

You charge him, but he slips away.

Behold the faceless men who go forth and deliver a certain death. What does one do? Charge them? What good does it do? These slippery creatures are as those elusive eels that employ their slime to slip out of a grasp. These dark riders are as those spineless squid that hide in their own ink. They threaten any who oppose them and will trample the same in the political juggernaut they employ.

They wield their single-edged swords and slay both those who congregate before them as well as those unfortunate souls they happen to meet on the highways and byways. These pompous men of pride have lifted themselves up above the people. As they ride upon their high horses they travel from one district to another and even transgress national boundaries as well as God's law. These armored crabs, whose claws draw in and devour – these tin men, whose bronzed armor conceals hearts of stone – they refuse to hear that word calling them to account and will not permit themselves to be questioned.

Does it seem that these men are all of German lineage? In fact, they are. Such a declaration is born neither from prejudicial rancor nor sour-grape stereotyping. It is, rather, a simple statement of the historical truth. Here is “the good old boys’ club” in action as they walk to and fro across the landscape seeking someone to devour.

Martin Luther wrote to their ancestors warning them to beware of false doctrine and practice, and pleading for them to repent and believe in the LORD God. He indicated to them that the men who occupied their office earlier had, at first, placed the Gospel above by-laws and statutes, but that later, self-seekers got control and gave to their rules an authority equivalent to that of the Gospel. “Now,” he wrote, the most pious among them is worse than a heretic and “though they swear ten oaths and sign a hundred briefs, they observe none.”

Of the predecessors of these men, Luther wrote:

In olden times the Romans did the same thing. They had brought together in their city gods from all over the world. But when they heard that some people regarded Jesus Christ as a God, they would not recognize him as a God, simply because the Roman senate had not yet authorized it and the belief had originated elsewhere. These arrogant men presumed that only he should be God whom they declared to be a god, and no one else. This was the same as saying, “We Roman senators are gods above all gods, and may make gods of whomsoever we will.” And that is exactly what they did. This is why among them Christ could not be God. This is also what our fine gentlemen are doing today with their councils; God's word is to cool its heels in patience, and not be God's word until they grant it permission. ...

We, on the contrary, state our position thus: Councils may make decisions and exact decrees in matters that are temporal or yet unclarified. But in matters where we can plainly see what is God's word and will, we will not wait for the decrees and decisions either of councils or of the church; we will rather fear God, and go right ahead and act accordingly before the question is even raised whether councils should be called or not. I refuse to wait until councils decide whether we are to believe in God the Father, Maker of heaven and earth, in his only Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, in the Holy Ghost, etc.

The Christian in Society, II, Luther's Works, vol. 45, p. 147-158

These wretched souls claim to be men of virtue. However, they lack true honor and have not Godly integrity. Prudence is not on the horizon. Wisdom and justice are corrupted in the service of self. Courage? If courage be conceded, well, it is only the type claimed by Commodus in the movie, “*Gladiator*.” After being told by his father (the Emperor) that he would not be named as his successor, Commodus replies:

"You wrote to me once, listing the four chief virtues, - wisdom, justice, fortitude and temperance. As I read the list I knew that I had none of them. But I have other virtues, father ... ambition. That can be a virtue when it drives us to excel. Resourcefulness, courage - perhaps not on the battlefield - but there are many forms of courage."

The 1905 Nobel Prize winner for Literature, Henryk Sienkiewicz, (for his work, *Quo Vadis?*) wrote of these treacherous men who tyrannized the common people, but who, despite their strong-handed tactics and reigns of error, could not touch the faithful souls. Consider this short dialogue from the Polish author who was critical, not only of the Teutonic knights from Germany of whom this writ is writ, but also the Tartars who journeyed from the east ...

"Were you perhaps with Duke Witold at the Worskla?" he asked.

"I was," answered Zych of Zgorzelice cheerfully. "Well, God did not bless him. We suffered a cruel defeat at the hands of Edyga. They shot our horses first. Your Tartar does not attack you directly, like a Christian knight, but shoots arrows at you from a distance. You charge him, but he slips away, then shoots again. You can't do anything with him!"

The Teutonic Knights by Henryk Sienkiewicz, p. 147

Anyway, I really liked *The Teutonic Knights* and give it nine stars out of ten. If you think you'd like to buy the book, it's for sale on the net at Amazon. If you order it by clicking into Amazon through the website below then scholia.net will get a 5% referral. Cool, huh?