

# THE LETTERS OF MARTIN LUTHER

## 1507-1518

To John Braun,

Vicar in Eisenach

The first extant letter of Luther.

He invites Braun to come to his ordination as priest in Erfurt.

April 22, 1507.

To the saintly and Right Reverend Priest in Christ, John Braun, vicar in Eisenach, my beloved friend in Christ, grace and peace in Christ Jesus our Lord.

I would be afraid, best of friends, to trouble you with my letters and requests, did I not know from the many benefits you have showered upon me how kindly you feel towards me. Therefore, I have no hesitation in addressing you, confident that our mutual friendship will secure the favourable consideration of these lines. For seeing the holy God has, of His manifold goodness, so highly exalted me, an unworthy sinner, and deemed me worthy to enter His service, then I must be grateful, and try, as far as I can, to fulfil the duties entrusted to me. My father has arranged that, with God's help, I shall be consecrated to the office of the priesthood on Sabbath four weeks. The day has been fixed to suit my father. Perhaps I may be presuming too much on your love, when I humbly beg for your presence also. I do not ask you to make this troublesome journey because of any services I may have rendered you, for I know of none, but because I experienced so much of your goodness when with you lately. You will then, perhaps, best beloved father, lord, and brother (the first title belongs to your age and office, the second to your merits, and the third to your order), if your clerical and domestic duties permit, honour me by standing by me with your dear presence and intercession, so that my offering may be acceptable in God's sight. And, lastly, I would remind you that you pass our cloister and must not seek other quarters! But one of our cells must content you.

May you be preserved in Christ Jesus our Lord! In our cloister at Erfurt.

Martin of Mansfeld.

I scarcely like to moot it, but if it were not beneath the dignity of their order, and did not give too much trouble, I would esteem the presence of the members of the College at my ordination at Erfurt a great honour.

To John Braun

Luther had been hurriedly summoned by Frederick the Wise, on the recommendation of Staupitz, to be Professor in Wittenberg in 1508; he apologises for not bidding adieu.

March 17, 1509.

To the saintly and Right Reverend Father in God, Herr John Braun, priest in Eisenach, my beloved lord and father.

Greeting from Brother Martin Luther, the Augustinian monk!

Stop wondering, honoured father, that I stole secretly away from you as if no friendship existed between us, or as if I had been ungrateful enough to root out of my heart all remembrance of your great kindness to me, or let a rough north wind blow away my love for you. Indeed, it is not so, although my actions may lead you to suppose this. I have certainly left — that I must confess, and yet I have not gone away, for the best part of me, at all times, remains with you. For although I have departed in body, I am ever with you in thought wherever you are, and I hope you will never feel differently towards me from what you do now. But to come to the point. In order to get quit of the dreadful idea that your love might perhaps begin to doubt my fidelity to you, I have torn myself away from my manifold occupations to write you, as it is so difficult to convey anything. And what do you think is my sole object in writing, but to send you my love, and ask you to have as much confidence in me as I have in you! And although I cannot compare myself with you in anything good, still my love for you is very great, and having nothing else to bestow, I once more assure you of it. For I know your generous heart desires nothing from me, but that we may be one heart and soul in the Lord, even as our faith is one and the same in Him. But you must not be offended at my leaving so quietly, for my departure was so sudden that even those in the house scarcely knew, I always intended writing but had no time. However, I felt very sorry not to see you. I am now, by God's command or permission, settled in Wittenberg, and very well, only the study of philosophy is most disagreeable to me; for from the first I would have preferred theology, viz. the theology which goes to the kernel of the nut and touches the bone and the flesh. But God is God, and man often errs in his judgment. He is our God, who will guide us lovingly to all eternity. Kindly note all this, which has been written in the greatest haste. And when you have a messenger you will honour me with a line, and I shall do the same. With all good wishes from first to last, and credit me with what you would like to believe of me.

Once more farewell.

Martin Luther,  
Augustinian.  
Wittenberg.

To THE Order of Augustinians in Erfurt

Luther attains the height of his ambition, having been invited to accept the dignity of Doctor of Theology, which enabled him to expound the Holy Scriptures.

September 22, 1512.

Grace and peace, honoured and beloved fathers!

St. Luke's day is approaching, when I, in obedience to my superiors and highly esteemed Vicarius, am to be solemnly set apart to the dignity of Doctor of Theology — which I trust you have heard, through the honoured Prior in Wittenberg. I will not apologise for accepting it, or talk of my unworthiness, as if by my humility I were seeking my own glory. God knows, and my conscience also, whether I feel worthy of such almost fulsome expressions of honour. Therefore, I plead with you, for Christ's sake, to commend me to God with one accord, for you know, according to the rights of love, it is your duty to do so — that His holy will may be accomplished in me: also, that you would, if possible, honour me, and show this respect to our order, to be present on the occasion. I would not ask you to take such a toilsome journey and incur so much expense had I not been deputed to do so by the honoured Prior, and also, I would consider it most unseemly not to let my Erfurt friends know the day of my promotion, and invite them to be present. Doubtless you will act as we hope and expect, and we shall remember the kindness with gratitude. May you prosper in the Lord, to whom all of us commit you and your brothers in prayer.

Martin Luther,  
Augustinian.  
Wittenberg.

To George Spenlein, Augustinian in Memmingen

In this year began Luther's acquaintance with Tauler's works. This letter contains an exquisite passage on true righteousness.

April 7, 1516.

Grace and peace in God and the Lord Jesus Christ! Dearest Brother George!

I write to let you know that I have realised two gulden and a half, for what I sold for you. One florin for the Brussels robe, half a florin for the Eisenach volume, and one for the cowl, etc. We cannot dispose of the rest, so have handed the money to the honoured Prior for you. Regarding the half-gulden you still owe him, you must see to the paying of it or let him remit the debt. This will not be difficult, as the esteemed father is well disposed to you. Now I would like to know how it is with your soul, if it has at length learned to despise its own righteousness and seek comfort and joy in Christ's. For, at present, the temptation to rest in one's own works is very powerful, especially with those who long to be good and pious. They are ignorant of God's righteousness, which has been so richly bestowed on us in Christ without money and price, and try to do good of themselves, till they fancy they can appear before God adorned with every grace. But they never get thus far. You, yourself, when with us in Erfurt suffered from this illusion, or rather delusion, and I also was a martyr to it, and even yet I have not overcome it. Therefore, dear brother, learn Christ and Him crucified. Praise and laud His name, and despairing of self, say to Him, **"Thou, Lord Jesus, art my righteousness, but I am Thy sin. Thou hast taken what is mine, and given me what is Thine. Thou hast assumed that which Thou wert not, and given me what I had not."** Beware, my brother, at aiming at a purity which rebels against being classed with sinners. For Christ only dwells among sinners. For this He came from heaven, where He dwelt among saints, so that He might also sojourn with the sinful. Strive after such love, and thou wilt experience His sweetest consolation. For if by our own efforts we are to attain peace of conscience, why then did Christ die? Therefore, thou wilt only find peace in Him when thou despairest of self and thine own works. He, Himself, will teach thee how in receiving thee **He makes thy sins His, and His righteousness thine.** When thou believest this firmly (for he is damned who does not believe) then bear patiently with erring brothers, making their sins thine. If there be any good in thee, then receive ye one another, even as Christ received us, to the glory of God. " Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God." Be thou the same. If thou esteem thyself better than others, do not pride thyself on that, but be as one of them, bearing their burdens. For he is a pitiable saint who will not bear patiently with those worse than himself, and longs only for solitude, when he, through patience, prayer, and example, might be exercising a salutary influence over others. This is burying his Lord's talent, and not giving his fellow-servants their due. Therefore, be thou a lily or rose of Christ, knowing that thy walk must be among thorns. Only see that through impatience, hasty judgments, or secret pride, thou dost not thyself become a thorn! "Christ's kingdom," says the psalmist, "subsists in the midst of its enemies." Why then rejoice in being surrounded only by faithful friends? If He, thy Lord, had only lived among the good, or had died only for His friends, for whom then would He have died, or with whom could He have lived? Remember this, brother, and pray for me. The Lord be with thee.

Farewell, in the Lord!

Your brother, Martin Luther,

Augustinian.

To George Leiffer

Luther comforts a brother in Erfurt.

April 15, 1516.

Salvation in the Lord, most cherished Brother. I hear that your brotherly love is deeply tried by manifold waves of temptation. But God, the Father of mercies and all consolation, has placed over you the best of comforters and advisers. Father Bartholomew. **Only see that you keep a tight hand over your thoughts and make room for His word in your heart.** For I know from my own experience, as well as from that of all troubled souls, that it is solely our own self conceit which is at the root of all our disquietude. For our eye is a knave, and, alas, what misery he has caused me, and still plagues me to the utmost. The cross of Christ is distributed through the whole world, and each receives his portion. Therefore, pray do not cast thy portion from thee, but cherish it as a precious relic, certainly not enshrined in a casket of gold or silver, but in a golden heart filled with loving charity. For, even as the wood of the cross is consecrated through coming in contact with the flesh and blood of Christ, so that henceforth they are esteemed to be the costliest of relics, how much more will the injustice, persecution, and hatred of men, whether it be right or wrong, not through contact with His flesh, but through union with His loving heart and Divine will, which consecrates everything which is in touch with it, thereby transform the curse into a blessing, suffering into glory, and the cross into a crown of joy.

Farewell, dearest friend and brother, and pray for me.

Martin Luther,

Augustinian.

Wittenberg.

To Johann Bercken, Aug. Prlor in Mainz

Luther thanks him for his kindness to a fugitive monk.

May I, 1516.

Honoured and beloved Prior. I was sorry to hear that Baumgaertner, from our cloister in Dresden, who had fled in a hurried manner, and for good reason, had found refuge with

you. I must thank you for receiving him so kindly, so that the scandal might be put an end to. He is my lost sheep, who belongs to me, therefore I must try to restore the erring one, if God will. So, I beg you, by our common faith in Christ, and the order of St. Augustine, that you will either send him to Dresden or to Wittenberg, or lovingly try to persuade him to return of his own free will. I shall receive him with open arms, if he come: he need have no fear on account of having injured me. I know that offences will come, and it is no marvel when a man falls, but it is a miracle when he recovers himself and remains steadfast. Peter fell, so that he might know he was human. Even in the present day the cedars of Lebanon, whose branches almost reach heaven, fell. Yes, even an angel in heaven fell, which was indeed a marvel — and Adam fell in paradise. So, is it to be wondered at that the reed should bend before the storm, and the glimmering torch be extinguished?

May the Lord Jesus enable you to perfect this good work. Amen, Farewell.

From our cloister in Dresden.

Martin Luther.

To George Spalatin

June 8, 1516.

Thanks for your good wishes, dear Spalatin. Through the grace of God, I reached home in good health, at least bodily. God knows if also spiritually. All this I owe to your love. I got your letter from the brothers. You write that our Serene Prince wishes to make our esteemed Vicar-General (Staupitz) a bishop and desires your cooperation. You are acting uprightly as a friend, but I would like that your entreaties with the honoured father were not so full of fire: for I shall act differently, so that he who is being over-praised may hesitate in his purpose. Do you wonder at this? Certainly not because I despise your counsel, but because love prompts the desire, consequently the judgment is in abeyance. "For true love," says Chrysostom, "seldom judges aright." I say this because you are swayed by the Prince's favour, and I do not wish the esteemed father to do what you urge to please the Prince. Your Prince is fascinated with much that appears lovely in his sight, which is far from pleasing to God. Frederick the Wise is very clever in worldly things, but in those pertaining to God and the salvation of souls I consider him sevenfold blind, even as your Pfeffinger. I do not say this in a corner to malign them, but to their faces at every opportunity. Were I certain that your project came from God, then, would that you had a tongue of fire, and the Pater were pure stubble! But remember that what you and the prince are discussing secretly is known, for before I got your letter I heard that the esteemed father would be made Bishop of Kimsche. These happy times are long gone by when it was considered a grand thing to be a bishop, but now there can

be no more miserable position, for it means leading a life of gluttony and debauchery such as that of Sodom and Rome. You see this when you compare the life and work of the old bishops with ours. How many are immersed in wars, while their homes have become a very hell of insatiable greed! Notice how far this man is removed from such vices, so that when the time comes for him to be lured into the terrible vortex of the bishop's courts you will try to prevent the calamity. But enough of this! If your petition really admits of no delay tell me at once, because the esteemed father does not return from Antwerp till autumn, so I must send a special messenger to Cologne, where he told us to forward his letters.

Farewell in the Lord, and pray for us.

From the cloister at Wittenberg.

Martin Luther,  
Augustinian

To Michael Dressel Augustinian Prior in Neustadt, whom Luther deposed because he could not keep the peace with the brethren.

June 22, 1516.

Salvation and peace! But not such peace as is manifest to the natural man, but that which lies beneath the cross, viz. the peace which passeth all understanding. Thou art longing for peace, but in the wrong way: for thou seekest it as the world gives it, and not as Christ does. Dost thou know, dear father, that in this matter God deals in a wondrous manner with His people, having placed His peace in the midst of dispeace, nay, in the very thick of temptation and dissensions. "Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies." Therefore, it is not he whom no one disturbs who has peace — that is the world's peace, but he who is troubled on every side, and bears all quietly and joyfully. Thou sayest with Israel, "Peace, peace, and there is no peace." Cry rather with Christ, "cross, cross!" And yet there is no cross. For, as soon as thou canst joyfully say, "Blessed cross, of all kinds of wood there is none like unto thee." Then, in that moment, the cross has ceased to be a cross. See, then, how graciously the Lord is leading thee to true peace in surrounding thee with so much of the cross. For he who seeks peace will find it. And the best way to seek it is, when affliction overtakes you, to receive it with joy, as a sacred relic, and cease searching vainly for a peace which commends itself to your lower nature. For God considers any such peace far inferior to His peace, which is inseparable from the cross and the troubles of this life.

Farewell, and pray for me, dear father.

May the Lord reign in you.

Martin Luther,  
Wittenberg..

To John Lange, Prior at Erfurt

It was in Lange's church in Erfurt, still standing, where the first evangelical sermon was preached.

Luther begins lecturing on Galatians.

October 26, 1516.

I would require two secretaries, for I do nothing almost all day but write letters, therefore if I repeat myself you will understand why it is. I am lecturer in the cloister, reader at meals, preach daily, and direct the students' studies, am the Prior's vicar (which means being vicar eleven times over), inspector of fish-ponds at Leitzkau, must espouse the Herzberg people's cause at Torgau, expounder of St. Paul and the Psalms, besides my letter-writing. Behold what a leisurely man I am, and in addition am plagued by the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil. I sent several of the brethren you sent me to Magister Spangenberg, to take them away from this pestilential air. I felt much drawn to the two from Cologne, and having such a high opinion of their abilities, kept them with me, although at much expense. We support twenty- two priests, forty-two youths, etc., out of our poverty. But the Lord will provide. You write that you began to lecture on the Sentences yesterday. I shall begin to expound the Epistle to the Galatians to-morrow, although I fear that with the plague here, I shall not be able to continue. It has already robbed us of two or three, but not in one day. The smith opposite lost a son, who was in good health yesterday, and the other is infected. Yes, indeed, here it is, and is beginning to rage with great vehemence especially among the young. You counsel me to flee for refuge to you. But why? "The world will not come to an end although Brother Martin perish. But if the plague spread, I shall send the brothers out into the world. As for me, seeing I have been placed here, my vows of obedience demand that I remain till I am ordered elsewhere. Not that I have no fear of death, for I am not the Apostle Paul, but only his expounder, and I still hope the Lord will deliver me from this fear also.

Farewell, and think of us. Amen.

Martin Luther,  
Augustinian.

On 31st October 1517 Luther nailed his ninety-five theses on the door of the Schloss Church in Wittenberg. He was impelled to this, through Tetzel's sale of Indulgences, at the instigation of the Archbishop of Mayence.

To Christoph Scheurl

This letter shows Luther's modesty. Scheurl espoused Luther's cause, though later he became estranged from it, when practising law in Nurnberg.

January 17, 1517.

I have received your letter, my excellent Christoph, which was most agreeable, and yet displeasing to me. Why knit your brows over this? What could please me more than to hear you praise our Staupitz, or rather the Lord Jesus, who dwells in our Vicar-General, so highly. Nothing could rejoice me more than to hear Christ's voice resounding through him and bearing fruit. But, on the other hand, what could be more disagreeable than that you should strive for my friendship by loading me with praise. I will not be your friend, for my friendship can be no credit to you, if the proverb be true, "Friends must have all things in common." Now, if what I have become yours, you would only be richer in sin, folly, and ignominy. For these are my possessions which you dignify by very fine names. Still, I know you mean to say, "It is not you, but Christ I admire in you" — to which I reply, "How can Christ who is pure righteousness dwell alongside sin?" And is not this the greatest pride when a man imagines himself to be the temple of Christ. Only an apostle dare boast of this. I wish you joy in the friendship of our Vicar-General, but do not drag yourself down through my friendship. No doubt our honoured father praises me everywhere, to my great grief and peril, saying it is Christ he lauds in me, and people try to make me believe this. Truly a hard demand! The more of such eulogists one has, and the closer they cleave to us, the more hurtful they are. "A man's foes shall be they of his own household," etc. For God's favour decreases as that of man increases. God will either be all or nothing. And the worst of it is, the more thou humblest thyself, and puttest praise and favour from thee, the more do these pursue thee to thy great injury. Oh, how much are hatred and blame to be preferred to praise! For hatred only injures us once, while love threatens us with double danger. I do not write thus to thee, best of all friends, because I scorn your noble heart, but because I have so little confidence in my own. You act like a true Christian who lightly esteems no one except himself. For all are not Christians who esteem others for their learning, virtue, piety, and renown (for the heathen do this also), but it is they who love the poor, needy, and sinful, who are Christ-like. The psalmist calls those blessed who receive, not the learned, wise, and pious, but the poor and needy. And, lastly, Christ declares that what is done to the least of His little ones is done to Him, when He might have said the opposite. But what is great in man's eyes is often despicable in God's sight. Now, if you would be my friend, do not cause me to be despised of God, by praising me both to myself and others. But if you cannot refrain from praising Christ in me, then mention His name, and not mine. Why should

Christ's cause not have the stamp of His name upon it or be branded with mine? You see how eloquent I am! So, be patient, my friend.

From our cloister in Wittenberg.

Martin Luther, (Schlttze.) of the Augustinian Order.

To John Lange About Erasmus.

March 1, 1517. I am at present reading our Erasmus, but my heart recoils more and more from him. But one thing I admire is, that he constantly and learnedly accuses not only the monks, but the priests, of a lazy, deep-rooted ignorance. Only, I fear he does not spread Christ and God's grace sufficiently abroad, of which he knows very little. The human is to him of more importance than the divine. Although unwilling to judge him, I warn you not to read blindly what he writes. For we live in perilous times, and everyone who is a good Hebrew and Greek scholar is not a true Christian: even Dr. Hieronymus, with his five languages, cannot approach Augustine with his one tongue, although Erasmus views all this from a different standpoint. Those who ascribe something to man's freedom of will regard those things differently from those who know only God's free grace.

From our desert Wittenberg. (Lindner's Selected Letters.)

Martin Luther,  
Augustinian.

To Christoph Scheurl

Luther's modesty as to his own classical attainments.

May 6, 1517.

My greeting!

To begin with, best of friends, I must thank you for Staupitz's pamphlet, but I am quite ashamed that the honoured father should circulate my insignificant writings among you. Truly I did not write them for the cultured Narnbergers, but for our rough Saxons, for whom religious instruction must be broken into infinite particles. Even were I to do my utmost, I never could furnish anything which would find favour with men so versed in classical literature, and how much less in your eyes, seeing my sole endeavour is to bring myself down to the capacity of the common people. Therefore, pray keep what I write from the learned: and I took great pains, according to your instructions, to write a friendly letter to Eck, avoiding everything disagreeable. I do not know if he has received

it. I send you these theses or propositions, and through you to Link, or to anyone who may like such trifles. If I do not deceive myself: they are not Ciceronian, but those of our Carlstadt, rather of St. Augustine, which are far more sublime and superior to those of Cicero, even as Augustine, or rather Christ, is exalted above Cicero. These propositions are a standing reproach to the ignorance of those who consider them paradoxes (very striking ones), rather than look, upon them as orthodox (that is, in accordance with the pure doctrine of the Church universal), not to speak of those who are shameless enough to malign them as errors, a class of people who neither read St. Paul's Epistles, or, at least, read them without comprehending them, thus leading themselves and others astray. To modest men who do not quite see through them they appear wonderful, and I regard them as fundamental truths in their primitive purity. Praise be to God who causes light to arise out of the darkness. I presume our father vicar is not with you. We hope he may come to us. Dr. Christian Reuter has departed this temporal life. May God give him eternal life. Amen.

Amsdorf and all friends greet you.

Farewell.

Martin Luther,  
Augustinian.  
Wittenberg. (SchQtze.)

To John Lange

Luther boasts that true theology is flourishing in Wittenberg.

May 18, 1517.

Our theology and that of St. Augustine, by the grace of God, is making rapid progress in our university. Aristotle is continuing to fall from his throne, and his end is only a matter of time: and all object to hearing lectures on the text-books of the Sentences, and no one need expect an audience who does not expound this theology, viz. that of the Bible or St. Augustine, or some other of the honoured Church teachers.

Farewell, and pray for me.

Martin Luther.

Master Christian Goldschmidt, who is here, sends greeting.

To George Spalatin, at the Schloss

Salvation! See that you, with the father confessor and his friend, come about nine o'clock. If Herr Christopher, the ambassador, is with you, bring him also, for I have given orders to invite him.

Farewell, but see that you procure wine for us, as you are aware that you are coming from the court to the cloister, and not from the cloister to the court.

Martin Luther

To Christoph Scheurl

September 11, 1517.

To my highly esteemed Herr Christoph Scheurl, my greeting.

Although I have no pretext for writing to such an excellent man as you, still I think the fact of having recently acquired such a warm, upright friend is reason enough for doing so. And even should one, once in a while, have to complain of getting no letters, surely even this silence would merit a few jocular lines, and how much more a regular correspondence to maintain the friendship, not to say rivet it closer. Even the holy Hieronymus begged his friend that he would at least write to say he knew of nothing to write about. Therefore, I determined to talk nonsense, rather than be silent. But, dear God, how seldom does this Brother Martin, who has been falsely called a great theologian, take up the pen without prating? But it seems as if I would write a book instead of a letter. My object in addressing you was to show how highly I esteemed you, and not to cause you to express a similar opinion of me, but only to convince you that you might trust me as you would yourself. It just occurs to me, that in sending me the writings of our Vicar-General through Ulrich Pindar, I owed you two ducats: I have partly sold them, and given some to the esteemed friends of this good man.

1 Probably the famous professor of medicine, who flourished at Frederick's Court. — Translator.

The money which I drew from those I sold I gave, according to your directions, to the poor, viz. to myself and my brother monks. Poor, upon God's dear earth, I know of no one poorer than myself. I now beg you to send me a gulden more of those writings, and I shall remit the money when I have sold them. There are still many who wish them. At the same time, I send you my singular propositions, which seem quite unreasonable to many. You can direct the attention of our learned and thoughtful Eck to them, so that I may know what faults he finds in them.

All your friends here, of whom Herr Licentiate Amsdorf and Dr. Hieronymus are the dearest, send greetings, also Peter the Barber, whom you honour with your friendship.

Farewell, and pray for me.

Martin Luther,  
Wittenberg.  
Augustinian Cloister. (Schiitze.)

To Albrecht of Mayence

On this day Luther nailed the ninety-five theses on the door of the Schloss Kirche in Wittenberg, being the first time he opposed the Church authorities.

October 31, 1517.

To the Right Reverend Father in Christ, Lord Albrecht, Archbishop of Magdeburg and Mayence, Markgrave of Brandenburg, his esteemed lord and shepherd in Christ.

The grace of God be with him. May your Electoral Highness graciously permit me, the least and most unworthy of men, to address you. The Lord Jesus is my witness that I have long hesitated, on account of my unworthiness, to carry out what I now boldly do, moved thereto by a sense of the duty I owe you, right reverend father. May your Grace look graciously on me, dust and ashes, and respond to my longing for your ecclesiastical approval. With your Electoral Highness's consent, the Papal Indulgence for the rebuilding of St. Peter's in Rome is being carried through the land. I do not complain so much of the loud cry of the preacher of Indulgences, which I have not heard, but regret the false meaning, which the simple folk attach to it, the poor souls believing that when they have purchased such letters they have secured their salvation, also, that the moment the money tingles in the box souls are delivered from purgatory, and that all sins will be forgiven through a letter of Indulgence, even that of reviling the blessed Mother of God, were any one blasphemous enough to do so. And, lastly, that through these Indulgences the man is freed from all penalties! Ah, dear God! Thus are those souls which have been committed to your care, dear father, being led in the paths of death, and for them you will be required to render an account. For the merits of no bishop can secure the salvation of the souls entrusted to him which is not always assured through the grace of God, the apostle admonishing us "to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling," and, that the way which leads to life is so narrow, that the Lord, through the prophets Amos and Zechariah, likens those who attain to eternal life to brands plucked from the burning, and above all, the Lord points to the difficulty of redemption. Therefore, I could be silent no longer. How then can you, through false promises of Indulgences, which do not promote the salvation or sanctification of their

souls, lead the people into carnal security, by declaring them free from the painful consequences of their wrong-doing with which the Church was wont to punish their sins? For deeds of piety and love are infinitely better than Indulgences, and yet the bishops do not preach these so earnestly, although it is their principal duty to proclaim the love of Christ to their people. Christ has nowhere commanded Indulgences to be preached, but the Gospel. So, to what danger does a bishop expose himself, who instead of having the Gospel proclaimed among the people, dooms it to silence, while the cry of Indulgences resounds through the land." Will Christ not say to them, "Ye strained at a gnat, and swallowed a camel"? In addition, reverend father, it has gone abroad under your name, but doubtless without your knowledge. that this Indulgence is the priceless gift of God, whereby the man may be reconciled to God, and escape the fires of purgatory, and that those who purchase the Indulgences have no need of repentance. What else can I do, right reverend father, than beg your Serene Highness carefully to look into this matter, and do away with this little book of instructions, and command those preachers to adopt another style of preaching, else another may arise and refute them, by writing another book in answer to the previous one, to the confusion of your Serene Highness, the very idea of which alarms me greatly. I hope that your Serene Highness may graciously deign to accept the faithful service which your insignificant servant, with true devotion, would render you. The Lord keep you to all eternity. Amen.

Wittenberg, the night before All Saints' Day 1517.

If agreeable to your Grace, perhaps you would glance at my enclosed theses, that you may see the opinion on the Indulgences is a very varied one, while those who proclaim them fancy they cannot be disputed.

Your unworthy son,

Martin Luther,  
Augustinian, set apart as Doctor of Sacred Theology. (De Wette.)

To George Spalatin

November 1517.

My greetings! I had decided, dear Spalatin, to tell no one of the dialogue with Erasmus, my sole reason being that it was so delightful, so full of humour, so clever, and, I would almost say, woven together in such an Erasmus like manner, that the reader is tempted to laugh and enjoy the failings in the Church of Christ, which ought rather to grieve all Christians, and be borne before the Lord in prayer. But seeing you plead so earnestly to

see it, here it is, and after perusing it, return it to me. You write that the Prince has promised me a robe, so I would like to know to whom he has entrusted the matter.

From our cloister.

Brother Martin,  
Augustinian.  
Wittenberg.

To THE Elector Frederick of Saxony

The founder of Wittenberg University, who did so much to protect the pure gospel, — upon a tax levied.

November or December 15 17.

Most gracious and dear lord, Elector Frederick of Saxony. Some time ago I was promised, through Dr. Hersfelder, a new robe, so I now wish to remind your Grace of it. But I would beg, gracious lord, that if Pfeffinger is to arrange the matter, as he did before, he would do it in reality, for he is very good at spinning fine words, but these do not always produce good cloth. I have heard through Prior Lange at Erfurt that your Electoral Grace is displeased with our worthy Father Staupitz because of something he has written. So, I called upon him when he came to see you at Torgau, and said I could not bear to think His Excellence was in disgrace with your Grace. I soon found that no one had such a high place in his heart as the Elector of Saxony, and he does not know how he can have offended except by loving you too much. I pray your Grace would continue to him your favour, even as he has ever been loyal to you. Thus, I wish to prove my fidelity to you, to let you see I merit my Court dress. I have also heard that at the end of the present financial year your Grace purposes laying another and heavier tax upon us, so I beseech you do not despise a poor beggar's prayer, for my heart, as well as the hearts of many who love you dearly, are, because of the extra tax, very heavy, and it has robbed your Electoral Highness of much of your good name and favour among the people. God has endowed your Grace with great wisdom, so that no one sees farther in these matters than you: but sometimes God wills it so that great wisdom may learn something from one with less, so that one may depend on God alone, who, it is to be hoped, may spare you to us, for our good, and afterwards preserve your soul unto life eternal. Amen.

Your Electoral Highness's obedient chaplain,

Martin Luther. (De Wette.)

Luther's first German letter: his extant letters till this date are all in Latin.

1518

Luther at the General Assembly of Augustinian monks at Heidelberg, where he publicly defended his theses.

Luther cited to appear at Rome, but the Elector arranged he should appear at Augsburg instead, before Cajetan.

To George Spalatin

February 15, 1518.

About the motives which should accompany good works. Salvation! What you write, or rather prescribe to me to do, that I am doing, most excellent Spalatin. And I thank the most Serene Prince, through you, for the princely piece of venison that he sent our new magister, and I have told them what an honour it is. But I am the one who is most delighted, for human nature loves a cheerful giver. You ask me two questions. The one, "If one wishes to sacrifice something, or do a good work, what ought to be his motive?" I answer briefly, a man must be animated in all he does by a feeling of despair as well as confidence. The despair appertains to thyself and thy work, but the joyous confidence is founded on God and His mercy. For the Spirit says, "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, and in those that hope in his mercy." The other question concerned the power of the Indulgence, and what it can accomplish. This matter is still doubtful, but I shall say privately to you and our friends that I consider present-day Indulgences as a deceiving of souls, and of no use except as an encouragement to lazy Christians. And this is beyond dispute, my enemies and the whole Church being obliged to admit it is, viz. that alms and kindness towards one's neighbour are far higher than the Indulgences. Therefore, I admonish you to buy no Indulgences, as long as you have poor neighbours to whom you can give the Indulgence money. If you act otherwise, I am blameless: the responsibility is yours. I firmly believe that those who neglect the poor and purchase Indulgences merit condemnation. I shall tell you a great cause of annoyance to me, viz. the busybodies have invented a new mode of attack, by circulating everywhere that our Serene Prince is at the bottom of all I do, as if he caused me to make the Archbishop of Magdeburg hated! Dear one, advise me how to act, for I am deeply grieved that the Prince should come into ill repute through me, and I fear being the cause of dispeace between such great princes. But I shall gladly permit the Prince to lead me into a disputation, or place me on my trial, if he would openly give me a safe-conduct, but I dislike the innocent Prince being blamed on my account. They are

truly perverse people who love the darkness and hate the light. They have traversed three lands to lay hold of **John Reuchlin**, and have dragged him hither against his will, while I am at the door, and pleading to be taken, and they leave me alone and whisper in corners that which they cannot defend.

Farewell, and forgive me for making so many words about this, for I am talking to a friend.

From our cloister.

Martin Luther,  
Augustinian. (Both free and bound in the Lord.)

To Christoph Scheurl

Luther laments the spread of his theses.

March 5, 1518.

To the learned Herr Christoph Scheurl, my esteemed friend in Christ, my greeting!

I have received two letters from you, a Latin and a German one, my good Christoph, along with a present from that superior man, Albrecht Durer, and my Latin and German propositions. You wonder I did not tell you of them. But I did not wish to have them widely circulated. I only intended submitting them to a few learned men for examination, and if they disapproved of them, to suppress them: or make them known through their publications, in the event of their meeting with your approval. But now they are being spread abroad and translated everywhere, which I never could have credited, **so that I regret having given birth to them** — not that I am unwilling to proclaim the truth manfully, for there is nothing I more ardently desire, but because this way of instructing the people is of little avail. As yet I am still uncertain as to some points, and would have gone into others more particularly, leaving some out entirely, had I foreseen all this. From the rapid spread of the theses I gather what the greater part of the nation think of this kind of Indulgence, in spite of them having to disguise their opinions for fear of the Jews: still I must have the proofs of my propositions in readiness, although I cannot publish them yet, having been delayed through the Bishop of Brandenburg — whose advice I asked — being so long in returning them. Yes, when the Lord grants me leisure, I purpose issuing a book on the use and misuse of the Indulgences, in order to suppress the before- mentioned points. I have no longer any doubt that the people are deceived, not through the Indulgences, but through their use. When I have finished these propositions, I will send them to you. Meantime, pray remember me to Albrecht Durer, that excellent man, and assure him of my continued gratitude. But I expect both of you to discard your exalted opinion of me, and not to expect more from me than I can

render, for I am nothing, and can do nothing, and am daily becoming more of a cipher. I wrote lately to Dr. John Eck, to you, and to all the others, but fear you have not received the letter. I am most anxious that the pamphlet of our highly esteemed vicar "Upon Love," which appeared the other day in Munich, and made such a sensation, should be reissued among you. For we all hunger and thirst after love. I commit you to God.

Wittenberg.

Martin Luther. (Schatze.)

To John Lange

Luther complains of his opponents raging against him.

March 21, 1518.

The vendors of Indulgences are thundering at me from the pulpit, so that their stock of insulting epithets is exhausted. They tell the people that I shall be burned in fourteen days — another makes it a month. They are also issuing counter propositions, so that I fear ere long they will burst with fury. I am advised not to go to Heidelberg, so that they may not accomplish through deceit and wiles what they are unable to achieve through force. But I shall render obedience, and come on foot, and, if God will, pass through Erfurt: but do not wait for me, for I shall scarcely be able to start till the Wednesday after Quasimodo. Our Prince, who devotes much time to the study of this theology, and loves it, is a warm protector of Carlstadt and me, and will not permit me to be lured to Rome. They know this and are furious at it. So that you may not have an exaggerated account of the burning of Tetzels theses, I shall tell you the facts. **The students, who are heartily sick of sophistical teaching and longing for the sacred Scriptures, are most favourable to me. Having heard that Tetzels, the originator of them, had sent a man from Halle, they immediately went and asked how he dared bring such things here. Some bought a few, while others robbed him of several, and burned the rest — about eight hundred copies — after proclaiming that the burning and funeral of Tetzels answer to them would take place at the Market at two o'clock.** And all this was done without the knowledge of the Prince, the Town Council, or any of us. We all think it very bad of our people treating the man so. I am innocent. but feel certain I get all the blame. It has caused much talk, especially among Tetzels followers, who are naturally very angry. I do not know how it will all end, only it has placed me in a more perilous position.

Martin Luther.

Wittenberg.

To JOHANN VON STAUPITZ

To Staupitz, his Superior and Father in Christ Jesus.

March 31, 1518.

My greeting! Although overwhelmed by business, I feel constrained briefly to address my father in the Lord. To begin with, I am quite willing to admit that my name is in bad odour with very many. For these good folks assert that I despise psalters and other forms of prayer, nay, even good works themselves. But St. Paul himself was often treated in the same way, some accusing him of saying, " Let us do evil, that good may come." But I have kept firm to **Tauler's theology** and that other treatise which you had printed through our Aurifaber. **I teach that man must trust solely in Christ Jesus** — neither in prayer, merit, nor works, but hope for blessedness only through God's mercy. It is from this that these people extract poison and disseminate it everywhere, as you see. Only as it was neither good nor bad report which made me act so, therefore I take no notice of all this, although it is those things which bring down the hatred of the schoolmen about my neck. Because I prefer the mystical writings and the Bible to them, their wrath and jealousy are unbounded. I do not read the scholastics blindfolded, as they do, but ponder them. The apostle told us to prove all things and hold to that which is good. I do not despise all theirs, neither consider it all good. But these creatures generally kindle a fire out of a spark, and make an elephant out of a flea. When it was permitted to a Thomas to stand out against the whole world, and a Scotus, Gabriel, and others to contradict him, and when, even among the scholastics, there are as many sects as there are heads, or rather every single head daily builds up a new system of divinity, why should I not have the same liberty ? But when God lifts up His hand no one can stay it, and when He rests no one can arouse Him.

Farewell, and pray for me, and for the cause of divine truth wherever it may be hidden.

Martin Luther.

Wittenberg. (SchQtze.) XXIII

To JOHANN VON STAUPITZ

Luther begs his Vicar-General, who hated theological strife, to send his " Resoluciones " to Pope Leo X.

May 30, 1518.

I remember, reverend father, that among the many comforting words with which you consoled me, was that of Repentance — that word with which the Lord Jesus in such a marvellous manner was wont to strengthen His people. I received your word as a voice from heaven. True repentance always begins with a longing after righteousness and God. This your word pierced me like a sharp arrow, and I, at once, began to compare the portions of Scripture which treat of repentance, and, behold, what a treat was in store for me — the words with that meaning crowding upon me, from all directions, so that this word, which up till now had been the bitterest in the Bible to me, sounded dearer and sweeter than any other.

(Here follows an exhaustive analysis of the Greek for repentance, which means a change of disposition — consequently not primarily of works, but a revolution of sentiment.)

Then just as my heart was filled with such thoughts, there began to resound around us proclamations of Indulgences for the forgiveness of sins, but no exhortation to true spiritual conflict with sin. In short, not a word was heard of true repentance, but the Indulgence-mongers were bold enough to glorify and praise themselves, while hurling invectives against repentance. I had to listen to all this lauding of self in a way hitherto undreamt of, and certainly a most unimportant part of confession. In addition, they taught so many godless lies boldly, that whoever differed from them was at once denounced as a heretic, condemned to the flames, and counted worthy of eternal damnation. Not being able to check their madness, I set myself modestly to throw doubts on their teaching, confident in the testimony borne by the doctors and the whole Church, who, from time immemorial, thought it better to repent than purchase Indulgences. Having discussed the matter openly, I unfortunately roused the opposition of all who are concerned about the dear gold, or shall I say, the dear souls. For these dear folk are wondrous cunning, and being unable to refute me, they declare the Pope's authority will be injured through my disputation. This is the traffic, most esteemed father, which compels me with much personal danger to come to the front — I, who have ever loved obscurity, and would vastly prefer being a spectator of the lively game which these worthy and learned men are carrying on at present, than be the centre of observation and ridicule. But I see weeds grow up among cabbage, and black is placed alongside white, to make it more attractive. Therefore, I beseech you to forward my poor "Resolutions" to the good Pope Leo X., so that they may plead my cause with His Holiness against the wicked intrigues of evil-disposed persons. Not that I wish to lead you into danger, for I take the entire responsibility of all I do. May Christ judge whether I have said what is His, or my own, without whom even the Papal tongue can utter nothing, and in whose hand is the heart of kings. I expect to receive Christ's verdict through the Papal throne. For the rest, I can only answer the warnings of my friends with **Reuchlin's words : "He who is poor need fear nothing, for he has nothing to lose."** I have neither gold nor possessions, nor do I desire them. If I had a good reputation and

honour, I am being robbed of them by Him who gave them. My useless body, weakened by many hardships, still remains. If they deprive me of this in God's service, they only render me poorer by an hour or two of life. My sweet Redeemer is sufficient for me. I shall praise Him all my life. May He keep you through all eternity, my dearest father. Amen.

Martin Luther.  
Wittenberg. (De Wette.)

To Pope Leo X.

Luther writes submissively to the Pope, in whose justice and love of truth he seems to have implicit confidence.

May 30, 1518.

Martin Luther, Augustinian monk, desires everlasting salvation to the Most Holy Father, Leo X.

I know, most holy father, that evil reports are being spread about me, some friends having vilified me to your Holiness, as if I were trying to belittle the power of the Keys and of the Supreme Pontiff, therefore I am being accused of being a heretic, a renegade, and a thousand other ill names are being hurled at me, enough to make my ears tingle and my eyes start in my head, but my one source of confidence is an innocent conscience. But all this is nothing new, for I am decorated with such marks of distinction in our own land, by those honourable and straightforward people who are themselves afflicted with the worst of consciences. But, most holy father, I must hasten to the point, hoping your Holiness will graciously listen to me, for I am as awkward as a child.

Some time ago the preaching of the apostolic jubilee of the Indulgences was begun and soon made such headway that these preachers thought they could say what they wished, under the shelter of your Holiness's name, alarming the people at such malicious, heretical lies being proclaimed to the derision of the spiritual powers. And, not satisfied with pouring out their venom, they have disseminated the little book in which their malicious lies are confirmed, binding the father confessors by oath to inculcate those lies upon their people. I shall not enlarge upon the disgraceful greed, which can never be satisfied, with which every syllable of this tiny book reeks. This is true, and no one can shut his eyes to the scandal, for it is manifest in the book. And they continue to lead the people captive with their vain consolation, plucking, as the prophet Micah says, "their skin from off them, and their flesh from off their bones," while they wallow in abundance themselves. They use your Holiness's name to allay the uproar

they cause, and threaten them with fire and sword, and the ignominy of being called heretics: nay, one can scarcely believe the wiles they use to cause confusion among the people. Complaints are universal as to the greed of the priests, while the power of the Keys and the Pope is being evil spoken of in Germany. And when I heard of such things I burned with zeal for the honour of Christ, or, if some will have it so, the young blood within me boiled: and yet I felt it did not behove me to do anything in the matter except to draw the attention of some prelates to the abuses. Some acted upon the hint, but others derided it and interpreted it in various ways. For the dread of your Holiness's name, and the threat of being placed under the ban, was all-powerful. At length I thought it best not to be harsh, but oppose them by throwing doubts upon their doctrines, preparatory to a disputation upon them. So, I threw down the gauntlet to the learned by issuing my theses, and asking them to discuss them, either by word of mouth, or in writing, which is a well-known fact.

From this, most holy father, has such a fire been kindled, that, to judge from the hue and cry, one would think the whole world had been set ablaze.

And perhaps this is because I, through your Holiness's apostolic authority, am a Doctor of Theology, and they do not wish to admit that I am entitled, according to the usage of all universities in Christendom, openly to discuss, not only Indulgences, but many higher doctrines, such as Divine Power, Forgiveness, and Mercy. Now, what shall I do? I cannot retract, and I see what jealousy and hatred I have roused through the explanation of my theses. Besides, I am most unwilling to leave my corner only to hear harsh judgments against myself, but also because I am a stupid dunderhead in this learned age, and too ignorant to deal with such weighty matters. For, in these golden times, when the number of the learned is daily increasing, and arts and sciences are flourishing, not to speak of the Greek and Hebrew tongues, so that even a Cicero were he now alive would creep into a corner, although he never feared light and publicity, sheer necessity alone drives me to cackle as a goose among swans. So, to reconcile my opponents if possible, and satisfy the expectations of many, I let in the light of day upon my thoughts, which you can see in my explanation of my propositions on Indulgences. I made them public that I might have the protection of your Holiness's name and find refuge beneath the shadow of your wings. So, all may see from this how I esteem the spiritual power, and honour the dignity of the Keys. For, if I were such as they say, and had not held a public discussion on the subject, which every doctor is entitled to do, then assuredly his Serene Highness Frederick, Elector of Saxony, who is an ardent lover of Christian and apostolic truth, would not have suffered such a dangerous person in his University of Wittenberg. And also, the beloved and learned doctors and magisters of our university, who cleave firmly to our religion, would certainly have expelled me from their midst. And is it not strange that my enemies not only try to convict me of sin and put me to shame, but also the Elector, and the whole university?

Therefore, most holy father, I prostrate myself at your feet, placing myself and all I am and have at your disposal, to be dealt with as you see fit. My cause hangs on the will of your Holiness, by whose verdict I shall either save or lose my life. Come what may, I shall recognise the voice of your Holiness to be that of Christ, speaking through you. If I merit death, I do not refuse to die, for "the earth is the Lord's, and all that is therein", to whom be praise to all eternity! Amen.

May He preserve your Holiness to life eternal.

Martin Luther,  
Augustinian.

To Wenzel Link

Wenzelaus Link studied in Wittenberg, and was afterwards pastor in Nurnberg.

July 10, 1518.

Our vicar, John Lange, says that **Count Albrecht of Mansfeld** has warned him not to let me leave here, as some great people have given orders that I should be suffocated or drowned. I am like Jeremiah, the man of strife, whom the Pharisees daily tormented with new doctrines, as they called them. But I have only taught the pure gospel, therefore I always knew that I would be a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Greeks. But it would ill become me not to do all this for the Lord Jesus, who says to all His people, "I will shew him what great things he must suffer for my name's sake!" The more they threaten, the more confident and joyful I become: my wife and child are provided for: my land, house, and all I have are in order, and if they rob me of my good name, nothing remains but my miserable body. From the beginning God's word is on this wise, that all who cleave to it must with the apostles be hourly prepared to suffer the loss of all things, nay, even to meet death itself. Were it not so, then it would be no word of Christ, for it has been made known and spread abroad, through the death of many, and will go on, being thus maintained and renewed through manifold deaths. For our Bridegroom is a blood-stained Bridegroom. Therefore, pray that the Lord Jesus may strengthen the confidence of His faithful sinners. I preached the other day upon the tyranny of the officials and vicars, etc. The people marvelled that they had never heard anything of this before. We now wait to see what I shall have to endure on this account. I have lighted a new fire, but the word of truth does this also, the sign that shall be spoken against. I do not concern myself about the faultfinders. To Christ alone I shall defer in the ministry.

Martin Luther.  
Wittenberg.

To George Spalatin

Melanchthon was only twenty-one when sent by Reuchlin to teach Greek at the Elector's request.

Aug. 31, 1518.

To the learned George Spalatin, my faithful friend in Christ, salvation!

What you wrote of our Philip has all come to pass, and will also be verified in the future, as you know. The fourth day after his arrival he gave a learned and eloquent address, to the delight of all who heard him, so you need not laud him to us, for we have already formed the highest estimate of his person and intellect, and are most grateful to the Prince for conferring him upon us, and also for your services in the matter: and see how skilfully you can praise him to the Prince. So long as he lives I desire no other teacher in Greek. I only fear that our coarse food will not suit his delicate constitution, as I hear he is getting too small a salary, so that the Leipsic people are already boasting that they will deprive us of him. For they wished him at first. I, and others, fear Herr Pfeffinger has been too faithful a steward, as usual, to his Electoral Highness, in giving Philip as little as possible. Therefore, dear Spalatin (I speak freely, for it is with my best friend I talk), see that you do not lightly esteem his youth and boyish appearance, for the man is worthy of all honour. And I do not wish that we and our university should do such a mean thing, thereby causing our detractors to speak evil of us. I send you my hurried opinion of the coarse and rude Sylvestrum (high official in the Pope's household), my sophistical opponent, for I scarcely deem him worth my attention. I thank God and you for protecting me and my cause. Farewell, and love me in Christ.

Martin Luther.

To George Spalatin,

Luther at the Diet of Augsburg.

10 October 1518

Dear Spalatin, I arrived at Augsburg on 7 October. I arrived tired, for having contracted some grave stomach trouble, I almost fainted by the wayside, but I recovered. This is the third day since I arrived, nor have I yet seen the very reverend lord legate, though on the very first day I sent Dr Wenzel Link and another to announce me. Meantime a safe-conduct is being secured for me by my friends from the imperial councillors. They are all very cordial to me for the sake of the illustrious Elector. But although the very reverend

cardinal legate himself promises to treat me with all clemency, yet my friends will not allow me to rely on his word alone, so prudent and careful are they. For they know that he is inwardly enraged at me, no matter what he may outwardly pretend, and I myself clearly learned this elsewhere.

But today, at any rate, I shall approach him and seek to see him and to have my first interview, though whether it will so turn out I do not know... I know not whether the most reverend legate fears me or whether he is preparing some treachery.

Yesterday he sent to me the ambassador of Montferrat, to sound me on my position before the interview with himself. All think that the man came to me suborned and instructed by the legate, for he pleaded with me long, advancing arguments for sanity (as he called it), saying that I should simply agree with the legate, return to the Church recant what I had said ill.

He gave me the example of the Abbot Joachim of Flora who, by acting as he advised me to do, deserved to be considered no heretic. although he had uttered heresy. Then the suave gentleman dissuaded me from defending my opinions, asking if I wished to make it a tournament. In short, he is an Italian and an Italian he will remain. I said that if I could be shown that I had said anything contrary to the doctrine of the Holy Roman Church, I would soon be my own judge and recant. Our chief difficulty was that he cherished the opinions of Aquinas beyond what he can find authority for in the decrees of the Church. I will not yield to him on this point until the Church repeals her former decree on which rely. 'Dear, dear,' said he, 'so you wish to have a tournament?' Then he went on to make some insane propositions, as, for example, he openly confessed that it was right to preach lies, if they were profitable and filled the chest. He denied that the power of the Pope should be treated in debate, but that it should be so exalted that the Pope might by his sole authority abrogate everything, including articles of faith, especially that point we were now disputing on, He also made other propositions which I will tell you when I see you. But I dismissed this Sinon (*the Greek who persuaded the Trojans to admit the wooden horse into their city, Virgil, Aeneid*), who too openly showed his Greek art, and he went away. Thus, I hang between hope and fear, for this clumsy go-between did not give me the least confidence. The very reverend vicar John Staupitz writes that he will certainly come when he hears that I have arrived.

Martin Luther  
Augsburg  
(Smith, Correspondence, I, 116 et seq.)

To Philip Melanchthon

Luther at the Diet of Augsburg. Preached in Weimar before the Elector on the way thither.

October 11, 1518.

Salvation! There is nothing new here, only everyone is talking of Dr. Luther who has lighted such a great fire. Show yourself a man, and teach the young people what is right, but I go hence to offer myself up for them and you, if God wills it. For I will rather die and be deprived of your dear society, hard as that would be for me to all eternity, than be the means of ruining the liberal studies and elegant learning, thus causing the enemy to triumph. Italy is, as Egypt was long ago, enveloped in thick darkness, being entirely ignorant of Christ and all that appertains to Him, and yet we must submit to them ruling over us, and teaching us in their own way both faith and morals. Thus does God manifest His wrath towards us in the lament of the prophet, "I will give children to be their princes, and babes shall rule over them."

Farewell in the Lord, dear Philip, and turn away the wrath of God through your fervent and earnest prayers.

Martin Luther.  
Augsburg.

To Andreas von Carlstadt

Carlstadt had never seen a Bible when he became Doctor of Theology in Wittenberg in 1510. Later he destroyed the images in churches. *(This comment reflects Luther's later hostility towards Carlstadt. At the time of this letter, Luther and Carlstadt were colleagues. They were never friends, but Carlstadt wrote 151 Theses against indulgences the year before Luther's 95 Theses. Carlstadt's 151 was dated September 16, 1516.)*

October 14, 1518.

May you have all good for time and blessedness hereafter, esteemed Herr Doctor!

I am pressed for time but shall write more again. My cause has assumed a very dismal aspect these three days, so that I have lost hope of returning to you, fully expecting to come under the ban. For the Legate (Cardinal Cajetan) is determined I shall not hold a public disputation, refusing to argue with me alone, and declares he will not be my judge, but will treat me as a father. Nevertheless, the only words he will listen to from me are, "I recant, and confess I have erred," and I was unwilling to say those words. But the keenest discussion has been over these two articles:

First, that I have said that the Indulgence is not the treasure {Schatz} of the merits of our dear Lord and Saviour Christ: and the next, that the man who desires to approach the Lord's holy table must believe.

After the Legate had dealt with these matters with a high hand, I have, through the intercession of many, got permission to answer in writing. And if harshly dealt with by the Legate I purpose publishing my answer to the two propositions, to let all see his ignorance and tactlessness. For many heretical and extraordinary ideas proceed from his standpoint regarding the two articles. Although he may be a so-called Thomist, he is a muddle-headed, obscure, and incapable theologian, or Christian, and as incapable as an ass of judging this matter. So, seeing my affairs are in such jeopardy through having judges who are not only full of enmity and deceit, but unable to understand my cause, I may well tremble. Be this as it may, God the Lord lives and reigns, to whom I commit all, and have no doubt that help will come through the prayers of God-fearing people.

On these I rely as firmly as if they were offered for me alone. Therefore, I shall either return to you uninjured or seek refuge elsewhere: so farewell. Continue steadfast and exalt Christ with all confidence. I enjoy the favour of all men, except those who cleave to the Cardinal, who calls me his dear son, and tells my vicar that I have no better friend than he, and I know he would be highly pleased with me if I would only say, "I recant," but I shall not become a heretic, through the change of opinion by which I became a Christian. I shall sooner die, be burned, banished, and persecuted.

Farewell, dearest sir, and show my letter to our divines, Amsdorf, Philip, etc., so that they may pray for me, also for you. For your cause too is being discussed here, viz. faith in our Lord Jesus and in the grace of God.

Martin Luther,  
Augustinian.

To Cardinal Thomas Cajetan

Staupitz and Link tried to allay the strife by getting Luther to yield, so Luther wrote this letter to see what abject humility would accomplish.

October 17, 1518.

Highly esteemed in God the Father! I approach you once more, not in person, but in writing. And you will graciously lend me your ear. Dr. Johann Staupitz has urged me to humble myself, and give up my own opinions, submitting them to the judgment of pious people whose characters are above suspicion, and he has so lauded your fatherly love, that I am convinced that you are anxious to do your utmost for me, and that I may commit myself to your loving care. I rejoice to hear all this from the messenger, for this man (Staupitz) is worthy of my confidence, for I know no one whom I would more gladly obey. My beloved brother, Dr. Wenzelaus Link, who studied with me, has also tried to

influence me in the same way. I now confess, honoured father, that I have not been humble enough, and have been too vehement, not treating the superior Bishop with sufficient reverence. And although I had good cause for all this, I now confess I should have been more gentle and treated His Eminence with more respect: but it is done, and I admit that it is not always wise to answer a fool according to his folly, and thus become like him. I am very sorry for all this now, and plead for mercy, and will point out all this now and again to the people from the pulpit, as I have often done. And with God's help I shall henceforth be more careful how I speak. **Yes, I am quite ready to think no more about this traffic in Indulgences, and when things have quieted down to return to my repose, but my opponents must also be compelled to keep silence, for it was they who began the whole disturbance, and caused me to interfere in the matter.**

Your Excellency's submissive son,

Martin Luther,  
Augustinian.

To The Elector Frederick

Luther left Augsburg October 20, and on November 28 appealed from the Pontiff to a General Council. Even Luther's opponents admit this letter to be a masterpiece of eloquence.

November 29, 1518

Most Serene and Gracious Lord! I have received with great joy a pamphlet from my dear friend, George Spalatin, along with a copy of the esteemed Cardinal's letter to you, which gives me an opportunity of explaining all the details of my case to your Electoral Highness. I merely humbly plead that your Grace would graciously listen to an insignificant, despised mendicant brother, and take my uncouth relation in good part.

(Here follows a particular account of his dealings with the Legate in Augsburg.)

Therefore, I once more beseech your Electoral Highness not to believe those who declare that Brother Martin said what was not right, and taught what was wrong, without definite proof that this was the case. St. Peter erred even after he had received the Holy Ghost, so a cardinal can also err no matter how learned he may be. Therefore, your Grace will, I hope, make it a point of conscience and honour that they do not send me to Rome, for this your Electoral Highness could not insist upon, let the man be what he may, for I would not be safe in Rome. If your Grace did this it would be betraying an innocent Christian's blood and becoming my murderer. Even the Pope is not sure of his life for an hour. They have paper, pen, and ink in Rome, and notaries enough, so it would be easy to write down in what I have erred. It would cost much less to instruct me at a

distance than to demand my presence and make an end of me through their cunning and wiles. One thing vexes me greatly, and that is, that the Legate should sneeringly insinuate that I have acted as I have in reliance upon your Electoral Highness; and some liars among ourselves falsely assert that I undertook the disputation on the Indulgences by your Grace's advice, when the fact is, that not even my dearest friends were aware of it, except the Cardinal of Mayence and the Bishop of Brandenburg. For I admonished these two, whose office it was to prohibit the scandal, most humbly and respectfully in writing, before I let the disputation come to the light of day. But now that the Legate is trying to stain your Grace's honour and that of the noble house of Saxony, and bring it into bad repute with His Holiness, I will explain how they go about it. People nowadays believe firmly that Christ is buried and cannot now speak even through an ass; hence they imagine that His disciples and their followers will also be obliged to be silent, even should the stones cry out.

Therefore, that no evil may befall your Serene Highness, which I do not wish, I shall leave your Grace's land in God's name and will go wherever the everlasting and merciful God directs, and shall submit to His divine will, letting Him do with me as He will. Herewith I bless and greet your Electoral Grace, in deep humility, committing you to the merciful God, and thanking you with all my heart for the benefits you have bestowed upon me. And wherever my dwelling-place may be, I shall never to all eternity forget your Grace's goodness to me or cease to pray earnestly for your Highness's salvation and prosperity. At present I am full of joy and gratitude to God, that His dear Son counted a poor sinner like me worthy to suffer tribulation and persecution for His good and sacred cause. May He maintain your Electoral Grace to all eternity. Amen.

Your Grace's unworthy chaplain,

Martin Luther.  
Wittenberg.

To John Reuchlin

The great German humanist, who was the first to spread the knowledge of Hebrew in Germany.

December 14, 1518.

The Lord be with you, my valiant hero! I praise the mercy of God, which dwells in you, my learned and esteemed sir, through which you have at length stopped the mouths of those who spoke against you. Certainly, you are an instrument of Divine Providence, although you may not know it. But those who have the cause of sacred learning at heart have for long earnestly desired one such as you, and God's purposes were very different

from what your actions would have led people to suppose they were. I was one of those who greatly desired to be with you, but the opportunity never presented itself. Still, I have been ever with you, with my wishes and prayers, but what was not possible for the young comrade has been granted in rich measure to his successor. I am now being attacked by the Behemoth, who are anxious to avenge upon me the disgrace they have suffered at your hands. Doubtless I am forced to encounter them with much feebler weapons of wit and learning, but with as much courage and delight as you. They will have no dealings with me, so determined are they only to use force against me. But Christ lives, and I can lose nothing; for I have nothing. However, the horns of these animals have rather lost effect through your courage. For God has achieved this through you — that the lord of the Sophists has found that the righteousness of God must be met with gentleness, so that Germany, through the teaching of the Holy Scriptures, which, alas, for so many hundred years has been smothered and suppressed, has again begun to breathe. But it is presumptuous of me discussing matters so confidentially with such as you. It is because I am so devoted to you — both for yourself and your books. It was Philip Melanchthon, whom I am proud to call my dearest friend, who persuaded me to write, saying you would not take it amiss, however poor the production might be. So, blame him if you do not perceive that it is written to prove my devotion to you.

Farewell, my much-honoured master.

Martin Luther,  
Wittenberg.  
Augustinian.