



An aerial view of modern Rottenacker. The Danube River is at right, and the church is clearly visible near the river. The house where the Rottenacker Separatists lived together communally is quite big, but not discernible on the picture.

Document

Questioning of the Separatists of Rottenacker after the Quartering of a Military Command, May 1804

1. Is it true that recently you stated in front of the assembled local court: You will not accept any orders except from God?

Yes, Konrad Schacher said so.

2. Is it true that you said: Jesus Christ, our king, will kill the officials and all the princes?

Yes, we all said that, especially Johannes Breymaier, but we said it differently because we did not use the word “kill” but instead we said “remove.”

3. Is it true that you stated: Within two months surely something will happen?

Yes, we all said that, and we still believe so; within two months all the godless people and the unjust authorities will doom.

4. Is it true that you said: The Elector is a pharaoh, and his officials are his tools?

Yes, Johannes Breymaier said: If the Elector wants to exterminate God’s people he is a pharaoh, and his officials are his captains.

5. How did you get the crazy idea that our most gracious Elector could ever think of exterminating God’s people, and how did you fall into that confused expression?

Johannes Breymaier replies: I want to answer that question when I meet the Elector himself.

6. Is it true that you said: Christ, our King, will conquer the country, and we will stay there?

Yes, this is true, because our Lord Jesus Christ is a righteous God and does not like any unfair people. But we believe that we are righteous people and therefore we will stay in the country when God will conquer it.

7. Is it true that you said during the hearing at the court repeatedly for the second time: We will not accept any more orders by the local bailiff or by the magistrate?

Yes, we said that, and we stick to it. We will not accept any orders except from just authorities. Our protocol and our orders are only the Bible and the word of God. We will pay our fees and taxes and fulfill all our duties. If we do any evil the authorities are allowed to punish us.

8. Is it true, that during the questioning you addressed the mayor as “Du” and insulted him with bad language of all kinds?

Stephan Huber stated that he had said this. He addressed the mayor with

“Du” and insulted him because he had said repeatedly that the Separatists should be killed. Johann Georg Braungart supported him by stating that he had called the mayor a fool ...

9. Is it true that during the questioning they told the bailiff face to face: “You Haman, you wanted to have gallows built for us, and look, now you will be hanging there?”

Johannes Breymaier appeared with the greatest arrogance and stated: Yes, I said that. Jakob Gemmi interrupted him: yes!, they all think so, and all the Separatists agreed.

10. Is it true, that you said, the bailiff and the magistrate are dust and dirt?

Yes, we all said that.

11. Are only the bailiff and the magistrate such people, and not all the Separatists as well?

Yes, they all are dust and dirt as well.

12. Is it true that they stated: They are very well aware that they will be arrested or expelled from the country, but those persecuting them will see that fire shall fall from the sky and burn the bailiff and the magistrate of Rottenacker?

Yes, we all said that, but not that the fire falling down from the sky shall only burn the bailiff and the magistrate of Rottenacker but all godless people.

[Question to Jakob Gemmi:]

13. Is it true, that you recently met the local pastor who went home from visiting someone ill and told him: “Go on trying very hard in blending the souls.”

Yes, I did. I said nothing but the truth.

[Because of this answer Jakob Gemmi received some slaps in the face by the beadle.—Questions to Johannes Breimaier and Simon Götz:]

14. Is it true, that recently you met the pastor who walked to the village of Munderkingen

and asked him face to face: 'Where do you want to go, you cursed and lying parson?' along with many other very bad insults?

We did not say that. We asked him “Where do you want to go, you lying parson, you soul-blinder?,” and they keep telling it because they consider it as the truth.

15. What motivated you do behave like this?

There was no particular occasion, but the pastor was on his way to Munderkingen, where he was boozing as usual.

[Questions to the assembled Separatists on May 8, 1804:]

16. You know very well how exceptionally mild and gracious the authorities treated you. They did not touch your liberty of conscience and did not ask much from you obeying law and order. As you do not show any obedience at all we must ask you sincerely: Are you at all willing to follow the Elector's orders obediently? This would be the only way to avoid the enormous costs of the military command which would be imposed on them, and to moderate the past well-earned fines.

If the orders shall not be against God or our conscience we will obey. But we will ignore everything that is earthly. We strive for heaven and eternity. Johannes Breymaier said further, acclaimed by the others: There must be a difference between God and mankind!

17. Will you from now on refrain from your assemblies or not?

Here Stephan Huber spoke for all and replied that they would not do it because it would be against God and their conscience.

18. Will you from now on refrain from defying law and order and go on speaking contemptuously and ignominious against the laws and against church and state authorities?

Up till now we were obeying the laws, and we will keep on doing so. If we said anything contemptuously against the laws and against church and state officials, we said nothing but the truth, and we will do so in the future.

19. Will you go on disturbing the church, treating their members scornfully, working on Sundays, holidays, and days of atonement, and insulting the servants of the church?

Up till now we neither disturbed nor insulted the church and its members. We only told the truth. We did not work on Sundays, holidays, and days of atonement, and we will not further change our behavior.

20. Will you henceforth obey the church laws, fulfill all duties, pay all natural and financial deliveries and the fees for baptisms, weddings, funerals, school lessons, etc. like all the others? How do you think you will behave in theses respects?

We do not quarrel about earthly but the true Christian liberty. We will pay whatever is asked from us within that liberty.

21. Concerning the funerals: If one of their members should die, will you obey the general laws?

We will carry our deceased members ourselves to the local cemetery but without any ceremonies. There, they will be buried by the gravedigger, and we will pay anything that is legally asked from us.

22. Will you henceforth bring your children to the church to be baptized or not?

We dedicate our children to Jesus Christ and not to the church and will henceforth do so.

23. Will you henceforth send your children to school, catechism lessons, and Sunday school?

No, we will not. It seems impossible, we want to teach our children ourselves.

Source: Hauptstaatsarchiv Stuttgart, A 213 Bü 7888a.