

2.15 Luther: *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation Concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate* (August 18, 1520)

LW 44: 126–7, 129, 133–34, 136–7, 175, 189–90, 205–6

The Romanists have very cleverly built three walls around themselves. Hitherto they have protected themselves by these walls in such a way that no one has been able to reform them. As a result, the whole of Christendom has fallen abominably.

In the first place . . . they have made decrees and declared that the temporal power had no jurisdiction over them, but that on the contrary, the spiritual power is above the temporal. In the second place, when the attempt is made to reprove them with the Scriptures, they raise the objection that only the pope may interpret the Scriptures. In the third place, if threatened with a council, their story is that no one may summon a council but the pope. . . .

Let us begin by attacking the first wall. . . . [A]ll Christians are truly of the spiritual estate, and there is no difference among them except that of office. . . . This is because we all have one baptism, one gospel, one faith, and are all Christians alike: for baptism, gospel, and faith alone make us spiritual and a Christian people. . . . [W]e are all consecrated priests through baptism. . . .

It follows from this argument that there is no true, basic difference between laymen and priests, princes and bishops, between religious and secular, except for the sake of office and work, but not for the sake of status. . . .

The second wall is still more loosely built and less substantial. The Romanists want to be the only masters of Holy Scripture, although they never learn a thing from the Bible all their life long. They [try] . . . to persuade us that the pope cannot err in matters of faith. . . .

Therefore, their claim that only the pope may interpret Scripture is an outrageous fancied fable. They cannot produce a single letter [of Scripture] to maintain that the interpretation of Scripture or the confirmation of its interpretation belongs to the pope alone. . . .

The third wall falls of itself when the first two are down. When the pope acts contrary to the Scriptures, it is our duty to stand by the Scriptures, to reprove him and to constrain him, according to the word of Christ, Matthew 18[15–17]. . . .

The Romanists have no basis in Scripture for their claim that the pope alone has the right to call or confirm a council. . . .

We also see how the priesthood has fallen, and how many a poor priest is overburdened with wife and child, his conscience troubled. Yet no one does anything to help him, though he could easily be helped. . . . And this is what I say: according to the institution of Christ and the apostles, every city should have a priest or bishop, as St. Paul clearly says in Titus 1[5]. And this priest should not be compelled to live without a wedded wife, but should be permitted to have one, as St. Paul writes in 1 Timothy 3[2, 4] and Titus 1[67]. . . .

2.4 Luther: “Disputation Against Scholastic Theology” (September 4, 1517)

LW 31: 10–12

17. Man is by nature unable to want God to be God. Indeed, he himself wants to be God, and does not want God to be God.

28. If it is said of the Scripture passages, “Return to me, . . . and I will return to you” [Zech. 1:3], “Draw near to God and he will draw near to you” [Jas. 4:8], “Seek and you will find” [Matt. 7:7], “You will seek me and find me” [Jer. 29:13], and the like, that one is by nature, the other by grace, this is no different from asserting what the Pelagians said.

29. The best and infallible preparation for grace and the sole means of obtaining grace is the eternal election and predestination from God.

30. On the part of man, however, nothing precedes grace except ill will and even rebellion against grace.

33. And this is false, that doing all that one is able to do can remove obstacles to grace. This in opposition to several authorities. [Cf. 1.21]

34. In brief, man by nature has neither correct precept nor good will.

40. We do not become righteous by doing righteous deeds but, having been made righteous, we do righteous deeds. This in opposition to the philosophers.

50. Briefly, the whole of Aristotle is to theology as darkness is to light. This in opposition to the scholastics.