

An Earnest Exhortation for All Christians, Warning them Against Insurrection and Rebellion

GRACE and peace from God to all Christians who read or hear the contents of this pamphlet. Amen.

By the grace of God the blessed light of Christian truth, suppressed for a time by the pope and his followers, has again risen, since by their manifold and shameful practices all manner of wickedness and tyranny have been clearly revealed and brought to shame. Now it seems probable that there is danger of an insurrection, and that priests, monks, bishops and the entire spiritual estate may be murdered or driven into exile, unless they seriously and thoroughly reform themselves. (The Fear of an Insurrection) For the common man has been brooding over the injury he has suffered in property, in body and in soul, and has become provoked. They have tried him too far and have most unscrupulously burdened him beyond measure. He is neither able nor willing to endure it longer, and would indeed have good reason to lay about him with flails and cudgels, as the peasants are threatening to do.

Now, I am not at all displeased to hear that the clergy are brought to such a state of fear and anxiety. Perhaps they will come to their senses and moderate their mad tyranny. Would to God their terror and fear were even greater. But I feel quite confident, and have no fear whatever that there will be an insurrection, at least one that would be general and affect all the clergy. (Unfounded) And this confidence I feel because I neither can nor ought to doubt that God will watch over His Word and will see heaven and earth pass away long before a single jot or tittle of His Word shall fail, as He Himself says in Matthew 5:18 and 24:35. For this reason any man who can and will may threaten and frighten them, that the Scriptures may be fulfilled, which say of such evil doers, in Psalm 36:2, "Their iniquity is made manifest that men may hate them." So also in Psalm 14:5, "There have they trembled for fear, where there was no fear"; in Proverbs 28:1, "The wicked flee when no man pursueth"; in Leviticus 26:36, "The sound of a shaken leaf shall terrify them," and in Deuteronomy 28:65-67, "God will give thee a trembling heart, and thy life shall hang in doubt before thee. In the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were evening! And at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning!" According to the Scriptures such fear and anxiety come upon the enemies of God as the beginning of their destruction. Therefore it is right, and pleases me well, that this punishment is beginning to be felt by the papists who persecute and condemn the divine truth. They shall soon suffer more keenly.

I will go farther. If I had ten bodies and could acquire so much favor with God that He would chasten them by the gentle means of bodily death or insurrection, I would most gladly give them all to death in behalf of these poor men. Alas! no such mild chastisement awaits them. Already an unspeakable severity and anger without limit has begun to break upon them. The heaven is iron, the earth is brass. No prayers can save them now. Wrath, as Paul says of the Jews, is come upon them to the uttermost. God's purposes demand far more than an insurrection. As a whole they are beyond the reach of help. Would God we might at least extricate some and save them from the horrible abyss that is waiting to swallow them up. The Scriptures have foretold for the pope and his followers an end far worse than bodily death and insurrection. Daniel 8:25 says, "He shall be broken without hand," that is, not with the sword nor with bodily strength. And St. Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2:8 says of

the pope, "Our Lord Jesus shall consume him with the spirit of his mouth and shall destroy him with the brightness of his coming." Artists also paint Christ seated on a rainbow with a sword and a twig proceeding out of His mouth, a conception based on Isaiah 11:4, "He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked." (cf. Revelation 1:16) But the artists paint a twig in blossom, and that is a mistake. It should be a rod or staff, and both staff and sword should be on the same side, extending only over the condemned. Psalm 10:15 also says, "Break thou the arm of the wicked, and seek out his sin, and his wickedness shall not endure."

These texts teach us how both the pope and his anti-christian government shall be destroyed. Through the word of Christ, which is the breath, staff and sword of His mouth, the pope's knavery, deceit, mischief, tyranny and seduction shall be revealed and laid open to the world's derision. For lying and seduction need only be revealed and recognized to be overcome. When once lying is recognized as such, it needs no second stroke; it falls of itself and disappears under a cloud of shame. That is the meaning of Psalm 10:15, "Only seek out his sin, and his wickedness is at an end." It needs only to be sought out and recognized. Now, all that the pope is and has, his foundations, monasteries, universities, laws and doctrines, all are sheer lies, founded upon sheer lies. Only his hypocrisy has enabled him to deceive, seduce and oppress the world and to destroy men's bodies, property and souls. If once the truth is recognized and made known, pope, priests, monks and the whole papacy will end in shame and disgrace. For no man is so mad as to cling to, and not rather to hate, open lies and dishonesty. When the knavery of the pope has been thus exposed and Christ prevails by the breath of His mouth, so that men no longer respect but utterly despise both the pope and his lies, the last day will have begun, and Christ will by His coming completely destroy the pope, as Paul says. (2 Thessalonians 2:8)

But here is the best point in the whole matter. The pope and his followers will be hardened and will not believe it at all, but laugh at it, that they may fulfill the word of Paul, *cum dixerint pax*, — "When they shall be secure and say, There is no need, then sudden destruction cometh upon them." (1 Thessalonians 5:3) In order that the papists may by no means reform and look for mercy, they are not to believe this, but rather to say, The last day is yet far off, until in the twinkling of an eye, before they are aware of it, they lie tumbled in a heap deep down in hell-fire.

As I have said, these texts have made me certain that the papacy and the spiritual estate will not be destroyed by the hand of man, nor by insurrection. Their wickedness is so horrible that nothing but a direct manifestation of the wrath of God itself, without any intermediary whatever, will be punishment sufficient for them. And therefore I have never yet let men persuade me to oppose those who threaten to use hands and flails. I know quite well that they will get no chance to do so. They may, indeed, use violence against some, but there will be no general use made of violence. Priests have been murdered in earlier days, when men still feared their ban, and when the wrath of God had not yet come upon them, more than perhaps than now; and no tumult or insurrection was made. But now that the wrath of God has come upon them, and men no longer fear them, let them be afraid without cause, just as they formerly made us afraid without cause by means of their counterfeit ban, and were delighted and proud because we were afraid of them. Although it will not come to violence, and there is therefore no need that I restrain men's hands, I must instruct their hearts a little. For the present I will pass by the temporal authorities and the nobility. The duties incident to the authority conferred upon them demand that they do something with their authority, each prince and noble within his own territories. For what is done by constituted authority cannot be regarded as rebellion. But at present they are doing nothing at all, each hinders the other, and some

even help Antichrist and stand up for him. God will find them out and reward them according to the use they have made of their authority and position, whether to the salvation or to the destruction of the bodies, property and souls of their subjects. But the mind of the common man we must calm, and tell him to give way not even to the passions and words which lead to insurrection, and to do nothing at all unless commanded to do so by his superiors or assured of the cooperation of the authorities.

This course should commend itself to him for the following reasons:

I. As has been said, there will be no real violence. (Insurrection Impossible) All that men are saying and thinking on the subject amounts to nothing more than wasted words and idle thoughts. For, as we heard above, God has reserved their punishment to Himself, and they do not at all deserve so light a punishment. Besides, we see how the princes and nobles disagree among themselves, and that they manifest no willingness whatever to improve matters. And all this is the Lord's doing, that He alone may punish them and pour out His wrath upon them. But that does not excuse the princes and nobles. They ought to do their part, oppose the evil with all the power of their sword, in the hope that they might turn aside and moderate at least some of the wrath of God, as Moses did according to Exodus 32:8. At his command three thousand men were slain by the people, that God's wrath might be turned away from the people. The Scriptures relate similar deeds also of Elijah and of Phinehas. (1 Kings 18:40, Numbers 25:7 ff.) I do not mean that the priests ought to be killed, for that is not necessary, but that whatever they do beyond and contrary to the Gospel should be forbidden by commands properly enforced. Words and edicts will more than suffice in dealing with them; there is no need of more material weapons.

II. Even if the occurrence of an insurrection were possible, and God were willing to visit so gracious a punishment upon them, insurrection is an unprofitable method of procedure, and never results in the desired reformation. (Unprofitable) For insurrection is devoid of reason and generally hurts the innocent more than the guilty. Hence no insurrection is ever right, no matter how good the cause in whose interest it is made. The harm resulting from it always exceeds the amount of reformation accomplished, so that it fulfills the saying, "Things go from bad to worse." For this reason temporal powers are ordained and the sword given into their hands that they may punish the wicked and protect the godly, and that insurrection may not be necessary, as St. Paul says in Romans 13:1, and also St. Peter in 1 Peter 2:13 f.. But when Sir Mob breaks loose he cannot tell the wicked from the godly nor keep them apart; he strikes at random, and then horrible injustice is inevitable.

Keep your eye fixed on the authorities therefore. As long as they do nothing and give no commands, do you keep quiet your hand, your mouth and your heart, and assume no responsibility. But if you can prevail upon the authorities to do something and to give commands, you may do so. If they are unwilling it is your duty to be unwilling also. Any move you may make is wrong, and makes you much worse than those you oppose. My sympathies are and always will be with those against whom insurrection is made, however wrong the cause they stand for, and opposed to those who make insurrection, however much they may be in the right. For there can be no insurrection without the shedding of innocent blood and wrong done to the guiltless.

III. God has forbidden insurrection, (Forbidden) in that He says through Moses, *Quod justum est, juste exequaris*, — "Thou shalt follow justly after that which is just," and "Vengeance is mine, I will repay"; upon which texts is based the true proverb, "He who strikes back is in the wrong," and that other, "No one can be his own judge." (Deuteronomy 16:20, Deuteronomy 32:35, Romans 12:19)

Now insurrection is nothing else than being one's own judge and avenger, and that God cannot endure. Hence the only possible result of insurrection is that matters become worse than they were, because insurrection is contrary to God and God will have nothing to do with it.

IV. In this particular case insurrection is most certainly a suggestion of the devil. (Of the Devil) For he sees the bright light of the Gospel in which his idols, the pope and the papists, stand exposed before all the world, and in no way can he put it out. The brilliant rays have so dazzled his eyes and blinded him that he can do nothing more than lie, blaspheme and suggest arrant nonsense, until he even forgets to assume the hypocritical appearance of respectability to which we were accustomed in the bulls and books of those shameless liars, the pope, Eck, Eraser and the rest of them. Now he wants to stir up an insurrection through those who glory in the Gospel, and hopes in this way to bring our teaching into contempt, as if the devil and not God were its author. Some men are already making much of this interpretation in their preaching, as a result of the attack on the priests which the devil inspired at Erfurt. But, if God wills, he shall not succeed. We must bear the contempt he brings upon us. But he shall have to bear something that will pay him amply for it. They who read and understand my teaching correctly will not make an insurrection. They have not so learned from me. But how can we prevent men from assuming our name when they make insurrection? How much that Christ has forbidden, how much that even destroys Christ, are the papists doing in the name of Christ? Are we to keep our company so pure that among us not even a St. Peter may stumble, although among the papists there are none but Judases and Judas-like deceit, and they are not willing to have their teaching ascribed to the devil? But, as I said, the devil tries in every way possible to find an excuse for slandering our teaching. If there were anything worse he could do, he would do it. But he is checkmated, and must take his punishment, if God wills, now that he has been reduced to such lame, worthless, rotten schemes. He will not and shall not succeed in stirring up an insurrection, although his heart is set upon it.

Therefore I beseech all who would glory in the name of Christian to be guided by St. Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 6:3, that we may give our opponents no occasion to blame our teaching. (Men's Duty) For we see how apt the papists are to pay no attention to the beam in their own eyes, and to hunt and dig to find a tiny splinter in our eyes. (Matthew 7:3) We are not to reproach them with the fact that in them there is hardly any good thing. But if even one of us is not perfectly spiritual and quite an angel they claim that we are altogether in the wrong. Then they rejoice, and dance and sing as if they had gained a complete victory. Therefore we must guard against giving them any occasion to slander us, for they are exceeding full of slander. Not that we can help them, for they must slander and let their mouth speak out of the abundance of their heart, (Matthew 12:34) even if they must lie to do it, as they are doing now. But we must think of the Holy Gospel and keep it free from reproach, and stop their mouths, as St. Peter bids us do, that, so far as lies in us, they may not be able to speak any evil of us truthfully. (Titus 1:11, 1 Peter 2:15, 1 Peter 3:16) For whatever evil they can say of us they immediately ascribe to our doctrine, and thus the holy Word of God must bear our shame, although we derive from it all the honor we have. But their doctrine they regard as above reproach, although it produces nothing but evil. So noble, loving and just a people are they!

But if you ask, What are we to do in case the authorities are unwilling to act? Are we to continue to put up with things as they are, and encourage them in their wickedness? I answer, You are to do nothing of the kind. There are three things you are to do. First, you are to recognize your own sin, (To Confess Sins) because of which the strict justice of God has brought upon you this antichristian government, as St. Paul foretold in 2 Thessalonians 2:10 f., "God will send upon them false teaching

and government, because they have not received the love of truth, that they might be saved." All that the pope and his followers have done to our possessions, to our bodies and our souls, is no more than we deserve. Therefore you must first confess your sin and put it from you, before you try to escape the punishment. Otherwise you will only run into greater condemnation, and the stone you throw upwards toward heaven will fall on your own head.

In the second place, you are to pray in all humility against the papal government, (To Pray) as Psalm 10:12 ff. does and teaches us to do when it says, "Arise, Lord God, and lift up Thine hand, forget not Thy poor. Why does the wicked man blaspheme Thee, Lord God, and say, Thou wilt not require it? Thou seest it and considerest his labor and sorrow, that Thou mayest deliver them into Thy hands. To Thee is the poor man left; Thou wilt be a helper to the orphan. Break Thou the arm of the godless; seek out his wickedness, and his godlessness shall not be found."

In the third place, you are to make of your mouth such a mouth of the Spirit of Christ as St. Paul speaks of in the text quoted above, "Our Lord Jesus will slay him with the mouth of His Spirit." (To Proclaim the Gospel, 2 Thessalonians 2:8) This we will do if we boldly continue the work already begun, and by speaking and writing spread among the people the knowledge of the knavery and deceit of the pope and his papists, until he is exposed, known and brought into disrepute throughout the world. For we must slay him with words; the mouth of Christ must do it. That is the way he is torn out of men's hearts and his lies become known and despised. And when he is out of men's hearts, so that he has lost their confidence, he is already destroyed. This will do more good than a hundred insurrections. Our violence will do him no harm at all, but rather make him stronger, as many have experienced before now. But the light of truth hurts him; when we contrast him with Christ, and his teaching with the Gospel, that brings him low and utterly destroys him without any effort or exertion on our part. See what I have done. Have I not with words alone, without any use of the sword whatever, done more injury to the pope, bishops, priests and monks than all emperors, kings and princes with all their power ever did before? And why? Because Daniel 8:25 says, "This king shall be broken without hand," and St. Paul says, "He shall be destroyed by the mouth of Christ." (2 Thessalonians 2:8) Now every man, whether it be I or another, who speaks the word of Christ, may boldly assert that his mouth is the mouth of Christ. I for my part am certain that the words I speak are not mine, but Christ's. Then my mouth also must be His Whose words it speaks.

Therefore you need not desire an armed insurrection. (The Spiritual Insurrection) Christ has Himself already begun an insurrection with His mouth which will be more than the pope can bear. Let us join ourselves to that, and go about our business. The work that is now being done in the world is not ours. Such a matter cannot be begun and carried on by any man. In what has already been done my approval and advice were not asked; the end also shall be attained without my help, and the gates of hell shall not prevent it. (Matthew 16:18) A far different man is making things move; but Him the papists do not see, and therefore they lay the blame on us. But they shall see for themselves very soon. The devil has for a long time feared the approach of these years; he smelled the rat from afar. He even issued many prophecies against it, some of which point to me, so that I am often amazed at his marvelous subtilty. More than once he would have liked to kill me; now he would like to see an armed insurrection, which would bring this spiritual insurrection into bad repute and hinder it. But, if God wills, it will not and shall not help him at all. He must be destroyed "without hand" and "with the mouth alone"; nothing will prevent that.

Do you, therefore, preach the holy Gospel, and help others to preach it; teach, speak, write and preach that the Church laws amount to nothing; allow no one to enter the priesthood, the monastery or the convent, and encourage every one who has entered to leave it again; give no more money for bulls, candles, bells, paintings and churches, but tell men that a Christian life consists of faith and love. Let us do this for two years longer, and you shall see what will become of pope, bishops, cardinals, priests, monks, nuns, bells, towers, masses, vigils, gowns, cowls, tonsures, rules, statutes, and all the swarming vermin of the papal government. They shall all vanish like smoke. But if we do not thus teach and spread this truth among the people, so that their hearts will no longer cling to these things, the pope will abide in safety, though we should stir up a thousand insurrections against him. See what effect this one year of preaching and writing this truth has had; how the papists' cover has shrunk both in length and in breadth! The stationarii complain that they are almost starving. What will the result be if this mouth of Christ shall consume with His Spirit for two more years? (2 Thessalonians 2:8) This is what the devil would like to prevent by stirring up an armed insurrection. But let us be wise, thank God for His holy Word, and be bold with our mouths in the service of this blessed insurrection.

The ignorance of the papists has been revealed. (The Papists are judged) Their hypocrisy has been revealed. The wicked lies contained in their laws and monastic orders have been revealed. Their wicked and tyrannical use of the ban has been revealed. In short, everything with which they have until now bewitched, frightened and deceived the world has been uncovered. Men see that it was all a mere delusion. They can no longer frighten men with anything except the little temporal power they have. But now that the tinsel has come off, and they must defend themselves by sheer force, it cannot continue long. And what escapes the mouth: of Christ, His appearing shall destroy, as St. Paul says. (2 Thessalonians 2:8) Therefore let us keep boldly on, earnestly inculcate the word, and drive out the laws of men. This is the way Christ is through us slaying the papacy. Already it sings, Eli, Eli; it is hard hit. (Mark 15:34, 37) Soon men will say, expiravit.

But I must admonish those also who by their way of doing even this cause a great falling away from the holy Gospel and bring it into evil repute. (Moderation Demanded) There are some who, as soon as they have read a page or two or have heard a sermon, go at it slap-dash, and do no more than overwhelm others with reproach and find fault with them and their practices as being unevangelical, without stopping to consider that many of them are honest and simple folk, who would soon learn the truth if it were told them. This also I have taught no one to do, and St. Paul has strictly forbidden it. (Romans 14:1 ff.; 15:1, 1 Corinthians 4:3 f., Acts 17:20) Their only motive is the desire to tell some new thing and to be considered good Lutherans. They abuse the holy Gospel and make it serve their pride. In that way you will never bring the Gospel into the hearts of men. On the contrary, you will frighten them away, and upon you will be laid the awful responsibility of having driven them away from the truth. That is not the way to do, thou fool. Listen, and let me advise you.

First of all, I ask that men make no reference to my name, and call themselves not Lutherans, but Christians. (Not Lutherans but Christians) What is Luther? My doctrine, I am sure, is not mine, (John 7:16) nor have I been crucified for any one. St. Paul, in 1 Corinthians 3:4, would not allow Christians to call themselves Pauline or Petrine, but Christian. How then should I, poor, foul carcase that I am, come to have men give to the children of Christ a name derived from my worthless name? No, no, my dear friends; let us abolish all party names, and call ourselves Christians after Him Whose doctrine we have. The papists have a party name deservedly, because they are not content with the doctrine and the name of Christ, but want to be papist as well. Let them be papist then, since the

pope is their master. I neither am nor want to be any man's master. (Matthew 23:8) Christ alone is our Master, and He teaches me and all believers in one and the same way. In the second place, If you want to tell others about the Gospel in a Christian way, you must consider the persons with whom you are speaking. (Consideration for the Weak) For you will meet two kinds. There are some who are hardened and will not hear, but with their lies deceive and poison others. To this class belong the pope, Eck, Eraser, and some of our bishops, priests and monks. To these men you are not to tell anything about the Gospel at all, but do as Christ says in Matthew 7:6, "Give not that which is holy to dogs; neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest perhaps they trample them under their feet, and the dogs turn and tear you." Let them remain dogs and swine; your efforts are wasted in any case. Solomon also says, "Where there is none who listens, pour not out words." (Ecclus. 32:6 (Vulgate)) But when you see that these liars instill their lies and poison into other people, then you are to oppose them boldly and fight against them, just as Paul opposed Elymas with hard and sharp words, (Acts 13:10 f.) and as Christ calls the Pharisees a generation of vipers. (Matthew 23:33) This you are to do not for their sake, for they will not listen to you, but for the sake of those whom they are poisoning. For so St. Paul commands Titus to rebuke sharply such vain talkers and deceivers of souls. (Titus 1:10, 13)

But there are others who have so far heard only this and might be willing to learn if some one taught them, or who are so weak that they cannot readily understand it. These you must not bully and startle, but instruct them in a kindly and gentle manner, point out to them the evidence and the proof, and if they cannot immediately grasp it, have patience with them for a time. St. Paul speaks of this in Romans 14:1; 15:1, "Him that is weak in the faith, receive ye"; and St. Peter in 1 Peter 3:15, "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with gentleness and fear." Here you see that we are to give instruction in our faith with gentleness and in the fear of God to any man who desires or needs it.

If, in dealing with such people, you want to display your great learning, pounce upon them with the bare assertion that their way of praying, fasting and celebrating mass is wrong, and insist upon eating meat, eggs and other things they regard as forbidden on the fast-day, and with it all do not with gentleness and fear explain to them the why and wherefore, these simple souls cannot help thinking that you are a proud, impudent and wicked man, as in truth you are. (The Wrong Way) They will get the impression that men are not to pray nor to do good, that the mass is nothing, and so on. You have led them into this error and put this stumbling block in their way, and you will be held accountable for it. That is why they think and speak ill of the holy Gospel and imagine that you have been taught monstrous things. What does it profit you thus to give offense to your neighbor and to lay obstacles in the way of the Gospel? You have cooled your inconsiderate ardor, and men say, "Well, I will keep my old faith," and shut their hearts against the genuine truth.

But if you would tell them your reasons with fear and gentleness, as St. Peter teaches you, (1 Peter 3:16) and say, "My dear man, fasting, the eating of eggs, meat and fish are matters of such a nature that salvation does not depend on them; both the doing of these things and the leaving of them undone may be either right or wrong according to circumstances; faith alone saves," and whatever else ought to be said in such a case, as, for example, that the mass would be a good thing if it were properly celebrated, etc.: this method would draw them to you, they would listen and at last learn what you know. (The Right Way) But now that you are so insolent, pride yourself on your superior knowledge, act like the Pharisee in the Gospel, (Luke 18:11, John 7:49) and base your pride on the fact that they do not know what you know, you fall under the judgment of St. Paul in Romans 14:15,

Jam non secundum caritatem ambulas, and you despise your neighbor whom you ought to serve with meekness and fear. Consider an analogous case. If an enemy had tied a rope about your brother's neck so that he was in danger of his life, and you were so foolish as to rage against the rope and the enemy, and ran up and with all your energy pulled the rope toward you or lunged at it with a knife, you would most likely strangle your brother or stab him, and do more harm than the rope and the enemy had done. If you really want to help your brother, this is what you must do: the enemy you may punish or beat as hard as he deserves, but the rope you must handle gently and with fear until you get it away from your brother's neck, lest you strangle him.

In the same way you may be harsh in dealing with the liars, the hardened tyrants, and be bold to do things contrary to their teachings and their works, for they are unwilling to listen to you. But the simple people, whom they have bound with the ropes of their teachings and whose lives are endangered, you must treat quite differently. You must with fear and gentleness undo the teachings of men, tell your reasons, and in this way gradually set them free. This is what St. Paul did when, in defiance of all the Jews, (Galatians 2:3) he would not have Titus circumcised, and yet circumcised Timothy. (Acts 16:3) You must treat dogs and swine differently from men, and wolves and lions differently from the weak sheep. With the wolves you cannot be too severe, with the weak sheep you cannot be too gentle. Living as we do among the papists, we must act just as if we lived among the heathen. Indeed, they are sevenfold heathen, and therefore, as St. Peter teaches, we are to have our conversation honest among the Gentiles, that they may not be able to speak any evil of us truthfully, though they would like to do so. (1 Peter 2:12) It gives them great pleasure to hear that you make a boast of this teaching and give offense to weak hearts; because it gives them an opportunity to decry the whole of the teaching as one that gives offense and does harm, and they have no other way of resisting it, but must acknowledge that it is true.

God grant us all to live as we teach, and to practice what we preach. There are many among us who say, "Lord, Lord," and praise the teaching, but are slow to do what it demands. (Matthew 7:21)

Let this suffice for the present, as a renewed warning against insurrection and the giving of offense, that we may not give occasion to men to profane the holy Word of God.