Unfortunately, since I was forced to learn that someone has taken the opportunity to use my disputation *De crimine magiae* in order to incriminate me falsely of not believing in the devil, disregarding the opposite position which is to be read in open and clear words in the disputation itself, I have myself taken the opportunity to testify clearly, by means of the discourse of those Egyptian magicians, to my innocence and to report my opinion of witches more fully than I could in that disputation because of the shortness of time I had and the press of other affairs. Specifically, as I (1) believe in the devil, and (2) the devil is the original cause of evil, and it allows from this that (3) I hold that he is responsible for the first sinful fall of the first human beings (that is, original sin). I also believe (4) that sorcerers and witches exist, and that they injure men and beasts in various ways.

I also believe (5) that there are crystal-gazers and exorcists and they are able to accomplish wonderful things by means of superstitious things and blessings. I allow (6) that by these people certain things are done which are not illusions or fraudulent and cannot be ascribed to the natural powers of bodies and natural elements, but must come from the devil, and that (7) certain things happen by these means, about which one can say nothing other than that they come from a greater power than that of man, and cannot be ascribed to God and his angels, as when, for example, there come forth from a human body things that are sometimes natural and sometimes artificial, such as threads, needles, potsherds, hair, pike’s teeth, and in far greater number out of orifices that could not possibly contain them, for example out of the ears. I also hold (8) that no one should permit crystal-gazers, exorcists, and conjurors to live in a well-ordered republic, but should expel them from it or when the opportunity arises to punish them in more severe ways. I hold that (9) those same sorcerers and witches who injure humans by these different means should be put to death, also when injuries are committed by otherwise unknown and secret powers of Nature, or even when no injuries resulted, but sorcerers and witches only tried to commit them by their spells and deceit.

But, I deny most firmly and cannot believe (10) that the devil has horns, claws, or talons, or that he appears as a Pharisee, or a monk, or a monster as men depict him. I cannot believe (11) that he can take on a material body and appear to men in this or some other form. I cannot believe (12) that the devil can enter into agreements with humans, cause them to give him written documents [that is, pacts], sleep [that is, sexual intercourse] with them, or that he bears them off to the Blocksberg [sabbat] on a broom or a goat, and so forth. I believe (13) that all these things are either the inventions of idle people or false stories told by those who wish to deceive others and through this to obtain some authority from them or to get money from them, or the result of melancholic illusions, or forced from people by an executioner [that is, a torturer].

I believe (14) that the commonly held opposite opinion gains nothing when I allow as well that through superstitions and exorcisms all kinds of wonderful things can really take place. For who does not know, for example, that Jews, when they throw a piece of bread on which are marked certain characters into a fire, or when they otherwise cast a spell on the fire, do cause the fire to burn no more? Who does not know that Gypsies can set fire to stables and barns and that nevertheless this does not cause injury? But I have never heard anybody claim that either Jews or Gypsies were witch-masters and had made pacts with the devil. I believe (15) that the commonly held opinion gains nothing when I now allow that some illnesses are caused by the devil and that some of them are brought about by magicians by the help of the devil. Holy men, by the power of God and through their strong faith, have certainly performed wonders, but they have not done this by making a pact with God, or signing a contract with Him. Why then should not the devil
also work through the children of unbelief without such a pact? Or why cannot their wicked faith and strong impressions and desire alone work evil through Satan’s power? Just as God has revealed Himself to the faithful and His prophets through visions, dreams, and voices, so the devil can reveal to his sorcerers and witches the harmful superstitious means to invisibility.

I hold (16) that since the procedure of the witch trials is inadequate, because jurists have made the pact with the devil the basis of the charge, a thing which is not possible in nature, that one has to proceed cautiously if people are to be convicted of having injured others through witchcraft. There must be many proofs, and the rules of evidence indicated in the Code of Criminal Law are not correct, as has been shown in my disputation. And (17) especially in the case of wonderful and supernaturally induced diseases, great investigation should be made in order to make certain that there are no deceptions involved, even when they are testified to by learned and trustworthy persons and even by doctors of medicine, because learned and trustworthy people can be as easily deceived as any others, if not more so. And I believe that (18) among these stated or supernaturally induced diseases, about which someone has compiled and entire book, most of them have been told about by deception and that among a hundred cases there is scarcely one that does not involve some hocus-pocus or some hasty action. The well-known deception involving the golden tooth shows how foolish deceptions often stand behind things that appear otherwise, about which the medical masters have written books and undertaken investigations. And I must also confess (19) that when I would, for example, see a bowl full of pike’s teeth drawn from a man’s ear, I myself would at first think that this was at thing that could only have been done with the help of the devil and witchcraft, but when the matter was investigated further, I would not know exactly how I should answer him who would object. That man in no way can consider this a natural disease, because it contradicts human sense; a man cannot grasp such things an in such great numbers. And the devil cannot bring about things that are self-contradicting either, because even the divine power, greater than all others, cannot bring about self-contradictory things. Thus I am led to the conclusion by further observations that even in this case I would rather say that I do not know how this happens, than that the devil does it. Because just as certainly as the fact that two times three is six, it is equally certain that I do not know what I do not know. If someone else says, however, this thing has been caused by the devil, even though he does not understand it, I will accept this, if that person will only permit me to remain in my learned ignorance.

But even if one postulated that this business came from the devil, I still don’t see (20) how a trial for witchcraft could be based on it. For then the question becomes, who was the witch-master who inflicted this disease on the patient and how any judge could become certain of this. It is certainly no great problem to get an executor [torturer] to extract a confession, but this is not enough. I am afraid that if someone tortures you or me, we will confess to everything that the torturer wants to demand. And if tortured further concerning the particulars of the case, we would lie about the because we knew what the judge wanted to hear and that this would get us out of the torture chamber.

In a word, I consider that witch trials are useless, that the bodily horned devil with his pitch-ladle and his mother is a pure fabrication of popish priests, and that it is their greatest secret in order to frighten people with such devils so that they will pay money for masses for their souls, contribute rich inheritances and money to the endowments of monasteries or other pious causes and treat innocent people who cry “Father, what do you do?” as if they were sorcerers. Christ did not convert sinners with such devils, nor did the Apostles by their preaching build any
such systems in which the devil was a cornerstone which, when removed, would bring down with it the whole structure.

At that time it was said, Who denies Christ denies God. Today it is said, Who denies the horned and painted devil denies God. Even in the depths of darkest popery would I have been possible for such mischief to be conceived? Some time ago I heard a learned preacher whom I admire very much, say in a sermon that man should watch out for the devil, but not fear him. I must also watch out, for example, for my own vices as much as for the vices of those who take the devil’s side, or for those of others, young and old, who might be at Wittenberg or here in Delitzsch, or somewhere else, but I do not fear for them. I take into consideration that I attribute to them no motive of devilry; that is blasphemy, but if they choose to blaspheme anyway, I let them diabolize as long as they want to, and I let them pass on, even if some mask themselves as an angel of light or others practice their abuses against me under the appearance of praying for me, and so forth.