

## An Open Letter on the Harsh Book Against the Peasants

LW 46:68-80

It is the very devil himself who wants to do all the evil that he can, and so he stirs up good and pious hearts and tempts them with things like this, so that they may not see how black he is, and he tries to deck himself out in a reputation for mercy. But it will not help him! My good friends, you praise mercy so highly because the peasants are beaten; why did you not praise it when the peasants were raging, smiting, robbing, burning, and plundering, in ways that are terrible to see or even to hear about? Why were they not merciful to the princes and lords, whom they wanted to exterminate completely? No one spoke of mercy then. Everything was “rights”; nothing was said of mercy, it was nothing. “Rights, rights; rights!” They were everything. Now that the peasants are beaten, and the stone that they threw at heaven is falling back on their own heads,<sup>15</sup> no one is to say anything of rights, but to speak only of mercy.

And yet they are stupid enough to think that no one notices the rascal behind it! Ah, no! We see you, you black, ugly devil! You praise mercy not because you are seriously concerned about mercy, or you would have praised it to the peasants; on the contrary, you are afraid for your own skin, and are trying to use the appearance and reputation of mercy to escape God’s rod and punishment. That will not work dear fellow! You must take your turn, and die without mercy. St. Paul says, “If you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain; he is the servant of God to execute his wrath on the wrongdoer” [Rom. 13:4]. You, however, are trying to do wrong and yet escape wrath by praising mercy. Come back tomorrow and we shall bake you a cake.<sup>16</sup> Who cannot do this? Suppose I were to break into a man’s house, rape his wife and daughters, break open his strong box, take his money, put a sword to his chest, and say, “If you will not put up with this, I shall run you through, for you are a godless wretch”; then if a crowd gathered and were about to kill me, or if the judge ordered my head off, suppose I were to cry out, “Hey, Christ teaches you to be merciful and not to kill me,” what would people say?

That is exactly what these peasants and their sympathizers are now doing. Now that they have, like robbers, murderers, thieves, and scoundrels, done what they pleased to their masters, they want to put on a song and dance about mercy, and say, “Be merciful, as Christ teaches, and let us rage, as the devil teaches: do good to us, and let us do our worst to you; be satisfied with what we have done and call it right, and call what you are doing wrong.” Who would not like to get away with that? If that is mercy, then we shall institute a pretty state of affairs; we shall have no sword, ruler, punishment, hangman, or prison, and let every scoundrel do as he pleases; then, when he is to be punished, we shall sing, “Hey, be merciful, as Christ teaches.” That would be a fine way of doing things! Here you see the intention of those who condemn my book as though it forbade mercy. It is certain that they are either peasants, rebels, and bloodhounds themselves, or have been misled by such people; for they would like all wickedness to go unpunished. Thus under the name of mercy they would be—so far as it is in their power—the most merciless and cruel destroyers of the whole world.

“Not at all,” they say, “we do not justify the peasants and would not prevent their punishment, but it seems wrong to us for you to teach that the poor peasants should be shown no mercy; for you say that they ought to be slain without mercy.”<sup>17</sup> I can only answer that if you really mean that, I am blameless.<sup>18</sup> That is just a cover for your bloodthirsty self-will and your secret pleasure with the peasants. Where have I ever taught that no mercy should be shown? Do I not in that very book beg the rulers to show grace to those who surrender?<sup>19</sup> Why do you not open your eyes and read it? Then it would not have been necessary for you to damn my book and take offense at it. But you are so full of poison that you seize upon the one part of it in which I say that those who will not surrender or listen ought to be killed without mercy; and you skip over the rest of it, in which I say that those who surrender are to be shown grace. Everybody can see that you are a spider that sucks poison from the rose.<sup>20</sup> It is not true that you condemn the peasants or love mercy—what you would really like to see is wickedness go free and unpunished, and the temporal sword made ineffective. Nevertheless, you will not accomplish it.

So much for the un-Christian and merciless bloodhounds who praise the sayings about mercy<sup>21</sup> so that sheer wickedness and mercilessness may rule in the world as they please! To the others, whom they have led astray, or who are so weak that they cannot reconcile my book with the words of Christ, I have this to say: There are two kingdoms, one the kingdom of God, the other the kingdom of the world. I have written this so often that I am surprised that there is anyone who does not know it or remember it.<sup>22</sup> Anyone who knows how to distinguish rightly between these two kingdoms will certainly not be offended by my little book, and he will also properly understand the passages about mercy. God’s kingdom is a kingdom of grace and mercy, not of wrath and punishment. In it there is only forgiveness, consideration for one another, love, service, the doing of good, peace, joy, etc. But the kingdom of the world is a kingdom of wrath and severity. In it there is only punishment, repression, judgment, and condemnation to restrain the wicked and protect the good.<sup>23</sup> For this reason it has the sword, and Scripture calls a prince or lord “God’s wrath,” or “God’s rod” (Isaiah 14 [:5-8]).

The Scripture passages which speak of mercy apply to the kingdom of God and to Christians, not to the kingdom of the world, for it is a Christian’s duty not only to be merciful, but also to endure every kind of suffering—robbery,

arson, murder, devil, and hell. It goes without saying that he is not to strike, kill, or take revenge on anyone. But the kingdom of the world, which is nothing else than the servant of God's wrath upon the wicked and is a real precursor of hell and everlasting death, should not be merciful, but strict, severe, and wrathful in fulfilling its work and duty. Its tool is not a wreath of roses or a flower of love, but a naked sword; and a sword is a symbol of wrath, severity, and punishment. It is turned only against the wicked, to hold them in check and keep them at peace, and to protect and save the righteous [Rom. 13:3-4]. Therefore God decrees, in the law of Moses and in Exodus 22 [21:14] where he institutes the sword, "You shall take the murderer from my altar, and not have mercy on him." And the Epistle to the Hebrews [10:28] acknowledges that he who violates the law must die without mercy. This shows that in the exercise of their office, worldly rulers cannot and ought not be merciful—though out of grace, they may take a day off from their office.

Now he who would confuse these two kingdoms—as our false fanatics do—would put wrath into God's kingdom and mercy into the world's kingdom; and that is the same as putting the devil in heaven and God in hell. These sympathizers with the peasants would like to do both of these things. First they wanted to go to work with the sword, fight for the gospel as "Christian brethren,"<sup>24</sup> and kill other people, who were supposed to be merciful and patient. Now that the kingdom of the world has overcome them, they want to have mercy in it; that is to say, they are unwilling to endure the worldly kingdom, but will not grant God's kingdom to anyone. Can you imagine anything more perverse? Not so, dear friends! If one has deserved wrath in the kingdom of the world, let him submit, and either take his punishment, or humbly sue for pardon. Those who are in God's kingdom ought to have mercy on everyone and pray for everyone, and yet not hinder the kingdom of the world in the maintenance of its laws and the performance of its duty; rather they should assist it.

Although the severity and wrath of the world's kingdom seems unmerciful, nevertheless, when we see it rightly, it is not the least of God's mercies. Let everyone consider and decide the following case. Suppose I had a wife and children, a house, servants, and property, and a thief or murderer fell upon me, killed me in my own house, ravished my wife and children, took all that I had, and went unpunished so that he could do the same thing again, when he wished. Tell me, who would be more in need of mercy in such a case, I or the thief and murderer? Without doubt it would be I who would need most that people should have mercy on me. But how can this mercy be shown to me and my poor, miserable wife and children, except by restraining such a scoundrel, and by protecting me and maintaining my rights, or, if he will not be restrained and keeps it up, by giving him what he deserves and punishing him, so that he must stop it? What a fine mercy to me it would be, to have mercy on the thief and murderer; and let him kill, abuse, and rob me!

These advocates of the peasants do not consider this kind of mercy which rules and acts through the temporal sword. They see and talk only about the wrath and say that we are flattering the furious princes and lords when we teach that they are to punish the wicked. And yet they are themselves ten times worse flatterers of the murderous scoundrels and wicked peasants. Indeed, they are bloodthirsty murderers, rebels at heart, for they have no mercy on those whom the peasants overthrew, robbed, dishonored, and subjected to all kinds of injustice. For if the intentions of the peasants had been carried out, no honest man would have been safe from them, but whoever had one cent more than another would have had to suffer for it. They had already begun that, and it would not have stopped there; women and children would have been put to shame; they would have taken to killing each other, too, and there would have been no peace or safety anywhere. Has anything ever been heard of that is more unrestrained than a mob of peasants when they are filled with food and have got power? As Solomon says, in Proverbs 30 [21-22], "Such people the world cannot bear."

Are we now to have mercy on such people above others, and are we to let them rage on, doing as they please with everyone's body, life, wife, children, honor, and property? Are we to leave them unpunished, and allow the innocent to perish shamefully before our very eyes, without mercy, help, or comfort? I hear reliable reports that the Bamberg peasants were offered more than they asked, provided only that they would keep the peace, and they would not.<sup>25</sup> Margrave Casimir,<sup>26</sup> too, promised his peasants that whatever others won with strife and rebellion, he would give them out of free grace; but that did not help either. It is well known that the Franconian peasants, out of sheer wantonness, planned nothing else than robbing, burning, breaking, and destroying.<sup>27</sup> It is my own experience with the Thuringian peasants that the more they were exhorted and instructed, the more obstinate, the prouder, the madder they became.<sup>28</sup> Their attitude everywhere was so wanton and defiant that it seemed as though they really wanted to be slain without grace or mercy. They most scornfully defied God's wrath, and now it is coming upon them, as Psalm 109 [17] says, "He did not like blessing; may it be far from him!"

The Scriptures, therefore, have good, clear eyes [Matt. 6:22-23] and see the temporal sword aright. They see that out of great mercy, it must be unmerciful, and from utter kindness, it must exercise wrath and severity. As Peter and Paul say, it is God's servant for vengeance, wrath, and punishment upon the wicked, but for the protection, praise, and honor of the righteous [I Pet. 2:14; Rom. 13:4]. It looks upon the righteous with mercy, and so that they may not suffer, it guards, bites, stabs, cuts, hews, and slays, as God has commanded; and it knows that it serves God in doing even this. The merciless punishment of the wicked is not being carried out just to punish the wicked and make them atone for the evil desires that are in their blood, but to protect the righteous and to maintain peace and safety. And beyond all doubt, these

are precious works of mercy, love, and kindness, since there is nothing on earth that is worse than disturbance, insecurity, oppression, violence, and injustice. Who could or would stay alive if such things were the rule? Therefore the wrath and severity of the sword is just as necessary to a people as eating and drinking, even as life itself.

“Not at all,” they say: “We are not talking about the obdurate peasants who are unwilling to surrender, but of those who have been defeated or have surrendered. The princes ought to show them mercy, and not treat them so cruelly.” I answer: You cannot be a good man if you slander my little book and say that in it I speak of such conquered peasants, or of those who have surrendered; I made it plain that I was speaking of those who were first approached in a friendly way, and would not respond. All my words were directed against the obdurate, hardened, blinded peasants, who would neither see nor hear, as anyone may see who reads them; and yet you say that I advocate the merciless slaughter of the poor captured peasants. If you are going to read books this way and interpret them as you please, what book will have any chance with you? Therefore, as I wrote then so I write now: Let no one have mercy on the obstinate, hardened, blinded peasants who refuse to listen to reason; but let everyone, as he is able, strike, hew, stab, and slay, as though among mad dogs, so that by so doing he may show mercy to those who are ruined, put to flight, and led astray by these peasants, so that peace and safety may be maintained. It is better to cut off one member without mercy than to have the whole body perish by fire, or by disease [Matt. 5:29-30]. How do you like that? Am I still a preacher of the gospel who advocates grace and mercy? If you think I am not, it makes little difference, for you are a bloodhound, and a rebellious murderer and destroyer of the country, you and your rebellious peasants, whom you are flattering in their rebellion.

They say further that the peasants have slain no one in the way they themselves are being slain. What shall be said to that? What a splendid argument! They have slain no one! That was because people had to do what they wanted! They threatened to kill those who would not go along with them; they laid hold of the sword that did not belong to them; they attacked property, houses, and possessions. Arguing this way, a thief and murderer who took from me what he wanted by threatening to kill me would be no murderer. If they had done what they were asked in a kind way to do, they would not have been killed; but because they were not willing to do it, it was right to do to them what they themselves had done or threatened to do to those who did not agree with them. Besides, it is plain that they are faithless, perjured, disobedient, rebellious thieves, robbers, murderers, and blasphemers, and there is not one of them who has not deserved to be put to death ten times without mercy. People are not seeing straight in the matter.<sup>29</sup> They see only the punishment and the pain and not the crime and its guilt and the indescribable injury and ruin that would have resulted. If the punishment hurts, stop doing evil. Paul gives the same answer to this kind of people when he says in Romans 13 [:3-4], “Would you have no fear of him who is in authority? Then do what is good.... But if you do evil, be afraid.”

They say, in the third place, that the lords are misusing their sword and slaying too cruelly. I answer: What has that to do with my book? Why lay others’ guilt on me? If they are misusing their power, they have not learned it from me; and they will have their reward. For the Supreme Judge, who is using them to punish the self-willed peasants, has not forgotten them either, and they will not escape him. My book speaks not of what the lords deserve, but of what the peasants deserve and how they ought to be punished; I have deceived no one about that. When I have time and occasion to do so, I shall attack the princes and lords, too, for in my office of teacher, a prince is the same to me as a peasant. I have already served them faithfully in ways that have not made me very popular with them; but I do not care about that. I have One who is greater than all of them, as St. John [Matt. 3:11] says.

If my first advice, given when the rebellion was just beginning,<sup>30</sup> had been followed, and a peasant or a hundred of them had been knocked down so that the rest would have tripped over them, and if they had not been allowed to get the upper hand, many thousands of them who now have to die would have been saved, for they would have stayed at home. That would have been a necessary act of mercy that could have been performed with little wrath; now it is necessary to use so much severity because there are so many of them to control.

But God’s will has been done, in order to teach both sides a lesson. First, the peasants had to learn that things had been too easy for them and that they were not able to stand prosperity and peace.<sup>31</sup> They had to learn that hereafter they ought to thank God if they have to give up only one cow to enjoy the other cow in peace; for it is always better to possess the half of one’s property in peace and safety than to have all of it and at every instant be in danger from thieves and murderers—and under those conditions not really have it at all. The peasants did not know what a precious thing it is to be in peace and safety and to enjoy one’s food and drink in happiness and security, and so they did not thank God for it. He had to take this way to teach them, and relieve their itch.<sup>32</sup>

This was a profitable experience for the lords, too. They have learned what the rabble is like and how far they can be trusted, so they might learn to rule justly and to keep order in their territories and on their highways. There was no longer either government or order; it had all been abandoned.<sup>33</sup> There was no longer any fear or reverence among the people; everybody did just as he pleased,<sup>34</sup> no one wanted to give anything, but everyone wanted to revel, drink, dress up, and be idle, as though every man were a lord. The donkey needs to feel the whip, and the people need to be ruled with force.<sup>36</sup> God knew that full well, and so he gave the rulers not a featherduster,<sup>36</sup> but a sword.

One of their more important distortions of the situation is this: They claim that many righteous people participated in the revolt innocently—because they were forced to do so. To execute them would be unjust in God’s sight. I answer: They are talking like people who have never heard a single word of God, and therefore I must reply here as I would to heathen or to little children; for so little has been accomplished among the people by all the books and sermons!

I say, in the first place, that no injustice is done to those whom the peasants forced to participate. No Christian stayed among them, and these men did not get involved innocently, as they pretend. Indeed, it seems that they are suffering injustice, but it is not so. Tell me, my dear friend, if a man killed your father and mother, abused your wife and children, burned your house, and took your money and everything that you had, and then said that he had to do it because he had been forced to do it, what kind of an excuse would that be? Who ever heard of anyone being compelled to do good or evil? Who can compel a man’s will? This argument does not hold water. Nor does it make sense for a man to say, “I have to do wrong; I am forced to do it” To deny Christ and the word of God is a great sin and wrong, and many are forced to do it, but do you think that that excuses them? Likewise, to start an insurrection, to become disobedient and faithless to rulers, to perjure oneself, to rob and burn—that is a great wrong, and some of the peasants were forced to do it; but how does that help them? Why do they let themselves be forced?

“No,” they say, “but they threatened to take my life and my property:” Come now, friend, are you willing to break God’s commandments, to kill me, and to abuse my wife and children to keep your life and property? But how did God and I get involved in that? Would you be willing to suffer the same things at my hands? If the peasants had forced you to go along with them by tying you hand and foot, and carried you along by force, and you had defended yourself with your mouth, and rebuked them for doing it, and your heart had thus confessed and borne witness that it was unwilling and refused to consent, then your honor would have been preserved; you would have been compelled in body, but not in will. But as it is, you kept silent and did not rebuke them; you went along with the crowd and did not make your unwillingness known, and thus nothing helps you. This has gone on too long for you now to say that you were unwilling. You ought to have feared and heeded God’s commandment more than men,<sup>37</sup> even at the risk of danger or of death. He would not have deserted you, but would have stood by you faithfully, rescued you, and helped you. Therefore, just as they are damned who deny God, even though they are forced to do it, so it is no excuse for the peasants that they have let themselves be forced.

If that excuse were accepted, there would be no more punishment of sin or crime; for where is there a sin to which the devil, the flesh, and the world do not drive us and, as it were, force us? Do you not think that there are times when a wicked lust drives men to adultery with a raging fever that may well be considered a greater compulsion than that which drove a peasant to revolt? Who is lord of his own heart? Who can resist the devil and the flesh? Indeed, it is not possible for us to ward off the lightest sin, for the Scriptures say that we are captives of the devil, as though he were our prince and god, so that we have to do what he wills and what he puts into our hearts [II Tim. 2:26]. There are some terrible stories to prove this. Ought such sins therefore go unpunished and be thought right? Indeed not! It is our duty to call upon God for help and to resist sin and wrong. If you die or suffer for it, good for you! Your soul is blessed before God and highly honored by the world! But if you yield and obey, you must die anyhow, and your death is shameful before God and the world because you have allowed yourself to be forced to do wrong. Thus it would be better to die with honor and blessedness, in praise of God, than to have to die with shame, in punishment and pain.

“Good God!” you say. “If only we had known that!” Good God, I reply, how can I help it? Ignorance is no excuse.<sup>38</sup> Ought not a Christian to know what can be known? Why do they not learn? Why do they not support good preachers? They deliberately choose to remain ignorant. The gospel has come into Germany; many persecute it, few desire it—fewer accept it, and they are so lax and lazy that they let the schools go to ruin,<sup>39</sup> and the parishes and pulpits fall apart. No one gives any thought to maintaining the gospel and training the people, and everywhere it seems as though it hurts us to learn anything and as though we wanted to know nothing. Why be surprised, then, if God afflicts us and lets us see a bit of the punishment that comes from despising his gospel, a sin of which we all are guilty (for even though some of us are innocent of this rebellion, we have deserved worse things), in order to warn us and drive us to school, so that we may get some sense and some knowledge.

Isn’t this what it is like in wartime, when the innocent must suffer with the guilty? Indeed, it seems that the innocent suffer most, for it is they who become the widows and the orphans. These are plagues that God sends; and they are always well deserved. And we must suffer them together if we want to live together at other times. The proverb says: You have to put up with it if a fire in your neighbor’s house burns your house too.<sup>40</sup>

If you want to live in a community, you must share the community’s burdens, dangers, and injuries, even though not you, but your neighbor has caused them. You must do this in the same way that you enjoy the peace, profit, protection, wealth, freedom, and security of the community, even though you have not won them or brought them into being. You must learn to take comfort and sing with Job, “Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not also receive evil?” [Job 2:10]. So many good days are worth a bad hour, and so many good years are worth a bad day, or year. For a

long time we have had peace and good times, until we became presumptuous and self-confident, did not know what peace and good days meant, and did not once thank God for them; now we have to learn.

My advice is to stop complaining and murmuring and thank God that, by his grace and mercy, we have not experienced the greater misfortune which the devil intended to bring upon us through the peasants. That is what Jeremiah did when the Jews were driven out and captured and slain. He comforted himself and said, "It is of the Lord's grace and goodness that we are not entirely destroyed."<sup>15</sup> We Germans are much worse than the Jews, and yet we have not been driven out and slain, as they were; but we want to murmur and become impatient and justify ourselves. We are so unwilling to have a part of us slain that God's wrath against us may increase and he may let us go to destruction, remove his hand, and give us over entirely to the devil. We are acting as we mad Germans always do: we know nothing about God, and we talk about these things as though there were no God who does them and wills that they be done. We do not intend to suffer at all, but to be nobles, who can sit on cushions and do as they please.

You would really have seen something if this devil's business of the peasants had gone on and if God had not answered the prayers of godly Christians and restrained them with the sword. Throughout all Germany, people would have suffered exactly what those suffer who are now being killed and destroyed; only it would have been much worse. No one would have been safe from another; any man might have killed another, burned down his house and barn, and abused his wife and children. For this business did not start with God: there was no order in it; they had already reached the state where no one trusted or believed the other; they deposed one captain after another; and things were done, not as honest men would have had them done, but according to the wishes of the vilest scoundrels. The devil intended to lay all Germany to utter waste because there was no other way by which he could suppress the gospel. Who knows what will yet happen, if we keep on with our murmuring and ingratitude? God can let the peasants go mad again, or release some other plague upon us, so that things may become worse than they are now. I think that this has been a good strong warning and threat. If we disregard it, and neither repent nor fear God, let us beware of what may come to us, lest this shall prove to have been only a joke, and a really serious situation confronts us in the future.

Finally it may be said, "You yourself teach rebellion, for you say that everyone who can, should hew and stab among the rebels, and that, in this case, everyone is both supreme judge and executioner." I reply: My little book was not written against ordinary evildoers, but against rebels. You must make a very, very great distinction between a rebel and a thief, or a murderer, or any other kind of evildoer. A murderer or evildoer lets the head of the government alone and attacks only the members or their property; indeed, he fears the ruler. So long as the head remains, no one ought to attack such a murderer, because the head can punish. Everyone ought to await the judgment and command of the head, to whom God has committed the sword and the office of punishment. But a rebel attacks the head himself and interferes with the exercise of his sword and his office, and therefore his crime is not to be compared with that of a murderer. We cannot wait until the head gives commands and passes judgment, for the head himself is captured and beaten and cannot give them. Rather, everyone who can must run, uncalled and unbidden, and, as a true member, help to rescue his head by stabbing, hewing, and killing, and risk his life and goods for the sake of the head.

I must make that clear by a simple illustration. Suppose I were some lord's servant, and saw his enemy running at him with a drawn sword, and I were able to ward him off, but stood still and let my lord be shamefully slain. Tell me, what would God and the world say of me? Would they not rightly say that I was an absolute rogue and traitor, and must certainly be in league with the enemy?<sup>16</sup> But if I were to leap between my lord and his enemy, risk my body for my lord, and run his enemy through, would that not be an honorable and honest deed, and be praised and lauded before God and the world? Or, if I myself were to be run through in doing it, how could I die a more Christian death? I would be dying in the true service of God, as far as what I was doing is concerned; and if I had faith, I would be a true, holy martyr of God. But suppose I tried to excuse myself by saying I did nothing because I was waiting for my lord to command me to defend him, what would that excuse do but condemn me twice as much and make me worthy to be cursed by everyone for making a joke out of it. Did not Christ himself praise this kind of thing in the gospel, and make it right for servants to fight for their lords, when he stood before Pilate and said, "My kingship is not of this world; if my kingship were of this world, my servants would fight, that I might not be handed over to the Jews" [John 18:36]? There you see that before God and the world it is right for servants to fight for their lords; otherwise, what would worldly government be?

<sup>15</sup> Ecclus. 27:25. Cf. Thiele, *Luthers Sprichwörterammlung*, No. 29.

<sup>16</sup> *Wyr wollen dyr eyn kuchlin daxu backen*. Cf. Wander (ed.), *Deutsches Sprichwörter Lexikon*, II, "Küchlein," No. 2.

<sup>17</sup> See pp. 50-53.

<sup>18</sup> Literally, "I am golden." Cf. Wander (ed.), *Deutsches Sprichwörter Lexikon*, I, "Golden," No. 1.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. pp. 54-55.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. p. 64, n. 7.

<sup>21</sup> The sayings of Christ, quoted above.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. for example, *LW* 45, 75-129 *passim*, and 231-237 *passim*.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. I Pet. 2:14.

<sup>24</sup> See p. 7, n. 14.

<sup>25</sup> Early in April, 1525, after lengthy, personal negotiations conducted by the bishop of Bamberg, an agreement was reached with the peasants whereby their grievances would be reviewed by a commission representing them, the city of Bamberg, and the bishop. The authorities even granted an amnesty. A few weeks later the peasants broke the truce which had prevailed since the agreement and violence flared anew. Cf. Wilhelm Stolze, *Der deutsche Bauernkrieg* (Halle, 1907), pp. 193-232.

<sup>26</sup> Margrave Casimir of Brandenburg (1481-1527) was at this time administrator of the Franconian princedoms. The community of Kitzingen, for example, disregarded the concessions made to it and joined the rebellion.

<sup>27</sup> For example, the leaders of the peasants from the Neckar Valley and the Odenwald tried to establish law and order among the peasants under conditions that met most of their demands, but the peasants repudiated their leadership. Günther Franz, *Der deutsche Bauernkrieg* (4<sup>th</sup> ed. rev.; Darmstadt: Hermann Gentner, 1956), p. 196.

<sup>28</sup> The peasants in Thuringia were influenced primarily by Thomas Münzer. Luther's visit to the peasants in the area of Weimar during the first days of May convinced him that they would not respond to him. On the basis of his experience, Luther wrote *Against the Robbing and Murdering Hordes of Peasants*. Cf. pp. 47-48.

<sup>29</sup> Matt. 6:22-23; cf. pp. 49-52.

<sup>30</sup> In *Admonition to Peace* Luther had recommended arbitration.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. p. 79.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. *MA*<sup>3</sup> 4, 396, note to p. 168.

<sup>33</sup> *Es stund apes offen and mussig*. Cf. *MA*<sup>3</sup> 4, 396, note to p. 168.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Judg. 21:25.

<sup>35</sup> Ecclus. 33:24. Cf. Wander (ed.), *Deutsches Sprichwörter Lexikon*, I, "Esel," Nos. 115-117.

<sup>36</sup> *Fuchsschwantz*, literally, "a foxtail."

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Acts 5:29.

<sup>38</sup> Wander (ed.), *Deutsches Sprichwörter Lexikon*, IV, "Unwissend," Nos. 5 and 6.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. pp. 209-211.

<sup>40</sup> *Eyn Nachbar ist dem andern eyn brand schuldig*; literally, "one neighbor owes the other a fire." Cf. Thiele, *Luthers Sprichwörterammlung*, No. 382.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Lam. 3:22 and Job 2:10.

<sup>42</sup> *Kop and teyl mit dem feynde haben*; literally, "have head and tail with the enemy." Cf. Thiele, *Luthers Sprichwörterammlung*, No. 307.