be

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³¹ The supreme goodness of the king

³² An assembly of pot-fellows

hidden in everlasting darkness, yet, because it could not be concealed, he reluctantly brought out the book, after strongly fortifying his spirit by draining his cups. Once the reading started, it began to grate on their asinine ears with biting truth. They therefore close the book, and then soon reopen it. Now they leaf through it to see if they may perhaps discover something which they can reasonably carp at. Nothing occurs convenient to cavil. Now, as in situations of crisis, opinions are sought. The assembly began to be dejected, and things began to look desperate for Luther, except that some Bitias³³ skillfully consoled him, saying: What difference did it make to them what the king of England had written, or why did they have to consider honesty at all, since they had no purpose but to agitate a noisy rebellion and become famous as the ringleaders of a faction? Thus they would exact money from the seduction of the simple and pleasure from the provocation of the more learned.³⁴ Therefore, what did it hurt how truly the king writes or how shrewdly he refutes their heresies? Let Luther just reply and pursue his usual way: let him be quick to rail and mock. It would be enough for them to impose on and dominate the simple folk.³⁵ How few of these would either wish to reconsider the whole matter from the beginning or would be able to evaluate it, once reconsidered? So let him not be disheartened nor at any rate so foolish as to decide that the battle must be waged by reason; all that needed to be employed were reproaches and insults on every page, thicker than winter snow, of which an inexhaustible stream would gush forth from Luther's breast. With these weapons Luther would be safe; with them he could both strike and keep himself from being struck in return. The generous soul of the king would be indignant that such things were said against himself by such men; it would grieve the souls of all honorable men that the scoundrels were allowed to get away with so much unpunished. If anyone should write a stern and severe answer, the common people would contemn it, which would be enough for Luther. If, on the contrary, someone should determine to make a retort that fit Luther, he would act ridiculously; for, spoken against a man whose person is fouler than every kind of reproach, his words will have no effect. But neither would anyone be equal to Luther, who could take on single-handed ten of the most garrulous and brawling

³³ Bitias, a toper in the first book of the Aeneid

³⁴ The purpose of the Lutherans

³⁵ The prompt advice of Bitias

whores. And yet his pot-fellows themselves, each according to his ability, would not fail to help him, and thus the victory would easily be his.

On being given this advice, Luther began to recover his spirit, which had already almost escaped through the rear. But because he saw that he needed more than his usual brawling, since indeed he had not a single other weapon to employ in the disputation, he urged them each to hurry to the place where they could hunt out the greatest possible matter of stupid brawls and scurrilous scoffs. When each had collected a bagful of these, he should bring it immediately to Luther, for from them he would stuff full his own farrago of a response. With this charge he dismisses the assembly.□

They then go off in different directions, each to the place that his spirit suggests, and they scatter among all the carts, carriages, boats, baths, brothels, barber shops, taverns, whorehouses, mills, privies, and stews. There they diligently observe and set down in their note-□ books whatever a coachman spoke ribaldly, or a servant insolently, or a porter lewdly, or a parasite jeeringly, or a whore wantonly, or a pimp indecently, or a bath-keeper filthily, or a shitter obscenely. After hunting for several months, then, finally, all that they had collected from any place whatever, railings, brawlings, scurrilous scoffs, wantonness, obscenities, dirt, filth, muck, shit, all this sewage they stuff into the most foul sewer of Luther's breast. All this he vomited up through that foul mouth into that railers' book of his, like devoured dung. From there, reader, you receive that accumulated mass of indecent brawlings, with which alone the utterly foolish book is filled. When he tries to say anything to the point, just remove that very ornate mosaic of scurrility; immediately you will see, reader, how slight a handful of substance remains from such a great heap of words, and yet even that is corrupted. That this may become clearer to you, come, let us examine, as I was about to do, those errors, briefly objected to in passing, which he volubly strives to disclaim. It will be fairly easy to infer how he behaves in attacking another since he so prettily defends himself.

He refutes the shameless deception of Luther, who falsely writes that the king cites no instance of his contradiction but only declares in a word that Luther is inconsistent.

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Chapter 6.

Before we come to the point at issue, he says,³⁶ I will first exonerate myself of two charges which the Thomistic king in his womanish fury lays against me. Of these, the first is that I am inconsistent.

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In order to exonerate himself of this charge, therefore, as though with a profound awareness of his innocence, he pompously reviews the catalogue of his published books, lest anyone be ignorant of the names of those poisons with which the poison-maker has tried to infect the Christian people. Anyone who carefully examines these same books will find so many, such evident, such absurd contradictions that he will think Luther has done nothing else by this review of his books than if he had slit the throat of a man in the sight of the people, and then, when summoned to trial, produced as witnesses of his innocence all those people who had been the spectators of his crime.³⁷

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But here, I suppose, he will demand that I present some examples of those inconsistencies, that I draw a flask from this sea; as though it were necessary to point out what everyone sees; or as though Ambrose Catharinus,³⁸ a most learned man, did not long ago point out to him many instances; and as though some were not pointed out in the king's book itself. If I did produce many of them at this point, as I can, Luther would not be ashamed—such is the fellow's horror of evil—to pretend once more that none had been produced and to demand once again that some examples be produced. Although, as I have said, the most learned Ambrose Catharinus presented many instances of that kind, Luther then, like an ape, answered several instances with derisive laughter. The rest, however, were so obvious that not even from his wealth of scurrilous scoffs was he able to find any argument against them.³⁹ These through dissimulation he left completely untouched and turned to the only method in which he is effective, attacking the Roman See by an

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³⁶ Luther's words

³⁷ An appropriate comparison

³⁸ Ambrose Catharinus

³⁹ Luther's shameless cunning

excess of virulent railing and mad brawling, in the manner of fools who when struck by one person immediately strike another. Does he not employ a similar dissimulation when he says now that the king has not presented in his book even one passage, at least for the sake of example, by which he may convict Luther of inconsistency? 5

The pompous king, he says,⁴⁰ merely spouts rhetoric in this way: “Luther contradicts himself; who may believe him?” This simple statement was sufficient for the new defender of the church, the divinity recently born in England. But it was unnecessary for him to have shown an example, lest Luther be given the opportunity of clearing himself and of dealing with the stupid king according to his Thomistic dignity.⁴¹ 10

Would not anyone who heard these words of the most shameless scoundrel, if he did not know Luther and had not read the book of the king, immediately be convinced that the king had never presented any instances of Luther’s inconsistency but had deliberately concealed them so that he could more irresponsibly make statements against which Luther would be denied the opportunity of defending himself? But if this same person had read the trifling work of Luther, he would admit that the king would not have erred in the least by not presenting proof of a matter detected by everyone. Had the same person known Luther’s deceitfulness,⁴² he would not doubt that the king had done whatever Luther said that the king had not done. But if this person had also read the book of the king, since he would see there so many instances of those contradictions of which Luther writes that not even one is there, how thoroughly and completely would he necessarily condemn the utterly dishonest craftiness of the most wicked scoundrel. 15 20 25

This fact will be abundantly proved by even the one passage which I shall call to your attention first, especially because of the fact that after he tries by cavilling to make light of these passages in which he says that he does not disagree with himself, he is the first to change his opinion on everything. 30

Now, since Luther had said in the *Babylonian Captivity* that everyone was commanded to receive the eucharist under both kinds, and not much later on the same page said that neither kind at all was a matter of precept, his royal majesty in the words which follow touches on the signal madness of a man so at odds with himself. 35

⁴⁰ Luther’s words

⁴¹ See the scoundrel’s buffoonery

⁴² Luther high priest of every deceit

“But please observe⁴³ how Luther wavers□
 and contradicts himself: in one place he□
 says that at the supper Christ said to each and every one of the
 faithful, not by way of permission but by way of command: ‘All of
 you drink of this.’ But afterwards, fearing to offend the laity, whom he
 flatters into hating the priests, he adds these words: ‘Not that they
 who use one kind sin against Christ, since He did not command the
 use of any kind but left it to the choice of each individual, saying: “As
 often as you do these things you do them in remembrance of me.” But
 they sin who forbid both kinds to be given to persons who desire to
 exercise this choice. The fault is not in the laity but in the priests.’
 You see clearly that first he said it was commanded, then he says it□
 was not commanded but left to the choice of each individual. What
 need is there, then, for us to contradict him who so often contradicts
 himself?”

By your raving madness I ask you, “What do you have to say here,
 friend Luther?” Will you argue here that
 you are not inconsistent,⁴⁴ and will you be so□
 shameless or stupid as to defend as one and the same thing the
 statement that both kinds were commanded to all and the statement
 that neither kind was commanded to anyone? But if you were so
 shameless as to seek this, or if anyone were so senseless as to grant
 what you seek, yet you could not any the better escape from the snares□
 of your own most deceitful trickery. When you write that the king
 produces none of your inconsistencies by way of example, lest you be
 given the opportunity of clearing yourself, it is plain that what you
 desire is not at all the kind of example which cannot be explained
 away, but that kind which your opponent at any rate terms a contra-
 diction, in which case you would have the opportunity of clearing
 yourself of the reproach of that fault by some trick, if you could.

Behold one passage produced by the king; it was the first which
 occurred to me from among many as I read the book; in it you are so
 clearly convicted of contradicting yourself that, shameless as you are,
 you, who conceal by a foolish silence a passage commonly known;
 you, wicked liar, who in the case of this passage which everyone is
 reading and which you yourself have read with such torment that
 you cannot forget it thus read, contended that this passage had never
 been written; you have yet not been able, by putting on a bold
 front, to summon up enough audacity to defend the passage as not

⁴³ The king’s words

⁴⁴ Luther is convicted of inconsistency

contradictory. But if you could do precisely this, although you would thus escape being considered inconsistent on the grounds of that one passage, still you would not any the more
 avoid being convicted of the basest dishonesty clearly fitting a real scoundrel,⁴⁵
 since you have boasted with so much arrogance that the king had not produced even one passage, even for the sake of example, lest an opportunity be given you of clearing yourself.

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Therefore, honest reader—to return to you after disposing of the scoundrel—this one passage suffices to convict Luther, as I said, of the most shameless dishonesty, since he says that the king has produced no example of his inconsistency lest he be given the opportunity of clearing himself. But in order that the fellow’s deceitfulness may come to light still more clearly, listen, reader, to yet another passage.

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Luther wrote in his *Babylon* that the sacrament of orders was something new, and unknown to the church of Christ; that it has been recently invented by the church of the pope; and yet he admits that
 this same sacrament is mentioned by Saint Dionysius, who he does not deny is very ancient.⁴⁶ The prince did not pass over
 this most stupid contradiction on the fellow’s part, but he censured it very sharply in the following words:⁴⁷ “If Dionysius were the only ancient father who wrote that orders is a
 sacrament, even this would be enough to
 overthrow Luther, who would have us think that the invention of that sacrament is something new. For its being new contradicts his admission that it is included in the writings of a man he admits is ancient.”

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See what lies this fellow will dare to tell, reader; he is not ashamed to pretend that the prince has produced no passage in which he may say that Luther contradicts himself, whereas this single passage is such
 a contradiction that by producing it the prince has overthrown the rascal’s whole foundation in almost three lines. I think no one is so given over to Luther as not to admit that either of these passages will suffice to expose the shamelessness of the man who was not ashamed to boast with such great pomposity that the king had produced no passage, even for the sake of example, in which he might say that Luther contradicted himself. Nevertheless, so that on this point there may be a superfluity rather than the slightest lack, we will add still a

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⁴⁵ This indeed Luther frequently does

⁴⁶ Luther is convicted of inconsistency

⁴⁷ The king’s words

third passage. We are ready to add more than ten, except that we would be ashamed to dwell so long in this way on an evident matter.⁴⁸

71

Since Luther perceived himself to be hard pressed by the perfectly clear words from the epistle of James, not only in the matter of the sacrament of extreme unction, but also in that the apostle portrayed precisely the fellow's abusive tongue and poisonous heart, when the most wise prince caught this point very shrewdly and touched on it very skillfully, Luther began to boil with fury, and, desiring to avenge himself, he first contemned the epistle, then treated the apostle as not worth a straw. You will read about this later, when you wish, in the king's book itself. But first we will touch on his remark about the epistle, which he contemned so much that he said it was probably not an apostle's because it contained nothing worthy of the apostolic spirit.⁴⁹ I will set down the very words of the king on this matter so that you can see whether the king has brought forward no passage at all in which he might say that Luther contradicts himself. These, then, are the words of the king.⁵⁰

“Surely, if Luther had brought forward reasons why the epistle was not James', but still that of someone else who spoke in the same spirit, it could have been endured somehow. But now he says that it is probably not, because it is unworthy of the apostolic spirit. In which case I bring no other objection against Luther than Luther himself, for hardly anyone contradicts Luther more often or more forcefully than Luther.⁵¹ He, then, in speaking of the sacrament of orders, says that the church has the power of distinguishing the words of God from the words of man. How then does he now say that an epistle is unworthy of the apostolic spirit which the church, whose judgment as he says cannot err in this matter, has judged to be full of the apostolic spirit? Consequently, he has now so hemmed himself in on all sides by his own wisdom that he must either necessarily acknowledge that the epistle is the apostle's, and he has said that the contrary is probable; or he must say that the church can be deceived in determining the sacred scriptures; this possibility he has denied.”⁵²

⁴⁸ Why, when he was not ashamed, thus to lie in an evident matter?

⁴⁹ Surely you do not have this doctrine from heaven, Luther!

⁵⁰ The king's words

⁵¹ Luther is set against Luther

⁵² Get yourself out of this, Luther

What is clearer than this passage, reader? What impudence the scoundrel has who is not ashamed to deny such clear evidence! What does he need to hear from these men who, after comparing these passages with the fellow's shameless lying, may consider the buffoon-
ish words of the most deceitful buffoon when he plays the buffoon as follows? 5

Seeing that he was pleased to play behind
a mask with masked words in a matter so
serious and sacred, a thing without precedent, I say,⁵³ without a mask
and openly, that this King Henry of 10
England is clearly lying and that by his
lies he resembles a most frivolous buffoon
more than a king.⁵⁴ I, Luther, publicly accuse this virulent Thomist of
this crime and, with my books as well as my readers as witnesses,
convict him throughout the world. In this contest, let me be done 15
with the distinction between his royal majesty and my lowly estate;
I am speaking with a lying buffoon veiled by kingly titles concerning
divine matters which it is the duty of every Christian to defend against
the injury of lies. If the foolish king so forgets his royal majesty that he
dares to come out in public with manifest lies, and that while discuss- 20
ing sacred matters, why is it not fair for me to cast his lies back into his
mouth, so that, if he has derived any
pleasure from lying against the divine
majesty,⁵⁵ he may lose it by hearing the
truth against his own majesty. 25

Please consider carefully, reader, the very just causes for which this venerable father judges it lawful for him, as if in his own right, to play the buffoon against the king. Because the
king has dared to say that Luther contra-
dicts himself,⁵⁶ Luther divides this statement 30
into two charges, both very capital. The one charge is that the king
made this statement without producing any passage, not even for the
sake of example, lest Luther have an opportunity of defending him-
self. How deceitful and shameless the venerable father is in this matter
you see at least from the third passage just presented. 35

The other charge is that by his statement the king lies against the divine majesty. But since the king has said nothing else but what he has already proved many times; namely, that Luther is stark mad and that he constantly contradicts himself, you necessarily see, reader,

⁵³ Luther's words

⁵⁴ Did Paul use to be so biting, Luther?

⁵⁵ Or from you, you lying scoundrel

⁵⁶ It vexes Luther to be even slightly contradicted

that if the prince is lying against the majesty of God in this matter, then that majesty of God is the majesty of Luther. The king has not spoken of any other god; and so you see clearly how this reverend father is openly proclaimed to us as a god, and with his own mouth trumpets his apotheosis.

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In the future, therefore, we must avoid arousing this easily aroused new god of the underworld, but by casting honeyed cakes into his Cerberian mouth let us try to pacify him with pastries, and by singing a palinode in the Stesichorean manner let

the king soothe him as follows:⁵⁷ “The

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divine Luther is not contradictory, not

inconsistent, not a liar, not wicked, not virulent, not a blasphemer against God, not a raving madman, not a scoundrel, not a heretic;

but he is more faithful than faith itself,⁵⁸

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more honorable than honor itself, more

prudent than prudence itself, more reverent toward God than the saints themselves, more sincere than sincerity itself, more upright than uprightness itself, more modest than modesty itself, more constant than constancy itself, and more truthful than truth itself.”

Sufficient proof of which is given even by the fact that he has dared to boast with such bombast that the king did not produce any contradictory passage of his, not even for the sake of example, lest he be given the opportunity of defending himself. Since he knows it is

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clearly evident to everyone that the king has produced many passages, he is forced, being powerless to defend any of them, to dissemble all of them most shamelessly and to deny that they have been produced. By this most stupid denial he is refuted much more shamefully than he could ever have been refuted by any confession. Therefore, reader, as

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Luther for his part seeks to have you appraise the trustworthiness of the king in dealing with him from the fact that the king supposedly produces no example of Luther’s inconsistency, so now I beg of you in turn that you judge the utterly worthless

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trustworthiness of Luther from such wicked

dishonesty,⁵⁹ such proven deceitfulness, such shameful shamelessness.

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I am utterly convinced that no matter what aspect of the man you examine, you will find him in every respect as you have perceived him to be in this one respect.

⁵⁷ Palinode to be sung by the king

⁵⁸ Ears erect now, ass

⁵⁹ A fair demand

He proves that Luther does not satisfactorily clear himself of the reproach of capricious inconsistency and the charge of stupid abuse. Chapter 7.

77

It is worth considering how skillfully he defends those very passages in which he would have it appear that he has not been inconsistent. Since it had been objected to him that his errors concerning indulgences and the power of the Roman pontiff had formerly not been so extreme, but that later, swept along by anger and spite, he had changed his opinion for the worse, the pleasant fellow defends himself by the example of Paul and Augustine; since no one deems it a fault in them that they turned from evil to good, one would be clearly stupid not to consider it a matter of praise for Luther that he has changed from vicious to more vicious.⁶⁰ Especially since everyone knows very well that the former, with Christ inspiring them, had charity and pious zeal toward God as their purpose, whereas no one does not know that Luther, with the devil inflating him, has taken on the most monstrous pride, the most cruel hatred, the most virulent spite, and the most pernicious counsellors possible.⁶¹ Since no one becomes worst all of a sudden, this constantly inconstant fellow has advanced with the help of these advisers, first from bad to worse, then, step by step, from worse to worst. And yet, as though he had proceeded in the opposite direction and arrived at perfection, having been carried aloft to that high peak of virtue, from that height he naturally applauds himself alone; looking down on the world lying below him, he scoffs at miserable mortals, and, drunk with the new wine of such great felicity, he does not perceive from his distant height how much laughter he evokes from the earth against himself by his frenzied folly.

Who would not laugh at the most wretched scoundrel blasting out such frenzied boasts, as though he reclined on the bosom of Christ, whereas he lies confined within the arse-hole of the devil? Thence he farts and trumpets his splendid victories. Thence he brags that he has conquered the pope, bishops, monks, nuns, masses;⁶² and that he has proved all these things to be nothing but sheer monstrosities,

⁶⁰ This is the way Luther imitates Paul and Augustine

⁶¹ Luther's counsellors

⁶² He reproves in short order certain impious and doltish words of Luther

idols, phantoms, lies, and the very abomination itself standing in the holy place; and that it is the madness of a sacrilegious people to want to act in the sight of God by works and not by faith alone. Thence this lousy friarlet boasts that he is trampling the whole church under his feet, and that he will be a bear on the road and a lioness in the path, and an enemy so implacable that even though burned—for from his consciousness of heresy he has a presentiment that such an end threatens his life—he will double his hostile soul, and though his ashes are cast into a thousand seas, he will persecute and harass the church. In the same way, doubtless, as his cronies, the other caco-daemons,⁶³ have done.

Tell me, reader, who does not see, even from these words of the madman, that all the infernal furies, after knocking out the fellow's brains, have taken up residence in his empty noggin? These furies drive him so mad that they do not allow him to perceive what a ridiculous and wretched Thraso he makes of himself before the whole world. This is because from that same font of frenzy which pours out these railings, revilings, abusive language and blasphemies there also flows forth that surge of the Stygian swamp with which the crazy fellow thinks that he cleanses himself from the taint of abusive language by the filth of further abusive language. For this was the other objection brought up against him, which he tries to throw off as follows.

⁶⁴To the other charge, he says, with which the king beats me black and blue, namely, that of biting language, I answer: first, that he should have proved my biting language is unfair and the papacy innocent. Otherwise, why did Christ Himself, in Matthew 23, use such fiercely biting language against the scribes and pharisees and accuse them as hypocrites, blind men, fools, men full of the uncleanness of hypocrisy, murderers?⁶⁵ And Paul, how many times he is vehement against what he calls mutilations, and against false apostles whom he calls adulterators and hucksters of the word of God, dogs, deceitful workers, apostles of Satan, sons of the devil, men full of deceit and malice, deceivers, vain babblers, bewitchers, charlatans.⁶⁶ Will the masked Thomist accuse these persons along with me of spite and pride?

⁶³ Luther's cronies

⁶⁴ Luther's words

⁶⁵ How skillfully he proves that he does not unfairly abuse the church

⁶⁶ You belong to these men, Luther

But the king, as though he had demonstrated that the papacy is holy, raves with cartloads of his own virulent abuse against my biting language; a blockhead, indeed, who knew full well that in my mind the papacy is regarded as the kingdom of Antichrist.

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See, dear reader, into what straits this

fellow has cast the king: before he accused

Luther of abusive language, he should of

course have proved that the papacy is innocent; but the reverend father

was not required, when he wished to blaspheme the papacy, to prove

first that the papacy is wicked.⁶⁷ This legal shrewdness he has un-

doubtedly learned, by long experience, from the practice and custom

of the courts. There, whoever is accused of having committed some

crime is ordered to prove on the spot that he did not do it. Nor has

anyone ever been so senseless as to demand proof of the deed from the

person who brought the criminal to trial. But perhaps the reverend

father thinks that he has carried out the role of accuser remarkably well

since he has already in several brawling volumes doused the bishops

of the Roman See with a flood of reproaches and revilings. Unless the

king will in turn show that these bishops have all been utterly sinless,

he would be unjust toward the reverend father not to allow him, free

of the charge of abusive language, to abuse, not several wicked popes,

but the papacy itself.

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This drunken pettifogger is so fair and experienced an accuser that

because he has accused several popes, he asks the judges to please

condemn for his sake, not those popes whom he has accused, but the

papacy itself. This is as though a man who should prove that some

consuls are wicked would reproach the consulship as such; or because

of some dishonest senators would demand that every senate should be

driven out of every single city; or, finally, as if someone should,

because of several friarlets like Luther, condemn in their entirety all

orders of friars.

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Luther, however shameless, cannot deny that there have been some

good and holy Roman pontiffs, nor is he such a great prophet that he

can predict with certainty that there will never be any good pontiffs,

since he can bring no objection at all either against the holy election

or the blameless life of the present pope; and yet because of several

popes whom he chooses to call wicked he condemns the papacy itself.

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⁶⁷ Note the justice of Luther's demands

This is the way, then, in which the reverend father, Friar Martin Luther, argues with us: Some popes have been wicked; therefore, the papacy is wicked. What if someone in turn should thus argue from your example: Some Augustinian friars are heretical, seditious, schismatic; therefore, the whole Augustinian brotherhood is heretical, seditious, schismatic. Then let him subsume thus: But reverend friar, father, toper Luther is an Augustinian friar, and a counterfeit of that brotherhood; therefore, friar, father, toper Luther is a schismatic and seditious heretic. How could your paternity escape from this conclusion, which is valid according to the rule of your paternity? Surely you have but one escape: that before we make this argument, your paternity escape from the order.

Such subtle subtleties, however, the dimwitted Thomistic king naturally does not understand; but the diabolically clever Luther easily considers that since Christ and Paul so vehemently accused, the one the scribes and pharisees, the other the false apostles, over whom they had power, surely therefore it is permitted to him, a lousy friarlet, to inveigh as intemperately as he pleases against kings, princes, pontiffs, and, under the pretext of attacking those whom he pleases to call false apostles, against the true apostleship, according to the frenzied fancy of his mind. Nor do Christ's words, which should have restrained his frenzied insolence, make any impression on him—the words in which Christ orders the people to obey the scribes and pharisees, however evil, because of the chair of Moses, and not to scorn the holy chair because of its unworthy occupants. Indeed, even Paul himself, although when unjustly struck by the high priest he answered, “May God strike you down, you whitewashed wall,” yet on being warned that it was the high priest, alleged as his excuse that he had retorted with abusive speech to an abusive deed. And this scoundrel boasts that he is equal to the apostles of Christ, and almost to Christ Himself, when because of a few men's faults noised about by the crowd he rages madly against the holy office and responds to the truly paternal charity of the Roman pontiff with frenzied railing and reviling.

You see, then, honest reader, how honorably Luther has conducted himself in this matter; he has thrown off from himself the reproach of abusive language and of inconsistency in such a way that he has not only retained those two reproaches for himself but has added also those of shameless folly and madness. From these reproaches he will

never be able so to clear himself that they will not brand with lasting infamy the glorious name of Luther and cling to the ashes of his body when it has been burned, as he himself prophesies, even though these ashes be scattered into a thousand seas.

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He refutes Luther's general response, in which the latter argues that nothing is to be believed with certainty which cannot be proved by clear scripture. Chapter 8. 5

Having driven off these charges from himself as the northeast wind drives off clouds from itself, he finally says: "Let us now come to the point at issue." That is, after he had by his own admission wasted on irrelevancies seven out of twenty-eight pages,⁶⁸ or one fourth of so slight a work on such an important topic, he finally begins to lay the foundation, which he would have us consider the general response to all the arguments contained in the king's book against him. 10 15

But here, reader, note the fruitlessly cunning counsel of a man with a bad conscience about his own case—a counsel that both betrays his uneasiness and tries to assist it with worthless craft. He has heard that night is for weak forces, and so, when about to fight, he immediately escapes into darkness. He devises a response in which he leaves out all the objections that deserve a response,⁶⁹ as though he were going to respond to them individually in that section of the work in which he pretends to respond to particular objections. And yet, when you come to that section, you will find hardly any word quoted faithfully; all the strongest arguments, indeed, are passed over with shocking dissimulation. But in this general response especially, not a single objection of the king is brought forward; he tries to turn the mind of the reader only toward himself, as though no one would ever detect such doltish adroitness. We shall therefore proceed by a different way, reader. We shall drag out this blind serpent, despite his resistance, from his disgusting and darksome hiding places into the light;⁷⁰ and we shall preface this response of his with certain excerpts from the prince's 20 25 30 35

⁶⁸ Luther's prolixity

⁶⁹ Luther's sham battle

⁷⁰ Keep this in mind, reader

book. Then we shall subjoin the response itself, so that when you have both together under your eyes you can more easily judge, by means of this specious response which he has set forth as the perfection of all responses against those objections of the prince to which he was obligated to respond, how he has responded nothing at all.

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First, on the sacrament of the eucharist.⁷¹□

“Moreover, in the canon of the mass [the priests] repeat certain words as though spoken by Christ which are nowhere read in sacred scripture. And yet, there is no doubt that Christ did speak them. For many things were said and done by Christ which none of the evangelists record. But certain details fresh in the memory of those who were present, having been handed on thereafter as it were from hand to hand since the very time of the apostles, have come down even to us. Luther does not doubt that Christ said at the last supper: ‘As often as you do these things you do them in remembrance of me.’ He is so certain that these□ are Christ’s words that from them he takes his argument that no one is compelled to receive the sacrament, but that the practice, having□ been left to the free choice of each individual, is circumscribed only by the condition that as often as we do it we should do it in memory of Christ.⁷² He does not, therefore, read these words in the evangelists’ accounts of the supper of the Lord. There we read nothing more than: ‘Do this in remembrance of me.’ Where then does he read the words, ‘As often as you do these things,’ if not in the mass? I certainly think not elsewhere. In the apostle’s account the words are□ different. Therefore, since he trusts those words so much and uses them because he finds them in the canon, why does he not with equal trust accept the words of the same canon in which the mass is called an oblation and a sacrifice?”

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And elsewhere concerning the sacrament of confirmation:

“But since Luther himself mentions certain passages out of which□ the sacrament of confirmation could not unreasonably take its origin (although he jeers at this), why does he, because he does not read in those passages any word of promise, so perversely judge the whole church as if she were rashly accepting a sacrament? As if Christ promised, said, did nothing at all which the evangelists do not include. According to this reasoning, if only the gospel of John were extant, Luther would deny the institution of the sacrament of the

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⁷¹ The king’s words

⁷² Luther relies solely on a procedure which he condemns

Lord's supper, about which institution John writes nothing at all; he omitted to mention this by the same design of God by which all the evangelists passed over many other things which Jesus did, which, as the evangelist says, are not written in this book and which the whole world could not contain. Of these events, some have been disclosed to the faithful through the mouths of the apostles, and have been preserved thereafter by the abiding faith of the catholic church. Why should you not believe her regarding some truths although they are not read in the gospels, since, as Augustine says, you could not know which are the gospels except by the tradition of the church?⁷³ If none of the gospels had ever been written, there would still remain written in the hearts of the faithful the gospel which is more ancient than the books of all the evangelists; there would remain the sacraments which themselves are undoubtedly more ancient than all the books of the evangelists, so that Luther may not think it an effectual proof of the erroneous affirmation of a sacrament that he does not discover its institution in the gospels.□

“Otherwise, if he admits nothing at all but what he reads in the gospel so clearly that there is no room for evasion, how is it that he believes—if only he does believe it, since he believes scarcely anything—the perpetual virginity of Mary? He will find nothing on this point in the scriptures; so true is this that Helvidius seized the occasion of decreeing the contrary from no other source than the words of the scriptures. Nor is any other proof opposed to him than the faith of the whole church, which is nowhere greater or stronger than in the sacraments. I certainly think that no one who has the slightest spark of faith can be persuaded that Christ, who prayed for Peter that his faith would not fail, who established His church upon a firm rock, would allow her to be universally bound for so many ages by the empty signs of corporal things through an erroneous trust in them as though they were divine sacraments.⁷⁴ If nothing were read about them anywhere, nevertheless those men who associated with the Lord personally could have verbally conveyed His intention; of these men He said: ‘You are the witnesses who have been with me from the beginning.’ The Paraclete Himself could have taught what was to be done; of Him Christ said: ‘But when the Paraclete shall have come, whom I shall send you, the spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness

⁷³ Which of you triumphs here, Luther?

⁷⁴ Argument from probability

concerning me.’ And again: ‘When He shall have come, who is the spirit of truth, He will lead you into all truth. For He will not speak of Himself, but whatever things He shall hear, He shall speak, and the things which are to come He will reveal to you.’ Since the church, then, has had so many and such great teachers, so many living evangelists, and that Spirit who inspires truth, shall we believe that she has rashly instituted a sacrament and placed her hope in a meaningless sign? Shall we not rather believe that she has learned from the apostles; shall we not rather believe that she has learned from the Holy Spirit?”

And shortly after, concerning the sacrament of matrimony:

“He denies that grace was anywhere promised. He denies that the sacrament was anywhere instituted as a sign of grace. How does he know this? ‘Because,’ he says, ‘we do not read of it.’⁷⁵ O bold reason, and mother of many heresies. From this font Helvidius drew his venom. You admit no sacrament unless you read of its institution in a book? What book did He ever write who instituted all the sacraments? ‘Concerning some things,’ you say, ‘I believe Christ’s evangelists.’ Why then do you not, concerning some things, believe Christ’s church? Christ placed her over all the evangelists, who were only certain members of the church. Therefore, if you trust an individual member, why do you not trust the members taken as a whole?⁷⁶ If you grant so much to a member, why do you grant nothing to the whole body? The church believes this is a sacrament; the church believes that, instituted by God, passed on by Christ, passed on by the apostles, passed on by the holy fathers, passed on thereafter from hand to hand as a sacrament, it has reached us, to be passed on by us to later generations as a sacrament, to be venerated until the end of the world as a sacrament. This the church believes, and what she believes she declares. The same church tells you this, I say, as tells you that the evangelists wrote the gospels. If the church did not say that the gospel of John is John’s, you would not know that it is John’s. For you were not sitting by him as he wrote it. Why, then, do you not believe the church when she affirms that Christ has done these things, that He has instituted these sacraments, that the apostles have passed them on, just as you believe her when she says that the evangelist wrote this gospel?”

You have heard, reader, several passages from among many which

⁷⁵ Luther’s strongest argument

⁷⁶ Such is the Lutheran dialectic

the king has written, in which he points out that many things were said and done and taught by Christ which are not recorded by any of the evangelists, which are not contained in any writings of the apostles, not related in any scriptural text. Since his associates held these details fresh in their memory, however, they have been passed on successively, as though from hand to hand, since the time of the apostles and have come all the way down to us. He also shows that the catholic church, in its sacraments and articles of faith, is taught and governed by the Holy Spirit. Moreover, he proves these statements, not only from the argument that otherwise the most absurd results would follow, but from the clear words of the evangelists, as well as the evident testimony of sacred writings, in addition to that of Christ Himself. And what do you think Luther replies to these proofs? Set aside for a while, reader, the railing, the jeers, the mockery and the abuse; you will find nothing else but these two propositions: that nothing is true and certain apart from evident scriptures; that all other traditions are the work of men and are left to the free choice of each individual.⁷⁷ But in the meantime, to the reasons which the king presents; to the authority of the evangelists and of Christ Himself by which the king proves that other things were done, taught, and commanded besides those which were set down in writing; to these arguments which certainly should have received some answer, Luther answers nothing at all. Therefore, when he answers in such a way as to leave untouched the arguments which he should have answered, what else is he doing but admitting clearly that he has nothing to say?

Although this fact is clear in itself, still, that it may become yet clearer, we will review the words of Luther and disperse the clouds and fogs in which this fogbrain shrouds himself.

Let us come now, he says,⁷⁸ to the point at issue, and in the manner of Aristotle, who is the god of the Thomists, let us first generally, then specifically, dispute about these points. The foremost, general and sole strength of the Henrician wisdom in so regal a book is not any scriptural authority, not any compelling reason, but that Thomistic mode of disputing:⁷⁹ “It seems thus to me; I think thus; I believe thus.” If I may recall here my friend Amsdorf, the doltish king carries on his disputation just as the theologians

⁷⁷ The sum of Luther’s book

⁷⁸ Luther’s words

⁷⁹ On the contrary, this applies more to you, since you flee all reason

at Leipzig did theirs, according to the way Amsdorf likes to recount it. 95
 There, when the respondent had denied the premise of his opponent,
 the opponent proved the same premise by saying: "It should be so."
 On the respondent's denying the premise a second time, the opponent
 replied a second time: "and how can it be otherwise? It should be so." 5
 Very neat, and very Thomistic; indeed, very Leipzigian and very
 Henrician. In the same way, although I had in my book especially
 attacked this Thomistic general principle and had set up the divine
 scriptures against the observance, usage, custom and authority of
 men, nevertheless our lord the king in his Thomistic wisdom replies 10
 nothing but:⁸⁰ "It should be so; usage has
 it thus; the custom has long been thus; I
 believe thus; the fathers have written thus; the Church has thus
 ordained, etc." But if I would write another thousand books and
 prove through the scriptures that the usage and authority of men are 15
 of no validity in matters of faith, it will still be easy for this Thomistic
 king to answer with a thousand books and, leaving out the scriptures
 adduced by me, to keep repeating: "It should be so; usage has it thus;
 the authority of men speaks thus," and not one other word. But if I
 would say:⁸¹ "How do you prove that
 usage and the authority of men have
 validity?" he answers: "It should be so;
 it seems thus to me; I believe thus. Are
 you, a single individual, more learned than everyone?" 20

Who will not ridicule this archdolt's raving ridicule that recoils 25
 back on his own ridiculous head? He talks nonsense, saying that the
 king alleges no other argument but: "It should be so; usage has it
 thus; the custom has long been thus; I believe thus; the fathers have
 written thus; the Church has thus ordained." Everyone knows, how-
 ever, that Luther himself knows that the king makes hardly any of 30
 these statements, but that he does say: "Reason proves this; God has
 revealed this; the Holy Spirit has taught this; the evangelist says this;
 the apostle says this; Christ Himself says this." To all these arguments,
 Luther says nothing at all.

You understand then, reader,⁸² that these 35
 stubborn blockheads seek only to have
 themselves alone believed. I demand cre-
 dence not for myself but for the manifest words of God; they demand
 credence for the hackneyed and insipid fantasies of their own brain,
 while contemning the words of God. I have not denied the usage or 40

⁸⁰ Do not lie, my good man

⁸¹ You, a single individual, are certainly more wicked than everyone

⁸² Luther's words. Parmeno will not let this pass in silence

the authority of men completely; I simply wish whatever has been written outside the holy scriptures to be free and indifferent, as I refuse to have necessary articles of faith fashioned from the words of men. I wish praiseworthy words and deeds outside the testimony of scripture to be tolerated, yet tolerated freely. But these lunkheads make articles of faith for us out of every word of the fathers, a thing so far from what the holy men wished to be attributed to their writings that no blasphemy could be more offensive to them than to have their free words and deeds turned by the sluggish Thomists into necessary articles of faith; that is, into lying snares for the destruction of souls.

Behold, reader, how clearly Luther presents what we demand and what he for his part demands. We stubborn blockheads of course demand that we alone be believed; that is, that only the Italians, Spaniards, English, French, and finally all men alone should be believed, wherever the church of Christ exists today or has ever existed anywhere in the world since the death of Christ. But Luther, an exceedingly just man, demands nothing else of course than that the evident scriptures be believed, the most evident of which he everywhere drags into doubt and openly twists into heresies; and when he finds them constricting, he dares to condemn them, as we will later show clearer than day.

Meanwhile, however, let us winnow his statement that whatever is written outside holy scripture is free and indifferent and that he simply wishes whatever praiseworthy words and deeds have occurred apart from the testimony of scripture to be tolerated freely. If this statement is true, Luther, why do you answer nothing to all the objections which the king brings up against you? We will present many of these objections in their proper places. Meanwhile, we have cited a few above. If anyone, after reading them, then reads this general response of yours and sees that you have not touched on any one of these objections but have passed them over and concealed them by silence as though they were words spoken to a deaf man,⁸³ he will not be able to ignore how great a fear of being unable to make a fitting response and how complete a lack of a true defense lead you to pass over these objections. Now since we see that you are glad to evade these passages, we shall again and again set them before you, together with others like them which it pains you to see.

As I began to say, then, if everything must be held freely and

⁸³ Luther's resources reduced to straits

nothing must be believed for certain that is not evidently included in scripture, for you assert this in several places, then what does the apostle mean when he says: “Stand firm and hold the traditions that you have learned whether by word or by letter of ours”? The apostle was commanding that what he had taught by word of mouth should be preserved equally with what he had taught in writing. Something, then, was taught, not as though it were a matter of free choice, but as a matter which bound the church beyond scripture. What do you say to this, Luther? What do you say to the following words of the evangelist:⁸⁴ “Many things were done which are not written in this book”? And to prevent you from saying that such incidents were written down by other evangelists, he says that the whole world could not contain them. Why then will you acknowledge as miracles only all those incidents of which many could have been unknown to us without peril to our faith, but will not acknowledge that the apostles could have omitted to mention any of the sacraments, on which the church could not be in error without the sin of superstition? You see that the king, to prevent your pretending this, has also brought up the objection that the evangelist John did not record the sacrament of the eucharist. If you should argue that he did not record it because the other evangelists had included it, then, according to that reasoning, he would rather have omitted other details of less importance which he again relates even though these evangelists had written them. Accordingly, it cannot be denied that even necessary articles of faith were among those teachings which were not written down but were transmitted without writing.

Now Paul, in writing to the Corinthians about this same sacrament, said:⁸⁵ “I myself have received from the Lord what I also delivered to you.” Did he not deliver this truth without writing as he received it without writing? In fact, he would have delivered nothing at all in writing, either to the Corinthians, or to the Romans, or to any other people, had he been able at the time that he wrote to speak to them personally. Had this perchance happened, you would have withdrawn your faith from all those teachings which are now read in the Pauline epistles. Very many of his epistles, as of the other apostles also, are lost, and of those which are extant, some are translated incorrectly, some are translated ambiguously, the copies in the two

⁸⁴ Now his wit droops

⁸⁵ Luther is refuted by a clear scriptural text

languages do not agree at all points, and there is incessant controversy about their meaning. Consequently, as to your sole argument, the man who admits nothing but the evident scriptures will never lack pretext for denying what he wishes and for asserting what he pleases.

Tell me, what is the significance of Christ's words: "When the Spirit, the Paraclete, comes He will lead you into all truth"? He did not say, "He will write to you," or, "He will speak to you audibly," but, "He will lead you"; that is, He will incline you inwardly and by His inspiration direct your hearts into all truth. But tell me, whom will the Holy Spirit lead into all truth? Is it the apostles only, to whom Christ was then speaking personally? Then it was to the apostles only that He also said: "I am with you even unto the consummation of the world." Who then will doubt that it was of the church that Christ said that the Holy Spirit would lead her into all truth?

What about the men to whom He said: "Go, preach the gospel to every creature"? Were they accustomed to preach the gospel from a written text? Did Christ command the new law to be recorded on tablets or inscribed on bronze, so that whatever was not read there would be immediately and totally rejected as worthless? Is not Luther moved at all by the words of God, mentioned also by the apostle: "I will put my laws upon their hearts and upon their minds. I will write them"? He does not say, "on stone"; He does not say, "on tablets of wood"; but whereas He wrote the old law first on stone, later on wood, yet always externally, He will write the new law inwardly by the finger of God on the book of the heart. Thus what lasted a very short time on harder material, He will cause to last forever on the most pliant material. It has pleased God in this way to manifest His power. The tablets made of rock were broken immediately; those of wood lasted a long time; but what He has written on the heart will last indelibly.

On the heart,⁸⁶ therefore, in the church of Christ, there remains inscribed the true gospel of Christ which was written there before the books of all the evangelists. There God has inscribed His faith so indelibly that no deceptions of heretics can erase it, no matter how many scriptural texts they produce from the books of the gospel that are apparently contrary to the true faith. From this source the faith of Christ stood firm against Helvidius, the enemy of Christ's mother. From this source it stood

⁸⁶ The gospel is written with the greatest certainty in the hearts of men

firm against Arius,⁸⁷ the enemy of Christ Himself. From this source it stood invincible against the massed troops of heretics who stormed it with the same battering ram with which Luther is now storming it, when they denied that the public faith of the church is proved from scripture, or when they said that the scriptures were contrary to the faith. But the church of Christ did not doubt that whatever the Holy Spirit inspired in the church was undoubtedly true, whether it was contained in scripture or not. Indeed, if any apparently contradictory scriptural text was alleged, the faith written in her heart taught that this text was insufficiently understood by those to whom it seemed so contradictory, since it was a matter of absolute certainty that Christ does not fail His church on articles of faith, nor does the truthful Spirit of God contradict Himself. 5

If you still stupidly persist, however, in arguing that nothing was done or taught apart from the scriptures, and if you are not drawn from this folly by those testimonies of the scriptures which I have recalled from the book of the king and to which you have answered nothing at all, then I wish you would at least grant that in the whole of sacred scripture the Father is nowhere called “unbegotten,” the Son is nowhere called “consubstantial,” the Holy Spirit is nowhere very clearly read to proceed from the Father and the Son.⁸⁸ In fact, the heretics argued so insistently that the divinity of the Holy Spirit is not sufficiently clear from the scriptures that, as Saint Gregory Nazianzen testifies, they called Him *theos agraptos*⁸⁹; that is, “the God of whom nothing is written.” Will you on this account forbid that any of these truths be believed for certain, and will you constitute them as free to each individual, so that at the cost of his salvation a man may deny that the Father is unbegotten, he may deny that the Son is consubstantial, he may deny that the Holy Spirit proceeds from both? 10 15 20 25 30

What would you answer to the fact that nothing at all is found in scripture about the perpetual virginity of Mary, so that Jerome had great difficulty in proving that the scriptures did not contradict this truth? Although he did prove it conclusively, nevertheless he did not prove it by means of such clear scriptural texts as to deprive his opponent of every means of disputing it. The whole article clearly depends on the faith of the church. I wish you would answer frankly 35

⁸⁷ Helvidius. Arius

⁸⁸ Untie this knot if you can, Luther

⁸⁹ Theos agraptos

whether you obey her in regard to this article. Although you may be impious, yet I believe that you surely do obey on this point. If you do think she must be obeyed, you are certainly admitting something besides the scriptures, and this is contrary to your fundamental principle. But if you should be so impious that you would not hesitate to cast doubt on the integrity of the Virgin Mother of God, I still do not think you will be so shameless as to deny again that the eucharist is a sacrament.⁹⁰ 5

It is almost the only one you have left us, yet even it is not free from the defilement of your foul fingers. I do not suppose that you will retract your assertion that there is no sacrament where sacred scripture mentions no promise of grace and no remission of sins: this is the single fundamental principle which you have chosen for your work of destroying the sacraments. Come then, Luther, on this point at least be consistent. It will be disgraceful for you to be beaten back by means of this fundamental principle of yours; it will be impious to deny that the eucharist is a sacrament. 10 15

And yet the king has forced you, whether you wish it or not, to abandon one of these two alternatives. Recall now, you rascal, the words of the prince; with them as with a burning iron he has branded on your whorish face such a mark of stupidity and impiety that you cannot conceal it with any disguise. 20

“Now that we⁹¹ have proved according to Luther’s own fundamental principle that the sacraments which the church believes could not have been instituted except by God, even though nothing at all were read about them in scripture, let us see whether scripture really does make no mention at all of this sacrament. All men unanimously admit that the apostles were ordained priests at the Lord’s supper. Luther alone denies it, although it is quite evident from that passage that they were given the power of changing the bread into the Body of Christ, a thing which only a priest can effect. But it is not a sacrament, he says, because no grace was promised to them. How does Luther know this? Because we do not read it, he says. This line of reasoning is habitual with Luther: It is not written in the gospel; therefore it was not done by Christ. The evangelist invalidates this form of deduction when he says:⁹² ‘Many things were done which are not written in this book.’ But we will touch Luther a little closer still. He grants that the eucharist is a sacrament. 25 30 35

⁹⁰ He will even deny that Christ is God, if he pleases

⁹¹ The king’s words

⁹² Note this, Luther

If he did not admit this he would be mad. But where does he find in scripture that grace was promised in that sacrament? He accepts nothing but the scriptures, and evident ones at that. Let him read the passage about the Lord's supper; he will not find in any of the evangelists that grace is promised in the reception of the sacrament.⁹³ The words of Christ read: 'This is my blood of the new covenant, which is being shed for many unto the forgiveness of sins.' By these words He signified that He would redeem the human race through His suffering on the cross. But when He said earlier: 'Do this in remembrance of me,' He did not in those words promise to the one who does it, that is, to the priest who consecrates or to the one who receives the eucharist, any grace, any remission of sins. But neither does the apostle, in the letter to the Corinthians when he threatens judgment to those who eat unworthily, make any mention of grace for those who eat worthily. And if anything from the sixth chapter of John promises grace to him who receives the sacrament of the Lord's flesh and blood, not even that can help Luther, since he says that that whole chapter has nothing at all to do with the eucharist. You see, then, how this promise of grace which he grandly proposed to us throughout his work as the sole basis of a sacrament cannot be maintained in the case of that sacrament which is almost the only one he has left us, unless, as is necessary, he has recourse beyond the words of scripture to the faith of the church."²⁵

Have you heard these words before, Luther?⁹⁴ Or have you become so drowsy from drinking that you do not hear them shouted into your ears? Why did you fall silent at them, though you boast that you answer so grandly? Did you have to conceal the fact that he completely destroyed the one fundamental principle by which you would seem to have destroyed all the sacraments? Since you laid down, as the one foundation for your *Babylon*, the assertion that there is no sacrament unless we read of a promise of grace in the evident testimony of scripture, and since you now enlarge that foundation by the assertion that nothing at all must be believed for certain which is not clearly read in holy scripture, the prince forces you to the point where you must either deny the sacrament of the eucharist, which before was the only one you admitted; or, if you

⁹³ Nowhere do we read that this sacrament is a sign of grace to the one who receives it

⁹⁴ Rather, his spite obstructs his hearing

choose to persist in that belief, withdraw by necessity from this infamous foundation and flee for refuge beyond the words of holy scripture to the public faith of the church which you call papist.

109

He refutes the assertion that although something may be true
apart from scripture yet it cannot be certain, and there
will be the danger that false teachings will pass as
truths into articles of faith and that traditions of men
will pass for the traditions of God. Chapter 9. 5

What does the friar, father, toper answer to these arguments? The sot
is asleep; he is buried in his cups; he does not hear. When he has slept
off that mouthful, will he then, rising from his drunken stupor, belch
at us this objection: that although some things are true which still are
not contained in any scriptures, yet they cannot be known for certain?
Since man is free to fashion very many traditions, he will doubtless
say that we have no sign by which to distinguish the things that are
true from those that are of our own fashioning. From this, he says, will
follow the absurd conclusion that we will embrace all human tradi-
tions as the traditions of God. If this objection is true, Luther is a
cautious fellow, but the evangelist was not cautious enough, the
apostle was not cautious enough, for they did not see that since certain
truths which the church needed to preserve were not recorded in
writing, as we have shown, either those truths could eventually slip
from memory, or under their guise other teachings proceeding from
human falsehood could arrogate authority to themselves as though
they were likewise handed down by God. And yet Luther thinks him-
self so strong on this point that he shouts to us a hundred times:
“Nothing must be held as certain and undoubted which does not
appear in the scriptures, and clear and evident scriptures at that.”⁹⁵
Otherwise he considers it a necessary con-
sequence that the church will erroneously
bind herself to empty signs in place of true sacraments until she
thinks that the traditions of men are the traditions of God, or, in the
case of an ambiguous scriptural text, she adheres to the false as
against the true interpretation. Luther considers this error to be
inescapable. 10 15 20 25 30 35

⁹⁵ Are you fearful, my dear fellow?

At this point we could have countered either of these suggestions by quoting several of the ancient fathers or several passages from sacred scripture, except that it seemed better to set against Luther the one and only person whom he esteems more highly than all the fathers, whom he esteems more than all the evangelists; namely, Luther.⁹⁶ Rather than cite him directly by way of objection, we shall quote a passage reminding the reader of an objection already raised by the king, which, since Luther could not refute it, he deceitfully passed over in silence.⁹⁷ This, then, is what the king says on the sacrament of orders.

“But he advances⁹⁸ as an inescapable□ weapon the argument that nowhere is a promise of grace recorded for this sacrament. He says that the whole New Testament makes not one mention of this sacrament. And it is ridiculous, he says, to allege as a sacrament of God what can nowhere be shown to have been instituted by God. We are not permitted, he says, to ascribe to divine ordinance anything which has not been divinely ordained, but he says we must try to confirm everything by clear scriptural texts. Later we will investigate whether the New Testament makes no mention at all of this sacrament. Meanwhile, I shall deal with him as though no mention at all were made, since it is with this same weapon that he hopes to spear almost all the sacraments. Against this weapon I shall take up as my shield the very arms which Luther himself admits are impenetrable. For these are his words:⁹⁹

The church undoubtedly has the power to distinguish the word of God from the words of men, as Saint Augustine confesses in saying that he believed in the gospel moved by the authority of the church which proclaimed that this was the gospel.

“Since the church, then, as Luther admits, has the power to distinguish the word of God from the words of men, it is certain that she has this power from no other source but God, and for no other cause than that the church may not err in those matters in which errors should not be made. Therefore it follows from this foundation which

⁹⁶ Nothing is truer than this truth

⁹⁷ This is the way Luther usually conquers

⁹⁸ The king's words, by which he refutes Luther from Luther's own words

⁹⁹ Luther's words in the *Babylonian Captivity*, from which he is clearly refuted

Luther has laid for us that the church has from God not only that power which Luther grants, the distinguishing of the word of God from the words of men, but also the ability to distinguish the divine from the human meaning in the divine scriptures. For otherwise, of what use would it be for the church, with God teaching her, to distinguish the true from the false scripture, if in the true scripture she should not distinguish the false from the true meaning? Then, by the same reasoning, it also follows that even in those matters which are not written down, God teaches His church so that she cannot erroneously embrace the false for the true, since such a possibility would threaten no less danger than if she either considered the writings of men as the words of God or derived a false meaning from the true words of God. This would be the case especially if she should accept false sacraments as true and the traditions of men as the traditions of God; rather, not the traditions of men, but the fabrications of the devil, if the church of Christ should, as magicians do, place her hope in fictitious and worthless signs of bodily things as though they were the sacraments of Christ.

“It is manifestly clear, then,¹⁰⁰ from Luther’s admitting that the church has the power to distinguish the words of God from the words of men, that she has no less the power also to distinguish traditions of God from the traditions of men, since otherwise one or the other error could arise, either of which is equally to be avoided, and since Christ’s concern is not that the church should not err in one or the other manner, but that she should not err in any manner. No error could be more offensive to Christ, however, than if the faith which the church should place in Him alone should be placed by her signs supported by no grace at all but void and empty of all the blessing of faith. The church cannot err, therefore, in accepting the sacraments of faith; no more, I say, than she can err in accepting the scriptures, in which matter even Luther confesses that the church cannot err. If the opposite were true, many absurd consequences would follow, but above all this one, than which nothing can be more absurd, that all the teachings of the Christian faith, established throughout so many ages, would be called into doubt again at the whim of the growing number of heretics. If nothing should be held as certain except what is confirmed by the scriptures, and evident ones at that, as Luther says, not only will we not defend the perpetual

¹⁰⁰ Luther miserably run through by his own weapon

virginity of holy Mary, but also anyone who ever chooses either to bring to life new sects or to revive those that have been buried will be presented with inexhaustible material for attacking the faith. There have been very few heretics who have not accepted the scriptures, but almost all of them established their teachings on the argument either that their doctrines were confirmed by the scriptures, or, when their doctrines seemed conformable to reason, that the contrary was not defined by the scriptures, since they argued that the passages which were brought forward in opposition to their sect were being interpreted otherwise than the orthodox church was accustomed to interpret them. Moreover, to prevent these passages from being called evident, they either contrived another meaning, or they produced from another part of the same scripture passages which were apparently very contrary to the first, and thus kept confusing the whole matter so that it would appear ambiguous. Thus, if the public faith of the church had not stood firm against Arius, I do not know whether he would ever have lacked matter for disputing about the scriptures.”

I have no doubt, reader, that as you read these words you experience both astonishment and abhorrence for the wicked and shameless dissimulation of this scoundrel, who like a deaf man ignores that warning which everyone realizes has penetrated his ass-ears so painfully that not even a drunken person could shake off that feeling of pain. For what weapon could have struck Luther more forcibly than that which caused him to lie wounded and transfixed by his own words? He rarely speaks the truth; yet the very thing which he does not say truly refutes the falsehoods which he has added to it. What escape will you contrive here, Luther?¹⁰¹ With what doltish device will you labor to escape? Summon your assembly of scoundrels, toppers, whore-masters, assassins; let them lead you out of this labyrinth; let them persuade you to do once more what you have so often done: revoke and recall any syllable which you have ever spoken well. Shout that you regret having admitted that the church has been given the power to distinguish the scriptures of God from the writings of men. But if you do this, and it is clear that you will eventually come round to it, you should at the same time grant that the gospel itself is uncertain and of no authority; the gospel about which you shout so loudly with your mouth, but which you do not at all believe in your heart. Should you not retract, however, but concede that the church

¹⁰¹ Here, brotherhood of Luther, run to help your pot-brother

has been given by God the power of inerrancy in distinguishing the words of God from the words of men, and if you cannot assign any other source of this power than the particular care with which God so governs the church that He does not consent to her erring in matters of such great importance,¹⁰² then it is necessary for you to concede also that God will never fail His church in interpreting the scriptures or in distinguishing traditions, wherever such a danger besets her from her lack of knowledge as would exist if she were permitted to err on necessary articles of faith or on the sacraments. To err on these matters is nothing else than to withdraw one's faith from God and to place it, not in man, but in empty signs. This is almost worse than to worship the molten calf. In this matter Christ Himself testifies how far He is from failing His church when He says: "I am with you even unto the end of the world."¹⁰³

He shows that Luther stupidly boggles in trying to make the identity of the church a matter of dispute, and at the same time he answers the empty prattle of Luther's nonsense against Ambrose Catharinus on the question of the same church. Chapter 10.

Impudent as he is, however, he will perhaps at this point raise a question about the church, as he often does, and will say that the whole church which he calls papist is not the church of Christ. In order not to neglect any argument, the prince very shrewdly attacks the rascal on this matter accurately and keenly. In speaking of the sacrament of orders, after recalling Luther's words from the *Babylonian Captivity*, "This sacrament of orders¹⁰³ is unknown to the church of Christ, and it was invented by the church of the pope," the prince adds:¹⁰⁴

"These few words contain a great heap of falsehood and nonsense. He distinguishes the church of the pope from the church of Christ, whereas the pope is head of the same church of which Christ is. He says that the church has invented what she did not invent but received as instituted.¹⁰⁵ He says

¹⁰² What do you have to snarl here, Luther?

¹⁰³ Luther's words

¹⁰⁴ The king's words

¹⁰⁵ Luther is convicted of lying

this sacrament is unknown to the church of Christ, whereas it is certain that almost every region of the earth which truly professes the faith of Christ also considers orders as a sacrament. If he could find some obscure corner, and I do not think he can, in which the sacrament of orders is unknown, nevertheless that corner should not be compared with the rest of the church, which is subject not only to Christ but also for the sake of Christ to the sole vicar of Christ, the Roman pope, and which believes that orders is a sacrament.

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“Otherwise, if Luther persists in distinguishing the church of the pope from the church of Christ and says that in the one church orders is considered a sacrament but is not considered such in the other, let him bring forward that church of Christ which, contrary to the faith of the papal church, as he calls it, is ignorant of the sacrament of orders.¹⁰⁶ Meanwhile, when he says that this sacrament is unknown to the church of Christ and that those whom the pope governs do not belong to the church of Christ, it is certainly clear that according to both these reasons he separates from the church of Christ not only Rome, but all Italy, Germany, Spain, France, Britain, and all the rest of the nations that obey the Roman pontiff or receive orders as a sacrament. When he takes all these peoples away from the church of Christ, it necessarily follows either that he say the church of Christ is nowhere, or that, like the Donatists, he reduce the catholic church of Christ to two or three heretics buzzing in a corner about Christ.”

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You see, reader, that the king has reduced the matter to this point: if the church which Luther calls papist is not the church of Christ, it necessarily follows either that the church of Christ is nowhere or that it is only in whatever place there are two or three heretics buzzing in a corner about Christ.

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What does Luther answer to this? He is silent; sufficient praise. He thus acknowledges that he understands the words of Christ, who says: “Wherever two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I also in the midst of them.” He does not remember that whoever are separated from the church, even if they are gathered together and speak about Christ, are the council of the devil.¹⁰⁷ There is one church of Christ, outside of which there is no church except that of the wicked.

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And yet it does not surprise me at all that Luther answered nothing

¹⁰⁶ Perhaps he has seen it in Utopia

¹⁰⁷ Such are the Lutherans

to these words of the king. This is the man's constant practice: to hammer away at his own ideas incessantly but at the same time always to pass over every objection raised by his opponent. He did the same thing in replying to Ambrose Catharinus on this very question. The fellow who was a Theseus to Luther in dredging up the witless witticisms in that book may deride Catharinus as much as he pleases, yet he also undoubtedly sees that Catharinus has more native ability and learning in his finger than Luther has in his brain. When Catharinus answered him on the power of the pope and of the church, Luther answered nothing at all to Catharinus' objections.¹⁰⁸ Anyone who reads these objections fairly and without bias and compares them with Luther's writings will declare that Luther is a flagrant trifler who, ignoring everything his opponent says, answers only, "I deny everything that you say. I want no distinctions. I believe nothing apart from the scriptures. As for the meaning of the scriptures, I do not believe the holy fathers, for they have all erred. I want no charge of inconsistency. The charge of inconsistency does not solve the argument." And a thousand like trifles.

Catharinus, as is necessary, distinguishes the Church militant from the Church triumphant, saying that in the former the evil live mingled with the good, in the latter live saints only. But Luther wants no distinctions, being unwilling to distinguish, as I see it, between the election of which Christ said, "Many are called but few are chosen," and that election of which Christ said, "Have I not chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" So that he will not have to admit that he is clearly talking nonsense, he demands that distinctions be proved from scripture, as though he would then finally believe. Yet he ridicules no less the distinction between faith formed by charity and unformed faith.

You¹⁰⁹ have fashioned the most wicked fiction of all, that of unformed faith, so that you may more easily and more safely, like the robbers of Moab, introduce your sacrileges into the scriptures of God. But Paul says to us: "What fellowship has light with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial?"

You see how, as though by Paul's authority, he declares this distinction to be not only contrived but even most wickedly contrived.

¹⁰⁸ That Luther answers nothing to Catharinus' objections

¹⁰⁹ Luther's words

Yet at the same time the scoundrel conceals the fact that he is accusing the apostle himself of wickedness. What is more frequently on the lips of Paul than this distinction?¹¹⁰ In many passages he insists on the great difference which exists between that faith which lacks charity and the life of good works and that which works through charity. But it is enough for Luther to shout one thing and to conceal the other by silence.

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Now Catharinus occasionally brought up certain points which, being divinely taught to the church, all the holy fathers write and the whole Christian world believes. To this Luther cries out: "I accept nothing but evident scriptures." Yet all the faithful steadfastly deny that Christ took care to have everything written down which He wishes Christians to believe; nor has Luther proved this till now by any word of scripture.¹¹¹

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When the point under discussion was the interpretation of some scriptural text, Catharinus alleged in behalf of the interpretation which he himself affirmed the constant agreement of the most holy fathers, of the most ancient interpreters, of the most learned men. To this Luther shouts: "I have no use for the holy fathers; I have no use for ancient interpreters; I have no use for those learned doctors; all, being men, have erred." Meanwhile, he introduces no argument on his own behalf except to shout that whatever he says is true, and that he neither errs nor can err inasmuch as he is not a man as the holy fathers were, but is outside the human condition, an infallible ass.

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Catharinus proved that many absurd and inconsistent conclusions flowed from Luther's position. To this Luther shouts: "The charge of inconsistency does not solve the argument,"¹¹² although deduction to an inconsistency is the strongest method both of proof and of rebuttal. Luther is not impressed even if someone should prove that from his teaching it follows that man is an ass. Whoever should prove this to Luther would accomplish no more than if someone should prove the same point to an ass.

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Catharinus said that in the words of Matthew 16, "To you I will give the keys of the kingdom of heaven," the keys were promised, not given, but that from this text it is necessarily proved that the keys were

¹¹⁰ Here Luther is refuted by evident scripture

¹¹¹ Not everything can be proved by the scriptures since many things are not recorded in the scriptures

¹¹² How foolishly Luther answers the words of Catharinus

given because there is no doubt that Christ, being truthful, has fulfilled His promise. To this Luther answers that even if Christ made the promise, one did not have to believe that He kept His promises unless one should read in scripture that He did fulfill them.

It is necessary¹¹³ that the place, the person and the time of the fulfillment of the promise be confirmed for us not by our conjecture but by the testimony of scripture. For if this presentation of the keys cannot be shown in scripture, we will be uncertain even to this day as to the time when Peter received them. Far be it from Christ, however, to leave us so uncertain that we would not know the time, the place in which Peter received the keys.¹¹⁴

O great danger, if we should not know the time, the place in which Peter received the keys! Not to know this will surely be little less dangerous than not to know the day and the place where Peter was baptized.

Furthermore, since Luther occasionally twisted some text of scripture to his own advantage,¹¹⁵ Catharinus, in refuting his false interpretation, first proved the truer meaning from the agreement of ancient interpreters, then recounted multiple other meanings also, showing that any one of them was more probable than that which Luther argues is the only true and evident meaning. But Luther escapes this argument as follows:

I do not allow you¹¹⁶ to attribute more than one meaning to scripture. I do not consider valid the argument that you try so often: "It can also be stated thus; it can also be understood thus; it can also be answered thus; literally it can mean this; mystically it can mean this." Away with this "It can," my dear Catharinus; all these are arguments of falsehood and mere evasions and clear defenses of my interpretation.

But of course, Luther. Why not? So that if someone should show that you present as the indubitably true meaning one which is the least probable of many, you in turn may boast the more and wish to be thought so much the wiser, the more ways you are shown to be a dolt.

¹¹³ Luther's words

¹¹⁴ Luther's remarkable scruple

¹¹⁵ How unfair Luther is in his zeal for his own side

¹¹⁶ Luther's words

Say this, "This text is to be understood thus and in no other way," so that you¹¹⁷ may allege one constant and simple meaning of scripture even as I do; for this is the office of a theologian as the other is the office of a sophist.

Certainly, Luther. Although I grant that the literal sense, if it should ever be evident, is almost always the only one effective for proving anything; still, it often happens that a matter is expressed too obscurely for that single meaning to flash out from the ambiguous words, all the most learned men and the holiest of ancient theologians have usually ascertained various meanings, leaving the matter open for careful consideration. Doubtless they judged this was a safe procedure and the office, not of a sophist as you say, but of a sober theologian truly worthy of God.¹¹⁸ But this that you declare is the sole office of a theologian, those ancient and true theologians judged to be the role of a true and unadorned blockhead, and the rashness of a conceited scoundrel, who argues that an interpretation of scripture which is doubtful and disputed by learned men, or one contrived solely from his own understanding, is the only genuine interpretation. The wise man warns and reproaches this class of fools when he says: "Lean not upon thy own prudence, and do not wish to seem wise in your own eyes." But Luther, in his own eyes the only wise man, cries out:

I do not want you,¹¹⁹ Catharinus, to invoke long-standing usage and the multitude of those who agree with you. The word of Christ urges me in this matter; He alone must be believed before all the saints, even before the angels.

Without a doubt, Luther, Christ alone must be believed more than all the saints and all the angels. But since God speaks in His saints, according to the text: "It is not you who are speaking, but the Holy Spirit who speaks in you," since so many saints, so many learned men agree that the words of Christ were not spoken with that intention which you alone argue against so many saints, such learned men, then he who agrees with you does not, as you boast, agree with Christ, but contrary to the truth which God has inspired in so many of His saints, he agrees with the devil, the father of lies, who tries through you to pervert the truth. When, according to your habit, you distort the

¹¹⁷ Luther's words

¹¹⁸ What Luther calls the office of a sophist is above all that of a theologian

¹¹⁹ Luther's words

scripture, saying, “Of which of the angels has He ever said, ‘Hear this man?’” as though according to that text you ought to believe nothing that anyone else says, why do you not also remember the words which Christ Himself says to the apostles, and through them to other undoubtedly holy men on whom He deigned to pour out His Spirit: “He who hears you hears me”? It is abundantly evident that Christ breathed out His Spirit on the holy doctors of the church, whose teaching and life He has confirmed by many miracles. Therefore, even if not a single one, being human, has not at some time been in error, a thing which you also proclaim happened to the apostles themselves, nevertheless, when they have agreed on a point in such great numbers through so many ages, it must not be doubted that they reached this agreement by the inspiration of the divine Spirit who makes those who dwell in a house to be of one mind, and that when you despise their agreement and frequently blaspheme them, saying, “I do not care about a hundred Jeromes, I do not care about a thousand Cyprians, Augustines, Ambroses,” you are exposing yourself to the threats of Christ, who said: “He who despises you despises me.”

Because Catharinus agreed with him that it was indeed true that Christ is the true and solid rock and the true head of the church, but in such a way that Peter also is both rock and head of the church under Christ, Luther is exceedingly self-complacent and thinks that he plays the buffoon very wittily.

This blockhead¹²⁰ does not perceive that if my argument is granted as true according to any one interpretation, especially the spiritual one, which Catharinus does grant me, then clearly I have conquered even by the decision of my opponent.

Then the merry fellow continues to play the witty buffoon, proclaiming that he must philosophize dully before a dull and blear-eyed blockhead since an ass does not respond to a lyre; and so Luther, laying aside his lyre, plays lilingly with letters at Catharinus’ expense, and teaches him as he would a boy by means of the alphabet, as if he were about to prove the matter by a geometric demonstration. He writes as follows:

But if A should argue with B,¹²¹ and the matter should proceed to the point where A would grant that B had spoken very well and according to the

¹²⁰ Luther’s words

¹²¹ Luther’s words

spiritual meaning, but that he himself follows another outward meaning, and if, with this granted, A should nevertheless boast that he has conquered and confuted B, and should then celebrate the triumph entirely by railing, what will the spectator judge at this point? Will he not think that the Bacchae or the Corybantes are raging?

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Ha! Ha! He! Clever, neat, smart, Luther, incomparable! Catharinus is clearly done for. Everyone who hears this will die laughing. Now at last everyone is afraid of you. But please, Luther, in your kind indulgence allow us dullards to examine still more dully this demonstration of yours which you yourself admit is dull.

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Suppose, then, that A and B are disputing among themselves, and A should say that Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt, while B should utterly deny this. Then this B would say that God was the leader, and A would grant him that and admit that B speaks very well and very truly on this point, especially according to the spiritual meaning, and yet that what A himself says is no less true; namely, that Moses was the leader of the children of Israel. Now suppose that B, because A grants that what he says is true, especially according to the spiritual meaning, should boast that he has thereby conquered and should celebrate the triumph entirely by railing, what would the spectators judge at this point, Luther? Would they not judge that B is truly a beast? Would they not judge that this truly dull and blear-eyed blockhead was fit to be cudgelled?

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Now what is the nature of your words, “especially according to the spiritual meaning”? Recently you were saying that not the spiritual and mystical but only the literal meaning proves anything. But now suddenly, since Catharinus granted that it is true spiritually that Christ is the rock, but that in that passage of Matthew Christ was nevertheless not speaking about His own preeminence but about placing a vicar in charge of His flock, you immediately take a fancy to that spiritual meaning and prefer it to the literal for proving your point. From his granting that you speak the truth in some sense, especially in the spiritual sense, you conclude that he speaks falsely when by means of the decisions of the holy fathers he resists your distortion of the letter. Even if it is true, as it is, that Christ is most truly and firmly the rock, most truly the head of the church and most truly the foundation corner stone of the church who has made both one, nevertheless, in that passage Christ was not speaking about His own sovereignty but about substituting the primacy in His church.

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Not only do the saints testify and the Christian world agree to this, but even the sequence of the line itself seems to demonstrate it clearly; nor does the sense which you assign seem to fit very exactly. It is as though Christ were saying, “You are Peter, and therefore I shall build my Church upon myself.”

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“But,” you say, “there is only one meaning. Therefore, if my meaning is true, that of Catharinus is false.” You yourself do not deny that at times there is one sense that is mystical, another that is literal. You say that the second alone is effective as proof. This mystical sense, therefore, agreed on by almost all exegetes, Catharinus alleges for himself and grants to you as being not at all prejudicial to the literal sense. But at this point you start gibbering again and keep shouting:

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Catharinus,¹²² you do not deny that my argument is in some sense true; therefore yours is false. For if anything that I say is true, then everything that you say is false. You must either deny my arguments utterly and completely or you must grant that your own are utterly worthless.

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What a fair condition you offer, Luther! Did not Sinon in Virgil also say something true? And yet he cost the Trojans dear; allured by what was true they believed the lies that were patched on to it. Does one not refute you on any point unless he overthrows all your arguments completely and wholly? Therefore, if you mingle your utterly false teachings with the apostles’ creed, either one must deny whatever truth the apostles say or he must grant along with it whatever lies you tell. Oh, the shrewdness of Luther!

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But that is clearly an inescapable weapon and a charmed sword with which you transfix Catharinus in saying that even if Peter should have been authorized as primate of the church, nevertheless the pope could not be primate nor could he succeed Peter in office unless he succeeds Peter in conduct. Here you have the mastery, you laugh, you exult, you jeer, and ignoring all the holy men who have governed the holy see you swoop down like a raven and a vulture to feed only on decay; except that you usually gnaw like a rabid dog on all the most holy men and with your rotting teeth turn honey itself and an antidote into your own poison. But at the same time you maintain a profound silence about all the answers which Catharinus had previously given you on these arguments. He proved to you most clearly that the case of a man and his office, of conduct and authority, of

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¹²² Luther’s words

virtue and power is so distinct that, even though the heavenly life which God has promised to virtue is taken away from wicked and criminal men, nevertheless the earthly authority which God has joined to their office is not taken away. And so, Luther, if you wish to be thought a man, you should first leave off and answer these arguments of Catharinus. When you have answered him, not like an ape with gesticulation and nonsense, but with sound reason as becomes a man, then finally, at the Greek kalends, you may return and laugh. 5

Meanwhile, this laughter of yours is insane and madder than the laughter of Ajax; with it you pass over in silence and dissimulate the reasonings of your opponent and, as though you heard nothing, answer nothing, but only trifle and jeer like a senseless madman and consider yourself wonderfully witty when you jest and trifle and play the buffoon on the problem that if Peter, who was holy and virtuous, could be called a rock, anyone would be so foolish as to think that the name "rock" could fit a pope who does not reflect the virtues of Peter. What an intricate knot, and how difficult to untie it! Because of the steadfastness of Peter's faith, Christ made him the head and primate of His church, as a rock standing in His own place, not as though Peter were immortal and so could hold office forever, but many would successively follow him into that office, and these not all of equal merit. Since this is so, even if the name "rock" does not fit them, is the power of the office for that reason not the same? What if Christ had said: "Peter, because of your eminent virtues, I constitute you, a good and holy man, as the initial head of my church, so that you may be an example for the kind of men I wish to be appointed as your successors." Certainly, if his successor were the kind of man to whom one could apply neither the name of good nor that of holy, the same authority would nevertheless reside in the office. Unless no one was a priest in Israel after Moses and Aaron except one who equalled either of those men in sanctity; or unless no one would be a bishop who was not altogether the kind of man the apostle describes. Paul himself certainly submitted even to a wicked bishop; and of Caiphas the evangelist writes that even though he was unholy and ignorant; the spirit of prophecy was given him because of the office of the episcopacy. In fact, although Christ Himself calls the scribes and pharisees impious and wicked men who place heavy burdens on the shoulders of others which they themselves do not wish to touch with a finger, while at the same time living proudly and wickedly, nevertheless 10 15 20 25 30 35

Christ, as I have said, commanded the people to obey them on account of their office. How forceful also is the point which to you seems absurd: that the word “rock,” which usually signified a virtuous man, would sometimes apply to a man who is not virtuous.¹²³ I wish that you had a mind that would be balanced at least long enough for you to be able to weigh carefully the point which you ridiculously deride. Tell me, Luther, do you think that the name “rock” is holier than the name “Christ”? But the word “Christ” is applied even to an evil and wicked man; unless Luther considers David ridiculous for saying of Saul: “I have sinned in touching the Christ of the Lord.”

I am surprised at you, Luther, that you wish to appear the only one who has read the scriptures, and that you wish it to seem so novel if any figurative word occasionally applies to opposite things. I ask you whether or not giants are described in sacred scripture as proud and violent, and yet Christ Himself is called a giant? What about the serpent which so often in scripture indicates the devil? Did not the same animal when raised up in the desert represent Christ, even though, as I am aware, one of a most learned and holy group of theologians thinks that the serpent there also represents the devil, because when raised onto the cross of Christ, fixed there and dead, it lost its poison and power to harm? But to me it is a stronger argument that Christ applied this figure to Himself when He said:¹²⁴ “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up.” Now I think that there is no doubt that the word “lion” is applied more than once in scripture to the devil, and yet it is said nonetheless of Christ: “The lion of the tribe of Juda has overcome.” Are not the words “elect” and “apostle” holy names, and yet both of them were applied to your brother, Judas, even at the time when the name “devil” fitted him. Thus, you see how subtle you are when you argue that it is absurd to call anything a rock unless it is holy, although you see a man who is not holy called “Christ,” and a man who is a devil called an “apostle,” and the selfsame word applied to both God and the devil, and the representation of the same animal designating both the Savior and Satan. Go on now, Luther, and glory with your followers that you answer Ambrose Catharinus courageously and cleverly on the primacy of the pope.

¹²³ What is more ridiculous than this opinion?

¹²⁴ Did even Christ himself err here, Luther?

I had not intended, reader, to say anything at all in this passage on the power of the pope, nor was I so much drawn to this by the urge to teach how Luther is ever the same, as forcibly dragged here against my will by the fellow's confusing discussion in which he has so entangled the question of the church with the question of the pope that I could not answer him on the one without touching somewhat on both. But since he most insistently demands that the question of the identity of the church on earth be discussed, it was not my intention to leave untouched any of those arguments on the question which I had noticed that Luther, not without the help of a Theseus, had handled so subtly that in no other passage does he boast more frequently or more shamelessly. This also is his constant practice, always to triumph most boastfully in word when he sees himself most disgracefully overcome in actual fact. 5 10

When I was about to discuss the church, therefore, I would gladly have refrained not only from the question of the pope but also from any other teaching of Luther's, so far as the present subject would permit, in which I have undertaken to refute nothing but the trifling remarks with which the scoundrel stuffed the book in which he answers the prince. Among just and good men¹²⁵ his impious doctrines sufficiently refute themselves, and they have been fully disproved by many of the most learned men : by Prierias, Catharinus, Eck, Caspar, Cochlaeus, Emser, Radinus of Piacenza, Faber, and many others likewise. Partly through report, partly through my own reading, I perceive that these men have most skillfully exposed the fellow's madness with sound and true reasoning. The Reverend Father John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, a man distinguished for his wealth of learning and above all for the holiness of his life, has so exposed and exploded his assertions that if Luther has any sense of shame he will buy up now at a high price his assertions, consigned to the flames long ago by himself, in fact together with himself, rather than have the Christian world behold, to his deep and everlasting disgrace, his monstrous offspring and foul Erichthonius. Certainly, as far as the primacy of the pope is concerned, the same venerable bishop¹²⁶ rendered the matter very clear from the gospels, from the Acts of the Apostles, from the whole body of the Old Testament, from the agreement of all the holy fathers, not only the Latin but also the Greek, of 15 20 25 30 35

¹²⁵ Those who have refuted Luther on those points which the author mentioned above

¹²⁶ John Bishop of Rochester

whose extreme opposition Luther likes to boast, and finally from the fact that the Armenians and Greeks were defeated, and admitted themselves defeated, by definition of a general council after the most stubborn resistance. Consequently, I considered that I would be acting uselessly and opening a closed issue if I were to weave a fresh web of writing about the primacy of the pope. 5

I am moved to obedient submission to this See by all those arguments which learned and holy men have assembled in support of this point; moreover, I am indeed moved not least by a fact which we have so often noticed; that not only has no one been hostile to the Christian faith without at the same time declaring war on that See, but also there has never been anyone who declared himself an enemy of that See without shortly afterwards declaring himself also a notorious and foremost enemy and traitor both to Christ and to our religion.¹²⁷ I am also much moved by the consideration that if the faults of men should be imputed to their offices in this manner, not only will the papacy not endure but also royal power, and supreme magistracy, and the consulate and every administrative office whatever will fall into ruin and the people will be without a ruler, without law and order. If this should ever happen, and it seems to threaten in several places of Germany, then men will finally realize at great loss what a profound difference there is in human affairs between having even bad rulers and having no rulers. 10 15 20

Surely, as regards the pope, God who put him in charge of His church knew what an evil it would have been to have lacked a pope; and I do not think one should desire the Christian world to learn this by experience at its own risk. How much more should we desire¹²⁸ God to make such men popes as will befit the Christian commonwealth and the dignity of the apostolic office, so that, freely spurning riches and earthly honors, they may breathe a wholly heavenly spirit, promote piety among the people, procure peace and exercise the authority which they have received from God against the satraps and strong hunters of the world, pursuing with the most terrible punishments and delivering up to Satan anyone who either usurps another's authority or misuses his own. The Christian world would shortly realize, from one or two such pontiffs, how much more satisfactory it is for the popes to be 25 30 35

¹²⁷ That no one has resisted the Roman See who did not also throw off the yoke of Christ

¹²⁸ We should rather desire to have such a pontiff than throw out the pontificate

reformed than to be removed. Nor is there any doubt that Christ would long ago have been mindful of the pastor of His flock if the Christian people had preferred to pray for the salvation of their father rather than persecute him, and to cover the nakedness of their father rather than laugh at his exposure. But God, Luther, will not abandon His vicar. He will one day be mindful of him and is perhaps mindful of him now as He scourges the father by means of the anguish which he suffers from his most profligate son. For I think, Luther, that you are clearly the scourge of God, to the great good of that See, but to your own great harm. God will act as a devoted mother is wont, who when she has whipped her son wipes away his tears and, to satisfy the boy, immediately throws the hated rod into the fire.

But setting aside the question of the papacy, which I would not have dealt with in this passage if Luther had not intermingled it with his discussion of the church, let us come now to that whole stratagem of Luther's with which he boasts that he has overthrown the church of Christ from her foundation and by means of which he brags that Catharinus has been conclusively convicted of impiety and heresy. But you will see, reader, that, whereas in many other passages Luther has proved that he is impious and stupid, in this passage he has taken great pains lest he seem to have proved this fact more clearly elsewhere. And so he writes as follows:¹²⁹

First of all, as Catharinus admits, Christ is speaking about the rock and the church. Secondly, he will admit that Christ promises that the gates of hell will not prevail against her. Are these points clear, Catharinus? No beast, but Christ says them. Let this hold then, that the gates of hell do not prevail against either the rock or the church. But the gates of hell prevail whenever they force one into sin. Otherwise, you tell me what else it means for "the gates of hell to prevail." And the contrary holds also. "To be built upon a rock" is to grow in grace and good works, so that you can say that this is what it means for "the gates of Sion to prevail." Thus, 1 Peter 2 says: "Be you yourselves as living stones built thereon into a spiritual house." And Ephesians 2: "In Him you too are being built together into a dwelling place of God in the Holy Spirit." And, lest you escape from me, suppose that the pope or your rock or your church have an unformed faith; nonetheless, if he is not in charity he is subject to the power of the devil and to the gates of hell. Romans 8 says: "But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ." And in Matthew 7, those who had had an

¹²⁹ Luther's words

unformed faith and had worked miracles and had taught rightly, hear these words addressed to them: “Depart from me, you workers of iniquity.” I ask you, Catharinus, man, Italian, Thomist, to deign to listen here for a little while to the beast. Through these texts I force you to grant that he who is without charity is subject to the devil and does not belong to Christ, and that as a result the gates of hell have prevailed against him and have dominion over him as over a slave of sin. As Christ says in John 8: “Everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin.” Are not even these words clear enough? Or do you need here Origen, Chrysostom, or even the whole catalogue of the fathers? Finally, you also grant that the pope whom you call the rock, and those built upon this rock subject to his visible administration whom you call the church, do at times sin and have sinned. You grant this, do you not? In fact, if you would confess the truth, there is no more vicious race on earth than that which today adheres most obstinately to the pope; these especially are built upon him and for this reason are subject to the gates of hell and are the slaves of every crime. Answer now. Where is the most verbose farrago of this whole disputation of yours? Indicate to me the church, the rock against which the gates of hell do not prevail. Why do you not indicate it? Do you not hear, Catharinus? You will not indicate the pope, I know, or the papists. Which, then, will you indicate? Not any external church, still less the Roman. Because, if you listen to Christ, you will indicate only that church which is without sin; namely, the mistress of the gates of hell. No matter which one you indicate, it is uncertain whether or not she is in sin and subject to the gates of hell. If you indicate Rome, she herself will testify that she is a Lernian quagmire of crimes.

Therefore, I conclude against you, with demonstrative proof, that the words of Christ in Matthew 16 do not pertain to any one person, but only to the church built in the Spirit upon the rock, Christ, not upon the pope or upon the Roman church.¹³⁰ As soon as you indicate an unholy pope, so soon do you indicate not the rock or the church, but the sludge of sin and the synagogue of Satan. But since it could not be known even of Saint Peter, if he were present, whether he were holy and would remain without sin, it is therefore necessary that not even he is the rock, but only Christ is, who alone is and remains most certainly without sin, and with Him His holy church in the Spirit.

Let us return to the stipulated agreement. I have caught you in this one error, Catharinus, and I have fettered you with an unbreakable

¹³⁰ Which in Luther’s opinion is the rock upon which the church of Christ is built?

bond, whereby I proclaim you a convicted
 heretic,¹³¹ and, together with this great book
 of yours, condemned and cursed. Do you
 have anything to mutter here, Cathari-
 nus? Arise, man, Thomist, and crush this
 accursed beast which so suddenly not only answers all your fic-
 tions but also reduces them to nothing. Therefore, as this rock without
 sin, invisible and spiritual, is perceptible by faith alone, so also
 necessarily the church without sin, invisible and spiritual, is per-
 ceptible by faith alone; for the foundation should have a superstruc-
 ture of the same character as itself. Thus we say: "I believe in the holy
 catholic church." But faith is "the evidence of things that are not
 seen." Consequently, the words in Matthew, "Thou art Peter," are
 removed as far as possible from the papacy and its visible church. In
 fact, this text overthrows it from its foundation and makes it a
 synagogue of Satan.

Further, if by the "rock" were understood the pope, and by the
 "church built on the rock" were understood the congregation obedient
 to the pope, it follows that the pope is not a pope nor is the church
 a church. I will clearly demonstrate this as follows. The rock and the
 church ought to be without sin, not sub-
 ject to the gates of hell.¹³² But since no one
 on earth can certainly and infallibly be
 thus, and yet we ought to be certain about the rock and the church, it
 follows that there is no pope and no church.

Since, then, this authority of Christ opposes the pope and the
 papist church, it is plainly evident that the opinion of Catharinus and
 of his Thomas and of all his authorities is heretical in the utmost
 degree. For that man is a heretic who explains the holy scriptures in a
 sense different than the Spirit demands;
 but Catharinus not only does this along
 with his heretical Thomas,¹³³ but he even
 attributes to the scriptures a blasphemous sense by calling the rock a
 man of sin, a slave of the devil.

Behold, reader, the truly accursed beast of which the Apocalypse
 13 says: "Who is like to the beast, and who will be able to fight with
 it? And there was given to it a mouth speaking great things and
 blasphemies. And it opened its mouth for blasphemies against God,
 to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, and those who dwell in
 heaven. But the time will come when the beast shall be cast into the
 pool of burning fire and sulphur." Meanwhile, as God foresaw, it is

¹³¹ Are you allowed to declare against a good man what you say the pope is not allowed to declare against a heretic?

¹³² Therefore, Christ never built what he promised

¹³³ Thomas a saint, Luther a heretic

well that this unsubdued and accursed beast should always contradict himself. He admits that the church is certain, yet discusses her in such a way as to render her most uncertain; and he is not content to judge in a human manner; while pursuing and manifesting a kind of concealed and hidden wisdom, he reduces the palpable and commonly known church to an invisible one,¹³⁴ from an external to an internal one, from an internal one he utterly reduces her to no church at all, as you shall immediately see proved. 5

But first, Luther, to return with you to the first premise from which you deduce these splendid syllogisms: Christ promises that the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church; now, what if someone should deny that He promises that which you assume as manifest, namely, that the devil will not be so powerful that he can force the church into sin? But if we should say: "Prove this to us, Luther," what else will you answer but to ask of us in turn what else this text can signify? If it can signify anything else, you have said nothing until you have demonstrated by reason or by the scriptures that your interpretation is the truer one. And so, I say in the first place that the gates of hell do not signify the devil, for the gates of a house are not the same as its master, nor are the gates of hell the same as the devil. Christ, therefore, meant something different by this figurative language; and although it is true that the devil will not prevail against the faith of Peter or against the power given to Peter of binding and of loosing which has been passed on in an unbroken succession, and although Christ promised this elsewhere in more than one passage, nevertheless, in this passage, where He does not name Satan or hell, but the gates of hell, it may not be so probable that He was speaking of the devil as of someone else who would not prevail against His church; for I would say that the devil was not the gates of hell so much as the way to hell. 10 15 20 25 30

But if you ask what else the gates of hell can be besides Satan, I will present to you, not by my own contrivance but in accordance with the interpretation of the ancients, two kinds of gates:¹³⁵ one the rulers and sovereigns of the world who persecuted the infant church but did not prevail against her; the other gate, I say, is you and men like you, if there ever has been anyone like you, heretics and antichrists who amid the wheat of a unanimous 35

¹³⁴ To what point Luther reduces the church

¹³⁵ How those gates of hell mentioned by Christ are to be interpreted

and harmonious faith do not cease to sow the weeds of sects and schisms, who strive not only to rend the seamless robe of Christ but even to destroy His name and faith by craftily undermining it. For through heretics, as through the wide-open gates of hell, the wretches whom you deceive enter into hell. Yet the word of Christ will stand firm. However much you attack the church, you will not prevail against her. The church of Christ will stand firm before your raging and gnashing.

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You see here, my good fellow, that your excellent demonstration demonstrates nothing unless you first demonstrate that in this text Christ was designating by the gates of hell the devil; for the ancient writers interpreted them to mean those who persecuted the church physically, the tyrants, and those who assault her spiritually, you heretics. But now, suppose that we grant you that the gates of hell signify the devil; we could still deny your statement that in this passage the expression, “the gates of hell prevail,” has anything to do with sin; rather, Christ was promising that no wiles of the devil would be powerful enough to extinguish the faith of the church which He was committing to the care of Peter, or be able to impair his authority and power of binding and loosing; we see that this promise has been realized up till now.

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Although this statement is truer than truth itself, nevertheless, in order that you may perceive in many ways how you say nothing at all when you think you have spoken most prettily, we will grant you still more, if you wish: not only that the gates of hell signify the devil but this whole passage does pertain to sin. Yet even so I will deny that in these words of Christ the phrase, “to prevail,” means what you interpret; that is, that “to prevail” means to force into sin in some way. The gate of hell has not prevailed against everyone whom the devil has overthrown, but it prevails only against the man who is finally so completely overthrown that he cannot rise again to the fight. In warfare no one is said to be conquered who, though prostrate on the earth, still fights back and tries to rise again to the fight. Why, this is what the very name “gate” seems to show; unless one thinks that the name was thoughtlessly established. For the function of a gate is twofold: it either shuts out those who try to enter, or it confines those who are shut in and does not allow them to go out. But the gates hell do not shut out anyone, since to those who wish to enter, “the door of Pluto’s court lies open night and day; but to retrace one’s step

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and escape to the upper world, this is work, this is toil.” Accordingly, it is indeed clear that the gates of hell do not prevail against everyone whom the devil has allured but only against the one whom the devil holds so confined that he can never break out. He who forces his way out has prevailed against the gates. That the gates of hell do not prevail against everyone whom the devil casts into sin is indicated by this text: “The just man falls seven times a day.” It is clear, then, that the gates of hell prevail against no one except him whom they so enclose that he can never get out. Since this does not happen to anyone in the present life, it is clear that these words of Christ do not prevent even sinners being able to belong to the Church in this life.

Behold, my good man, your excellent demonstration! No part of it demonstrates anything else than your doltish and scurrilous impiety. For I have now indicated an interpretation of these words consonant with the opinions of ancient holy men and with the scriptures themselves which clearly refutes and disproves your interpretation. Now let me add this: that even if all those who have ever read the sacred writings should admit that they do not clearly understand what Christ meant in saying that the gates of hell would not prevail against His church, still, no one can be unaware of the fact that the meaning which you yourself allege is completely false and utterly contrary to the teaching of Christ.

To return from that scoundrel to you, honest reader, I ask you to consider this fact: Luther not only says in this argument that no one belongs to the church so long as he is in sin—this statement alone would be false and impious—he makes the far more impudent and impious statement that one who belongs to the church does not sin, indeed, cannot sin. For he says that “the gates of hell shall not prevail” is the same as “not to be able to force one into sin”; from which it clearly follows that those who once belong to the church can never be forced into sin and that those who have been forced into sin have never belonged to the church. In case you doubt that he means precisely this, nothing else at all is expressed in those famous deductions in which the swine syllogizes filthily as follows:¹³⁶

That which does not yield to the gates of hell is the church built upon the rock. But the sect of the popes yields to the gates of hell. Therefore the sect of the popes is not the church.

¹³⁶ Luther’s words

“To yield to the gates of hell” he terms nothing other than “to sin,” which he declares in another syllogism, thus:

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Every church which sins yields to the gates
of hell. But the church of the papists sins.
Therefore the church of the papists yields to the gates of hell

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You see here, reader, that he clearly says that the church which sins is not the church of Christ, and he makes no distinction whatever as to the sin but quite simply asserts that the gates of hell prevail against one whom they have forced into any sin whatever. Since he says this, he clearly asserts that every sin is mortal and that those who belong to the church cannot be forced into any sin at all and that those who are forced into sin did not belong to the church even before they were forced into sin. If anyone still doubts that this is his opinion, let him consider also the following statement.

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As soon as you point out an unholy pope,
so soon have you pointed out not the
rock nor the church but the sludge of sin and the synagogue of Satan.

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At the same time consider the severity of this censor in whose judgment it is not enough for a man to be moderately virtuous but he must be either wholly a saint or wholly Satan. In presenting syllogisms such as that, he offers at this point an opportunity to draw a conclusion about himself, since it is not so very difficult to prove that he is not a saint; he himself has thereby deduced the logical conclusion: that he is the sludge of sin and the sanctuary of Satan. But let us leave his sanctity in the sludge of Satan; consider, reader, what follows.

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Since it could not be known even of
Saint Peter, if he were present, whether he
was a saint and would remain without sin, it is therefore necessary
that not even he is the rock

Luther says the same thing of the rock as he says of the church, for he says that the rock and the church, the foundation and the building, should be of the same character.

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As this rock, namely Christ, is without
sin, even so it is necessary that the church
also be without sin, for the foundation should have a building of the
same character as itself.

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It is necessary that Christ alone be the
 rock since it is most certain that He alone
 is and remains without sin, and together with Him His holy church
 in the Spirit.

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What does he say about her? That it is most certain that she is and she is and
 remains holy, since she is of the same character as her rock; and so he
 argues it is certain that, whatever she may be, she both is and remains
 holy, but that it is not certain concerning any man whether he belongs
 to her. And so you see clearly from these passages and from his state-
 ment that those who belong to the church cannot be forced into sin,
 that Luther openly asserts that Christians belong to the church only
 on condition that they are not only holy but also will remain holy; for
 otherwise not even while they are saints do they constitute the church.
 If Saint Peter were still living, it would be uncertain whether he were
 the rock, not only because it would be uncertain whether he were
 holy but also because it would be uncertain whether he would
 remain holy.

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I ask you, reader, when he says this, what church does he leave on
 earth? Does he not completely abolish every church, external and in-
 ternal, visible and invisible, spiritual and physical? What man is
 anywhere who does not sin? Who is so spiritual that the weak-
 ness of the flesh is utterly lacking in him? Who has so much of the
 divine spirit that the devil never prevails on him to any extent? Have
 we not all sinned and do we not all need the grace of God? Is it not a
 fact that if we say we do not have sin, the truth is not in us?

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Now I am wondering about this: where during all this time has that
 famous teaching of Luther's fled, that the just man, even by doing
 good, commits sin? If this is not true, as well as that statement which
 he defended for so long with such great effort, "that every good work
 is a sin," it surely follows either that there is no church at all on earth
 or that his statement that she does not sin is so false that on the con-
 trary she of necessity sins entirely and sins incessantly. With the one
 teaching he abolishes all indifferent actions; whatever anyone belong-
 ing to the church does must be either a good or an evil action. In the
 case of an evil act there is no doubt that one sins; but if he sins even in
 every good work, who does not see that it follows of necessity that
 there is no one in the church who does not sin incessantly? So far are

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¹³⁷ Luther's words

those who form the church from not yielding to the gates of hell, if, as this fellow says, to yield to the gates of hell be nothing else than to sin in any manner whatever. There is no one who does not yield in this way.

But I almost divine what he means. He means, I think, that every single good work is a sin because it can be the occasion of pride, and on the other hand every bad work is a virtue because it is the occasion of humility; and since every kind of evil may be done by the faithful—I mean the faithful with a faith not unformed as is the papist faith but with a faith formed according to the form which Luther teaches, that is, by trusting firmly that no sin can damn a Christian except lack of faith alone—then that evil, whatever kind it may be, if his faith remains firm or returns, is swallowed up in faith, without satisfaction, without contrition, without confession; unless someone should wish, as he says, for the sake of consolation to confess to women. Even these Luther consecrates as our priests. To Luther, then, all good works are sins; and yet his church has no sins, for not only are sins not imputed to her but they are even rewarded. “For to the just all things work together unto good”; and so the good works of the papists, vigils, alms, prayers, chastity, fastings and other works of that kind are nothing else but unmixed sins because of weak faith, by reason of which they do not trust that faith alone without works suffices; but the evil works of the Lutherists, drunkenness, adultery, robbery, blasphemy, and in fine a whole catalogue of such evils, because of their firm faith, by reason of which they trust firmly that faith alone suffices and that there is no need of good works, are nothing else but unmixed virtues. The Lutheran church, therefore, does not need to make supplication on behalf of their sins, because they do not sin. The church of Christ, on the other hand, which Luther argues cannot sin, is taught by Christ Himself that her sins must be expiated by prayers: “And she cries out daily, ‘Forgive us our trespasses.’”

Now if Luther were saying that out of this common multitude of Christians who repeatedly sin and repeatedly rise from sin, only those form the church, not who never sin—for there are none such—but who are without sin, even though they have sinned often and often will sin, and that in this life these same men through a frequent change now belong to the church, now do not belong to the church, having been driven out of it by their sin, however slight, even though they are not banished by any human decree, he would still be talking

nonsense. When we ask which is that church by whose authority Luther admits that the sacred scriptures have been committed to us, will he say that it is only those who are without sin? That those who are in sin must not be believed at all, for during such time they are not of the church? According to this reasoning we would, on a particular matter, believe the same man today, not believe him tomorrow, believe him at sunrise, not believe him at sunset. Or rather, indeed, we would not believe anyone at all, for we could not know of other men which one was in sin, which was out of it, since no one may be sure even concerning himself whether he is worthy of hatred or love. Luther rails against the bishops because they so readily excommunicate Christians, whereas he himself excommunicates everyone still more readily, since he casts out of the church on the spot anyone who has sinned in any manner whatever. 5 10

Who would not wonder at Luther's judgment on this point, when he sees that Luther's brother, Judas the traitor, even after his crime was plotted and perpetrated, still nevertheless belonged to the church so long as he lived was not expelled from the apostleship, although he was called a devil by the mouth of Christ Himself. But Luther, an eminently just man, not only expels his brother Judas from the church after his sin but does not admit either him or Saint Peter into the church, even before he sinned. If they had previously belonged to the church, the gates of hell could not, so he argues, have forced them into sin. Therefore, if Luther is speaking truly, Saint Peter did not belong to the church even at the time that Christ said to him, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar Jona," and, "Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my church." For the gates of hell later prevailed against him, if "to prevail" is, as Luther says, to force into sin. For a little later, Peter advised Christ not to endure suffering and heard from Him: "Get behind me, Satan." Later also he denied his Lord three times. Therefore, if the gates of hell prevail against all those who sin, yet no one does not sin exceedingly if Luther's doctrine is true, then it is clear that there is no church at all on earth. 15 20 25 30

But it is worth observing how feebly he poses to himself the objection of the absurdity that would follow if the church were nothing but a kind of spiritual entity and her whereabouts could not be known; and how much more feebly he solves that self-posed objection. 35

But¹³⁸ you will say: If the church is wholly
 in the spirit and a thing altogether
 spiritual, then no one will be able to know the whereabouts of any
 part of her in the whole world; a thing which is extremely absurd. The
 reason we claim a pope is that the church may be found in a definite 5
 place. Otherwise, why does Christ teach that His sheep should be fed,
 and Paul that the church should be ruled, and Peter that the flock of
 Christ should be fed, if the faithful can never be discovered dwelling
 bodily in definite places on the earth? Who would preach to spirits;
 or what spirit preaches to you? The church, therefore, will necessarily 10
 possess a body and a location, and then among these latter, some
 principal location and principal body.

You have heard, reader, how feebly he poses this objection to him-
 self as though the church should be recognized only in order that one
 can know to what congregation the gospel is being preached, whereas 15
 on the contrary the church needs to be recognized much more so that
 one can know by whom the gospel is being preached, so that if
 different persons preach different things, the authority of the church
 may give the listener certainty as to the true preacher of the gospel
 and reject the false one, just as her authority, even by Luther's 20
 admission gives the reader certainty as to the identity of the true
 scriptures.

As for the objection he poses to himself as though it were from us,
 namely that one should recognize where the church can be found so
 that there may be a definite congregation of Christ to whom the 25
 gospel should be preached, I do not know who but he would have
 posed that objection to him, since no one but he is so dull-witted as not
 to understand that the word of God must be preached even outside
 the church of Christ and that anyone who should preach it to un-
 believers would be doing a good work. Otherwise, the apostles would 30
 have acted wrongly in spreading the faith among the gentiles by their
 preaching.

But hear how, after so feebly posing this very objection, he solves it
 still more feebly.

I¹³⁹ answer: Although the church lives in 35
 the flesh, nevertheless she does not live
 according to the flesh, as Paul says in Galatians I, and Corinthians I.
 Thus, with the attribute of location she engages in the activities and
 works of the world, but she is not valued according to them. For Christ

¹³⁸ Luther's words

¹³⁹ Luther's words

does away with all place when He says: “The kingdom of God comes unawares, and they will not say it is here or there”; and, “Behold, the kingdom of God is within us.” Paul does away with all body when he says: “With God there is no respect of persons.” As the church does not exist in this life without food and drink, and yet the kingdom of God does not consist of food and drink, according to Paul, so the church does not exist without place and body, and yet body and place do not constitute the church and are not proper to her. Therefore, as it is not necessary for the church and all the faithful to have particular food, particular drink, particular clothing, although they cannot live in this world without food, without drink, without clothing, but all things are optional and indifferent, so it is not necessary to have a particular place and a particular person, although she cannot exist without place and person, but all things are indifferent and optional: every place suits the Christian, and no place is necessary for the Christian; every person can feed him and no particular person is necessary to feed him; for here reigns liberty of spirit, which makes all corporal and earthly things indifferent, none of them necessary.

And why should this be strange, since in order to exist as a man you do not require from a physical aspect any particular place, any particular person, but you can be a man in any place and with any person. Indeed, what earthly thing clings and is bound by necessity to any other; does not everything rather relate freely and indifferently to everything else, so that the whole of creation appears full of the liberty of the spirit, as we sing: “The heavens and the earth are full of thy glory.” What, then, is the madness of the utterly impious papists that they bind to particular and necessary persons and places the church of God, which of all things is most free as to its place and person. Thus they say that a man is not a Christian who has not adored this pope, even though impious, dwelling in this place. Nor is it of any use for a man to have indifferently any pastor he chooses in any place he chooses. This is that abomination standing in the holy place and the working of error. But of this elsewhere.

I ask you, reader, have you ever heard the like? To pass over the scriptural texts cited so absurdly that nothing more absurd can be alleged, does he not handle this argument as though we were demanding that a particular place be assigned to the church in such a way that the church cannot exist in any other place? But I ask you: Who ever thought that the location of the church had to be so definite that he thought there was some place in which the church could not take

root, since, on the contrary, we believe that someday there will be not a place on earth in which the church will not exist, when the time shall have come in which there will be formed one flock and one shepherd.

Secondly, he treats the question of the pontifical office as though those who maintain the primacy of the pope judge that the pope is head of the church as a Roman, not as the successor of Peter; whereas everyone knows that the see referred to has been in other places at other times. And although God seems to have chosen the city of Rome, as the most renowned place in all the world, nevertheless no one of those who maintain the primacy of its see has any doubt that wherever the see of Peter may be transferred, there also would be transferred the authority of Peter. But neither does anyone doubt, even if it is true that there is no place in the whole world where there cannot be a congregation of the faithful, that there must still necessarily be some place in which a definite church may be recognizable and certain. Otherwise no one could be certain which are the true scriptures, nor could any one know where to turn who, as yet an unbeliever, wishes to be instructed in the faith and to learn thoroughly the Christian teachings.

But now it will be worth while to consider carefully the scriptural passages which he has cited above in support of his position, as though ready to prove clearly from them that the church militant on earth has not been recognized in this palpable and perceptible church, but in some other multitude of Christians, somehow imperceptible and mathematical—like Platonic Ideas—which is both in some place and in no place, is in the flesh and is out of the flesh, which is wholly involved in sins and yet does not sin at all. This fellow posits each proposition with equal force when he claims that every good work is a sin and considers the church as men who do not sin. But now let us carefully consider his scriptural texts.

Paul,¹⁴⁰ he says, states in Galatians I and Corinthians I that, although the church lives in the flesh, nevertheless she does not live according to the flesh.

I ask you, Luther: Do you call an occasional act of sin “living according to the flesh”? Certainly whoever has any sense will say that living according to the flesh refers not to one who, while struggling against the flesh and trying to serve the spirit, nonetheless

¹⁴⁰ Luther's words

yields occasionally to the flesh and is overcome by the condition of human frailty, but rather to one who, seeking pleasure, surrenders himself as a slave to the flesh and devotes his life to the works of the flesh.¹⁴¹ This, Luther, and not an occasional act of sin, is “living according to the flesh.” Consequently, the church does not live according to the flesh, even if no one lives in such a way as not to need to pray constantly that his sins may be forgiven him. And yet there are those in the church who do live according to the flesh; they will not be in the church when she will live in heaven; in the meantime the apostle frequently warns and chides these men. In the epistle to the Corinthians he even cast out the man who had dishonored his stepmother, and afterward receives the penitent back again. And yet at same man belonged to the church after the commission of his crime until the apostle cast him out.

Then, how valid is your statement that Christ does away with every kind of place when He says: “The kingdom of heaven comes unawares. Neither will they say, ‘Behold, here it is,’ or, ‘Behold, there it is.’” You often protest that Catharinus speaks in equivocations, and yet you deride distinctions so that you may be free to sport with equivocations. What is farther from the point at issue than this text of scripture which speaks of Christ’s coming for judgment when He shall exalt the church to heaven; whereas our inquiry is about the church which now sojourns on earth? But how much more absurdly you quote: “The kingdom of God is within you,” which undoubtedly refers to any good and genuinely Christian heart; within which there is not, in my opinion, the church which is the congregation of the faithful.

Of similar force is your statement that Paul does away with every kind of body when he says: “With God there is no respect of persons”; as if, because God called the church to the faith from among both Jews and Greeks, God therefore did not place the person of Peter, nor of Christ Himself, in charge of the church; and as if, because with God there is no respect of persons, the multitude of Christians is therefore not the church; and as if, because God receives man into heaven, not through regard to his person, but through regard to his merit, no one is therefore bound while on earth to obey his superiors.

When Luther began writing, he promised that he would prove his

¹⁴¹ What “living according to the flesh” means

arguments either by evident scriptures or by evident reason, or by the interpretation of the holy fathers, or by the decrees of the pontiffs; later he was driven to such a degree of madness that he contemned the interpretation of holy men as deceptive, he spurned natural reason as opposed to faith and religion, he burned the laws and decrees of the popes because they opposed his own heresies; now, in order not to admit that he has held on to nothing, he boasts that he believes only in the scriptures; and yet, examine the scriptural texts that he cites and consider the passages carefully; I have no doubt that you will easily perceive that he contradicts the decrees of the popes less than he does the scriptures themselves, and that he contradicts the scriptures less than he contradicts common sense. Tell me, Luther, what sort of reasoning is the following:

If place and person are necessary¹⁴² for salvation, then those who possess and venerate this sort of thing are the saved and the saints. In these matters the conclusion from a particular is of the utmost validity, since it is established by posterioristic propositions; for I am forced to show off my dialectic also to these admirable dialecticians. It is impossible that he who has the one thing necessary for salvation does not also have at the same time everything that is necessary for salvation. And it is impossible that he who does not have the one thing should have anything necessary for salvation. This is very easy to prove inductively. But of this elsewhere.

When you will prove this elsewhere, Luther, we will answer you elsewhere. Meanwhile, I suspect that there is not a man of sense who does not clearly see that you are without sense, unless the apostle did not have much sense; for he too considered faith necessary for salvation when he said: "Without faith it is impossible to please God"; and yet he does not agree with you that whoever would have the faith which he declared necessary for salvation would by that very fact have the charity which he deemed even more necessary than faith for salvation. If he had thought that charity followed immediately on the possession of faith, why did he write the following: "If I have faith so that I can remove mountains but have not charity, I am nothing"? But of course the reason for this was that Luther had not yet been born at that time to show off his dialectic and to be able to teach the apostle that such a conclusion from a particular is valid because it is established by posterioristic premises. But of this elsewhere.

¹⁴² Luther's words

Because it is certain, then, that it is uncertain who are good men, it follows that this multitude which constitutes the catholic church, this church, I say, from which the faith is learned and the scripture determined, is the common multitude of those who profess the name and faith of Christ, even though their life may not correspond to their profession. Now this is so true, reader, that not even Luther, who readily conceals whatever he cannot solve, could keep silent. For he admits that the church should be known for certain. But, lest he be forced to admit likewise the truth that the church is this multitude which we all know now by the name of the Christian people, almost all of whom acknowledge the primacy of the pontiff, he turns every stone and gives some signs of his spiritual church through which he would have her rendered sufficiently well known; all these signs are not enough to render sufficiently well known the church he describes, and they all apply to this very church which he says is not true and which he calls papist. Thus, he is doubly foolish, since he neither arrives at the goal toward which he strains so mightily, and he falls into the position which he is above all trying to escape. For he makes the following statement:

If by the rock is understood the pope,¹⁴³ and by the church built on it is understood the congregation obedient to the pope, it follows that the pope is not a pope, nor is the church a church; which I clearly prove thus: The rock and the church ought to be without sin, not subject to the gates of hell. But since no one on earth can certainly and infallibly be thus, and yet the rock ought to be certain and the church certain, it follows that there is no pope and no church.

You see, reader, how he here admits that not only the rock but also the church ought to be certain. But incidentally I ask you to consider this statement very carefully. Does he not here clearly reason to a conclusion which, if it were as evidently true as it is evidently false, would abolish not only this church which he endeavors to assault but every church altogether insofar as it is earthly? Suppose any church you will, Luther, and by means of this single reasoning of yours I will twice prove that it is no church; which, to use your words, I clearly prove thus: The church ought to be without sins, not subject to the gates of hell. But since no one on earth can certainly and infallibly be thus, and yet the church ought to be certain, it therefore follows that there is no church.

¹⁴³ Luther's words

You see, Luther, that this brilliant argument of yours attacks your adversary less than it attacks you; indeed it does not attack him at all, whereas it stabs you to the heart. We, who say that it is not necessary for the church while she is fighting on earth to be without sin, are in a position of safety; but you, who judge that this is necessary, and yet admit that no one is without sin, and who declare that even good works are sins and that the just man sins by doing good works, you, I say, even if the church did not need to be certain, are nevertheless clearly convicted of having abolished every church from the whole earth; which, to use your words again, I clearly prove thus: The church ought to be without sin, but no one is without sin, therefore there is no church. Disentangle yourself from this web, Luther, in which your stupidity has entangled you.

But this is incidental, since I had no other intention than to show that even Luther admits that the church ought to be known for certain. I return, then, to my exposition of the signs by which Luther tries to render certain that internal, spiritual, and hidden church which he defines as the only church. He writes as follows:

By what signs,¹⁴⁴ therefore, shall I recognize the church, for some sensible sign should be given by which we may be gathered together into one to hear the word of God? I answer: A sign is necessary, and we have it; namely, baptism, the bread, and above all the gospel. These are the three signs, tokens, and marks of Christians. Where you see baptism and the bread and the gospel, in whatever place, among whatever persons, there you will undoubtedly find the church. For on these signs Christ wishes us to agree, as Ephesians 4 says: "One faith, one baptism, one Lord." Where there is the same gospel, there is the same faith, hope, the same charity, the same spirit, and in fact everything is the same. This is the unity of the spirit, not of place, not of person, not of things, not of bodies, for the preservation of which Paul commands us to be anxious. But where you do not see the gospel (as we see in the synagogue of the papists and Thomists), there you may know without a doubt that the church does not exist, even if they baptize and partake of the altar, unless you except children and simple folk; but you may know that Babylon is there, full of sorceresses, satyrs, owls, ostriches, and other monsters; that is, stuffed with our unusual teachers. For the gospel, before the bread and baptism, is the single most certain and most excellent sign of the church, since through the gospel alone is she conceived, formed, nourished, begotten, brought up, fed, clothed,

¹⁴⁴ Luther's words

adorned, strengthened, armed, preserved; in short, the whole life and being of the church is in the word of God, as Christ says: "Man lives by every word which proceeds from the mouth of God."

I am not speaking of a written gospel but of a spoken one; not about just any sermon preached from the pulpit in the churches, but about the genuine and authentic word which teaches the true faith of Christ, not a misshapen and Thomistic faith; the word which, having been snuffed out and suffocated by the pope and the papists, has fallen silent throughout the world. It was for this reason that Christ required nothing of His apostles with so much insistence as that they preach the gospel. Thus He required of Peter as representative of all the shepherds that he should feed the sheep; that is, teach the gospel with the living voice.

Catharinus explains this expression, quite Catharinally, as not referring to the gospel, fashioning once more from the simple meaning of Christ's words as many meanings as he pleased, because he knew that the meaning, "preaching the gospel," which is the sole meaning of that expression, could not fit a pontiff burdened with so many worldly preoccupations, so that another meaning had to be contrived referring to the ruling power, according to the prediction of II Peter 2: "And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you." I now pass over this matter, since I have treated it fully elsewhere.

What do you say, reader? Has not the honored doctor now extricated himself neatly? Has he not clearly rendered his church well known? He assumes that the church consists only of good men; he says that that congregation is known for certain by means of these three signs, baptism, the bread, and the gospel; yet not a written gospel, for the papists also have that, but a spoken one; nor yet just any sermon such as is preached from the pulpit in the churches of the papists; rather, he is speaking of the authentic and genuine word such as teaches the true faith of Christ, not a misshapen Thomistic one, but this Lutheran one; namely, that faith alone suffices without good works, and that nothing can damn a man but lack of faith alone because all sins are swallowed up by faith, and that no laws bind any Christian, and that there is no freedom of will but that the divine goodness is the necessary cause of human malice, and a thousand articles of this sort which the pope and the papists throughout the whole world are falsely trying to snuff out. Certainly by such preaching the church of the wicked is known for certain.

But in the first place, who will not commiserate with the miserable lot of us whom you deride as madmen like Margites and Coroebus, and whom you mock wittily at will, so long as you have persuaded yourself that no papist in his stupidity can detect the most obvious contradictions of a potist? First you say that the church should be certain so that it can be known for certain where the gospel should be preached, for you say that it ought not to be preached, nor can it resound except for in the church; from which you see the consequence that the church must be recognized before the gospel may be preached. Next, you say that the sole sign by which the church is recognized with certainty is the preaching of the gospel, for you admit that the rest of the signs are possessed by the papists also, among whom you say that the church does not exist. From this assumption of yours it follows that the gospel ought to be preached before the church can be recognized, since such preaching according to you is the sole sign by which the church is recognized for certain. You see then, O most prudent father, who never contradict yourself, how consistently and carefully you join two mutually contradictory propositions; namely, that the church must be recognized before the gospel may be preached, and that the gospel must be preached before the church may be recognized.

Now, distinguished doctor and most proficient posteriorist, since you demonstrate the certainty of the church from the certainty of the gospel and vice versa demonstrate the certainty of the gospel from the certainty of the church, please inform me by what posterioristic rule the posterior premise in this posterioristic demonstration of yours follows from the prior premise. For if you think you have sufficiently explained this as soon as you enjoin that one must first get a sure knowledge of the identity of the true church so that the gospel may be preached to her alone, and then again when men inquire about the church hold that she is known for certain through the preaching of the gospel, either you necessarily have a different posterioristic premise than everyone else has had up till now, or you are poorly practiced in posterioristics. For since you still leave uncertain to whom the gospel must be preached, and since you do not consider the gospel true unless it is preached to some persons or other whom you do not sufficiently specify, but conceive in your mind like Platonic Ideas, even when we seek to know it by your method of demonstration, the chariot will return to the starting point; and if we undertake a

hundred times over to make this inference, we will always return to the same propositions by one way or the other, like the mazes of a labyrinth, and we will say that we recognize the gospel because we recognize the church, then that we know her because we know the gospel, then again that we know the gospel because we know the church. And so, fenced in continually by these barricades, when we seek an exit and desire to reach a definite goal at last, we are forced to return to the same place; that is, the posterioristic premise of the honored Doctor. Since he has written that he already has a prior right to bespatter and besmirch the royal crown with shit, will we not have the posterior right to proclaim the beshitted tongue of this practitioner of posterioristics most fit to lick with his anterior the very posterior of a pissing she-mule until he shall have learned more correctly to infer posterior conclusions from prior premises?

When a fellow declares that he is certain about the church because he is certain about the true gospel, but that he is certain about the gospel because he is certain about the church, and again that he is certain about the church from the gospel and yet that the church must first be sought so that the gospel may be preached to her alone, but that she cannot be discovered except through the preaching of the gospel, who would not believe that this fellow is either raving mad himself or that he thinks absolutely everyone else raving mad, since he has no consideration as to what, among whom, against whom, where, when, or how he blathers, but without any occasion or reason blurts out unthinkingly whatever fills his cheeks and, like the Cynics, hurls out any abuse whatever against any person whatever, if anyone has so much as dared to open his mouth against his whims, even the most absurd?¹⁴⁵

But tell me, Luther, do you think you are in your right mind when you describe the true church; that is, according to you a church consisting only of good men and of those who are without sin and will remain without sin; that is, also according to you, a church of no men, since you assert that no one is without sin? But I pass over this matter.

Suppose that these statements of yours are both true: that there is some church on earth and that no one belongs to it unless he is without sin; and that no one is without sin. Nevertheless, as I have said,

¹⁴⁵ A fit retort for the man who threatens to bespatter kings with shit

since you will have it so, suppose there is on earth a church composed of such men as are nowhere on earth. Do you think now that this church of yours, consisting of good and sinless men, is sufficiently certain and evident by these three signs: baptism, the bread and the true preaching of the gospel? In the first place, these three signs of yours are clearly in our church, which you call the church of the papists. For, concerning baptism and the bread, not even you doubt that we have these two, and so you say that the third sign is far more certain; namely, the true preaching of the gospel; this you absolutely deny that we have. But we interpret and preach the gospel according to the mind of the holy fathers; and so, if they preached truly, then there is true preaching even in this church, no member of which, you say, belongs to the true church, unless one perhaps excepts children and simple folk.

You do not assert outright that children and simple folk are cast out of the church of Christ although they belong to the church of the pope, that is, according to you, to the synagogue of Satan; and yet you allow them to be excepted from those who do not belong to the church of Christ, considering that they are perhaps without sin and will also remain without sin; and so they are numbered in the church of Christ even without what you call the true gospel, which you posit as the single most certain sign of the church and which you argue exists nowhere in the church of the pope to which these simple folk and children belong, since we papists in carefully considering the meaning of the sacred scripture walk in the footsteps of the holy fathers. But you alone preach the gospel truly, and before you no one did so. For you carefully weigh the scriptures and rely on yourself alone in regard to their meaning; nor do you rely on any of the holy fathers, knowing that, however holy they were, they were nevertheless men and often erred, as you often proclaim; whereas all the while you know, I suppose, that you are not a man at all, but you are certain that you have your doctrine from heaven, and you are certain that you can err no more than an ass—I meant to say an angel.

But I would like to ask you this, Luther: by what sign do you determine that the interpretation of scripture which seems right to you is truer than that which you see has seemed right to such numerous, such learned, and such holy fathers? You answer: from a comparison of texts. Did they then not compare texts? Do you think that they lacked such reason and judgment as now superabound in

you, whereas they followed right method, while you strive almost to destroy it? But God has of course opened to your seeking, according to the text: "Seek and you shall receive," for you are accustomed to boast that you are certain you have your teaching from heaven; spiritual man that you are, you have, of course, sought with sure confidence that the twofold spirit of Elias might be breathed into you, a man into whom it is clear that several myriads of evil spirits have thrust themselves. Why, therefore, do you think that the holy fathers either lacked good will or did not implore the help of God or did not have trust in God? If you argue that God is indicating to you at the present time so many, such useful, such necessary truths, why should you think that He concealed all these truths for such a long time from such holy men to the great detriment of His whole church? But He did not conceal them, Luther. Rather, God opened their eyes and responded to their humility, whereas, rejecting your arrogance, He allows you to appear wise in your own eyes, so that, together with the philosophers whom you so often deride, while saying that you are wise, you may become foolish and vanish in your own reflections; and everyone likewise may grow foolish and vanish with you who, in the matter of virtue and faith, instead of preferring to risk his soul with so many troops of saints who he does not doubt are in heaven, would rather do so with a single blasphemous buffoon whom only a blind man does not see rushing headlong to hell.

Therefore, Luther, if it is true, as you say, that wherever there are these three, baptism, bread, and the true word of God, there undoubtedly is the true church, because the sign of the word, so you say, cannot possibly resound except in the church through the Holy Spirit, then certainly, since the true gospel has been written in our church and the holy fathers have truly interpreted it, and many men read this same written gospel to us in the churches that you call papist, and preach it according to the interpretation of the holy fathers, it necessarily follows, also according to you, that that is true which you so vehemently deny: that this church which you call papist is truly the catholic church of Christ.

But I also ask this of you: If the church has not existed during this whole time among these people who obey the pope and have so long obeyed him, tell me where has it been these past five hundred years before you were born? For now of course you have been sent down, a new offspring from high heaven, to establish a church of evil men in

good (and before your time incorrupt) Saxony. Both Saxony and all Germany, if you speak the truth, have till now been outside the church, and all their ancestors have descended into hell. The truth is that in heaven the latter now call down a curse upon you, who through malice try to turn away their posterity from following them there.

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But since we have proved as a consequence from Luther's position that if his signs make the church certain it is necessarily certain that the true church is the one which he calls false, we may now consider how cleverly he sets up these three signs as infallible marks of the true church. You remember, Luther, that you posit a church consisting only of men so holy that they are without sin. Come then, set before us any congregation you will, and since it has pleased you to play with letters and to argue by means of A and B as by proofs when you say you must philosophize dully with a dull and phlegmatic block-head and thus make your deduction: "If A should dispute with B," and so on with your brilliant inference; in the same manner we dull and phlegmatic fellows shall set forth a proposition for your thin and shiny black bile. So, then, you be A; your hearers B, C, D; let there be someone who longs to be certain about some true church, which he is persuaded is none other than that which is without sin, and let him have heard that this church can be recognized with certainty by three signs: baptism, the bread, and the true preaching of the gospel. But to proceed by means of letters: let this man be E, if you will. Suppose, then, that E comes into the church of A, B, C, D, who he knows have been baptized and who he perceives have received the eucharist; let him moreover hear A himself preaching the gospel in his usual manner before B, C, D; and suppose, by an impossibility, that the preaching which A preaches is true and sincere preaching. Would E know for certain from these signs that A, B, C, D, are the true church, according as he understands the true church; that is, that A, B, C, D should be good men and without sin. And I answer, "No"; which, to use your words, I clearly prove thus. Either E himself knows the scriptures and teachings of the Christian faith and comes in order to hear again teachings which he knows and to increase his devotion by hearing them frequently, or he does not yet know those things, but, having heard the name of Christ, is seeking the church from which he may thoroughly learn the faith. If he knows the scriptures and the teachings of the Christian faith, then E will

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know for certain that this church of A, B, C, D, cannot be known for certain through these signs. For he is still uncertain whether A, B, C, D, are good or evil. For they can dissimulate vices as well as simulate virtues. He will recognize, moreover, that there can be good preaching among wicked men, as Christ Himself often preached to the Scribes and Pharisees; and that the truth can be preached not only by a wicked man but even by the devil; and he will recognize as utterly false your statement that the true word cannot resound except in the true church, such as is without sin; unless the prophet is lying when in the name of God he says: "But God said to the sinner, 'Why do you profess my covenant with your mouth?'" Or unless the devil spoke falsely when through the mouth of a raving madman he confessed that Christ is the Son of God.

You see, therefore, Luther, that if E should understand the scriptures and doctrines of the Christian faith, then from them he will be certain that he is uncertain whether the church of A, B, C, D, is true or false; that is, whether it is good or evil, because insofar as virtue and vice are concerned, E cannot be certain by means of any of these signs of yours whether A is black or white, whether B is a good man or a toad, whether C is chalk or charcoal, whether D is deity or devil. And you see that this is true, Luther, even given the impossible supposition that the preaching of A were accurate and undoubtedly true. From this you have no trouble seeing how far your case is losing ground in the estimation of E, clearly an intelligent and virtuous person, since the preaching which A preaches is truly and without doubt utterly false.

But now let us consider another possibility. Suppose that E should not yet know either which are the true scriptures or which are the true teachings of the Christian faith but, being concerned about his salvation and having heard reports of Christ, he should wish to become thoroughly acquainted with the latter's faith and religion. E, then, as I say, comes into the church of A, B, C, D, and hears A preaching in his usual manner his usual teachings before B, C, D, and he sees B, C, D agreeing and declaring that this preaching is true. In the first place, if such teachings were true, E could still not consider the case as proven because he has heard that A, B, C, D are only a minimal fraction of those who profess the faith of Christ, nor could he after listening only to them be certain whether A, B, C, D were either professing the true scriptures or interpreting the true ones truly; nor

could he judge whether that which he was hearing among them was the true gospel or not; nor would he be ready to believe so few men on a matter of such profound importance without being persuaded to do so by a miracle. Therefore, when E would later travel through so many Christian nations and would perceive everywhere the same faith, the same teachings regarding what is necessary for salvation; when he would perceive from the writings of ancient holy men that all the holy doctors from the time of Christ's passion even to the present time have consistently agreed on these same points; then E would have no doubt that, if there is any true church of Christ on earth, it is this congregation which, begun by Christ, spread by the apostles, taught by the saints, has by God's special care persisted unceasingly through so many ages in the unity of the Christian faith.

Therefore, if E should later return into the church of A, B, C, D, and again hear A preaching in his usual manner his usual teachings before B, C, D, and declaring that he is preaching the true and genuine word of God and that all those Christians whom E has heard elsewhere among so many peoples are utterly deceived and damnable in error, surely it cannot but happen that E, since he sees the church of A, B, C, D to be nothing but a kind of rivulet trickling off from that great church and now violently separated from her; and since it admits nothing but the scriptures, yet does not have different scriptures but interprets them in a way different from and contrary to that in which that whole church of so many lands and so many ages interprets them; and since it arrogates their interpretation to itself in opposition to so many and such learned and such holy interpreters of so many ages, in opposition to the agreement of the whole Christian world, an agreement which E has already learned from the scriptures takes root through the Spirit of Christ; and when E sees among A, B, C, D, many extremely absurd teachings on most important topics, which are not only contrary to that catholic church, but also utterly destructive of public morals, it cannot but happen, I say, that E will understand with certainty that the church of A, B, C, D is not the church of Christ nor an assembly of good men, but that it is the hovel of the most corrupt buffoons and the brothel of Satan; and then from these facts he would recognize A either as the alpha of heretics, or as Antichrist. On the other hand, it cannot but happen that, since E is now certainly and thoroughly acquainted also with that true church which has been continued by a certain unbroken

succession from the one which Christ long ago established and which has ever remained uncorrupted in the faith of its origin, he will easily recognize that, however great a part has violently torn itself away from her, it will be a withered branch, lacking the divine Spirit who will remain only in His own vine, however much it may have been reduced by the pruning of its branches. 5

Look, Luther, you who so shamelessly proclaim that you demonstratively refute Ambrose, have you anything to mutter here to prevent your having to admit that you have been most evidently defeated and refuted by your own mode of demonstration, and that we have proved both that your church is the brothel of Satan and that the common multitude of Christians is the universally known and perceptible catholic church of Christ whose soldiers now conquer, now are conquered, so long as the church still battles on earth? 10

Now, since Luther makes such a fair proclamation about the many Christian nations that obey the pope as to declare positively that they are all the most wicked of all men and that the church is undoubtedly not among them, unless, as he says, one excepts children and simple folk, I should like to ask him where in the world are those grown-ups and unsimple people who never sin, whom he calls the true church. For he says that all Italy, all England, Scotland, Ireland, all of Spain and Portugal are, and until the time of his own gospel all Germany was, clearly most wicked and the synagogue of Satan. For all these nations, it is well enough known, have up till now reverently acknowledged the successor of Peter. We nevertheless judge more kindly of Saxony, which the pestiferous breath of this serpent has infected. For we hope that there also God has preserved for Himself seven times seven thousand mature and wise men who have not bent the knee to Baal. 15 20 25

But come, if, during the long period of time intervening between the healing death of Christ and the death-dealing birth of Luther, these nations did not form at least the greatest part of the church, tell me where on earth was the church. Even if the church is not confined to any part of the earth, nevertheless she must necessarily be in some part of it. Certainly, if she has not been in these parts of the earth, then for a long time now she has been either remarkably small or she has been nowhere. It is evident, then, that even if the church should not be the common multitude of Christians but the number of good men, whether of those who have been so thoroughly converted that 30 35

they will never sin again or of those who while frequently rising will frequently fall, who are to be considered in the church so long as they stand firm, being cast out when they have fallen and received back again when they revive, yet not even so have you proved anything. For, even of these men, it is certain that by far the greatest portion have for a long time now been among those nations which revere the See of Peter as the mother see. For there is not anywhere, nor for a long time has there been elsewhere, such a great number of peoples professing the faith of Christ. It follows, therefore, that if these nations are not the church, at least the church is within these nations; or, and this cannot be denied, by far the greatest part of the church is among them. Yet up till now in these nations, all the best men have been especially obedient to the pontiff, all the worst men have been especially rebellious against the pontiff. Men of the greatest holiness have established laws; all the best men most carefully observed the laws; all the worst men most carelessly scorned them. With one heart they all venerated the sacraments; hardly one or the other of so many people arose during so many ages to murmur anything against them; and those who did were always of known and notorious wickedness. Whichever may be the true church, therefore, such as indeed exists or has existed a long time among these peoples who are foremost in the profession of the Christian faith, it opposes and always has opposed your teachings.

But if this statement, which, clearly, more than destroys all your arguments, seems negligible to you, then mention any people among whom at any time during all the ages before your birth your heresies have been approved. Show us among which Christians there was no difference between priest and layman; among which Christians women were allowed to hear confessions; where females were believed to be priests and fitted for consecrating the Eucharist; where it was accepted that no laws bind the Christians; and a thousand similar absurdities. If you cannot do this, as you certainly cannot, then you have nothing further to prate about the church. For whichever has been the true church through so many ages, whether that has been the common multitude of good and bad men, or only the number of good men, whether in those regions which obey the Roman pontiff or anywhere else on earth, that church has always disagreed with you and has condemned your utterly insane teachings.

As for your statement that it is a fiction of the papists that the function of jurisdiction is one thing, that of fraternal charity another—and your statement that the gospel and the church know nothing of jurisdictions, for you say that these latter exist only through the tyrannical inventions of men—surely, if you were not an utter toper, you would easily perceive that jurisdiction and the function of charity are not altogether the same; even if it is true that there is no Christian jurisdiction which has not been instituted out of charity. But still, the authority of a ruler can and ought to do many things which the charity of any one private individual neither can nor ought to arrogate to itself. Otherwise, if jurisdiction is nothing at all, why did Paul exercise jurisdiction? Why did he deliver a man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh? Why did he declare most clearly that he who resists authority resists the ordinance of God? Why did he command that what he himself taught should be observed? Why did he command men to obey their rulers? Why did Christ Himself order the people to obey the Scribes and Pharisees who sat in the seat of Moses? Why did He Himself present an example of jurisdiction and drive the sellers out of the temple with a whip? For that matter, why do you yourself basely conceal that in the very words of Christ, “Feed my sheep,” there is a word which refutes you? You are not unaware, but you basely conceal the fact that Erasmus of Rotterdam, a man extremely learned beyond all cavil and one who has deserved very highly of the church of Christ, has noted the fact that there is in the repeated word *poimainein* the meaning “to rule”; but although everyone sees this, it is enough for you to pretend that you do not perceive it. I do not suppose anyone expects me to answer your extraordinary allegory in which you write that the three signs are represented by the two heads of the carrying-poles appearing outside the ark in the temple of Solomon, since you could of course have represented the same signs no less appropriately by the two tablets of Moses or by the two horns of Moses.

Now I do not know how much importance you attach to this fact which you twice let loose against us, namely that in the creed we confess that we believe in the holy catholic church, from which you infer that, since faith is the evidence of things not seen, if the church is believed in and is a matter of faith, then the church is in no way that perceptible multitude of good and bad men which is apparent to everyone and is perceived by human sense. This weapon you twice

take in hand; twice you hurl it forcefully, either because it seemed to you a splendid weapon and you delighted to handle it, or because you sensed that it was so dull that it needed to be hurled more frequently. On this point I am surprised first of all that the creed, which is, as it ought to be, of great weight with all the faithful, has any weight with you. For it is well known, I think, that the creed is tradition, not scripture; it is not listed in the scriptural canon, nor did any of the holy fathers, so far as I know, when he proposed to prove something from the scriptures, ever prove it from the creed. Therefore, if you, Luther, who so often cry out against tradition, who so often declare that you accept nothing but evident scriptures, if you believe in the church on the authority of the creed, then you are evidently indeed departing from your opinion and you are believing traditions, not scriptures. And I do not say this to reproach you in this matter. Indeed, I praise you exceedingly, and I would wish you did the same thing more often. It would be a matter worth applauding if you should ever begin to be capable of changing for the better, you who, more unstable than any wind, and more flighty than any leaf, repeatedly change yourself for the worse.

But meanwhile I ask you: What are you gaining for your case? Since it is clear that the church triumphant in heaven is one thing, the church militant here on earth is another, what have you proved about the latter, if the article of the creed speaks of the former, in that, having enumerated what must be believed about the divine Trinity and about the humanity of Christ, it finally presents the hoped-for reward of those who believe as something itself to be believed, since otherwise it could not be hoped for with certainty, and thus mortals who would wish to profess the faith are reminded that they should unhesitatingly believe that there will be a catholic church which, in holy fellowship, with sins forgiven, with flesh revived, and with bodies restored, will enjoy life everlasting?

But on earth also, even if there be no uncertainty about the identity or the location of the catholic church of Christ, whose unanimous authority gives everyone certainty about the true scriptures and about necessary articles of faith, and even if it be so certain that for this reason the church is perceptible to sense, nevertheless she herself depends in many ways on faith. For, even if the identity of that church which agrees on matters of faith is evident to sense, yet it is not evident to sense that this agreement does not come about by

human conspiring but that it is divinely born and inspired, for this no one grasps except by faith. Moreover, although the body of the church is perceptible to sense, yet the fact that Christ is her mystical head is likewise shown not by sense but by faith. Indeed, this fact also, that whoever is holy on earth is part of this church, which is called holy even here on earth not because there is no one in her who sins but because no one on earth is holy who is not a member of this church; this fact, I say, is taught us by faith, not by sense. Thus, we rightly believe in the catholic church because of the many things which do not appear to sense but which depend wholly on faith, and yet it is nonetheless manifestly certain that this common and perceptible multitude of men professing the name and faith of Christ is the catholic church by whose teaching the scripture is determined and the faith is learned and recognized with certainty. Luther, however, reverts ten times to the statement that the church cannot be this common multitude, because sinners do not belong to the church; nor does he remember that in Noah's ark, which prefigured the church, unclean animals were mingled with clean ones. I ask you, Luther: When the apostle was writing to the Corinthians, did he not write to the church? Or does he, for this reason, censure no sin in the church? What about when he writes to the Galatians? Is he not there also writing to the church? And yet he calls them senseless men, and he protests that they are so much in error that he wonders who has bewitched them. Moreover, in the Revelation of John the evangelist, when the Spirit speaks to the seven churches, does He find no fault anywhere? How severely He threatens to cast out certain men unless they repent! But although they are sinning and must be vomited out if they persist in their sin, He nevertheless numbers them meanwhile within the church. Indeed, Christ Himself, while dwelling personally with His church, said of her that not all were good: "You," He said, "are clean but not all of you." And again: "Have I not chosen you twelve and one of you is a devil?"

But if I wished to recall the opinions of the holy fathers which support this opinion of mine, it would take a long time and would be useless with you who, as a single individual, make light of all men taken together; in your mind not even the agreement of the whole church has any weight whatever when she confesses, not that some sinners belong to her, but that she herself is wholly a sinner and cries out daily to the Lord: "Forgive the sins of thy church, O God." Nor

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was she taught this by human counsel; but she was taught by Christ Himself, who taught His apostles also to pray that God would forgive them their sins. And so the church of Christ, while she dwells on earth, is not yet so cleansed that some sins do not constantly taint good men; and among the good men everywhere there live the wicked, who for the time being are in the church, in the same way as diseased parts are in an ulcerous body. For even though these men are not healthy, yet they are somehow still alive and are nourished by a certain warmth of the divine Spirit who animates and preserves the church, penetrating all things mightily and disposing all things sweetly. Nor, so long as the church is a wayfarer on earth, will she cease bearing sick members about with her; nor will Christ cease to intercede with the Father for the sick members, He who mourned over the ills of His mystical body and who wept bitterly for them on the cross, saying: "Far from my salvation are the words of my sins." But when the day shall come on which, laying aside corruption, she shall be clothed with immortality, then, those rotten and decaying members disappearing, the body of the church will be left utterly pure and gleaming, which in the meantime goes about and will go about diseased, but however diseased, will never go about dead. For Christ will be with her and His word, which, whether written or handed on without writing, is in either case spirit and life, together with the faith which works through love for those who believe; Christ Himself prayed to the Father that this kind of faith might never fail or be lacking to the church which Christ committed to Peter's charge.

But He put Peter in charge not only of the Roman but of the universal church, which even today does not refuse to acknowledge obediently the successor of Peter. For even if some men separate and tear themselves away from him as Dathan and Abyron and Chore with their associates separated themselves to their own great harm from Moses, nevertheless almost all the peoples who sincerely profess the faith of Christ look up to and venerate the successor of Peter as the vicar of Christ. But if these peoples, known to us and joined with us in the profession of the Christian faith, are not the catholic church, nor is the church of Christ any part of them, but is a number of secret and unknown assemblies from hither and yon who disagree both with the rest of the church and also among themselves about the faith of Christ, then to which of those groups will that man complain who has been told: "If he does not wish to reform, tell the church"? By

disobeying which church, I ask, will a man become to you as a heathen and a publican? Does Christ say it is a different one from that which is well-known and public? Or does He order that two or three heretics be sought somewhere, who, like the Donatists, deny that the catholic church is catholic?

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Suppose, then, that there is some Turk who should wish to come into the faith of Christ; suppose him persuaded that the true church is not this one which we call catholic; that is, the congregation of all peoples from any place whatever who profess the name and faith of Christ, even though most of them may not correspond in their morals and virtue to their profession of faith; but suppose him persuaded that the true church consists of two or three good men gathered together from hither and yon in the name of Christ, that the true faith thrives there in the midst of virtues, but that this well-known and universal church of ours is not the true one, but, as it is infected with bad morals, so it is led astray by false opinions and errors instead of possessing the true faith. Now please tell me, Luther, where will he go to learn the faith?¹⁴⁶ Will he go to those whose identity he cannot know?

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For he cannot know which men are good. Shall he then take the scriptures in hand himself? And shall he draw from them all the articles of faith, although scripture does not contain all of them and contains some of them in such a way that without a teacher the reader easily slips into errors? But who will distinguish the orthodox teacher from the heretic? Or will God teach him inwardly? He certainly would so teach him had He not left a church to whom He sends those who need to be taught. The man who contemns her, persuading himself that he alone is such a darling of God that he alone is especially taught by God something different from what the church publicly believes and professes, then, however humble he may think himself, he is surely convicted of arrogance before

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God, since he believes himself to be of greater concern to God than the whole church is, and addresses God, not, as Christ teaches, "Our Father," but, as a certain proud friend of Job, "My father";¹⁴⁷ and he does not believe God's promise to the church: "I shall be with you till the consummation of the world." Nor does he remember or stand in any awe of the fact that since the Spirit tells the church all that she needs to know, Christ orders that the man who will not hear the church

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¹⁴⁶ He will say, "To himself"

¹⁴⁷ Do you not perceive that you are being named here, Luther?

should be considered as a heathen and a publican. “If anyone,” He says, “who has been rebuked before two or three witnesses should not reform, tell the church.” He does not say, “Tell two or three men.” And so He does not call two or three men the church; for it is precisely this number of witnesses whom He distinguishes from the church.

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But if you should argue that the church does not differ from the witnesses in number but in merit so that in the one case number suffices, but in the other piety is sought, then I ask you once again: By what sign will you distinguish that church of three good men from any three witnesses whatever? For they can both dissimulate their vices and simulate virtues. To which three, then, will you speak when you are about to speak to the church?¹⁴⁸ Therefore, the catholic church is different, willy-nilly, from that which you represent; nor do you represent it for any other reason than that you may more freely condemn the truly catholic church, which, unless it were recognizable and well-known, would certainly not be the one before whom you can complain about the sin of your neighbor. If Christ orders us to submit complaints about moral matters to her judgment, surely much more does He order us to do so in matters of faith. “He who does not hear her judgment,” He says, “let him be to you as the heathen and publican”; of these the one sins in morals, the other errs in faith. You see that recourse must be had to the judgment of the church in matters of faith and of morals.¹⁴⁹ Since you do not listen to the judgment of this church in matters of faith, but on the contrary scurrilously ridicule, deride, jeer at, and condemn good works, since you fly swiftly toward evil works and add spurs to those who rush toward all the worst actions, promising them impunity through faith alone without good works for the worst crimes, you are deservedly denounced as a heathen by all Christians, by the voice of Christ Himself, and you have justly been cast out from the catholic church which you try to rend asunder and to reduce to two or three heretics who, if they should perhaps agree not to honor the Lord’s day and in place of the Lord’s day to establish as a feast the day of Mercury or of Venus, will doubtless argue that they clearly fulfill the precept, namely to keep the feast day;¹⁵⁰ that is, that day which they themselves have taken as

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¹⁴⁸ The words are spoken to a corpse

¹⁴⁹ Where the judgments of morals and faith must be sought

¹⁵⁰ This license is not liberty

their feast. They will argue that this is an optional matter, since no particular day has been defined by any scripture, except perhaps the sabbath. But if someone should say that it is the business of the church, governed by the Holy Spirit, to determine which day should be especially dedicated to God and that she has decided on Sunday, they will answer that the papist church has decided this. For the true and catholic church is themselves; that is, three men gathered together in the name of Christ.¹⁵¹ And the result will thus be that to keep the feast day is nothing else but to profane the true feast and to make a feast which the whim of each one has chosen; so that, according to the saying of Tyconius:¹⁵² “In the long run that is holy which is holy to each one.” But who will not be nauseated by this utterly absurd definition of the catholic church? For when the apostle says: “That which is beyond us does not concern us,” beyond which “us” is he speaking of? Is it not beyond that known church which was then known? When the same apostle wrote: “Appoint those who are rated as nothing in the church to judge,” of which church is he speaking? Is it indeed of some other church than that which was then known as the church of Christ? However widely she was scattered, she was united by the one profession of Christ and recognized by the name of catholic. In this church whoever professed a faith different from the common faith were always considered heretics; nor was their assembly the church of Christ, nor did they ever grow to such a number that they surpassed the rest of the flock professing the same name of Christ. For, although infidels and heathens have increased to such numbers that by comparison with them the Christians seem an insignificant flock, yet the heretics professing the name of Christ and claiming the church for themselves never increased to such a degree as to leave anyone in doubt where the catholic church might be found. For, although a man outside the church and utterly vicious may rail against the vices of the church, yet he will never bring it about that the field of the Lord will cease to belong to the Lord because in this time of growth it brings forth much cockle among the wheat, or that the net of Christ will cease to be Christ’s because while it is dragged in this sea it has bad fish mixed with the good, until such time as the Lord will gather both the wheat and the good fish¹⁵³ and set them aside for Himself,

¹⁵¹ Luther sings this trite song everywhere

¹⁵² The saying of Tyconius

¹⁵³ Luther is a worthless fish

but Luther and his associates He will cast out into the fire. But meanwhile, the church, His spouse, with whom He has promised to abide until the end of the world, although she sins at times and is often chastised, He nevertheless so preserves by His presence that He does not allow her through the fornication of infidelity to fall into the worship of other gods but by His Holy Spirit, who leads her into all truth, He so cherishes and instructs her that He allows her to err neither in the faith nor in the sacraments. If you should still stir up controversy about her and question her identity, I will answer once again: that same church through whom you have known that the gospel is the gospel, that same church, I say, is that catholic church who teaches you that the seven sacraments are sacraments; you cannot show why she can be deceived on the one point more than in both points. 5

If nothing at all had been written, would you have believed the church concerning all the things which actually have been written? You believe the church that those men were true evangelists, true apostles, who wrote those things which have been written; of those men who have done the writing not one has written that every detail was committed to writing. On the contrary, they openly write that not everything was written.¹⁵⁴ Why then do you not believe the church concerning the rest of the things which have not yet been written, since you would have been ready to believe her otherwise about all the things which have actually been written? Or, because certain things have been written, are the rest for that reason to be contemned? Why do you consider the church less reliable concerning a part than you would have been ready to consider her concerning the whole? Just because four or five individuals have written, who admit that they wrote down some details but not everything, has the entire group of these men lost their credibility, whom you would otherwise have judged worthy of your credence even without their writing the details which have actually been written? 10 15 20 25 30

¹⁵⁴ That, on the authority of the evangelists, not everything was written which pertains to our faith

I think I am spending far too much time arguing with this scoundrel
about such a clear matter. If any objection is brought up, he conceals
it; or if he does mention any, he distorts it by misquotation; and
against objections proposed by himself as though they were his
adversary's he gibbers rather than deliberates. He says that we make
articles of faith out of any saying of the fathers, and the scoundrel is
not ashamed to tell such a bare-faced lie.¹⁵⁵ 5

Whoever presented to you as a necessary
article of faith, Luther, a single statement 10
of any father whatever? Certainly we present it as probable, and
much more probable than your statement, especially because piety
opened their eyes while impiety closes
yours.¹⁵⁶ They were eager to understand;
you labor to pervert what is understood. 15

But if it is certain that on any one point all the ancient fathers long
ago agreed, we do not hesitate to oppose such thorough agreement of
good men to a single dull-witted scoundrel, when it is clear that they
reached agreement through that Spirit who makes those who dwell
in a house to be of one mind. 20

He gibbers in the same way when with a Tenedian two-edged ax
he splits one thing into two kinds, as follows:

If you had alleged¹⁵⁷ any usage or human
authority which clearly contradicts the
scriptures, such as, he says, the dull-witted king produces on the 25
matter of the second species of the sacrament, then let usage, authority,
the Thomist king, Satan, even an angel from heaven be anathema.

Rather, let this fellow be anathema, this abuser, this cashiered
friarlet, this Hussite, this Satanist from hell, who twists the sacred 30
scripture of Christ into a sacrilegious sense opposed to the sacraments
of Christ and distorts by misquotation the
correct statements of men.¹⁵⁸ For the fact that
this most deceitful scoundrel longs to take
advantage of the ignorance of his reader will do him no good when 35
we have come to the passage in which you, reader, will see the
transparent craftiness of the scoundrel who pretends that the king

¹⁵⁵ What else would a shameless fellow do?

¹⁵⁶ How Luther differs from the ancient fathers

¹⁵⁷ Luther's words

¹⁵⁸ So false you are, you wretched friarlet

opposes to him the authority of men, whereas he clearly opposes to him, not the authority of men, but that of the Holy Spirit.

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But if,¹⁵⁹ he says, one alleges such usage or human authority as does not contradict the scriptures, I do not condemn this, but I wish it to be tolerated, provided only that Christian liberty be safe, and that it be a matter of our free choice to follow, maintain, change those points when, where, how, we shall choose.¹⁶⁰ But if they wish to take captive this liberty of ours and to establish necessary articles of faith, then let him who will presume to do this be anathema, whether he be a silly Thomist, or a stupid papist, or a king or a pope; such is what our lord the king does in urging as articles of faith his sacraments of confirmation, matrimony, orders, extreme unction, and the mingling of water and wine. 5 10 15

Consider carefully, reader, what the king has written on these sacraments, and you will readily recognize and ridicule the wicked calumny of the scoundrel who, answering nothing at all to what the king has proved, only says lyingly that the king opposes to him the authority of men for matters for which the prince has alleged the authority of the Holy Spirit. Let that man be anathema who will have presumed to resist the ordinance of this Spirit and to blaspheme the sacraments which Christ has consecrated in His most holy church; whether this man be a silly satanist, or a stupid potist, or a friar, or an apostate. 20 25

He very skillfully declares how ineptly, indeed how utterly senselessly Luther cites and applies the scriptures. Chapter 12.

But now it is worth seeing how cleverly this fellow, who admits nothing but the scriptures and evident ones besides, himself cites scriptural texts which everyone evidently sees touch, as the saying goes, neither heaven nor earth. 30

We have,¹⁶¹ he says, more than enough divine thunderbolts against these Thomistic straws and bits of tow, where Christ, in Matthew 15, passes 35

¹⁵⁹ Luther's words

¹⁶⁰ But what are these things? Are they not whatever is now written down? Do not rage so fiercely, good father

¹⁶¹ Luther's words

judgment on all the traditions of men, saying: “Without cause do they worship me with the doctrines and commandments of men.”

What is all the sludge of this masked

Thomist against this one saying of Christ,¹⁶²

to pass over many others mentioned

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elsewhere? If everything which man has commanded is vain, with what boldness does the doltish king make of it articles of faith for us?

And so, by this single saying of Christ he lies prostrate, this unhappy and wretched defender of the Henrician church, together with his whole little book.

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Does not the shameless folly of this scoundrel exceed anyone’s expectation, in that he, clearly a trifler and an Antichrist, thunders Christ’s words, “Without cause they worship me with the doctrines and commandments of men,” against one who has declared and proved that the sacraments are the traditions of God, not of men? Even convicted of such shameless stupidity, he says, already exulting as a victor and conqueror:

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With this single saying of Christ he lies prostrate, this unhappy and wretched defender of the Henrician church, together with his whole little book.

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And these words Luther shouts because of his raging madness, conscious meanwhile that everyone sees that he cites the scriptural text with a great stupidity as great as the shamefulness of his defeat and prostration, this unhappy and wretched assailant of the catholic church, together with the whole of his most dull, diminutive brain.¹⁶³ This witling is so dull that in the very matter in which everyone laughs at his folly he still thinks he is carrying off a very witty jest.

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Where are you,¹⁶⁴ Lord Henry? he says.

Bring out your illustrious book against

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Luther. What does your lordship defend?

The seven sacraments? By whose teachings? God’s or men’s? Let your

Thomistic lordship hear then the judgment, not of Luther, but of

Him before whom the poles of the earth tremble: “In vain do they

worship me with the teachings of men.”

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Have you ever seen a blind man, reader, who when provoked was eager to avenge himself with his fists? In order to know where to

¹⁶² With what restraint this pious priest always speaks

¹⁶³ A camel dancer, indeed!

¹⁶⁴ Luther’s words. This is your style, honored brother

direct his blow he gets his opponent to say something; on hearing him he immediately goes after him with a rain of blows, unless the other retreats too quickly for the blind man to be able to reach him. It seems to me that Luther acts the part of this blind man, but in such a way that no one has ever acted more ridiculously. For when the king on being called by name answers him on the right, Luther strikes out in return with a blow toward the left.¹⁶⁵ And so, observe, please, how wittily Luther plays out this play. Imagine now that you see the fellow, his eyes blinded, standing determined to deliver a box on the ear. 5

“Where are you, Lord Henry?” he says.

“Here, next to you.”

He invites him to approach still closer, so that of course he may strike more surely. “Bring forward,” he says, “your illustrious book against Luther.” 15

“Here it is.”

“Come still closer. What does your lordship defend? The seven sacraments?”

“I do.” 20

“Stand closer yet. By whose teachings? God’s or men’s?”

“God’s.”

Now, clearly certain of hitting his mark, see how accurately he delivers his blow. “Listen, then, your lordship: ‘In vain do they worship me with the teachings of men.’” Friends, would you be able to restrain your laughter if you were admitted to such a sight, you who see this blind man, unaware of how far he has shifted in the opposite direction, so exult for joy that he is beside himself, as though he has cracked a mighty box on the ear of his opponent? 25

Now let your lordship go,¹⁶⁶ he says, and teach their papal lordships this fruitless faith and religion, and defend it vigorously, as he best knows how. But let your lordship keep his filthy and sacrilegious mouth away from the church of God, which admits nothing but the word of God.¹⁶⁷ 30
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On the contrary, Reverend Father Tossopot, let your lordship go, and to your sister ladyships, to whom, you preach, men must confess

¹⁶⁵ Luther is even blinder than the blind

¹⁶⁶ Luther’s words

¹⁶⁷ See that you keep your impious mouth from the faith of Christ

their sins, preach your faithless faith and
 the religion of the Bohemian back country,¹⁶⁸
 where matrimony means nothing but to
 increase and multiply and to mate in church like a pack of dogs.

This is the church for whose favor your paternity, who is exiled far
 from the favor of Christ, denies that matrimony is a sacrament and
 takes away from it absolutely all grace. This church your paternity
 points out as the church of God, and with that filthy and sacrilegious
 mouth blasphemes the true church of Christ, and with lips polluted
 by lying defiles the word of God, and against those whom Christ did
 not have in mind you hurl, like a lightning flash and thunderbolts,
 the words of Christ: "In vain do they worship me with the doctrines
 of men." You flash and thunder with fictitious flashes and thunders
 against the king just as Cacus once did with a similar stratagem
 against Hercules. And so, after reverently
 laying aside the thunderbolt of God, your
 lordship, who, like the giant Cacus, has
 blasted out a fictitious flash of lightning,
 will indeed merit that, as you extend your filthy mouth wide open to
 flash forth lightning, some Cacus should crap into it.¹⁶⁹

He wittily refutes Luther's silly premise attacking
 the long duration of the catholic faith by referring
 to the equally long duration of the super-
 stition of the Jews, Turks, and heathens.

Chapter 13.

But after he has thus flashed lightning by means of scriptural texts, he
 immediately gives battle with a reasoning no less flashing. For he
 says:

Finally,¹⁷⁰ this proposition of the king is so
 foolish that it contradicts even the com-
 mon sense of men. Who would not laugh to see that such great Sampsons
 bring forward no argument in defense of our Christian faith but
 duration in time and the usage of many men?¹⁷¹ By what reasoning will
 we prove that the faith of the Turks is
 erroneous, which has lasted now for
 almost a thousand years, having arisen

¹⁶⁸ For whose favor Luther denies the sacrament of matrimony

¹⁶⁹ Why is it necessary for some cacodaemon to have shit out such abuse

¹⁷⁰ Luther's words

¹⁷¹ You have lied directly against your own head

before Germany was converted to the faith? Or is it enough that while, separated by distances of space, we are not forced to dispute with them, we may meanwhile utter in our corners whatever nonsense we think right? Likewise, who would not justly vindicate the Jews by the example of this invincible Thomist, since they surpass us by such a length of time? And why should not the heathens throughout the world, on the authority of King Henry of England, be said to have justly persecuted the new faith of Christ, since their idolatry, according to this very neat and very Thomistic argument, should have been judged the right and sound faith, because it was confirmed by so many thousands of years within the territories of so many peoples by such constant use? And with the same Henry as our teacher let us even now declare that the errors of irreligious men are sound faith, because from the beginning of the world their numbers and duration and power have surpassed the scarcity and obscurity of religious men. In sum, if the words of men have the force of articles of faith, why do not my words also make articles of faith?¹⁷² Am I not a man? Nay more, according to the new wisdom of the king, all of us men are forced to believe the words of everyone. Let even the king himself, that he may be relieved of the trouble of writing, follow his own first premise, and say: I am a man who speaks thus; therefore it must be so; it cannot be otherwise.¹⁷³ Foolish, ridiculous, and most truly Henrician and Thomistic are these words; as if a spiritual matter is to be measured by prescriptions of time and usage or the law of men, like an estate or some plot of land.

Behold, reader, the irrefutable reasoning, tinselled with what pompous words, with what Phormian assurance! And the sum of it is: The public faith of the Turks lasting through several ages and of the heathens lasting through several thousands of years is erroneous, as well as that of the Jews; therefore, the public faith of the catholic church, maintained through however many ages, can be erroneous.¹⁷⁴ Oh, the keenness of it, deserving the applause of Jews, Turks, and heathens; but any Christian sees it is duller than a pestle. For, since the superstition of infidels is governed by the devil, and the faith of the catholic church by God, this is an amazing line of argument for the reverend father to take: the faith of a people

¹⁷² Because you have deservedly lost all reason to be trusted

¹⁷³ Do you believe that you are not detected when you blather so against your own fictions?

¹⁷⁴ You recognize his form of disputing, Father Subtle

governed by a lying spirit can be false; therefore also the faith of a people governed by the Spirit of truth can be false. Such is this reasoning and so bold an Achilles that I dare not engage in conflict with it. By this reasoning all the defenders of the church clearly lie prostrate. Yet that reasoning which Luther subjoins and argues by analogy is still more feeble, when he makes his inference by asking the following: “If the words of a man have the force of the articles of faith, why do not my words also make articles of faith? Am I not a man?”¹⁷⁵

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To this argument at least one can answer that the reverend father is not a man, because no ass is a man; since that man is truly an ass who still does not understand that what is said by men who speak on their own authority, or, as he does, who speak on the authority of the devil, is one thing; what is spoken by the church of Christ who speaks on the authority of the Holy Spirit is another thing. Christ said: “It is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.” Otherwise, because Paul was a man, then—if Luther were not an ass—you see that it clearly follows from Luther’s asinine assumption that the word of Luther would be of equal authority with the word of Paul. In this passage, however, he has nevertheless turned aside from his accustomed manner. For he has been accustomed to conceal wholly whatever can be objected and to pass it over in silence. But here, confident of himself, he has dared to recall something which seemed an obstacle to him. You easily see that he would never have been ready to do this had he not had a trick at hand by which he could immediately remove that obstacle. Let us hear, then, what he says.

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If¹⁷⁶ they say that their own precept differs from that of others in that the precept of the papists is from the Holy Spirit, that of the others from men, the Turk will laugh at them.

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We whom you call papists, Luther, clearly do say this, but we say that the faith of the church is from the Holy Spirit, that of the Turks not from men but from the devil; now what do you answer to this? He says that the Turk will laugh at this.¹⁷⁷ Really? And you, pious father, do you consider ridiculous whatever the Turk ridicules? So well does a thing suit your faith when it suits the faith

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¹⁷⁵ Hardly; or at least a worthless one

¹⁷⁶ Luther’s words

¹⁷⁷ The Turk is the judge of faith for Luther

of a Turk! What a Christian heart, that approves nothing but what the Turk approves along with you! Now I see why you deride the sacraments; it is, of course, so that you may not seem so silly to the Turk. You wish the bread and wine to remain in the eucharist lest the Turk mock you.¹⁷⁸ By the same reasoning, you will very shortly deny altogether that the body and the blood are present because otherwise it is certain that you cannot satisfactorily justify your faith to the Turks. 5

Now you see in full measure, reader, the faith and religious spirit of the reverend father, since you see according to what norm he constructs his articles of faith; now see his wisdom, clearly equal to this religious spirit of his. 10

The Turk,¹⁷⁹ he says, will say to you: When you assert this without scriptures and without signs, on mere human authority, you effect nothing more than if I said that my faith also is from God. I condemn your faith with the same facility with which you condemn mine; and I prove my faith with the same authority with which you prove yours.¹⁸⁰ What will happen here, he says, except that even fools will understand that the Henrician Thomists in their infamous ignorance have exposed our faith to ridicule and have fortified the impiety of all the heathens; they deserve to have their mouth, tongue, and hands cut off to prevent their ever saying or writing anything.¹⁸¹ 15 20 25

Did I not say that the genius of this fellow is utterly divine, since he saw what the Turk would say against those who would set forth the faith of the church without scriptures? If anyone should cite any text from the scriptures, then the reverend father easily sees that the Turk will have nothing to mutter against it.¹⁸² The Turk, of course, has always been thus accustomed to believe the scriptures of the Christians, especially if anyone cites them as appropriately as this reverend father is accustomed to do. For, although to a person citing a custom of ours, the Turk would not hesitate to cite a custom of his own, nevertheless to a person citing our scriptures he would never, of course, dare to cite his own scriptures, and to oppose the Alcoran to the gospel, not because he does not prefer the Alcoran of Mahomet to 30 35

¹⁷⁸ Not unlikely, indeed

¹⁷⁹ Luther's words

¹⁸⁰ As if he actually agreed with the scriptures

¹⁸¹ You certainly deserve to have both your tongue cut out and your teeth knocked out

¹⁸² Oh, the shrewdness of the venerable father!

the gospel of John, which he says has been corrupted by us, but lest he embarrass the reverend father, a fellow from among the papists who agrees with his own faith; a fellow so dull-witted, and an ass more asinine than asinity itself, that he believed the Turk was ready to believe the scriptures of the Christians. Now the reverend father, zealous for the faith, declares that those who write anything the Turks will deride deserve to have their mouth, tongue and hands cut off to prevent their ever saying or writing anything. Who would not rather think this fellow deserving that his golden mouth and honey-smooth tongue,¹⁸³ a very domicile of persuasion, should never grow quiet and that his gesturing hand should be adorned with golden rings, so that he may always be either saying or writing something such as may cheer up wretched mortals in the midst of their tribulations and labors and relax them with laughter; if only his impiety were as absent on any point as his folly is present at every point. 5 10 15

But yet, I wonder how it came about that at this point a man gentle and mild by nature should in this passage, contrary to his custom, burn with such merciless anger as to wish to cut off the mouth, tongue and hands of all the faithful who may say or write anything which the infidels would mock as foolish. Meanwhile he has not considered the tongue and fingers of the apostle Paul,¹⁸⁴ who confesses that he not only preaches the kind of thing which seems foolish to the gentiles but even that he preaches nothing else. “We,” he says, “preach nothing else but Jesus Christ, to the Jews indeed a stumbling block, but to the gentiles foolishness.” But as for what follows in Luther, you could hardly tell whether it shows more of folly, or of impiety. 20 25

But,¹⁸⁵ he says, a restless Satan does this in order to call us away from the scriptures through criminal Henries and sacrilegious Thomists and to found our faith on the lies of men. For there is now no need of holy scripture if the novel sayings of men are a sufficient argument apart from scripture.¹⁸⁶ 30 35

Do you think it is shrewdness, reader, that Luther has detected the design of Satan? He is too stupid to do such a thing. No, the devil himself has told him this. For John was no more intimate with Christ

¹⁸³ Eulogy of the venerable father

¹⁸⁴ How little foresight you show at any point, honored brother!

¹⁸⁵ Luther’s words

¹⁸⁶ Satan has been doing this in you for a long time

as His evangelist than Luther is inferior
to Satan as his very own cacangelist;¹⁸⁷ not
only at one meal, but day and night he reposes on the bosom of the
devil; or rather, the devil does not recline upon him but is stuck fast
in his very bosom. Otherwise he could not have declared with so
much authority that the catholic faith concerning the sacraments is
founded on the lies of men, although he has already succeeded in
proving that it cannot be founded on the Holy Spirit except insofar
as this may be proved by evident scriptures, lest, of course, the Turk,
who admits nothing apart from our scriptures, will not approve it. But
when the scripture of the Christians is cited, the Turk immediately
senses himself overcome and admits it. If you do not believe Luther
in this matter, he will be ready to swear that any one of the Turks
believes and venerates all the sacraments of the Christians, all the
articles of Christian faith insofar as they can be proved by the
testimonies of Christian scripture, no less than Luther himself believes
and venerates them. I certainly do not
believe that anyone is so incredulous as to
be unready to believe this not only on the oath of Luther, but even
without his oath.¹⁸⁸ But without the scriptures neither does the Turk
believe anything, nor does Luther; so prettily do they agree with one
another. To support this point he gives the following reason as his
defense: that there would be no need of sacred scripture now if the
novel statements of men are a sufficient argument apart from
scripture.

At this point the reverend father forces me to doubt whether any
Turk is ever so foolish as to deign, especially in this matter, to be an
ally of the Lutheran folly, not perceiving the nature of the following
inference: the church of Christ, governed by the Spirit of Christ, with
a certain faith passed on to her, preserves the sacraments of Christ;
therefore the church of Christ has no need of the scriptures.

If Luther had lived at the time of the evangelists he would have
deterred them by this reasoning from writing the gospels. For if those
things, which men at that time heard from men, were believed to be
handed down from God to those who related them, and thus created
faith in those who heard, what need was there for the evangelists to
include any of those things in writing? Was it, indeed, either because
Christ, who was working this faith in His church, would some day
utterly abandon the church, or because He could not preserve

¹⁸⁷ Luther a cacangelist

¹⁸⁸ That is not difficult

without writing the faith He had wrought without writing, although before He Himself was born He had promised that He would write the law in men's hearts, and when He was born in the flesh He promised that He would be with the church even to the consummation of the world? I do not think the evangelists would have been so deterred by such reasoning that they would have been ready to desist from writing the gospels. On the contrary, they would have answered among many other things perhaps also this: that Christ would indeed never abandon His church with whom He Himself promised that He would remain even until the end of the world;¹⁸⁹ that the Spirit, the Paraclete, who leads the church into all truth would never fail her; that thus, even if the evangelists never wrote a letter, the true sacraments and true articles of the faith would never be lost to the catholic church at any time, nor would error arise in matters of such necessity—a thing which would distract the hope and faith of the bride to empty appearances and turn her away from her spouse—that nonetheless the evangelists would not write in vain even though they should leave out all the articles and sacraments of faith which God both had caused to be taught and wished to preserve without writing; they would include the life of Christ and some part of His miracles, and some truths from among the many which Christ taught, for the sake of forming in His flock morals and virtues worthy of the Christian heart.

Finally, what sort of impudence leads him to call the sacraments of the church the novel sayings of men, since, except for Luther, no one doubts that the sacraments are more ancient than the books of the gospels themselves? Thus he has called the sacrament of orders something new. He said that it is a new thing that bread is believed turned into the flesh and wine into the blood; and he says that this teaching has arisen within the past three hundred years; although the king has most skillfully refuted the fellow's shamelessness by the testimonies of most ancient fathers, on both these points and no less so on all the other sacraments.

¹⁸⁹ The utterly certain promise of Christ

He again shows how senselessly Luther
distorts the scriptures, with which he tries
to prove that nothing is to be believed
with certainty which cannot be proved by
a clear scriptural text. Chapter 14. 5

But now he turns back again to the scrip-
tures and with a new formula, his foul
mouth full of abuse, farts anathema and a
curse if anyone should lay any other foundation than that which has
been laid.¹⁹⁰ As if anyone would do that except himself, who, having laid 10
his own foundation, is trying to overthrow the Christian faith from
its foundation, which is Christ. But come, let us see the nature of his
foundation and bow aptly he fits it to his building.

Paul,¹⁹¹ he says, in I Cor. 2, with great auth-
ority ordained that our faith ought to rely 15
on the words of God, when he says: “My discourse and my preach-
ing have not been in the persuasive words of human wisdom but in
the manifestation of the spirit and power, so that your faith may not
be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.”

Who has ever heard a fool present anything so irrelevant, so beside 20
the point? He thus thinks it enough to say whatever comes into his
mouth; the only thing he avoids is silence. Declaring that he will
prove that nothing possesses certain authority except the scriptures,
he brings forward the following text of the apostle: “No one can lay 25
any other foundation but that which has been laid.” As if that
foundation which has been laid were the
scripture and not what the apostle himself
immediately adds: “Jesus Christ.¹⁹²” And
then, with his anathemas and curses, having failed to mention Christ,
he tries to force us to believe that the foundation referred to is 30
scripture, not Christ; or that scripture is the same thing as Christ, as
if a book written about Caesar is the same thing as Caesar. Then,
although no one denies that we must rely on the words of God—but
we say that of these words some have been written, some, of equal
authority, not written, and both kinds must be believed with equal 35
faith; of these he silently contemns the one, the other he contemns

¹⁹⁰ They are Luther’s most frequent arguments

¹⁹¹ Luther’s words

¹⁹² How singularly Luther understands the words of Paul

openly—he brings forward, as though it were a great argument to support the word of God, those words of Paul, which say not even one word about the word of God but about the manifestation of the spirit and power of God. And then, as though the engagement had been carried off vigorously, he heaps abuse on the king because, so he says, the latter pours forth the persuasive words of human wisdom. As if he himself is becoming known to the whole world by means of miracles. Whether he has proved his preaching to the Bohemians by miracles I have not yet heard; but no one can impute to him, so far as I know, the persuasive words of human wisdom; no fool is farther removed from them; the farther he proceeds, the clearer he makes this fact.

Accordingly,¹⁹³ he says, we adhere to the defender of our church, who says, in Matthew 16, “I will build my church,” not on length of time nor on the multitude of men, nor on, “It must be so,” nor on usage, or the word of the saints; nor finally on John the Baptist, nor on Elias, nor on Jeremiah or any of the prophets, but on a sole and solid rock, on Christ, the Son of God. This is the defense of our faith, here we are safe against the gates of hell. He cannot lie and deceive.¹⁹⁴ “All men are liars.” And the saints, when they act or speak apart from this rock, are men. The absolutely pure and single and certain word of God must be the support of our faith. “If anyone speaks,” he says, “let it be as with the words of God,” and, “Let all prophecy be according to the proportion of faith.” Romans, 12.

Please observe, even from this passage, reader, where the impious fellow is guiding the argument, intending to prove that nothing must be believed except a clear scriptural text. He alleges that the faith of the church is built on Christ alone, and from this he concludes that the word of Christ alone must be believed. And he clearly praises the interpretation of anyone who understands him to mean that nothing is to be believed except what sacred scripture includes, because no other word which may be spoken by God is certain. For he does away with faith not only in the custom of the church and in all the ancient fathers, but also, by name, in John the Baptist, Elias, Jeremiah, and all the other prophets, and as a consequence of his reasoning, absolutely all the apostles.¹⁹⁵ He

¹⁹³ Luther’s words

¹⁹⁴ Why then do you do both?

¹⁹⁵ Luther’s impious arrogance

is worse by a long shot than the heretic
 Faustus who,¹⁹⁶ from Christ's words that all
 those who preceded Him are thieves and robbers, considered Moses
 and the prophets as malefactors. This fellow, however, abolishes faith
 and leaves no certainty in any one at all of the leaders of the old
 law and the gospel, unless perhaps what one reads that Christ Him- 5
 self has said, and this with so clear a meaning that there can be no
 controversy about His words. He rejects all other men as doubtful,
 both because they could have lied, since they were men, and because
 he thinks it uncertain whether, when they were setting down their 10
 writings, they stood on the rock or off the rock.

You see, then, reader, the supreme impiety of the man who, when
 he knows that his heresies have clearly been condemned by the
 testimony of all holy men, does nothing else but abolish in turn the
 authority of all holy men, deferring for a
 little while to Christ, until his iniquity 15
 shall reach full growth; then he will un-
 doubtedly be ready to dishonor Christ's majesty directly, which in the
 meantime also he attacks indirectly.¹⁹⁷ For, if every man is thus a liar,
 and if it is so uncertain whether, when holy men have spoken or 20
 written, they did it while standing on the rock of faith, that even
 Elias is a doubtful author, and Jeremiah, and John the Baptist, it
 certainly will follow that John the Evangelist likewise is a doubtful
 author. For both he and they spoke by exactly the same Spirit.

But now observe, on the other hand, the amazing folly of Luther. 25
 For, after he has proved what no one has ever denied: that Christ
 founded His church on a rock—from which rock, as everyone knows,
 Luther has fallen into the abyss¹⁹⁸—then
 again, from the fact that Christ alone is
 the foundation, he proves that scripture 30
 alone is the foundation, as if the only begotten Word of God is just any
 word written down in the sacred writings, must we not conclude that
 this fellow has either no shame or no brain? And yet, after concluding
 that clause with Paul's words: "If anyone speaks, let it be as with the
 words of God," and likewise with the words: "Let all prophecy be in 35
 proportion to faith," neither of which texts is at all relevant to the
 statement to which he joins them both,
 then, as if the battle line had been de-
 stroyed, he trumpets his own victory.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁶ The error of Faustus

¹⁹⁷ Where Luther seems to be heading

¹⁹⁸ Rather, he has deliberately leaped off of it

¹⁹⁹ A fellow greedy for victory

These are our defenses,²⁰⁰ he says, against which they are forced to fall silent, the Henries, Thomists, papists, every kind of scum, sludge, and privy of such impious and sacrilegious men; and they have nothing to answer here, but they lie confused and prostrate in the face of those thundering words; and we await also what the king, this vendor of women's wares, together with all his sophists, will dare to mutter against these arguments.²⁰¹ For the judgment stands fixed, that faith is not owed except to the certain word of God, as Romans 10 says: "Faith depends on hearing, but hearing on the word of Christ"; accordingly, whatever is brought forward in addition to the word of God, let it be a matter of choice for us as masters, to believe, not to believe, to condemn, to approve, as it is written: "All things are yours, whether Apollo, or Cephas, or Paul, but you are Christ's." 5 10 15

Let us consider, reader, where all this lightning and thunder of Luther is tending. "Christ has built His church upon Himself"; "If anyone speaks, let it be as with the words of God"; "Let all prophecy be according to the proportion of faith"; "Faith depends on hearing, but hearing on the word of Christ." What have you finally accomplished by all these quotations, Luther? "I have accomplished this," he says, "that the judgment stands fixed that faith is not owed except to the certain word of God,²⁰² and accordingly, whatever is brought forward in addition to the word of God, let it be a matter of choice for us as masters to believe, not to believe, to condemn, to approve." 20 25

See now how excellent a lightning flasher and thunderer you are; if anyone should grant you all these arguments, your lightning and thunder would still touch no one at all but yourself. But you it would blast through as completely as through Semele with an unexpected blaze. The king, if you can remember²⁰³—for no wolf is more forgetful (if you do forget as often as you fail to answer anything at all to those arguments which particularly nettle you)—has proved that the word of God is in one case written, in the other unwritten, but that certain things were either handed down by the apostles, or divinely spoken by Christ to His church, and that thus many details 30 35

²⁰⁰ Luther's words

²⁰¹ But you are the sower of great crimes, to say nothing of trifles

²⁰² And who will be the judge as to which is that word: Luther, or the catholic church?

²⁰³ Recall this to mind, good Father

have been included in writing and many
 have not as yet been included in any
 writing;²⁰⁴ that the seven sacraments and the rest of the articles of faith
 are supported partly by the written, partly by the unwritten word,
 but still by the word of God; that both words are equally true, equally 5
 certain, equally venerable. If these statements are true, then, even if
 it were granted (though, in fact, it is not granted) that all other
 points were a matter of your own free choice and that, like a king and
 master, you had the supreme right to decide what to believe and
 what not to believe, what to condemn and what to approve— 10
 nevertheless, you would have all this time accomplished absolutely
 nothing in regard to the sacraments and the articles of public faith;
 unless everything that I have said, or at least some part of it, be false.
 Will you then deny that one word of God
 is written, one unwritten;²⁰⁵ and will you 15
 argue, in opposition to the evangelist, that
 everything has been written; will you argue that nothing has been
 omitted, at least of the necessary articles, although you see that the
 principal evangelist omitted the principal sacrament, although you
 hear that Paul delivered very many teachings without writing, al- 20
 though the apostle James proclaims: “Receive the engrafted word of
 God which is able to save your souls,” although the scripture testifies:
 “His anointing shall teach you”? Will you deny that both the written
 and the unwritten word are equally true, although both are of God?
 But of course you will deny that the word of God which is unwritten 25
 can be known for certain or recognized by anyone. Yet you yourself
 have already long ago admitted that God has given the church the
 power to distinguish the word of God from the words of men. There-
 fore, since the words of God are of both kinds, that is, both written
 and unwritten, the church can, according to you, also distinguish 30
 within either kind the words of God from the words of men. There-
 fore, also according to you, the unwritten
 word of God is distinguished from the
 words of men.²⁰⁶ There is no reason why the
 church of Christ today can be more certain 35
 as to why the gospel of John written long ago is that of John than as to
 why any particular sacrament has grace from the unwritten word of
 God; but if you should deny that the catholic church which you call
 papistic has this power, then, since you do admit that some church has

²⁰⁴ Pay attention, reader

²⁰⁵ Why not, since he has already contemned the apostle?

²⁰⁶ The word of God is distinguished by the church even by Luther’s admission

it, bring forward some church besides this one that you call papistic
 which has distinguished the unwritten words of God from the words
 of men. Or rather, bring forward some church besides this one which
 has distinguished for you—I do not say for your ancestors, but for
 you—the written words of God from the written words of men. But,
 in order not to render you worse²⁰⁷ by
 pressing you too hard with your own
 words and force you to retract, as is your
 constant custom, whatever good you have said, I pass over what you
 have conceded; I ask: What do you say to the fact that when Peter
 had confessed in the name of the church that Jesus is the Christ and
 the Son of the living God, he immediately heard from the Lord:
 “Blessed are thou, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not
 revealed this to thee, but my Father in heaven”?
 Come, Luther, this word which Peter
 confessed: from what evident scriptures did
 he learn it,²⁰⁸ since no scripture could have
 taught it to the Jews very evidently, nor
 had Peter, an ignorant fisherman, had any but the slightest education,
 for Christ says that he had certainly learned that which he confessed
 not from a word written exteriorly but from the Spirit of the Father
 pouring Himself out interiorly? Was he therefore uncertain that this
 was the word of God because he felt it, did not read it, because he
 heard it interiorly, not exteriorly?
 As for your citing, “Therefore faith is dependent on hearing,” I
 ask you whether or not Peter heard interiorly what God spoke
 interiorly? Or is something heard only when it is written? Or, before
 the gospels were written, did the Christians not hear the apostles?
 Now see, trifle-trafficking Luther, how unnecessary it is for anyone
 to answer these brilliant arguments of yours which, without any
 disadvantage to our cause, without any advantage to yours, may be
 granted collectively. Are you such a fierce debater, Luther? Are you
 such a great lightning-flasher; do you thunder with such frightful
 thunders? Let lightning and thunder,
 therefore, be taken out of your sacrilegious
 mouth and put back into their own divine
 place.²⁰⁹ Then it will be proper not merely to piss into that most filthy
 mouth. Even the following passage shows the degree of madness with
 which that mouth rushes headlong.

²⁰⁷ It is hardly possible for him to turn out worse

²⁰⁸ But Luther needs evident scripture, as one to whom God has denied His Spirit

²⁰⁹ He had diabolical, not divine, thunder

It is written,²¹⁰ he says, “that all things are yours, whether Apollo, or Cephas, or Paul, but you are Christ’s.” If we are Christ’s alone, who is the dull-witted king who strives by his lies to make us the pope’s?²¹¹ We are not the pope’s, but the pope is ours. It is not right to be judged by him but to judge him. For “the spiritual man is judged by no man and he himself judges all men,” because it is true that, “All things are yours,” even the pope; how much more these riffraff and good-for-nothing rascals, the Thomists and Henries. 5 10

Confound it if frenzy itself is as frenetic or raving madness itself is as raving mad as is this witty little noggin of Luther’s. “The pope is ours,” he says; “therefore it is our right, not to be judged by him, but to judge him.” By the same reasoning:²¹² a physician is ours, therefore it is our right, not to be cured by him, but to cure him; and a teacher belongs to his students, therefore it is their right, not to study from him, but to teach him. 15

Now as for his statement that it is our right not to be judged by the pope but to judge him, what does he mean by the words, “It is our right”? Is he speaking of all men taken together? Or of individuals? If he says, “of all taken together,” he says nothing in his own support, because the totality of the church is for the pope, against him; but it helps him still less in the case of the sacraments, where both people and pope, present as well as past, are for the sacraments, against him. But if it is the right of individuals to judge concerning the pope, concerning the sacraments, concerning the true sense of holy scripture, then, since out of so many judges the judgment of Luther is almost the only one on the one side, by what prerogative should the vote of this one man outweigh the votes of all the others?²¹³ “Because,” he says, “the spiritual man is judged by no one and he himself judges all men, because it is true that all things are yours, even the pope.” 20 25 30 35

Does it not seem to you, reader, that you are listening to gibberish? Is Luther alone, then, spiritual; or is the pope alone not spiritual; so that either Luther can judge all men and be judged by absolutely no one, or the pope ought to be judged by all men and judge no one?

²¹⁰ Luther’s words

²¹¹ On the contrary, you dull-witted friarlet, you lie against the king. You satanist and heretic!

²¹² Another similar reasoning

²¹³ Rather he is condemned by the votes of everyone

Who will not be amused by the madness of a man raving so sweetly that he does not see that whatever he blathers against the pope he is also blathering against Peter himself and against Paul? “For all things,” he says, “are yours”; he does not say, “the pope,” but, “Apollo, Cephas, and Paul.” For this reason, just as Luther says, “We are not the pope’s, but the pope is ours; it is our right therefore not to be judged by the pope but to judge him, because the spiritual man judges all things and he is judged by no one”; so it is necessary for him to say, “We are not Peter’s or Paul’s, but Peter and Paul are ours; it is therefore our right not to be judged by Peter and Paul but to judge Peter and Paul.”²¹⁴ Indeed, he will rather say, not, “It is our right,” but, “It is my right,” because the spiritual man judges all things and is judged by no one. Therefore Luther, a spiritual man, will judge according to this reasoning, not Thomists and Henries, but Peter and Paul and all the rest of the apostles.

Go on now, reader, and deny that a single Minerva was born from the head of Jove, when you see the single head of this fellow bring forth so many frenzies.

Although I am foolish,²¹⁵ he says, and not very skilled, I who drill so often without effect into these hopelessly senseless brains, and keep chanting without result to these deaf blockheads: “The traditions of men or long usage has no validity in matters of faith.”

You certainly are foolish enough, as you say, and not only unskilled but also senseless, insane, hopelessly brainless, who like a cuckoo keep chanting without result the same trite song: “The traditions of men have no validity in matters of faith,” since you are such a deaf blockhead²¹⁶ that you do not hear what has been dinned into your ears a thousand times: that what you call the traditions of men are the traditions of God; nor do you answer anything at all to those arguments by which the arguments you state have been dissolved before they are stated.

How often,²¹⁷ he says, I have said that even in the opinion of Augustine honor is owed only to the canonical books, so that one may most firmly believe

²¹⁴ Pray, tell then, Luther: How do you judge them?

²¹⁵ Luther’s words

²¹⁶ Deaf Luther

²¹⁷ Luther’s words

that there is no error in them, but that the rest, however much holiness and learning distinguish them, are not worthy of equal honor.

251

On the matter of the long-lasting faith of the church, which he had said is of no validity, he does not present any proof; for sufficient argument against the words of Christ, “I am with you even to the end of the world,” and likewise against the statement that the Spirit, the Paraclete, will lead the church into all truth, and against the fact that Christ prayed that the faith of the church would not fail; sufficient argument against all these texts, I say, is the fact that the Turk would jeer at the men who would say such things.²¹⁸ But, lest anyone be influenced at all by the authority of the holy fathers, he presents Augustine’s statement that the other books outside the canonical scripture are not worthy of equal honor, no matter how much holiness and learning distinguish their authors. As if anyone would thus cite the saying of any saint as though it were sacred scripture. And yet I have no doubt that if this same Augustine had read anything in the works of all the holy fathers preceding him, especially anything harmonizing with the faith of his own time, he would never have doubted that it was a true and undoubted article of Christian faith. For the writings of our predecessors represent to us the faith of their own times.²¹⁹ Nor do we have any other way of speaking with the dead in order that we can know the content of their faith. Therefore, out of the books of those who have lived before us we find out that knowledge, and thus we discover that this faith which Luther attacks is not, as he falsely asserts, new or proper to any one nation, but that it is the public faith of the whole church through many ages. That this church is true and unable to err and be deceived in a matter of such great importance was promised by Him who said: “The Paraclete, when He shall have come, shall lead you into all truth.” But Luther, on the contrary, says: “Scripture demands that nothing be believed except itself alone.” I ask you, Luther: Where does scripture demand this? Cite the scriptural text through which the Holy Spirit forbids anyone to believe Him unless He is quoting scripture. When He descended upon the apostles, did He teach them nothing at all without scripture?²²⁰ Did they

²¹⁸ What Luther opposes to the scriptures

²¹⁹ That the faith of the saints is gathered from their writings

²²⁰ Luther does not believe even God without a written guarantee

demand a scriptural text of Him in support of every truth? Is it to you alone, Luther, that the Holy Spirit is so untrustworthy that you are unready to believe Him at all without a written guarantee?

These are the arguments which this enchanter has always chanted vainly to virtuous and faithful men; that is, as he calls them, to deaf asps who, he says, incessantly repeat and chatter their ditties: “Augustine or Jerome said so; Ambrose said so; therefore Luther is a heretic because the sayings of Augustine or Ambrose are articles of faith.” I certainly admit that that inference has no validity; but I think the following is valid: “No one has ever said any such thing to Luther; therefore Luther is a shameless liar.” But Luther himself cannot deny this one: “Luther denies that what the Holy Spirit has taught the church are articles of faith; therefore Luther is a heretic.”

Indeed,²²¹ and these Thomist swine, he says, are forced to grant that holy men have erred rather often, so that their authority cannot be enough, even by the judgment of common sense, for confirming faith and supporting conscience.

Ah! I have just finally caught on, idiot that I am, why Luther arrogates so much to himself; why he wishes himself more than all the holy fathers taken together to be believed concerning the meaning of scripture and concerning faith. Now he has given the reason; namely, that they have erred rather often; he²²² cannot err.

Therefore, if he, a single individual, drags into question any matter on which everyone else agrees, the authority of all the others does not suffice to support conscience. Why? Because there is not one of the others who cannot err. But the authority of Luther suffices. Why? Because he cannot err. As if some blind man were to say: “There is hardly any person with sight who does not err at times on the colors of things; I am unable to err; therefore, if a man does not wish to be deceived about colors, let him distrust all other mortals taken together, and let him believe me alone.”

And this, he says, is my general response to those royal principles of the Thomists. Let mad Orestes swear that this answer is that of a madman.

²²¹ Luther’s words. With how much more reason do they say that you err?

²²² He, on the contrary, always errs

He takes up again certain absurd statements
of Luther which the author initially proposed
for discussion but has put off till this section.
Chapter 15.

255

Although I know, reader, that for a long while now you have been
disgusted by the whole tenor of this general response, which you see
is so stupid that you cannot but wonder what sort of ungoverned
madness has governed the fellow, since he has not been ashamed to
answer so senselessly with so much boasting, nevertheless I will ask
you to endure patiently a bit more boredom while you recall certain
words from the beginning of that little book which I have put off till
this point, lest he be able to pretend that I am imitating him and
passing over in silence any argument he considers solid; or lest you,
reader, should judge me either so forgetful as not to remember what I
promised at the beginning, or of such bad
faith as not to want to fulfill what I have
promised.²²³ On the other hand, that the
matter may hereafter be less disgusting to you, the folly of Luther,
which displays his asinine ears at almost every syllable, will relieve
your boredom. This, then, is how he talks: 5
10
15
20

The papists²²⁴ cannot yet understand what
the battle between me and them is all
about. To no avail have I published so many books which openly
testify that I seek only that the divine writings alone may reign, as
is fitting and just, but that human inventions and traditions should be
abolished as most harmful stumbling blocks, or with their poison cut
out and their sting removed; that is, with their power of forcing and
commanding and ensnaring consciences snatched away, they should
be tolerated as optional matters, neither good nor bad, like any other
pest or misfortune of the world. 25
30

You hear nothing new here, reader, but the same thing that,
having been hammered away at ten times before in his general
response, has been refuted and disproved ten times, as you have seen,
so that there was not any need of repeating
the same points again here,²²⁵ only I wished
to warn you and to present for your 35

²²³ The author now carries out his initial promise

²²⁴ Luther's words

²²⁵ Keep in mind, reader, what he has said before

consideration the sort of things he calls inventions and traditions of men. For he himself mentions them a little later, when he says:

257

The other kind²²⁶ consists of those things which are outside scripture, namely:

the papacy	the decrees of councils	5
doctors	indulgences	
purgatory	the mass	
universities	monastic vows	
falsely named bishops	the traditions of men	10
the cult of the saints	new sacraments	

And anything similar, that is, cockle sown by Satan, through the rule of his Roman idol, in the field of the Lord;²²⁷ not only can the church very profitably do without them, but moreover she does not even endure unless she does without them, or uses them in accordance with free choice. 15

You have often heard, reader, that he considers as traditions of men everything that is not contained in evident scriptures. Now you see him bring forward, as though under the topic of example, not only the papacy or indulgences or all the vows of monks, by doing away with which very things he would have showed that he was sacrilegious enough, but the decrees of councils, and holy doctors, and the sacraments, purgatory, the cult of the saints, and finally the mass itself, which he terms elsewhere a sheer monstrosity, an idol, a spectre, a lie, and the very abomination itself standing in the holy place.²²⁸ Therefore, unless all these things be at least optional and neither good nor bad, he thinks the church cannot even endure, but that, given this condition, the one as well as the other can endure, yet only as a man endures with a pest. Therefore, it would be much healthier that, like most harmful stumbling blocks, there should be abolished altogether the papacy, doctors, universities, bishops, councils, monks, the traditions of men, the veneration of saints, and the mass, the sacraments, all hope of forgiveness and fear of purgatory. For then at last the church would be most fortunate,²²⁹ if, with the papacy abolished together with the decrees of councils and monastic vows and all universities and 20 25 30 35

²²⁶ Luther's words

²²⁷ Do you, pray tell, so clearly distinguish the cockle from the wheat?

²²⁸ Here you see, reader, what Luther considers the traditions of men

²²⁹ On what condition Christians would seem fortunate to Luther

absolutely all doctors, the people would neither be ruled by laws nor obey rulers nor listen to doctors, but would be so free and unbridled, with the freedom of the gospel of course, that no one would be forced, nor commanded, nor counselled, nor taught anything, nor would anyone venerate the saints; and he would condemn the sacraments; but the mass, that is, the body of Christ offered with holy ceremonies, he would even abominate. That he can do this with more impunity, let him only believe that he does none of these things with a free will, but let him impute all evil deeds to God; let him have firm faith in the promise of God, that no matter what he has done he will be saved through baptism; if he believes this, he will be blessed and happy.²³⁰ All fears and the inexorable fate he has cast under his feet, together with the roaring of Avernian Acheron. I am not at all surprised if he has no fear of purgatory; there is indeed no reason for a person to be afraid of it who has had this sort of faith and lives in this manner.

He refutes the slander of Luther, who lies in saying that the king has falsely charged him with the heresy that faith alone without works suffices for salvation. Chapter 16.

But I must not pass over at this point the fact that Luther slanders the prince, as if the latter imputes to him falsely the heresy that faith alone without works suffices for salvation. And this, he says, the king says of him falsely, although he himself says the same thing once again in this same book in which he answers the king; in it his words are as follows:

These sacrilegious people²³¹ have one madness: they wish to act before God by works and not by faith alone; the result is that it is necessary to deny Christ and to make faith in Him void.

What is clearer than these words? And although this scoundrel reiterates the same thing again, yet he does not hesitate—as if he had never said it but had always argued for the contrary opinion—to

²³⁰ The Lutheran faith

²³¹ Luther's words

attack the king with reproaches because the latter said that Luther had long ago said what he now says a second time.

261

This offspring of a viper,²³² he says, manifests his natural character and imitates the example of his parents. For thus even Paul, when he had taught that all the sons of Adam are justified by faith alone without works, had those, as he writes in Romans 3, “Who say that we teach: let us do evil so that good may come of it.”
But what judgment awaits them?²³³ “The condemnation of such men,” he says, “is just.” What should I say to my royal basilisk about his lie except the same judgment of condemnation? 5 10

Who would not be clearly impious to condemn Luther, the comrade of Paul, and to restrain his pen no differently than God restrained the tongue of those men referred to? For he says again a little later: 15

The whole world knows²³⁴ that I have always taught and written consistently about faith, about charity, about works, although by reason of experience and study I advanced from day to day more and more, so that I have expressed the same ideas now one way, now another, at times more clearly, in some places more amply, in other places at greater length, and I have discussed the same ideas in various ways, even as the sacred writings also treat them. 20

Behold a most holy man, who delivers to us new sacred writings to which we owe such reverence that if he should clearly blaspheme God, we would take it patiently and in good part, certain that we are rather deceived and unable to grasp the meaning of so great a father than that a holy man and one who says he is certain that he has his teaching from heaven judges erroneously; and so we would rather believe that the same thing is white and black at the same time than that Saint Luther in any way contradicts himself. For if Paul cannot be charged with having misunderstood when, to prevent anyone’s seizing the chance of misunderstanding him, he interprets himself, why should not Luther likewise be excused when, accused of misunderstanding, he repeats exactly the same opinion? And if we judge favorably of Paul, whose piety prevents us from doubting that in doubtful passages he undoubtedly understood rightly, why may not 25 30 35

²³² Luther’s words

²³³ This will be your judgment, distorter of the scriptures

²³⁴ Luther’s words. Listen to this apostle, reader

Luther, whose impiety renders not only his ambiguous statements but even his well-expressed statements almost justly suspect, secure from us that we should interpret in good part whatever he has evidently written erroneously?

263

How stupidly Luther wavers on the matter of works and faith,
shamelessly pretending that the prince falsely misrepresents
his words. Chapter 17. 5

Lest anyone can doubt what the fellow does think of works and faith,
I will write below those words in which the most prudent prince
excellently refuted this impiety of the rascal. 10

“It is nothing new for this fellow,²³⁵

Luther, to talk nonsense about known
things as though they were new things. After he has described this
faith in many words, he then extols the riches of faith so that he may
render us poor in good works, without 15
which, as blessed James says,²³⁶ faith is utterly
dead. But Luther commends faith to us in such a way that he not only
allows us a dispensation from good works but even suggests boldness
in every sort of crime. For he says:

Now you see how rich is the Christian²³⁷ 20
or baptized man who, even though wish-
ing to, cannot lose his salvation by any
sins however great, unless he does not wish to believe. For no sins can
damn him except lack of faith alone.

“O impious voice and teacher of all 25
impiety,²³⁸ so hateful in itself to pious ears
that there is no need to refute it. Will not adultery, then, damn a
man? Will not murder damn him? Not perjury? If only a person
believes he will be saved by virtue of the promise in baptism?

“For he says this most clearly; nor do the words which he immedi- 30
ately subjoins correct this opinion in any way at all; rather, they
more truly exaggerate it, for he says:

²³⁵ The king's words

²³⁶ Saint James

²³⁷ Luther's words. This is a new religion

²³⁸ The king's words

If faith returns²³⁹ or stands firmly by the divine promise made to the baptized, everything else is swallowed up in a moment by this same faith, indeed by the truth of God, because He cannot refuse Himself if you have acknowledged Him and faithfully clung to Him who gives the promise. 5

“What²⁴⁰ else does he say in these words but what he has said before? Provided there be no lack of faith, all other crimes are swallowed up in a moment by faith alone, if you have acknowledged Christ and faithfully clung to His promise; that is, if you have firmly believed that you must be saved through faith, whatever you may have done. And, so that you may have less doubt about where he is heading: 10

Contrition,²⁴¹ he says, and confession of sins, as also satisfaction and all those exercises thought out by men will suddenly abandon you and render you more unhappy if you have wracked yourself on them, forgetting this divine truth. —which truth? Why, this truth that no sins can damn you except only lack of faith.²⁴² 15 20

“What Christian ears²⁴³ will endure the pestilential hiss of this serpent, by which he extols baptism for no other end than that he may debase penance and set up the grace of baptism as a license for sinning with impunity?” 25
 You have heard, reader, what the prince imputes to him; or rather, what his own words impute to him and that so openly that not even yet has he found any excuse to set up in defense of it, and yet the shameless fellow, as if he had heard nothing, says the very same thing again and at the same time, just as if he had never said it, complains that the statement is imputed to him.²⁴⁴ But if he wished people to think that he was giving an opinion on how necessarily good works follow from faith formed by charity—although that could not have been his opinion,²⁴⁵ since he not only cries out so often that faith alone suffices but he even explicitly abolishes works as altogether useless and 30 35

²³⁹ Luther’s words. If this is so, why do we avoid wicked deeds?

²⁴⁰ The king’s words

²⁴¹ Luther’s words

²⁴² Why, then, are sins called mortal?

²⁴³ The king’s words

²⁴⁴ This is characteristic of the fellow who is neither willing to speak nor able to keep silent

²⁴⁵ Where will you flee, Luther?

clearly clamors that no sins, no crimes, however monstrous, can damn a Christian except lack of faith alone—then hear again what the prince says in order to leave no escape at all to the heretic.

“Moreover²⁴⁶ when he says that we do not satisfy God by works, but by faith alone, if he means, ‘not by works alone without faith,’ he is raving senselessly against the Roman See, in which no one has ever been so foolish as to say that works without faith satisfy. But if he considers works superfluous and faith alone sufficient, no matter what sort the works may be, then indeed he is saying something and is truly dissenting from the Roman See,²⁴⁷ which believes Saint James that faith without works is dead. You see then how foolishly Luther gets himself all worked up when he so inveighs against the Roman See that meanwhile he entangles himself in nets either of folly or of impiety. However, I certainly think it is nearer the truth that Luther thinks faith without good works is always sufficient for salvation. That he thinks this is clearly evident from many other passages as well as from the following in which he says:

God cares nothing for works nor does He require them.²⁴⁸ But He does require that we consider Him true to His promises.

“Luther himself²⁴⁹ will have seen what he meant by these words; I certainly believe that God cares both for our faith and for our works and that He requires neither our works nor our faith. For, though He does not require our good works, since He is God, yet He has care of everything that men do, since He forbids them to do one thing, commands another, without whose care not even one sparrow falls to the earth, of which two are sold for two farthings.”

Behold, what have you ever read more clear, reader, than what the prince has quoted for you from Luther? Or what have you ever seen more pestilential? But if Luther should wish us to think he meant something different from what he writes, why does he not even now interpret his words more sensibly?²⁵⁰ If he does not think that we should sin, why does he promise impunity for sinning?

²⁴⁶ The king’s words

²⁴⁷ This something is nothing

²⁴⁸ Luther’s words

²⁴⁹ The king’s words

²⁵⁰ So that more people will follow him more readily

Why does he invite the whole world to security in sinning? If he should deny that his writings contain this meaning, behold, the prince has produced texts which are self-evident, and yet the prince makes them still clearer by interpretation. Luther shows that he has read these passages. If, then, the prince twists his words to another meaning than he should, why does he himself skip over such an important matter so timidly? Why does he not in turn show which words the king distorts, what he patches on through misrepresentation that Luther's own words do not contain? The slippery fellow would undoubtedly have done this, reader, if he had not seen himself hemmed in so narrowly that he had nowhere to turn for escape.²⁵¹

As for the fact that certain men try to defend him as though he does not think that just any works should be contemned, but only the works of the law; if he calls the law those precepts which were given to Moses on tablets, he sticks in the same mud. For without these works, faith does not suffice even now; unless he pretends that he is writing these things for children or fools whom ignorance excuses from fulfilling the precepts. But he could not have babbled these words about the ceremonies of the law, or as they call them the legal precepts, since he is not ignorant of the fact that no one is so foolish as to think he is at the present time bound by them. Although his promoters labor in vain to soften this stupid teaching by some gloss, the Ethiopian does not wish to be made white. What color of defense will this teaching take which not only argues that good works have no value but even that evil works, no matter of what kind, cause no harm.²⁵² No sins, he says, can damn the Christian except lack of faith alone. Surely, if Luther believed anything at all about Christ, he would never have dared to think such things. But he, clearly a pious fellow, wished to lead the world astray from reliance on good works to reliance on faith; as if the people were so constant in good works that there was thereby a danger that each one would think himself too much a little saint. In order to cure that evil, then, he orders that they should only believe Christ, that they will be saved through faith alone, and that they should altogether neglect, not only ceremonies, but even all good works whatsoever. Indeed, so that they may spend their time more pleasantly in the freedom of faith, they should realize that no crimes of any kind harm the man who believes. For no sins can damn

²⁵¹ Luther's last hiding places

²⁵² Make some defense, Quintilian

a Christian but lack of faith alone. O Satan, Satan, God has revealed to the king the subtleties which you plot through the mouth of Luther so that the liberty of the gospel may be nothing else but unbridled license by which the people of Christ may rush headlong to hell.

271

He censures the wicked folly of Luther, who
is of the opinion that all laws should be
repealed. Chapter 18. 5

This extraordinary opinion, by which he would wish all human laws abolished, is like a kind of corollary of this heresy. Indeed, he already denies that any one of all those laws binds any Christian. For he writes thus in the *Babylonian Captivity*: 10

And so I say:²⁵³ neither pope, nor bishop,
nor any man has the right to impose a single syllable on a Christian man, unless this is done by the latter's consent. What-
ever is done otherwise, is done in a tyrannical spirit. Therefore, prayers, fasting, donations, and in short whatever the pope has ordained and demanded in the whole body of his decrees, as numerous as they are wicked, he has demanded and ordained with absolutely no right, and he sins against the liberty of the church as often as he attempts to decree any of these things. 15
20

This madness of the rascal the prince touches on in the following words:

“But I am amazed²⁵⁴ that the man has so little shame as to be able to think up such
absurd things about laws; as if Christians could not sin, but that such a great multitude of believers were so perfect that nothing should be decreed, either for the worship of God or for the avoidance of crimes; but with the same stroke and with the same shrewdness he takes away all the power and authority of princes and prelates. For what
should a king or a prelate do if he can neither establish any law nor execute it once it has been established; but the people without law drifts to and fro like a ship without a rudder. What then becomes of the apostle's command: ‘Let every creature be subject to higher 25
30

²⁵³ Luther's words. This would be very advantageous for your heresy

²⁵⁴ The king's words

authorities? What about the text: ‘Obey your superiors, or the king as supreme,’ and what follows? Why then does Paul say: ‘The law is good’? And elsewhere: ‘The law is the bond of perfection’? Furthermore, why does Augustine say: ‘Not without reason have there been instituted the power of the king, the right of the judge, the executioner’s instruments of torture, the arms of the soldier, the discipline of the ruler, and even the severity of a good father. All these things have their own bounds, their own causes, reasons, usefulness;²⁵⁵ and when these things are feared, the wicked are restrained, and the good live in quiet among the wicked?’

“But I forbear to speak of kings lest I seem to plead my own cause. I ask this: If no one, whether man or angel, can lay down a law for the Christian man, why does the apostle lay down so many laws about electing bishops, and about widows, and about women’s veiling their heads? Why does he decree that the believing wife should not leave an unbelieving husband, unless she be deserted by him? Why does he dare to say: ‘To the others I, not the Lord, say?’²⁵⁶ Why did he exercise such great power as to order the fornicator to be delivered over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh? Why did Peter strike down Ananias and Saphira with a like punishment because they had kept back for themselves a little of their own money? If the apostles were used to decreeing many things besides the special precept of the Lord for the Christian people,²⁵⁷ why may not those who have succeeded to the position of the apostles do the same thing for the welfare of the people? Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, a holy man, and not at all arrogant, did not hesitate to command that throughout his diocese married couples should abstain from marital embraces during Lent; and is Luther indignant if the Roman pontiff, the successor of Peter, the vicar of Christ, to whom as to the chief of the apostles Christ is believed to have given the keys of the church so that by him others might enter and be excluded, enjoins fasting and a few prayers? As for his persuading men that one must obey bodily but retain liberty of mind, who is so blind as not to see these tricks? Why does this simple and sanctionious fellow carry both fire and water? Why does he order us, as

²⁵⁵ True, but Luther would want these things abolished so that the wicked man may be without punishment

²⁵⁶ Don’t tell me you condemn him, Luther!

²⁵⁷ These things you conceal, Luther

though in the words of the apostle, not to become slaves of men, not to be subject to the decrees of men, and yet order us to obey the unjust tyranny of a pontiff? Does the apostle preach in this manner: 'Kings have no right over you; you should put up with their unjust rule. Masters have no right over you; you should put up with their unjust slavery'? If Luther does not think the people should obey, why does he say that they must obey? If he thinks they should obey, why does he not himself obey? Why does the slippery fellow trifle with such tricks? Why does he rise up with abusive language against a pontiff who he says must be obeyed?²⁵⁸ Why does he stir up a tumult? Why does he arouse the people against one whose very tyranny, as he calls it, must by his own admission be endured? Indeed, it is for no other reason, I think, than to procure for himself the favor of such wicked men as would desire impunity for their crimes and who would appoint as their chief him who already struggles for their liberty, and who would divide the church of Christ, founded for so long upon a firm rock, and would erect a new church gathered together from wicked and criminal men, against which the prophet exclaimed: 'I have hated the church of the wicked and I will not sit down with the impious.' "

What does he answer to this? Exactly what he could; that is, absolutely nothing. What excuse can be given or contrived for an opinion so absurd? And yet this utterly stupid fellow is not ashamed to declare it so often with such great arrogance, as if to think otherwise would be a crime. But he thought he had brilliantly handled this very silly opinion when he replied at Worms that the law of the gospel alone would ultimately be sufficient and human laws useless if magistrates were good and the faith truly preached.²⁵⁹ As if even the best magistrates could manage either that the whole Christian people would want to live in common or that the wicked would not want to steal or that any preaching of the faith could procure that no one anywhere would be wicked. If the law of the gospel does not permit stealing, surely the human law which punishes stealing is not useless; and the human law which alone apportions ownership of goods binds Christians; if this ownership is done away with, there cannot indeed be stealing. But if he should

²⁵⁸ He does this so that he himself will not be forced to obey. The king hits the nail on the head

²⁵⁹ Luther stupidly handles a very stupid doctrine

say that from this premise the argument is drawn that we would do better to be without that law from which the ownership of goods arises and would do better to live in a certain natural community with the occasion of stealing eliminated, it does not help his case even if someone should grant him this argument. For even if we could live in common with far fewer laws, we still could not live altogether without laws. For the obligation to work would have to be prescribed for certain classes, and laws would be needed to restrain crimes which would run riot even in that kind of life. But now if, with the faith preached most truly as the apostles used to preach it most truly, with, moreover, the best rulers everywhere put in charge of the Christian people, the ownership of property could yet remain, and many wicked men would remain, he cannot deny that the human law binds Christians so that no one might steal what the law has apportioned to another, nor would the law be useless in punishing anyone who committed theft.²⁶⁰

As for his statement in the *Babylon* that good and prudent magistrates will govern their charge better by the leading of nature than by laws, who does not see how absurd this is? Will the good magistrate be less just in establishing law than in conducting a court of justice, in which many things can occur which may destroy the innocent?²⁶¹ To say nothing meantime of the fact that hardly any judgment is rendered justly which is not rendered according to some established law. For the law of the gospel does not apportion possessions, nor does reason alone prescribe the forms of determining property, unless reason is attended by an agreement, and this a public agreement in the common form of mutual commerce, which agreement, either taking root in usage or expressed in writing, is public law. Therefore, if you take away the laws and leave everything free to the magistrates, either they will command nothing and they will forbid nothing, and then magistrates will be useless; or they will rule by the leading of their own nature and imperiously prosecute anything they please, and then the people will in no way be freer, but, by reason of a condition of servitude, worse, when they will have to obey, not fixed and definite laws, but indefinite whims changing from day to day. And this is bound to happen even under the best magistrates, whom, although they may enjoin the best laws, nevertheless the people will oppose and murmur

²⁶⁰ Answer, Luther

²⁶¹ Conceal this, Luther

against as suspect, as though they govern everything, not according to what is just and fair, but according to caprice. But now, since Luther himself admits that no magistrates can be found anywhere who are not men; that is, of whom it is not very certain either to the citizens or to themselves what sort of men they will be within three days, how shrewdly does this wise man advise that laws be omitted and that all things be permitted to the magistrates, as though the people would thus live in liberty! 5

Now I ask you, what sort of statement is this which he makes: “Neither pope, nor bishop, nor any man has the right to impose a single syllable on a Christian man without the latter’s consent”? I say nothing for the time being about the pope and about those to whom God has given power to impose many syllables by which they may direct the people in the worship of God; let us consider civil laws. If no one has the power to establish a single syllable for the Christian man without his consent, then neither the king nor the whole people can establish any law which is valid against anyone who opposed it at the time it was proposed. Happy,²⁶² therefore, are the thieves and murderers, who will never be so insane as to agree on a law according to which they will pay penalties. Indeed, this farsighted father does not see that according to this reasoning,²⁶³ should everyone unanimously agree, yet the law can have force only until a new citizen is born or someone is enrolled as a citizen. But the fellow thinks that preaching the faith truly is nothing else than preaching it as he himself has often preached it already; namely, that faith alone suffices not only without good works but even with crimes of any kind, which, so he says, can in no way damn any Christian, if only his faith stays firm or returns;²⁶⁴ that is, of course, if even while he is committing the crime he yet believes that it cannot harm him because of his faith in the promise of God; or, if he has believed this less firmly while committing the crime and so because of his infirm faith has committed the crime more timidly, let his faith at least return once the crime is carried through; let him not be sorry that he has committed it and torture himself by useless contrition. Surely, if the people had faith in the preaching of this Lutheran faith, they would very soon say truly that no laws obliged anyone, but the people without law would rush forth into every kind of crime. 35

²⁶² O happy brigands!

²⁶³ Luther’s dull head

²⁶⁴ What is clearer?

Now you see, reader,²⁶⁵ how shrewdly the sagacious fellow strives to remove all human laws and with how much profit for the Christian people. You see, likewise, with how much reasoning, with what testimonies of scripture he has propped up his decree in opposition to the judgment of all learned men, in opposition to the judgment of all good men, in opposition to the public agreement of the whole world. You see how in that matter, in which hardly any reason could be strong enough, this sagacious fellow brings! forward no reason at all, no scriptural testimony; rather, he, who falsely imputes to others that they demand credence for themselves alone, himself demands credence for himself alone against the whole world, against clear reasons, against the testimonies of sacred scriptures, and this to the utter and inescapable destruction of all peoples. And this in human laws which truly are the traditions of men. For those items which are listed in his catalogue as traditions of men and are therefore, so he judges, to be tolerated like some pests or altogether abolished as most harmful stumbling blocks, have long ago been proved to be the traditions of God, partly contained in the scriptures themselves, partly handed on by the living word of God. And this has been proved by reason, by the scriptures, and by what is the strongest argument against Luther, the admission of Luther himself. Unless he either denies again his admission that the church has from God the power to distinguish the words of God from the words of men, or brings forward another catholic church by whose teaching he has known the gospel, or proves to us that the church has learned nothing without the scriptures, despite the evangelist's statement: "Not all things have been written in this book"; and likewise the apostle's words: "Hold on to what I have commanded you, whether by word of mouth or by letters"; likewise what was recalled by the same apostle: "I will give my laws into their hearts and in their minds I will write them"; and likewise those words of Christ: "The Spirit, the Paraclete, when He shall have come, will lead you into all truth"; or unless Luther proves to us that for so many ages in the times of the holy fathers Christ abandoned His church, and that the faith failed immediately after the apostles, contrary to the text which says: "Christ prayed that the faith of the church would not fail," and as though truth itself were a liar like Luther when He said He would be with the church even to the consummation of the world; unless Luther overthrows for us all the

²⁶⁵ Brief epilogue by the author

objections which the prince has brought up against him, all of which he so far conceals and dissimulates for no other reason than that he is aware that he has nothing at all to answer to any of all those arguments; unless, I say, Luther clearly does all these things, then I have made most clear to you, reader—rather, I have clearly shown you that the king has done so—that which I initially promised to show you: that this fellow not only abolishes the traditions of men, even those which he ought to obey, but that he abolishes even the traditions of God, which the filthy mouth of this utterly insane rascal with insolent blasphemy calls plagues and most harmful stumbling blocks.

He shows that Luther does only one thing:
destroy the very scriptures for which he
pretends to fight. Chapter 19.

Now let us see whether he does not by every trick possible attack the very sacred scripture for which he pretends to fight. In the first place, to say nothing of how he everywhere very wickedly, everywhere stupidly twists the scriptures to the defense of destructive teachings, what can more thoroughly or more clearly destroy the whole force and fruit of all the scriptures than the fact that this fellow strives hand and foot so that no one will believe any learned men at all concerning the interpretation of scripture; so that no one will believe any of the holy fathers at all, or all men taken together at all; not believe the whole church at all, though it has been of one mind from the very origins of the church until this day; but that each one will oppose his own interpretation to everyone? What fruit will the scriptures bring forth if anyone whatever claims such authority for himself that in understanding them he relies on his own interpretation in opposition to that of everyone else, so that he is influenced by no authority at all not to measure the scriptures according to feeling and fancy? Here he clearly opens the window by which the people may plunge into perdition.

Tell me, Luther, by your madness, if you had lived during that tempest in which the church was thrown into turmoil by Arian storms, would you have urged what you now urge: that anyone of the

common people who pleased might consider himself qualified to judge concerning that controversy, and that each one might rely on himself in understanding the scriptures which he read, and that he might make light of the judgment of the holy fathers who were present at the council sessions in which the heresies were condemned, so that, although you admit that Christ is present wherever two or three are gathered together in His name, you deny that He was present where there were gathered together in that same name six hundred men, and those from every part of the Christian people?

But who is so blind as not to see that in this matter you have no other intention²⁶⁶ than that, after abolishing completely the authority of public agreement, you may be able to stir up a tumult from the heedless disagreement of private individuals, in which case you may find some men foolish enough to think themselves free to rely with impunity on you, a single scoundrel, in opposition to the faith of everyone else? Lest the authority of scripture might have any force against you, you work so that each person will drag into doubt the meaning of the sacred writings and defend his own fancy not only against the judgment of all the holy fathers, against the universal judgment of the whole church, but even against the judgment of blessed Paul the apostle.²⁶⁷

Perhaps, reader, you understand this to mean that Luther is showing boldness in not acknowledging Paul's judgment and in saying:²⁶⁸ In this or that passage Paul does not mean what the church believes he means. No, the case is far otherwise, reader, although not even that is to be endured; but this fellow does not fear, when Paul teaches that some text or other from sacred scripture refers to Christ, he does not fear, I say, to draw into doubt once more and to render questionable the judgment of the apostle and to say: Perhaps Paul did not say that from God but from his own understanding. So then, you rascal, recognize the sacrilegious words with which in the *Babylonian Captivity* you, truly a captive in the service of demons, pervert the scriptures and blaspheme the apostle. For thus you blather:

Paul,²⁶⁹ in Ephesians 5, either forcibly applies to Christ on his own initiative

²⁶⁶ Luther's intention

²⁶⁷ He does this so that he may more freely defend his own error

²⁶⁸ Luther does not believe Paul

²⁶⁹ Luther's words

those words on marriage quoted from Genesis 2, or else, according to the commonly held opinion, he teaches that the spiritual marriage of Christ is taught in that passage.

287

O Satan, Satan, how much more honestly even you treat the scripture than does your disciple Luther!²⁷⁰ For, although you tried to misuse one text through trickery, yet you applied to Christ those words of scripture which pertained to Him. “It is written of you,” you said, “‘God has given His angels command concerning you.’” But Luther not only does not apply to Christ the scriptural text which pertains to Christ, but he even belittles, so far as he can, the trustworthiness of the apostle’s application of the text. Exult, Satan; you have the kind of disciple who makes even the word of Christ doubtful.²⁷¹ For, although Christ says, “No disciple is above his teacher, but it is enough for him if he be like his teacher,” it is not enough for your disciple Luther if he be a liar and a schemer such as you are, Satan, but he strives to surpass you by far. And so, when he tries first of all to disparage the authority of the sacrament according to the interpretation he wants accepted: that if that passage of Genesis did pertain in any way to Christ and the church, it would not, at any event, pertain to Him except superficially, as if by some commonly held opinion, lest it be thought to pertain properly to that point; yet, conscious that Paul cannot be so understood since he exalts the greatness of that sacrament so explicitly in so many ways on the authority of that passage of Genesis about the union of Adam with Eve, a passage applied so properly, so truly, to the marriage of Christ with the church, what does the scoundrel do? Why, something more pestilential than anything he could have devised for destroying the force of all the scriptures. Paul, he says, forcibly applies that passage to Christ, possibly on his own initiative.²⁷² O scoundrel, scoundrel, you suggest a scruple, as if the apostle would interpret the scriptures, not according to the spirit of God, but according to his own—that is, a human—spirit, which you so often call deceptive; nor does he only interpret but he even “forcibly applies” them, as if he seizes them by the neck and twists them resisting into a different meaning.

²⁷⁰ Satan applies the scriptures more honestly than Luther

²⁷¹ You have found a man according to your heart

²⁷² See how Luther defers to the scriptures

Is this your deference for the scriptures, you who boast that you believe nothing but the scriptures? You who accept nothing else but the scriptures, do you accept the scriptures in such a way that you do not believe even the apostles concerning the meaning of the scriptures, although the apostles learned the meaning of the scriptures from the Lord? But, you say, they speak some things from Christ, some things from their own head, and the former must necessarily be believed, the latter can be doubted. Let your friarity, reverend friar, give us, then, a rule by which we may distinguish those passages in scripture which the apostles interpret according to God's meaning from those which they forcibly apply and twist according to their own personal judgment.²⁷³ I hear, honored doctor, that you give us such a rule: that the interpretation of the apostles and evangelists on the sacred writings must stand firm wherever they add to their interpretations, "Thus says the Lord"; but, as to the other things which they say, that they themselves speak them, or rather they forcibly apply or twist the scriptures where they please according to their own personal, that is a human, judgment. Nor should they be believed in such cases because all men are liars, as you have earlier blathered in that madly raving book of yours in regard to Jeremiah, Isaiah, Elias and John the Baptist.²⁷⁴ A single scoundrel, therefore, renders questionable all the passages which the evangelists so often cite from the prophets or from any passage of scripture whatever, all those which the apostles so often bring forward in support of Christ, and he opens the way for everyone to say that these passages were not predictions about Christ but that the evangelists and the apostles have on their own judgment forcibly applied to Christ what the prophets have written about other persons. What is this, reader, if it is not openly to attack the scriptures?

But come, though; let this, if you will, be nothing; I grant you, Luther, who are so wicked that hardly any vice is a vice to you, I grant you, I say, that it is a trifling matter to contemn all the holy doctors. I grant that it is not a proof of a mind hostile to the scriptures that you strive and struggle to render all the interpretations of the apostles suspect.²⁷⁵ This at least not a single person will

²⁷³ A necessary rule for understanding the scriptures

²⁷⁴ That Jeremiah, Isaiah, Elias, John the Baptist seem liars to Luther

²⁷⁵ Luther openly attacks the scriptures

be too stupid to sense: how openly, how directly your not hesitating
 impiously to attack an undoubtedly sacred text as profane aims at
 sweeping away all the scriptures. Indeed, what is still more hateful:
 even if you have conceded that a text is canonical and written by the
 pen of an apostle, yet you dare to say that no faith should be placed
 in it and, setting your face against heaven, you do not fear to
 blaspheme an apostle with your abusive tongue. And so, you
 scoundrel, recognize again the sacrilegious words with which, when
 you were hard pressed by the apostle James' words on the sacrament
 of extreme unction, you, as though engaged in hand-to-hand conflict
 with the apostle, empty out on an apostle of God, you most base
 buffoon, the privy of your filthy mouth.

I pass over,²⁷⁶ you say, the fact that many
 persons assert with great probability that
 this epistle is not by James and is not
 worthy of the apostolic spirit, although whosoever it is, it has
 acquired authority by custom. Nevertheless, you say, if it were by the
 apostle James, I would say that no apostle is permitted to institute a
 sacrament on his own authority; that is, to give a divine promise with
 a sign accompanying it. This belonged to Christ alone. Thus, Paul
 says that he received the sacrament of the eucharist from the Lord and
 that he was sent not to baptize but to preach the gospel. Nowhere in
 the gospel, however, does one read of this sacrament of extreme
 unction.

Reader, please reread what the prince has written against these
 words. There you will immediately discover in how few words of
 Luther the prince has discovered and refuted how many absurdities.
 For he shows that Luther unjustly censures the church, that he
 impiously contradicts an apostle, and that
 he is also stupidly inconsistent with him-
 self.²⁷⁷ And all three of these things in
 scarcely three lines, so that no man's wisdom has ever been so
 wonderful as this fellow's folly is bewildering. What will you say here,
 Luther? What burrow have you provided for yourself by which you
 can flee? Will you deny that whoever wrote that epistle is clearly
 describing a sacrament, and will you depart from your definition of
 a sacrament as such, which you wanted to consist of a sensible sign
 and a promise of grace clearly included in the sacred writings? Or will

²⁷⁶ Luther's words against blessed James the apostle

²⁷⁷ The shameful (if he had any shame) lapse of Luther

you deny, as you have done, that that
 epistle should be numbered among the
 sacred writings? But the same church
 which numbers the gospels among the
 sacred writings, the same church, I say, 5
 numbers among the sacred writings this epistle.²⁷⁸ In this matter you
 are lying, whether the church can be deceived or whether it cannot
 be deceived. If she can be deceived in discerning the words of God,
 you lie precisely in saying that she cannot be deceived on this score.
 If she cannot be deceived, you again lie in saying that this epistle, 10
 which the church has approved as apostolic, is probably not apostolic.
 What remains then but that you should
 retract what you have said and instead
 deny once again that the church can
 discern the words of God, and then you would be calling into doubt 15
 even the epistles of Paul and the gospels?²⁷⁹ And you who contend that
 nothing is certain except the sacred scripture would then be render-
 ing nothing more uncertain than sacred scripture itself.

But still more dangerous is the fact that you even dared to contemn
 the epistle, if you have admitted that it is the apostle's; doubtless, I 20
 suppose, because the apostles are ours, not we theirs, according to
 that text which you cite as foolishly as you do frequently: "For all
 things are yours, whether Apollo, or
 Cephas, or Paul."²⁸⁰ It does not behoove us,
 then, you will say, to be judged by them but 25
 to judge them. How then, Luther, do you say that you are doing this
 so that the scriptures alone may be believed, since you do not admit
 as scripture a clear scriptural text? But if you rejected no scripture at
 all, nevertheless, since you care not a straw for all interpreters taken
 together, you return to the same spot since you believe nothing at all 30
 which is not manifest in evident scriptural
 texts.²⁸¹ For what scriptural text will ever be
 sufficiently evident if one can, as you are
 trying to do, cause the opinion of good men and of learned men to
 have no force against either the stupid interpretations of ignorant 35
 men or the crafty ones of wicked men? Who does not see that by this
 means it will come about that nothing at all can be proved from
 sacred scripture to a man so senseless that he either cannot or will not
 understand the sense of scripture? Indeed, that nothing is so absurd,

²⁷⁸ But Luther has nothing to do with the church, which he has long ago renounced. Luther is hemmed in on all sides

²⁷⁹ Here you hold the wolf by the ears, Luther

²⁸⁰ Luther would want that saying unsaid

²⁸¹ You are driving out one nail with another, Luther

nothing is so impious but someone like you, a raging madman and a shameless fellow, can argue he proves it by the testimonies of sacred scripture. For example, if some scoundrel should deny that Christ descended into hell, he will boast that he admits nothing besides evident scriptures, and he will deny that this teaching is proved by any sufficiently evident scriptural text. But if someone should cite that verse from the psalm, “My flesh shall rest in hope because you will not leave my soul in hell,” he will cite in his turn whatever fabrication he chooses from the commentaries of the Jews, and he will deny that that text refers in any way to Christ.²⁸² But if someone objects in turn that the apostle Peter declared that that psalm speaks of Christ (Acts 2), the scoundrel will not hesitate to say of Peter what our scoundrel said of Paul; namely, that Peter forcibly applied that text to Christ on his own initiative. But if some other scoundrel wants good works not to be required for salvation, he will cite that text of the gospel, “Whoever believes and is baptized shall be saved”; nothing else therefore should be required. Then, if someone should deny that this text is to be so understood and should cite the real meaning, together with the testimony of all the doctors, the fellow will scorn all the doctors and will stick to his own interpretation, bawling only that the scriptural text is evident.²⁸³ But if someone keeps bringing up to him some objection or other from sacred scripture, the scoundrel will not hesitate to escape immediately by means of some silly trick or other. For example, if someone brings up that text of James, “Faith without works is dead,” the fellow will say the same thing as our rascal has said: that the epistle is not James’, that it is not any apostle’s, that it has nothing worthy of the apostolic spirit. Finally, should the epistle be proved to be an apostle’s, the fellow will still say that the apostle does not speak correctly, that he has arrogated too much to himself in imposing the law of good works on Christians whom Christ has made free in faith alone from every yoke of good works.²⁸⁴ Nor should anyone but Christ alone be able to impose any law or any syllable of the law on any Christian.²⁸⁵ For the apostles did not have authority enough to judge us, but it is our right to judge them. “For all things are ours, whether

²⁸² That Luther fashions and changes the scriptures at will

²⁸³ He relies on himself alone in interpreting the scriptures

²⁸⁴ While he himself acts too arrogantly

²⁸⁵ And does not He require good works?

Apollo, or Cephas, or Paul.” For thus the fellow has been taught by Luther.

297

If anyone therefore, passing over your disciple, should object to you once more, Luther: “The church has judged this epistle to be the apostle’s, to have been written by the divine Spirit,” and should bring up to you your own words: “This power at least has been given by God to the church, that she can distinguish the words of God from the words of men,” then you will retract this statement immediately and will say that you have now weighed the matter more carefully,²⁸⁶ that the church has no power from God but that the church can be deceived in accepting scripture. But if someone or other will add that therefore the gospels themselves are uncertain, you will doubtless concede this also: that the true gospels are probably not the scriptures and gospels which we read but rather some one of those which the church has rejected.²⁸⁷ And concerning these matters, each one believes at his own risk.

But if someone should at this point throw up to you your inconsistency, because you are so often at variance with yourself and disagree with your own self, here indeed with how many jeers, how many guffaws and snorts will that man be mocked who is so ignorant, so inexperienced in arguing that he does not know what it means for a man to disagree with himself, or considers capricious and unstable a person who is consistently inconsistent,²⁸⁸ or demands that a man’s words should be bound fast as a bull’s horns are bound fast so that if he has ever said anything worthwhile he should not be permitted later to retract it when it would be to his advantage and to turn it into something evil, even as he changes nothing for the better of those things which he has at any time said badly.

You see here clearly, reader, with what good faith this good man proclaims that he proclaims:²⁸⁹ “The gospel! The gospel!”—as if anyone has ever been a heretic who did not proclaim the gospel—while at the same time he devises for himself a way whereby he may raise a doubt as to whether the gospel be the gospel, and by false interpretations weakens

²⁸⁶ Wherever he is inconsistent, he has of course considered the matter more carefully

²⁸⁷ He is undoubtedly heading in that direction and will arrive there very soon

²⁸⁸ Luther consistently inconsistent

²⁸⁹ With what good faith Luther proclaims: The gospel! The gospel! All heretics have this in common with Luther

the scriptures which, he says, should alone reign, and gives everyone the license of daring the same thing. Whatever scriptures he pleases he does not acknowledge as sacred; then, if the case presses him hard, he even contemns those which have been acknowledged; so that you cannot have any doubt that he himself has proved for us that which we initially promised we were ready to prove: that he does this only in order to destroy the very scriptures for which he pretends to fight.

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He declares that Luther, who boasts that the papists use a corrupt method of disputation by begging the initial premise, not only makes this objection falsely against others, but also uses this as his own peculiar and perpetual method of disputing. This whole chapter is delightful. Chapter 20.

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Come now, let us carefully examine that point in which Luther strangely delights and considers himself witty and skillful,²⁹⁰ when he makes sport of the catholic church as papistic and thinks everyone in comparison with himself so ignorant that no one understands either what the point in question is or by what method the point ought to be proved. “There is,²⁹¹” he says, “among these very men a most corrupt method of disputing which they call ‘begging the initial premise.’ This they learn and teach even till grey hairs, even till the grave, with so much sweat, with so much waste, the utterly wretched men.”

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Let us see, then, reader, which of the two sides begs the initial premise more corruptly; for each side begs some initial premise. We beg of him four postulates.²⁹²

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First,²⁹³ we beg that Luther believe the sacred writings. We beg²⁹⁴ that he believe that some things were said, done, taught by God which are not contained in writing.

²⁹⁰ He does not try to prove; he wishes to be believed on his word

²⁹¹ Luther’s words. You of course are fortunate in being taught from heaven without your own effort

²⁹² Our postulates

²⁹³ Postulate I

²⁹⁴ Postulate II

We beg²⁹⁵ that he believe that the church has been given the power from God to distinguish the words of God from the words of men and the traditions of God from the traditions of men, with Christ clearly governing His church constantly and the Holy Spirit always directing the agreement of the church in matters of faith. 5

We beg finally²⁹⁶ that in a disputed interpretation of the sacred writings he believe the consistent judgment of the holy fathers and the faith of the whole catholic church rather than his own opinion. 10

Although we consider these postulates no less evident to the Christian than the geometrical postulates of Euclid are to the philosopher, nevertheless this fellow postulates reasons for such postulates. 15

And so we have presented for the last postulate,²⁹⁷ besides several other reasons, the fact that it is easier and more probable that one man is deceived and out of his mind than that many are so, that a bad man misunderstands rather than good men, that a heretical man errs rather than the catholic church. 20

The second last postulate²⁹⁸ we prove indeed by many and evident testimonies of sacred scripture, with many reasons besides, and finally by the confession of Luther himself. 25

Next, as to the postulate that some things have been said,²⁹⁹ done, taught by Christ which have not been written, besides other evident reasons, besides other passages of scripture, we have proved this on the authority of Paul; we have proved it by the gospel. 30

As for the first postulate,³⁰⁰ that the sacred scripture must be believed, we had hoped that Luther would not demand any proof at all for this, because he so often proclaims throughout all his books that he demands nothing else than that the sacred scripture alone should be believed. 35

Luther jeers at all these postulates of ours.³⁰¹ He considers the last one to be utterly foolish: that anyone should beg him to believe the fathers and the church rather than himself. Whereas

²⁹⁵ Postulate III

²⁹⁶ Postulate IV

²⁹⁷ Reason for the fourth

²⁹⁸ Reason for the third

²⁹⁹ Reason for the second

³⁰⁰ Why there is no reason for the first

³⁰¹ Why he does not grant the fourth postulate

the fathers, so he says, and the judgment of the church are at times deceived, he himself cannot be deceived, because he is certain, so he says, that he has his teaching from heaven.

The next to last postulate,³⁰² however, although once granted by himself, he now nevertheless retracts altogether. For he thinks it ridiculous if anyone should think the church is governed by the Holy Spirit in the faith, since the Turk would ridicule anyone begging such an initial premise. And so, the pious priest will rather be impious toward Christ than be ridiculous to the Turk. 5 10

The second postulate³⁰³ he clearly considers worthless, since whatever Christ has said, done or taught which has not been written Luther once and for all considers as of no importance, because—I suppose—if those points had been of importance, Luther did not think that Christ would have been so negligent as not to have taken care that they be included in scripture. 15

Next, because of the authority of scripture, he treats the first postulate ambiguously.³⁰⁴ For he often cites the scriptures erroneously, and very often he twists them from a true meaning to a false one when he has no support for himself but his own words, and those almost always contrary to his own conscience. When the words of scripture express conflicting ideas, the fathers give a consistent interpretation, and the whole church through so many ages agrees; at such times we inexperienced Thomists beg the initial premise that he believe everyone taken as a whole rather than a single individual.³⁰⁵ But because this is begging an initial premise, we are repulsed with the ridicule of this fellow, shrewd and quite artful in arguing, and we are overwhelmed by waves of roaring laughter. 20 25 30

But if you present a text of scripture which is so clear that there can be no question about its meaning, then, driven by necessity, he betrays himself and openly denies the scriptural text. If the situation requires, he says that the epistle of James is not apostolic, or even if it be an apostle's, still the apostle has arrogated too much to himself.³⁰⁶ And when once Luther has said this, if anyone should again insist that Luther yield to the 35

³⁰² Why he denies the third postulate

³⁰³ Why he does not admit the second postulate

³⁰⁴ How he treats the first postulate

³⁰⁵ But it is not convenient

³⁰⁶ Is it not you who too impiously arrogate too much to yourself?

authority of the apostle, then that person will be mocked in a thousand ways as a man ignorant of disputing, one who is not ashamed to use the most corrupt form of disputing and to beg the initial premise; namely, that that be considered scripture which Luther denies is scripture, or that the apostle be believed to have written correctly, although Father Tossopot has said once and for all that he has erred. In this way, then, reader, we corruptly beg the initial premise.

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Luther, on the contrary, is a little more modest, for he also has established an initial premise, but only one, which he demands to have granted to himself. It is, however, of this kind: that he alone must be believed on all matters.³⁰⁷

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This initial premise, as a matter known by nature, he does not hesitate to beg everywhere; in fact, to assume as by his own right. Suppose there is a question about the meaning of a scriptural text; he first presents what he himself either thinks or at least pretends to think; you in turn present whatever has always been the judgment of all Christians; he drives everyone away like flies and begs that he be believed. He denies that human laws are useful; you in turn present whatever has always been the judgment of mortals; he jeers at the whole world and demands that he be believed. He denies the sacrament of extreme unction; you in turn present the apostle James; he contemns the apostle and demands that he be believed. Thus, almost everywhere he begs that this initial premise be granted him: that in all matters he alone be believed.

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This postulate of his: although no one does not see that it is apparently very fair, nevertheless because we fear the snares and subtleties of this sophistical fellow, we will be prevailed upon reluctantly and with difficulty to grant him this postulate, especially because we are aware that on this initial premise and brilliant axiom of Luther rests the whole foundation of the marvelous Lutheran doctrine.³⁰⁸ Once this initial premise is granted, it is amazing to relate the sort and importance of the conclusions he will prove to you in such a way that you simply cannot deny them. But if you deny that axiom, he proves to you absolutely nothing. We therefore put off granting him so subtle and sophistical a premise, and we ask of him: “By what reason, father, do you prove that you alone must be believed?”

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³⁰⁷ Luther’s sole postulate

³⁰⁸ On what initial premise the Lutheran doctrine rests

To this he returns this cause: “Because I am certain,” he says,
 “that I have my teachings from heaven.”

Again we ask: “By what reason are you certain that you have your
 teachings from heaven?”

“Because God has seized me unawares,” he says, “and carried me
 into the midst of these turmoils.” 5

Again therefore we demand: “How do you know that God has
 seized you?”

“Because I am certain,” he says, “that my teaching is from God.”
 “How do you know that?” 10

“Because God has seized me.”

“How do you know this?”

“Because I am certain.”

“How are you certain?”

“Because I know.” 15

“But how do you know?”

“Because I am certain.”

I ask you, reader, whether that form of disputing does not find a
 place here, the form by means of which (un-
 less Luther is lying) Amsdorf lyingly says 20

that the theologians of Leipzig dispute,
 as follows:³⁰⁹ when the respondent has denied his opponent’s assumed
 initial premise, the opponent proves the same premise as follows:
 “It must be so.” When the former again denies it, then the latter
 says a second time, “And how can it be otherwise? It must be so.” 25

To this lie Luther has added, as one of his better sayings, the
 flourish:³¹⁰ “Splendidly,” he says, “and most
 Thomistically, or rather, most Leipzigly
 and most Henricianly.”

Now, since the reverend father founds all his arguments on this
 initial premise:³¹¹ “I am certain because I
 know, and I know because I am certain,
 and I am certain because I cannot err, and
 I cannot err because I am certain, and I am certain because I know,”
 may we not re-echo against the reverend father the flourish of the 30
 reverend father: “Splendidly and most Wittenbergly, or rather, most
 stupidly and most Lutheranly.” 35

You see, then, reader, that in this passage I quote none of his
 statements in the way that he usually quotes all the statements from

³⁰⁹ Amsdorf’s fable about the theologians

³¹⁰ Luther’s flourish

³¹¹ Luther’s flourish is wittily retorted

the king's book. He quotes nothing honestly, but he either distorts it badly or he cites from the book statements which are nowhere in the book; but while he is recounting them he is fashioning for himself monsters to conquer. But we, as a matter of fact, make clear that the scriptures are thus presented by him, thus twisted from their own meaning, that this fellow thus prefers his own fancies to the judgments of all the saints, that he thus counts the whole church as straw in comparison with himself, that he thus openly denies the sacred scripture and clearly contemns the acknowledged scripture, that he thus establishes his own teachings without scripture and contrary to scripture, so that you cannot doubt that in very truth this fellow everywhere begs this single initial premise: that against everyone and everything he alone be believed on all matters. 5 10

Lest it can seem that he makes up such absurd things as these about Luther through calumny, he recalls the very words of Luther and examines them carefully; from which it is clear that Luther both said and thought things in many ways still more absurd. Chapter 21. 15

Nevertheless, that you may not doubt that this inference was not drawn from ambiguous words of his but that it was proclaimed by himself in the clearest of words, consider carefully the very words of the rascal. 20

I am certain,³¹² he says, that I have my teachings from heaven, I who have triumphed even over him who has more strength and cunning in his little fingernail than do all the popes and kings and doctors. 25

Likewise, shortly after:

The Lord has seized me unawares and carried me into the midst of these turmoils. 30

And again:

Here I need have no reason for patience, when the trifling buffoon

³¹² Luther's words

attacks with his lies, not me nor my life, but the very doctrine which I am most certain is not mine but Christ's.

311

And when he has proved this simply by saying it, then by his own right the rascal rages wildly against the king, as if to reprove a heretic on behalf of the faith were in very truth to blaspheme God. 5

He would have to be forgiven if humanly he erred.³¹³ Now, since he knowingly and consciously fabricates lies against the majesty of my king in heaven, this damnable rottenness and worm, I will have the right, on behalf of my king, to bespatter his English majesty with muck and shit and to trample underfoot that crown of his which blasphemes against Christ. 10

Come, do not rage so violently, good father; but if you have raved wildly enough, listen now, you pimp. You recall that you falsely complained above that the king has shown no passage in your whole book, even as an example, in which he said that you contradict yourself. You told this lie shortly before, although the king has demonstrated to you many examples of your inconsistency. Suppose that the king here in turn asks of you why you have not produced even one passage as an example in which you say he blasphemes God.³¹⁴ Your paternity must by all means search out and produce this passage. But meanwhile, for as long as your reverend paternity will be determined to tell these shameless lies, others will be permitted, on behalf of his English majesty, to throw back into your paternity's shitty mouth, truly the shit-pool of all shit, all the muck and shit which your damnable rottenness has vomited up, and to empty out all the sewers and privies onto your crown divested of the dignity of the priestly crown, against which no less than against the kingly crown you have determined to play the buffoon.³¹⁵ 15
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In your sense of fairness, honest reader, you will forgive me that the utterly filthy words of this scoundrel have forced me to answer such things,³¹⁶ for which I should have begged your leave. 35
Now I consider truer than truth that saying: "He who touches pitch will be wholly defiled by it." For I am

³¹³ Luther's words, worthy of the Lord

³¹⁴ Why is it less fair for him to do this to you than for you to do it to him?

³¹⁵ He cuts the man's throat out with his own sword

³¹⁶ On the contrary, he himself had to be thus adorned with his own virtues

ashamed even of this necessity, that while I clean out the fellow's
 shit-filled mouth I see my own-fingers covered with shit. But who can
 endure such a scoundrel who shows himself possessed by a thousand
 vices and tormented by a legion of demons
 and yet stupidly boasts thus:³¹⁷ “The holy
 fathers have all erred. The whole church
 has often erred. My teaching cannot err, because I am most certain
 that my teaching is not my own but
 Christ's,”³¹⁸ alluding of course to those words
 of Christ, “My words are not my own but
 His who sent me, the Father's”? What about the following: “The pope
 shall fall; my teachings will stand firm”³¹⁹
 Does it not seem to vie with that statement
 of Christ: “Heaven and earth shall pass away, not one iota of my
 words shall perish”? For when he says, “The Lord has seized me
 unawares and carried me into the midst of these turmoils,” this is
 more than, “The devil took Him and
 placed Him on a pinnacle of the temple.”³²⁰
 Then, how boastful is that statement: “I have triumphed over him
 who has more strength and cunning in his little fingernail than do all
 the popes and kings and doctors”? How much more boastfully this
 fellow exults than did Christ, who said of
 Himself somewhat more modestly: “I have
 overcome the world”; and likewise: “The
 prince of this world comes and in me he has nothing”? But what does
 this fellow say?³²¹ “Therefore I have triumphed, not over the world, but
 far more sublimely, over the prince of the world, the devil.” Then he
 trumpets his triumph and tinsels it with
 pompous bombast:³²² “I have triumphed,”
 he says, “over him who has more strength
 and cunning in his little fingernail than do
 all popes and kings and doctors.” O swelling triumph! But whence
 have we learned this? What will he say to us here who proves every-
 thing by evident scriptures? What else but the words of Christ (for he
 tries to vie with Him): “I bear witness to myself”? But if someone
 should answer, “Your testimony is not true,” he will have recourse
 immediately to his new scripture:³²³ “I am
 certain that I have my teachings from
 heaven.” And there he will stand firm on this initial premise of his as

³¹⁷ The most mild father swells with bombast

³¹⁸ Luther's first parallel concerning himself

³¹⁹ Second parallel

³²⁰ Third parallel

³²¹ Here he surpasses his counter-parallel

³²² Of course according to the proverb: he has a right to praise himself whom no one else will praise

³²³ Luther's new scripture

on a most firm foundation that not all the popes, kings, doctors, men, angels will be able to destroy.

Certain, then, indeed most certain that he has his doctrines from heaven, as men who sleep are certain, indeed most certain that everything they dream is true;³²⁴ or rather certain, indeed most certain that he lies with his eyes wide open in saying that his teachings are from heaven, whereas his own conscience murmurs to him that they have been let loose in him by the deceits of demons; he curses any men and angels who contradict his teachings.³²⁵ And he protests that all those who do not fear to reproach his most filthy blasphemies set their face against heaven and besmirch sacred things and blaspheme God. His only cry is: "Let all be anathema who attack my teachings, because I am certain that I have my teachings from heaven."³²⁶

With this initial premise begged by the reverend father and granted by no one, he thus argues further, this reverend friar, Father Tossopot Luther, fugitive extraordinary of Saint Augustine,³²⁷ one of the unskilled masters of Wittenberg, unformed ranter of both kinds of law, and unlearned doctor in sacred theology:³²⁷ "I am certain that I have my teachings from heaven; therefore my teachings are heavenly." And then further thus: "My teachings are heavenly; therefore whoever contradicts my teachings sets his face against heaven and blasphemes God. Because, therefore, my teachings are indeed contradicted by the pope, the emperor, kings, bishops, priests, the laity, and in fine all good men, I will be permitted on behalf of the majesty of my God, to anathematize the pope, the emperor, kings, bishops, priests, the laity, in fine all good men, to assail them with curses and insults, and against all their crowns and heads I will be permitted to spew out of my mouth muck, filth, dung, shit."³²⁸

These are the conclusions of the reverend father, deduced by necessity from this same father's initial premise, begged by him: that we should believe him to be certain that his teachings are from heaven.

But come, reverend father, suppose I carried out the deduction

³²⁴ How certain Luther is that his teachings are true

³²⁵ Why do you not also swear, so that you can convince men of this matter?

³²⁶ A witty pun

³²⁷ Luther's series of syllogisms

³²⁸ You do this incessantly, Luther

thus: "I am certain that the reverend friar father is an ass; therefore the reverend friar father is an ass." If the reverend father should here grant me this antecedent premise, how many conclusions I may infer: he will undoubtedly have to eat hay; he will have to bear burdens; and what is most galling, he will have to do without beer; Father Tossport would be vexed to hear that.³²⁹ But rather than be forced to this conclusion, he would not hesitate to demand that I prove I am certain he is an ass; otherwise, shameless as he is, he will not be ready to grant what everyone nevertheless sees to be evident. But I should not hesitate immediately to prove the antecedent in this way: "I am certain that as no animal laughs but man, so no animal brays but an ass; but I am certain that the reverend friar, Father Tossport, is some animal and that he brays most brayingly; therefore I am certain the reverend friar, Father Tossport, is most truly an ass."

See, reverend father, I have proved my antecedent, nor would I have demanded that it be granted me had I not proved it. I pray you also, reverend father, prove that assumption of yours: how your paternity is certain that you have your teachings from heaven, from what messenger you received them.³³⁰ "For no one has ascended into heaven except Him who has descended from heaven." But at this point, as I hear, you will reply that your teachings were brought down to you from heaven, not indeed by Him who descended from heaven, but by him who fell like lightning from heaven. You answer well, reverend friar. Really, I do not qualify as your teacher, but I leave you with the cacodaemon who inspires your teachings, with whom you will remain in Tartarus for ever and ever.

I am indeed not so prejudiced in my own favor that I will not easily forgive you, reader, if you should at times little approve of this frivolity of mine by which I occasionally intersperse certain things which suit neither the gravity of the matter nor your seriousness.³³¹ And yet, I think there has never been anyone so severe as not to think it fair either to wink at us occasionally or to forgive us—when he reads everywhere the most filthy insolence of a most stupid scoundrel against a most prudent prince—if we are so stirred by indignation that, even though unwillingly, we

³²⁹ And he would be more vexed to endure it

³³⁰ Doubtless from frenzy, his constant servant

³³¹ The epilogue of the things that have been proved in this first book

are forced in turn to act foolishly and, as Solomon says, “to respond to the fool according to his folly,” especially since the fellow’s book, leaving aside completely the subject of concern, idles about entirely in scurrilous trifles.

We may in passing make sport of his madness; nevertheless, at the same time we handle the matter in such a way that everything that we promised at the beginning is made clearly evident to you. For since his general response includes in sum nothing else than that nothing must be held for certain except what is included in evident scriptures,³³² but that all other things—even if they are not opposed by the sacred writings and are confirmed by the unbroken agreement of the whole church—either must be wholly rooted out as traditions of men (which policy he indeed thinks best), or at least they are to be tolerated so freely that each of those things is left wholly to each individual to approve, disapprove, change, condemn, reject, wherever, whenever, as often as he pleases.³³³ Since he places in this category all human laws, the decrees of the fathers, the councils of the church, and the sacraments, fear of purgatory, the veneration of the saints and the rite of celebrating mass, we have made manifest both by most clear scriptures and most evident reasons that the word of God has been handed down without scripture and that this word is of no less authority than is the scripture itself. We have proved by the authority of scripture and even by the confession of Luther himself that the church cannot err at all in distinguishing the word of God in matters of faith. We have proved that the church which he calls papistic is the true catholic church of Christ. We have proved that those sacraments which Luther calls the traditions of men are not the traditions of men but of God, and that thus he denies the word of God, not of men. We have proved that he not only stupidly abolishes all human laws but also attacks both secretly and openly the scriptures themselves.³³⁴ From the latter we have shown more clearly than light that whatever he has presented from the scripture he cites so stupidly in support of his own case that no fool could cite it more stupidly. And since, on the meaning of any scriptural text, he would want no one to believe all men taken as a whole but every single person to believe himself, we have made clear

³³² The sum of the Lutheran principle

³³³ The condition presented by Luther

³³⁴ How much more truly and modestly does he preach about himself than Luther does

that he is contriving to weaken the force of all scripture and to turn all its fruit into destruction. Then, since he does not admit that an uncontested scriptural text is scripture but denies that it has anything worthy of scripture, and since the apostate does not hesitate to censure an apostle, we have made it very clear that he not only secretly but even openly destroys the very scriptures for which he pretends to fight. Finally, aside from his most wicked lies, and his most stupid contradictions, and his thousand follies, which we have exposed from here and there, we also proved that that corrupt method of disputing by begging the initial premise which he thought he had so very wittily cast in the teeth of others; this method, I say, we proved to be his one and only form of disputing. 5 10

Thus then, reader, we have discharged more than we promised, and we have done it with proofs drawn from hardly any other source than the book of the king.³³⁵ And since, as you see, Luther's general response has now turned out prettily for him, we next gird ourselves to handle his special answers; you shall not see one of them in which you will not laugh at the singular folly of the fellow. 15

³³⁵ Bear this in mind, reader