

Well, in nine months is Christmas – if our good Lord hasn't returned by then. Signs are good, that His coming is as close as never 😊

It's fascinating to see, how fast everything is changing around us. Suddenly the daily news really does come up with new stories and it's as if the reporters can't keep up with the avalanche of happenings around the globe. Where yesterday the world was full of denialists, it's full of apocalyptic prophets and even demagogues and other tricksters now.

Reading on the [Pope Leo's](#) preparation to deal with the German virus centuries back, You get a feel for how unprepared the curial bureaucracy was for this monk's story from across the Alps. At first there are attempts to just carry on as usual – boar hunting in the mountains around his palace in [Magliana](#). Even on the German side, You find similar patterns like elector [Frederick III](#) (Elector of Saxony) sitting out this dilemma with delaying tactics.¹

When the process gets going seriously early in January 1520, it continues to be complicated. You have cautious theologians like cardinal [Cajetan](#) on the one side, working on a detailed and nuanced approach, whereas the professor [Dr. Eck](#) was more of the rabid sort – seeking to just score points for his academic career and never letting an opportunity go by to take a cheap shot at his adversary. Some things never change. On the other side, You have Dr. Martin Luther firing on all cylinders and giving off one broadside against the establishment after the other:

1. August: *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation*
2. October: *On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church*
3. November: *On the Freedom of a Christian*

In the end, the whole issue goes on for more than a year, Luther gets threatened with excommunication (serious stuff!), summoned to Rome (He doesn't go!) and ends up being banned officially with the papal bull: [Exsurge Domine!](#) in the coming year – after he appears in Worms for the imperial diet with emperor [Charles V](#) and his [court](#) in attendance and fails to recant and demur obediently. Instead he confesses:

Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason (for I do not trust either in the pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. May God help me. Amen.²

Well, that dramatic introduction leads to the involuntary incarceration of the reformer on the Wartburg – safe and sound, but isolated and very much in exile. An exemplary case of “social distancing” especially if You consider, how productively he gets engaged even up there on his island of Patmos.

¹ “Verschleppungstaktik” (Martin Brecht 1981, Pg. 371)

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diet_of_Worms: Quoting [Brecht, Martin](#). *Martin Luther*. tr. James L. Schaaf, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985–93, 1:460. There in footnote 5: “According to tradition, Luther is said to have declared, “Here I stand, I can do no other,” before concluding with “God help me. Amen.” However, there is no indication in the transcripts of the Diet or in eyewitness accounts that he ever said this, and most scholars now doubt these words were spoken.” (Elesha Coffman. ["Hier Stehe Ich!"](#). *ChristianityToday.com*.)