

THE LETTERS OF MARTIN LUTHER

1527

This was the year of the first church visitation in Electoral Saxony. Plague in Wittenberg. Sack of Rome.

To Johann Agricola

January 1, 1527.

Grace and peace! Kathie, my wife and commander, ordered me to thank you for the cloth you sent, but such a costly gift is not seemly for poor people like us. It is just as it should be, that Elizabeth should enter your Elizabeth's service. God grant that she may be truly obedient. We are all well, and amusing ourselves by beautifying Wittenberg, so that it may have a uniform appearance, while we are becoming lamentably indifferent to the Word of God. I am at present preparing to attack the fanatics abroad. Pray to God for me that He may crush Satan.

Otherwise there is nothing new here. May you and yours prosper. All here greet you.

Martin Luther.

To Nicolas Hausmann

The Elector accedes to church visitation.

January 10, 1527.

Grace and peace in Christ, dear Nicolas! I have no news, except that the Elector wishes the church visitation begun at once. And after the churches are put on a good footing we can settle the question of excommunication {Bami). It would be impossible to do that now when all is in confusion. Zechariah is in the press, and the book is daily growing under my hand. I am also attacking the Sacramentarians (*those who deny the doctrine of the real presence, both the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation and the Lutheran doctrine of a temporal spiritual presence*).

Pray Christ to guide my pen so as to refute Satan successfully. I am greatly rejoiced over your testimony that you are untainted by such rubbish. But I never doubted you. I am grieved that that estimable man Oecolampadius has fallen into the mire through such

childish nonsensical ideas. Satan urges him on. May God save him! Urbanus Rhegius also inclines the same way, or has fallen in. May God preserve His own!

You will have heard that the Emperor has been successful in Italy. The Pope is beset on all hands, so that he may be demolished, for his hour has come, although persecution is rife, and many are being burned. My Kathie greets you respectfully.

Martin Luther.
(Walch, vol. 21. 1527.)

To Eberhardt Brisger

February 1, 1527.

Grace and peace! You ask me, my worthy Eberhard, to send you eight gulden; but where am I to get them. "You know the state of my finances, and this year alone I have contracted 100 gulden of debt through my wretched management. I have pledged in one quarter three goblets for 50 gulden. The Lord who thus punishes my folly will again draw me out of the net. In addition, Lukas (Cranach) and Christian will take no more such pledges from me, for they know they will either receive nothing or I be ruined. At length I pressed a fourth goblet upon them for 12 gulden, which they lent me, upon my word of mouth, to give to the fat Hermann. How could I let myself be so drained, and plunge my small belongings in such debt?

Now it would not be giving my own, but other people's money as alms. So, no one can say I am mean or greedy seeing I have been so lavish to others. Now I shall arrange thus. I shall talk it over with them, and perhaps satisfy them, and if I can lay hands on more money I would not hesitate to advance it. And, lastly, I would like to visit you myself, and talk over matters with you, and see your glebe. Why not let your empty house? It would have brought in a bit of money. Farewell.

Yours,

Martin Luther.
(Schdtze.)

To Elsie von Kanitz

The visitation of the churches and schools began in February. Melanchthon, Schurf, and two nobles were sent to the Wittenberg district.

May 2, 1527.

To the honourable and virtuous maiden, Elsie von Kanitz. My dearest friend in Christ! Grace and peace in Christ! I have written your dear aunt, Hanna von Plausig, to let you come to me for a time, as I could employ you in teaching young girls, and thus set an example which others might follow. You would live in my house and eat at my table, so you would be safe and free from all care; therefore, pray come.

I hear the Evil One is tormenting you with evil thoughts. Oh, dear young lady, do not let that trouble you, for those who suffer from the devil here will not be troubled with him above; so this is a good sign. Christ also had to endure the same, and many holy prophets and apostles, as the Psalms plainly show. Therefore, take comfort, and gladly suffer the Father's rod. He will deliver you in His own time. When you come I shall discuss the subject fully with you. I commit you to God.

Martin Luther.
Wittenberg.
(De Wette.)

To Leonhardt Kaiser

Who was imprisoned in Veste Oberhaus and finally burned for his religion at Scharding, Austria on the 16th August 1527.

May 20, 1527.

To the esteemed dear brother in Christ, the faithful servant and prisoner of Christ, Leonhardt Kaiser. Grace and peace! That your old man should be a prisoner, dear Herr Leonhardt, is the will of Christ your Saviour, who gave Himself up for you and your sins into the hands of the godless, so that He might redeem you with His blood, and make you His brother and co-heir of eternal life.

We are in deep sorrow on your account, and pray earnestly that you may be set free, not so much for your sake as for the benefit of many and the honour of God, if it be His will. But if it be the will of Heaven that you should not be free, still you are free in spirit. Only see that you are strong, and constantly overcome the weakness of the flesh, patiently bearing with it in the strength of Christ, who is with you in your cell, and will stand by you in all your affliction, as He has promised: "I will be with him in trouble."

Hence you must confidently call upon Him in prayer, sustaining yourself with Psalms of consolation amid Satan's fury, so that you may be strengthened of the Lord, and not succumb too readily to the teeth of Behemoth (Job xl.15). For you know he cannot injure you if you cry to Christ, whose presence and power are over all. As St. Paul says, "If God

be for us, who can be against us?”, and He will help all who are tempted. Therefore, my beloved brother, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, so that you may recognise, endure, Jove, and praise out of a full heart the fatherly will of God, whether free or not. To enable you to do this, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ will work in you, according to the riches of His glory, who is the Father of all mercies and the God of all consolation. Amen. I herewith commit you to God; also pray for us.

Martin Luther.
Wittenberg.

To Nicolas Hausmann

In July, Melanchthon, Myconius, and Menius of Erfurt, with three lawyers, began church visitation in Thuringia. The sack of Rome took place May 6, 1527, the troops of Charles V disobeyed orders by attacking Rome, forcing Pope Clement VII to seek refuge in the Castel d'Angelo.

July 13, 1527-

To the esteemed Nicolas Hausmann of Zwickau. Grace and peace! The church visitation has begun in earnest. Eight days ago, Herr Hieronymus and Magister Philip set off. May the Lord guide them. Amen.

Rome has been devastated in the most merciless manner. Christ has so overruled it that the Emperor, who, because of the Pope, persecuted Luther, should now be obliged to overthrow the Pope on Luther's account. So all things have been made subservient to the welfare of God's people against the adversary, I have no other news.

My Kathie and my Hans greet you. Farewell in the Lord. I have had a terrible attack of giddiness, so that I can neither read nor write.

Martin Luther.
(Schtttze.)

To George Spalatin

In this visitation the Elector legally established the office of superintendent, to keep an eye on the efficiency of the clergy.

August 15, 1527.

I am glad to hear you are again well, and thank God for this. Pray that I may be kept in health, if it be the will of God our Saviour. The Prince sent me the report of the visitation to see if it was worth printing. It is all right, if they only stick to what is arranged. The plague is certainly here, but it is not bad. However, the people are so terrified that they are running away in every direction. I have never seen Satan so successful. The more he can frighten them the happier he is; and that he has scattered our University is a great joy to him. But only eighteen have died. In the fishers' quarter no one has died of it, but all are buried there. To-day we have buried (*unnamed possibly chaplain*)'s wife, who died yesterday, almost in my arms. This is the first death in the middle of the town. The other eighteen are round about the Elster Gate.

Among them was Barbara, your Eberhardt's daughter, who was marriageable, and John Kronenberg's daughter. Hans Luft has recovered, and many others get better if they take medicine. But many are so excited they will do nothing and die defiantly. Justus Jonas has lost his son Johannes. He, with his household, has gone to his fatherland, but I remain here, as the people are in desperation. So Pommer and I are here alone with the chaplain, but Christ is with us, who will overcome the old murderous serpent, who brought sin into the world, even although he may bruise our heel.

Pray for us, and may God protect you.

Martin Luther.
(Walch.)

To Nicolas Hausmann

August 19, 1527.

The visitation will not be allowed to drop, dear Nicolas, so let us be of good cheer. We hope the plague may soon be over. It plagues us in manifold ways, especially me, weakening my faith and loading me with care. The pest has been three times in the house. The little son has been eight days ill, and is only kept alive by liquids; but now he is recovering. For many months I have suffered from faithlessness. Pray that our faith may not fail. My Kathie sends money for linen. I do not wish to trouble you. Pommer, who comforts me in my solitude, as the plague took the chaplain's wife away, greets you warmly. Kathie also commends herself to your prayers.

Farewell, beloved brother.

Martin Luther.
(Walch, V. 21. 605.)

To Nicolas Hausmann

Luther rejoices over his friend's recovery.

September 2, 1527.

Accept my greeting, for I have really nothing to write. But I would thank my Lord Jesus, my excellent Hausmann, that He has restored you to us. Praised be His name to all eternity for doing this! Amen. I hope that the visitors will, after a short rest, go on with their work. Meantime comfort yourself in patience. At the same time pray for us, so that the Lord may remove the epidemic and gather again the scattered ones, that His Word may be spread abroad more and more. God grant this. I commit you to Him.

Martin Luther.
(Schatze.)

To Gerhardt Xantis

Luther expresses joy over his friends' intercession for him, on account of the absence of his helpers in Jena.

September 2, 1527.

To my honoured brother in Christ, Gerhardt Xantis. Grace and peace! The other day I wrote to Montanus, and not to you. Now I write to you, and not to Montanus, for I perceive you are one heart and soul in the Lord. Therefore, show him this letter, and thank him on my behalf for being so constantly remembered in prayer. All of us, and especially myself, stand much in need of such intercession, and I rejoice that such pious men feel so deeply interested in me.

The Commentary upon Zechariah, which was half finished, has been delayed because of my health. The Prophets, which we had begun to translate into German, have again been obliged to hang their harps, through the dispersion of our colleagues by the plague. Let our Jacob know this, that he may pray more earnestly for us, that Christ, our Physician, may allay the fear, not so much of the frequent deaths, as of a most infectious disease, so that our people may again return and our work be resumed. It is Satan himself who has spread these evil reports and fears to impede the gospel, but Christ will, in answer to your prayers, tread him under our feet. God grant this. Our wives are full of joy, and thank you for your present, and good heart. Melanchthon unites in thanking you with me.

The High School (*University*) has been removed to Jena. Pommer and his wife greet you warmly, and also mine. And I greet you warmly, and promise, with God's help, to do what you prescribe. And yet one more greeting from my son.

I herewith commit you to God.

Martin Luther.
(Schutze.)

To the Christians in Halle

Halle long shut to the Reformation, because of Herzog George, although in 1527 their Evangelical preacher, George Winkler, was murdered by order of the Archbishop of Mayence.

September 1527.

To the dear friends of Christ in Halle. Grace and peace in Christ our Saviour! Amen.

Dear sirs and friends — I have long intended writing you a letter of admonition and consolation under the trials with which Satan has visited you, through the murder of that good man, Magister George, thus robbing you of a faithful pastor, who declared to you the Word of life. But one thing after another has prevented me, especially my weak health, and although not yet well I can delay no longer. But although unable to derive any comfort from such an untoward event, still it would be wrong to allow such a perfidious murder to be passed over in silence and let such blood rot in the earth instead of bearing witness to God's Holy Word.

Therefore, I shall help it to cry to Heaven, in order that so much as in us lies, such a murder may never be forgotten till God the merciful Father and righteous Judge hears the cry, as He heard that of righteous Abel's blood, and executes justice upon the murderer. And God grant that Magister George's blood may be a divine seed, which although sown in the earth by the hands of Satan and his members, may bring forth seed an hundredfold, so that instead of the murdered George a hundred other faithful preachers may arise, who will injure Satan a thousand times more than the one man has done; and because he would neither suffer nor listen to the one he will be obliged to suffer and listen to many others, even as happened to the Pope through Huss's blood, whom he would not permit to exist quietly in a corner, but must now hear its cries over the whole world, till it has reached Rome itself, and there seems no prospect of its being silenced. Amen.

Martin Luther.
(De Wette.)

To Michael Stiefel

About Leonhardt Kaiser's death.

October 22, 1527.

Grace and peace! I have received the history of Leonhardt Kaiser, but meantime his cousin has sent me all his writings in his own hand. I shall have them printed at once. Pray earnestly that Christ may not forsake me, for I am driven almost mad by the assaults of Satan's angels. Miserable creature that I am! How unlike Leonhardt! I preach the gospel with many words, but he is a powerful doer of the Word. Oh, that I were counted worthy to be endued, not with the double but with the half of his spirit, so that I might be able to overcome Satan and quit this life. God be praised that amid so much evil He has granted us poor miserable creatures a glorious glimpse of His lovingkindness as a token that He has not forsaken us.

Pray for me, my brother Michael, and may Christ grant that we too may be followers of Leonhardt. He is not called a king, but a kaiser, for he has overcome him whose power is so great that no one on earth can be compared to him.

In addition, he is not only a priest, but a true bishop, nay pope, who has offered up his body as a sacrifice well pleasing to the Holy God. Also, he is rightly named Leonhardt, that is, lion-heart, for he has proved himself to be a strong and fearless lion. All that this name signified was foreseen when he received it. He is the first of his race who has so consecrated the name.

Give your dear wife my thanks, and my little prattling Hans must send his respects to you. I and my Kathie hope that she may live happily with her child in Christ.

Pommer greets you warmly. Farewell in Christ.

Martin Luther.
(Walch, V. 21. 597.)

To Nicolas Amsdorf

A letter full of complaints.

November 1, 1527.

Grace and peace!

Dear Amsdorf — It seems to be God's will that I who up till now was wont to comfort you all, now need it greatly myself. Meantime my sole petition is that you will help me to pray that Christ may perfect His gracious will in me; so that I may be well pleasing in His sight, and never be ungrateful to Him, after having up till now zealously preached His gospel and honoured His name, although often having grieved Him with my sins. Satan begs that a Job may be delivered into his hands, but Christ bids him spare his life. And to me He says, "I am thy salvation," which makes me sure that He will not for ever be wroth over my sins. I should like to answer the Sacramentarians, but if I do not get stronger I cannot.

My house has been turned into a hospital. Augustine's Hanna had the plague inwardly, but is now better. Margaret Mochim alarmed us with a sore and other bad symptoms. I am also very anxious about my Kathie at present. My Hans has been three days ill, and eats nothing. Some say it is the teeth, and both seem in danger.

The wife of George, the chaplain, is also ill of the plague, and her condition is perilous. May Jesus be gracious to her. So, there are fightings without and fears within. Truly, the Lord is trying us sorely. Our one consolation is, and with this we can defy Satan, that we have God's Word, through which believing souls can be saved, although He consumes the bodies. We send greeting to the brethren and yourself, and beg you to pray for us that we may patiently endure God's chastening hand, and withstand Satan's power and cunning, both in life and death.

Wittenberg, All Saints' Day. In tenth year of the overthrow of the Indulgence, to whose memory we are drinking a toast, and to both our healths.

Martin Luther.

To Justus Jonas

A sad letter. Jonas in Nordhausen during the plague.

November 10, 1527.

Grace and peace in God our Saviour! Thanks, dear Jonas, that you pray for us, and sometimes write. I hope you got yesterday's letter. I have not read Erasmus's writings nor those of the Sacramentarians, except something by Zwingli. They only do right in trampling a miserable creature like me under foot, thereby following Judas's example, and making me utter my complaints to my Lord Jesus of being persecuted on all sides, and having to bear God's indignation for having sinned against Him.

The Pope, Emperor, Bishops, and the whole world attack me; and as if this were not enough, my very brethren plague me, nay, even my sins, death, and the devil with his angels, rage without measure. So, then what would become of me were Christ to forsake me because of whom all these are my enemies." But He will not desert me, poor miserable sinner, for I esteem myself the least of all men.

Would that Erasmus and the Sacramentarians experienced for one quarter of an hour the sorrows of my heart, then I would declare they were truly converted. But now my enemies are mighty, and heap anguish on him whom the Lord chastens.

But enough of this, so that I may not seem impatient under God's rod, who chastens and heals, kills and makes alive again. Let His holy and perfect will be praised now and for ever! Were we of the world it would love its own. I am also very anxious about my wife. The Lord has done great things for me, so I must suffer great things. May Christ be my rock and my strength. Amen.

My Hans can send no greeting in his sickness, but begs for your prayers. For twelve days he has lived only on fluids. He now begins to eat a little. The child would gladly play as he used to do but is not able.

Margaret Mochim's abscess was opened yesterday, and she is now a little better. I do not wish Rome to be burned; that would be a marvellous sign. Would to God that we could meet again in our homes, and work at Ecclesiastes, so that it may be issued before we die. I commend myself to your prayers. We Wittenberg people are hated of all, and they are terrified on account of the pest. As the Psalm says, "We are a byword among the heathen, a shaking of the head among the people," but we hope a joy and crown of the angels and saints.

Martin Luther.

To Nicolas Hausmann

Luther thanks him for comfort received.

November 17, 1527.

Grace and peace in Christ! May our Lord Christ one day, dear Nicolas, comfort you with the comfort you have given me. But I, poor sinner, thank my Lord that up till now He has not permitted Satan to do as he pleased with me, although he has tried with all his might and cunning to do so. Pray that Christ may overcome him and his onslaught upon me. I do not believe that it is one devil that is attacking me, but that the very prince of devils has risen against me, so great is his power of assailing me with Scripture, so that

my own knowledge of the Bible does not suffice for my protection if I were not strengthened by words of Scripture out of the mouths of my friends.

This is why I ask so earnestly for your prayers; and if ever you are in the same position, the sport of the devil, you will understand my request. May Christ be with you. Amen.

Martin Luther.
(Walch, 21. 1069.)

To Justus Jonas

Luther longs for his friend's return.

November 29, 1527.

Grace and peace! That you are so earnest in your prayers for me, dear Jonas, is a very great boon to me, poor tortured creature. I also pray much for you that Christ may take pity on you, for I hear you suffer from stone. I would counsel you to return to us, for Christ be praised, the plague has abated, and our townspeople are beginning to marry and live in security. Your quarters since (*unnamed*)'s death are now quite purified up to the Pfarr church and the market. May the Lord guide you to what is well pleasing to Him and good for yourself. Amen.

Greet your Kathie and Justelchen. Augustine's wife is better. If only Margareta Mochim would recover, but now we have hope. She has been some weeks ill, and can scarcely hear or speak.

P.S. — Your house, which is now clean, I have lent to the other chaplain's wife and family, for she was so distressed over the death of her friend, the chaplain's wife, that it was the only way to comfort her, but the two husbands sleep here in the manse. I hope you will excuse us making so free with your belongings, but I promised that if the plague attack any of them they shall at once be brought back here.

Meanwhile may Christ give you a house in Nordhausen, as we in our dire need had to take yours.

Our Brunoni's little son will not live over the day, for death has marked the orphan for his own. Farewell in Christ.

Martin Luther.
(Walch, V. 21. 1072.)

To Johann Walther in Torgau

Walther was three weeks in Luther's house helping to arrange the Church music, the Reformer himself composing the melodies for the German hymns, to Walther's amazement. Luther said Virgil had taught him this.

December 21, 1527.

Grace and peace! From this letter you will see, my Walther, that I answered your last, as I wished to offer you help and counsel. The messenger should have fetched this letter early in the morning, as you write, but how can I know where they spend the night, or run after them? It is their custom, when they have given the letters to my servants, to disappear, as if carried away by the wind, and they do not reappear. Therefore, I write once more, as you request. I herewith commit you to God. Amen.

Martin Luther.

To Justus Jonas

Luther expects the return of the University from Jena.

December 29, 1527.

Grace and peace! I marvel much, my Jonas, that you have not yet returned, seeing the plague is gone. You might at least have paid us one visit in our affliction — of course, at our expense. The people who had fled are now returning in shoals — indeed, the whole of the citizens. Tomorrow the Town Council will also be here, and we expect the University shortly, as Magister Philip writes. God has manifested His love towards us in a marvellous manner, letting us perceive that our earnest prayers are acceptable in His sight, although we ourselves are sinners.

Margaretta Mochim is restored from the jaws of death, for we had given up hope, as she could neither hear nor understand. Otherwise, we are all well. My Kathie, with the little baby Elizabeth, is well, and sends you greetings, but is longing to see you all here again in good health.

I am well in body, also in mind, so long as my Lord Christ upholds me, and the slender thread by which He keeps hold of me, and I of Him, is not snapt asunder. But Satan has tried to drag me down with powerful cart ropes and ships' cords into the abyss, but the weak Christ has overcome as yet through your prayers, and struggles bravely for the victory!

Go on and cause the weak Christ within me to become strong through your prayers, that He in His weakness may defy the might and insolence of the devil. Revenge me on him,

and turn his pride into shame, which I have exposed through the discovery of his arts and cunning. We are all one in Christ. May you prosper much in Him! Greet all your people and return speedily.

Martin Luther.
Wittenberg.

1528

To Gerhardt Xantis

The second visitation of the churches began in October — Spalatin, Melanchthon, Luther, Jonas, Myconius, taking part. The following year the Elector ordered Luther to remain at home, as Wittenberg lost one hundred students through his and Melanchthon's absence.

January 1, 1528.

Grace and peace! I received your last letter of consolation with much joy, my Gerhardt. Many thanks. May Christ comfort you for this. No doubt this temptation, which has afflicted me from my youth up, is very great, but I could not have believed that it should so have gained the upper hand. Nevertheless, up till now Christ has always conquered. I commend myself to your prayers and those of the brethren. I have helped others, but cannot help myself. Praise to my Christ, who, amid poverty, murmuring against God, and even in death, will gather us together into His kingdom.

Meantime we know, that firmly as we may trust His Word and work, these will not justify us. We are ever faithless, although we may boast of having led a Christian life in this world, in spite of its accompanying trials. But one thing is certain, Christ is our life and righteousness, and it is hidden in God. (How difficult, how alien to the flesh, is it to comprehend this.) I am glad I now understand St. Peter's allusions to being partakers of Christ's sufferings, which are the portion of our brethren in this world; but as life draws to a close they become more bitter.

Greet Montanus and all the brothers.

Martin Luther,
(Schutze.)

To Nicolas Hausmann

The little book on the Visitation.

March 2, 1528.

Grace and peace! The book on the Visitation is not finished, for the printers ran short of paper, but it will soon be ready. I am delighted to hear your good opinion of Herr Paul, Abbot of Sagan, and that he sent you such an honest answer. May we with one heart and mouth praise the Father to all eternity. Amen!

There is nothing new here, except the terrible threats of the priests, who hope much from the Regensburg Diet. Pray earnestly with your people for the Princes of Germany, that God may endue them with grace, so that they need not always require to come together at such great expense, and in vain, but may desire peace and righteousness, as is seemly. We have had so many diets lately, and see no results, because God has forsaken us; while the devil hinders all that is good. Farewell, and greet Paul your evangelist in the Lord, with all the brethren.

Martin Luther.

To Conrad Cordatus

Luther invites his friend to Wittenberg, as he thinks he cannot be happy in King Ferdinand's land.

March 6, 1528.

Grace and peace in the Lord! Dearest Cordatus — I have known for long that you had left Austria, and were living on the estate of Glock in Silesia, waiting to be recalled by that noble lady in the Riesengebirge, who promised to send for you, but I fancy will not do so. If you are not comfortable there, do not hesitate to hasten to me, or wherever you would like to go. If it should ever occur to the lady to recall you, she can find you as easily with us as anywhere else, and I thought you could have more congenial society here than among people so unlike yourself. For my part, I have no hesitation in begging you to set aside the lady's promises and begin work in the Lord's vineyard. So come with your wife and sister till Christ arranges something else. The Papists, triumphant through Ferdinand's mandate, are waxing bold, and probably will not grant the gospel's servants any authority in these lands; and why should you buoy yourself with vain hopes? It is now three months since the plague left Wittenberg, God be praised!

I hope you have read my treatise against the Anabaptists. I flatter myself that I have rescued some from their errors. The rest you will hear from our Rorar, Christ's faithful servant. The grace of God be with you!

Martin Luther.

To Leonhardt Beier

Luther invites him to Wittenberg.

March 7, 1528.

Grace and peace! When Satan rages, my Leonhardt, he is only acting in accordance with his office and name. For, as the Scriptures say, nothing else is to be expected from him. But be steadfast, and struggle and pray against him in spirit and in deed. There is One who is mighty, and He dwells within us. To God be honour and glory. If you be driven away, a refuge is waiting for you here, and all that the Lord has given us is at your service. For many {Kxultanten} who have to flee from Ferdinand's kingdom settle among us, who at least resemble Christ in His poverty. I commend myself to your prayers and those of your friends. Farewell in the Lord.

Martin Luther.
(Schutze.)

To George Spalatin

Luther announces his arrival in Borna.

March 18, 1528.

Grace and peace! I have this moment arrived in Borna, dear Spalatin, almost frozen, and starving of hunger. What a dreadful journey we have had, but we have done it in two days, having crawled rather than travelled, for we were determined to sup with you to-night. I write this in order that you may excuse us to the Prince. For, the letter demanding our presence only arrived the other night, and we hurried as much as we could, but the roads, wind, and cold hindered us. So, if God will, we shall breakfast with you to-morrow. Pommer and Jonas are my travelling companions, as they did not wish me to go alone.

May you prosper in the Lord!

Martin Luther.
(Walch, V. 21. 1094..)

To Wenzel Link

Luther sends books, and tells of the flight of Elizabeth of Denmark (1485–1555), Electress of Brandenburg (married Joachim Nestor elector of Brandenburg in 1502). She was the daughter of King Hans of Denmark (known as John reigned 1482-1513) and sister of King Christian II (reigned 1513-1523). Her mother was Christine of Saxony (1461–1521),

March 28, 1528.

Grace and peace! I have given Johann Hoffmann copies to distribute among you, against the Sacramentarians. God grant that they bring forth much fruit, for I have resolved to stop writing against them, for they do not understand logic, so it is impossible to bring them to reason or convince them that they have been refuted. The Electress has, with the help of her brother the King of Denmark, fled from Berlin Schloss to our Prince here, her uncle; for it is said the Elector intended walling her up on account of her having partaken of the sacrament in both kinds. Pray for our Prince. The pious and good-hearted man is much plagued and deserves the help of our prayers.

May you prosper with wife and child!

Martin Luther.
(Walch, V. 21. 109S.)

To A Stranger

Consolation to one doubting his election to eternal life.

July 20, 1528.

Dear sir and friend — I wish you above all the grace and mercy of God through his Son Jesus, our sole Saviour. Some days ago, my brother, Caspar Cruciger, doctor of the Holy Scriptures, informed me that you were afflicted with strange thoughts as to God's omniscience, and had become quite perplexed, so that it was feared you might take your own life (which may God Almighty prevent).

You find difficulty in believing that the Almighty knew from all eternity who should be saved, whether they were already dead, alive, or as yet unborn. Now, all must admit

this, for He knows all things, and nothing is hidden from Him who counts the stars in the heavens, the leaves of the trees, nay, even the hairs of men's heads, from all which you seem to fancy you may do what you will, good or evil, for if God has ordained whether you shall be saved or not (which is true) your thoughts are more taken up with damnation than salvation, and you sink into despair and become a prey to despondency. So I, as my Lord Christ's servant, send this letter of consolation to let you know God's thoughts towards you, whether you be destined to blessedness or perdition.

Although the Almighty knows everything, and no one can go against the decrees of His will, still it is His earnest desire, nay command, decreed from all eternity, that all men should be partakers of everlasting joy, as is clearly seen from Ezekiel xviii. 23, "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord; and not that he should return from his ways, and live?" Seeing He desires the salvation of sinners, who swarm beneath heaven's lofty vault, why will you with your foolish thoughts prompted by Satan separate yourself from them, thereby cutting yourself off from the grace of God? "For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him," and cry for help. For He is rich toward all who call upon Him. But it is only strong faith which can drive away such despairing thoughts as in Rom. iii. 22, "Even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe." Mark these words, unto all, and upon all. If not among that number, at least you can reckon yourself among the sinners, which is a greater reason that you should pray and be certain of the answer should God delay coming speedily to your help; for He will never forsake those who call upon Him, nor fail to drive away your despairing doubts which are the fiery darts of the devil and his emissaries.

Why wander in false ways when so good and straight a path is before you, and the Father cries, "This is my beloved Son!" Listen to His counsel! And even although in your despair you were so hardened as not to hear God's voice, you cannot overlook that of the Son, who stands across the path which all must tread, crying in trumpet-like tones, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He not only uses the word "come," but "all." No one is excluded, no matter how wicked he be. So, seeing all may come, do you run with them, leap and spring, and do not remain among those lost crowds. Further, He says "to me!" who knows every foot of the way and will not let thy foot slide. Why wander aimlessly about? But who are to come? The weary and heavy laden! And what kind of company would that be? I do not know Messrs. Weary and Heavy Laden. They ought to have high-sounding names, such as burgher-master, and such like — these master minds, who love to grovel in God's Word with their human reason, like the sow in a turnip field! Not at all. It is he who is weary and heavy laden, borne down with sad thoughts direct from the Evil One, who is called, — the man who does not know to what hand to turn, and is ready to sink into despair. So that is why He says "heavy laden," as if He had known our burdens, and wished to help

us to bear them, nay, even relieve us of them entirely. And consider that God Almighty created and elected us, not to damnation, but to everlasting life, even as the angels in the first sermon proclaimed to the shepherds on the field: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men!" And it was inner, not bodily peace they meant. It was not from those who injured them, but from the world, the flesh, and the devil, they were to be delivered. Hence one can see from the Scriptures how great is God's mercy, and these and such like thoughts can enable him to form an opinion as to God's foreseeing, and then there is no occasion for a man to torture himself, nor would it avail even were he to worry his flesh from his bones.

What business is it of yours that God causes the dear sun to shine over good and bad, over arid and green? God has ordained that the sun should endue the moisture of the ground with its vital powers, thus causing the roots and branches of the trees to fructify and yield fruit. And if a dried-up tree should nevertheless remain impervious to the rays of the sun, still the tree is not so much at fault as the soil which is marshy. For "good ground, good corn," as the proverb says. Thus, where the preaching is good and full of consolation, there are sure to be tender consciences and joyful hearts. Therefore, as you cannot hinder the natural sun, which is a tiny spark compared to the starry firmament, — the smallest star being larger than the whole world, — from spreading her rays abroad, still less can you limit God's grace, being fathomless, having neither beginning nor end. Dear one, do not reckon so close with God. Fancy if the Son of God had asked the high priests and Levites at the crucifixion if He should receive the malefactor into Heaven, what would they have said? Doubtless the answer would have been: "If thieves and murderers desire to enter Heaven we do not object," and might have added, "If he belong to Paradise we should not have hung him upon a gallows, and it is as likely he will enter Heaven as that you are God." Thus speaks a scornful world and man's reason. How well Christ answered His disciples who asked, as John lay asleep on His bosom, "What shall this man do?" "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" as if to warn him not to fall. "Let every one sweep before his own door, and then we shall be saved!" This would prevent much heartburning as to what God in the eternal counsel of His will has decreed concerning those who should be saved or lost.

He who will not accept a certainty for an uncertainty will at length come away empty-handed, besides being the object of ridicule. He who will not be counselled in time and despises God's Word will fall a prey to a raging devil as sure as God is God. If things went with us according to our thoughts, prompted by the flesh and the devil, we should all be given over to death, therefore we have the word of promise: "Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days. But go thou thy way till the end be for thou shalt rest and stand in thy lot at the end of the days." If we persevere to the end we may console ourselves that devilish thoughts shall be expelled, and we may raise our hearts in faith to God, and be certain that we have received forgiveness of sins, and shall be, nay, are justified, according to Christ's promise, by

faith of Jesus Christ, as St. Paul testifies in Gal. iii. 22. That is when we are cast down, and every path seems shut up to us, we shall once more stand erect in faith, resting on God's promises of Christ, or in Christ. Amen.

Martin Luther,

To Nicolas Amsdorf

Invitation to Mary Mochim's marriage.

July 31, 1528.

Grace and peace! We have betrothed Mary Mochim to Herr Georgio, and the marriage takes place on St. Lawrence's Day, As we think this is a good opportunity for you to visit us, we plead with you to come, when, if God will, we shall have a joyous wedding feast. As to the rest — pray to Christ for us in whom your soul flourishes. Amen.

Martin Luther.

(Walch, V. 21. 1116.)

To Nicolas Hausmann

Luther thanks him in his boy's name for toys.

August 5, 1528.

Grace and peace! My Hanschen thanks you, dear Nicolas, for the beautiful toys, which he is very proud of. I purpose writing about the Turkish war. My little daughter Elizabeth has been taken away from me, leaving me almost in womanly sorrow, so deeply am I grieved. I never dreamt that a father's heart could have been so soft towards his children. Pray to God for me, and may you prosper in Him!

Martin Luther

Wittenberg

(Walch, v. 21.1528.)

P.S. — As to the Freybergerin, the escaped nun, being carried away, I have my own thoughts, so let it rest.

To the Elector John

Request to appoint M. Stiefel as pastor in Lochau.

September 3, 1525

To the Most Serene High-born Prince, Elector John.

Grace and peace! Most gracious lord! M. Franciscus, the pastor in Lochau, has fallen asleep in God, and the people have asked to be appointed. But I have referred them to your Grace, as I have nothing to do with that. Now, I am most anxious to retain Michael Stiefel in the land, for he is pious and well acquainted with the Scriptures, and a good preacher. So, if it please your Highness, we all think he should meantime be settled in Lochau, till perhaps another turn up, for the good man is quite unhappy in case he is a burden to me (he is here just now, but I can scarcely prevent him leaving). I am most anxious to have pious learned people about us, for we lose so many such. Were he to become pastor in Lochau we would try to get him to help the poor widow with her two children, she being left in great poverty, perhaps by marrying her, but if not — God's will be done. I relate all this to your Electoral Highness and beg a favourable answer. But it occurs to me that you know M. Stiefel, who travelled with us to Weimar; you presented him with five gulden.

May Christ ever be with you! Amen. Your Grace's obedient

Martin Luther.
(Walch, V. 21. 260.)

To Johann Agricola

Melanchthon in Thuringia on the visitation.

October 25, 1528.

Grace and peace! Philip is absent on the visitation, so we are deprived of his counsel in seeking a schoolmaster. But I shall consult Milich and George Major to see if one can be sent at once, although I am told that Veit was with you before, whom meantime you could have again. Within eight days we shall tell you what we have arranged. I am just starting for Lochau to marry M. Stiefel to the widow of the Bishop of Lochau, and to introduce him to his new charge. One thing always seems to come upon the top of another. I could not keep the man (Merisch) with me, for he was far too modest, fancying he was a burden to me, so preferred living anyhow elsewhere, thus compelling me at length to let him go. He herewith sends you by me some letters inviting you to his

marriage. I fear they are a little late but dispose of them as quickly as possible. Farewell to your Hans Albert and the other branches of your vine.

Martin Luther.
(Walch, V. 21. 1 124.)

To George Spalatin

Luther comforts him over calumnies caused by his marriage.

October 29, 1528.

You must not vex yourself over the outcry your marriage has caused but rather rejoice; for it is a condition which has God's approval, and is lauded by the angels, and held in honour of all saints. In addition, it has this seal, that it is distinguished by the cross being vilified by devils and false brethren, to which every word and work of God are subjected. Therefore regard the priestly utterances as so many precious stones which blacken you in the world's eyes, but make you all-glorious in the eyes of a pure God, and comfort yourself that the world is not esteemed worthy to perceive the glory of such a work of God as you are permitted to see. Let the world with its princes indulge in their foolish, presumptuous judgments and blasphemies. The wicked must be rooted out, so as not to see the glory of God. I have no doubt the priests are hurrying you into Bethaven, but be that as it may, you have received the office of the visitation, and have a gracious Lord who will not suffer you to want the necessaries of life. May the Lord Jesus strengthen you by His Spirit! Amen.

Martin Luther.
Wittenberg.

To Chancellor Brock

Petition for longer leave for Bugenhagen.

November 11, 1528.

Grace and peace! Honoured and learned Herr Doctor! A messenger has just arrived from the Town Council of Hamburg to ask permission from my gracious lord that Herr Johann Pommer may be allowed to remain longer there, as the enclosed documents testify. Although I had written to the good man not to worry as to overstaying his leave, if God's work required it (for our lord has no desire to hinder the Word of God, if

Bugenhagen's presence can further it), but the good man had no peace till our gracious lord himself assured him of it. Therefore, pray procure a writing from my lord, asking him to return as soon as he can, without imperilling God's work through his haste, but empowering him to defer his return if necessary. Your Excellency will know how to manage it and send it by this messenger. I commit you to God.

Your Excellency's obedient

Martin Luther.
{De Wette.)

To Michael Stiefel

Luther rejoices in his friend's happiness.

November 1528.

Grace and peace! I am delighted, dear Michael, that you are so pleased with your wife and her children, and that she loves you. May God maintain this unity! Will you say to the overseer that it is impossible for me to come to his marriage, as I have not a free hour that day. I expected we would have been in Schweritz then, and could sacrifice half a day in his honour, but the business connected with the church visitation has increased so enormously that all our plans have been upset. So please apologise for me. Greet your Eve with the olive branches committed to your care. The evening I got your letter.

Martin Luther.
(Walch, V. 21. 1341.)

To Philip Melanchthon

Luther sends letters to his friend, who is on the visitation.

November 30, 1528.

Grace and peace! I send you, as well as Lukas Cranach, letters which have lain long here. The Chancellor will tell you the rest. Say to Lukas that gloves and a black cap were sent with the other things from Augsburg. If any of the letters tell you for whom they are, let them write. For we have received all our things, but did not wish to open any of the letters.

To-day I am again a prey to the tempter. Do pray in such times of sifting for me as I do for you, that my faith may not fail. We have paid all due honour to the Chancellor. Your family and ourselves are all well. My Kathie greets you respectfully, and longs for your return. May Christ be with you! Amen. I trust all our folks who are with you may keep well.

Martin Luther.
(Walch, V. 21 . 1339)

To Margareta N.

Consolation on the death of her husband.

December 5, 1528.

Grace and peace in Christ Jesus! Honoured and virtuous lady! Having heard from your son of the great trial with which you have been visited, viz. the death of your husband, I am moved out of Christian love to write this letter of consolation to you.

First, you must take comfort that in the hard conflict which beset your lord (Herr), the Lord Jesus at length gained the victory, and that your husband at last passed away full of trust and confidence in the Lord, which I was delighted to hear.

For even thus did Christ Himself struggle in the garden and rise again from the dead.

It is even possible that your husband inflicted an injury upon himself, for the devil has power over the members of the body and may have forcibly guided his hand against his will. For if he had done it willingly, it is unlikely he would have come again to himself and turned to Christ with such ample confession of sin. How often does the devil break arm, neck, back, and all the limbs? He can gain the mastery over all the members, therefore be satisfied in God, and rank yourself among those of whom Christ says, "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted!"

All the saints must sing Psalm xlv.: "For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter." There must be suffering and misfortune if we are to partake of the consolation. Therefore, thank God for His great mercy in not suffering your husband to linger in conflict and despair, as is the case with so many, but he was by God's grace delivered and at length restored to the Christian faith, and numbered among those of whom it is said: "Blessed are they who die in the Lord." And "He that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

May God the Father comfort and strengthen you with such words in Christ Jesus! Amen.

Martin Luther.

Wittenberg.
(From Luther's Letters to Women.)