

Introduction to Paul Bachmann's Response to Luther's Open Letter to Albert of Mainz

By William R. Russell

The immediate context for this piece is the Diet of Augsburg (1530). That spring-summer, royals and prelates of the Holy Roman Empire gathered in the southern Bavarian city to evaluate the official theology and practice of the "Lutherans" (who preferred to be called, "Evangelicals"). Luther and his cohort wrote what was to become the founding theological document of Lutheranism, *The Augsburg Confession*. The document was edited into its final form by Philipp Melanchthon after the Saxon party had reached the city. The task fell to Philipp, because Luther was prohibited from attendance by the Edict of Worms (1521).

Although protected in his prince's castle at Coburg, Luther remained engaged in the proceedings. He sent a letter to the highest-ranking church official in Germany, Archbishop Albert of Mainz, on July 6th, after the Augsburg Confession was presented and before the Roman Catholic theologians issued their official response. The reformer appealed for tolerance at the center of his letter:

Because we can have no real hope of unity in the faith, I beg your Grace, in all humility, to encourage the other side to allow for peace. Let them believe what they will and let us believe the blameless truth of our confession. It is obvious that nobody, including the pope and the emperor, should compel another to believe (indeed, this is not even possible). If God Almighty does not force anyone to faith, then how could a lowly creature have the temerity to force others to believe a certain way, let alone accept what they know is false-teaching? May

God grant that your Grace, more than anything, would be a new Gamaliel and provide similar peaceful wisdom.¹

Luther's reference to Albert "as a new Gamaliel" would not only flatter the archbishop, but it would also read the Bible into the proceedings at Augsburg.

When [the Temple Elders] heard this, they were enraged and wanted to kill [the apostles]. But a Pharisee in the council named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, respected by all the people, stood up and ordered the men to be put outside for a short time. Then he said to them, "Fellow Israelites, consider carefully what you propose to do to these men... I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone; because if this plan or this undertaking is of human origin, it will fail; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them—in that case you may even be found fighting against God!"²

Abbot Paul Bachmann, O. Cist., aka Amnicola (1466? – 1538), was tapped to pen this response on behalf of the Archbishop. Born in Chemnitz, Bachmann studied at the University of Leipzig in the early 1490s, where he lived with his Cistercian brothers at the Bernhard College. An able administrator, Bachmann assumed positions of increasing responsibility in his order—traveling as his abbot's representative to the mother house in Citeaux over a dozen times (the last in 1514). In 1522, he was consecrated abbot of the monastery at Alzelle an der Mulde, Saxony (100 kilometers from Wittenberg). In 1537, he was named vicar-general of the region.

¹ WA 30II, 400-401. The translation here is a revision of Roland Bainton, *Here I Stand* (New York: Penguin Books, 1995), 254.

² Acts 5: 34-39 (NRSV)

Bachmann had been an early and consistent opponent of the Lutheran Reformation, and his polemics against Luther appeared in the context of other prominent Roman Catholic opponents of the Reformer's work (e.g., John Cochlaeus [who prefaces this piece], Jerome Emser, etc.). His attacks were pointed and often personal—calling Luther, in 1524, a “wild slobbering pig,” and shortly before he died, Bachmann wrote the anti-Lutheran diatribe, “Against the Adder-Tongued, Sweet-Talking, Blasphemy Mill.”

As a dutiful servant of his Order, Bachmann fought mightily against the Protestant movements in Saxony—writing barbed attacks on Luther and struggling successfully to keep the monastic lands attached to his abbey, from being appropriated by the Saxon prince.

Bachmann's basic argument here is twofold. First, he claims that Luther does not truly seek an honest discussion and assessment of his work by the church. His only interest is in his own new ideas. He will not listen to the church's evaluation. Obviously, Holy Mother Church has condemned Luther's reform proposals already, and he refuses to submit. To underscore this, Bachmann repeatedly refers to “Luther,” “Lutheran teaching,” and “Lutheranism”—in this context, all polemical terms of derision.

Second, Bachmann links Luther to the violence and unpredictability of Thomas Müntzer and the “Peasants' War” (1525). The toleration of Luther's ideas would only encourage him and sow seeds of corruption and discontent. Lutheranism leads inexorably to violent rebellion—and the ruination of Christendom.

Bachmann entitled his 16-page response, “*Antwort auff Luthers Sendtbrieff, geschribenn gen Augspurg, an den Cardinal, Ertzbischoffen zuo Mentz Churfürsten [et]c.*” Published by the printer Alexander Weissenhorn of Augsburg in 1530, its limited press run has led to a paucity of

extant copies. It opens with a Dedication to Abbot Conrad of Kaisersheim by Johann Cochleus.

Written in German, no other translations exist.

Response to Luther's Open Letter Addressed to the Cardinal Archbishop of Mainz,

Elector, etc.

Published in Augsburg, 1530

Translated and Edited by the Rev. Dr. William R. Russell, Ph.D.

To the Honorable Father-in-God, Abbot Conrad of Kaisersheim by
God's grace, my Gracious Master, etc. Grace and peace to you,
from Christ our Lord.

Esteemed Father, Gracious Master, I have recently received a booklet from an especially good friend of your grace. In it he offers a response on behalf of my most gracious Master, the Cardinal Archbishop of Mainz, Elector, etc., to Luther's open letter, which arrived recently here in Augsburg. Luther's venomous epistle deceptively applies the Second Psalm to our Imperial Majesty, the other Christian kings and princes, and even the holiness of the pope (along with the honor of the imperial crown). Indeed, its poisonous barbs and ferocious language could lead to the betrayal and selling-out of Germany.

Because I cannot help but see that this response flows from a free, Christian, and undauntedly courageous conscience, I want to help it see the light of day. It is an antidote to Luther's poison and the seeds of fear that he plants. With such a response, the poor, unsophisticated Christian people will not be deceived and misled by Luther's high sounding, dangerous world of words—words with which he attacks the old, true faith and would destroy it.

It is, therefore, my humble request, your Grace, that you would receive this response magnanimously and that you would carefully and seriously receive it with my highest recommendation.

Augsburg, September 6, 1530.

Your Grace's dutiful servant, Johann Cochlaeus, Dr. of Theology

When darkness or corruption of our common life requires it, someone must step up who has the means to disperse that darkness. What is now needed for the general good of the Christian church, is to confront the evil and dangerous Lutheran errors and heresies, as well as their most obvious perils of disbelief, from a learned perspective—particularly the errors that have most significantly and dangerously attacked and offended us (and have the most obvious risk of false belief). Because of this situation, it appears appropriate that I, as a theologian of high rank, do this.

The Samaritan amazed the innkeeper when he told him to care for the man, say nothing, and help him regain his health.¹ Similarly, God cares for us in our various circumstances through all kinds of human offices and duties, so that they work toward God's ends and God's will. And therefore, in whatever way I am needed, as King David says, I will use my office as God has given to me to serve.² The one who raises a future king is worthy enough to wash the child's loins, whether the monarch knows it or not. In the same way God gives all of us our particular work to do, as David, Christ, and Paul say.

For Luther, it is not enough for him to sit in the vineyard of the Lord (the Church of Rome). Christ declares that crops and weeds remain together until the last day, when the heretics

¹ Marginal note: Luke 10[:35]; Micah 6.

² Marginal note: Psalm 68 [ET, Psalm 69].

will be damned.³ For now, it is a special work and requires due diligence to keep the Imperial Diet at Augsburg from amounting to nothing or lapsing into chaos. To prohibit his weeds from sprouting, we can clearly agree on these facts: First, the clergy and politicians will meet at Augsburg, with the Wittenbergers, on the appointed date. Second, the Cardinal Archbishop-Elector, etc., has received the other day an epistle that is so poisonous and so ill-formed that it is so full of errors that they veritably flow out of it. It is so full of errors that one cannot know whether it is more awful than it is simply acrimonious, whether it is written by a drunk or an idiot. At one moment, he would come to humbly petition us. The next moment, he threatens to fight. After that, he blasphemes and contradicts himself. He would confuse everything and lead a rebellion toward schism. It is clear what sort of spirit is upon him.

Luther offers his teaching with a simplistic confidence that he says comes from Christ. I, however, bear witness to the evil he speaks. Truly, whenever someone claims to possess the truth, evil is not far behind. Each heresy is connected to all the others, and they all lead to the same place—and it is not the truth. Therefore, they flee from the truth and do nothing and hide from the light. To speak properly, means to do nothing other and to remain in the light and to grow stronger from the light. Lies, error, and heresy, therefore, hide from the light (as it says in Luke 8, do nothing in private that cannot be done openly). They do not stand in the light. Rather, they fight against the light and hide from it. Luther's doctrines do the same thing. It is because of this the contradiction exists. Mistaken heretics debate long and say really nothing. Nevertheless, in the end it falls to the floor (according to the promise of Christ that the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church).

³ Marginal note: Psalm 61[ET, Psalm 62:11-12]; Luke 10[:1-16]; 1 Corinthians 3[:10-15]; Matthew 13.

Luther does not help his cause, when he screams and demands that his refuted errors be put on the table (like his disputed doctrine of justification). They cannot be tolerated. Each monstrosity shuffles along in its own misshapen way. Whatever a heretic might have to say is plain wrong, so they are not allowed to preach or claim divine inspiration. So, if I also allow Luther's teaching to be publicly considered and evaluated, then I would be highlighting some 500 errors, not only in his New Testament but also the numerous errors in his speeches and sermons. All these have been exposed by the theologian Emser, of blessed memory.

In addition, his teaching has been examined and declared to be heretical by the universities of Paris, Cologne, Louvain, etc. Further, his Imperial Majesty and even the magisterium at Rome found it wanting. Therefore, when Luther claims that his doctrine has not been examined (which is simply a ploy), he just wants a wider audience. Luther's teaching is so obviously proven to be against God and his bride, the church, that another disputation or hearing is not warranted and will only confuse the weak in faith even more.

As His Imperial Majesty, in the Edict of Worms, testifies, Luther sows and plants all the ancient, condemned heresies. Therefore, another public forum with Luther would yield nothing more than a rejection, a contradiction, and an affront to the ancient councils of the church—a deviation from the faith and the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. After all, Christ promised to remain with the church until the end of the world (John 14).

However, Luther speaks, sings, and screams whatever comes into his head, and with that he remains unchangeable (like all heretics). St. Augustine compared heretics to a water-logged piece of wood with which one tries to build a fire—it does not light, and only smoke and darkness arise from it. Often, it even puts the fire out. In the same way, we can dispute or debate with the heretic, if we want, interminably, but he will not give in and come to the truth. Rather,

the more he debates and lives, just like a water-logged piece of wood he gives off the darkness and smoke of error. He often weakens the light of truth. This is the fire of love and wisdom that Christ speaks of in Luke 12[:3] and John 12[:35-36, 46-50].

Error is not necessarily heresy. Error that will not be abandoned, however, is heretical. As Augustine says, an error in reason or in understanding is not uncommon. The essence, the true form, and fulfillment of error and heresy takes place in the will—when one receives or takes in error, holds on to it, and does not let it go. The apostle Paul speaks about heretics like this.⁴ From him arises the saying, “It is human that one sins and makes mistakes. It is, however, evil when one remains in sin and error and will not drop it.”⁵ The devil would dispute with God, but will never win. Rather, he keeps on shrieking all the louder: how God’s treats him too harshly, that God is unfair in condemning him, etc. Therefore, the devil aligns himself against God’s majesty. As the prophet says, “...the uproar of your adversaries goes up continually,” offending and reproaching God.⁶

God, however, chastises and shames, even punishes, every creature who diminishes the divine honor; which is precisely what Luther does with his constant claim that he is right. He disagrees with the entire Catholic Church. He publicly and misleadingly claims in his writings that he wants his doctrine to be evaluated, either by doctors of theology or by a council of the church (perhaps even an angel from heaven would be enough). Is not this just like the devil’s over-reach?

⁴ Marginal note: Titus 3.

⁵ The precise origin of this quotation is obscure.

⁶ Bachmann quotes from the Latin Vulgate, Psalm 73:23 (ET 74:23), and then returns to German. Marginal note: Psalm 73.

Paul had studied his gospel in the third heaven,⁷ after which he went up to Jerusalem and presented everything to the apostles. That way, he would not work in opposition to them, and they would recognize his doctrine. That way, he could freely preach, as it is written.⁸ Luther does not want any such validation. He seeks no blessing or authorization. Rather, he trusts only what comes out of his own head, what he alone creates (which he attributes to the Holy Spirit). He puffs himself up—overreaching and ignoring the head of the church. Rather, the Catholic Church itself, as Luther puts it in his pamphlet written to the Bishop of Meissen, is in total error and is ruled by money, etc. He will have the Scriptures alone as his authority.

But who, by themselves, can understand or teach the words and the meanings? The eunuch of Queen Candace said clearly to Philip that it would be impossible to understand the Scriptures without a guide. Philip, therefore, did so—traveling with them in the chariot so he could interpret or explain the prophet.⁹ And Paul said to the Romans, “How will they believe the word without a preacher, or how will they hear the proclamation unless someone is sent to them?”¹⁰

Luther, however, does not want to receive any insight from the outside, even if it were to come from an angel in heaven. Thus, he writes letters on the page, but he does not mean them, and he is cannot understand them. As we have heard, Luther thinks that he is the only one in the right, that only his eyes see correctly, and that he is the only one with the Holy Spirit. Filled with the utmost pride, Luther maintains that a small congregation or gathering of the faithful (even a single person) can have all the articles of faith and can properly teach—maintaining and having true faith. About that, however, he is wrong.

⁷ Marginal note: 2 Corinthians 12[:2].

⁸ Marginal note: Galatians 2[:1-2]. *****Bill, what’s the martinal note after Gala.2?

⁹ Martinal note: Acts 8[:31-34].

¹⁰ Marginal note: Romans 10[:14].

The gospel, which the Holy Spirit promises to the church, remains until the end of the world. Otherwise, the Gospel of John, chapter 14, would be false. Luther may think that he is the first to have the truth, but the Holy Spirit is not without the truth. This is the truth bestowed upon the church. Was it given to Luther? Is the Holy Spirit not in the church (as Christ promised) or is falsehood the same as godlessness? Luther's doctrine is nothing less than an affront to God and the constructions of Luther's mind.

The king is ruler over all subjects of the court (as the statute reads),¹¹ but if he permits Luther, who is evil, to attend according to his good pleasure, then he provides Luther encouragement. And by doing so, he allows Luther to appear legitimate. And all Luther wants to do is shock and upset the whole world. Look at Luther's pamphlet addressed to the clergy at Augsburg,¹² where nothing has changed. It is as if the spirit of Müntzer is still alive.¹³ So, we ought not allow him to encourage his advocates in any way. He would bring them down with him. We, however, are not surprised. Christ, the truth, promised this to us and further promised, "The gates of hell will not prevail against the church."¹⁴ With this, we will take the field, and we are confident in it.

We have more than enough witnesses to our beliefs. Luther, however, has presented no such witnesses to his teaching. On our side, we have all of the holy fathers and the teachers of the church: Augustine, Ambrose, Jerome, Gregory, Bernhard, Bede, Leo, Fulgentius, and others who were witnesses and martyrs – teachers that the church, for 1000 years, has deemed faithful. They are honored, and they are worthy as instruments and containers of the Holy Spirit.

¹¹ Marginal note: Job 41[:25; ET, Job 41:34].

¹² Bachmann refers to Luther's, "Vermahnung an die Geistlichen, Versammelt auf dem Reichstag zu Augsburg," WA: 30^{II}, 268–356; LW 34: 3-63.

¹³ Thomas Müntzer (1489-1525) had been an early follower of Luther, but broke with Luther in the early 1520s, over the use of force to establish the Reformation. Müntzer became a leader of the "Peasants' War" and was killed by royal forces at Mühlhausen, Thuringia. Bachmann claims here that Luther's reform proposal leads to the kind of violence and destruction fomented by Müntzer.

¹⁴ Marginal note: Matthew 16[:18].

I contend that the witnesses and holy martyrs confessed the faith with tremendous heart-felt passion, even suffering death for the sake of faith. Our Faith, which has endured through many heresies and hardships, is more precious than pure gold.¹⁵ It stands firm. Therefore, it is necessary, and it has fallen to us, to see to it that the lambs of Peter remain protected now and to the end of time.

However, Luther would truly rather destroy, no matter the cost and conflict. He chooses to trust his own, self-generated work. Therefore, he needs to humble himself before the judge,¹⁶ beg for the opposite, receive peace, and not pursue this course. If Luther possessed a little healthier sense of reason, he should certainly recognize on his own, how misleading is the spirit that is driving this.

Twelve years ago, Luther was pounding on the table of his monastic order in Grimma, “I will shake the throne of the pope in Rome and will do so as long as I have my hat.”¹⁷ He announces his lies, and the church, then, should drop everything for him, etc. Twelve years have flown by and Luther remains a liar. Because we still, in the church, will process into the hall with our caps and gowns, we still sing and ring bells. Luther would like also to process in—only the spirit of lies would be leading him in by the nose. It would be yet another wrong turn.

Now the Spirit is touching Luther, so that he is begging us to let him be a part of things. I say, we leave it as it is. No one should be exposed to his beliefs. True, no one should force another to believe, so he cannot do that. But if someone has cast away the faith and put in its place new errors; if he would split the unity of the church down the middle with his system and

¹⁵ Marginal note: Ecclesiasticus 51[:36]; Malachi 3[3].

¹⁶ Marginal note: Luke 14[:7-11].

¹⁷ Luther rather frequently noted that the church had called him teach theology and he had vowed, as a professor of Bible, to correct the kinds of errors he identified in the church of his day. He does so here by mentioning his doctoral tam, symbolic of his calling to serve as a teacher of the church.

advocating violence; and if he would lead others away from God; then that person should be excluded.

Both the Old and New Testaments bear witness to this. As Deuteronomy 13 says: “If prophets ... appear among you and promise you omens or portents...and they say, ‘Let us follow other gods (whom you have not known),’ ...then those prophets or those who divine by dreams shall be put to death.”¹⁸ And Luke 9[:62]: “No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God” (here Christ links salvation to the steadfastness of faith). Also, Paul gave Hymenaeus and Alexander over to Satan because of their blasphemies.¹⁹ Thus, the church also has the authority to identify heresy (as Isaiah says) and reject error.²⁰

The more Luther stirs things up, the more we should recognize that there are two distinct sides here—and they could not be further apart. I will let the apostle Paul respond, as he spoke to the Corinthians: “What partnership is there between righteousness and lawlessness? Or what fellowship is there between light and darkness? What agreement does Christ have with Baal? Or what does a believer share with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God,”²¹ etc. And as he wrote in 1 Corinthians, “Do you not know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough? Clean out the old yeast so that you may be a new batch, as you really are unleavened,”²² and look also at the eighteenth chapter of 1 Kings, where Elijah speaks to the Israelites and says that (as we would say in German), “It’s okay to split into two parts, that which has already been separated.” If the Lord is God, then follow him. If Baal is God, then follow him.²³

¹⁸ Deuteronomy 13:1-5.

¹⁹ Marginal note: 1 Timothy 1[:20].

²⁰ Marginal note: Isaiah 28.

²¹ Marginal note: 2 Corinthians 6[:14-16].

²² Marginal note: 1 Corinthians 5[:6-7].

²³ 1 Kings 18:21.

I say, if Luther's teaching is correct then why do we not accept it? And if our teaching is correct, then why do we not hold onto it and confess it even more? Christ is (with all due respect) no adulterer. He did not offer two ways, as he himself testifies. Ergo, canon law says, the fullness of the dove (i.e., the Holy Spirit) resides in only one place, etc. And in the creed, we confess one holy, universal, apostolic church--not two churches.

Now, let us look at the nature and origin of Luther's spirit.²⁴ The Spirit of Christ reigns in the church as a spirit of unity in his peaceful kingdom (Psalm 25), but Luther's spirit is a spirit of division and schism. He seeks division and works toward separation—while he asks to be welcomed. Yet, he erects a mountain and then another one on top of it. Luther brings havoc and makes conflict inevitable. This is what happens wherever he goes.

Ergo, when Luther talks, it is as if the spirit of Müntzer is speaking again. And now he expounds and reinterprets the words of the second Psalm, "Why do the nations conspire?" and applies them to the current imperial diet. It is easy to see that Luther is speaking like every other heretic. They all claim that their teaching is from God, and yet they are rejected and condemned. Luther appeals to the speech of Gamaliel²⁵ for protection and attempts to make him a public ally. However, his counsel is more against Luther than for him. Gamaliel speaks about the unity of the Holy Spirit and the doctrine of the apostles. Luther has neither of these. He speaks from his own spirit and about his own doctrine. Therefore, he is a false witness²⁶—interpreting what Christ says with his own eyes, by himself. Luther said as much, in his postil for St. Katherine's day. His gospel does not warrant such protection. Its only protection is itself.

Why does he now seek help and the allowance of others? Gamaliel spoke to this with authority, because he spoke during the time of the apostles. Why does not Luther hold to the

²⁴ Marginal note: 1 Corinthians 14[:33].

²⁵ Acts 5:34-39.

²⁶ Marginal note: *****Bill, I'm at a loss as to the biblical book here. Is it Deuteronomy 5[:20].?

wisdom of the apostles? The apostles never allowed changes to be made by just anyone, and they did not let false teaching stand against them (as Luther wants to do). Let us, instead, rejoice that we are surely following the name of Christ.

Luther claims that it is a sin against the Holy Spirit to attack the plain truth. True enough. But there is more to it than that. Should we simply let Luther's doctrine go free? I say no. Luther's doctrine is not the plain truth. Luther's doctrine is flawed, through and through, compared to recognized truth. Therefore, as Luther claims to serve the Scriptures, he doubts and rejects the counsel of others and remains in darkness. This is the basis of every heretic's doctrine. Each one claims to have the plain truth. Each one points to God's word and the Holy Scriptures. Augustine said that such people take from the gospel, so they might attack the gospel. Thus, Luther abuses the Scriptures and interprets them so wildly far from their true meaning that he uses and reads them according to his own pleasure. That is how he is able to reinforce his errors and heresies.

No one should even try to understand Scripture on their own, because the whole church has the Spirit and Christ as her bridegroom (John 14[:15-17]). Christ did not promise his spirit to particular people, regardless of how good or virtuous they may be. Christ made such a public declaration to no one outside of the church. Therefore, everyone who does not listen to the church should be treated as a heretic.²⁷ Whoever interprets the Scripture apart from the church is a thief and a murderer. He comes, intending to steal, rob, kill, and attack. He does not come through the front door. Rather, he breaks in and slinks through the back (John 10[:1]).

At this point, what Luther says is a sin against the Holy Spirit, when he writes and teaches that it is not a sin to believe other than what the church teaches. He has proposed and still teaches that faith alone saves us. And no sin can condemn us, except for unbelief (even sin

²⁷ Marginal note: Matthew 18[:15-17].

against the Holy Spirit). At this point, we see his greatest sin. As with all arch-heretics, he confesses his faith from his own perspective, as we see in his writings against Zwingli and others. Now Luther wants us to waive his punishment and grant him grace. But if we do, he will undo all the progress we have made. He will institute practices like the ones that have led nearly all the people from where he lives to forget even how to pray (as his visitations have shown).²⁸

Luther continues to charge that the cardinal, archbishop of Mainz maintains false worship, and this claim allows him more freely to spread his teaching. Now he wants permission to allow his teaching free run. Such teaching, however, is false and leads to conflict. The bishops, therefore, are right to reject his request and concede nothing to him. Indeed, it would be truly helpful for the bishops to accept that his articles of faith are harmful. It would be unwise for the bishops to allow them too much of an open forum during the proceedings. To do so would be to give him too much public space. After all, he previously called the bishops “oil-idolaters” and “pretentious prancers.”²⁹ He would only pretend to show them honor and deference. Oh, the stench of such shameful lies! He would waive his fox’s tail and not truly confess any shame about his teaching. Further, the ignorance of the peasants would keep them from understanding what is going on.

This pamphlet is filled with lies and is not worthy of an answer. However, for the sake of the simple and uninformed, who mistake lies for the truth and accept darkness instead of the light, I would offer this response.

For those who understand, who carry the sword, and have the authority of the church behind them, I have often wondered why these people have watched this man for so long and

²⁸ Bill, would it be useful to include some reference here to Luther’s dismay at the results of the visitations –perhaps from the preface to the Small Catechism?

²⁹ These refer to rituals performed by bishops, who used oil in their consecrations and led worship in showy, ostentatious ways.

allowed him to commit so many multi-faceted, public errors—errors through which the church has been torn apart with stinking blasphemies. Let the pope, emperor, kings, princes, and the electors unite to handle this man as they are able.

Luther reviles the Church of Rome as “the Scarlet Whore of Babylon.”³⁰ He vilifies the pope as Antichrist and a “Flower of Florence,”³¹ etc. He calls the emperor a bag of worms who lives in filth. Luther scorns princes, as fools, tyrants, and slack-jawed monkeys. Bishops are to him oil-idolaters and pretentious prancers. Priests, monks, and nuns are temple-slaves, hypocrites, and unbearable burdens on society.

I do not know if the world can bear the burden of a person like him.

If folks interpret the Scriptures themselves, then there will be only one outcome. Because the world is a sinful place and overflowing with evil, all kinds of errors will arise and they will stumble. As Christ says in Matthew 18[:7], “Occasions for stumbling are bound to come.” Stumbling is inevitable, but we do not need to take it in unwisely.

Indeed, he is not the only one of his kind. It is as if I were to glance quickly at some object and then try to describe it to others. I will simply not know what to say. This is how the world has gotten so full of evil and unrighteousness (which brings along with them, error and stumbling). But woe to the one through whom such stumbling comes.

God punishes sin with other sinners—even though those who are punished are not the only ones who sin. It is just that they deserve punishment for the crimes they have committed. The Apostle Paul refers to this in the first chapter of Romans³² when he writes about discord. In

³⁰ Bill, do you know when Luther first used this phrase? Was it against Alveltdt in 1520?

³¹ Two cousins of Florence’s Medici family served as popes during the early years of the Reformation (Leo X [1513-21 and Clement VII [1523-34], separated by the short papacy of Adrian VI [1522-23]). With the *Fleur-de-Lys* as the symbol of Florence, this epithet intimates that the papacy not a sacred, spiritual institution, established by Christ. Rather, the papacy is a corrupt and human institution, controlled by the fabulously wealthy Medici.

³² Romans 1:28-31.

Exodus 4[:21], we see that God hardened Pharaoh's heart. That is, God's grace was withheld because of Pharaoh's sins. Thus, Pharaoh fell into hardness and stubbornness of heart. And it is horrible to fall into the hands of the living God, as both Peter and the Prophet Jeremiah say. Take a look and you will understand how evil and awful it is that you have abandoned God in your heart (whether through ongoing evil deeds or a conscious sin). There is no need to dispute about the evil of the world. We hear every day about the conflicts all around us.

Therefore, I believe and freely confess that the Lutherans' erroneous heresy is a punishment and a torture from the world of sin (as I've already said) and from which the heart is injured. The question facing heresy comes to this: can someone be from God and at the same time attack the church?

The world is drawing toward its end and leans into its downfall. Every day, the world lives in terror of God. It lives as though it is some old person who has lost their strength—left to their sins and vices. It is akin to when evil humors and weaknesses take over a once vital human body. As Christ says about the end of the world in Matthew 24[:5-12], evil will be poured out and the love of many people will grow cold. Therefore, it is no more possible for this to change than it is possible for an old person to become young again. We believe that the time from now until the end of the world, grows ever shorter and shorter. This is no time to develop something new: to adjust the old faith or adopt a new confession of faith.

The truth of Christ has been handed down to us, through the apostles. Their descendants have clearly and openly preached it. They have given it to us, as Christ says, "what you have heard, preach from the rooftops" (Matthew 10:27). Is there nothing that has been handed down that remains? Or was everything held back until the time of Luther? Rather Christ has established and maintained his church, preachers, prophets, and the holy gospel under the chair

(as we have seen until now).³³ We have been warned especially about false prophets.³⁴ And, therefore, we should stop Luther. So, I say and I confess freely that God is rejecting Luther's teaching at this present council. At the least, we rightly exclude him.

I know of no other way to say it: I cannot trust in another faith for salvation. Rather, I trust only in the church and her teachings, which have flowed from my mother's breasts.

For me, the holy fathers still live: Augustine, Ambrose, Jerome, Gregory, Bernard, Bede, Fulgentius, Leo, and others like them. I cling to them and I stand with their doctrine. And I will die in their faith. Luther says that they have, as human beings, erred and stumbled. I would rather err (as Luther puts it) with the famous fathers and stumble with them than follow Luther's advice or confess his doctrines. Luther is certainly no god but a forerunner of the Antichrist.

May God give his grace send his Holy Spirit into this assembly and its deliberations. May this holy diet handle all matters according to God's will. In the year 1530.³⁵

³³ "The Chair" is the Chair of St. Peter and the one who now occupies it (i.e., the pope).

³⁴ Marginal note: Matthew 7[:15] and 24[:11, 24].

³⁵ Bachmann (or the printer) sets this concluding prayer off from the text proper.