

# Luther burns the Papal Bull of His Excommunication from the Catholic Church



On December 10, 1520, Martin Luther burned the Papal Bull of his excommunication from the Catholic Church before the citizens of Wittenberg Germany! Just think how brave he was to publicly defy the System of his day, the Beast of Revelation 13, and the very Antichrist of that time, Pope Leo X! We owe a lot to Luther. The republican form of government that guarantees our liberties would not have been possible apart from the Protestant Reformation. Luther should be the hero of every true Christian living in western society.

This is chapter 19 of [The Life and Deeds of Martin Luther from a PDF file on the Lutheran Library](#).

## **Luther burns the Papal Bull**

ECK HAD FLATTERED himself that he would triumph over Luther, but he sustained a disgraceful defeat.

**Webmaster:** Johann Maier von Eck (13 November 1486 – 13 February 1543), often anglicized as John Eck, was a German Catholic theologian, scholastic, prelate, and a pioneer of the Counter-Reformation who was among **Martin Luther's theological opponents**. – (Source Wikipedia)

Filled with rage he hastened to Rome to seek revenge. At this period, Luther wrote the two celebrated works: "To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation on the Reformation of Christianity," and "[Of the Babylonish Captivity of the Church](#)," in which with holy zeal, and with ever increasing clearness, and decision, he exposed and attacked the abominations of the papacy.

Charles of Miltitz tried once more to reconcile Luther with the pope. Luther dedicated to the pope his masterly work on the "Liberty of the Christian," which, on the 6th of September, 1520, he sent to him, accompanied by a letter full of reverence for his person. "It is true," he says in it, "I have boldly attacked the Roman court, which you yourself must confess, as no man on earth can do otherwise, to be worse and more shameful than ever Sodom, Gomorrah and Babylon were; and as far as I can see, there is no hope and no help for its

wickedness. In the meantime you, Holy Father Leo, sit like a sheep among the wolves, and like Daniel among the lions, and Ezekiel among the scorpions. What can you do alone against so many wild monsters?" He then declared that he would have kept his promise to remain silent had not Eck's stupid ambition drawn him into the discussion.

In the meantime Eck had succeeded at Rome in inducing the pope to issue a bull, dated June 4., 1520, in which 41 propositions extracted from Luther's works were condemned, his writings were ordered to be burnt, and sentence of excommunication was pronounced against him as a heretic, if he did not recant within 60 days. Eck carried the bull through Germany in triumph. In the hereditary domain of the emperor he actually succeeded in having Luther's works committed to the flames, but in many places, especially in electoral Saxony, he was received with universal derision. In Leipzig, where he at first made a pompous display of his bull, and boasted that he would now teach Martin something, he fared so badly that he was compelled to seek refuge in the Paulinian cloister and dared not show his face again.

Luther continued in good cheer, notwithstanding his condemnation by the pope. He wrote to a friend: "I have now much more courage, since **I have become certain that the pope is plainly the Antichrist and Satan's seat.**" He wrote a work "*Against the bull of the Antichrist.*" in which he says; "If the pope does not revoke and condemn this bull, and punish Dr. Eck and his associates, its advocates, no one shall doubt that the pope is the enemy of God, the persecutor of Christ, the disturber of the Church, and the real Antichrist. For hitherto such a condemnation of the Christian faith publicly professed, has never been heard as is uttered in this infernal, accursed bull."

Thus Luther was forcibly ejected from the Romish Church, because he had confessed the pure doctrine of God's word. He therefore desired to show the whole world what he thought of such an excommunication. On the 10th of December, 1520, at 9 o'clock in the morning, a fire was kindled at the Elster gate of Wittenberg, and, in the presence of a large assembly of doctors, masters and students, Dr. Luther cast the bull which had been sent him, together with the papal Canon Law, into the flames, saying: "Since thou hast vexed the Holy One of God, may the everlasting fire vex and consume thee!" On the following day he earnestly admonished his hearers to guard against the papal decrees, saying: "If you do not with all your heart contend against the scandalous government of the pope, you cannot be saved." He then, in a tract, laid before the public his reasons for taking this step and showed, at the same time, what ungodly propositions are contained in the papal Canon Law, among which are these: "The pope and his court are not obliged to submit to the laws of God. If the pope were so wicked as to lead innumerable souls to hell, no one would have a right to reprove him for it."