

Whether Secular Government Has the Right to Wield the Sword in Matters of Faith A Controversy in Nürnberg, 1530

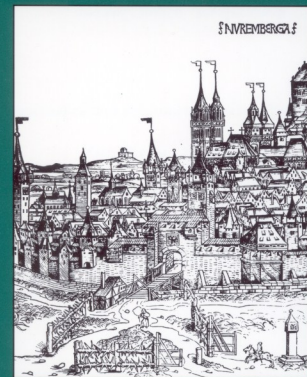
TRANSLATED WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES BY
JAMES M. ESTES

By the 1530s, governments of German territories that had abolished Catholicism and established the Reformation began to impose strict uniformity of doctrine and worship. In protest, people raised their voices: one such protest and the response it evoked is recorded here.

After a Nürnberg citizen wrote a memorandum contending that secular governments have no authority in matters of faith and must therefore tolerate Jews, Anabaptists, and any other peaceful religious dissidents, three noted theologians responded. Andreas Osiander, Wenceslaus Linck, and Johannes Brenz wrote skillful memoranda arguing that Christian magistrates have the divinely imposed obligation to establish true religion and remove error. While the anonymous memorandum's arguments agree with modern views of the matter, the counter-arguments demonstrate why the most learned people of the time thought that religious intolerance was the solemn duty of every Christian magistrate.

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