

THE LETTERS OF MARTIN LUTHER

1523

Pope Hadrian died (Sept 14, 1523). Pope Clement VII (Nov 19, 1523 - Sept 25, 1534).
Reformation progresses.

The first martyrs, Heinrich Voes and Johann Esch, burned at Brussels.

Birth year of the German hymn.

To Herzog George of Saxony

Herzog George asked Luther if he really wrote to von Kronberg. Luther admitted he did.

January 3, 1523.

Cease fuming against God and His Christ, on account of what I have done, most ungracious Prince! I have received your ungracious document, along with my letter to von Kronberg, and have paid particular attention to the part of which you complain, as injuring your soul, honour, and good name. As you wish to know the meaning I attach to my words, I answer, that it is all one to me how your ungracious Highness may take them.

For, however I may act or speak against your ungracious Grace, whether secretly or openly, I consider I am entitled to do so and mean to maintain the right. For were you really in earnest and did not tell so many lies as to injuring your soul, honour, and good name, you would not slander and persecute the truth so shamefully as you do. And this is not the first time that you have maligned me, so that I have more cause to complain of you.

But I am silent as to all this, for Christ commands me to be kind to my enemies, and hitherto you have had my poor prayers and service, and if that be treating you with contempt then I can do no more, nor shall I be frightened by any water bubble. But if my Lord Jesus will. He can enlighten the heart of your most ungracious Highness and turn you into a gracious and kind Prince towards me.

Martin Luther.

Wittenberg.

To Wenzel Link

Luther promises to come to his wedding.

April 8, 1523.

Grace and peace!

I, Philip, the Provost, Dr. Hieronymus, Pommer, our Prior, and Jacob, and also James, will certainly come to your wedding, if the Lord will. Carlstadt is from home, but Hieronymus, Trappe, and Meister Lukas will also come. Whether the wives of the Provost and Hieronymus may accompany them is uncertain. **I heard yesterday that nine nuns have left cloister Nimpschau, their prison, among whom are the two Sessatzers, and the Staupitz.** May you prosper with your bride.

Martin Luther.

(Walch, V. 15, Appendix 113.)

To Nicolas Hausmann

Hausmann, like Bugenhagen, had the gift of Church organisation, and insisted on the inseparable connection between doctrine and life. He died when preaching his first sermon in Freiberg in 1538. Deeply mourned by Luther.

May 24, 1523.

Grace and peace! This man returns to you, and brings as much as I could spare, but insisted upon having a letter to you. Do then as Christ teaches. As to the rest I am well in body, but outwardly so occupied with business, that my soul is well-nigh quenched for want of time to attend to it.

Pray that I may not be swallowed up by fleshly concerns. Greet all our companions in the faith, and may you prosper in the Lord. Martin Luther.

Wittenberg.

(Walch, V. 21. 845.)

To Three Banished Young Ladies

Luther comforts the three Freiberg young ladies who had been banished from Court for reading his books.

June 18, 1523.

To the honoured and virtuous Hanna von Draschwitz, Milia von Olsnitz, and Ursula von Feilitzin, my special friends in Christ.

Grace and peace! Honoured ladies. Herr Nicolas von Amsdorf has told me of your disgrace because of my books and begged me to write you a letter of consolation. But although I do not like writing to people I do not know, and you do not need comfort from me, still I could not refuse his request.

First, I beg you, as a friend, to let your hearts rest in peace, and not wish evil to those who have brought this upon you, but "being reviled bless," as St. Paul says. And Christ says, "Bless them that curse you," etc., so do the same, seeing you are illumined by the grace of God, and they are blinded and are injuring their own souls by running against God, not seeing how they are destroying themselves, when they fancy they are injuring you. Only wait and let Christ manage matters. He will abundantly requite your reproach, and raise you even higher than you desire, if you commit your cause entirely to Him. And even if your conscience tells you that you are in fault, you must not despair on that account. For it is a precious sign that God has so soon led you to repentance. And reflect that if even you wished to injure them, you could accomplish nothing. For it is a sacred matter for which you suffer, which God will permit no one but Himself to revenge. "He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye," He says.

I fancy that miserable blinded creature, Dr. Wolf Stehlin, is master there, but he will become entangled in a way he does not dream of in other matters. So act thus, my dear sisters, and the peace of God shall be with you. Amen! And take my letter in good part.

Martin Luther.
(De Wette.)

To the Christians in Holland, Brabant, and Flanders.

Luther's first poetical effusion was in honour of the two martyrs, Heinrich Voes and Johann Esch, Augustine monks,

July 1523.

Praise to the Father of mercies for permitting us anew to see His marvellous light, which has been hidden from us because of our sins. But the time has again come for the voice of the turtle to be heard in our land, and the flowers to appear on the earth. What a joy it is, dear ones, that you should yield us this great delight! For to you it has been given, not only to confess Christ, but to be the first to endure shame, imprisonment, and reproach for His name's sake, and now you have proved the strength of your faith by sealing your testimony with your blood. And also that Christ's two precious gems, Heinrich and

Johann in Brussels, should have held their lives of so little account as to yield them up to His honour.

Oh, how shamefully were these two souls slain, but how gloriously shall they reappear with Christ, and judge them by whom they have been unrighteously slaughtered. What pleasure the angels had in these two souls! How eagerly the fire freed them from this sinful life to open the door into everlasting glory! God be praised to all eternity that we have lived to see holy martyrs.

We up here have not yet been esteemed worthy to become such a precious offering to Christ, although many of us have not been without persecution, and are still enduring it. Therefore, well beloved, let us be joyful in Christ, and render thanks for this great miracle which He has begun to work among us. Pray for us, and for one another, that we may reach out a helping hand to each other, and let all cleave with one mind to Christ our Head, who will strengthen you with His grace, and perfect you to the honour of His holy name, to whom be praise from all of us, to all eternity. Amen.

Martin Luther.

To Bartime von Sternberg

A peculiarly beautiful letter.

September 1, 1523.

Grace and peace in Christ! Most gracious sir. Vincent Wernsdorfer has persuaded me, a stranger, to write expressing my Christian sympathy with you in your trial. Therefore, I trust your Excellency will graciously appreciate the motives which prompt me. He tells me how, since the departure of your dear consort to God, you have constantly occupied yourself with good works, particularly masses, vigils, etc., for the repose of her soul, thereby showing your love and loyalty to one who, through her life, certainly merited it; and he begged me to write you — a request I could not refuse, as it was meant for your Excellency's good.

You must recall Job's words, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord!" Thus, must you sing to your loving God, who first bestowed such a faithful wife upon you, and has now removed her. She was His before He gave her, and she is still His, even as we all are — now that He has taken her.

Therefore, although this is a great grief, that He has recalled His own, still the heart can find sweeter consolation in His most perfect will than in all His gifts — so to fulfil His will is something higher than to possess the best and noblest wife. Although one cannot feel this to be so, still faith does perceive it.

Therefore, may God give you grace to be joyful, and acquiesce in the rich exchange you have made, having now, instead of a tender loving wife, the will of a tender loving God — and God Himself in addition.

Oh, how blessed would we be if we could go on, making such exchanges with God! And we could do this if we understood how. For God meets us daily, but we are not ready to welcome Him. And I would beg of you, gracious sir, to cease from masses, vigils, and ' daily prayers for her soul. It is sufficient if your Excellency pray once or twice for her, for we are told that if we believe we shall receive what we pray for. Otherwise, if we always ask for one thing, it is a sign we do not believe God and thus anger Him more through unbelieving prayer.

But I particularly beg you would leave off the vigils and masses for the soul, for it is most displeasing to God, there being neither reality nor faith in them, but a mere mummery. Oh, people must pray otherwise if they wish anything from God. God ridicules such vigils — primarily, because God did not institute the mass for the dead, but as a sacrament for the living, and it is a dreadful thing for man to presume, without God's permission, to turn a sacrament for the living into a sacrifice for the dead. Beware of becoming a partner in this terrible error, which the priests and monks have instituted for the sake of their bellies.

For a Christian must do nothing that God has not commanded, and there is no command as to such masses and vigils, but it is solely their own invention, which brings in money, without helping either living or dead.

Your Excellency can inform yourself as to all these things by applying to the before-mentioned Wernsdorfer, who has a deep interest in you, impelling me to write you. . . .

May Christ illuminate and strengthen you in Christian faith and love towards your neighbours.

Your Excellency's obedient Martin Luther.
Wittenberg.

To Nicolas Gerbel

Luther asks if Francis Lambert would be likely to find a living in Strassburg.

December 4, 1523.

Grace and peace! Although this letter may be useless, my beloved Gerbel, I must write, as I heard you were in Strassburg at present. We have a Frenchman with us just now,

Francis Lambert, who was a preacher among the apostolic Minorites, as they call them, and he has taken a wife here, and thinks he would be better off nearer France, and will not be advised, being so full of his own affairs.

I believe there are many with you not too prosperous, who feel more inclined to come here, than we have people wishing to go to you. But if I am to have any peace I must do him this favour.

Therefore, pray say if there is any prospect of him earning sufficient to live upon. He is already pretty well versed in the Bible, although not up to our Barnabas and Paul. He hopes later to put my writings into French in order to make money on French soil. Our Prince often presents him with silver money, and this year he has fleeced him of forty ducats.

If you do not reply, neither of us shall have any peace.

So, you can see what I suffer from such people who, through me, become a burden to my good friends.

May you live prosperously with your wife.

Martin Luther.
Wittenberg
(Walch, a 10.)

To George Spalatin

Luther expresses dislike of the famous or infamous Thomas Munzer.

December 26, 1523.

I begged the official of Alt-Stadt to beware of Munzer's spirit of prophecy. What has happened meantime I do not know, but I cannot endure such a spirit, whoever the man may be. He lauds my doctrine and yet tries to tear it to bits. Then he talks and prays in such an insipid manner, using such unscriptural expressions, that anyone would fancy he was mad or drunken. He insists upon an interview with me and boasts beyond measure. I therefore begged the official to arrange a meeting with him, to discuss his teaching. I do not know if he will manage it. We are not of such a spirit that he need fear having his teaching put to the test.

Farewell, and pray for me.

Martin Luther.
Wittenberg.
(Schutze.)

To Johann Hesse

Luther approves of Hesse's Latin paraphrasing of Ecclesiastes. This, the real birth-year of Church hymnary, mostly founded on the Psalms.

{No date.}

Grace and peace! Accept my greeting, thou preacher of Ecclesiastes, but see that you and he preach the same thing. For I too will hear his voice in you and certainly read it. So send us your Commentary upon this book. It is desirable that it should be translated into the mother tongue; therefore I take the opportunity of admonishing you to this, in advance, that when the spirit moves you to the work you may let me know at once. I saw the man you sent me. It is no new thing, that many should wish to make the gospel a source of profit. It was so in St. Paul's days, and how much more in ours! Freedom is regarded as a cloak for evil. But there is One who will speedily judge them.

Farewell, and pray for me.

Martin Luther.
Wittenberg.
(Schatze.)

1524

First German Hymnbook appeared. Peasants' War. Luther more distressed by this, and the disturbances caused in Wittenberg by the fanatics, than by Charles V. declaring that the Edict of Worms should be enforced.

To Lambert Thorn

The Augustinian monk, Thorn, suffered a martyr's death in the Netherlands.

January 19, 1524.

Grace and peace! Christ, who is with you, my dear brother, bears witness within me that you need no comfort from me. For He suffers and is glorified; He is captive and reigns; He suffers violence, and yet triumphs both in and with you, having made you just and holy, through the knowledge of Himself, which is hidden from the world, but which He has so richly bestowed upon you.

Thereby you are not only strengthened inwardly by His Spirit in your affliction, but by the example of the two brothers, Heinrich and Johann. Both you and they have been a great comfort to me, and a sweet savour to all Christendom, and a glorious ornament to the gospel of Christ. Who knows why the Lord did not permit you to perish with them? Perhaps He spared you that He might do some mighty work through you. This encourages me much, that the faithful Saviour has not only permitted me to come to the knowledge of His truth, but has allowed me to see His grace flourishing so gloriously in you three.

I might deem this a misfortune, for it was I who first brought this teaching — for confessing which these two were burned, and you now sit in captivity — to the light of day. I fear I shall not be counted worthy to suffer such tribulation as you three for Christ's sake. Nevertheless, I shall comfort myself thus — that your bonds are my bonds, your prison my prison, and your fire my fire. In addition, I shall preach, and openly confess, before the godless world, princes and angels, the Word for which these two were burned and you sit in captivity, and because of which I both suffer and rejoice with you.

But the Lord Jesus, who has begun the good work in you, will perform it until the day of His glorious appearing. But pray for me, as I do for you, and remember you do not suffer alone, but He who says, "I will be with him in trouble; he shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name," suffers with you. Only wait upon Him who has said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." Do not dispute with Satan but turn your eyes to the Lord. Be firmly rooted upon the pure faith and never doubt that we shall be justified and sanctified through the precious blood of Christ, the spotless Lamb of God. Our works can as little make the man righteous, as they can be mistaken for Christ's blood — neither can they condemn us or lay sin to our charge. God be praised, in our Elector's land we have peace.

The Duke of Bavaria and the Bishop of Trier cause many to be slain and banish some. There are other bishops and princes who are not bloodhounds, although they worry their people through threats, and do them much injury. So, Christ is again despised of the people, whose member you now are, through the holy calling of our Father in heaven, and may He perfect this call in you, to His honour and glory. Amen.

All our people greet you, especially Jacob Praepositus, and the brethren from Antwerp, etc. They commend themselves to your prayers.

Martin Luther.
Wittenburg.

To George Bruck, Chancellor of Saxony

A marriage case. Luther complains of the unruly Carlstadt.

January 30, 1524.

Grace and peace! Most excellent Herr Chancellor. M. Wolfgang has told me of the sad separation case.

The man accuses his wife of wicked desertion, declaring he can prove he is blameless. But he has not done so as yet, so one must act according to Matt, xviii., as the man has hitherto been too modest to prove his wife's guilt in her presence, or bring forward the testimony of the whole town that she left her husband without cause. For it is not right to condemn her unheard, or without having convicted her of guilt.

It seems Aegidius of Erfurt only heard part of the matter, and then gave his opinion, which is even more contrary to the gospel than to law. In the next place, best of men, pray submit the following to your Prince at my request. Carlstadt has set up a printing - press at Jena in order to print what he pleases, desiring to indulge his weakness for teaching where he is not wanted, and maintaining a persistent silence where he has a call to act. Although this cannot do much injury to our ministerium, still it is apt to bring dishonour upon our Prince and University, as both have promised that nothing should be published without censorship by proper parties.

Seeing the Prince and we have kept the bargain, Carlstadt and his adherents cannot be allowed in the Prince's land to emancipate themselves from all authority. Would the Prince, therefore, order him to send any work to any censor he pleases, or suppress his undertaking, so that we may not come into bad odour through breaking our promise. Farewell in the Lord, and give my respects to the Prince.

Martin Luther.
Wittenberg.
(Schutze.)

To George Spalatin

The first evangelical hymnbook appeared this spring in Wittenberg, containing eight hymns — four by Luther. "Aus tiefer Noth schrei ich zu Dir" (Ps. 130) was in this collection.

February 23, 1524.

Grace and peace! I write, dear Spalatin, only because I wished to write you. For you are sitting at Nurnberg as still as if you were in Rome, so that we do not know whether you

may not all be sound asleep, somewhere. I got a letter from you long ago, but now all is so quiet that we do not know whether to expect a Pope or a Diet.

But by Easter we expect that the princes will be so stirred up by their priests and father confessors that as a worthy way of celebrating the sacrament of the Lord Jesus they will begin a fresh persecution of the gospel.

I am waiting to hear if you have put some of the Psalms into metre as I suggested. Everything goes well here.

The translation of Job gives us immense trouble on account of its exalted language, which seems to suffer even more, under our attempts to translate it, than Job did under the consolations of his friends, and seems to prefer to lie among the ashes. Evidently the author never wished it to be translated. Meanwhile this hinders the printing of the third part of the Bible.

Do write and let us know what is going on in the world. May all go well with you, and pray for me.

Martin Luther.
Wittenberg.
(Walch, 210. 886.)

To the Elector Frederick of Saxony

Luther wishes Melanchthon to be set apart to expound the Holy Scriptures.

March 23, 1524.

Grace and peace in Christ! Most Serene High-born Prince, etc. Doubtless your Grace knows that by the grace of God we have many promising youths among us, from distant lands, all thirsting for the Word of God, while enduring many hardships, some living merely on bread and water. Now I have been urging M. Philip to lecture on the Holy Scriptures, because he is so much better qualified to do so than I. For although I would gladly do it, it would necessitate my giving up the translation of the Bible into German. But whenever we plead with him to do so — the whole University desiring it — he defends himself thus, that he was appointed and is paid by your Grace to teach Greek, and must do so.

Therefore I am requested by all to beg your Electoral Grace, for the sake of the dear young people, and for the furtherance of God's Word, to see if it be not possible to have his salary directed for the exposition of the Holy Scriptures, as there are many young people qualified to teach Greek; and it is not seemly that his time should be taken up

with elementary teaching, while higher work, which might produce much fruit, and could not be repaid with money, be left undone. Would we had more who were thus fitted to lecture, for, alas, there are enough who think themselves able, and occupy the place of others, because they happen to be there.

But the time will come, as was formerly the case, when such work, no matter how unwillingly, must be left undone for the want of the right people to do it. Hence, we must now train people while we can, and do our utmost for our successors, and if it be your Grace's good pleasure, I beg you to bind over the said Philip to lecture on the Bible, even if he require a larger salary to do so. I commend your Electoral Grace to the tender mercies of God. Amen.

Your Grace's obedient servant,

Martin Luther.
Wittenberg.
(De Wette.)

To Erasmus of Rotterdam

Luther turns lovingly to Erasmus, and forgives him for his want of courage in espousing his cause.

April 1524.

Grace and peace from our Lord Jesus Christ! I have remained silent long enough, dear Herr Erasmus, waiting till you, as the greater and elder, should break the silence, but having waited so long in vain, charity impels me to take up my pen.

I do not reproach you for having kept aloof from us, knowing you did not wish to complicate the cause you were maintaining against my enemies the Papists. And I even have not taken it greatly amiss, that in order to conciliate the favour of some, or instigate the fury of others, you have issued pamphlets in which you attack us with a bitterness we did not expect from you. For we perceive that you have not been endued by God with such steadfastness and courage that you can confidently go forward with us to combat this monstrosity — hence we do not expect what is beyond your ability to render. But we have borne your weakness patiently and highly appreciated your gifts.

For the whole world must confess that it is through you there has been such a revival in letters, through which people have got access to the Bible in its purity, and that you possess great and glorious talents, for which we must ever be grateful. Hence I have never wished you to mingle in our affairs, to the detriment of your gifts ; for although your common sense and eloquence might accomplish much, still, if you do not heartily

enter into it, it is better that you should only serve God with the talent committed to you. But I fear our enemies might persuade you to condemn our doctrine, and then we would have to contradict you to the face. We have hitherto prevented some entering into conflict with you through their writings, therefore I wished that Hutten's challenge had not appeared, and still less your Schwamm (*Erasmus's defence against von Hutten's challenge*), which, without doubt, you have learned for yourself. How easy it is to talk of modesty, and blame Luther for want of it; and, on the other hand, how difficult, nay, impossible it is to act accordingly, except through a special gift of the Spirit. If I, who am easily moved to wrath, have often in the heat of the moment written too bitinglly [beizend), I have only done it to stubborn people. And I can testify that my tenderness towards the godless, no matter how unjust and stupid they may be, has not only the testimony of my own conscience, but has been experienced by many. Up till now I have held my pen in check, in spite of your conduct towards me, and have also written to friends, that I would restrain myself till you attacked me openly.

For although you were not of us, and rejected some of the principal points pertaining to everlasting blessedness, or hypocritically refused to give your opinion on the matter, still I shall not accuse you of obstinacy. What am I to do? The business is a bad one on both sides.

If I be mediator, I would ask these people to give up assailing you, and permit you, at your advanced age, to fall asleep in peace in the Lord. They would do this if they considered your weakness and the magnitude of the question at stake, which is far above your head.

But you, too, dear Erasmus, must remember their weakness, and not practise your powers of sarcasm on them, and where you cannot or dare not espouse our opinions, then leave them alone, patiently awaiting the success of your cause. I say all this, excellent Herr Erasmus, to prove my earnest wish that the Lord may give you a mind worthy of your great name, and if He delay doing this, I beg of you only to be a spectator of our tragedy, and not unite with our opponents, nor write against me, seeing I shall not publish anything against you. As to those who complain of suffering because of Luther, remember they are men, even as you and I, upon whom we should have compassion, bearing one another's burdens. There has been more than enough backbiting, so we must see that we are not devoured one of another.

This would be a most pitiable spectacle, as on neither side is any one really at heart an enemy of the gospel of Christ. Take my child-like simplicity in good part, and may you prosper in the Lord. Amen.

Martin Luther.
(De Wette.)

To Johann Oecolampadius

Luther expresses satisfaction at the decision of the Council at Basle against the Bishop's vicar.

April 1524.

Grace and peace! I have nothing to write, dear brother, except to greet you, and commend myself to your prayers.

Joachim, our trusted friend, will tell you everything.

I do not know whether Philip will come to us with the accused, whom I should like to see. I have written Erasmus, expressing a desire for peace and unity, so that this melancholy spectacle may come to an end, and you will do your best to achieve this.

We have had enough of disputing, and both of us have lost our tempers, so it is high time that Christ should come to the rescue and compel Satan to make way for the Holy Ghost.

The decision of the Council and magistrates of Basle against the Bishop's vicar has delighted me beyond measure. And pray for me. Farewell in the Lord.

Martin Luther.
Wittenberg.

To Jacob Strauss, Preacher in Eisenach

Luther now begins to interest himself in education.

April 25, 1524.

Grace and peace! You must not imagine, best of men, that I have not the highest opinion of you; for, I know, through the glorious power of the gospel, that we have been raised above everything else.... I beseech you to lay to heart the instruction of the young; for the gospel is threatened with untold evils through neglecting this duty. It is one of the most important duties. Greet Schalb and Schultetus in my name. I would have written them, but it is incredible how I am overwhelmed with all sorts of work, scarcely being able to overtake my correspondence, not to mention other things. The globe seems to rest on my head, so that I wish either to die or be borne away from the world, in order not to be quite annihilated. Greet your wife and child and smile sweetly upon them in my name.

Bear with your weak health, as is seemly, seeing you are in God's hand. Pray for poor me and farewell.

St. Mark's Day, without celebrations or procession.

Martin Luther,
(Schutz

To Nicolas Gerbel

Luther rejoices that the gospel is dominant in Strassburg.

May 6, 1524.

Grace and peace in the Lord! Although I have nothing to say, dear Gerbel, I could not let the messenger leave without sending love to the brethren in the Lord and commending myself to your prayers.

For I hear that the Word of God prevails with you. With us, the more hindrances that are put in its way the more it spreads. It has now reached Magdeburg and Bremen, and will soon be in Brunswick, I hope, as Prince Henry, who was once its bitter enemy, is now a changed man. Satan has founded another sect among us, who are neither acknowledged by the Papists nor by our own people. They boast that they are animated by celestial spirits and are independent of the witness of the Spirit within them.

From this we may perceive that our word is the Word of God, for it suffers not only from violence, but from fresh heresies. May God grant you and your loved ones health. Greet all in the Lord.

Martin Luther.
Wittenberg.
(Walch, 210.)

To Wolfgang Capito

Luther denies that Bucer and he are not friendly, etc. Capito was Praepositus in St. Thomas's Church, Strassburg.

May 25, 1524.

Grace and peace in the Lord! If you and Bucer did not so persistently declare that some people said your actions were condemned by us, and that we differed entirely in opinion

from you, I would attribute this to your weakness and jealousy on account of our silence; for the letter which the brothers brought three days ago declared the same thing. But seeing Christ reigns in you, you have nothing to fear, although our opinions might differ from yours, or that we should despise those you hold.

Still, it is almost unbearable for me to hear that our differences have been the topic of conversation, especially when such perfect unanimity of spirit reigns among us. This is specially trying to me, for I gladly conceal and overlook, as much as I can, any difference of opinion among ourselves; hence how much less dare I put up with these suspicions which are thrown upon our Christianity and spiritual peace? Therefore, if I were not so much occupied, I would, through the public press, expose such lies, and prove that in the things pertaining to Christ we are at one.

I am delighted to hear of the marriages of the priests, monks, and nuns among you; and that the former are now husbands in defiance of Satan, and am pleased when they get livings. What more shall I say? Am sorry I have heard nothing further of you. Go on and prosper, for all bear witness to your wonderful teaching; the people being struck down under it amid the enemies of the King.

I think, hitherto, too much consideration has been allowed for the weak; so, as they are daily becoming more hardened, one must speak plainly to them. For some day I shall cast aside the cowl, which I have hitherto worn, to strengthen the weak, and turn the Pope into ridicule. They are blind leaders of the blind.

I believe the report of our dissensions has arisen out of my letters to you translated into German. It is enough to terrify me from writing when they are immediately borne away to the printers against my will; for among close friends one writes more confidentially than it would be advisable to spread abroad.

But then you were a different man, and a courtier, while now you are Christ's freeman, and a servant of the gospel, and belonging to me, and I to you. Greet M. Bucer from me in Christ, with his dear wife and children, and all the recently made husbands, especially Hedio.

Our Church greets you. Grace be with you.

Martin Luther.
Wittenberg.

P.S. — Please apologise to Bucer and the others for not answering their letters. I shall write when I have time.

(Walch, V. 21. 900.)

To Johann Oecolampadius

Luther praises him for having quitted the monkish life.

June 20, 1524.

Grace and peace in Christ! I beg you, dearest Oecolampadius, not to ascribe my not writing to you to ingratitude or sloth; for I have not heard from you since you quitted your order, and fancied that since Christ had strengthened your heart through the power of the Spirit, you had overcome your superstitious conscience, and were now too great to write me, or need a letter from me. Truly, I highly approve of the praiseworthy step you have taken, and Philip never ceases speaking of you, and rejoices that you keep him in remembrance.

May the Lord strengthen you in your great undertaking — the exposition of Isaiah — although I know Erasmus takes no pleasure therein. But do not let his displeasure disturb you. He has performed the task to which he was called — he has reinstated the ancient languages, thus defrauding godless learning of their crowds of admirers. Perhaps, like Moses, he will die in the land of Moab, for he is powerless to guide men to those higher studies which lead to divine blessedness. I rejoiced when he ceased expounding the Scriptures; for he was not equal to the task. He has done enough in exposing the evils of the Church, but cannot remedy them, or point the way to the promised land. Take my prolixity in good part.

I know you do not need my consolation, for Christ will not forsake you. Pray for me, for I am so occupied with outward things that my health is in as great danger of being injured as my spirit. The monks and nuns who have left their cloisters rob me of many hours, for I am expected to find homes for them all, etc. Farewell, dear Oecolampadius. The grace of Christ be with you! Greet all who are of one mind with us.

Martin Luther.

(Walch, V. 21. 1 1 66.)

To Hieronymus Baumgartner, Nurnberg

A young patrician, who studied at Wittenberg.

October 12, 1524.

Grace and peace in the Lord! I must ask your services, dear Hieronymus, on behalf of this poor young man, Gregorius Keser. He wishes to settle, and asked me to introduce him to some one in Nurnberg, Although I could not give him much hope, for I know every place is full, still I bade him God-speed, in God's name, who feeds the ravens.

Moreover, if you intend marrying Katherine von Bora, make haste before she is given to someone else, for C. Glatz, pastor in Orlamunde, is ready waiting. She has not yet got over her love for you. I wish that you two were married.

Farewell.

Martin Luther.
Wittenberg.
(Walch, V. 21. 917.)

To George Spalatin

Luther dissuades Spalatin from leaving the Court, and resigning his post, unless he wishes to marry.

November 30, 1524.

Grace and peace! As you ask my advice as to leaving Court, dear Spalatin, I would say: You have perhaps cause to do so, but unless you have some other reason for giving up your post, the wrongdoing of others does not justify your doing it, if it be not the idea of marriage (*Spalatin married the following year*), which is driving you away; and I can think of nothing else, especially as you are so at home at Court, and so useful to many princes; and if some one else got your situation, how much he would have to learn! And even if your wish were accomplished, it would be long before the Prince could have the same confidence in any other, you having been so long with him.

Therefore remain, leaving only to marry. I fancy you are substituting another reason for the true one, but I see no object in this, for it must become public when it takes place. You can thank Argula von Staupitz (*A warm friend of the Reformation*) for what she writes about marrying. I cannot wonder at people gossiping about me when they do it about others. But tell her from me that I am in the hands of the Lord, as His creature, whose heart He can turn whither He will.

But according to my present frame of mind, I have no intention of marrying, not that I am insensible to the emotions of the flesh, being neither wood nor stone, but because I have no desire to, and daily expect to die a heretic's death. However, I shall not limit the power of the Lord working in me, nor depend on the stability of my own heart. But I hope He will soon take me away.

Farewell, and pray for me,

Martin Luther.
Wittenberg.
(Walch, V. 21.)

To Katherine Schutzin

Luther congratulates this excellent lady on her marriage to a famous preacher, Matthew Zell, in Strassburg.

December 17, 1524.

To the virtuous Katherine Schutzin, my dear sister in Christ, Strassburg, Grace and peace!

My dear friend. I wish you joy in having so richly received the grace of God, so that you not only behold His kingdom (which is hidden from so many), but that He has given you such a husband, from whom you can learn all that is good, I wish you grace and strength to enjoy this good gift with gratitude till that day comes when we shall all meet and rejoice together, if God will. Pray for me and greet your lord Herr Matthew Zell from me. I commit you to God.

Martin Luther.
(De Wette.)

To George Spalatin

Luther again begs him to help him with Church hymns.

1524.

Grace and peace! I wish to follow the example of the prophets and Church fathers and compose German Psalms for the people; that is, spiritual songs, so that the Word of God may dwell among them through the hymn.

Therefore, we are seeking poets everywhere. Hence, you being such a master of the German tongue and so eloquent, I beg you to lend a hand here, and turn one of these Psalms into a hymn, according to this pattern.

But avoid Court terms, to enable the common people to understand the words, which must flow smoothly, and the language be pure. But free scope is allowed, and if one understand his work, he can express himself as he will. I have not this gift and would not be pleased with my own work.

Therefore, I shall search if a Heman, an Asaph, or a Jeduthum can be found anywhere. I shall also ask Johann Dolzig, he being rich in words and eloquent; so you will do your

part when you have leisure. Meantime, you have my seven Penitential Psalms, with the exposition thereupon, from which you can gather their meaning; or, if you prefer me to point out the Psalms you should take, the first might be, "Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger," "Lord, hear my prayer," the second.

And John Dolzig might paraphrase, "Happy is the man," for I have already translated "Aus tiefer Noth" (130th Psalm). But if these be too difficult, take " Rejoice in the Lord," 33rd Psalm, or Psalm 103. Write which I shall leave for you.

May you prosper in the Lord.

Martin Luther.

To George Spalatin

Luther sends specimen of new edition of the New Testament and begs for an income for Bugenhagen.

1524.

Grace and peace! Here you have the whole of the New Testament for yourself and the Elector, except the preface to the Romans, which will be ready to-morrow.

I also send a copy to the young Prince (John Frederick), which you may praise to your heart's content.

Lukas Cranach and Christian counsel this. I fancy Wolfgang Stein has already sent one for the old Prince (Johann).

And I hope you will undertake to persuade the Elector to bestow one of the bursaries, or stipends, on Johann Pomeranus, which was so badly bestowed upon the sophist; for, next to Philip, he is the first theological lecturer in the town, indeed, in the whole world. I am most anxious to keep him here, for it is said — and it is true — they wish to have him in Erfurt, and who knows how long I may be allowed to remain! More of this again.

Farewell, and pray for me.

Martin Luther.

(Walch, V. 21. 466.)