

THE LETTERS OF MARTIN LUTHER

1529

In this year the Diet at Speyer was held, also the Conference at Marburg, between the German and Swiss divines, on the question of the Lord's Supper. Luther's Larger and Shorter Catechisms appeared simultaneously.

To Nicolas von Amsdorf

February 12, 1529.

That you are pleased with my little book against Herzog George is a great pleasure to me. For all are down upon me, forgetting how he has treated me, and act towards him as if he were innocent. I shall not show them your letter, or they would class you with me. Henceforth I shall not answer the tyrant, as he asks me to let him alone in future. Much is being said here about Ferdinand's tyranny and extortion. Pray that God may strengthen me that I may not be left in Satan's hand. The Lord Jesus maintain and bless you! Amen.

Martin Luther.
(Walch, V. 21.)

To Nicolas Hausmann

February 15, 1529.

I am delighted that the church visitation has come to such a happy end among you. May other church matters soon be arranged. We sing the Litany both in Latin and German here. Perhaps a printed form may soon be issued. Then the days of humiliation, the ban, and the other liturgical arrangements connected with our congregations will follow. This is enough to begin with. I have been suffering from giddiness, not to mention what I endure from Satan's emissaries. Pray that God may strengthen me. I shall never again answer Herzog George. My sermon against the Turks would have been printed long ago had not the first printed sheets been lost through the servant's carelessness. My Kathie greets you, also Jonas and Philip. We fear Pommer will not return before Ascension. Christ be with you! Amen.

Martin Luther.
(Schatze.)

To Nicolas Hausmann

Luther complains of temptations.

March 3, 1529.

Grace and peace! The Catechism is not ready, but it will soon be, my Hausmann, also the sermon against the Turks. But in spite of my soul being well, I am always ill, so dreadfully does Satan plague me by preventing me studying, for I must have society to hinder him attacking me in my solitude. Pray for me. Now that your Paul has been dismissed as Spalatin wrote, you must be thinking of a successor. If you have none in view, I think Cordatus would be the most suitable. He is an excellent and learned man, and a staunch confessor of his faith. Farewell, and pray for the impending Diet.

Martin Luther.
(Schatze.)

To Nicolas von Amsdorf

Luther sends a letter inviting him to Holstein.

March 21, 1529.

Grace and peace! From this letter you will see what the Herzog wishes regarding you. But as I do not think it would be Christian-like to tear you away from Magdeburg so soon, it would be better to serve him otherwise. Show this document to Stein and Klotz in the Council, and let them see you may accept, which may bring them to reason, and cause them to do something for the schools. Do let them think you are in earnest. And if they plead with you to remain do not be too easily persuaded to do so. For I am still doubtful whether your departure would grieve them. You will know that Langefeld has been called away, and that Marcus Scharre in Hesse is dead.

Martin Luther.
(Walch, V. 21. 1 152.)

To Nicolas von Amsdorf

At Diet of Speyer the Elector and Princes protested against the Edict against the Lutherans, hence the word Protestant.

March 29, 1529.

Grace and peace! I am pleased that you proved Stein thus and have found neither him nor others wanting. Now that I have a pretext I shall write, and earnestly exhort them to promote learning. Go on as you are doing, and help the good work as much as you can. The bridegroom Bruno has asked me to invite you to his wedding on Thursday. The bride (Gersa von Krosse) will come to my house on Tuesday, or rather to my wife's. So arm yourself, not with sword of steel, but with gold and silver (*Amsdorf was rich*), for you shall not escape without a present. No news from Speyer, but you hear everything. Farewell in Christ, Pray for me.

Martin Luther.

To Nicolas Hausmann

Cordaius, Hausmann's assistant, brought this letter.

March 31, 1529.

Herewith, behold the sharer in your ministerial cares and helper in your work, Herr Licentiate Cordatus, an estimable man. I hope he will help you and do much good in your parish. Although ignorant people may not be satisfied at first, they will appreciate his worth afterwards. May Christ comfort you in all your tribulations! It is a miracle that we are not swallowed up of the devil in our impotence. Those who have eyes to see must behold in us one of God's greatest works, that we insignificant creatures have been enabled to withstand so many powerful enemies and remain steadfast. Outwardly we are much harassed, and inwardly Satan takes up his abode among the children of God. But it is only a reigning Christ who can triumph over us weak ones, and will at length give us a glorious deliverance on the great day. God grant it. Christ will teach and confirm it out of Cordatus's mouth. Farewell, and pray for me.

Martin Luther.

To Nicolas von Amsdorf

A marriage case.

May 4, 1529.

This is what I should recommend. Do not believe this faithless bridegroom. I agree with you to send him back, either to prove that he has never promised (which he is trying to do), or to take the bride, or remain unmarried. I have told him this. But if matters be as you say, then he must not marry for a punishment, unless he marries her. We know nothing definite as to the Reichstag. We daily expect Philip Melanchthon. I can scarcely lecture because of my cough. Yesterday and to-day I expounded Isaiah but was very hoarse. Pray for us.

Martin Luther.
(Walch, V. 21.)

To Wenzel Link

Thanks for a gift, etc.

May 6, 1529.

Grace in Christ! The watch, dear Wenzel, has arrived all right. But it is either weary with its journey or not accustomed to its new owner, for it has stopped. However, with time, it appears inclined to run. I thank you warmly for it, but, being a poor man, can make no return. For the books which came out lately you must already have, and they are of such a nature that they cannot be called gifts. They are only old things brought out afresh. God has given me a little daughter Magdalena, and the mother is very well.

The Diet is at an end, and almost without result, except that the persecutors of Christ, the tyrants of souls, could not vent their fury on us as they desired, and we could expect no more from God. There is talk of a Council, but it will be fruitless. There is a Venetian here just now, and he says that in the last French war against the Pope there were eight hundred Turks, of whom three hundred were uninjured, and being tired of the war returned home, I thought you did not know these dreadful things, as you took no notice of them. Soon midnight will come, when the cry will be heard, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him." Pray for me. Greet our friends.

Martin Luther.

To the Elector John

Luther begs the Elector to recall Bugenhagen from Hamburg.

May 12, 1529.

Grace and peace! Serene High-born Prince. Herr John Pommer has written from Hamburg that he has arranged to return, but the people are holding him so fast that he cannot get away, and he says they intend writing your Grace to let him remain always. I have written him to resist such action, and hope they will not thus requite our goodness in lending him to them. So, he now writes, begging that your Electoral Grace would write demanding his presence in Wittenberg, to prove his hurrying home is not his own wish. Therefore we humbly request your Grace would furnish us with such a document to forward, with those from the University, ordering his return, for the classes have lain long enough waste, especially as, God be praised, students are daily arriving, principally from Saxony, so Bugenhagen cannot be longer spared. Your Grace will know how to act in the matter.

Martin Luther.
(Walch, V. 21. 276.)

To Wenzel Link

May 25, 1529.

I commend to you this Scotsman, my Wenzel, who has been banished from his fatherland because of the gospel. He begged me to write you, hoping he might get some assistance. He seems of good family, and well-grounded in scholastic theology. Could he speak German we could find plenty for him to do, and, despite our poverty, have kept him with us, but he has reasons for wishing to try his fortune elsewhere. In Philip's absence, and during my illness, I translated the book of Wisdom (Proverbs), which Philip had taken in hand. It is in the press. That which Leo Judais of Zurich has translated is miserable in the extreme (*Perhaps under Zwingli's supervision*).

Farewell, and pray for me.

Martin Luther.
(Schatze.)

To Jacob Montanus, Preacher in Herford

About Erasmus of Rotterdam.

May 28, 1529.

Grace and peace! I am well aware, my Jacob, of all you tell me of Erasmus, who rages against us. I gathered as much from his writings, for in them he displays the soreness of the wound he has received. But I despise him, and do not consider the creature worthy of any other reply, and should I write shall only refer to Erasmus in the third person, and doing this more to condemn his opinions than to refute them, for he is a thoughtless "Indifferentist," who ridicules all religion in his Lucian fashion, and is only in earnest when he wishes to gratify his revenge. We are all well here, thanks to your prayers. Thanks for the present — a proof of your good feeling. I shall send you my latest works. Farewell in Christ and continue praying for me.

Martin Luther.
Wittenberg.
(Schatze.)

To Landgrave Philip of Hesse

Luther agrees to a Conference with Oecolampadius and Zwingli.

June 23, 1529.

Grace and peace! Serene Prince, Most Gracious Lord! I have received your Grace's invitation to Marburg to the disputation with Oecolampadius and the other Swiss divines, to see if we cannot see eye to eye regarding the sacrament. Although I have little hope of this, still your Grace's anxiety for unity and peace is most laudable, and I am willing to co-operate in such vain and for us perhaps dangerous efforts, for the other party must not have the glory of outstripping me (if God will) in the desire for unity. I beseech you to learn if they feel inclined to yield their opinions, to prevent the evil becoming worse. It seems as if they were trying, through your Grace's zeal, afterwards to boast that they had moved great princes to interfere to prove that they wished peace while we were its enemies.

God grant I am no prophet, but if they were really in earnest they do not need such mighty princes to represent them; for, God be praised, we are not such worthless characters. They might have written us long ago, saying how they wished peace, or could still do so, for I cannot yield to them, being convinced our cause is right and theirs wrong. Therefore, pray consider whether this Marburg conference will do good or harm; for if they do not yield we shall part without fruit, and our meeting, as well as your Grace's outlay and trouble, have been in vain. And then they will boast, and load us with reproach, as is their wont, so things would be worse than ever. Regarding your Grace's tears that bloodshed would ensue from such discord, you know that whatever happens we are innocent, and God will bring our innocence to the light of day. If this spirit of

union should result in bloodshed, such action is in accordance with its nature, as was seen in Franz von Sickingen (d.1523, Knights war), Carlstadt (unjustified criticism), and Munzer (d.1525. Peasants revolt); and there, too, we were blameless. I write all this to prove how ready I am to serve you. May Christ tread Satan under our feet! Amen.

Your Grace's obedient

Martin Luther.
Wittenberg.
(De Wette.)

To Conrad Cordatus

Luther says the gospel messenger must suffer persecution.

July 14, 1529.

Grace and peace! Be strong in Christ, my Cordatus, in order to put up with those ungrateful people in Zwickau. Do not think of changing your post. This is a more testing temptation than any you have had. The world is the enemy of God and His Word. It is therefore a miracle if among God's enemies any are friendly to His children. The world loves its own, so we may know that we are not of this world when she hates and despises us. Hence you have merely to put up with an incarnate devil, who, through the flesh, his sluggish tool, harasses and enervates you, but cannot, much as he wishes, injure you. But resist him with all your might. Therefore, you act in a brotherly way in comforting me so lovingly and wishing me all good. Continue so to do and pray, as I do for you, that we may be set free, and till that day comes, bring forth fruit in patience. God grant this! Greet your beloved other half in the Lord.

Martin Luther.
(Schatze.)

To Nicolas Amsdorf

Luther hears that Amsdorf is not satisfied with his post.

August 1, 1529.

Grace and peace! Although you have not complained to me, my Amsdorf, I hear how little you have benefited from the promotion you have received from the Prince. But be steadfast. The Lord will make an end of the trouble. The Court is the devil's seat. If things

do not improve I shall support you by word and deed, so that you may leave Zwickau, and shake its dust from off your feet — you and Cordatus also. I shall consider Paul's affairs; meantime put up with all, showing yourselves men among those troublesome people. You did not leave Cellarius's notes on Isaiah here. I searched everywhere, and found nothing. Perhaps he will pass your way and visit you. Pray to Christ for me, a poor sinner. Kathie sends friendly greeting.

Martin Luther.
(Schatze.)

To Justus Jonas

On the death of Melanchthon's son.

August 17, 1529.

Grace and peace in Christ! Dear Jonas — Last Sabbath, God the Lord took away from our Philip one of his children, called George; so you can imagine how much we have to do in trying to comfort this tender-hearted and emotional man. He is grieving too much over the loss, not being used to such trials. Pray that the Lord may comfort him, and then, in your best rhetoric, write him a letter of consolation. You know how important it is for us that he should be spared in health. We are all sick and sad in his sickness and sadness. I can think of nothing but him, except the most intimate concerns of my daily life. But the God of the humble and afflicted will not allow him to be vanquished, although he is still very weak. I shall write of other things when the grief is a little assuaged. Farewell in the Lord, and greet your fellow-bishops respectfully in the Lord.

Martin Luther.
(De Wette.)

To the Elector John of Saxony

Luther sends thanks for present of garments.

August 17, 1529.

Grace and peace in Christ! Most Serene High-born Prince, Most Gracious Lord! I have delayed long in returning thanks for the garments your Grace has so kindly sent me. But I humbly beg you not to believe people who try to make your Electoral Grace think I am

in want. I have, alas, more than I can reconcile it with my conscience, especially from your Electoral Highness, to accept. And as a preacher it is not seemly for me to have superfluity. Therefore, I sometimes tremble because of your Grace's generosity towards me, in case I may be found in this life among those to whom Christ says, "Woe to you rich: for you have your reward here." But to use common language, I have no desire to be burdensome to your Grace, for you have so much to give away that I know you have little over, and the purse may be rent asunder if so many demands be made upon it. It was superfluous sending the leather-coloured cloth, but I feel much indebted to your Grace for it, and I shall wear the black coat in honour of your munificence, although too costly for me; and were it not your Grace's gift I would never appear in such a garment. Therefore, I beseech your Grace to wait till I myself complain and beg, so that your kindness may not make me shy of asking favours for others who are much more worthy of your bounty. For your Grace loads me with too many benefits. Christ will graciously reimburse you for all this. I pray for this with my whole heart. Amen.

Your Grace's humble servant,

Martin Luther.
(De Wette.)

To John Brenz, in Schwabian Halle

Luther praises his exposition of Amos, etc.

August 29, 1529.

Grace and peace in Christ! I perused your Amos, my esteemed and learned Brentius. Far be it from me to suggest any alterations, for I cannot set up as a master in the divine writings. I only wish to be a learner in that school. The friend to whom you entrusted its publication intentionally delayed it, fearing attacks from the printers. But it shall be printed, if he'll listen to me. Concerning the Hesse Conference, of which you write, and to which you are summoned, you are right. Nothing good is likely to ensue from such a hole-and-corner coming-together of the Churches of God. Therefore, I beg of you not to appear, and, if you have not promised to go, remain away. At first, we absolutely refused, but as this young Hessian Alexander so worried our Princes, we had to promise, but persisted it would result in no good, and only make matters worse. But he stuck to his point, so we yielded; if he would also invite some talented Papists, who could bear witness against these boasters and remarkable saints who are to be there! Although I long to see you, I shall rather forgo the pleasure than enjoy it to the detriment of the cause. May Christ build you up to His own glory! Amen. Pray for me, a sinner.

Martin Luther.

(Schatze.)

To his wife, Kathie,

In September Zwingli, with the Greek professor in Zurich, started for Marburg, Bucer, Hedio, Oecolampadius, etc., joining them in Strassburg. On September 30, Luther, Melancthon, Jonas, Cruciger and Myconius, Osiander, Brenz, etc., also came.

October 4, 1529.

Grace and peace in Christ! Dear Kathie — Our friendly conference at Marburg is almost ended, and we have agreed upon nearly all points, except that our opponents maintain that only the bread and wine are present in the sacrament, although admitting Christ's spiritual presence in the elements. To-day the Landgrave is making every effort to unite us, or at least to make us consider each other brethren and members of Christ's body. He is doing his best to accomplish this. But although we object to be brethren, we wish to live at peace and on good terms. I fancy we shall set out tomorrow or next day, and go to your gracious lord in Vogtland, whither His Electoral Grace has summoned us. Say to Herr Pommer that Zwingli's argument was the best: "Corpus non potest esse sine loco, ergo Christi corpus non est in pane" (*A body cannot be other than its location, therefore Christ's body is not in the bread*); that of Oecolampadius was: "Sacramentum est signum corporis Christi." (*The sacrament signifies Christ's body*).

I consider God has blinded them, that they cannot achieve anything good. I have much to do, and the messenger waits. Good night to all and pray for us. We are all well and lively, and living like princes. Kiss Lenchen and Hanschen for me. Your obedient servant,

Martin Luther.
(De Wette.)

P.S. — They are all quite excited over the sweating sickness (English sickness). Fifty were seized yesterday, of whom two have died.

To John Lange

October 28, 1529.

Grace in Christ! I commend Magister Wolfgang to your love, my Lange, so that if possible you may help him to a situation. He is a good man, and well up in the sciences, and thoroughly grounded in our faith, so is well fitted to be pastor, secretary, or teacher.

You know how the Turks destroyed Vienna, and then fled in their despair from Germany, which we regarded as a miracle of God. Only we dear Germans slumber on. Farewell in Christ, and give your little son, as well as his mother, many kisses as a greeting.

Martin Luther.

The siege of Vienna took place 27th September 1529 – 15th October 1529. The Ottomans failed to take Vienna even though they had 100,000 men against 21,000. Vienna was not destroyed but much of the surrounding area was either destroyed or burnt. Luther's comment that they fled in despair from Germany refers to the Turks retreating. Luther regards it as a miracle because the severe weather meant the Turks could not bring their artillery and supplies across muddy roads enabling the Viennese soldiers to force the Turks to retreat.

To Frederick Myconius, at Gotha

Luther wishes to hear of John Hilten in Eisenach.

November 7, 1529.

Grace and peace! Your letters, my Frederick, were most welcome, being full of brotherly love, and also a proof of your kindness in finding out what I wished. I expect your promised letter shortly. You will already know all about the Turks. God fought for us, driving them away through a marvellous fright. We must beg God to be our wall and send His angels to help us. We cannot sufficiently laud your faith, in praying against the Turks and the gates of hell, with your congregation. God hear you in our day of trouble; even as the angel could not destroy Sodom because of one Lot, so may it be with us on account of the many pious people here. Amen.

There is nothing new here. Philip is from home, or he would have written. He and Amsdorf are honouring the marriage of Herr Trutleben in Freyberg with their presence. Many greetings from my Kathie, the head of the house. Greet your wife, who may be your lord as well, and our hostess, and Basilius, and your justiciary, and may you prosper greatly in Christ!

Martin Luther.
(Schiitze.)

To Nicolas Hausmann

About the Turkish war, etc.

November 10, 1529.

Grace and peace! Be strong in the Lord, my dear Nicolas, and do not be afraid of the Turks. Christ lives, and the Prophet Daniel (which Philip and Jonas are at present publishing), so we hope he will not be able to subdue Germany, although he is punishing us for our neglect of the gospel. For it is really a miracle that the Turk has vanished from his camp, leading people to believe that the day of judgment is at hand, when Gog the Turk and Magog, the Pope, the political and the spiritual opponents of Christ, will both be overthrown. I wish you much happiness on being ridiculed as a Pietist, and that you are deemed worthy of Satan's hatred, who can only injure you by stirring up poisonous tongues against you. Laugh at his impotence, for you cannot wound him more than by being invulnerable to his sting. I wish the bride Christina joy, and when looking for a wife I trust you will be as fortunate; but if you have no desire, and can do without one, you will be far happier, and I shall wish you joy all the same. Not that I would malign matrimony — that God appointed institution — but because you are free from manifold troubles and household cares; to this I wish you joy. May Christ teach you and keep you well and cause you to pray for me! Farewell in Him.

Martin Luther.

(Walch, 21. 1374.)

To the Elector John

Request to have Emser's New Testament suppressed. Rostock became Evangelical in 1527 through the earnest preaching of Sliiter, the Rostock reformer, who was poisoned in 1532.

November 23, 1529.

To the Serene High-born Prince, the Elector John of Saxony. Grace and peace in Christ! Some prominent citizens of Lubeck have written informing us that some Lollards have caused Emser's New Testament to be printed in Rostock, in Saxon, through which they fear much mischief may be done, and have begged me to request your Grace to petition the Herzog of Mecklenburg- Schwerin, for God's honour and the good of souls, to forbid its publication. For although I have nothing against the Emser Testament, whose contents the rascals have wickedly stolen from me (for it is precisely my text, with a few harmless alterations), yet since he has reissued it, so scandalously mangled with his annotations, and accompanied by a glossary which prevents it bearing any fruit, but rather does harm, I beseech your Electoral Grace graciously to present this petition to the highly esteemed Herzog Heinrich, and let us have the answer by the messenger who

brings this, for as much as in us lies we must defend ourselves against the devil. May Christ our Lord be with your Grace to all eternity! Amen.

Your Electoral Highness's obedient

Martin Luther.

(De Wette.)

To Dorothea Mackenrod, Luther's Sister

Luther promises a gospel sermon.

December 2, 1529.

Dear Sister — I see from your letter to me how earnestly your heavily laden conscience longs for an Evangelical sermon of consolation, and, if possible, in your own church in Rossla. I am delighted to hear this, and have made up my mind, in God, to come to you on the approaching Christmas Eve, and to preach, with God's help, the first gospel sermon at Rossla and upper Rossla as a memorial. Greet your husband and the little Margareta, to whom I shall bring something with me. I commit you to God.

Martin Luther.

Eisleben

(Date doubtful, as it is improbable no gospel sermon had been preached there so late as 1529.)

To Friedrich, Abbot in Nurnberg

December 29, 1529.

To the much honoured in Christ, Herr Friedrich, superintendent in St. Oegidius, Nurnberg, my superior in the Lord.

Grace and peace in Christ! I have nothing, and yet a very great deal to write to you, my honoured friend in Christ. Concerning myself I have nothing, except to commend myself to your sacred prayers, but in regard to the bridegroom, your fellow-citizen, that most excellent young man, Conrad Mauser, I have a great deal. Doubtless your large heart will know that were I to write a letter at all commensurate with the greatness of this burning love which has been kindled in the bridegroom's heart, perhaps the whole world could not contain it. But I am only joking in order to gain your sympathy for Mauser's marriage.

For he desires through you to gain his parents' consent to his happy union. This will certainly be accomplished if you can make the father see that his son has really chosen a pretty and, what is even better, a capable and virtuous maiden, and I would add Christian, if the value of the term had not sunk in the estimation of the people through its indiscriminate use, although it is not so with us. And the bride's father is not nearly so badly off as the most of the burghers are here but is a member of the Town Council and well-to-do — in short, a most honourable man, who looks well to the ways of his household, and has a most industrious wife, who is universally loved because of her amiability. You will have the goodness to bring all this to the knowledge of Mauser's father when you have the opportunity, so that he may not grieve his son, but cause him to rejoice through his consent, without which he will not marry.

It is much to be desired that the father, to show his approval, should appear at the wedding. And we are most anxious to have your presence also, but we fear to present an impossible request to you. May the kindness of your heart prompt you to do what is right in your eyes, and may you prosper in Christ! Amen.

Martin Luther.
(Schatze.)