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DR. MARTIN LUTHER'S TREATISE OF CONFESSION,  
WHETHER THE POPE HAVE POWER  
TO ENJOIN SAME.

JESUS.

1. First. The holy king and prophet David has composed a psalm of 176 verses, by far the longest and largest psalm of all, which in its four divisions is daily sung and read in the churches, at prime, tierce, sext, and none. And it is especially strange that each verse from beginning to end prays for nearly

the same thing and has the same content as the other, so that it is tedious, — unless the Spirit guide us, — to hear that in so long a psalm one and the same matter is treated, though in different words, so many times, namely, one hundred and seventy-six times. For the scope of all the verses and of the entire psalm comprises two things: First, that God would guide and teach, instruct and keep us in His ways, commandments, and laws; secondly, that He would keep us from human doctrines and ordinances. Whosoever attends to these two things easily understands every verse and the entire psalm.

2. Second. We ask, Why has the prophet done this? The answer is self-evident, viz.: to give us an earnest warning which we might have before our eyes daily, to beware of, and flee from, human doctrines and laws as from the greatest misfortune on this earth, for nothing glitters more beautifully and does greater harm. Thus Christ, Matt. 7, 15, when He had proclaimed His teaching, concludes with a warning to beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. And He earnestly admonishes the disciples, Matt. 16, 6. 12, to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, that is, as He Himself explains, to beware of human doctrines that teach merely hypocrisy and not foundation truths.

3. Here David has done the same, as if to say: Now, then, I will compose a psalm that contains nothing but a warning of human doctrines, and I will heap the measure even unto surfeit, for I see that they glitter so beautifully, are swallowed so easily, and seduce us from God's laws so craftily and covertly. Accordingly, there has been a good reason for reading this psalm above others daily, although it has been of no avail — Christendom has become filled, nevertheless, with human laws, and even this psalm, contrary to its own intent, has been tied down with human laws. All the priests read it every day, not knowing in the least what they read.

4. Third. Although this psalm ought to be sufficient to give us a horror of commandments of men, the disease has gone

so deep and so far that all men have been brought to believe firmly in a false interpretation, everybody holding that the sayings in this psalm, and similar ones, are directed only against public and great transgressions, and not against the laws of the pope and the priests. Thus they have not only dulled the edge of the sword, but they have placed a piece of horn over it so that it cannot cut, so much so that the laws of the pope, and not Holy Scripture, now rule everywhere. Therefore it is necessary to fight and storm against such old and deeply rooted errors with mighty and trenchant verses of Holy Scripture. Let us see whether we can drive them from the field and reveal their unwarranted procedure and unjust tyranny, so that we may again teach and know that whatsoever God has not commanded is to be avoided as the devil's poison and death, no matter whether the pope or the bishops, whether angels or devils have ordained it.

5. Fourth. In the first place, Moses says Deut. 4, 2 [ch. 12, 23]: "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish aught from it." Can "to add to" mean anything else than to teach more, and to "diminish from" to teach less than is taught by Scripture? It cannot refer to interpretation, for interpretation neither increases nor diminishes, but merely explains. Is not this a plain passage against all man-made laws? Now what are the pope's laws other than additions pure and simple, on account of which Scripture gives a special name to the devil and calls him in Hebrew "Leviathan," that is, "increaser," one who increases a thing beyond its due limits.

6. Therefore all that add man-made laws to God's laws are surely God's enemies and apostles of Leviathan, and whosoever accepts and keeps these laws is a disciple of Leviathan. It is no excuse to say that Moses has said this not in regard to the New but to the Old Testament; for the apostle says Hebr. 2, 2—4 that we ought to give more earnest heed to the New Testament, given through Christ Himself, than the Old, which

He has given through angels. Thus the popish sect cannot stand before this verse; their laws lie in the dust.

7. Fifth. Similarly, Solomon says, Prov. 30, 5. 6: "Every word of God is pure," tested as by fire; "He is a shield unto them that put their trust in Him. Add thou not unto His words, lest He reprove thee and thou be found a liar." Behold, he speaks of "every word of God," not only of the Old Testament, and denounces all those as culpable and as liars that add anything to it. It must follow, that whosoever puts his trust in human laws and additions trusts in lies and deceptions. Thus the pope is nothing but a teacher of lies and deceiver of all the world, he and all his fellows.

8. This is the origin of the proverb in the prophet Isaiah [ch. 36, 6] and in the Book of Kings [2 Kings 18, 21]: "If a man lean upon a staff of reed, it will break and pierce his hand," that is, if one trust in human teachings that appear to be good and proper; just as a reed closely resembles a solid staff of wood, and yet is worthless and hollow: at last it breaks, and the hand, that is, all the works done by it, is ruined and made a source of weakness. This is the reed which the Jews put into the hands of Christ when they mocked Him, Matt. 27, 29, foreshadowing the future deception of the pope's doctrines and laws.

9. Sixth. In the same manner Isaiah reproveth the nation as follows (ch. 1, 22): "Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water." To pour water into wine is to add the commandments of men to God's Word; likewise, to sell dross for silver. The pope is such a thieving merchant selling polluted water for good wine. But I must refrain from using such figurative sayings, although they are attractive and the Scriptures are full of them. For our quarrelsome enemies might evade them, saying: Wine and silver does not signify divine Scripture, or at least not expressly and clearly, and in a controversy we ought to fight with plain passages of Scripture. The children of Israel have set us an example, for in Joshua

(ch. 8, 24; 10, 28) we read that they slew the enemies "with the 'mouth' of the sword,"<sup>1)</sup> that is, with the sharp edge where-with it bites and devours, a thing it cannot do with the back or sides. The mouth of the sword is its edge. Thus one must wield the Word of God with the naked edge so that it may mightily devour all opponents and all errors.

10. Seventh. Jeremiah has written an entire chapter on the false prophets (Jer. 23); among other things he says (v. 16): "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they make you vain: they speak a vision of their own heart and not out of the mouth of the Lord." Behold, all prophets that speak not out of the mouth of God, deceive, and God forbids us to hearken unto them. Does not this passage plainly say that where God's Word is not preached no one, as he fears God's command and anger, is to listen, and that it is mere deception?

11. O pope, O bishops, O priests, O monks, O theologians, how can you pass in view of this text? Do you deem it a small thing when the high Majesty forbids whatever does not come out of the mouth of God and is something other than God's Word? This was not spoken on the threshing-floor or by a shepherd. If you heard your master say to you: Who has commanded you this? I have not commanded you to do this; I think you would gather this much from his words, that you ought not to have done it and have avoided it as forbidden. What, then, shall we do when the high Majesty says: Do not hearken, it is not my word; are we not in fairness bound to defy the pope in all his mad laws of which he himself must confess that they are only words out of his own heart, not God's words issued from the mouth of God?

12. Eighth. But he continues in the same chapter (v. 21): "I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied." I think it is proper enough to demand that no one is to preach anything but God's

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1) Original Hebrew.

Word, and when Divine Majesty says: I have not commanded it, it is sufficient to indicate that it is not God's Word. Therefore all commandments of men are surely lies, deception, and perdition.

13. To proceed (v. 22): "But if they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings." Do you not hear again that we must cause the people to hear God's counsel and God's words, and that otherwise no one can be converted from a bad to a good life? God's Word must do it, not the word of men. What need would there be of God's Word, if human doctrines could help us? Moreover, what sort of a God would He be, if His Word did not suffice and needed the additions of men? Ought we not in justice to divide the honor and thanks, giving them not only to God, but also to those that add thereto? But God's Word is so sensitive that it cannot bear any addition; it must be pure, or nothing at all. God can bear that something impure, something that has been added by men, should insinuate itself into our actions and life, but in His Word, which is to cleanse us from all additions and impurities, He cannot tolerate any additions; otherwise our life would not become pure in all eternity. Therefore He calls it (Ps. 12, 7) a silver that is pure, and says: "The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times." This He applies in the same psalm against those who add human doctrines.

14. Ninth. Later on [vv. 28. 29] He says: "The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my Word, let him speak my Word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord. Is not my Word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" Behold, human doctrine is "chaff," God's Word is "fire." How well they agree together! And whosoever has God's Word must preach it aright, and not pervert it according to human notions. If anyone have a dream, that is, a revelation in his sleep, let him regard it as such, and not pretend it

to be anything else. For Numb. 12, 6. 8 God declares that He reveals His Word in a threefold manner, in a dream, in a vision, and publicly in the Spirit. And to conclude the quotation from Jeremiah, God continues [vv. 30—32]: “Behold, I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, that steal my words everyone from his neighbor” (that is, by the glittering commandments of men they hide the Word of God, so that the people do not see how they are deprived of God’s Word, and accept man’s words for God’s Word). “Behold, I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, that use their tongues, and say, He saith. Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the Lord, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them; therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the Lord.”

15. Tenth. If we are not moved by such words in which God Himself so fully tells us that whatsoever is not His Word is void, we are surely of stone and wood. If He had simply said that they should not teach such things, and if He had not added that they are not His command and His Word, someone might find a loophole and say: That does not reject everything which is not God’s Word, but merely that which is evil and contrary to God’s Word. Thus they could devise something intermediate between God’s Word and false prophets, as they have done ere this. But this intermediate thing has been done away with, and it has been firmly established that God’s Word alone, and not human doctrine, is to rule among God’s people. For whatever He has not enjoined, advised, or commanded no one is to command or require.

16. Eleventh. Let us proceed to the New Testament and hear first what He Himself says concerning this matter. Matt. 15, 7—9 Christ says to the Jews that kept their commandments of men and reproved His disciples for not keeping them: “Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips: but their heart is far from me. But in



vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." Tell me, What is "to serve God in vain"? Does this text need a gloss? And yet there was no evil in the commandments of those men, such as the washing of hands and clothes and the cleansing of pots and other vessels; why, then, does Christ, as well as Esaias, reject them so utterly? What plea can be brought forth here to save the commandments of men? Who would serve a hangman in vain, let alone God? Who would willingly render vain service?

17. I think Christ has here sufficiently indicated that He would have the commandments of men forbidden. He Himself acted contrary to them; He commanded and permitted His disciples to act contrary to them; He taught and preached against them. He certainly would not have done this and would surely have set us a different example, if God did not reject and forbid man-made doctrines, since Christ was obedient to God in all things. Therefore we must follow His example in all things, and without doubt also in despising man-made ordinances, if we would be true Christians.

18. Twelfth. St. Paul (Rom. 16, 17. 18) says: "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary" (Greek: *παρά*; Vulgate: *praeter*; German: *neben*) "to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple." He speaks not of doctrines which are set up in opposition to, but by the side of, true doctrine. These are the additions that produce divisions and may easily offend the simple, so that they miss the right way and cling to the additions. Of this Solomon writes (Prov. 4, 24—27): "Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee. Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left, remove thy foot from evil." Why, do you think, does Solomon at such length express his desire to keep us in

the undeviating path? Is it not because God's Word and way alone ought to be before our eyes, without any byway whatsoever, whether to the right or to the left, whether good or bad? Now, human doctrines are surely mere byways and not God's highway.

19. Thirteenth. Similarly, St. Peter says (2 Pet. 2, 1. 2): "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon them swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways." Behold, he also speaks of byways and sects; this cannot be aught else than human doctrine, extraneous to God's doctrine and ways; and the more beautifully they glitter the worse they are.

20. On this point Solomon has written two parables in the 7th and 8th chapters of Proverbs. Here he earnestly warns us against the harlot that uses sweet words and deserts the master of her youth, and forgets the covenant she made with her God. All this is said with regard to the last times when the devil's church with human doctrines deceives the Church of God. And Solomon describes her as follows (Prov. 9, 13—18): "A foolish woman is clamorous; she is simple, and knoweth nothing. For she sitteth at the door of her house, on a seat in the high places of the city, to call passengers who go right on their ways: Whoso is simple, let him turn hither: and as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant. But he knoweth not that the dead are there, and that her guests are in the depths of hell."

21. O pope, how well thou, together with thy church, hast been portrayed in this parable! Who sits in a high place in Christendom? Who sits at the door on the street? Who else but our formalists with their external visible holiness? Who entices those that walk aright unto himself into the murderers' den and depth of hell? Who is more loquacious and unlearned

in God's ways than this mad crowd of hypocrites? Who seduces the simple and those that lack understanding? What are the stolen waters and the bread eaten in secret other than this, that one pretending to have divine truth fill the simple with human doctrine? It is a parable and cannot be said of a real human harlot.

22. Fourteenth. Similarly, Prov. 7, 4—27 he says of the same devil's harlot: "My son, say unto wisdom, Thou art my sister; and call understanding thy kinswoman: that they may keep thee from the strange woman, from the stranger which flattereth with her words. For at the window of my house I looked through my casement, and beheld among the simple ones, I discerned among the youths, a young man void of understanding, passing through the street near her corner; and he went the way to her house, in the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night: and, behold, there met him a woman with the attire of an harlot, and subtil of heart. (She is loud and stubborn; her feet abide not in her house: now is she without, now in the streets, and lieth in wait at every corner.) So she caught him, and kissed him, and with an impudent face said unto him, I have peace offerings with me; this day have I payed my vows. Therefore came I forth to meet thee, diligently to seek thy face, and I have found thee. I have decked my bed with coverings of tapestry, with carved works, with fine linen of Egypt. I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. Come, let us take our fill of love until the morning: let us solace ourselves with loves. For the goodman is not at home, he is gone a long journey: he hath taken a bag of money with him, and will come home at the day appointed. With her much fair speech she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she forced him. He goeth after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks; till a dart strike through his liver; as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life. Harken unto me now therefore, O ye children, and attend to the words of my mouth. Let not thine heart decline

to her ways, go not astray in her paths. For she hath cast down many wounded: yea, many strong men have been slain by her. Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death."

23. Fifteenth. This certainly is speaking in parables. And although it might be understood as depicting a real woman, still the true interpretation is to take it as directed against human doctrines inasmuch as Solomon himself says that he speaks exclusively in parables and allegories. Christ does likewise in the Gospel according to St. Matthew, ch. 13, 34. 35. He plainly foresaw that in the eventide of the world, when the sun of faith shall have set and when a mad people devoid of understanding shall follow their vagaries on earth in external ways and specious holiness, this would be a people meet for this harlot called human wisdom and doctrine. She highly praises and adorns herself, promises much and makes the way unto salvation easy, as we see it done before our eyes in the church of the pope, which tallies to every word of this description. But to follow out this interpretation would take too long; enough has been said for the wise, and we must now fight with clear texts of Scripture, as was said above.

24. Sixteenth. St. Paul says twice (Gal. 1, 8. 9): "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which ye have received, let him be accursed." That is certainly a hard saying of the apostle. Now human doctrine is undoubtedly something else than the Gospel, and must, therefore, surely be accursed. But let us see, they have made a loophole in this passage, with a gloss that reads as follows: The words "any other gospel" do not mean here that we are not to teach or observe anything beside the Gospel, but that we ought not to contradict or deny the Gospel, and this the pope with his laws is not doing. Now listen, are they not fine glossarists? If I now asked them what ground they have for this gloss, and who gives them power thus to wrest the words of the apostle, they will say as we may read of them in the twelfth Psalm (v. 5): We have the power, why dost thou ask?

And as the pope with puffed cheeks blusters and sputters in his decretal: "Ubi est majoritas, ibi est mandandi auctoritas, caeteris manet obediendi necessitas." Because we are in the majority, we have power to command; all others are bound to obey. I ween that sounds apostolic and Christian!

25. Seventeenth. But this gloss is easily refuted; in the first place, it is their own fabrication, without any foundation in Scripture. For they can cite no example in which these words have this meaning. In the second place, it is clear that St. Paul does not argue against those who contradicted or denied the Gospel, as they falsely represent, but against some disciples of the other apostles who desired to inculcate the law of Moses beside the Gospel. For he says more than once that they should not obey those who would introduce circumcision, holidays, and other laws of Moses in addition to the Gospel. Observe now, if St. Paul could not suffer the law of Moses given by God till the time of Christ to be preached, in addition to the Word of God and His Gospel, and if he so earnestly cursed himself and all angels from heaven if they taught any addition: what would he say in regard to the ordinances of the pope and other men which God has never commanded?

26. Therefore, this saying of Paul is truly a thunder-clap that drives the pope with all his doctrinal dreams and mad commandments as dust into the ground. No one can stand up against this verse. St. Paul was not so ineloquent or so poor in words, he would have been able to say: If anyone contradict or deny the Gospel, let him be accursed, if that had been what he meant in saying "any other gospel." For 1 Tim. 1, 3. 4 he speaks similarly and says: "As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine, neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies." Here we see again that the apostle is not concerned about a denial of the Gospel, but about other, additional doctrines and teachings, which secretly turn the people away from the Gospel ere they are aware of it.

27. Eighteenth. Even more clearly he speaks Col. 2, 8: "Beware, lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." Could anything be clearer? He plainly says: Whatsoever is not after Christ, that is, after Christ's Word and doctrine, is deceit and must be avoided. He expressly names all natural knowledge and wisdom (philosophy), all human doctrine; what more could he name? What does he suffer to remain, save Christ alone? As philosophy is surely the greatest thing man can have, so human laws are the most spiritual thing they can have. But it is all error and deceit, says St. Paul.

28. Nineteenth. In order that we may not carry this matter to an undue length, he gives to the commandments of men a severe blow, Tit. 1, 13. 14, and commands him thus: "Rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men, that turn from the truth." What an honor for human ordinances, to say that they merely lead and turn men away from the truth! From this we can easily gather what the apostle St. Paul thinks of the pope and as whose vice-regent he regards him. He regards him as the vice-regent of Lucifer in hell who is the father of all lies (John 8, 44), and as his apostle exalted in Rome, in order to seduce and corrupt all Christendom under the name of Christ as is now the case. Here the proverb is appropriate: Where God builds a church the devil erects a chapel by its side; and where a church is dedicated, there a tavern and fair is bound to be. Thus in the Old Testament he has at all times erected foreign altars and places of worship besides the temple and raised false prophets for them, and in the New Testament he has introduced, besides the holy Gospel, the doctrine of the pope and his sect, until now he alone preaches everywhere and the Gospel lies under the seat.

29. Twentieth. But what if they hold up before us the church councils in which many things have been commanded that are not found in Scripture? Answer: In some councils

articles of faith have been explained by Scripture, for instance, in the Nicene, and some things have been ordained that were drawn from Scripture and founded in Scripture; to observe them is the same as observing the Word of God. But whatever human things have been ordained therein (and the majority or, rather, almost all are of this class) are not observed even by those who praise the councils so highly. They often disagree, one commanding what the other condemns, and the decrees of the councils have become so involved and numerous that they now ordain nothing out of Scripture, but merely out of their own heads, in a great and impious presumption that the Holy Spirit is with them and will not suffer them to err; therefore without fear, without reverence, without understanding they do what they please in the councils, and have corrupted their faith. And if we were to keep and know the laws of all councils, it would be necessary to send more printers into the world and to obtain for men a longer life. Even as it is, a great ocean of such statutes has been collected in course of time; but because it was human trash, it has disappeared in course of time, with the exception of those parts that support the holy Roman chair. These alone have been graven in adamant and preserved a thousand times more carefully than the Gospel of Christ. In what spirit this is done anyone can easily see.

30. Twenty-first. Therefore councils or no councils, if their statutes are commandments of men, they have no value, for they are not councils, but taverns and Jewish synagogues. I believe Christ, nay, even His apostle St. Paul more than all councils, though they be as numerous as the grains of sand in the sea and the stars in the heavens; and he calls down a curse upon himself and all angels if they preach anything except God's Word. Councils must deal with Scripture or with an undoubted indication of the Holy Spirit, as did the first council of the apostles, Acts 15, 6 sqq. It will be a long time before they prove that a council have the Holy Spirit and that they sit as representatives of all Christendom, as they drivel and pretend, unless they deal with Scripture and God's Word. They

will not be believed offhand on account of their boasting and their own testimony. Self-glorification stinks, says Solomon. (Prov. 27, 24.)

31. And, if it must be said, one of the greatest misfortunes in the Christian Church is the shameful, damnable notion that the councils are regarded as having the Holy Spirit, though scarcely one of twenty uses Scripture and shows the guidance of the Spirit. They saw that the first councils, proceeding in the Spirit, have obtained authority, and now they have obtruded themselves into the same honor, regardless of the fact that they, in their life and spirit, may differ by a thousand miles from the first holy fathers in their councils. And as they preach their own lies under God's name and under a pretense of divine truth, so they give to our poor souls under the name and title of holy councils the brood of their synagogues and taverns. In short, when we come to the market with the common people we must pay for pepper and eat the droppings of mice.

32. Twenty-second. If it required no more to form a council than a gathering of many men wearing cardinals' hats and bishops' *infulae* and barrets, one might gather the wooden saints of the churches and place on their heads cardinals' hats and bishops' *infulae* and barrets and call it a council. Henceforth there would be no need of the Holy Spirit or of the Gospel in councils; any painter or sculptor could make a council. Are these unlearned, unspiritual cardinals, bishops, and doctors more than wooden blocks? They treat us to a carnival play with their hats and tonsure and caps, so that we might regard them as that which they had rather not be; and yet they have their garments, their gestures, and their position, and frighten us with the saying of Christ (Luke 10, 16): "He that heareth you heareth me;" just as if Christ had commanded them to say what they please. But He says thus (Matt. 28, 20): "Go ye and teach them all things whatsoever I have commanded you;" surely not whatsoever they might fabricate.

33. But someone might say (and this accusation has been raised against me): If there is to be no human law, we cannot



have civil government; would you destroy all authority? I answer: How does this concern civil government? We know well enough that Paul and Peter have commanded us to respect civil authority and laws, Rom. 13, 1; Tit. 3, 1; 1 Pet. 2, 13. But the civil powers do not presume to govern the consciences; they deal only with temporal possessions. A stone-mason must have a law prohibiting him from taking the length of an ell as half an ell; a cobbler, a law not to make shoes of men's size for a child; and even murderers must have a law for an equal division of the booty. In what respect do such laws concern the spirit and conscience? Thus civil government has a law that no one is to harm his neighbor in his property, honor, and body, but it does not claim that thereby our conscience is well ordered before God. But the pope and his spiritual lawgivers fly with Lucifer higher than the heavens, pretending that their laws are divine, that they make us blameless before God, and govern and lead the consciences aright. This thing God cannot endure; here He is jealous. For in our consciences He *will* be alone and have His Word to govern alone; here must be freedom from all commandments of men. If, now, the pope, as the emperor does, would let the consciences alone and would extend his penalties no farther than the emperor, there would be no complaint. But he insists on holding the consciences captive, and asserts that his word is equal to God's Word, and falsely attaches eternal punishment and eternal reward to his laws, a thing no emperor does. Therefore he is the Antichrist that exalts himself above God ( 2 Thess. 2, 4), and breaks into the bridal chamber of Christ, and makes strumpets of the souls of all Christians.

34. O thou, greatest of all procurers, how far does thy malice and wickedness surpass all words, all thoughts, all understanding! Who can count the consciences which he thus leads astray and strangles and defiles with his laws in all the world. This St. Paul [2 Thess. 2, 9] speaks of as the final and proper working of Satan, the highest and worst devil.