

# THE LETTERS OF MARTIN LUTHER

## 1519

Leo the X. now sent his chamberlain, Karl von Miltitz, to gain over Luther, and they met in Spalatin's house in Altenburg. His Holiness also sent the "Golden Rose" to the Elector Frederick by Miltitz, who persuaded Luther to write a conciliatory letter to the Pope.

To The Elector Frederick

Luther narrates negotiations with von Miltitz, whom the Pope had sent to convert this son of Satan.

January 1519. Most Serene High-born Prince, Most Gracious Lord. It is really too bad that your Electoral Highness should have so much annoyance through being involved with my affairs; but seeing necessity and God have willed it so, I beseech you graciously to take it in good part. Herr Karl von Miltitz pointed out yesterday the disgrace and disturbance which have accrued to the Roman Church through me, and I have offered to do all I can to atone for it. So, I beg you to ponder the matter, as I wish to do something.

**To begin with, I shall do nothing more in the affair, and let it, so to speak, bleed to death (if the other party are also silent),** for, if my writings had been allowed to circulate freely, the whole thing would have died a natural death long ere now, for all are sick of it. So, see to it, for if this precaution be neglected, the matter may assume alarming proportions, and disgrace ensue. For my weapons are ready. Therefore, I deem it best that there should be a truce.

In the second place, I shall write His Holiness, and submit humbly to him, confessing that in the past I have been too vehement, although I did not intend to injure the Church, but only to show the true reason of my opposition, in combating, as a faithful son of the Church, the blasphemous teaching which has occasioned so much mischief, and aroused the general indignation against the Roman See.

In addition, I shall issue a pamphlet exhorting the people to cleave to the Roman Church, and be obedient and respectful, and not consider this writing as tending to disgrace the Holy Roman Church, but rather to exalt her; and I shall also admit that I expressed the truth in a too vehement manner, and perhaps at an inopportune time.

In the fourth place, Magister Spalatin has proposed that the matter be referred to the verdict of the Archbishop of Salzburg, along with other learned people, whose reputation is above suspicion, while I keep to my appeal. But I fear the Pope will not put

up with a judge, and I, too, will not submit to the Pope's verdict. So, if the first means fail, then the result will be, that the Pope will draw up the conditions, and I shall supply the glossary thereto. This would not be good. I have also talked it over with Karl von Miltitz, who does not think this would suffice, yet does not demand a revocation, but wishes all to express an opinion on the question under discussion. If your Grace thinks I can do anything more, will you graciously tell me how to act I shall gladly do or suffer anything that I may not again have to enter the arena of conflict. For nothing will come of the revocation.

Your Electoral Highness's obedient chaplain,

Martin Luther.

To Herzog George of Saxony

The vehement enemy of Luther and the Reformation, which seemed to him like revolution.

February 19, 1519.

My poor prayers are ever at the service of your Royal Highness, Most Serene High-born Prince, Most Gracious Lord!

The worthy Dr. John Eck (Professor in Ingolstadt) writes that he has besought your Grace, graciously to permit a disputation in Leipsic, in your Grace's University there, with the excellent Carlstadt. But seeing Dr. Eck professes to desire the disputation with Dr. Carlstadt (Professor in Wittenberg), whose opinions he has scarcely attacked, while he has combated my doctrines with all his might, I shall appear myself in defence of my propositions, or to receive instructions in the better way. Therefore, I humbly request your Grace, out of love for the truth, to allow this disputation. For the highly esteemed gentlemen of the University have just written me, that they have promised Dr. John Eck (which I had heard) to refuse my request. They accuse me of having made known that a disputation was to be held before I received your Grace's permission thereto, but my excuse must be, that I hoped I would not be denied what Dr. Eck was boasting had been already granted to him, I plead that your Grace will graciously forgive my offence. May God mercifully spare and uphold your Highness. Amen.

Your Electoral Grace's obedient chaplain,

Martin Luther.

Wittenberg.

To Christoph Scheurl

February 20, 1519.

My greeting! I often reproach myself, my excellent Herr Doctor, for writing so seldom, having received so many kind messages from you. But my excuse must again be the mass of work which weighs me down. Up till now our Eck has been able to restrain his wrath against me, but now he is letting it have full scope. God alone, who is in the midst of the gods, knows what will be the outcome of this conduct. Neither Eck nor I am working for ourselves alone. It seems to me as if all this proceeded solely from the will of God. I often say that up till now it has only been child's play. But from henceforth I must proceed in earnest against the Roman pontiff and Romish pride.

I commend to you, most warmly and in all unselfishness, Udalrich, our Pindar, that excellent and learned man. You will try to help him, seeing he is your compatriot, and speak highly of him to your counsellors — perhaps they may deem him worthy of some assistance. We hear that the Suabian league is rebelling against the Duke of Wurtemberg. Melancholy outlook! May God not rebuke us in His wrath but chasten us according to His tender mercy. Amen !

Greet all our friends. I herewith commend you to God.

Martin Luther,

Wittenberg.

Augustinian. (Schutze.)

To Pope Leo X.

Luther's conciliatory letter to the Pope.

March 3, 1519.

Most Holy Father. Necessity once more compels me, the most unworthy and despicable creature upon earth, to address your Holiness. Therefore, would you, in Christ's stead, graciously bend your fatherly ear to the petition of me, your poor sheep. The esteemed Herr Karl von Miltitz, your Holiness's treasurer, has been here, and complained bitterly to the Elector Frederick, in your Holiness's name, of my insolence towards the Roman Church and your Holiness, and demanded a recantation from me. When I heard this, I felt aggrieved that all my efforts to do honour to the Roman Church had been so misrepresented and considered foolhardiness and deliberate malice by the

Head of the Church. But what shall I do, most holy father! I am quite at sea, being unable to bear the weight of your Holiness's wrath or to escape from it. I am asked to recant and withdraw my theses. If by so doing I could accomplish the end desired, I would not hesitate a moment. But my writings have become far too widely known and taken root in too many hearts — beyond my highest expectations — now to be summarily withdrawn. Nay, our German nation, with its cultured and learned men, in the bloom of an intellectual reawakening, understands this question so thoroughly that, on this account, I must avoid even the appearance of recantation, much as I honour and esteem the Roman Church in other respects. For such a recantation would only bring it into still worse repute, and make everyone speak against it. It is those, O holy father, who have done the greatest injury to the Church in Germany, and whom I have striven to oppose — those who, by their foolish preaching and their insatiable greed, have brought your name into bad odour, sullyng the sanctity of the sacred chair, and making it an offence; and it is they who, in revenge for my having rendered their godless endeavours abortive, accuse me to your Holiness as the originator of their plots. Now, holy father, I declare before God that I have never had the slightest wish to attack the power of the Roman Church or your Holiness in any way, or even to injure it through cunning. Yes, I declare openly, that there is nothing in heaven or on earth which can come before the power of this Church, except Jesus Christ alone — Lord over all. Therefore, do not believe those malicious slanderers who speak otherwise of Luther. I also gladly promise to let the question of Indulgences drop and be silent, if my opponents restrain their boastful, empty talk. In addition, I shall publish a pamphlet exhorting the people to honour the Holy Church, and not ascribe such foolish misdeeds to her, or imitate my own severity, in which I have gone too far towards her, and by so doing I trust these divisions may be healed. For this one thing I desired, that the Roman Church, our mother (*Luther still professes to be a son of the Church*), whose yoke he soon after throws off), should not be sullied through the greed of strangers, nor the people led into error, being taught to regard love as of less importance than the Indulgences. All else, seeing it neither helps nor injures, I regard of less importance. If I can do anything more in the matter, I am willing to do it.

May the Lord Christ preserve your Holiness to all eternity.

Martin Luther, Doctor.  
Altenburg.

To THE Elector Frederick of Saxony

Luther excuses himself for his discussion with Eck.

March 13, 1519.

My poor prayers are always at the service of your Grace, Most Serene High-born Prince, Most Gracious Lord.

God knows that I was most anxious that the game should be at an end. So eager was I for this, that I kept my agreement, even after your Electoral Highness's chaplain, Herr Magister Spalatin, forwarded some points to me, at the instigation of the Pope's commissioner, Herr Karl von Miltitz, and I left Herr Sylvester Prierat's reply unanswered, although there was much in it which would have been a good pretext for breaking my resolution; but I refrained from doing so, even against the advice of my friends — therefore our agreement made at Altenburg has not been broken — that I would be silent, if my opponents would also be silent, and this Herr Karl knows.

But now that Dr. Eck thus attacks me without any provocation, seeking not only to disgrace me, but the whole University of Wittenberg, it is not right that I should disregard such cunningly devised assaults, and permit the truth to be held in derision. For, should my mouth be bound, while every one else is free to speak, your Electoral Highness can well believe that I shall expose myself to all manner of attacks from those who might otherwise not have presumed to raise their eyes towards me. I am still inclined to follow your Grace's counsel and be silent, if others will do the same, for I have other things to occupy me, and find no pleasure in such dissension.

But if this be not possible, I beg your Grace not to be displeased with me, for my conscience will not allow me to leave the truth in the lurch. For although in my disputation with Eck I shall have to dispute the assertion that the Church of Rome is superior to all others, I shall do so with the reservation of full submission and obedience to the Holy See. May God graciously spare your Electoral Highness. Amen.

Your Electoral Highness's most humble chaplain,

Martin Luther,  
Wittenberg.  
Augustinian.

To the Elector Frederick the Wise

Luther begs to be allowed to build an addition to the cloister and pleads for two cowls.

May 1519.

Most Gracious Lord. We are compelled to build an addition to our cloister. We humbly begged the councillors to do this but have received no answer. Therefore, we pray that your Grace will graciously grant our request. I also beseech your Electoral Grace to present me at the Leipsic Fair with a white and a black cowl.

Your Grace owes me the black cowl, and I humbly plead for the white one. For two or three years ago, your Highness promised me one, and I have never received it, although Pfeffinger agreed to it, but perhaps he has been deterred by other matters, or has delayed doing so, as people say he is very unwilling to spend money. At any rate I had to procure one, so up till now your Grace's promise remains unfulfilled. In my present need I now humbly beg for one — if the Psalter (*expounded by Luther, and dedicated to the Elector*) merits a black cowl, and if the Apostle (*exposition of Paul's Epistle to the Galatians*) be worthy of a white one. Please let me have it, but do not depend again on Pfeffinger giving it.

Your Electoral Grace's obedient chaplain,

Martin Luther,

Augustinian at Wittenberg.

To Martin Glaser,

Prior in Augustinian Cloister

Luther tells his friend of his proposed **disputation with Eck over the Pope's supremacy, which lasted from June 25 till July 15**. In June Charles V. was elected Emperor of Germany.

May 30, 1519.

To my beloved friend in the Lord. You, above all, have a good right to marvel, nay, to be offended, most honoured father, that up till now I have not sent you a single line. Although I am not without excuse for thus acting, I shall rather confess my fault. Concerning your horse, I hope, through the mediation of our esteemed vicar, you will have mercy on me. For, without doubt, you presented it to God, and not to me. I was delighted to hear from our vicar that we are soon to have the pleasure of seeing you here again. I fancy you have already heard of my proposed disputation at Leipsic, and other things as well. I am lecturing upon the Psalms for the second time, and with good results. The town is crowded with students, and Rome is longing for my downfall, while I laugh at their malice. I hear that the paper Martin has been publicly burned there, and openly cursed and condemned. I anticipate their wrath.

The Epistle to the Galatians is now actually in the press — you will see it in a few days. In other respects, we are peaceful and contented here, and not so badly off as formerly. Our Heldt looks after things well, but only kitchen matters, for he is always much concerned as to what he is to eat and drink and will continue so. I have read what you wrote me about the tattler M, but I am used to the sting of envy. The whole world seems

to be in motion, both physically and morally, and what the outcome will be God alone knows. I predict murders and wars. God have mercy on us.

Farewell, and pray for me.

Martin Luther.

(Schutze, v. i.)

To Thomas Fischer, Preacher in Milau

Luther says how despisers of the gospel should be treated.

August 26, 1519.

Grace and peace to my beloved brother in the Lord!

Regarding what you have written to me, my dear man of God, about these godless scorners — this is my opinion.

Even as no one can be compelled to accept the gospel, so no magistrate must suffer any one to traduce it, but, if any one do so, the magistrate must have him up and admonish him and hear his reasons for acting as he does. If he can give none, then he must be bound over to silence, so that the seeds of dissension may not be sown.

For whoever will speak against it must do so openly — the magistrate being called upon to put down all private disputes with all his authority. This is how we do in Wittenberg, and counsel others to do the same. From this you will see that the magistracy dare not tolerate what you speak of in the community. For it is nothing short of a secret scandal. Therefore call them out to the light of day, so that they may either justify themselves or be vanquished.

Along with the Decalogue and the Catechism, inculcate civil (bürgerliche) and domestic virtues, and these ought most frequently to be the subject topics of preaching, and the people be compelled to attend, so that they may be instructed as to the duties of a subject and social life, whether they approve of the gospel or not, to prevent them becoming a stone of stumbling to others, by deliberately setting at naught political laws. For if they live in a community they must learn the laws of the same and obey them, even against their will. And they must do this, not only on account of their possessions, but for the sake of their family. Christ, who will sustain you, will teach you all else.

Martin Luther.

(Schutze.)

# 1520

This year Luther issued the three great Reformation treatises:

- I. "To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation."
- II. "On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church."
- III. "Concerning Christian Liberty," or "The Freedom of a Christian Man."

To the Emperor Charles V.

Luther places himself under Charles's protection as being the defender of truth and righteousness.

January 15, 1520.

Grace and peace from our Lord Jesus Christ! Doubtless everyone marvels, most gracious Emperor, that I presume to write your Imperial Majesty. For what is so unusual as that the King of kings and Lord of lords should be addressed by the meanest of men? But whoever can estimate the enormous importance of this subject, which so intimately concerns the divine verities, will not wonder. For, if it be worthy of being brought before the throne of His Majesty, how much more before that of an earthly prince; for even as earthly princes are an emblem of the heavenly, so it becomes them to follow their great example: viz. to look from their heights upon the lowly of the earth, and "raise the poor out of the dust, and lift the beggar from the dunghill."

Therefore, I, poor miserable creature, throw myself at your Imperial Majesty's feet as the most unworthy being who ever brought forward a matter of such importance. Several small books I wrote drew down the envy and hatred of many great people, instead of their gratitude, which I merit: (1) Because against my will I had to come forward, although I had no desire to write anything, had not my opponents, through guile and force, compelled me to do so. For I wish I could have remained hidden in my corner. (2) As my conscience and many pious people can testify, I only brought forward the gospel in opposition to the illusions or delusions of human traditions. And for so doing, I have suffered for three years, without cessation, all the malice which my adversaries could heap upon me. It was of no avail that I pled for mercy and promised henceforth to be silent. No attention was paid to my efforts after peace, and my urgent request to be better instructed was not listened to.

The one thing they insisted upon was, that I, with the whole gospel, should be extinguished. Therefore, seeing all my labour lost, I appealed to the example of St.

Athanasius, to see if perhaps God might not, through your Imperial Majesty, support His cause. Hence, O lord, prince of the kings of the earth, I fall humbly at your Serene Majesty's feet, begging you will not take me, but the cause of divine truth (for which cause only God has put the sword into your hand) under the shadow of your wings, protecting me till I have either won or lost the cause.

Should I then be declared a heretic I ask for no protection and only plead that neither the truth nor the lie be condemned unheard. For this is only due to your Imperial throne. This will adorn your Majesty's empire! It will consecrate your century, and cause its memory never to be forgotten, if your Sacred Majesty do not permit the wicked to swallow up him who is holier than they, nor let men, as the prophet says, "become as the fishes of the sea — as the creeping things that have no ruler over them! "

I herewith commend myself to you, hoping for all that is good from your Sacred Majesty, whom may the Lord Jesus preserve to us, and highly exalt to the everlasting honour of His gospel. Amen.

Your Imperial Majesty's devoted servant,

Martin Luther.  
Wittenberg.

To the Elector Frederick of Saxony

Luther dedicates a little book of consolation to the Elector, for the comfort of believers under disappointment.

February 1520.

Most Serene Lord. Our beloved Saviour has commanded us to visit the sick, liberate the prisoner, and perform works of mercy towards our neighbour, even as our Lord Himself set the example of marvellous love, in descending from the Almighty Father's bosom, to share our captivity, and take our sins and weaknesses upon Himself. Whoever despises this most blessed type and command will at the last day hear the words, "Go into everlasting fire: I was sick, and ye did not visit me."

This is my apology for compiling this small book, so that I may not be accused of ingratitude in being unable to recognise my Lord Jesus' image in the illness with which your Electoral Highness has been smitten by my Lord God, and I cannot pretend not to hear God's voice from the person of your Grace, which says, " I am sick."

For when a Christian is ill, it is not he alone who suffers, but Christ our Saviour, in whom the Christian man lives. As Christ Himself says, "What you have done unto the least of my disciples ye have done unto me." And although this command of Christ refers to the

whole human brotherhood — still, it is specially applicable to our brothers in the faith, and above all, must be exercised towards our friends and relatives. Besides, it is incumbent upon me, with all your Grace's subjects, to sympathise in all your afflictions, as our head on whom all our prosperity depends. But I, who for many reasons am entitled to look upon you as my protector, could, in my poverty, find nothing worthy of your acceptance, till my dearest friend, George Spalatin, put it into my head to prepare you a little book of spiritual consolation drawn from the Holy Scriptures. Therefore I present this booklet {Tafel) to your Grace, which is divided into fourteen chapters. It is not a tablet of silver, but a spiritual one, not to be placed in the churches, but in the heart.

The first part consists of seven meditations upon evil, trial, and disappointment; the second part also contains seven meditations — upon prosperity and things pertaining thereto.

May your Electoral Grace, with your usual princely benignity, graciously receive this my little treatise. And I humbly commend myself to you.

Your Electoral Grace's humble servant,

Martin Luther.

To Herzog John of Saxony

Encouraged by the Elector's gracious acceptance of his little book, Luther dedicated his large German treatise, ***Sermon on Good Works*** to his brother Prince John.

March 29, 1520.

Most Serene High-born Prince, Gracious Sir. My humble service and poor prayers are ever at your Grace's disposal.

For long I have wished to show my devotion to your Grace by offering you some of my spiritual wares; but always thought them too insignificant for your Highness's acceptance. But seeing my gracious lord, Frederick, Herzog of Saxony, and Marshal of the Holy Roman Empire, etc., your Grace's brother, received my little book so graciously, I presume once more on the royal blood, trusting you will not disdain my humble offering, which I consider the most important of all my small books — such a commotion having arisen on the great question of good works, through which more deception is being practised and more simple people are being led astray than by any

other means. And our Lord Jesus has commanded us to "beware of false prophets which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves,"

Although I know that many despise my poverty and say I only make little books and sermons for the unlearned laity, I am not upset by this. Would to God that I had devoted my whole life to the improvement of one layman — I would have thanked God and let my books perish. I leave others to judge if writing many large books is a science and tends to the improvement of Christendom. If I desired to write large books, perhaps with the Divine help I could do so, with better results than they could imitate me in writing a little treatise. If we cannot all be poets, we would all like to be judges. Gladly do I leave the honour of accomplishing great things to others and am not ashamed of writing and preaching German for the unlearned, although not very qualified to do so. And it seems to me that if we had done this hitherto Christendom would have derived no little advantage therefrom, much more than it has reaped from the large books and learned discussions in the universities. Besides, I have neither asked nor compelled any one to read my works.

I have served the people freely with what God has given me, and whoever does not care for this can read something else, which would not distress me greatly. For it is more than enough if some of the laity, including those of high rank, demean themselves to read my sermons. And if for no other reason, this is sufficient, that your Grace appreciates such little books, being anxious to know more about good works and faith, and it behoves me to be as useful as possible to you in this matter.

Therefore, I humbly beg your Highness will graciously accept my good intentions, till, if God give me the time, I shall publish an exposition of faith in German. On this occasion I have tried to show how faith must be exercised in all good works, and how it is the best work of all. Again, if God will, I shall discuss the question of faith, and how we should daily pray and practise the same. I herewith commend myself to your Grace.

Your Grace's obedient chaplain,

Martin Luther,

Wittenberg.

Augustinian.

To Nicolas von Amsdorf

Luther's friend Amsdorf was Professor in Wittenberg, and later Bishop of Naumburg.

June 23, 1520.

The grace and peace of God! Honoured dear sir. The time to be silent is past, and the time to speak has come, as we read in Ecclesiastes. I have put together some observations, as we agreed upon, to place before the Christian nobility, to see if God will help the Church through the laity, seeing the clergy, whose duty it is, have become indifferent. I send this to your Excellence for approval, and, if need be, correction. I know that I, poor despised creature, will be accused of presumption in haranguing such exalted people upon such weighty matters, as if there were no other than Dr. Martin Luther to espouse the cause of Christianity and give advice to such learned men. Perhaps it was decreed I should one day commit a folly in the eyes of God and the world, and this is the time I have chosen, and if I succeed, I may at length become Court fool, for I must verify the saying, "A monk must be present at whatever is being done in the world." More than once a fool has uttered wise sayings, and wise people have often talked foolishly, as St. Paul says, "Whoever will be wise in this world, let him become a fool." So, seeing I am not only a fool, but a sworn Doctor of Divinity, I am happy to fulfil my oath in this foolish fashion. Please apologise to those of ordinary understanding for me, for I do not know how to gain the favour of the intellectual, which I was wont long ago to desire so eagerly, but which I now despise.

God help us not to seek our own, but solely His glory. Amen.

In Augustinian cloister.

Martin Luther.

Wittenberg.

To George Spalatin

Luther heard from von Schaumburg that one hundred Franconian knights were ready to defend him.

July 10, 1520.

I herewith send the letter of the Franconian knight, Sylvester von Schaumburg, and should like it alluded to in the Prince's letter to Cardinal St. Georgio, so that they may know, that although they banish me from Wittenberg with their ban they will only make bad worse. For, even in Bohemia, there are people who will protect me, if I am exiled, against the enemy's thunderbolts. And then with such protection I might attack the Papacy still more vehemently than I can from my theological chair in the prince's domain. Unless God prevent, this will happen. So let them know that the reason I have not yet attacked them is solely due to my great respect for the prince and the interests of the students in the University.

For me the die is cast, and I despise Rome's displeasure as much as her favour. I shall never be reconciled to her, let her condemn or burn me as she will! But if I can get a fire, I shall publicly burn the whole Papal code, this serpentine piece of treachery, and make an end of the humility I have hitherto displayed in vain, so that the enemies of the gospel may no longer vaunt themselves on account of it. The more I think of the Cardinal's letter the more I despise those who, through cowardice and an evil conscience, breathe out defiance with their last breath, trying to hide their ignorance through violence. But the Lord, who knows I am a wicked sinner, will conduct His cause through me, or some one else.

Martin Luther.

Wittenberg.

To Herr Wittiger, Canon in Breslau

July 30, 1520.

At first, I had no intention of writing you, most excellent sir, as Herr Schlepper, our common friend, could tell you everything better than I or he knows all that is going on, only he insisted I should send a line, so I obey. A great many pamphlets are being issued against me in Germany and Italy, but it does not put me about, for they are written by the most stupid of the stupid, who affront themselves through their work. I am pretty well in body and mind, only I should like to sin less, and yet I sin more and more every day. The faction of the Dominicans are now keeping quiet, for they were forbidden writing against me, but their place has been filled by the Bishop of Bavaria. If they overcome, they do so through coarseness and audacity. I never read such stuff, for they do not mind whether they win or lose. How sad for the people who have such wolves set over them! But the Lord sees it, in whom may you find refuge.

Martin Luther.

Wittenberg.

To John Lange

Staupitz, Lange, and Link all begged Luther to suppress his dangerous book, To the German Nobility^ but it was already in the press.

August 18, 1520.

If my little book, that you, my father, name a trumpet (Posaune), is really so fierce, I leave you and others to judge. No doubt it is vehement and fearless, but it pleases many and is not displeasing to our Court! I am no judge in this matter. Perhaps I am the forerunner of our Philip, whose way I am sent to prepare. We firmly believe here that the Papacy is the personification of Antichrist's throne, and feel we are justified in resisting their deceptions and wiles for the sake of the salvation of souls. I declare that I only owe the Pope the obedience due to Antichrist.

Philip is marrying Catherine Crappin, and I am blamed for promoting it. I did it for his good, and do not let the outcry disturb me. May God give His blessing.

I hate men's sins, and abhor the child of destruction, with all his kingdom of sin and hypocrisy.

Farewell in the Lord.

Martin Luther.  
Wittenberg.

To Hermann Tulich, Professor in Wittenberg

Luther dedicates his treatise on the Babylonian Captivity to Tulich.

October 6, 1520.

Whether I will or not, I am becoming more learned daily, as the esteemed doctors, time about, insist upon my taking up the cudgels. **Two years ago, I wrote on the indulgences, and now that the book is out, I regret it.** For then I was steeped in superstition, and thought the Indulgence not to be despised, as I saw so many enlightened men take it. But later, thanks to Sylvester and his comrades, I saw the Indulgence was only pure deception of the Papal flatterers through which faith in God was destroyed. **Therefore, I would like the printers, and those who have read the little book, to destroy it,** and read instead what I have written on this subject. Eck and Emser opened my eyes as to the Pope's sovereignty ; for although at first I maintained his right to the human title, I now see that the Papacy is the kingdom of Babylon, and the tyranny of Nimrod, the mighty hunter. I must now go and lecture on giving the sacramental cup to the laity, and deny the seven sacraments, retaining only three — Baptism, Repentance, and the Lord's Supper, in all which the Roman Court has imposed a miserable captivity upon the Church, The Indulgence is sheer tyranny of the Roman flatterers.

Martin Luther.

To Pope Leo X

Luther had seen the Papal bull condemning him. He sent the book on the Freedom of a Christian Man to the Pope.

October 13, 1520.

To the Most Holy Father in God, Leo X., Pope in Rome, all blessedness in Christ Jesus our Lord!

In consequence of the disputes in which I have been embroiled for three years, through some worthless men, I have had occasion to look towards you, as it is thought you are the cause of this dissension. For although I have been driven by some of our godless flatterers to appeal from your Holiness's judgment to a general Christian Council, still I have never been so alienated from you that I did not pray earnestly for the welfare of the Roman See. And I declare I am not aware of ever having spoken of you except with great respect. I have called you Daniel in Babylon, and anyone can tell you how I stood up for your innocence against your defamer, Prierias. Your good name has been far too highly lauded by eminent men everywhere, to make it possible for any one to attack it, however high he may be, so I am not fool enough to belittle him whom every one praises. No doubt I have eagerly attacked my opponents for their unchristian teaching; and in this I have Christ's example, who speaks of His enemies as serpents, "Ye fools and blind"; and St. Paul says, "Children of the devil, full of all subtilty and all mischief," and some false prophets he names "dogs" and "deceivers," etc. Were any fastidious people nowadays to hear such language they would say, "No one was so bitter as the Apostle Paul," And who are more so than the prophets? — Jeremiah cursing the man who doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully. Therefore, most holy father Leo, pray accept my apology, and be assured I never attacked your person, although I confess to having spoken against the Roman See, the Court of Rome, which not even thyself can deny, that it has been a very Sodom, Gomorrhah, and Babylon, and is, so far as I can see, in a hopeless state.

Meantime, thou sittest, most holy father, like a sheep among wolves, and like Daniel in the lions' den, and Ezekiel among scorpions. What canst thou do against such like." And even if there be three or four pious and learned Cardinals, what are they among so many? God's wrath lies upon the Court of Rome, for it will not submit to a General Council, nor to counsel or reform, so what was predicted of her mother may be fulfilled in her, "We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed," etc. It should be thy work, and that of the Cardinals, to put an end to this miserable state of things; but the malady defies the remedies, the horse and carriage pay no heed to the driver. I have ever regretted, thou pious Leo, that thou shouldst now be Pope, when thou wert worthy of better times. The Roman See is not worthy of thee — the Evil Spirit should be Pope, who

rules more than thou in this Babel. Oh, that thou wert free, and could live from thy paternal inheritance! Such a post should be reserved for Judas Iscariot and such like, whom God has cast away. The Roman Court surpasses that of Turkey in wickedness. Once it was a gate of heaven, now it is the very jaws of hell. This is why I have attacked it so mercilessly, most holy Leo!

And my efforts not having been vain, the Evil Spirit raised up John Eck, a special enemy of the truth, and persuaded him to draw me unawares into a disputation at Leipsic, about a word I dropped as to the Papacy — and all under the pretext of disputing with Dr. Carlstadt. And then at Augsburg, when Cajetan, to whom I committed my cause, dealt so unjustly with me, and after him came Karl von Miltitz, also sent by your Holiness, who, after much running to and fro, tried to arrange matters, and it is at his request, and at that of the Augustinian fathers, who will not believe the cause is lost, if the holy father Leo would stretch out his hand to help, that I now write to your Holiness. I long for peace that I may have quiet to devote to better studies. I now plead that a limit may be set to the flatterers, the enemies of all peace. It is needless to ask me to retract, for I will not, nor can I suffer any interference with my expositions of Scripture; because the Word of God must not be bound. If this be conceded I am ready to do and suffer anything. Therefore, most holy father, do not listen to the sweet music of those who tell thee thou art not a mere man, but a mixture of God and man, who has everything at his disposal. This is not the case. Thou art not lord over all. For a Pope in whose heart Christ does not reign, instead of being Christ's vicegerent — is Antichrist. Perhaps it is presumptuous of me to try to teach so exalted a personage, but I do it from pure love and a sense of duty, for my neighbour's good, and in this I follow St. Bernard's example, when he gave his book to Pope Eugene — a book every Pope should read.

In conclusion, and not to come empty handed before your Holiness, I bring a little book, which came out with the sanction of your name, in the fervent hope that it might be the beginning of better times, and to let your Holiness see the sort of profitable work I love to pursue, if your flatterers would give me leisure. It is a tiny book (The Freedom of a Christian Man) in respect of paper, but it contains the whole kernel of a Christian life. I am poor, and have nothing else by which I can show my devotion to your Holiness, but thou requirest only spiritual wares for your higher welfare. I herewith commend myself to your Holiness, and may Jesus keep you to all eternity. Amen.

Luther does not sign this, his third letter to the Pope, evidently not wishing the consideration due to an Augustinian monk to be taken into account.

To George Spalatin

Luther rejoices that Spalatin at length sees one cannot rely on man. The Pope's Bull reached Wittenberg on October 11.

November 4, 1520.

Salvation! I wonder how it is, my dear Spalatin, that you do not get my letters, for I have written twice and got no answer. I am glad you now see that the Germans' hopes are in vain, and that you are learning not to trust in princes and are disregarding the world's judgment whether it praises or condemns my cause. If the gospel could be promoted or maintained by worldly powers God would not have committed it to fishermen. No, my dear Spalatin, it is not the work of the princes and high priests of this world to protect the Word of God — therefore I crave no one's protection, for they would rather require to help one another against the Lord and His Christ. But I am sorry for those who have heard and known God's Word, for they cannot, without risking everlasting perdition, deny or forsake the same, and it is much to be feared that many, with ourselves, may be found among them — therefore let us pray for courage. It is very hard to be of a different opinion from all the bishops and princes, but it is the only way to avoid God's wrath and hell. I would, if you did not so press me, commit the whole business to God, so that He might arrange matters according to the counsel of His will.

Do what the Spirit bids you and farewell.

Martin Luther,  
Wittenberg,  
Augustinian.

To John Lange

Luther determined to stand by his appeal from an ill-informed to a better-instructed Pope, in spite of Herzog George.

November 28, 1520.

To the honoured John Lange, Doctor of the Holy Scriptures in Erfurt, my friend in the Lord.

My greeting! We rejoice over our Prince's return, and I beseech you, honoured father, to pray for our cause. Herzog George is foolish — very mad. We duly expect thunder and lightning from that quarter. I am determined to stand by the appeal. I see troublous times ahead. May God direct all well! We have read your Prince's learned and judicious answer to the Papal delegates, Aleander and Marinus, from which we see they have achieved nothing in that quarter. I shall send them to you soon. This Aleander has been

mercilessly attacked in a witty lampoon because of his many vices. My writings have been burned in Cologne and Louvain.

Farewell in the Lord. Our father vicar has set off for Strenberg, under the escort of the lay brother Johannes.

Martin Luther.  
Wittenberg.  
(Schutze.)

To George Spalatin

The Emperor wrote to the Elector, asking him to bring Luther with him to Worms, to be judged by learned men. On 10th December Luther burned the Pope's Bull at the Elster gate, Wittenberg, in presence of hundreds of students, who flung Eck and Emser's works into the flames, and then sang the "Te Deum."

December 21, 1520.

You ask what I shall do if the Emperor demands my presence. If I am summoned, I declare I shall be borne thither sick, if I am not well enough to go, for if the Emperor call me, doubtless it is God's call. But if they use force towards me, which is probable, for they will not summon me in order to be enlightened, then the cause must be committed to God, who still reigns — to Him who upheld the three youths in the king of Babylon's fiery furnace. But if He will not deliver me, then my head is of no importance compared to the shameful death which was meted out to Christ. For, in a matter such as this, neither danger nor prosperity must be considered, — for we must only see that the gospel is not turned into ridicule by the godless through our conduct — or that our opponents should be able to boast that we had not the heart to confess, nor the courage to shed our blood, for the doctrines we taught. May the merciful Jesus guard us from such cowardice, and them from such boasting.

We cannot know whether our life or death may be most beneficial to the gospel. You know that the truth of God is a rock of offence set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel. We have only to pray God that Charles's reign may not be desecrated through the shedding of my blood, or any one else's, and as I have often said, I would rather perish in Papal hands than have him and his entangled in this matter. I know the misfortunes that befell the Emperor Sigismund through Huss's murder. He never after had any prosperity — dying without children — and his name blotted out, while his consort Barbara became a reproach among queens. But if it be decreed that I am to be delivered, not only to the high priests, but to the heathen, the will of the Lord be done. Amen.

This is my opinion and counsel. You can fancy anything of me but flight or recantation. I shall not flee, and much less recant, if the Lord Jesus give me the power thereto. For I could do neither without danger to holiness and the welfare of many souls.

Farewell, and be strong in the Lord. Wittenberg, on St. Thomas the Martyr's day, as many believe.

Martin Luther.