have made this distinction. For, as has been said, the soul is not under the authority of Caesar; he can neither teach it nor give life, neither kill it nor give it life, neither bind it nor loose it, neither judge it nor condemn it, neither hold it fast nor release it. All this he would have to do, had he the authority to command it and impose laws upon it. But with respect to body, property, and honor he has indeed to do these things, for such matters are under his authority.

If your prince or temporal ruler commands you to side with the pope, to believe thus and so, or to get rid of certain books, you should say, “It is not fitting that Lucifer should sit at the side of God. Gracious sir, I owe you obedience in body and property; command me within the limits of your authority on earth, and I will obey. But if you command me to believe or to get rid of certain books, I will not obey; for then you are a tyrant and overreach yourself, commanding where you have neither the right nor the authority,” etc. Should he seize your property on account of this and punish such disobedience, then blessed are you, thank God that you are worthy to suffer for the sake of the divine word. Let him rage, fool that he is; he will meet his judge. For I tell you, if you fail to withstand him, if you give in to him and let him take away your faith and your books, you have truly denied God.

Let me illustrate. In Meissen, Bavaria, the Mark, and other places, the tyrants have issued an order that all copies of the New Testament are everywhere to be turned in to the officials. This should be the response of their subjects: They should not turn in a single page, not even a letter, on pain of losing their salvation. Whoever does so is delivering Christ up into the hands of Herod, for these tyrants act as murderers of Christ just like Herod. If their homes are ordered searched and books or property taken by force, they should suffer it to be done. Outrage is not to be resisted but endured; yet we should not sanction it, or lift a little finger to conform, or obey. For such tyrants are acting as worldly princes are supposed to act, and worldly princes they surely are. But the world is God's enemy; hence, they too have to do what is antagonistic to God and agreeable to the world, that they may not be bereft of honor, but remain worldly princes. Do not won-

der, therefore, that they rage and mock at the gospel; they have to live up to their name and title.

You must know that since the beginning of the world a wise prince is a mighty rare bird, and an upright prince even rarer. They are generally the biggest fools or the worst scoundrels on earth; therefore, one must constantly expect the worst from them and look for little good, especially in divine matters which concern the salvation of souls. They are God's executioners and hangmen; His divine wrath uses them to punish the wicked and to maintain outward peace. Our God is a great lord and ruler; this is why He must also have such noble, highborn, and rich hangmen and constables. He desires that everyone shall copiously accord them riches, honor, and fear in abundance. It pleases His divine will that we call His hangmen gracious lords, fall at their feet, and be subject to them in all humility, so long as they do not ply their trade too far and try to become shepherds instead of hangmen. If a prince should happen to be wise, upright, or a Christian, that is one of the great miracles, the most precious token of divine grace upon that land. Ordinarily the course of events is in accordance with the passage from Is. 3:14, “I will make boys their princes, and gaping fools shall rule over them”; and in Hos. 13:11, “I will give you a king in my anger, and take him away in my wrath.” The world is too wicked, and does not deserve to have many wise and upright princes. Frogs must have their storks.

Again you say, “The temporal power is not forcing men to believe; it is simply seeing to it externally that no one deceives the people by false doctrine; how could heretics otherwise be restrained?” Answer: This the bishops should do; it is a function entrusted to them and not to the princes. Heresy can never be restrained by force. One will have to tackle the problem in some other way, for heresy must be opposed and dealt with otherwise than with the sword. Here God's word must do the fighting. If it does not succeed, certainly the temporal power will not succeed either, even if it were to drench the world in blood. Heresy is a spiritual matter which you cannot hack to pieces with iron, consume with fire, or drown in water. God's word alone avails here, as Paul says in 2 Cor. 10:4-5, “Our weapons are not
Twelve Articles of the Peasants

The German Reformation has, but mighty in God to destroy every argument and proud obstacle, that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and to take every thought captive in the service of Christ.

Moreover, faith and heresy are never so strong as when men oppose them by sheer force, without God's word. For many count it certain that such force is for a wrong cause and is directed against the right, since it proceeds without God's word and knows not how to further its cause except by naked force, as brute beasts do. Even in temporal affairs force can be used only after the wrong has been legally condemned. How much more impossible it is to act with force, without justice and God's word, in these lofty spiritual matters! See, therefore, what fine, clever nobles they are! They would drive out heresy, but set about it in such a way that they only strengthen the opposition, rousing suspicion against themselves and justifying the heretics. My friend, if you wish to drive out heresy, you must find some way to tear it first of all from the heart and completely turn men's wills away from it. With force you will not stop it, but only strengthen it. What do you gain by strengthening heresy in the heart, while weakening only its outward expression and forcing the tongue to lie? God's word, however, enlightens the heart, and so all heresies and errors vanish from the heart of their own accord.

Therefore, so long as the devil is not repelled and driven from the heart, it is agreeable to him that I destroy his vessels with fire or sword; it's as if I were to fight lightning with a straw. Job bore abundant witness to this when in his forty-first chapter he said that the devil counts iron as straw, and fears no power on earth. We learn it also from experience, for even if all Jews and heretics were forcibly burned no one ever has been or will be convinced or converted thereby.

But you might say, "Since there is to be no temporal sword among Christians, how then are they to be ruled outwardly? There certainly must be authority even among Christians." Answer: Among Christians there shall and can be no authority; rather all are alike subject to one another, as Paul says in Rom. 12: "Each shall consider the other his superior"; and Peter says in 1 Pet. 5:15, "All of you be subject to one another." This is also what Christ means in Luke 14:10, "When you are invited to a wed-
6. The *Twelve Articles* of the peasants (1525)*

The German peasants' uprising of 1524–1525 had only a tenuous relationship with the Protestant Reformation, since the real causes of the peasants' discontent reached back into the preceding century, where they found expression in periodic uprisings and restlessness.

But the Protestant Reformation and its slogans—the freedom of the Christian man, the priesthood of all believers, the repudiation of man-made laws and regulations—seemed to be tailor-made for the peasants, and it was natural that they should embrace the tenets of the Reforma-

to pay the fair tithe of grain. None the less it should be done properly. The word of God plainly provides that it should be given to God and passed on to His own. If it is to be given to a minister, we will in the future collect the tithe through our church elders, appointed by the congregation and distribute it, to the sufficient livelihood of the minister and his family elected by the entire congregation, according to the judgment of the whole congregation. The remainder shall be given to the poor of the place, as the circumstances and the general opinion demand.

The Third Article. It has been the custom hitherto for men to hold us as their own property, which is pitiable enough considering that Christ has redeemed and purchased us without exception, by the shedding of His precious blood, the lowly as well as the great. Accordingly, it is consistent with Scripture that we should be free and we wish to be so. Not that we want to be absolutely free and under no authority. God does not teach us that we should lead a disorderly life according to the lusts of the flesh, but that we should live by the commandments, love the Lord our God and our neighbor.

The Fourth Article. In the fourth place it has been the custom herefore that no poor man was allowed to catch venison or wild fowl, or fish in flowing water, which seems to us quite unseemly and unbrotherly, as well as selfish and not according to the word of God. Accordingly, it is our desire if a man holds possession of waters that he should prove from satisfactory documents that his right has been rightfully acquired by purchase. We do not wish to take it from him by force, but his rights should be exercised in a Christian and brotherly fashion.

The Fifth Article. In the fifth place we are aggrieved in the matter of woodcutting, for our noble folk have appropriated all the woods to themselves alone. It should be free to every member of the community to help himself to such firewood as he needs in his home. Also, if a man requires wood for carpenter's purposes he should have it free, but with the approval of a person appointed by the community for that purpose.

The Sixth Article. Our sixth complaint is in regard to the excessive services demanded of us, which increase from day to day.
We ask that this matter be properly looked into, so that we shall not continue to be oppressed in this way, and that some gracious consideration be given us, since our forefathers served only according to the word of God.

The Seventh Article. Seventh, we will not hereafter allow ourselves to be further oppressed by our lords. What the lords possess is to be held according to the agreement between the lord and the peasant. . . .

The Eighth Article. In the eighth place, we are greatly burdened by holdings which cannot support the rent exacted from them. The peasants suffer loss in this way and are ruined. We ask that the lords may appoint persons of honor to inspect these holdings and fix a rent in accordance with justice, so that the peasant shall not work for nothing, since the laborer is worthy of his hire.

The Ninth Article. In the ninth place, we are burdened with the great evil in the constant making of new laws. We are not judged according to the offense, but sometimes with great ill will, and sometimes much too leniently. In our opinion we should be judged according to the old written law, so that the case shall be decided according to its merits, and not with favors.

The Tenth Article. In the tenth place we are aggrieved that certain individuals have appropriated meadows and fields which at one time belonged to the community. These we will take again into our own hands unless they were rightfully purchased.

The Eleventh Article. In the eleventh place we will entirely abolish the custom called Todfall [heriot], and will no longer endure it; nor allow widows and orphans to be thus shamefully robbed against God’s will. . . .

Conclusion. In the twelfth place it is our conclusion and final resolution, that if any one or more of these articles should not be in agreement with the word of God, which we do not think, we will willingly recede from such article when it is proved to be against the word of God by a clear explanation of the Scripture. For this we shall pray God, since He can grant all this and He alone. The peace of Christ abide with us all.
7. Martin Luther: *Friendly Admonition to Peace concerning the Twelve Articles of the Swabian Peasants (1525)*

This tract was Luther's response to the *Twelve Articles*, which had clearly implicated him by the "evangelical" character of their demands. From the insistence that a congregation elect its own minister to the willingness to be corrected by the Scriptures, the *Twelve Articles* seemed to be pages out of Luther's book. Luther responded with this tract, published in April, 1525. Above all, it was meant as an appeal to peace, as a plea that the grievances of the peasants be duly considered and bloodshed avoided. At the same time, Luther left little doubt that he disapproved of the peasants' marshaling of scriptural arguments in support of their economic or social goals and in this tract he expounded his understanding of the relationship of Christianity to social change. No matter how well justified certain social or economic demands may be, the gospel cannot be adduced in their support. Luther rejected the use of the gospel to sustain secular demands, and insisted that the laws of society must provide the answer for social amelioration.

A condensed version of the entire tract is reprinted below.

*LITERATURE*


The peasants who have now banded together in Swabia have put their intolerable grievances against the rulers into twelve

articles, and undertaken to support them with certain passages of Scripture, and have published them in printed form. The thing about them that pleases me best is that, in the twelfth article, they offer to accept instruction gladly and willingly, if there is need or necessity for it, and are willing to be corrected, in so far as that can be done by clear, plain, undeniable passages of Scripture, since it is right and proper that no one's conscience should be instructed or corrected, except by divine Scripture.

Now, if that is their serious and sincere meaning—and it would not be right for me to interpret it otherwise, because in these articles they come out boldly into the open, and show no desire to shun the light—then there is good reason to hope that things will be well. As one who am counted among those who now deal with the divine Scriptures here on earth, and especially as one whom they mention and call upon by name in the second document, it gives me the greater courage and confidence in openly publishing my instruction, which I do in a friendly and Christian spirit, as a duty of brotherly love, in order that, if any misfortune or disaster shall come out of this matter, it may not be attributed to me, or blamed on me, because of my silence. But if this offer of theirs is only pretense and show (and without doubt there are some of that kind of people among them; for it is not possible that so great a crowd should all be true Christians and have good intentions, but a large part of them must be using the good intentions of the rest for their own selfish purposes and seeking their own advantage), then without doubt, it will accomplish very little, or contribute, in fact, to their great injury and eternal ruin.

Because this matter, then, is great and perilous, concerning, as it does, both the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the world (for if this rebellion were to proceed and get the upper hand, both kingdoms would be destroyed and there would be neither worldly government nor word of God, but it would result in the permanent destruction of all Germany), therefore it is necessary to speak boldly and to give advice without regard to anyone.

To the Princes and Lords
We have no one on earth to thank for this mischievous rebellion, except you princes and lords; and especially you blind bishops and mad priests and monks, whose hearts are hardened, even to the present day, and who do not cease to rage and rave against the holy gospel, although you know that it is true, and that you cannot refute it. Besides, in your temporal government, you do nothing but flay and rob your subjects, in order that you may lead a life of splendor and pride, until the poor common people can bear it no longer. The sword is at your throats, but you think yourselves so firm in the saddle that no one can unhorse you. This false security and stubborn perversity will break your necks, as you will discover. I have often told you before to beware of the saying, in Psalm 106, \textit{Esstundit contemptum super principes, He poureth contempt upon princes.} You are striving after it, and want to be smitten over the head, and no warning or exhorting will help you to avoid it.

Well, then, since you are the cause of this wrath of God, it will undoubtedly come upon you, if you do not mend your ways in time. The signs in heaven and the wonders on earth are meant for you, dear lords; they bode no good for you, and no good will come to you. A great part of God's wrath has already come, and God is sending so many false teachers and prophets among us, so that through error and blasphemy we may richly deserve hell and everlasting damnation. The rest of it is now here, for the peasants are mustering, and this must result in the ruin, destruction, and desolation of Germany by cruel murder and bloodshed, unless God shall be moved by our repentance to prevent it.

For you ought to know, dear lords, that God is doing this because this raging of yours cannot and will not and ought not be endured for long. You must become different men and yield to God's word. If you do not do this amicably and willingly, then you will be compelled to it by force and destruction. If these peasants do not do it for you, others will. Even though you were to beat them all, they would still be unbeaten, for God will raise up others. It is His will to beat you, and you will be beaten. It is not the peasants, dear lords, who are resisting you; it is God Himself who is resisting you in order to visit your raging upon you. There are some of you who have said that they will stake land and people on the extirpation of Lutheran teaching. What would you think, if you were to turn out to be your own prophets, and your land and people were already staked? Do not jest with God, dear lords! The Jews, too, said, \textit{We have no king.} and it became so serious that they had to be without a king forever.

To make your sin still greater, and ensure your merciless de-
struction, some of you are beginning to blame this affair on the gospel and say it is the fruit of my teaching. Well, well! Slander away, dear lords. You did not want to know what I taught, and what the gospel is; now there is one at the door who will soon teach you, unless you amend your ways. You, and everyone else, must bear me witness that I have taught with all quietness, have striven earnestly against rebellion, and have diligently held and exhorted subjects to obedience and reverence toward even your tyrannous and ravenous rule. This rebellion cannot be coming from me. But the murder-prophets, who hate me as much as they hate you, have come among these people and have gone about among them for more than three years, and no one has resisted them save me alone. If, therefore, God is minded to punish you, and allows the devil, through his false prophets, to stir up the people against you, and if it is, perhaps, His will that I shall not be able to prevent it any longer; what can I or my gospel do? Not only has it suffered your persecution and murdering and raging; it has also prayed for you and helped protect and maintain your rule over the common people. If I had any desire to be revenged on you, I could laugh in my sleeve, and become a mere onlooker at the doings of the peasants, or even join in with them and help make matters worse; but from this may my God preserve me, as He has done hitherto.

Therefore, my dear lords, enemies or friends, I beg submissively that you will not despise my faithfulness, though I am a poor man. I beg that you will not make light of this rebellion. Not that I believe or fear that they will be too strong for you, or that I would have you be afraid of them on that account. But fear God and have respect for His wrath! If it be His will to punish you as you have deserved (and I am afraid that it is), then He would punish you, even though the peasants were a hundred times fewer than they are. He can make peasants out of stones and slay a hundred of you by one peasant, so that all your armor and your strength will be too little.

If it is still possible to give you advice, my lords, give a little place to the will and wrath of God . . . Do not begin a struggle with them, for you do not know what the end of it will be. Try kindness first, for you do not know what God wills to do, and do not strike a spark that will kindle all Germany and that no one can quench. Our sins are before God; therefore we have to fear

His wrath when even a leaf rustles, let alone when such multitude sets itself in motion. You lose nothing by kindness; and even though you were to lose something, it can afterwards come back to you ten times over in peace, while in conflict you may, perhaps, lose both life and goods. Why run into danger, when you can get more by another, and a good way?

The peasants have put forth twelve articles, some of which are so fair and just as to take away your reputation in the eyes of God and the world and fulfil the Psalm about pouring contempt upon princes. Nevertheless, almost all of them are framed in their own interest and for their own good, though not for their best good. I should, indeed, have put forth other articles against you that would have dealt with all Germany and its government . . .

The first article, in which they ask the right to hear the gospel and choose their pastors, you cannot reject with any show of right, though, to be sure, it contains some selfishness, since they allege that these pastors are to be supported by the tithes, and these do not belong to them. Nevertheless, the sense of the article is that permission should be given for the preaching of the gospel, and this no ruler can or ought oppose. Indeed no ruler ought to prevent anyone from teaching or believing what he pleases, whether gospel or lies. It is enough if he prevents the teaching of sedition and rebellion.

The other articles recite physical grievances . . . and they, too, are fair and just. For rulers are not instituted in order that they may seek their own profit and self-will, but in order to provide for the best interests of their subjects. Flaying and extortion are, in the long run, intolerable.

To the Peasants

So far, dear friends, you have learned only that I admit it to be (sad to say!) all too true and certain that the princes and lords, who forbid the preaching of the gospel and oppress the people so unbearably, are worthy, and have well deserved, that God put them down from their seats, as men who have sinned deeply against God and man. And they have no excuse. Nevertheless, you, too, must have a care that you take up your cause with a good conscience and with justice. If you have a good conscience, you have the comforting advantage that God will be with you, and will help you through. Even though you were worsted for a while,
and though you suffered death, you would win in the end, and would preserve your soul eternally with all the saints. But if you have not justice and a good conscience, you will be worsted; and even though you were to win for a while, and were to slay all the princes, yet in the end you would be lost eternally, body and soul. This is, therefore, no joking matter for you; it concerns your body and soul eternally. The thing that is most necessary to consider and that must be most seriously regarded, is not how strong you are and how completely wrong they are, but whether you have justice and a good conscience on your side.

Therefore, dear brethren, I beg you, in a kindly and brotherly way, to look diligently to what you do, and not to believe all kinds of spirits and preachers, now that Satan has raised up many evil spirits of disorder and of murder, and filled the world with them. Only listen and give ear, as you offer many times to do. I will not spare you the earnest warning that I owe you, even though some of you, poisoned by the murderous spirits, will hate me for it, and call me a hypocrite. That does not worry me; it is enough for me if I save some of the goodhearted and upright men among you from the danger of God’s wrath. The rest I fear as little, as they despise me much; and they shall not harm me. I know one who is greater and mightier than they are, and He teach me in Psalm 3, “I am not afraid, though many thousands of people set themselves against me.” My confidence shall outlast their confidence, that I know for sure.

In the first place, dear brethren, you bear the name of God and call yourselves a “Christian band” or union, and allege that you want to live and act “according to the divine law.” Now you know that the name, word, and titles of God are not to be assumed idly or in vain, as He says in the second commandment, “Thou shalt not bear the name of the Lord thy God in vain,” and adds “For God will not let him be guiltless who bears His name in vain.” Here is a clear, plain text, which applies to you, as to all men. Without regard to your great numbers, your rights, and your terror, it threatens you, as well as us and all others, with God’s wrath. He is, as you also know, mighty enough and strong enough to punish you as He here threatens, if His name is borne in vain; and so you have to expect no good fortune, but only misfortune, if you bear His name falsely. Learn from this how to judge yourselves; and accept this kindly warning. For Him who once drowned the whole world in the Flood and sank Sodom with fire, it is a simple thing to slay or to defeat so many thousand peasants. He is an almighty and terrible God.

In the second place, it is easy to prove that you are bearing God’s name in vain and putting it to shame; nor is it to be doubted that you will, in the end, encounter all misfortune, unless God is untrue. For here stands God’s word, and says through the mouth of Christ, “He who takes the sword shall perish by the sword.” That means nothing else than that no one, by his own violence, shall arrogate authority to himself; but as Paul says, “Let every soul be subject to the higher powers with fear and reverence.”

How can you get over these sayings and laws of God, when you boast that you are acting according to divine law, and yet take the sword in your own hands, and revolt against the “higher powers” that are ordained of God? Do you not think that Paul’s judgment in Rom. 13 will strike you, “He that withholds the ordinance of God shall receive condemnation”? That is “bearing God’s name in vain”; alleging God’s law and withholding God’s law, under His name. O have a care, dear sirs! It will not turn out that way in the end.

In the third place, you say that the rulers are wicked and intolerable, for they will not allow us the gospel, and they oppress us too hard by the burdens they lay on our temporal goods, and they are ruining us body and soul. I answer: The fact that the rulers are wicked and unjust does not excite tumult and rebellion, for to punish wickedness does not belong to everybody, but to the worldly rulers who bear the sword. Thus Paul says in Rom. 13, and Peter, in 1 Pet. 2, that they are ordained of God for the punishment of the wicked. Then, too, there is the natural law of all the world, which says that no one may be judge in his own cause or take his own revenge. The proverb is true, “He who resists is wrong,” and the other proverb, “He who resists makes strife.” The divine law agrees with this, and says, in Deut. 32, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.” Now you cannot deny that your rebellion proceeds in such a way that you make yourselves your own judges, and avenge yourselves, and are unwilling to suffer any wrong. That is contrary not only to
Christian law and the gospel, but also to natural law and all equity.

On the contrary, because you boast of the divine law and yet act against it, He will let you fall and be punished terribly, as men who dishonor His name; and then He will condemn you eternally, as was said above. For the word of Christ in Matt. 7, applies to you; you see the mote in the eye of the rulers, and see not the beam in your own eye. Also the saying of Paul in Rom. 3, "Let us do evil that good may come; whose damnation is just and right." It is true that the rulers do wrong when they suppress the gospel and oppress you in temporal things; but you do much more wrong when you not only suppress God's word, but tread it underfoot, and invade His authority and His law, and put yourselves above God. Besides, you take from the rulers their authority and right; nay, all that they have. For what have they left, when they have lost their authority? . . .

Can you not imagine it, or figure it out, dear friends? If your enterprise were right, then any man might become judge over another, and there would remain in the world neither authority, nor government, nor order, nor land, but there would be only murder and bloodshed; for as soon as anyone saw that someone was wronging him, he would turn to and judge him and punish him. Now if that is unjust and intolerable when done by an individual, neither can it be endured when done by a band or a crowd. But if it can be endured from a band or a crowd, it cannot be prevented with right and justice when individuals attempt it; for in both cases the cause is the same, namely, a wrong. And what would you do yourselves, if disorder broke out in your band, and one man set himself against another and took his own vengeance on him? Would you put up with that? Would you not say that he must let others, whom you appointed, do the judging and avenging? How, then, do you expect to stand with God and the world, when you do your own judging and avenging upon those who have injured you; nay, upon your rulers, whom God has ordained?

Now, all this has been said concerning the common, divine and natural law which even heathen, Turks, and Jews have to keep, if there is to be any peace or order in the world. Even though you were to keep this whole law, you would do no better and no more than heathen and Turks. For not to be one's own judge and avenger, but to leave this to the authorities and the rulers, makes no man a Christian; it is a thing that must eventually be done whether willingly or not. But because you are acting against this law, you see plainly that you are worse than heathen or Turks, to say nothing of the fact that you are not Christians. But what do you think that Christ will say to this? You bear His name, and call yourselves a "Christian assembly," and yet you are so far from Christian, and your actions and lives are so horribly contrary to His law, that you are not worthy to be called even heathen or Turks, but are much worse than these, because you rage and struggle against the divine and natural law, which all the heathen keep.

If, now, it is really your will to keep the divine law, as you boast, then do it. There it stands! God says, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay"; and again, "Be subject not only to good lords, but also to the wicked." If you do this, well and good; if not, you may, indeed, cause a calamity, but it will finally come upon yourselves. Let no one be in doubt about this! God is just, and will not endure it. Be careful, therefore, with your liberty, that you do not run from the rain and fall in the water, and thinking to gain freedom of body, lose body and goods and soul eternally. God's wrath is there; fear it, I advise you! The devil has sent false prophets among you; beware of them!

And now we would go on, and speak of the law of Christ, and of the gospel, which is not binding on the heathen, as the other law is. For if you boast that you are Christians and are glad when you are called Christians, and want to be known as Christians, then you must allow your law to be held up before you rightly. Listen, then, dear Christians, to your Christian law! Your supreme Lord Christ, whose name you bear, says, in Matt. 6 [5:39] "Ye shall not resist evil, but if any one compels you to go one mile, go with him two miles, and if anyone takes your cloak, let him have your coat, too; and if anyone smites you on one cheek, offer him the other also." Do you hear, "Christian assembly"? How does your undertaking agree with this law? You will not endure it when anyone does you ill or wrong, but will be free, and suffer nothing but good and right; and Christ says that we are not to resist any evil or wrong, but always yield,
suffer it, and let things be taken from us. If you will not bear this law, then put off the name of Christian, and boast of another name that accords with your actions, or Christ Himself will tear His name from you, and that will be too hard for you.

Thus says Paul, too, in Rom. 12, "Avenge not yourselves, dearly beloved, but give place to the wrath of God." Again, he praises the Corinthians, in 2 Cor. 11, because they suffer it gladly if a man smite or rob them; and in 1 Cor. 6, he rebukes them because they went to law about property, and did not endure the wrong. Nay our Leader, Jesus Christ, says, in Matt. 7, that we are to wish good to those who wrong us, and pray for our persecutors, and do good to those who do evil to us. These are our Christian laws, dear friends! Now see how far the false prophets have led you away from them, and yet they call you Christians, though they have made you worse than heathen. For from these sayings, a child easily grasps that it is Christian law not to strive against wrongs, not to grasp after the sword, not to protect oneself, not to avenge oneself, but to give up life and property, and let who takes it take it; we have enough in our Lord, who will not leave us, as He has promised. Suffering, suffering; cross, cross! This and nothing else, is the Christian law! But now you battle for temporal goods, and will not let the coat go after the cloak, but want to recover the cloak. How, then, will you die, and give up your life, or love your enemies, or do good to them? O worthless Christians! Dear friends, Christians are not so common that so many of them can get together in one crowd. A Christian is a rare bird! Would to God that the majority of us were good, pious heathen, who kept the natural law, not to mention the Christian law!

I will also give you some illustrations of Christian law so that you may see whither the mad prophets have led you. Look at St. Peter in the garden. He wanted to defend his Lord Christ with the sword, and cut off Malchus's ear. Tell me, had not Peter great right on his side? Was it not an intolerable wrong that they were going to take from Christ, not only His property, but also His life? Nay, they not only took from Him life and property, but in so doing they entirely suppressed the gospel by which they were to be saved, and thus robbed heaven. Such a wrong you

have not yet suffered, dear friends. But see what Christ does and teaches in this case. However great the wrong was; nevertheless He stopped St. Peter, bade him put up his sword, and would not allow him to avenge or prevent this wrong. In addition He passed a judgment of death upon him, as though upon a murderer, and said, "He that takes the sword shall perish with the sword." From this we must understand that it is not enough that anyone has done us wrong, and that we have a good case, and have right on our side, but we must also have the right and power committed to us by God to use the sword and punish wrong. Moreover, a Christian must also endure it if anyone desires to keep the gospel away from him; if, indeed, it is possible to keep the gospel from anyone, as we shall hear.

A second example is Christ Himself. What did He do when they took His life on the cross and thereby took away from Him the work of preaching for which He had been sent by God Himself for the blessing of the souls of men? He did just what St. Peter says. He committed the whole matter to Him who judgeth righteously, and He endured this intolerable wrong. More than that, He prayed for His persecutors and said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Now, if you are true Christians, you must certainly act in this same way and follow this example. If you do otherwise, then let go the name of Christian and the boast of Christian law; for then you are certainly not Christians but are resisting Christ and His law, His doctrine and His example.

I must also give you an illustration from this present time. Pope and emperor have set themselves against me and have raged. Now how have I brought it about that the more pope and emperor have raged the more my gospel spread? I have never drawn sword nor desired revenge. I have begun no division and no rebellion, but, so far as I was able, I have helped the worldly rulers, even those who persecuted the gospel and me, to maintain their power and honor. But I have stopped with committing the matter to God and relying confidently at all times upon His hand. Therefore, He has not only preserved my life in spite of the pope and all the tyrants (and this many really consider a great miracle; as I myself must also confess that it is), but He has caused my gospel always to increase and spread. Now you interfere with
me. You want to help the gospel and do not see that by what you are doing you are hindering it and holding it down in the highest degree.

I say all this, dear friends, as a faithful warning. In this case you should rid yourselves of the name of Christians and cease to boast of Christian law. For no matter how right you are, it is not for a Christian to appeal to law, or to fight, but rather to suffer wrong and endure evil; and there is no other way (1 Cor. 6). You yourselves confess in your Preface, that all who believe in Christ become kindly, peaceful, patient, and united; but in your deeds you are displaying nothing but impatience, turbulence, strife and violence; thus you contradict your own words. You want to be known as patient people, who will endure neither wrong nor evil; but will endure what is right and good. That is fine patience! Any knave can practise it! It does not take a Christian to do that! Therefore I say again, however good and right your cause may be, nevertheless, because you would defend yourselves, and suffer neither violence nor wrong, you may do anything that God does not prevent, but leave the name of Christian out of it; leave out, I say, the name of Christian, and do not make it a cloak for your impatient, disorderly, un-Christian undertaking. I shall not let you have that name, but so long as there is a heartbeat in my body, I shall do all I can to take that name from you. You will not succeed, or will succeed only in ruining your bodies and souls.

In saying this, it is not my intention to justify or defend the rulers in the intolerable wrongs which you suffer from them. They are wrong, and do you cruel wrongs; that I admit. But what I hope is that, if neither party will allow itself to be instructed, and the one party attacks and comes to blows with the other (which God forbid!), neither shall be called Christians, but that, as is usual when one people fights with another, God will punish one knave with another, as the saying goes. If it comes to a conflict (which may God graciously avert!), I hope that you will be counted as people of such a kind and such a name that the rulers may know that they are fighting not against Christians but against heathen; and that you, too, may know that you are fighting the rulers not as Christians but as heathen. For Christians fight for themselves not with sword and gun, but with the cross and with suffering, just as Christ, our leader, does not bear a sword, but hangs on the cross...

If you were Christians, you would stop defying and threatening, and stay inside the Lord's Prayer, and advance your cause with God by praying, and say, "Thy will be done," and "Deliver us from evil. Amen." You see in the Psalter that the true saints take their necessities to God, and lament them, and seek aid from Him, and do not defend themselves or resist evil. Such prayer would have done more to help you, in all your needs, than if the world were full of you, especially if, beside that, you had a good conscience, and a comforting assurance that your prayers were heard, as His promises declare; such as 1 Tim. 4. "He is the helper of all men, especially of the believers," and Psalm 39. [50:15], "Call upon me in trouble, and I will help thee"; and Psalm 90 [91:15], "He called upon me in trouble, therefore will I deliver him." See! That is the Christian way to get rid of misfortune and evil, namely, endure it and call upon God. But because you do neither—neither call nor endure—but aid yourselves with your own might, and make yourselves your own God and Savior, therefore God cannot and must not be your God or Savior. By God's permission (which, we pray, may not be given!), you might accomplish something as heathen and blasphemers, though only for your eternal and temporal ruin; but as Christians, or evangelicals, you will win nothing; I would wager a thousand necks in it!

On the basis of what has been said, all your articles are easily answered; for even though all of them were right and proper according to the law of nature, nevertheless you have forgotten the Christian law, since you have not put them through by means of patience and prayer to God, as Christian people ought, but have undertaken, with impatience and violence, to wrest them from the rulers, and extort them by force; and this is against the law of the land and against natural justice. The man who framed your articles is no pious and honest man, for he has indicated on the margin many chapters of Scripture, on which the articles are supposed to rest, but keeps the porridge in his mouth, and leaves out the passages by which he would show his own wickedness and that of your enterprise. He has done this to deceive you and urge you on and bring you into danger. For the chapters he ad-
duces, when they are read through, say very little in favor of your undertaking, but rather the opposite; viz., that men shall live and act as Christians. He is some prophet of turbulence, who seeks, through you, to work his will upon the gospel. May God prevent, and guard you against him!

In the preface you are conciliatory and allege that you would not be seditious, and make the excuse that you desire to teach and live according to the gospel. There your own mouth and your own words rebuke you, for you confess that you are making disturbances and rising in revolt, and you want to adorn such conduct by means of the gospel. You have heard above that the gospel teaches that Christians ought to endure and suffer wrong, and pray to God in all their necessities, yet you are not willing to suffer, but like heathen, force the rulers to conform to your impatient will. You adduce the children of Israel as an example, saying that God heard their crying and delivered them. Why then do you not follow the example that you bring forward? Call upon God and wait until He sends you a Moses, who will prove by signs and wonders that he is sent from God. The children of Israel did not riot against Pharaoh, or help themselves as you propose to do. This illustration, therefore, is dead against you, and condemns you. You boast of it, and yet you do the opposite.

Again, it is not true when you declare that you teach and live according to the gospel. There is not one of the articles which teaches a single point of the gospel, but everything is directed to one purpose; namely, that your bodies and your properties may be free. In a word, they all deal with worldly and temporal matters. You would have power and wealth, so as not to suffer wrong; and yet the gospel does not take worldly matters into account, and makes the external life consist only in suffering, wrong, cross, patience, and contempt for temporal wealth and life. How, then, does the gospel agree with you; except that you are seeking to give your unevangelical and un-Christian enterprise an evangelical appearance, and do not see that you are thereby bringing shame on the holy gospel of Christ, and making it a cloak for wickedness? Therefore you must take a different attitude, and either drop this matter entirely and decide to suffer these wrongs, if you would be Christians and have the name of Christian; or else, if you are going on with it, make use of another name and not be called and considered Christians. There is no third course, and no other way.

True enough, you are right in desiring the gospel, if you are really in earnest about it. Indeed, I am willing to make this article even sharper than you do, and say it is intolerable that anyone should be shut out of heaven and driven by force into hell. No one should suffer that; he ought rather lose his neck a hundred times. But he who keeps the gospel from me, shuts heaven against me and drives me by force into hell; for the gospel is the only way and means for the soul’s salvation, and on peril of losing my soul, I should not suffer this. Tell me, is that not stated sharply enough? And yet it does not follow that I must set myself against my first against the rulers who do me this wrong. “But,” you say, “how am I at once to suffer it and not suffer it?” The answer is easy. It is impossible that anyone shall have the gospel kept from him. There is no power in heaven or earth that can do this, for it is a public teaching that moves freely about under the heavens and is bound to no one place. In this it is like the star, running through the air, which showed Christ’s birth to the wise men from the East.

It is true, indeed, that the rulers may suppress the gospel in cities or places where the gospel is, or where there are preachers, but you can leave these cities or places and follow the gospel to some other place. It is not necessary that, for the gospel’s sake, you should capture or hold the city or place; but let the lord have his city, and do you follow the gospel. Thus you suffer men to do you wrong and drive you away; and yet, at the same time you do not suffer men to take the gospel from you or keep it from you. Thus the two things, suffering and not suffering, come to one. If you will hold the city for the sake of the gospel, you rob the lord of the city of what is his, and pretend that you are doing it for the gospel’s sake. Dear friend, the gospel does not teach robbing or the taking of things, even though the lord of the property abuses it by using it against God, wrongfully, and to your injury. The gospel needs no bodily place or city to dwell in; it will and must dwell in hearts. This is what Christ taught in Matt. 10, “If they drive you out of one city, flee to another.”
THE GERMAN REFORMATION

He does not say, "If they drive you out of one city, stay there, and capture the city, to the praise of the gospel, and make a riot against the lord of the city," though that is what men now want to do, and what they are teaching. But He says, "Flee, flee straightway into another, until the Son of Man shall come." Thus He says, too, in Matt. 23, that the godless shall drive His evangelists from one city to another; and Paul also says, in 2 Corinthians 4, "We are in no certain place." If it so happen that a Christian must be moving constantly from one place to another, and leaving the place where he is and everything that he has, or if he sit in uncertainty, expecting this to happen any hour; then it is well with him; it is as it should be with a Christian. For because he will not suffer the gospel to be taken from him or kept from him, he has to suffer city, place, property, and everything that he is and has, to be taken and kept from him. Now how does this agree with your undertaking? You capture and hold cities and places that are not yours, and will not suffer them to be taken or kept from you; thought you take and keep them from their natural lords. What kind of Christians are these, who, for the gospel's sake, become robbers, thieves, and scoundrels, and then say they are adherents of the new evangelical faith?

ON THE FIRST ARTICLE

"An entire community shall have the power to choose and depose a pastor." This article is right if only it were understood in a Christian sense, though the chapters indicated on the margin do not help it. If the goods of the parish come from the rulers, and not from the community, then the community cannot apply these goods to the use of him whom they choose, for that would be robbery and theft. If they desire a pastor, let them first humbly ask one from the rulers. If the rulers are unwilling, then let them choose their own pastor, and support him with their own property; and let the rulers have their property, or else secure it from them in a lawful way. But if the rulers will not tolerate the pastor whom they chose and support, then let him flee to another city, and let any flee with him who will, as Christ teaches. That is a Christian and evangelical way to choose and have one's own pastor. Whoever does otherwise, acts in an un-Christian manner, as a robber and brawler.

MARTIN LUTHER

ON THE SECOND ARTICLE

"The tithes shall be divided out to the pastor and the poor, and the balance kept for needs of the land, etc." This article is nothing but theft and highway robbery. They would appropriate for themselves the tithes, which are not theirs but the rulers', and would do with them what they please. Not so, dear friends! That is the same thing as depositing the rulers altogether, when your preface expressly says that no one is to be deprived of what is his. If you would make gifts and do good, do it out of your own property, as the Wise Man says, for God says by Isaiah, "I hate the sacrifice that is got by robbery." You speak in this article as though you were already lords in the land and had taken all the property of the rulers for your own and would be no one's subjects, and would give nothing. From this one grasps what you have in mind. Stop it, dear sirs, stop it! It will not be you who end it! The chapters of Scripture that your lying preacher and false prophet has smeared on the margin, do not help you at all; they are against you.

ON THE THIRD ARTICLE

"There shall be no serfs, for Christ has made all men free." That is making Christian liberty an utterly carnal thing. Did not Abraham and other patriarchs and prophets have slaves? Read what St. Paul teaches about servants, who, at that time, were all slaves. Therefore this article is dead against the gospel. It is a piece of robbery by which every man takes from his lord the body, which has become his lord's property. For a slave can be a Christian, and have Christian liberty, in the same way that a prisoner or a sick man is a Christian, and yet not free. This article would make all men equal, and turn the spiritual kingdom of Christ into a worldly, external kingdom; and that is impossible. For a worldly kingdom cannot stand unless there is in it an inequality of persons, so that some are free, some imprisoned, some lords, some subjects, etc.; and St. Paul says in Gal. 5, that in Christ master and servant are one thing...

The other articles, about freedom of game, birds, fish, wood, forests; about services, tithes, imposts, excises, Todfall, etc., these I leave to the lawyers, for it is not fitting that I, an evangelist,
should judge or decide them. It is for me to instruct and teach men's consciences in things that concern divine and Christian matters; there are books enough about the other things in the imperial laws. I have said above that these things do not concern a Christian, and that he cares nothing about them. He lets anyone else rob, take, skin, scrape, devour, and rage, for he is a martyr on earth. Therefore the peasants ought rightly let the name of Christian alone, and act in some other name, as men who want human and natural rights, not as those who seek Christian rights. This means that on all these points they should keep still, suffer, and make their complaints to God alone.

See, dear friends, this is the instruction that you asked of me in the second document. I beg that you will remember that you offer willingly to be instructed by the Scriptures. Now when this reaches you, do not cry out at me, "Luther flatters the princes and speaks contrary to the gospel." First read and see my arguments from Scripture; for this is your affair; I am excused in the sight of God and the world. I know well the false prophets that are among you. Do not listen to them. They are surely deceiving you. They do not think of your consciences, but would make Galatians of you, so that by means of you they might come to wealth and honor, and must afterwards, with you, be damned eternally in hell.

Admonition to Both Rulers and Peasants
Therefore, dear sirs, since there is nothing Christian on either side and nothing Christian is at issue between you, but both lords and peasants are dealing with heathenish, or worldly, right and wrong, and with temporal goods; since, moreover, both parties are acting against God and are under His wrath, as you have heard—therefore, for God's sake, let yourselves be advised, and attack these matters as such matters are to be attacked, that is, with justice and not with force or with strife, and do not start an endless bloodshed in Germany. For because both of you are wrong, and both of you would avenge and defend yourselves, both of you will destroy yourselves and God will use one knave to flog another.

You lords have both Scripture and history against you, for both tell how tyrants are punished. Even the heathen poets say that tyrants seldom die a dry death, but usually have been slain, and have perished in blood. Because, then, it is an assured fact that you rule tyrannically and with rage, prohibit the gospel, and skin and oppress the poor, you have no reason for confidence or hope that you will perish otherwise than your kind have perished.

Look at all the kingdoms that have come to their end by the sword,—Assyria, Persia, Greece, Rome. They have all been destroyed at last in the same way that they destroyed others. Thus God shows that He is judge upon earth and leaves no wrong unpunished. Therefore nothing is more certain than that this same judgment is close to you, whether it come now or later, unless you reform.

You peasants also have Scripture and experience against you. They teach that turbulence has never had a good end, and God has always held strictly to the word, "He that takes the sword shall perish by the sword." Because, then, you are doing wrong by judging yourselves and avenging yourselves, and are bearing the name of Christian unworthily besides, you are certainly under the wrath of God; and even though you win and destroy all the lords, in the end you would have to tear the flesh from one another's bones, like wild beasts. For because not spirit, but flesh and blood, rules among you, God will shortly send an evil spirit among you, as He did to the men of Shechem and to Abimelech. See the end that finally comes to turbulence in the story of Korah, in Numbers 16, and of Absalom, Sheba, Samri and their like. Briefly, God hates both tyrants and rebels; therefore He sets them on each other, so that both parties perish shamefully, and His wrath and judgment upon the godless are fulfilled.

To me the saddest and the really pitiful thing, and that which I would willingly buy off with my own life and death, is that on both sides two inevitable injuries must follow. For because neither party strives with a good conscience, but both fight for the upholding of wrong, it must follow, in the first place, that those who are slain are lost eternally, body and soul, as men who die in their sins, without penitence and without grace, in the wrath of God. There is nothing to be done for them. The lords would be fighting for the strengthening and maintaining of their tyranny, their persecution of the gospel, and their unjust oppression of the poor, or else for the aiding of that kind of rulers. That is a terrible
wrong and is against God. He who commits such a sin must be
lost eternally. The peasants, on the other hand, would fight to de-
 fend their turbulence and their abuse of the name of Christian.
Both these things are greatly against God, and he who dies in them
or for them must also be lost eternally, and there is no help for it.

The second injury is that Germany will be laid waste, and if
this bloodshed once starts, it will scarcely cease until everything
is destroyed. It is easy to start a fight, but to stop it when we will
is not in our power. What have they ever done to you—all these
innocent children, women, and old people, whom you fools are
drawing with you into such danger—that you should fill the land
with blood and robbery, widows and orphans? Oh, the devil's
mind is wicked enough! And God is angry, and threatens to let
him loose upon us and cool his rage in our blood and souls. Be-
ware, dear sirs, and be wise! It concerns both of you! What good
will it do you to condemn yourselves eternally and wilfully and
leave behind you, for your descendants, a desolate and devastated
and bloody land besides, when you could arrange things better,
while there is still time, by penitence toward God and friendly
agreement, or by suffering in the sight of men? With defiance
and strife you will do nothing.

It would, therefore, be my faithful counsel to choose from
among the nobles certain counts and lords, and from the cities
certain councilmen, and have these matters dealt with in a friendly
way, and settled; that you lords let down your stubbornness—as
you must do in the end, whether you will or will not—and give
up a little of your tyranny and oppression, so that poor people
get air and room to live; that the peasants for their part, let them-
selves be instructed, and give over and let go some of the articles
that grasp too far and too high, so that the case may be settled by
human law and agreement, even though it cannot be dealt with in
a Christian way.

If you shall not follow this advice (and God forbid that you
do not follow it!), I must let you come to grips, but I am guiltless
as regards your souls, your blood, and your property; you will
bear the guilt yourselves. I have told you that you are both wrong
and that your fighting is wrong. You lords are not fighting against
Christians—for Christians do nothing against you, but prefer to

suffer all things—but against open robbers and defamers of the
Christian name. Those of them who die are already condemned
eternally. On the other hand, you peasants are not fighting against
Christians, but against tyrants, and persecutors of God and man,
and murderers of the holy Christ. Those of them who die are also
condemned eternally. There you have God's sure verdict upon
both parties; that I know. Do what you please to keep your bodies
and souls, if you will not follow this verdict.