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## Olavus Petri's Polemic against Monasticism: A Translation with Critical Notes

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OLAVUS PETRI'S POLEMIC AGAINST MONASTICISM:  
A TRANSLATION WITH CRITICAL NOTES

by

Margaret Mary King

A Thesis  
Submitted to the  
Faculty of The Graduate College  
in partial fulfillment  
of the  
Degree of Master of Arts

Western Michigan University  
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OLAVUS PETRI'S POLEMIC AGAINST MONASTICISM:  
A TRANSLATION WITH CRITICAL NOTES

Margaret Mary King, M.A.

Western Michigan University, 1979

Olavus Petri (1493-1522) is considered one of the primary figures of the Swedish Reformation during the reign of King Gustav Vasa (1523-1560). Olavus Petri's polemical writings, dating from 1527 through 1528, are particularly significant in relation to the 1527 Recess and Ordinance of Västerås which deprived the church of its substantial political and economic powers and privileges. The importance which the King and reformers attributed to control over and termination of the monastic and mendicant orders in Sweden is evidenced by Olavus Petri's treatise, En liten bok i vilken klosterleverne förklarar varder, printed November 13, 1528. This document, which has not been previously accessible in English, is an important source in the history of monasticism and of sixteenth-century Sweden.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Margaret Mary King

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## CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

Monastic and mendicant orders and establishments had a late beginning and came to an early end in Sweden. The Cistercian foundations made from Clairvaux at Alvastra and Varnhem in the 1140's on the request of King Sverker I and Queen Ulfhild<sup>1</sup> were Sweden's first monastic settlements. The Franciscans and Dominicans arrived in the 1220's and considered Sweden part of the province Dacia. Consequently

from about 1250 all the Nordic countries had acquired a 'monastic landscape,' a monastic geography, where religious orders of various kinds in the countryside and the towns, in leper houses, hospitals, almshouses and so on, began to fall into a certain pattern in people's awareness. Once created, this monastic geography underwent no essential change in the course of the middle ages.<sup>2</sup>

By the sixteenth century, houses of the Johannite, Holy Spirit, Carmelite, Birgittine, Carthusian, and Antonine orders had been added to Sweden's religious establishments.<sup>3</sup> However, the decade of 1520 brought about a sudden reversal in this situation through the combined attack of royal power and church reformers.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Carl Silverstolpe, "De Svenska Klostren före Klostret Vadstena," Historisk tidskrift 22(1902):7.

<sup>2</sup>Tore Nyberg, "Lists of Monasteries in Some Thirteenth-century Wills," Mediaeval Scandinavia 5(1972):51.

<sup>3</sup>Olavus Petri, Anteckningar om städer och kyrkliga institutioner i Sverige in Olavus Petri Samlade Skrifter, ed. Bengt Hesselman, 4 vols. (Uppsala: Sveriges Kristliga Studentrörelses Förlag, 1914-17) 4:557-58 (hereafter cited as OPSS).

<sup>4</sup>Gustaf Ivarsson, Johan III och klosterväsendet (Lund: C.W.K. Gleerup, 1970), p. 1.



While the Swedish church was not wealthy in comparison to the ecclesiastical establishments of other countries, "it was anything but poor in relation to other elements in Swedish society."<sup>5</sup> Its land was in the frälse or tax-exempt category and by the end of the middle ages constituted twenty-one percent of land holdings.<sup>6</sup> The scarcity of frälse land led to antagonism between the church and nobility, and this situation could be exploited for the monarchy's benefit.

Gustav Vasa was elected King in 1523 following the rebellion which freed Sweden from the domination of Denmark under the Union of Kalmar. Sweden was heavily in debt to the Hanseatic city of Lübeck for its support during the war, and out of necessity Gustav Vasa began to appropriate ecclesiastical silver and revenues, particularly from the monasteries. In a letter to the monastery of Vadstena in 1524, the King's chancellor, Laurentius Andreae, justified these measures through the principle that the wealth of the church belonged to the people who constituted the church. Laurentius Andreae had adopted this Lutheran position through association with Olavus Petri, who studied at Wittenberg from 1516 to 1518. Gustav Vasa came into contact with the two reformers on his election at Strängnäs in 1523 and found that their doctrines supported his ambitions for authority over the church. Consequently Olavus Petri had access to both the pulpit and printing press in Stockholm under royal protection.

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<sup>5</sup>Michael Roberts, The Early Vasas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), p. 62.

<sup>6</sup>Eli F. Heckscher, An Economic History of Sweden (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954), p. 67.

Opposition to the King and reformers came primarily from Hans Brask, bishop of Linköping, whose conservative position represented the feelings of the majority of Swedes, particularly the peasants of Dalarna. When Gustav Vasa railed against the church and monasticism at Uppsala in 1526, the people defended the monks vehemently. This incident may have led to the addition of a question about monasticism to the ten propositions Gustav Vasa circulated for debate at the end of 1526. Olavus Petri published his responses to these questions one month before the riksdag met at Västerås in June 1527.

At the Västerås assembly Gustav Vasa complained of his subjects' infidelity, the poverty of the crown and nobility in contrast to the wealth of the church, and impugment of his orthodoxy. He demanded a public debate between Olavus Petri and his opponent Peder Galle to dispel charges of heresy and effectively threatened his own abdication. The Recess of Västerås substantially deprived the church, particularly the episcopacy, of its economic and political power and privileges. Monasteries and convents supported by rents were placed under the supervision of nobles as officials of the king. Their excess income would go into the royal treasury in "a plan of starvation which represented itself as being prompted by concern for administrative efficiency."<sup>7</sup> The subsequent Ordinance of Västerås provided that mendicant friars could beg no more than five weeks in summer and five weeks in winter and must carry a license. Although the monastic and mendicant orders still had popular support

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<sup>7</sup>Roberts, p. 78.

which emerged even at Västerås, these decisions gave the King effective control over both the monastic and mendicant establishments.<sup>8</sup> The timely publication of Olavus Petri's polemic against monasticism, En liten bok i vilken klosterleverne förklarar varder,<sup>9</sup> in 1528 provided justification for the Västerås decisions.

Olavus Petri was born in 1493 in Örebro in the province of Närke. Little is known about his family except that his father was a smith. Both Olavus and his younger brother Laurentius went to school in Örebro at one of the Carmelites' two establishments in Sweden. From the University of Uppsala, founded in 1477, Olavus went to the conservative University of Leipzig, which he abandoned for the University of Wittenberg in 1516. In 1518 he received the master of arts degree and remained in Wittenberg to study law and theology. While Olavus was without question a student of Luther, there is no mention of closer association or exchange of letters between them,<sup>10</sup> and Olavus left no record of his experience of the decisive events in Wittenberg during this period.

After returning to Sweden in 1519, Olavus was ordained a deacon in 1520 and became the secretary to Bishop Mattias Gregorii of Strängnäs. When the bishop was beheaded during the Bloodbath of Stockholm, the purge which followed the Danish King Christian II's

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<sup>8</sup>Ivarsson, p. 14.

<sup>9</sup>Hereafter cited as Om klosterleverne.

<sup>10</sup>Hjalmar Holmquist, Svenska Kyrkans historia, vol. 3: Reformationstidevarvet 1521-1611 (Stockholm: Svenska Kyrkans diakonistyrelses bokförlag, 1933), p. 80.

invasion in November 1520, Archdeacon Laurentius Andreae assumed the practical leadership of the diocese. Olavus taught in the cathedral school, and in 1523 his preaching drew the censure of the dean of the Strängnäs chapter for Lutheran heresies. When Gustav Vasa was elected King of Sweden in 1523, Laurentius Andreae became his chancellor. The following year the King made Olavus Petri secretary of Stockholm's City Council. Olavus preached at the Church of St. Nicholas under the protection of Gustav Vasa who found the Lutheran doctrines favoring independence from Rome expedient for increasing his authority and appropriating church revenues. Olavus' marriage in 1525 brought the disapproval of Bishop Hans Brask of Linköping, whose influence diminished as the king suppressed his printing press and made printing a royal monopoly of the Stockholm Royal Press which issued Olavus' reformation writings.

In 1531 Olavus' brother Laurentius Petri was elected the first evangelical archbishop of Uppsala. Olavus served as Gustav Vasa's chancellor from 1531-33 to their mutual dissatisfaction. Olavus and Laurentius Andreae were replaced in the King's favor with two Germans, Conrad von Pyhy and George Norman, who cooperated with his efforts toward the increasing subordination of the church to royal authority. Olavus' criticism of the King in his sermons and the manuscript of En svensk krönika brought about Gustav Vasa's ill will. At Örebro in 1539 Laurentius Andreae and Olavus Petri were accused of high treason as a result of the King's accumulated grudges against them. The reformers were condemned to death, but their sentence was commuted to a fine. Olavus Petri served as pastor of the Church of

St. Nicholas in Stockholm from 1543 until his death in 1552.

The first biography of Olavus Petri and his brother Laurentius was written by Hallman<sup>11</sup> in 1726, but the four-hundredth anniversary of Olavus' birth marked the beginning of extensive research on his writings. Schück<sup>12</sup> and Holm<sup>13</sup> published biographies of Olavus in 1893 and 1917 respectively. Both saw Olavus and Luther as representatives of an individualistic spirituality opposed to sterile dogmatism.<sup>14</sup> Bergendoff<sup>15</sup> attempted to demonstrate Olavus' dependence on the theologians of southern Germany. Subsequent studies have raised questions about Olavus' divergence from Luther and on the whole have substantiated Bergendoff's conclusions.<sup>16</sup> The most comprehensive study of Olavus' theology was written by Ingebrand and includes an extensive bibliography.<sup>17</sup>

In 1526 the first Swedish reformation writing, En nyttig undervisning, published anonymously, may be attributed to Olavus Petri. The foreword and also the first Swedish translation of the New Testament published in 1526 have been variously assigned to Olavus

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<sup>11</sup>Johan Gostaf Hallman, The twenne bröder och neriksboer (Stockholm, 1726).

<sup>12</sup>Henrik Schück, Olavus Petri (Stockholm: Hugo Geber, 1893).

<sup>13</sup>Rurik Holm, Olavus Petri (Uppsala: J.A. Lindblad, 1917).

<sup>14</sup>Sven Ingebrand, Olavus Petris reformationiska åskådning (Lund: C.W.K. Gleerup, 1964), p. 13.

<sup>15</sup>Conrad Bergendoff, Olavus Petri and the Ecclesiastical Transformation in Sweden (New York: Macmillan Co., 1928).

<sup>16</sup>Ingebrand, p. 14.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., pp. 372-80.

and Laurentius Andreae. Olavus' works can be divided between translations and adaptations of German works and his original efforts.<sup>18</sup> The years of 1527-31 comprise Olavus' most productive period. The polemical works which deal with monastic and mendicant orders were published under his own name, as were the liturgical books, including En handbok på svenska (1529) and Den svenska mässan (1531).

The years 1527-28 have been termed Olavus Petri's polemical period.<sup>19</sup> In 1527 he published Svar på tolv spörsmål, following the precedent set by the 1525 Brandenburg Ratschlag, twenty-three articles of controversy with responses from both papal and evangelical parties. In December 1526, King Gustav Vasa sent a series of ten articles to the opposing parties in Sweden in hope of a public disputation. The questions were probably formulated by Laurentius Andreae and Olavus Petri, and two were subsequently added, one of which was monasticism's basis in the Scriptures. Dr. Peder Galle, professor at Uppsala University, refused to debate Olavus Petri but issued his answers in written form. Olavus printed the twelve questions, Galle's answers, his own answers, and his rebuttals of Galle. Svar på tolv spörsmål was published a month before the decisive Västerås assembly of June 1527 at which time Peder Galle and Olavus finally held a public disputation. The eighth question which concerns monasticism is a preliminary draft for ideas which Olavus later developed into Om klosterleverne.

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>19</sup>Bergendoff, p. 145.

Olavus also issued two polemical works in response to the Danish Carmelite Paulus Eliae. Printed in March 1527, Svar på ett okristligt sändebrev was a defense of Luther's teachings and included an attack on the mendicant orders which Olavus continued in Om klosterleverne. Ett fögo sändebrev, printed in June 1528, was Olavus' refutation of Paulus Eliae's unsolicited answers to Gustav Vasa's original ten questions.

One other work of this period is pertinent to Om klosterleverne. En liten undervisning om äktenskapet was printed in August 1528 and is divided into three parts. The first part affirms that marriage was established by God and cannot be forbidden by men. In the second part, Olavus states that all those who have not been given by God the grace to remain in celibacy are permitted to marry, even if they are priests, monks, or nuns.<sup>20</sup> In the third part, he gives a history of the way in which the Church of Rome imposed clerical celibacy and points out that this was not enforced in Sweden until the arrival of the papal legate William of Sabina in the thirteenth century.<sup>21</sup> Olavus concludes the work with an admonition to the clergy of Sweden to abandon "the pope's anti-Christian prohibition which has been followed by so much evil"<sup>22</sup> and assures them that they will not lose their positions--"a suggestion of the official nature of this polemical work."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>OPSS 1:451.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 461.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 471.

<sup>23</sup>Bergendoff, p. 137.

Om klosterleverne is one of Olavus Petri's original works and does not use any known work as a model.<sup>24</sup> Olavus makes no direct reference to Martin Luther's Themata de votis, published in 1521 and followed in 1522 by De votis monasticis Martini Lutheri iudicium. The Scriptures are the primary authority for Olavus' arguments against monasticism. The primitive church and the first monks are the standards by which he measures the present situation. Olavus' major theme in Om klosterleverne is that "every Christian must be perfect."<sup>25</sup> He claims that monks have reserved the Scriptures about perfection for their way of life, "as if every Christian should not by God's commandment be as perfect as they are."<sup>26</sup> They have not understood that chastity, poverty, and obedience are spiritual<sup>27</sup> and are intended for all who have promised in baptism to lead a Christian life.<sup>28</sup> Monastic vows are a human invention not found in the Scriptures, and they violate the baptismal vow and Christian freedom.<sup>29</sup> Olavus' intention is to "deny monks and nuns their distinction"<sup>30</sup> for the vows which they do not observe in practice. Olavus

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<sup>24</sup>Ingebrand, p. 39.

<sup>25</sup>OPSS 1:487.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 510.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 486.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 488.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., pp. 484-85.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 516.



argues that monasticism and Christianity are mutually exclusive<sup>31</sup> because monks "want to merit with their works what Christ has merited, on which they should place their faith and trust."<sup>32</sup> Therefore he admonishes all monks and nuns to leave the monastic life in order to live as true Christians.<sup>33</sup>

Olavus Petri's last polemical work after Om klosterleverne was Om Guds ord och människors bud och stadgar, printed in December 1528. As a polemicist Olavus did not employ abusive invectives to the degree of other writers during the same period.<sup>34</sup> His polemical works were issued in response to particular issues and events and demonstrate the mutually advantageous relationship between Gustav Vasa and the reformers during the first decade of the Swedish Reformation.

En liten bok i vilken klosterleverne förklarar varder was printed by the Royal Press in Stockholm on November 13, 1528. Collijn lists twelve known copies of this edition.<sup>35</sup> In 1593 the Council of Uppsala expressed the desire to collect and print the works of Olavus and Laurentius Petri and Laurentius Andreae, but the project was not carried through.<sup>36</sup> The first collected edition of Olavus Petri's

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 499.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 518.

<sup>34</sup>Holmquist, p. 167.

<sup>35</sup>Isak Collijn, Sveriges Bibliografi intill år 1600 (Uppsala: Svenska litteratursällskapet, 1937), p. 350.

<sup>36</sup>Erik E. Yelverton, An Archbishop of the Reformation (London: Epworth Press, 1958), p. ix.

writings was not made until the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>37</sup> The Hesselman edition, which has been used for the following translation, can be considered the most authoritative critical edition of Om klosterleverne.<sup>38</sup> Collation with a microfilm copy of the 1528 printed edition at the University of California, Berkeley, has shown only minor orthographic inconsistencies, which are appended to this translation. Om klosterleverne was included, in abridged form, in a modern Swedish selection of Olavus Petri's writings.<sup>39</sup> No previous translation of Om klosterleverne exists, and even the Swedish editions unfortunately do not furnish critical footnotes.

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<sup>37</sup>Uno von Troil, ed., Skrifter och handlingar til uplysning i Svenska kyrko och reformationens historien, 5 vols. (Uppsala: J. Edman, 1790-91) 2:1-77.

<sup>38</sup>OPSS 1:474-523.

<sup>39</sup>Olavus Petri, Skrifter i urval, ed. Gunnar T. Westin (Stockholm: Natur och Kultur, 1968), pp. 94-120.

- I. Introduction
- II. Origins and history of monasticism
  - A. Old Testament
  - B. New Testament
  - C. Desert fathers
  - D. Four divisions
    - 1. Sarabaites
    - 2. Cenobites
    - 3. Anchorites
    - 4. Gyrovagues
  - E. Degeneration
    - 1. Rules
    - 2. Wandering
    - 3. Vows
    - 4. Property
    - 5. Begging
- III. Monastic sects
  - A. Monks
  - B. Nuns
- IV. Vows
  - A. Baptismal vow
  - B. Scriptural and human authority
  - C. Christian liberty
  - D. Three principal vows
    - 1. Spiritual meaning for all Christians

2. Monastic outward practices
3. Dishonesty of monastic vows
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- VIII. Conclusion
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  - A. Opposition of monasticism and Christianity
  - B. Deception of those entering the monastery
  - C. Justification in leaving
  - D. Exhortation for assistance in leaving
  - E. Impediments to leaving

CHAPTER II  
TRANSLATION

A little book in which  
the monastic life is explained  
and something is told about the  
damage and corruption which this  
life has caused in Christendom  
Followed by a brief  
admonition to monks and their friends

Olavus Petri

Stockholm

1528

They will have no further success  
for their folly is evident to all

II Timothy 3

In some of my previous writings I promised to tell about the monastic life.<sup>1</sup> Since circumstances have given me an opportunity, I will carry out this intention, even though I openly confess that I am altogether incompetent to express as completely as needs to be done the deceit and falsity which have been practiced in monastic life for centuries and which, God forbid, are still practiced. I will do this to the extent my ability permits, but someone whom God has endowed with greater grace and understanding must continue it because this ungodly thing is greater than one man can fully describe. In the name of Jesus Christ I caution every Christian person who reads or hears my writing against immediately taking offense when he perceives that it is directed against those whom everyone has considered holy people for so long a time. One must first examine questions before deciding them, giving careful attention to the argument and proof presented, for otherwise one pronounces a false judgment.

Before I actually present the matter, I will describe the origin of the monastic life and the way it was first conducted. Even though this has been covered to some extent previously, I will go into it further here in order to describe the abuse and impiety to which this way of life has come. It is obvious that teachers do not entirely agree about the circumstances under which the monastic life first originated. Some say that it first began with Elijah and Elisha of the Old Testament,<sup>2</sup> but this cannot be established with certainty. Elijah and Elisha were God's chosen prophets and messengers rather

than monks, as Jerome<sup>3</sup> writes in the life of Paul the first hermit. Some say that the monastic life has its origin with the Apostles and their disciples who with the Christian community in Jerusalem lived together from a common treasury as is described in the Acts of the Apostles.<sup>4</sup> Cassian<sup>5</sup> is of this opinion as are others who base it on the writings of Dionysius<sup>6</sup> and on a letter written by Philo<sup>7</sup> describing a group in early Christendom whose life resembled that of monks. But one cannot depend on what Dionysius says about this because his writings are not as ancient as many thought, nor is he the Dionysius the Areopagite who lived during the Apostles' time.<sup>8</sup> It is also uncertain whether Philo's work refers to the Christians since its title and opening seem to be about the Essenes who were among the Jewish people. I do not altogether deny that it also pertains to the Christians. However, as Jerome<sup>9</sup> says, this proves nothing more than that the early Christian community lived as monks should live now, but its members were not for this reason monks. They had no special habit, nor were they the only model for monks.

Some say that the monastic life has its beginning and origin in Paul the first hermit and Anthony, who went into the desert and stayed far from other people. Then many followed and lived as they did, so that Anthony acquired many disciples to whom he gave Christian instruction, and their number continually increased. They were called monks because they withdrew and were solitary. Jerome<sup>10</sup> agrees that it was Anthony who founded the monastic life in Egypt, and this third opinion comes nearest the truth. As Chrysostom<sup>11</sup> says concerning the

Epistle to the Hebrews, there were not yet any monks in the Apostles' time.

Some say that the good fathers entered into this way of life because they thought they could not live according to God's precepts in the cities as well as they did when they withdrew to themselves. According to an opinion which seems not unlikely to me,<sup>12</sup> when the heathen princes tortured and killed innumerable people for their Christian faith many escaped to forests and mountains and became accustomed to the wilderness. But we do not need to worry about how it happened or about when the monastic life actually began. Everyone acknowledges that in Anthony's time, three centuries after Christ's ascension into heaven, the monastic life came into prominence, and a large number of people devoted themselves to it. Most of them were laymen except for a few priests among them. After the group increased many of those who came were not dedicated monks who desired the life they had undertaken. Presently a division came among them so that many who were esteemed as monks did not observe such austerity as others and were called sarabaites. Others who were dedicated monks in their own way lived together from a common treasury and were under obedience to an abbot or elder father. They were called cenobites because they had all things in common. There were some who devoted themselves to a more severe way of life than the others and lived alone in the desert in great austerity, and they were called anchorites. One group called gryovagues separated from the others and wandered about from one town to another in monks' attire and let the monastic life take whatever form it would.<sup>13</sup>



The monks previously described, particularly the cenobites who lived together with everything in common, always had exceptional men as their abbots or superiors who were learned in the Scriptures and could teach God's word to the other monks. At first they had no rule by which to live other than God's word, which they practiced day and night in both words and deeds, as can be understood from the writings of Cassian and Jerome. Athanasius<sup>14</sup> writes that once many monks came to Anthony to request instruction about conducting the monastic life. He answered that the holy Scripture provided sufficient instruction for whatever situation or way of life one could have and affirmed that no rule other than God's word is necessary. At that time the monastic life was nothing other than a Christian school<sup>15</sup> where one constantly practiced God's word and learned humility, obedience, discipline and doctrine. Consequently, when one needed a man learned in the Scriptures and discipline and doctrine as a bishop or priest, one would readily find him among the monks. The monastic vows by which they now pledge that they will not abandon this way of life were unknown then. Monks lived by their work and were a burden to none, but according to the situation were beneficial to all who needed their help. They turned over to the common treasury all they could earn from their work and from this fund they supplied not only those in need but also strangers who came to them needing assistance.

Thus for a long time the monastic life proceeded as honorably as was possible. But in time their piety began to grow cold and God's word began to go increasingly from their minds, and eventually they did not know how to conduct their life. Therefore St. Basil and

others, including St. Augustine<sup>16</sup> in common opinion, had to write short rules summarized from God's word for them. When they could not give attention to the entire Scriptures as the first monks did, they had to consider them in a little summary.

In time they began to approach the cities, and Basil gave them instructions about building their dwellings there, as Gregory Nazianzen<sup>17</sup> writes. But the longer it went on, the more offensive the monastic life became. They began to wander about the country and towns and respected no rule. Nevertheless they called themselves monks and would found monasteries everywhere so that the Council of Chalcedon<sup>18</sup> had to prohibit it. In time St. Benedict<sup>19</sup> set forth a monastic rule, and the custom also came about that they must make an oath and promise not to abandon the life they had undertaken. Many people began to give vast property and possessions to monks or cloisterpeople for their support. Despite this, they had the opportunity to return to living by their work as they had done formerly. At last the four mendicant orders came twelve centuries after Christ and lived by alms, so the longer it has gone on, the worse it has become.<sup>20</sup>

In order to better present the subject considered in this book, I will recount the multitude of monastic sects<sup>21</sup> as noted men have described them and to the extent it is possible, because one cannot thoroughly enumerate all of them.<sup>22</sup> We have previously heard that in the beginning they divided themselves into four sects--anchorites, cenobites, sarabaites, and gyrovagues--but then they further divided into the following sects.

The Benedictine Order has a great black cape. Basilians have a white cape and white garments. The Order of Preachers has a black cape and cowl outside with white inside and they are called black friars.<sup>23</sup> The Franciscans or gray friars are divided into many sects: Discalceati, Minores, Minimi, Clareni, Observants, Caputians, and Evangels. The Carmelites have a white cape and cowl outside with black inside, and here in this country they are called the Brothers of the Virgin Mary. The Augustinians have a black tunic and cape, and the Hermit Augustinian Order is dressed almost like the other. The Praemonstratensians are dressed completely in white. The Order of German Lords, whom one calls the Teutonic Knights, has a white cape with a cross on the breast. The Rodijss Lords of the Order of St. John have black clothes with a white cross, and there is still another Johannite Order with black clothes and a white cross. The Order of Josaphat's Valley has a red cape and hooded cowl. The city Brothers of the Order of St. John have a red cape and clothes with a chalice on the breast. Anthonites have black clothes with a blue cross of Anthony. The group of monks and nuns of St. Birgitta's Order are all gray-clad with a red cross on the breast. Voluntary Poor Brothers, who wander all the time and speak with no one, are gray-clad and carry a crucifix on their staff. The Flagellant Order were white-clad and went naked down to the waist and publicly hit and scourged themselves with whips. The Holy Sepulcher Brothers are gray-clad and have a great cape and cross outside. The Scissors Order has white clothes and scissors on the breast. The Sword Order has white clothes and two red swords on the breast. The Star Monks wear

a cape with a star on the breast, and the Star Brothers have no cape, only a star on the breast. Nyia Brothers are dressed completely in black, including cape, tunic and cloak. Cross-star Brothers have black clothes with an eight-fold star outside. The Order of Constantinople has a red cape and cloak and a green tunic with two blue crosses. The Brothers of St. Sophia have a great cape with a red cross on the breast. Grandmontensians have a cape and cowl outside and trousers inside; they might well be called pants monks. Nullert Brothers have a gray cape and clothes and a black scapular. The Order of Hungarian Lords has a red cowl and a green cross outside and white clothes underneath. The Slavonic Order has a red cape and clothes. Mirror Lords have a white cloak and a black cross outside with a black ring underneath. The Williamite Order has a completely black cape and clothes. The Venceslaes Order has all white clothes. The Carthusian Order has a black and white habit. The Cistercians have white linen clothes outside with black inside. Jacob's Brothers have gray clothes and a Jacob's bowl on the breast. The Order of St. Bernard has black and white hooded cowls. Purgatory Brothers have gray clothes and a cross on the breast. The Celestine Order wears black, and the Camaldolese Order wears white. The Order of Vallombrosa wears a gray cape and clothes. The Gerundines wear white clothes. The Brothers of St. Helena have a completely white cape and clothes. Joseph's Brothers have a white cape and ash-gray tunic. The Gregorian Order has white-blue clothes. Ambrosian Lords wear gray clothes. The Templars wore black clothes, but now they are disbanded. Canons Regular, who are actually neither priests nor monks, wear white, and

orders of the same sect have a white scapular and then wear what they like. The Servants of Mary are clad in black. Key Lords wear black clothes and two keys. Lazarite or Magdalene Brothers have a black tunic and a white cape and cloak. Cross Brothers wear black with a white cross on the breast. Brothers of Scotland have clothes almost like the Bernardines; some say their clothes are green. Jacob's Sword Brothers wear a red sword on the breast. Brothers of Jerusalem wear gray with a cross outside. Hospitaller Brothers of the Holy Spirit Order wear black with a double white cross. Brothers of India have a black tunic and white cape.

One doesn't know what sort of clothes many other monks have, since they have finally not known themselves what colors they want to wear. Many of the previously described sects are divided into so many factions with various habits that one does not know their total number.

As we shall now hear, nuns are divided into various sects in the same way monks are. They include: Dominican nuns like those in Skanninge, Benedictine nuns, Augustinian nuns, Lazarite or Magdalenite nuns, Carthusian nuns, St. Birgitta nuns, Jerusalemite nuns, nuns of St. Bernard, St. Anne nuns, and Mary nuns, who have a black veil, white tunic, red scapular, and a gray cloak. There are many sorts of Franciscan nuns: Observants, Reformed, Urbanists, and Tertiaries. There are many other sorts of nuns who cannot be enumerated here, since countless new orders are founded. There are many who are enclosed and no one can enter their enclosure.

Thus far we have heard about the origin of the monastic life,

the way it was first conducted, and its division into more factions than can be counted. With God's grace, we will see what nature the monastic vow has assumed since it came about that monks make an oath not to abandon the way of life they have undertaken. We first observe that there are three principal vows upon which the monastic life depends: chastity, voluntary poverty, and obedience. Monks make a promise to observe these three vows until death, and their rules contain many other articles, not equal to these, which they also promise to observe. We will consider these later, but now we will hear how honestly they make such promises.

In baptism all Christian people have made a promise to God to renounce the devil and all that belongs to him. They have pledged fidelity and subjects' obedience to God and have bound themselves to observe all that God has commanded and ordered. This is known and apparent to everyone, so it would be useless to furnish proof. In the same promise which the person has made to God, he has delivered himself completely into God's hands so that God will be lord over him and not he himself. In giving himself with all that he possesses and all his ability into God's hands, he has pledged that neither the devil nor his own will but God alone will rule over him. Through baptism he is dead to the old Adam and has taken on a new life according to Christ, and with the old Adam he has forsworn all that is contrary to God in order to observe all that God will have him do. One should keep this as a firm foundation.<sup>24</sup>

From this foundation it follows that after the person has renounced the devil and his own will in the spiritual matters we

consider here, he will neither rule himself according to his own will nor the devil's will but according to God's will alone. Thus he has no power to make any new promise. For one must admit that when a person makes a new promise, he does it according to his own will rather than God's will; indeed God has not commanded this but instead has forbidden it. When one acts according to his own will he violates the promise which he made in baptism, because in the holy Scripture not a word is found that we should make such promises, as we will be able to hear further.

One can prove that the promises monks make are directly opposed to what God has commanded, for everyone must admit that the monastic life is an entirely human invention. In the Scriptures not one letter is found which says that one should carry on this way of life. When one makes a vow to observe this life until death, then one binds oneself to human laws in matters pertaining to the soul and thus comes under human thralldom. This is contrary to what St. Paul tells the Corinthians<sup>25</sup> when he forbids us to be men's slaves since we have been dearly redeemed through Christ's precious blood and passion. While these vows are against God's commandment, they are also directly contrary to baptism's promise. The same vows are also against what Paul tells the Colossians<sup>26</sup> when through his mouth the Holy Spirit forbids us to have scruples about food or drink, clothes or other things which are done according to human invention or laws. When a monastic man or woman eats or drinks or has clothes or things other than those his order's rule prescribes, he holds in his conscience that he sins against his vow and thus attributes to sin something

which is not sinful. Therefore the monastic life is against these words of God.

Christ says of Isaiah's words that one who serves God according to human laws serves him idly.<sup>27</sup> Certainly it is never God's will that we should render futile service, rather that all our service should be fruitful, and service to God cannot be fruitful according to human laws. Therefore the monastic vows which bind one to useless service must certainly be contrary to God's will and intention. If it is contrary to God's will, then it is contrary to the promise which was made in baptism.

God's word gives us a Christian freedom to freely use food, drink, clothes, places, times, and other things which we ourselves desire and find convenient, and God wants us to firmly retain this freedom. As Paul instructed the Galatians,<sup>28</sup> we should remain in the freedom to which we were called without letting it come into abuse. The monastic vow denies this freedom and restricts people to particular food, clothes, places, times, and other outward things and gestures when according to Christian liberty one should be free to act and to be idle as the time and brotherly love instruct. Consequently the monastic vow is contrary to the Christian freedom which is given to us.<sup>29</sup>

Christ said that every plant which our heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots.<sup>30</sup> With these words he absolutely negates the monastic vow since it was not planted by our heavenly Father but is a completely human invention, as we have said. There is no doubt that when a plant is dug up by the roots it must



not be good. If the monastic vow is a plant which our heavenly Father has not planted, as is true, it must not be good and if it is not good, then it is not with God but against him, for Christ said, whoever is not with me is against me.<sup>31</sup> Thus it follows that since the monastic vow is against God, it is also against the promise which one made in baptism and cannot be from God but rather from the devil, and thus one casts aside baptism's vow and departs from Christendom.

The monastic vow originates from a gross misunderstanding, wherein one has understood God's word so carnally that one has thought that someone who has lived without marriage, has not handled money or worldly wealth, and has been obedient to his superior according to the contents of his rule, has been more perfect and better before God than another who has not observed these things. One would never give oneself to the monastic life unless one had these assumptions, but they are false. One should consider that God's kingdom and rule to which we have pledged ourselves does not consist of outward practices in food, drink, clothes, or any other external thing but in the inward heart, in righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.<sup>32</sup> God's kingdom is a spiritual kingdom which exists in the soul and heart and not in bodily form. It must follow that God's word which that kingdom and rule steadfastly hold must be spiritually understood as it affects the heart and soul. God wants us to do what he commands from the heart and soul with wills obedient to his word as we have promised and pledged ourselves to be under his kingdom and rule. God's word holds that one who would be in his kingdom should be chaste, pure, poor, and obedient, otherwise

he cannot be in God's kingdom, as the Scriptures make known. As this kingdom is spiritual, chastity, poverty and obedience are spiritual in the same way, and the one who best observes them in spirit is the most perfect, even though he is married, rich, and in a high position in the world, and we will extend this further.

Chastity is required of us all, not only outwardly when we are forbidden to live in adultery, fornication, illicit sexual intercourse and other impurity, but also that we are not to desire these things in our hearts. Christ said that one who looks at a woman to desire her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.<sup>33</sup> For this reason he says that those who have pure hearts are blessed.<sup>34</sup> Purity of life or chastity can exist in marriage as well as outside marriage and even better according to a common process, when a man has a wife as though he had no wife, as Paul says.<sup>35</sup> One who has a pure life or chastity is pure before God whether or not he is married, but one who does not have it is impure whether or not he lives in virginity.

Poverty is commanded of us all, because Christ said that one cannot be his disciple unless he forsakes all that he possesses.<sup>36</sup> Here we see that if we would be Christ's disciples and be subject to him we must give up everything. He also said, if you would be perfect, sell what you have and give to poor people and follow me.<sup>37</sup> He does not say, if you would be a monk, but perfect, which is a true Christian. Every Christian must be perfect,<sup>38</sup> otherwise he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven because no one who is defiled enters it.<sup>39</sup> Thus Christ set an example for all of us, not only for the monks--an

example which contains all perfection. We should all strive after the same example or pattern so that we can at last all be like him,<sup>40</sup> and if this does not happen we can never go into the kingdom of heaven with him. Christ was poor here in the world and is called poor in many places in the Scriptures, so we should all be poor, for otherwise we will not be like him. But this poverty is spiritual, as Christ said that those who are poor in spirit are blessed.<sup>41</sup> Not all the poor are blessed, only those poor in spirit, and those who are spiritually poor have nothing in which to put reliance or trust. They have neither wisdom, strength, wealth, nor any created things but confess that they are destitute and wretched creatures. Since they have nothing on which they can depend, they put all their reliance, hope, and trust in God and ask for his assistance. Even though they have riches, they do not lay them up in their hearts but are ready to lose them if God should require it. They have always been as generous with their possessions to their neighbors as to themselves because they have brotherly affection and love for their neighbors. One who is not equally generous does not really love his neighbor. Thus this poverty consists of giving rather than taking.

We are all strictly commanded to be not only obedient and humble to our superiors but also mutually obedient and humble to each other, as St. Paul says.<sup>42</sup> Christ said that if someone compels us to go a mile, then we should go two with him,<sup>43</sup> and in all that we want someone to do for us, we should do the same for him. Everyone is in mind that he wants us all to be obedient and willing to render service to him.

He will do them again to keep the law and the prophets, and we must do so if we want to be true Christians. From this one can observe what a Christian life, to which we have pledged ourselves in baptism, must include. It demands chastity, poverty, and obedience, as has been said and sufficiently proved with the Scriptures, and it is intended for all of us.

But the monks have not considered this foundation, and therefore they have foolishly and imprudently made their vow. If they make a vow to observe spiritual chastity, spiritual poverty, and obedience, then they promise nothing other than what they previously promised in baptism, and thus they negate their baptismal vow. They are not at peace with what they previously promised but promise the same anew while assuming a strange life, as though it was not enough that they made it a resolution. If they only promise to observe these articles in outward bodily form so that they will live without marriage, not have worldly wealth, and be obedient to their superiors in the articles their rule contains, then they behave as foolish people in holding their life more perfect and better than the life ordinary Christian people lead because of these insignificant articles. The Turks and the heathen know how to observe such articles as well as monks and nevertheless are not better.

We will prove further that it is dishonest to make such vows, and first we will discuss their chastity. It is impossible to live without marriage and not fall into God's wrath through adultery, fornication, unmentionable sins<sup>44</sup> and other impurity unless it happens that God gives one a particular grace. But one sees daily before

one's eyes how seldom it happens that God gives this grace, and in this matter I do not need to dispute very much against monks and nuns. I refer them to their own hearts and consciences, since they are well aware whether or not they live in chastity. One must certainly admit that someone who has an impure and unchaste heart does not live in chastity, but monks must search their consciences if it is so with them. Not all are virgins who are outward virgins in the flesh unless their hearts are also pure, although those who observe outward virginity are few enough. They do not defile themselves with unmentionable sins and other impurity, as in large part monks are accustomed to proceed generally, although they praise themselves for their pure virginity before men. But God, who does not let himself be deceived, knows their chastity well because he has said that no one can practice celibacy unless he has the grace for it.<sup>45</sup> He has left marriage free in all respects so that those who do not have the grace for celibacy should marry because, as St. Paul says, it is better to marry than to burn with natural desire.<sup>46</sup> It is God's strict commandment that one who does not have the grace for celibacy should marry, as is proved in other places where prohibition of marriage is mentioned, although it would be too extensive to discuss now.

Since no one can practice celibacy unless God gives special grace for it, as Christ himself says, and since it is God's strict commandment that one who does not have such grace should marry, it is evident that one who promises what is not in his power behaves as a foolish person. He is not certain that God will give him grace for celibacy but finds instead from the natural desire he has that

God has neither given him such grace nor will give it but wants him to marry. Thus monastic life is the cause of constant danger and the occasion for adultery, fornication, illicit sexual intercourse, unmentionable sins, natural desire and other impurity through which one falls into God's terrible wrath and remains estranged. As certain men say, one who loves dangers is lost in them.<sup>47</sup> One can clearly see that someone who pledges himself to an eternal chastity which is not in his power makes a foolish and dishonest promise and thus places himself in a terrible danger which was not necessary. It is concluded that hardly anywhere is found such great and flagrant impurity and unchastity as is found among the largest part of those who have made such a vow as, God forbid, one sees before one's eyes.

Countless persons are deceived when they think that someone who lives in virginity will be more esteemed and better before God than someone who lives in marriage. Many great men including Jerome, Augustine, Ambrose<sup>48</sup> and others have given occasion for this with their misguided writings in which they have praised virginity highly and often have not used the Scriptures as correctly as they should have, not knowing, in their innocence, what would follow. But in this respect their writings will not hold good. God has given his word, according to which we should conform and judge whether or not things are pleasing to him, because through his word he has given us his will. The Scriptures tell us in many places that God is no respecter of persons.<sup>49</sup> He does not judge according to outward appearances as men judge, but he examines the heart, as he himself

said to the prophet Samuel.<sup>50</sup> Since God does not see or judge according to outward things, he does not look at virginity because it is an outward thing in people's bodies.

Furthermore, St. Paul says that among those who have been baptized and put on Christ as a garment, there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither man nor woman, because all are one in Christ Jesus.<sup>51</sup> And afterwards he says that in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor absence of circumcision is of any account, but only faith which works through love.<sup>52</sup> Paul also says that in Christ Jesus there is neither circumcised nor uncircumcised but a new creature.<sup>53</sup> One can clearly see from St. Paul's words that God judges nothing by any outward thing, so he does not care whether one is Jewish or Greek, German or Swedish, circumcised or not, man or woman, lord or servant. If God does not care whether one happens to be a man or a woman, he cares much less whether or not one happens to be a virgin. God does care that one has a true faith and love, has become a new creature, and has a good and pure heart. One who has this is welcome to God, and the better the heart, the more pleasing the person is to God. If a virgin has a good heart and has become a new creature in Christ, he is pleasing to God. Otherwise his virginity is nothing but impurity and unchastity to God, and it is the same for all people. There have been and still are many notable virgins in heathendom, and nevertheless they remain with the devil in hell for eternity. What does their virginity help them?

From all this one must admit that God has created human beings for marriage and not for virginity. When God had created man he said

that it was not good for him to be alone and created woman as a support for him. He created neither man nor woman for virginity but rather to grow together and multiply themselves. If he had valued virginity more than marriage, he would have created humanity for virginity, but since he created it for marriage it is evident that he does not esteem virginity as highly as monks believe. God let this be understood in the Old Testament where he had great association and discourse with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, and many others who had all been married. The apostles in the New Testament have certainly been as dear to God as any who have lived without marriage. In the same way, distinguished women including Sarah, Rebecca, Hannah and mother of Samuel, Judith, Esther, and many others have lived in marriage. Monks and nuns should be able to show someone, either man or woman, who has lived in monasticism and can be compared with those enumerated above. Where does one find a monastic man who is equal to Abraham, Isaac or Jacob? Where does one find a monastic woman whom one can confidently compare with Sarah or Rebecca? No, one certainly finds no one among those now living or those who have preceded us.

From all this one can clearly see, if one is not altogether blind, that God cares nothing about virginity, and it does not matter to him whether or not one happens to be a virgin. It is true that a virgin or someone who is unmarried is freer than someone who is married, because the one who is married does not have power over his own body, as Paul says.<sup>54</sup> A husband must adapt himself to his wife and a wife to her husband; and as one sees daily, this causes worldly



cares which someone who is unmarried can avoid. Thus Paul said that when God gives grace for celibacy it is good to be unmarried because of these problems.<sup>55</sup> Someone without grace for celibacy must submit to the cares which a resolute Christian can go through without sin. Paul did not say that a virgin is better before God because of his virginity than one who is not a virgin, as monks now do when they say that in the kingdom of heaven they receive a special crown from God because of their virginity. He said that a virgin is freer to deal with God's word and to obey God than someone who is concerned with his spouse and children. Nevertheless, he wants no one to desire this freedom unless he has the grace for celibacy. Although a man is married and has many worldly cares, he can still be pleasing to God when, like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, he is employed with Christian responsibilities toward his wife and children and the good of others, and a woman can do the same. Although marriage has accompanying problems, it is still a holy state which God himself has established. In marriage one can practice God's word, observe his commandments, and be as close to God as in virginity, although in marriage one is more burdened with trouble and inconvenience which one with the grace for celibacy is well without, according to Paul's advice.

I conclude that virginity is not better before God than marriage since God is no respecter of persons, as was said. Whether one is married or unmarried, a virgin or a widow, is equal for him, but the one who fears him with a good heart, has him before his eyes, and does what he has commanded is dear to him. Thus they go far astray in highly praising virginity over marriage when their only purpose is

the special reward they think will follow virginity in heaven. Many people have been deceived by this, because one does not get any special reward from God for either virginity or marriage. As one does not expect particular recompense for living in marriage, one should not presume recompense for living in virginity, because virginity and marriage can both be practiced by the evil and the good, although the ability to live in virginity or without marriage is God's gift alone. Virginity or celibacy is not like gifts of God by which one is good and righteous before him, but like wisdom, strength, and beauty which are God's gifts and nevertheless can be bestowed on both the evil and the good. If virginity is to be praised, it should be because it leaves one free from trouble and inconvenience to practice things of God, not because a special reward should follow it. One can praise marriage because God has decreed it as a secure state in which woman is a support for man according to God's creation and in which one has the opportunity to bring up children to God's praise and honor.

If someone wants to prove that virginity is better before God than marriage because God's Son would allow himself to be born of a pure virgin and not in marriage through the natural way, I answer that it was foretold through the prophet Isaiah that Christ should be born of a pure virgin and it must be fulfilled.<sup>56</sup> It was also appropriate that the one who would free all who were born and conceived in sin should himself be born without sin. To be born without sin, he must not be born of man and woman as we are since such birth is not without sin, and for this reason it must come about

that he should be born of a virgin without man's help. This is why Christ allowed himself to be born of a virgin, not because the state of virginity is better than marriage before God. The highly honored virgin Mary is not praised for her virginity's sake but is said to be blessed because she bore God's Son. It is an honor to her that she bore a child and still remained a virgin. Nevertheless, if she had not borne the child she bore, the praise would be withdrawn.

Thus many people are in the habit of drawing in other passages from the Scriptures to extol virginity, but this will not help them because it is firmly established that God is no respecter of persons. Enough has been said about virginity. We will come to the other two articles the monastic vow contains.

The second principal vow which monks promise is what they call poverty, meaning that they should have nothing of their own. They are accustomed to quote the proverb that a monk who has a mite is not worth a mite. This vow must pertain to outward things since we are all bound to spiritual poverty as was said before, so when monks promise poverty, they promise not to have their own property and wealth. They think they will have a special reward from God and be nearer to him than other people who have and use worldly wealth. But this vow fails for them like the vow of virginity, because it does not matter to God whether one happens to be a man or a woman, a lord or a servant. Nor does he care whether one is poor or rich in worldly wealth, because Abraham, David, and Solomon were rich and were still pleasing to God, but what he cares about is spiritual poverty, as was previously said.

It is the same with their third vow, in which they promise to be dutiful and obedient to their superior according to their rule. In the same way they think they will receive a great reward from God for this obedience and will be more perfect than other people who do not practice this obedience. But since their obedience is according to human invention, it is a futile service to God, and they do not receive any reward nor are they better before God because of a useless service. From everything that has been said it follows that the monastic life is not at all better before God than the life the common man leads in the world. Therefore those who think they will receive a great reward from God because of this way of life behave as foolish people and are lead astray.

While monks think their life is better than the common man's because of the three vows which they promise to hold until death, I will now prove exactly the opposite. Their life is evil because of these vows, so it cannot be at all pleasing to God, much less better than the life the common man leads, which God himself ordained and decreed. Thus I say that as matters have proceeded for some centuries, the monastic life is an un-Christian and ungodly existence, in which one departs from the faith and teaching of Christ to the character and error of Antichrist, as I will now prove.

First, they have brought about manifold division, discord, and factions in Christendom contrary to God's word and have damaged the unity, concord, and charity which Christ wants to have in his Christian body. As Christ is not more than one, his holy Christendom is not more than one, in which he wants to have the greatest concord

and unity without any sects and factions, as St. Paul told the Romans and Corinthians.<sup>57</sup> But monks have separated themselves from this unity, first in claiming to practice a more perfect discipline than the common man and then in dividing into so many factions that no one can actually enumerate all of them, as was proved and related before. Of course each faction has its patron to whom it commends itself: one sect to Augustine, a second to Dominic, a third to Francis, some to the virgin Mary, although she never established a monastic order, some to Bernard, and innumerable others. None commend themselves to Christ, and each sect and faction exalts and praises its patron and order over the others, and untold discord and dissension have come into Christendom because of this. Their life and character are directly contrary to Christ since they lay another foundation for mankind's salvation than the one which was laid, which is Christ Jesus. The entire Scripture presents Christ to us as the true foundation for mankind's salvation so that all who would be saved are saved by his merit alone. But monks set their orders and rules as a foundation for mankind's salvation, so that each in his place thinks he will save his soul with his monastic life. This is so clear that no one can deny it, nor can anyone deny that it is un-Christian, yes, Antichristian in character when Christ is absolutely disregarded and rejected. Because they think they will attain the kingdom of heaven with the monastic life, Christ is not useful to them, and he does not need them either. He cannot be where there are factions and dissension; he is only where there is unity, concord, and charity. These qualities are not with monks; therefore, Christ

is not with their way of life. Antichrist and the devil are certainly present where Christ is not.

Monastic life is a true apostasy or departure from the Christian faith preached by Christ and the apostles to mankind's own works. God's word maintains that mankind lies under sin, death, and hell and stands with no salvation or redemption except in Christ alone. Our heavenly Father sent him here below to assume human form and in this form to make satisfaction for our sins, conquer death, the devil, and hell, and by his death and passion enable us to receive the Holy Spirit, be renewed and join him in the kingdom of heaven. He has accomplished all these things and has taught us to put complete faith and reliance in this and to trust absolutely in him and what he suffered and accomplished for our sake, so that we entrust our salvation to him and to no other. When we do so and have this faith, Christ grants us the kingdom of heaven. The monastic life is not in accord with this faith but is completely contrary to it, because they assume this way of life with the intention and purpose of attaining the kingdom of heaven by their reading, singing, watching, fasting, and other austerities which their rule demands. In saying this I do not mean that one should abandon good works at all, and those which are really good will be discussed at another time. If they are asked why they are in the monastery, they have no answer except that they seek their soul's salvation with this life, and if they were not doing so, they would not be in the monastery. None of them can say that he is in the monastery in order to have a true faith in Jesus Christ, since he could just as well have such a faith outside the monastery. Thus

he must answer that he is in the monastery to procure a great reward and a distinguished crown for himself in the kingdom of heaven. If he will procure this for himself, he does not have faith that Christ has gained it for him, because if he had faith he would not attend to gaining it for himself. One clearly sees that the monastic life, as it is now observed and has been observed for many centuries, is really a departure from a true Christian faith. Consequently all monks and nuns who hold themselves to their monastic life are apostates and deserters from the faith and teaching of Christ since they want to merit with their works what Christ has merited, on which they should put their faith and trust.

As we said before, the monastic life cannot be pleasing to God since vows are made against God's word and against the vow which was made in baptism. These vows are also contrary to the freedom God's word gives us in leaving marriage free, not forbidding worldly wealth, and letting all sorts of clothes, times, places, food and other external things be freely used according to the situation rather than forbidding them. But the monastic life takes away this freedom, and in this respect it is directly contrary to God's word in making what is free no longer free and is against baptism's promise, as we proved earlier. As one enters Christendom with the promise made in baptism, one departs from Christendom when one negates baptism's vow with the monastic vow. Thus it is concluded that the monastic life with its vows is something entirely evil, because one thinks he has a Christian life at hand and then finds injury and perdition where there is nothing but hypocrisy.

In dedicating oneself to the monastic life one renounces marriage which God wants to be free in all respects and thus lives all one's life in adultery, fornication, natural desire, unmentionable sins, and other impurity while saying that one lives in chastity. Yes, we must be called chaste men and virgins, and although at times our chastity results in the same fruit as marriage, we are nevertheless persons with pure lives. Oh, what hypocrisy!

On entering the monastery one says he will give up all he possesses and will live in poverty, but we see before our eyes how sincere this is. One gives up his property and lives in indolence and idleness from another man's sweat and work. When one actually looks at it, what the monks and nuns call poverty is remarkable wealth. I do not consider it poverty to have a good house and homestead where one can sleep and wake when he pleases and to have free food and clothing with more than enough of everything that one needs, and that is what one sees in monasteries. Their monasteries are built on the best land and locations. They have the largest part of property and enough tenants to be altogether well-supplied with food and clothing, and they still call themselves poor brothers and sisters. They say that they live in poverty, and yet they have all they need in abundance. Therefore they falsely praise themselves for following Christ, because he did not have an existence like theirs. Their houses are like castles, but he did not have a place to rest his head.<sup>58</sup> An impoverished peasant, who has his wife and children as guests and beggars, must pay taxes and debts, and does not know in the evening what his unfortunate wife and children will eat in



the morning, is a truly poor man. Nevertheless he does not praise himself for his poverty like the hypocrites in the monastery where they say that they are poor and are not, because they have no room for the spiritual poverty we discussed earlier. They boast about their poverty, but when they do not have enough, they grumble and do not want to be in the monastery. Since they have promised to practice poverty, why don't they want to endure it? Thus their hypocrisy bursts forth.

They promise obedience, yet the monastic life is nothing but disobedience. They depart from the obedience which they should render to their fathers and mothers, lords and princes, their officials, and the magistrates, and from the obedience which all Christians should have towards one another. They will not submit or be obedient in any respect to any authority except their abbots and priors.<sup>59</sup> Before they enter the monastery they must be obedient in all respects to God's commandments which they will not obey in any respect now. They say they will obey their abbot and claim they have nothing to do with the magistrates or God's other officials. They abandon the obedience which God has commanded and instead adopt an obedience which God has forbidden rather than commanded. The obedience they have promised is according to human commandments about things of God, although they are not overly obedient to their superiors either. No matter which way one turns these people are not without hypocrisy. They praise themselves for chastity, poverty, and obedience, but they are not without unchastity, wealth, and disobedience their whole lives. With their vows they have departed from the true chastity, poverty and

obedience into hypocrisy.

One must be able to see by now what holiness the monastic life has brought with it. They cause division, discord, and dissension in the body of Christ where there should be the greatest unity. They have departed from faith to their own works and with their vows have negated baptism's promise. When they should be honest Christians at heart, they are nothing but hypocrites in outward things. Everyone must be able to see that such a life must be evil and false and in no way can it please God. But monks and nuns cannot consider these things except to say that their life is more perfect than the life the common man leads in marriage and that everyone requires their functions.

Yes, they consider their life so holy that they sell their good works and give the common man a share in them and a letter with a seal on it.<sup>60</sup> They are all indisputably simoniacs in this act because they sell spiritual things. They sell something as good when they themselves do not know whether or not it is good. When one asks them if they are certain that their works are good, if they tell the truth according to their own consciences they must confess that they are not certain whether or not these works are pleasing to God since they do not have God's word about it. Yes, we have proved that they deal with nothing but hypocrisy and deceit, and they sell this to the common man as good and cheat him out of his property and money. They sell false goods, and St. Peter speaks about this sort of bargaining.<sup>61</sup> It must be a cursed foolhardiness and pride for a sinful human being who is nothing but ashes and dust to be so bold

that he exalts himself in spiritual things and says that he leads so perfect a life that he can sell another person his good works to enter the kingdom of heaven and then gives him a letter and seal on it. But woe to the one who would go to the kingdom of heaven on such a letter, for he must go through fire and water and the letter will be ruined. They have finally become so mad that they have promised the kingdom of heaven to those who have only been buried in their habit.<sup>62</sup> If one had no other article against the monastic life but this one, it would be enough to prove that they deal with nothing other than the devil's existence.

Christ has taught us otherwise. He has said that one who exalts himself will be cast down<sup>63</sup> and that when we have done all we were commanded we should still say that we are unprofitable servants and have not done more than we were bound to do.<sup>64</sup> Monks and nuns do not want to be unprofitable servants but rather so profitable that they are able to distribute their good works among common men whom they consider unprofitable servants and thus draw into heaven as many as it pleases them to take into their brotherhood. We see clearly that they have not only departed from the faith of Christ themselves but that they also draw others with them from Christ into their brotherhood and works. This is so obvious that no one can deny it, and they do it all for the sake of property and money. Their way of life is so cursed that when they stop selling their works and no longer hold Mass markets and the like, it ceases to exist as is beginning to happen in some places. All they have is from this illicit bargaining. If they cease it, nothing is given

to them, so they must abandon their monastic life and think of another way to support themselves. One sees clearly before one's eyes that the monastic life has no other means of subsistence than its Mass market, vigils market, reading market, singing market, fast and watch market. When this market is abolished, the monastic life has no substance. This free market has existed far too long, God forbid. It is now time to illuminate it through God's word, which is definitely beginning to happen as God promised. They also do us great wrong because they ask us to pray for them and will not give us any money for it, but they will not pray for us without money.

Furthermore, since we have entered into this monk and nun business, the matter demands that we say something in particular about the mendicant friars and describe their virtues, for what they are worth. I must say that although all monks and nuns have brought damage and corruption to Christendom, it has never received injury like the mendicant friars have done to it. As they have arrived last, they have done the greatest damage. Other monks who preceded them lived by rent and usually had to remain at home in their monasteries. They did not have as great an opportunity to deceive everyone since they did not travel around like the mendicant friars who have no rent for their subsistence and thus have occasion to go from house to house to beg for their food. So I do not doubt that since the thousandth year John speaks about in his revelation has passed,<sup>65</sup> the devil has been loose in the world as mankind has deserved and he has raised up the mendicant orders to circulate from house to house and teach and preach lies and deceit to those who would not

receive God's word and truth. God has caused the world to be plagued with mendicant friars as he plagued Egypt with toads and grasshoppers in the Old Testament.

We heard earlier that when the monastic life first began, they lived by their work for a long time as Basil, Augustine, and many others advised. They entrusted whatever they earned from their work to their superior and all lived from a common treasury. They did this with what seemed to them a good intention and at this time were not a burden or very harmful to anyone. They lived austere, but they did not sell their good works as has happened since then. Nevertheless, they were wrong because they separated themselves from other people and immediately began to consider their way of life better than another way of life, as can be understood from the biographies of the fathers and the writings of Cassian. But when monks and nuns received property and estates and lived by rent, they had to promise something in return to those who gave property and rent to their monastery, so they began to promise that they would pray well for those who gave them something. The longer it went on, the deeper they went beyond it, until they began to sell their brotherhood and good deeds. At last came the four mendicant orders: Dominicans, Franciscans, Augustinians, and Carmelites. These friars would be so much better than the others that they would have neither common possessions as the other monks did nor anything of their own. They would not have one meal together like the other monks but would seek their food with begging. But since those who were strong and capable of seeking their food with work had no just cause for begging, they

had to turn to lies and flattery, preaching what people would willingly hear. Their circumstances demand this because if they told the truth about their existence, they would sooner receive ten blows from a fencepole than a piece of bread. They must confess, as they sometimes do, that if they did not lie to the peasant, they would receive nothing from him.

These friars have brought great damage and corruption to Christendom with the lies and deceit they have preached. Many distinguished men stood firmly against them when they first began and would not consent that their undertaking should have success. Among these were William of Paris, Wycliffe of Lincoln, Armocanus, John of Poliacho<sup>66</sup> and many others who could consider what would come out of such begging, and they argued strongly against it. At first the pope himself was unwilling to confirm their order.<sup>67</sup> Nevertheless, the devil, who was the true patron and originator of this order, prevailed, so the pope confirmed it and could say nothing against them since he had done so. Many bishops and prelates still resolutely opposed them, so Gregory IX had to make special laws to benefit them against the prelates.<sup>68</sup> These mendicant friars became increasingly powerful and arranged for defenders among the pope and particularly the cardinals by giving them an annual tax from what they begged if they would be their patrons and defend them so that nothing would force their order back. They knew they had no adequate right on which to stand, so they must have some to defend them with power. If the liar is found out, he must have strong patrons or he will soon fall when the truth comes out, and the friars have considered this.

Nevertheless, we will not be concerned with these patrons, even the pope himself. Instead we will see whether one can strike down their way of life, and although it has been done sufficiently before this, I will do it still further. It is to be noted that they live by begging for sustenance, which is against God and mankind and contrary to all honor and righteousness, as one can prove. First, God has required man to eat his bread in the sweat of his brow,<sup>69</sup> so he wants everyone to live by his work. St. Paul says that the one who will not work, shall not eat.<sup>70</sup> He also advises that one should work and save something with which to help another who is in need.<sup>71</sup> These monks behave in the opposite way, because they will not work but want to be idle and to fatten themselves from another man's work and sweat. Even if they do something, it is to no purpose. Thus begging is contrary to brotherly love, because someone who loves his neighbor does not desire to be a burden to him but to work himself in order that he can be a solace to him. For one must admit that the more there are who withdraw and will not work, particularly when no necessity compels them, the more those who do work are burdened. It is neither honest nor fair for an able-bodied man who is neither lame nor blind to wander around the country and take up alms which the poor, the lame, and the blind should have. They tell lies for all the alms they receive and thus are little better than thieves. One can understand that their sustenance is ill-gotten against both God and mankind. It is dishonorable to feed oneself by lying as they do. They promise great reward to those who give to them, but I will not discuss that now.

We have heard previously that the monastic life is a deceitful and ungodly existence. It is true that if monks do not receive alms and donations they are obliged to abandon their lies and deceit and assume another way of life. Consequently those who give them something to support their monastic life strengthen them in their deceit and ungodliness. Thus they are participants in all the evil practiced in this way of life since they give them the opportunity with their alms.

In a second respect they do wrong with their alms in abandoning and departing from the faith they should have in Christ and his works alone and instead trusting in monks' works and merits. They cannot deny this, because if they did not believe that they would be participants in monks' good works, they would not have given them alms. Therefore those who give alms to monks with this intention are not true Christian people.

In a third respect they do wrong and do not act as the Scriptures advise when they do not give alms to the poor, the lame, and the blind according to God's commandment<sup>72</sup> but give them to monks and nuns and thus support them in their deceitful existence. If mendicant friars say that those who give them something earn great reward in heaven, I say from previous arguments that there is danger that hell awaits them, so in this matter they have earned hell with their alms.

Now to the degree possible I will further present in summary the damage and corruption which monks and nuns have brought about in Christendom, but to enumerate all the harm they have done is beyond my powers. Thus one can learn to know this tree by its fruit.



The first injury they have caused is the division, dissension, and factions in opposition to unity in Christendom as was related before.

The second injury is that they have not only departed from faith in Christ themselves, but they have also drawn other people with them to trust in their brotherhood, indulgences, masses, prayers, and their other works. They have taught them that they will draw them into the kingdom of heaven with them and to confirm this deceit they have invented innumerable false miracles. This absolutely denies and rejects faith in Christ.

The third injury is that they have distorted the true service of God which exists in the heart and spirit into hypocrisy which relies on outward things like clothes, rooms and places, times, food and drink. They have preached these things and have drawn simple peasants into their hypocrisy.

The fourth injury is the dishonest bargaining called simony in which they have sold spiritual things. They have proclaimed their good works which are nothing but lies and deceit and have taken property and money for them.

The fifth injury is that they have enticed children into their monasteries against their father's and mother's will and have withheld them, causing the children to be disobedient to their parents against God's word.

The sixth injury is that they have raised bones of dead people buried in their monasteries. This has happened at Vadstena, Skänninge, Västerås, Husaby, and many other places. They have also raised some

particular images in Stockholm with what they call the holy redemption, and this has happened in Arboga and many other places as well.<sup>73</sup> Dean bones or images should not be venerated or have great power attributed to them, but they do so to increase their offerings. They have used these bones and images as money nets and have deceived poor innocent peasants out of their property and money and have corrupted their souls.

The seventh injury is that they have always done bishops and parish priests great wrong, as the popes' lawbooks made known.<sup>74</sup>

The eighth injury is that the mendicant monks in particular have wandered around the country taking up alms which the poor, the lame, the blind, and the homeless should have. They have done well at this and have done the poor great harm.

The ninth injury is that they have set such an evil example with their begging that so many beggars have appeared that one does not know their number. Now nearly all orders are mendicants, and a new saying has appeared, that one who gives his child to a monastery makes him a perpetual beggar.

The tenth injury is that they have brought such a profusion of lies into the country and towns that no one can completely enumerate them.

The eleventh injury is that the Dominicans and Franciscans in particular have always been opposed to truth. When someone has been illuminated by God in his word and has told the truth and rebuked wrongs that have appeared in Christendom, they have opposed him and condemned him to the fire as they did with John Hus, Jerome of

Prague, and many others. They have been and are now judges over who will be thrown into the burning oven which Antichrist has brought about.<sup>75</sup> Yet they themselves have been veritable heretics and have condemned those who told the truth.

The twelfth injury is that they have withdrawn from all burdens of the common welfare. They have not wanted to answer in any respect to the law and justice with which the common man has been troubled. If they have been ordered to do something for the common good, they have immediately held it as a prohibited act.<sup>76</sup>

The thirteenth injury is that they are among those who have defrauded the nobility of their property and estates and then have been defended for it.<sup>77</sup>

The fourteenth injury is that they have misused the Scriptures in many places by reserving to themselves alone what applies to every Christian. They say that the Scriptures which concern perfection should only be valid for their way of life, as if every Christian should not by God's commandment be as perfect as they are. It has nearly come about that those who have not been in the monastery have been exempted from the Scriptures which pertain to perfection, and thus God's commandment is disregarded.

I would venture to tell them that all the good they have done is nothing when it is measured against the harm they have done. There are many other articles in which they have been harmful. The wrong some persons among them have done would be too lengthy to enumerate, although wrongs done in monastic life by particular persons should not be charged against the whole order if the order was otherwise good

in itself. But since they are evil and opposed to God's word, one must include all those who are in this life. Nor should some wonder if we draw in such articles, because this ungodly existence must be defeated, and this can come about sooner if one reveals their infamy and deceit. For a long time it has been thought that the Holy Spirit was under a cowl, but with these articles their real spirit has burst forth. We have the experience at hand how their leaders have falsified and darkened God's word with their writings. The infamy they have done and are doing in the country is untold, and everyone knows it so well that I do not need to tell about it. We have heard here in Sweden what treachery has been practiced in the monastery, although they call themselves holy people, as when Henry VII was poisoned by a Dominican in the sacrament.<sup>78</sup> Wasn't it a terrible thing that a wretched vile man should be so bold that he would contaminate the body of Christ with poison? Four Dominicans acted in the same way in Bern, Switzerland, twenty years ago when they pursued their infamy with one of their laybrothers. They gave him a sleep-inducing drink and drilled through his hands and feet and a hole in his side and thus gave him five miracles, making themselves a Francis, and claimed and preached that the virgin Mary had given him these miracles.<sup>79</sup> In the end they would poison someone in the sacrament. Nevertheless, it is not much wonder that they carry on like this, particularly the mendicant friars, because they are so nourished with lies and deceit that in the end they are so deep in them that they do not care what they do. Everyone knows what infamy they have carried on in confession. They frequently know the way when they hear that a rich man

or woman lies sick and seek them out like a dog after carrion. They behave so piously and instruct the sick in his soul's salvation; that is, he should let himself be buried in their monastery as it is such a holy place, and great indulgences fall to one who makes out his will to them, but without a will no indulgences fall. Thus they betray the sick and drag him into eternal damnation. They call themselves poor brothers and yet willingly stay near the rich. They do not frequently find the way when the poor lie sick because there is no will in store. Still, what need is there to draw in so many examples of their virtues since one can say with a few words that all their existence is nothing but ungodly lies, deceit, and a true departure from the faith of Christ, as has been proved before. Yes, Christendom never had more malicious enemies than they, because their whole existence is at enmity with Christ.

Thus no dedicated monk who will hold himself strictly to his monastic existence can be a true Christian, nor can a righteous Christian be a true monk. A true Christian has nothing in which he can put his faith except in Christ alone, and his conscience is not bound to any outward thing. He holds freely all that God's word leaves free, but this is not so with a monk. He trusts in the monastic life and his conscience is bound to outward things according to his rule, and he does not hold freely what God's word leaves free. Therefore he cannot be a true Christian. If he would be a true Christian he must dismiss his monastic life as pretense or this will never happen at all. One can understand from all that has been said that the monastic life is a truly ungodly existence, so all dedicated

monks who hold themselves strictly to their rules are apostates and deserters from Christendom which they accepted in baptism, although I do not doubt that many distinguished persons, both men and women, have entered this existence unawares. By God's grace they have still known they should cleave to Christ alone and absolutely have not trusted in their way of life but have lived in Christian freedom, not bound to their rules more than this freedom allowed. If at times they have looked out for themselves, God has forgiven them because of their faith. They have been saved by a true Christian faith and not by their rules. These persons have been righteous Christians in their hearts, and even though through misunderstanding they have had the outward monastic gestures, God has covered his eyes and has not counted it as sin because they had faith in Christ.

We have heard from the arguments presented here that the monastic life cannot be at all better than the common man's life because of its vow and rule. Instead it is un-Christian and ungodly, and monks and nuns have no cause to praise themselves for a perfect life. A righteous Christian does not pride himself on his life as monks and nuns do but berates himself for his sins and imperfection. Nevertheless, if it were so, which it is not, that monks and nuns had some degree of holiness, they still could not praise themselves honestly for their rules because they do not observe them. We will present something about this, especially about the Dominicans and Franciscans, who are the most known in our land. It is an old habit with monks and nuns to accept no more from their rules than they please, and they have given the pope a sum of money to dispense them from the

articles they have not wanted to observe. What the pope has not dispensed, they have dispensed with themselves.<sup>80</sup> One sees before one's eyes how well they observe their three principal vows. All too many of them bear witness about their pure life or chastity. They say they have abandoned all they had and have given themselves to poverty and to following Christ. But if they reversed this and said they have given themselves from poverty to wealth, then they would be telling the truth. Some of them give up a little and some nothing and then give themselves free bread and receive all they need. Most of them could not get this when they were outside the monastery, but since then they receive enough and have stone houses rather than poor wooden houses. Their superiors are well aware of their obedience, as we discussed previously.

In the same way the Franciscans' rule is very foolish, and it would take too long to repeat it. It says that no Franciscan may ride except in obvious necessity. They must not handle money. All those who have the capacity should work, and when reward for their work is withheld so that they receive nothing for it, then they may beg. So it is contained in the rule of Francis that gray friars should work for their food and should not beg unless reward for their work is withheld.<sup>81</sup> They should have no association with women, and they should not go into the nuns' convents. They have many decrees and regulations, including one that says they should not handle money with their bare hands, and whoever does not observe this will fast on bread and water for a day. Oh, what hypocrisy! They should not shake hands with women. They should never sleep without their

wearing-apparel. They should not have feather beds or sheets. They should not have expensive buildings. Women should not eat in their houses.

But according to common report St. Augustine made up the rule by which Dominicans should live,<sup>82</sup> and it is mostly drawn from the Scriptures. If monks would observe it, they would not be as harmful as they are. If they conducted themselves according to Augustine's instructions, they would live by their work and would not seek their sustenance with begging in which they use their lies and deceit. I do not need to draw in many articles from Augustine's rule, because one sooner finds twenty articles in it which the Dominicans do not observe than one they actually keep, and yet they call themselves holy observants. Dominicans also have many ordinances and regulations which they themselves have made. They should not sleep on feather beds in their monasteries. They should never eat meat. They should lie down in tunics and stockings and should not have any linen clothing. They should not ride. They should not have costly buildings and paintings. But one sees how well this is observed. Where does one find buildings like monks in their poverty build? One finds the most expensive paintings with monks, all because of pride. All their walls are completely painted with monks, some with crosses in hand, some with angels, some with devils, part with papal crown, some with cardinals' hats, and some with bishops' hats. They are found among other painted monks who have devils whispering in their ears, perhaps after Muhammad.<sup>83</sup> Every order has had its own brothers painted. In the Dominicans' friary one finds



all the walls filled with black monks to honor and praise their holy order which has had such distinguished men. The Franciscans and other monks and nuns all do this, each to praise its own order. They say they are humble and yet they want to be highly regarded.

Furthermore, the Dominicans hold rules that they should not have anything of their own, moveable or immoveable. When St. Dominic imposed this rule in the extreme, he commanded that a curse should come over those who entered his order to have worldly goods.<sup>84</sup> Those who give them something must consider that St. Dominic ordered a curse to come over them, and that is their reward. All monks and nuns are forbidden to have anything of their own, as was said before, so it is a common proverb that a monk who has as much as a mite which is his own is not worth a mite. But if the proverb is true, all the monks in Sweden are not worth half a mite, because all of them together certainly have something of their own.

The Dominicans are forbidden to exhort people to contribute to their buildings. They should not take money from any woman or give her money. Both Dominicans and Franciscans are strictly forbidden to associate with women, although they have often been accused of having women dressed in monks' habits and counted as other brothers of the order in their monasteries with them. The Dominicans' own constitutions make this known when they command that this should not happen any more.<sup>85</sup> Since it is commanded that it should not happen any more, we have sufficient proof that it happened previously. They do not observe their rules about fasting at all, and there are many other things which would be too extensive to enumerate. Everyone

may be judge of how they observe these rules.

We have heard something about the vows which monks and nuns have pledged themselves to observe and do not, although it is of little importance that they do not observe their rules, especially the articles which are not founded on God's word. I have not drawn in these articles with the intention that I want them to observe their rules exactly. I would much rather have them completely relinquish their rules and give them up as pretense. If they want to be monks. I would have them be like monks were in the beginning when they had no rule to obey except God's word. But in drawing in these articles my intention has been to deny monks and nuns their distinction so they should not be able to praise themselves for their strict life, since they do not observe what they have promised.

It is appropriate to say something about their habits, which they claim are holy. I would eagerly know what holiness can cleave to clothing, since holiness exists only in the heart. It cannot be anything but a hypocritical holiness which depends on clothing. If some holiness is signified by their habit as they are accustomed to say, they should live up to it, for if they do not, it will be detrimental to them as it was for the Pharisees. They made phylacteries and great folds in their clothing in order to seem good and were still nothing but hypocrites and men of evil deeds.<sup>86</sup> It is the same way with monks and nuns when they seem to be good and nevertheless are not. The holier they seem in their clothing, the greater hypocrites they are. It will come about that they will have nothing on which to pride themselves with their habits unless they would

praise themselves for their hypocrisy.

Since this is nothing but a hypocritical habit, I cannot readily believe that those who really consider it should be able to wear it with a good conscience. In many matters they must certainly dissemble because of the habit, and they could avoid hypocrisy if they did not wear the clothing of monks and nuns. Hypocrisy is certainly a great sin, yes, a double wickedness before God, when one would seem to be better but really is worse. Their habit is an offense to them and given them occasion for sin. Many innocent people who have the idea that they would be better in a cowl than without a cowl are deceived by it. The habit is a great cause for offense, both to themselves and to others. One must admit that monks and nuns are mocked and derided by many because of their habits and that those who mock them commit a great wrong, but if the habit did not exist, the sin would not come about. If they were dressed like other people, they would be mocked no more than other people. This habit is something which offends many people, and God has strictly forbidden one to give any occasion for sin or offense. Christ said that misfortune will come to one who causes offense and that if our hand or eye is an offense to us we should cast it out.<sup>87</sup> If we should cast away a hand or an eye because it offends, how much more should we cast away clothing when it gives occasion for sin.

It will not help to say, as many are accustomed to do, that the habit does them neither evil nor good. Although the habit in itself does neither evil nor good, the hypocrisy, deceit, and offence which accompany it do a great deal of evil. Eating meat is neither bad

nor good in itself, but if it happens to offend some people, then it is bad. St. Paul teaches that we should flee not only from what is evil but also from what seems to be evil.<sup>88</sup> It has been proved that the monastic habit cannot be worn without sin, especially in our time. One can see by their habit and their entire way of life what a flagrant error has been present in the world. Monks and nuns have been so foolish that they have disguised themselves and have become jesters and fools. We others have been so foolish that we have supported them in this foolishness with our property and money. Oh, blindness, blindness!

I will now conclude this book. The monastic life which has gone on for a long time is a true apostasy and departure from Christendom. They observe neither what God has commanded nor what they themselves have promised. This book will be like a court of appeals for monks and nuns. If I perceive that some oppose it, with God's help I will further explain the monastic life and depict it for what it is worth.

#### A brief admonition to monks and nuns and their friends

Since we have amply demonstrated that the monastic life is an ungodly and hypocritical existence, in the name of Jesus Christ I admonish every monastic person, man or woman, who through misunderstanding or another way has entered this dangerous life, to take this to heart and consider how he can be a true Christian person and leave his present way of life, since a Christian life and monastic

existence are directly contrary to one another. Monks and nuns must carefully consider that one who enters the kingdom of heaven must go in as a Christian and not as a monk or nun. No one serves in God's kingdom except one who has reliance and trust in Christ alone. Monks and nuns who hold themselves to their monastic life have no place there. God's kingdom is a kingdom of truth where no hypocrisy will serve, so one who would enter God's kingdom must lay aside hypocrisy. But to do this he must give up the monastic life which cannot be observed without hypocrisy. This hypocrisy has now broken forth and has been revealed, so one knows that monks and nuns have proceeded with deceit and not with holiness. Yes, may God grant that they will be able to consider this as well as we can. Since by God's grace we have learned to understand this, we will not willingly let ourselves be deceived as has happened until now. Therefore it will soon come about that monks' and nuns' existence will not agree well with them, and they are advised to think about that time and be deserters from their ungodly monastic existence rather than deserters from the faith of Christ.

May God have mercy on the innumerable persons who have been deceived both in body and soul by this hypocritical life. How many honorable virgins have been deceived when they thought they would live in pure virginity and, not having the grace for celibacy, have fallen into God's terrible wrath with unmentionable sins, natural desire, and other impurity. The devil has pursued his destruction with the monastic life. One who enters may not come out again even though he has experienced great passion or natural desire. Thus they

have fallen into God's great wrath with illicit acts because they did not have the grace for celibacy. Nature will take its course, and whether it is disgusting or delightful, it bursts out and nothing can remove it. Since it cannot happen permissably in marriage as it ought, it still happens with God's severe anger. I do not doubt that monks and nuns would acknowledge in their consciences that what I write is true. Would to God it were not true but, God forbid, it is all too true. The distinguished bishop and martyr St. Cyprian<sup>89</sup> advises that the virgin who has promised virginity and either will not or cannot observe it should marry according to the teaching of St. Paul. Since God's great wrath comes upon the monastery, the poor people have just cause to leave. Even without this cause, which certainly exists, they may abandon this life righteously for other reasons. One knows the circumstances under which they entered. Some came in their innocence with what seemed to them the good intention of having a holy life and then were deceived. They have found it other than they thought when they gave themselves to it, and if they had known before what they have learned since then, they would never have come to it. They were deceived in their innocence, and before God and every understanding person they have rightful cause to leave. Even if the monastic vow were good, which it is not, it could not preclude this since they were deceived all the time in the agreement. When they made their vow they had a wrong idea, intending something to be good which is not good, and they were deceived. Therefore they are not bound to keep it.

Some have entered the monastery in their childhood when they ~~could~~ not consider evil and good properly and were enticed in. But when they come of age and learn to consider this, they have a right-ful cause to leave. Great wrong is done to them if they are coerced to keep what they promised as children when they could not consider properly what they understand better as adults. One finds many people who have dragged their children into the monastery against their will, as has happened often at Vadstena. They have intended to offer their children to God so they would be his brothers and belong to him, but they have done wrong. It is dreadful that they have taken those who would have been God's brothers outside the monastery and have made them the devil's brothers. They have taken those who might have lived in the fear of God in a pure marriage and have given them to a monastery where they have lived their whole lives out in envy, spite, zealous hatred, unmentionable sins, natural desire, and other impurity. There they curse their fathers and mothers and all those who have helped them enter the monastery. I think they have offered their children to God most commendably. Yes, they have acted against them as murderers and betrayers and are even worse than murderers because they destroy their own flesh and blood in both body and soul. One who deals with his children in this way is not worthy of being called a father but rather a murderer of children, and it would be appropriate to punish him accordingly, but God will find him out in due time.

Many are dragged into the monastery so that others should receive a larger share of the inheritance, but that these people are

put in a monastery because of a will and property is wrong before God and the world, and the authorities ought to be charged with preventing this wrong from happening.<sup>90</sup> It would have been better if they had been born in such great poverty that not a farthing of inheritance would fall to them than to have been born to an inheritance they enjoy through so much evil. Many have let themselves be given to the monastery in order to have an easy life and be clothed and fed without work. These people are useless whether they are outside the monastery or in it. They do no good but serve their own bellies as long as they are of this disposition.

All these persons have just cause to leave the monastery when they think it right. And in summary, there is no one in the monastery who does not have just cause to leave when he considers it properly. Whoever would keep them in this ungodly existence against their will acts against God and brotherly love. No one can detain them because of their vow because it is evil as was proved before, and no unrighteous promise ought to be kept. Therefore I advise every monastic person to deliberate and abandon his hypocritical existence and become a true Christian again.

I admonish all Christian people who have children, friends or relatives in the monastery to help them to leave. They have incomprehendingly helped them into this ungodly existence to the damage and corruption of both body and soul. Now with understanding help them to come out again, and help those who are eligible to marry, rather than seeing the misery that their own flesh and blood should be ruined. They are bound in strict honor to account in the last



judgement for the way they have managed the offspring God has given them. He has commanded them to look out for their welfare and if they should be negligent a stern judgement and terrible woe will come upon them, so they must completely obey.

I know very well that many persons, particularly among the nuns, are advanced in old age and have no hope of marrying and are a hindrance to the poor young girls who know about their deceit and their own natural desire and would eagerly leave. But the old ones detain them and say they must be persuaded to stay there for their lifetime, as they have done before them. I relegate these people who hinder their neighbors' best interest to their own conscience, to ask how honorably they have lived out their age in the monastery. They should think carefully whether at some time they have had passion and desire for men. They can deny this to human beings, but they cannot deny it to God and their own conscience. Yes, we can prove this about them. One sees before one's eyes that they willingly converse with men, write to them readily, eagerly read their writings, and want to be in their remembrance. They are their true hearts, faith, hope, charity, beloveds, and the like, They give men bouquets and wreaths of flowers, handkerchiefs, and other more significant things.<sup>91</sup> These things are certain signs that they have desire and passion for men and natural inclinations in their bodies. They may explain their existence as much as they want, but we know they are flesh and blood as well as we are. I will remain silent about the existence their confessors and fathers are accustomed to have in their convents. But I will say without restraint that the greater part of monastic persons have

nothing to praise themselves before God for an unsullied virginity, and that in their youth they would have been better off in marriage than in the monastery. Therefore they have no cause to be an impediment to young persons and to obstruct what they themselves have pursued. They should be troubled about the other sins they do when they subjugate the young girls to a life they cannot go through without God's terrible wrath, to which we referred earlier. But may God give both young and old a good and true understanding, because the soul's salvation depends on more than gambling with aces and deuces.<sup>92</sup>

CHAPTER III  
CRITICAL NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Olavus had taken up the question of monasticism earlier in Svar på ett okristligt sändebrev and Svar på tolv spörsmål.

<sup>2</sup>Cassian, De Institutis Coenobiorum 1.1.

<sup>3</sup>Jerome, Vita Pauli 1.

<sup>4</sup>Act. iiiij (Olavus' note). Olavus cites only the book and chapter and, as in this instance, is not always accurate, although his paraphrase of the Biblical text usually follows closely the Swedish translation of the passage in an 1882 edition of the New Testament which is not fundamentally different from sixteenth-century editions. The reference is to Acts 2:44. All scriptural citations are from The New English Bible with the Apocrypha.

<sup>5</sup>Coslatione xviiij (Olavus' note). Cassian, Collationes Patrum 18.5.

<sup>6</sup>Eccle. Hierar. cvj (Olavus' note). Chapter 6 of The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy is entitled "Mystery of the Monastic Consecration."

<sup>7</sup>Jerome mentions Philo's description of the Essenes in Epistola 22.35. De Vita Contemplativa, attributed to Philo. actually concerns the Therapeutae.

<sup>8</sup>Vide anotaciones valle In acta apost. (Olavus' note). Acts 17:34 in Lorenzo valla, Adnotationes in Novum Testamentum.

<sup>9</sup>De Eccleciast. script. (Olavus' note). Jerome, De Viris Illustribus 11.

<sup>10</sup>De viris illust. (Olavus' note). Jerome does not explicitly attribute the foundation of monasticism to Anthony in De Viris Illustribus 88.

<sup>11</sup>Home. XXV (Olavus' note). John Chrysostom, Homilies on Hebrews 25.7.

<sup>12</sup>Tripart: Hist. libro jc xj (Olavus' note). Cassiodorus Senator, Historia Tripartita.

<sup>13</sup>Jerome lists cenobites, anchorites, and Remoboth in Epistola 22.34. Cassian describes cenobites, anchorites, and sarabaites and mentions a fourth category without a name in Collationes Patrum 18.4-8. The four divisions are named in Benedict of Nursia Regula Monachorum 1.

<sup>14</sup>In vita Anthonij (Olavus' note). Athanasius, Vita Antonii 16.

<sup>15</sup>Vide Hieronymum ad rusticum monachum (Olavus' note). In Epistola 125.9 Jerome refers to "the monastic schools." In the prologue of Regula Monachorum Benedict of Nursia calls the monastery "a school for the service of God."

<sup>16</sup>Basil was the author of both Regulae fusius tractatae and Regulae brevius tractatae. In the sixteenth century Augustine's Epistola 211, sections 5-16 or Regula puellarum (RP) was considered the authentic text for the Augustinian rule.

<sup>17</sup>In Monadia (Olavus' note). Gregory of Nazianzus, Oratio 43.62.

<sup>18</sup>Anno domini ccccliiiij (Olavus' note). The text of Council of Chalcedon canon 4 is in H.J. Schroeder, Disciplinary Decrees of the General Councils (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1937), p. 92.

<sup>19</sup>The vow of stability is taken from Benedict of Nursia, Regula Monachorum 58.

<sup>20</sup>The mendicants--Franciscans, Dominicans, Augustinians, and Carmelites--represent to Olavus the decline and corruption of the original ideals of monasticism and the primitive church which he uses as standards. According to his theory of history, the mendicants are farthest in time from the original and thus are the most imperfect.

<sup>21</sup>Literally, secter och party.

<sup>22</sup>Olavus uses the device of a monastic catalogue to stress the multiplicity monasticism has opposed to the original ideal of unity and to satirize the orders' divisive identities. The arrangement of the orders seems fairly arbitrary and gives the impression of chaotic proliferation. The orders could be classified as major orders designated by common names and by secondary names (e.g., Cistercians and Bernardines), divisions of particular orders (e.g., Franciscan sects), obscure orders (e.g., Celestines and Williamites), names which might refer to brotherhoods or guilds with monastic connections (e.g., Key Lords), and names Olavus may have invented. The latter category could include those with deceptively historical names (e.g., Ambrosian Lords) and those evidently intended as satire (e.g., Gerundines and Nullert Brothers).

<sup>23</sup>The names Olavus gives the mendicant orders are confusing, because he does not consistently distinguish them from the cloistered monastic orders. He calls the mendicants tiggemunkar or begging monks or simply munkar. He refers to the Dominicans as svartmunkar or

black monks and to the Franciscans as grāmunkar or gray monks. I have used the word friar when it is clear that he is discussing only the mendicants.

<sup>24</sup>Roma vj (Olavus' note). Rom. 6.

<sup>25</sup>Cor. vij (Olavus' note). Cor. 7:23.

<sup>26</sup>Col. ij (Olavus' note). Col. 2:16, 20-23.

<sup>27</sup>Matt. xv, Esa. xxix (Olavus' note). Matt. 15:7-9; Mark 7:6-9; and Isa. 29:13.

<sup>28</sup>Galatas v (Olavus' note). Galatians 5:13.

<sup>29</sup>Cf. Martin Luther, De votis monasticis Martini Lutheri iudicium in Luther's Works 44 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1955): 297-316 (hereafter cited as LW) and D. Martin Luthers Werke 8 (Weimar, 1883): 606-17 (hereafter cited as WA). In contrast, Luther discusses at length freedom of the conscience from faith in works as well as freedom from human laws and outward ceremonies.

<sup>30</sup>Matt. 15:13.

<sup>31</sup>Luce x (Olavus' note). Luke 10:16.

<sup>32</sup>Luce xvij; Roma. xiiij (Olavus' note). Luke 17:20-21; Romans 14:17.

<sup>33</sup>Matt. v (Olavus' note). Matt. 5:28.

<sup>34</sup>Matt. 5:8.

<sup>35</sup>j Cor. vij (Olavus' note). Cor. 7:29-31.

<sup>36</sup>Luce xiiij (Olavus' note). Luke 14:33.

<sup>37</sup>Matt. xix (Olavus' note). Matt. 19:21.

<sup>38</sup>This could be considered the major theme of the work. Although Olavus does not use the terms counsels and precepts, the last of

monasticism's fourteen injuries against Christendom is the reservation of the Scriptures concerning the perfection which is commanded of all Christians.

<sup>39</sup>Apoca. xxj (Olavus' note). Rev. 21:27.

<sup>40</sup>Roma viij (Olavus' note). Rom. 8:29.

<sup>41</sup>Luke 6:20.

<sup>42</sup>Ephe. ij (Olavus' note). Eph. 5:21.

<sup>43</sup>Matt. v (Olavus' note). Matt. 5:41.

<sup>44</sup>Literally, stomma synder, dumb or mute sins.

<sup>45</sup>Matt. xix (Olavus' note) Matt. 19:11-12.

<sup>46</sup>j cor. vij (Olavus' note). 1 Cor. 7:9.

<sup>47</sup>Eccle. iij (Olavus' note). Ecclus. 3:26.

<sup>48</sup>Jerome, Epistola 22; Augustine, De Sancta Virginitate; and Ambrose, De Virginitate.

<sup>49</sup>Roma. ij; Ephe. vj; Colo. iij; and j Pe. j (Olavus' note).

Rom. 2:11; Eph. 6:9; Col. 3:25; and 1 Pet. 1:17.

<sup>50</sup>j Ke. xvj (Olavus' note). 1 Sam. 16:7.

<sup>51</sup>Gala. iij (Olavus' note). Gal. 3:28.

<sup>52</sup>Galatas v (Olavus' note). Gal. 5:6.

<sup>53</sup>Gala. v (Olavus' note). Gal. 6:15.

<sup>54</sup>j Cor. vij (Olavus' note). 1 Cor. 7:4.

<sup>55</sup>1 Cor. 7:32-35.

<sup>56</sup>Esa. vj (Olavus' note). Isa. 7:14.

<sup>57</sup>Roma. xvj; j Cor. iij (Olavus' note). Rom. 16:17-18; 1 Cor. 3:3.

<sup>58</sup>Matt. viij (Olavus' note). Matt. 8:20.

<sup>59</sup>The Ordinances of Västerås in 1527 made the clergy subject to civil rather than ecclesiastical laws and courts, and all fines were paid to the king.

<sup>60</sup>Cf. Luther, LW, pp. 285-86; WA, p. 598. Membership in the brotherhoods included the benefit of all members' good works as well as letters of indulgence.

<sup>61</sup>ii Pe. ii (Olavus' note). 2 Pet. 2:3.

<sup>62</sup>Cf. LW, p. 286; WA, pp. 598-99. Those buried in the order's habit were called monachus, frater or soror ad succurrendum, "to be succoured." See Louis Gougaud Devotional and Ascetic Practices in the Middle Ages (London: Burns Oate & Washbourne, 1927), p. 134.

<sup>63</sup>Luce xvij (Olavus' note). Luke 17:10.

<sup>64</sup>Matt. 23:12; Luke 14:11, 18:14.

<sup>65</sup>Apoca. xx (Olavus' note). Rev. 20:2-3, 7-8. John Foxe correlates the founding of the mendicant orders with the Joachimite prophecies of Antichrist in Actes and Monuments, 4th ed. (London: John Day, 1583), Book 5, p. 398.

<sup>66</sup>Olavus implies that this opposition occurred when the orders originated, while it actually came later. William of Saint-Amour was regent of theology at the University of Paris from 1250. The Oxford scholar John Wycliffe, ordained to the See of Lincoln, became a fourteenth-century critic of the mendicants after first supporting them. Armccanus of Richard Fitzralph, Archbishop of Armagh, opposed the mendicants from 1350. John of Poliacho or Pouilly defended the interests of the secular clergy against the mendicants in the years 1312-13.



<sup>67</sup>Innocent III approved the rule of Francis of Assisi in 1210 after hesitation because of the proliferation of religious orders.

<sup>68</sup>Extra de excess. pre. *Nimis prava* (Olavus' note). Gregory IX supported the Franciscans through a series of papal letters and bulls, in particular *Nimis prava*, issued August 22, 1231, and *Nimis iniqua*, issued August 28, 1231. See John Moorman, *A History of the Franciscan Order* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), p. 94.

<sup>69</sup>Gene. iij (Olavus' note). Gen. 3:19.

<sup>70</sup>ij Tess. iij (Olavus' note). 2 Thess. 3:10.

<sup>71</sup>Ephe. v (Olavus' note). Eph. 4:28.

<sup>72</sup>Eccle. xij (Olavus' note). Ecclus. 12:3-5.

<sup>73</sup>According to the locations cited in Olavus' *Anteckningar om städer och kyrkliga institutioner i Sverige*, these practices were common to the Birgittines, Dominicans, Cistercians, and Franciscans. The shorter version of his autobiographical notes mentions the exhumation of blessed Ingrid of Skänninge in 1398.

<sup>74</sup>The tension between the episcopacy and secular clergy and the mendicant friars was the subject of papal bulls following the attempt of Boniface VIII to settle their disputes through the bull *Super cathedram*, issued February 18, 1300. See Moorman, pp. 201-4.

<sup>75</sup>Gregory IX and later Innocent IV used both Franciscans and Dominicans to conduct heresy trials in the Inquisition, and members of both orders were among the examiners of John Hus and Jerome of Prague, who were condemned and burned at the stake at the Council of Constance in 1415 and 1416 respectively.

<sup>76</sup>Olavus could be referring to the dispute over Gustav Vasa's right to quarter soldiers and horses in the monasteries during time of war and to the "loans" of monastery silver to pay Sweden's debts to Lübeck.

<sup>77</sup>This could be a justification for the provision in the 1527 Recess of Västerås that "all properties donated by the nobility to the church since the year 1454 were to revert to the families of the donor, without compensation." Roberts, p. 78.

<sup>78</sup>After the death of Henry VII in 1313 during his attempt to establish imperial rule in Italy, the story that he had been poisoned by his Dominican confessor was propagated. William M. Bowsky, Henry VII in Italy (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1960), p. 271.

<sup>79</sup>Four Dominicans were condemned for attempting to stage a miracle against the Franciscans in the 1509 Jetzer affair in Bern. See Bernd Moeller, "Piety in Germany Around 1500," in The Reformation in Medieval Perspective, ed. Steven E. Ozment (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1971), p. 68.

<sup>80</sup>Cf. Luther, LW, pp. 343-44; WA, pp. 633-34. Luther argues that according to Bernard of Clairvaux a superior may grant dispensation in any part of the rule according to his judgement and that this should include the vow of chastity.

<sup>81</sup>Francis of Assisi Prima Regula 7.

<sup>82</sup>Following the Fourth Lateran Council, the Dominican Order adopted the Rule of St. Augustine which was to be supplemented by

constitutions and received papal confirmation from Honorius III in 1217.

<sup>83</sup>In a Christian legend the devil inspired a defrocked Byzantine monk named Bahira to command demons in the form of birds or animals to whisper evil sayings in Muhammad's ear and these constituted the Koran. See Francesco Gabrieli, Muhammad and the Conquests of Islam, trans. Virginia Luling and Rosamund Linell (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1968), p. 14.

<sup>84</sup>"Possessions seu redditus nullo modo recipiantur." P. Heinrich Denifle, "Die Constitutionen des Prediger-Ordens vom Jahre 1228" in Archiv für Literatur-und Kirchengeschichte des Mittelalters 1 (1885): 225.

<sup>85</sup>C de recipiendia (Olavus' note). "Prohibemus autem ne aliquis de cetero aliquam mulierem tondeat vel induat, vel ad professionem recipiat." G.R. Galbraith, The Constitution of the Dominican Order 1216 to 1360 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1925), p. 215.

<sup>86</sup>Matt. xxij (Olavus' note). Matt. 23:1-36.

<sup>87</sup>Matt. xvij (Olavus' note). Matt. 18:8-9.

<sup>88</sup>j Tess v (Olavus' note). 1 Thess. 5:22.

<sup>89</sup>Epist. li.j; Epist. xj (Olavus' note). Cyprian, Epistola 4 seems to be the only letter pertinent to the matter.

<sup>90</sup>This may have been common, since "absence of any custom of primogeniture led to the constant subdivision of estates among heirs." Roberts, p. 35.

<sup>91</sup>Literally, ANNAT MEER, capitalized in the 1528 edition.

<sup>92</sup>Gambling represents the uncertainty of human laws and faith in human works for Olavus, while certainty of knowledge is found in God's word and faith in Christ's saving work.

# APPENDIX

Hesselman edition		1528 edition
p. 475, line 6	vthtryckia	vthryckia
p. 485, line 27	vrsprung	v:spung
p. 486, line 3	closterleffnat	closteleffnat
p. 488, line 12	propheterne	propherterne
p. 492, line 5	qwinnorna	qwinnona
p. 496, line 30	ock	och
p. 502, line 6	en	een
p. 507, line 28	åstadh	åstadgh
p. 510, line 33	swartmunk	swrtmunk
p. 511, line 17	siuk	siwk
p. 511, line 26	epter	epper
p. 519, line 6	closterfolk	clossterfolk
p. 520, line 7	mening	menig
p. 522, line 33	sådan	sådana

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