

The First Confederate

A pitiful complaint to the Christian Emperor Charles concerning Doctor Martin Luther and Ulrich von Hutten. Also concerning the courtiers and mendicant friars. That His Majesty not allow himself to be led astray by such people.

I, THE FIRST CONFEDERATE, was charged by my fourteen companions to bring honor to our confederacy, so I thought it useful to direct my words to the faithful, noble, Christian heart of our most gracious Emperor Charles, in the hope that if his majesty were well informed as our sovereign, all his other subjects would have prosperity and security. Do not be angry with me, Oh worthy Emperor, that I come so rashly into your benevolent presence, for I have been driven to this by our great need and by our great hope in you. There is such pressing need to report our common suffering that even the sun and moon and stars take pity on us, and we know of no one on earth we can appeal to aside from you, our sovereign, our long wished for and most welcome emperor. In you rest all our trust, our hope and refuge; let them be realized, Oh beloved Prince. Behold how mercifully our God has dealt with you. He wants you to be a blessed creation in body and soul, in honor and goods, whose equal has not been seen in a thousand years, and to whom so many lands and peoples, both here and beyond the seas, are subject without bloodshed or opposition. But in particular the German lands, at the very heart of Christendom, are willingly obedient to you, so that under you may be established through wise and

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prudent judgments a reign pleasing to God. Your predecessors among the German emperors have strived for this earnestly and often, but by God's special decree it has been reserved for you. Oh Christian Lord, would that you bear this in mind and take God's sword in your hand, protect and govern the noble and dearly ransomed Christian people, especially those of the German nation. This nation God has singled out so that from it more than any other you may establish a wholesome reign according to Christian principles. A Christian character consists in maintaining a devout heart to God and upright conduct with one's neighbors. Where such a Christian character is planted among the people, there the wise administration of your imperial majesty will be effective. And although this Christian character should fill the whole world, nonetheless it pleases God that it arise again first in the German lands, where, unfortunately, it has lain hidden for many years (as it has in all of Christendom). But now it pleases God that the entire world will again have a source of Christian character in the German nation, as previously occurred in Judea. And not without special provision from God has Germany always been obedient to a Roman emperor, so that with God's cooperation he would want to do great things on the basis of this obedience, as appears possible in these days. For many years now a seed of all good things has germinated unobserved in the German nation: a shrewd sense, clever inventions, consummate skill in all crafts, knowledge of all writings and useful languages, a new useful art of printing, a desire for Gospel teaching, and delight in all truth and honesty. All of these things had been concealed in our land by misfortune, but with heavenly help they are now emerging. Therefore, the German nation is wonderfully and suitably prepared, and as a passionate, robust, and obedient people, would be worthy of this task. And because you are the Christian emperor you are, this should move you to particular care and love for the German nation, and to promote, increase, and protect the above-mentioned divine seeds scattered by God in German hearts. Through this your empire, glory, and security will be increased and eternally secured. Know also, Oh mighty Emperor, that Johann Reuchlin,¹ famed throughout the world, is the source of all things useful in the German land. It was he who began to uncover the source of Christian character sown in human understanding and life, and therefore he is worthy of eternal glory. Thereafter, came Erasmus of Rotterdam, who, with angelic ingenuity and kindness, nurtured continually

1. Johann Reuchlin (1455–1522), humanist and noted Hebrew philologist. See *ER* 5:325–27; *CE* 3:145–50.

the godly gifts in us for our great benefit. And clearly the printing press has used these developments to good effect, as Your Esteemed Wisdom already knows. The above-mentioned two men have laid the first stones for everything beneficial, to which many others have also contributed, such as Jakob Wimpfeling,² Doctor Johann von Kaisersberg³ in Alsace, Doctor Ulrich Kraft⁴ from Ulm, Johann Oecolampadius⁵ in Swabia and all of their supporters. Also very helpful in this matter has been the faithful and beneficial instruction of many excellent schoolmasters in many places, such as Crato⁶ and Sapidus⁷ in Schlettstadt, Michael Hilspach⁸ in Hagenau, Simler⁹ and Gerbelius¹⁰ in Pforzheim, Brassicanus¹¹ and Heinrichmann¹² in Tübingen, Ägidius Krautwasser¹³ in Stuttgart and Horb, Johann Schmidlin¹⁴ in

2. Jakob Wimpfeling (1450–1528), Alsatian humanist, regarded as the father of German patriotic historical writing. See *ER* 6:311–12; *CE* 3:447–50.

3. Johann Geiler von Kaisersberg (1455–1510), renowned popular preacher and reforming theologian in Strasbourg.

4. Ulrich Kraft (ca. 1460–1516), humanist and member of an Ulm patrician family. He taught philosophy and law at the universities of Freiburg, Tübingen, and Basel. From 1500 to 1516, he was a priest in the Ulm cathedral.

5. Johann Oecolampadius (1482–1531), from 1522 Reformer of Basel. See *ER* 4:337–38; *OER* 3:169–71; *CE* 3:24–27.

6. Crato von Uttenheim (+ 1501), from 1490 until his death teacher in Schlettstadt in Alsace.

7. Johann Sapidus (1490–1561), rector of the Latin school in Schlettstadt. See *CE* 3:195–96.

8. Michael Hilspach (+ after 1546), rector of the Latin school in Hagenau and later in Pforzheim.

9. Apparently Georg Simler from Wimpfen (+1535/1536), rector of the Latin school in Pforzheim. See *CE* 3:253.

10. Nikolaus Gerbelius or Gerbel (c. 1485–1560), worked as the corrector of Reuchlin's works at a press in Pforzheim. In 1515 he moved to Strasbourg where he later became a committed partisan of Luther. See *CE* 2:90–91.

11. Johann Brassicanus (+ 1539), humanist and teacher at the Latin school in Urach (Switzerland) and later in Tübingen. In Tübingen his students included Phillip Melancthon. See *CE* 1:191–92.

12. Jakob Heinrichmann or Henrichmann of Sindelfingen in Swabia (c. 1482–1561), humanist and student, then teacher, in Tübingen until 1506. From 1514 he was councilor to the bishop of Augsburg, canon at the cathedral in Augsburg (until 1521), and parish priest at Zusmarshausen west of Augsburg. See *CE* 2:177.

13. Ägidius Krautwasser, teacher of Latin in Stuttgart and later in Horb.

14. Johann Fabricius (Schmidlin), teacher in Esslingen and Ulm.

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Memmingen, Cochlaeus¹⁵ in Nuremberg, Nesen¹⁶ in Frankfurt, etc. Now God the Lord, through the diligence and efforts of these men and others like them, and also through the earnest pleading to God of many devout people, has already prepared the minds and souls, and also the customs and hearts of Germans to desire a true Christian character. And since the time has arrived for your peaceful, God-pleasing reign to begin in Germany, God sent two specially chosen, daring, and enlightened messengers to prepare the way for your reign and to guide and direct you in your progress. Through their effort and exertion all that would lead you astray in your office will be brushed out of the way.

These two messengers are Martin Luther and Ulrich von Hutten; both are German born, learned, Christian men who have dedicated their days to promoting God's honor, as has been evident from the start. For, what does Martin Luther seek other than a pure,¹⁷ unadulterated proclamation of gospel teaching in the schools and from the pulpits, where, for many hundreds of years by God's special decree, one has taught the world for God, Antichrist for Christ, Barrabas for Jesus, heresy for truth. All of Martin's efforts are directed toward bringing back to the light of day evangelical, Christian teaching. And God is with him, for many learned, brave men in all places, not only in Germany but in all of Europe, leap to his side and many pious Christians, women and men, priests and lay-people, monks and nuns, support him in their hearts, even if they are unable to voice their support openly.

Ulrich von Hutten wields the pen and the sword to awaken ancient German integrity through loyalty, faith and truth in the German nation, which has always been self-sufficient in all the necessities for physical life, in money, in the fruits of the earth, in useful customs and laws. Now, however, its integrity and resources have been wasted by useless people, as you will hear. We now know that unadulterated evangelical preaching, and also loyalty and faith along with the required physical necessities, are all needed for a wholesome reign in your German land. In this God will help you and your subjects through Martin Luther and Hutten. However, as much as God favors you, so much does the devil oppose you, and he will not rest

15. Johann Cochlaeus (1479–1552), humanist and rector of the St. Lawrence School in Nuremberg from 1510–1515. He later became a bitter opponent of Luther. See *OER* 1:369–71; *CE* 1:321–22.

16. Wilhelm Nesen (1493–1524), member of the Basel humanist circle and student of Erasmus. See *CE* 3:12–14.

17. “*luthere*” (*lauter*). Eberlin is likely making a pun on Luther's name with this term, as did many of his contemporaries.

until he is able to lead astray your upright heart. And would God that in your youth you never would have been ruled over by Dertusiensis,¹⁸ from whom you were unable to learn much of Christian freedom or of other things that are necessary or may be useful for such a great prince. I fear that the evil enemy has prepared this, and God permitted it to happen to you, so that from it the whole world may know how noble your nature is, that even in your youth you could not be led into shameful humility. After that, through the devil's mischief, your upright conscience was entrusted to a barefooted friar from the ranks of the superstitious Observants¹⁹ as your spiritual counselor. Many devout Christians lament this, and day and night they plead with God that He will stand by their upright emperor, and help him to take up his godly glory, and save him from the Grey Hypocrite.²⁰ For, where you are not cautious, God help you and us. And God will hear the devout prayer offered up for you, and give you help that you may escape the traps laid for you. Therefore, we (in our hope) have been moved by God to lay our complaints before you. Consider in your lofty understanding to whom it is that you entrust your secrets: he is a bare-footed friar from the arrogantly named Observants. Among them there has always been little knowledge and little wisdom, they appear better than they are, their great numbers are completely unknown, and if one in a thousand among them is intelligent or learned, he sits among the rest like Daniel among the lions. Furthermore, they have never considered your confessor Glapion²¹

18. Cardinal Dertusiensis, later Pope Adrian VI (1522–1523), was appointed Charles' tutor by the Emperor Maximilian. See *ER* 1:12–13; *OER* 1:8; *CE* 1:5–9.

19. The Franciscan Observants, members of the order intent on a more strict observance of the rule of St. Francis than were their opponents, the Conventuals. In 1415 at the Council of Constance the Observants of the French province were granted their own provincials and in 1443 Pope Eugenius IV gave the Observants their own provincial general. In 1517 they were formally separated from the Conventuals and declared the true Order of St. Francis. See *ODCC*, 634–36. In pamphlets of the Reformation era Franciscans were often referred to as “Barfusser,” “barefooted” friars. This identification may derive from mid thirteenth-century polemics against the friars, in particular William of St. Amour's identification of the friars' practice of going barefoot with the Pharisees' broad phylacteries and the enlarged borders on their garments mentioned in Matthew 23:5. See Dipple, *Antifraternalism and Anticlericalism*, 160; Szittyá, “Middle English Literature,” 298–99; idem, *Medieval Literature*, 39.

20. The Franciscans were also referred to as the Grey Friars on the basis of the color of their habits.

21. Johann Glapion (mid-fifteenth century to 1522), a Franciscan and father confessor of Charles V. See *CE* 2:103–5.

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particularly learned or spiritual, and they themselves are surprised that you burden yourself with this person.

Oh devout Emperor, send the mendicant friars away from you, especially the bare-footed Observants, for your innocent conscience is too trusting of their deception. Inquire throughout the German nation, among all princes and lords, both spiritual and secular, all estates and cities which have anything to do with them; none are able to escape the bare-footed friars no matter how much they want to. Your predecessor, the blessed Maximilian,²² also sometimes confessed to them, but he didn't decide anything to do with the affairs of the empire in consultation with his father confessor, neither before nor after confession. And during confession he did not want the monk to bring into the discussion anything dealing with his pleasure concerning the empire. He said to his father confessor: "Sir, concerning my affairs I have taken counsel with wise people, do not question me about them. What I confess, absolve in God's name." As soon as he was finished confessing he sent the monk away. When he wanted to confess, the monks did not send him a learned man, both because they do not permit such honors to the learned among them and because they were well aware that Emperor Maximilian would not ask for special counsel. In such matters follow his example, devout, beloved Prince, and you will have good fortune, security, and great favor from the German land. We often think that it was through the devil's cunning that you came to be taught by Dertusiensis and Glapion, so that your empire would never be purged of false teaching and dishonest activities. The courtiers and mendicant friars have hindered the common good, and the devil's cunning has almost succeeded in deceiving you into believing that Luther and Hutten are worthy of disdain, but God's grace did not allow you to be blinded. Know, Oh Christian Emperor, that courtiers and mendicant friars are a particular poison for true Christianity in the German land. They oppose the blessed Luther and the Christian, noble lord von Hutten, and also all those who counsel beneficial things for your Christian people. Christian, evangelical teaching is a beginning of all things helpful. Luther strives the hardest for its advancement; the mendicant friars, especially the bare-footed Observants, who rely on their false renown and claim often to counsel the simple people, oppose it the most. Ulrich von Hutten has taken it upon himself to advance the cause of German honor, freedom, and self-reliance as much as possible, but the courtiers stand in his way. Therefore, everything evil directed against

22. Emperor Maximilian I (1459–1519). See *CE* 2:410–14.

you or your empire comes from the papist folks, because the mendicant friars and the courtiers are the sworn servants of the Roman pope.

Take note, devout Lord, the two breeds mentioned above want to deceive you so that you would regard even your best friends as sworn enemies. Who is a greater friend to you and your empire than Luther or Hutten, who seek only the well-being, honor, fortune and happiness of you and all your subjects? They are willing to place at your service themselves and all their supporters, their bodies and honor, their goods and lives; for this reason they have often placed themselves in mortal danger, and still they do not give up, even in the face of your apparent displeasure. For they love you and the truth so much that even if you never thanked them, they would wish, nonetheless, to do you good. But the mendicant friars and courtiers seek to harm and corrupt you and your empire and to promote their own interests. If any of them were to suffer one-thousandth for your sake what Hutten and Luther have endured, they would leave you to fend for yourself and give you the finger.²³ Indeed, they advise you to spurn your own friends so that there will be no one to warn you against their evil ruses. Not without reason do the mendicant friars fight against Hutten. The bare-footed Observants alone take out of your Upper and Lower Germany in one year 200,000 florins in cash and valuables. Although they refuse to touch money when anyone is looking, they have managers who handle their transactions more precisely than any prince does. In fact, it has been calculated that annually the four mendicant orders collect more than 1,000,000 florins in the German nation. This they suck out of the poor and rich, the lords and servants. Then, what should I say about the papal see which annually relieves the German nation of 300,000 florins? And what is drawn from the German nation to Rome as a result of the mischievous legal trade is impossible to calculate. Still less can one reckon what is stolen and pillaged by the courtiers from the cloisters, hospitals, parishes, and benefices of the German nation. In addition, the people must pay legitimate annual taxes to you and other lords, they must feed themselves, and also support so many monks and priests, not only those in the monasteries, but also those with benefices outside them, not to mention the mendicant friars. How, then, can the German nation flourish when so many harmful animals in it devour all the good pasture? All that would be tolerable if they jeopardized only our goods. But they have also tried to do harm to our bodies and freedoms, and

23. “*zaygen dir die fygten*,” an obscene gesture involving sticking the thumb between the first two fingers, indicating contempt and scorn. See *JEvGS* 1:209.

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so they are happy to see that we are unable to endure our secular lords on account of the taxes they levy. And they insist that what we give to them is a gift to God and may not be reduced, but the taxes of the princes might be held back. Now, if we are unable to support both the pope and the princes, they say that we should first forsake the princes. That we don't want to do, so they are accustomed to making themselves arbitrators and intermediaries so that they can gorge themselves on our strife. For this reason so often the Roman pope sends emissaries into all lands to sow discord among the princes and lords. And what is more serious, the courtiers and mendicant friars bring from foreign lands, especially from Rome and Italy, all falsehood, fraud, unfaithfulness, and deception, through which trust and faith are destroyed, and hardly one brother dares to trust another. Contrary to the ancient integrity of the German nation and by such mischief the monks absolve everyone on the basis of the freedoms of their orders and the courtiers on the basis of their indulgence letters and the grace of Rome. And to promote injustice, and also so that God's anger will come upon us and remain on us, they falsify the Gospel teaching from the pulpit. They encourage us in our envy and hatred, and they say that one may certainly hate the sin, but not the sinner. One may certainly avoid and shun someone and still not be his enemy. One may certainly take interest on a loan to a friend. One may certainly employ cunning if it's not harmful cunning. One may certainly have the pope dispense him from a written oath. One may certainly wage deadly warfare in defense of his own interests when he appears to have credible justification. Masses said by even evil priests redeem souls. We may, through our own abilities and without grace, guard against sin, and we can acquire grace for ourselves. It is better to give money for Roman indulgences than give it to other poor people in obvious need. Everyone may and should seek his own interest. Within limits one may avenge wrongs done to him. A government is no more required to do everything it can for its Christian subjects than the Turk is for his subjects. This and similar Aristotelian, heathen teaching they instill in us from our youth onward so that we never recognize the gospel truth. To ensure that God is our enemy they produce all such antichristian teachings. And since Dr. Luther wishes to root out all such things for the good of us all, the courtiers, the mendicant friars, and even the whole Roman curia oppose him and wish to besmirch your good reputation. To pervert your Christian judgment, to turn from you devout German goodwill, they try to draw you, Oh blameless Emperor, into their antichristian sect. But, Oh Emperor, we trust in your

righteousness, and we hope that you are so devout that on the basis of good intelligence you would never have judged Luther and Hutten as erroneous and dangerous. Therefore, we do not abide by any decrees dealing with such matters promulgated under the name of Your Imperial Majesty. We assume that either you do not know of them or else that you are not correctly informed about the matter. Therefore, we appeal to you to allow us to advise and inform you about the evil reports and the deceptions of Romanists around you. In the meantime, we will read what Hutten and Luther have written or will write in the hope that the Romanists' deceit will soon come to light, so that you would outlaw and ban the mendicant friars and courtiers. We do not doubt that God will soon bring this about, for God so loves you that he will not long leave you in error. Now that the true light has been made clear to you by Luther and Hutten, would that you soon throw off the errors of the Romanists and those who preach them. However, as I said at the beginning, Oh devout Prince, it is evident our distress is so great that we can no longer hold ourselves back from pitiful complaints. As you can see, our minds have been opened by God's grace so that we recognize from the old histories how fortunate our land once was and how terrible our situation is now. We are vexed by the great deception and superstition among us, which we cannot escape because they are sustained by Roman statute and canon law. As a result, no one can be secure in his affairs; there are always little loopholes through which one can find a way to squeeze the poor. For this reason the barristers and lawyers go to school so they can support themselves from this activity. Our ancestors had few laws but great faith, and it was not fitting for anyone to take his legal affairs out of our land. But now, if I have dealings with the mendicant friars, my opponent drags me from one conservator²⁴ to the next in both Upper and Lower Germany, and finally to Rome where he wins praise and glory. With the priests it is the same. And from this we lay people learn about pretext and objection, and to answer deceit with deceit. Everything is expensive among us, the money is debased, and no gold can be found anymore. Rome swallows up everything gold and silver, and the lazy mendicant friars and courtiers make even the water expensive. It is said that our learning leads us to the pulpit with a fool's bridle. If God took from us the error of our darkness, and we wanted to learn and hear the Christian truth which nourishes our

24. A bishop named by papal privilege for each province of the mendicant orders to act as judge in cases in which the legal rights of the friars were infringed upon in secular matters.

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souls, there would be no one who could tell it to us. For the mendicant friars do not want to be the ones to show us where we have gone astray; they would much rather let us remain longer in our error. To this end they have directed all their abilities and wish to frighten us with papal bans promulgated against the truth, with imperial mandates commanded without your well-informed judgment, with ancient customs of our mistaken ancestors, with the illustrious appearance of their orders, with the numbers of their followers. And the more they strive to keep the Christian law from appearing purely among us, the less can we be at peace because of the godly compulsion within us. So we have been cheated out of goods, lives, honor, and even our souls. And we have given up on expecting any help from the pope, or from many of the bishops, who are worm-eaten by their greed and wish to have three or four bishoprics with papal dispensation, that is, by leave of the antichristian law. They want to take on the offices of abbot, prior, or provost of a monastery *in commendam*²⁵ despite the fact that they are not monks and have no desire to become monks. And so they don't want to attend to their bishoprics, but instead attach themselves to the king or great princes, which they are unable to do without papal dispensation. Although there are also many bishops who would gladly give aid to the gospel truth, they are overwhelmed by fear of the pope. To whom, then, should we pour out our troubles, besides you, our devout emperor and lord, from whom we expect all good. Although, we are alarmed by your father confessor, who boasts far and wide that you regard him not only as your confessor, but as your mentor in all matters. But we hope that you would be of sounder judgment than to allow an insolent cheese hunter²⁶ to rule you and your empire. Nonetheless, there is now a great number of simple folk who are frightened and saddened by this and therefore have said: "Woe unto us, woe unto us, must we longer be subjected to the degrading tyranny of the monks? We hoped that the noble blood of Charles would have saved us from this. God have pity that an unlearned, ambitious, miserable monk should rule the entire Roman Empire, how will we ever be saved?" We fifteen confederates have heard such restless complaints among princes, nobles, burghers, and peasants and have undertaken with all our abilities to wipe out such an evil misperception of you among the people so that the German nation does

25. "*Commend*," the administration of a vacant ecclesiastical office until the position is refilled. In the sixteenth century this system was abused to allow one ecclesiastic to enjoy the benefices from several offices. See ODCC, 383.

26. "*käßjäger*," a common term of abuse for members of the mendicant orders at this time, likely because they would beg for cheese. See JEvGS 1:209.

not become displeased with you. We have said to them that you will turn to neither papal legates nor mendicant friars. And if you have already released decrees against Luther and his followers, as has been alleged, that is because you were not completely informed of matters or you will soon change these; that you would rather turn to Christ, who speaks through Luther and Hutten, than to the entire world; that you would send away the Grey Monk and take Erasmus of Rotterdam, or Luther or Karlstadt²⁷ or someone similar as your confessor and spiritual counselor. You would take as your closest advisors especially the secular Electors and your upright cousins, the Bavarian lords,²⁸ and the noble Franz von Sickingen, Ulrich von Hutten, Duke Frederick Count Palatine,²⁹ and others like them. You would outlaw and banish all courtiers and mendicant friars. You would allow no bishop to be an Elector. You would allow absolutely no cardinals in Germany. You would command that the wholesome teaching of the three languages³⁰ and other honest arts be advanced in schools, that only the gospel truth be preached from the pulpit, and that whoever wishes to oppose these things should be punished. You would decree that from now on no more palliums³¹ be purchased from Rome, that no more annates³² be paid, that no more indulgences be allowed to come into our land, that no mendicant friar be allowed to collect alms—instead they should support themselves by suitable and worthy work. That from now on no one be allowed to enter a mendicant order; instead the orders should be allowed to die out. That from now on no one should be excommunicated on account of debt. That no priest may hold more than one benefice. That each priest must inhabit his own living. That all parish priests and bishops fulfill the duties of their own offices themselves through preaching and other services. That from now on no

27. Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt (1480–1541), at this time Luther's reforming colleague in Wittenberg. See *OER* 1:178–80; *CE* 2:253–56.

28. Dukes Ludwig and Wilhelm of Bavaria had not yet declared themselves openly against the Reformation at this time. See *JEvGS* 1:209.

29. Count Palatine Frederick, later Elector Frederick II. See *JEvGS* 1:209.

30. The three "biblical" languages: Latin, Greek, and Hebrew.

31. A circular band of woolen material worn as part of the vestments of the pope and metropolitans. In the ninth century John VIII commanded all metropolitans to petition the pope for the pallium within three months of their election or confirmation. Thereafter it became a symbol of the jurisdiction conferred on the metropolitans by the pope. See *NCE* 10:807–8.

32. The first year's revenue from an ecclesiastical benefice paid to Rome. See *ODCC*, 71.

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monk or nun be allowed to take the three vows before the age of thirty. That all monks and nuns be allowed to leave the monastery if they discover that the monastic life poses a danger to their souls. That from now on no courtier may seize a benefice. That under no circumstances may one seek justice or a dispensation from Rome, but instead all spiritual matters should be brought before the local bishop. That a set amount be established for the goods one may take into a monastery, and no more be permitted. How many priests there should be in each city, and no more. That from now on no anniversary masses or benefices be endowed without specific permission of the emperor. That all monks and nuns in all orders be subject to their local bishops. That all priests be allowed to have wives so that so much shame and sin will be avoided. That no legal proceedings, including those involving secular law, should be drawn out for more than a year, because this causes so much hardship for the poor. That from now on Your Imperial Majesty will employ nobles in imperial offices and in your councils and not allow so many Johns and Conrads and Henrys and similar vagabonds and clerks and usurers to manage the great affairs of the Roman Empire any longer. For this reason the nobility now have their children study and be instructed in knowledge and morals. That from now on soulless, callous soldiers who take money and contract with the devil will be abolished. Instead, each land will help its lords, and the nobles, whose role it is, to wage war. That *Fuggerei*³³ will be destroyed. That drunkenness, a source of all vices, will be seriously punished. That scandalous clothing for both men and women will be abolished. That public blasphemy, notorious adultery, and drunkenness be regarded as sufficiently serious crimes that on account of them all one's honor will be lost. That from now on rent charges will not be sold on landed property, and that one may pay off all interest on goods in a reasonable amount of time.³⁴ That no war shall be waged without the permission of Your Imperial Majesty and the Imperial Electors.

33. "*Fuggerei*," usury. Eberlin here adopts the common early sixteenth-century identification of the prominent Augsburg banking family, the Fuggers, as the embodiment of usury. See Laube, *Flugschriften* 2:716.

34. The rent charge was an archaic financial instrument which permitted property holders, either owners of the property or holders of a heritable tenancy, to raise sums of money and provided purchasers with steady incomes. A property holder would sell a rent charge to a person or institution for a sum of money, thereby encumbering the property with the obligation to pay rents for a set time period or in perpetuity. Rent charges were regarded as real property and could be taxed, sold, or bequeathed by the holder. They appear to have been popular among ecclesiastical institutions because they provided regular income without the bother of maintaining and managing real property.

These and similar matters we have brought before the German nation with our mouths and pens, both openly and privately, so that you will direct all your efforts to address them before all other matters. Afterward God will give you victory and security before all your foes. Then the stout Germans will arise, pledging themselves and their possessions to march with you against Rome and make all of Italy subject to you. You no longer need to enlist the support of either pope or cardinal. From now on they will have to be confirmed by you and your successors, but all of your authority will come to you through the strength of your election by the Imperial Electors. In this way you will become a mighty king on the earth; if from now on you do God's work, then God will do your work. Therefore, we fifteen confederates beseech Your Imperial Majesty in the name of the German nation that you arouse your virile, noble heart and support our proposals before the common people; thus will you keep the love of the people. Prefer your willing German nation to the bare-footed Observants who will not remain faithful to you in the long run, as almost all princes and lords, both spiritual and secular, and lands and cities in the German nation can attest. If someone bestows great benefits on them and, as is sometimes necessary, requests a prayer from them, they forget about everything else and drop from their prayers other important matters, with great vexation for both rulers and ruled. This happens often with them and, as a result, the hearts of nearly all princes and cities have turned against them. Also, sometimes they plot against bishops and parish priests, cities and lords with their arrogant bulls and their intemperate preaching before the simple people. With this I conclude my and my comrades' heart-felt complaint to you. Act as a faithful father, as a merciful lord, as a courageous emperor, and give thanks to God and the German nation and come to our aid. God keep you and us prosperous for a long time. Amen.

See Buck, "Perpetual Rents," 23–33.