

THE LETTERS OF MARTIN LUTHER

1532

In this year Luther's good friend John the Steadfast passed away, and was succeeded by John Frederick, The Protestants also united with Charles V. to protect themselves against the Turks, who were happily defeated. The Reformation spread rapidly, and the Protestants were promised a council to arrange religious matters.

To Martin Gorlitz, Superintendent in Brunswick.

January 3, 1532.

Grace and peace! I have already written to you, my Martin, that I thought of calling you elsewhere. I now do so in the name of the Lord. So set yourself free as soon as you can. You are expected at the living of Kalen near Jena, which is without a pastor at present. If this do not please you, then we shall exchange it for that of Belger, or some other. Excuse my brevity, but I have much to do. Perhaps Brunswick is unworthy of the pure word, and wishes to imitate Muhlhausen and Zurich. God forbid. Amen. Carlstadt has succeeded Zwingli in Zurich, whom they now declare to be one of Christ's martyrs, that they may fill up the measure of their iniquities. May you prosper in Christ.

Martin Luther.
(Schutze.)

To Wenzel Link

Luther had heard with much concern of a misunderstanding among the preachers in Nurnberg.

January 3, 1532.

Grace and peace in the Lord Jesus! I have not written to you for long, my Wenzel, and, considering how much I have to do, my letters are not necessary to you. Still it was your duty, seeing you have more leisure than I, to write oftener to me. I only hope that the little rumour I have heard is not true, that there is some misunderstanding among you servants of the gospel at Nurnberg, a calamity almost sadder than any other I could hear of. Therefore I beseech you, for I know the uprightness of your heart, help me to combat this evil and to keep watch over these unruly spirits who are not satisfied with stirring up strife on earth, but would gladly shoot their fiery darts

even against the saints and God's kingdom, which we are - to lead us astray. If it be Osiander who does not approve of our views of baptism, we shall have patience and not irritate him, even as he must have patience with us and not provoke us till Christ unravels this knot.

We are now seeing God's judgments for the second time - first on Munzer and now on Zwingli. I prophesied that God would not long suffer such blasphemies, calling us cannibals, blood-drinkers, and other horrible names. They have brought it upon themselves. Do you cleave to the Augsburg Confession. You do not give me any reliable information about Carlstadt, and I wonder at the story remaining so long secret and then reaching us in such a roundabout way, so that we are not certain as to its truth. Philip says that if God does not lay hold of Carlstadt through his wondrous power and wisdom, He will never be able to do so by ordinary means, so manifold are the resources of this monstrosity. But the proverb, "He who stirs up strife will himself perish thereby," shall be verified in him. Greet Lazarus Spengler and all our people in a friendly way from me. May you and yours prosper in Christ. Amen.

Martin Luther.
(Schutze.)

To the Elector John

The Elector John made over the cloister buildings and garden in Wittenberg to Luther in his last illness.

February 12, 1532.

Grace and peace. High-born Prince and Gracious Lord! Dr. Brack has shown me the articles which are to be arranged by the Electors of Mayence and Pfalz - in view of a treaty between the Princes and the Emperor, and I have given my opinion as to the form in which they might be accepted. Feeling certain that God has answered our prayer by granting peace, I could not refrain from presenting my humble petition to your Grace. For I fear the article about the King will give you ample cause for anxiety.

But, seeing that your virtuous opposition to his unrighteous election is known over the whole world, I would humbly beseech you, for the honour of God, to let said articles pass and not hinder peace. For even if it came to war, and that war were successful, peace must at last be concluded, and the terms after all the damage done might be much harder than now. Also, your Grace must see how firmly the towns and confederations are holding together, their magnanimity being a marvel to all; but only let the parties come into collision - then this unanimity will vanish like water - and neither citizen nor town will risk life and property for the sake of a prince. It is true if God sends human aid it is well, but to depend on this never prospers. But now that the Emperor - the authority of God's

appointing - commands that peace should be concluded, this should be regarded as if God were holding out His gracious hand to us, and we must not let Him do so in vain. It is easy for an ordinary person to look forward to war, for he has little to lose and can crawl easier out of the mire than the Prince he has perhaps drawn into it. But I am becoming too worldly wise and garrulous, but it is my anxiety for my dear sovereign Prince which prompts me. (*Ferdinand's election as King of Rome and administrator of the Kingdom in Charles's absence.*)

However, I believe your Grace will manage better than I fear, and I shall cry earnestly to God for you, for it is He who must begin, carry on, and perfect anything good. Man's thoughts are only foolishness.

Your Electoral Grace's obedient

Martin Luther.
(De Wette.)

To his wife

From Torgau, where Luther is detained by the Elector's illness.

February 27, 1532.

To my beloved wife Katherine. God greets you in Christ. I hope if Dr. Bruck gets leave for me that I shall accompany him home tomorrow or the day after. Pray God to bring us back fresh and well. I sleep six or seven hours running, and afterwards two or three. I am sure it is owing to the beer. But in the morning before I have eaten anything, I am fit for nothing, as in Wittenberg. Dr. Caspar (*Cruciger*) says that our gracious lord's foot is not mortifying further. But no prisoner on the ladder in the tower suffers as much from Hans Stockmeister as does his Grace from the surgeons. His whole body is as sound as a fish, but the devil has his foot in his grip. Pray, go on praying! For God has begun to hear us.

As Johannes (*His man-servant*) is leaving, honour demands that I shall give him an honourable discharge. For you know how faithfully he has served us, and how humbly he has behaved in accordance with the gospel, having put up with everything, so do not let him want for anything, for it would be well-pleasing to God. There is little available, but I would gladly give him ten gulden if I had them - but under five you must not let him go, for his clothing is scanty. Pray give him more if you can. The town treasury would honour itself by giving him something, seeing I kept him for the use of their churches. But as they will; let nothing be wanting on our part; look round to see where you can get anything. God will requite it; that I know. Amen, Kiss little Hans, and bid him, Lenchen, and Tante Lene pray for the dear Prince and me. I can find nothing here, although it is the Fair, for the children, so provide something, if I bring nothing special.

Martin Luther.
(De Wette.)

To Elector John of Saxony

Luther wishes him joy on his partial recovery.

March 28, 1532.

Grace and peace. Most Serene Prince, etc. I have received your Electoral Highness's joyful letter with great delight, and thank God who has not despised our prayers, and has so graciously restored your Grace's health. We can well believe all that your Electoral Highness writes of the strange things he has experienced in this illness. But God, who is a God of life, of consolation, of health and of joy, will continue and perfect what He has begun, in opposition to the devil, who is the god of death, of mourning, and of sickness, and will compel him to stop his attacks. Amen.

We pray earnestly that your Grace shall want for nothing, either here or there, although you must eat a little wormwood and bite a sour apple. Pray take these awkward lines in good part, for my head is still in subjection to the enemy of all good and health, who at times promenades through my brains, so that I can neither read nor write. May Christ, our consolation and joy, be with you to all eternity. Amen.

Your Grace's obedient

Martin Luther.
(De Wette.)

To N. Zink

Luther comforts him on his son's death.

April 22, 1532.

Grace and peace! Dear friend, you will now have heard of your son's death - who was studying here. He was seized with serious illness, and although everything was done for him, the disease got the upper hand and bore him away to our Lord Jesus, He was very dear to all of us, especially to me (for he shortened many an evening for me by singing treble in my house), and in addition he was quiet and well behaved, and a diligent student; so his death was a great grief to us, for we would gladly have retained

him; but he was even dearer to God, who desired to have him. So it is only natural his fate should affect you and your dear wife, seeing it has grieved me so. Still rather thank God for giving you such an amiable pious son, upon whom all your trouble and expense were so well bestowed. But comfort yourselves with the thought of his falling asleep with such a testimony of his faith on his lips, which was a marvel to us, so that there is as little doubt that he is with God, his true father, as that the Christian religion is true. And be grateful that he like so many others did not come to an untimely end, and even had he lived, your means could have helped him to nothing higher than a profession of some kind. And now he is in the place he would not exchange for the whole world. So take comfort that he is not lost but only sent on before to be kept in everlasting bliss; therefore "we must not sorrow as those which have no hope."

Magister Veit Dietrich will comfort you with a few of the beautiful sayings he uttered before his death. But my love for the pious boy causes me to send you these lines. I commit you to Christ, our Lord and Comforter.

Martin Luther.

To Nicolas Amsdorf

June 23, 1532.

Grace and peace! My not writing you, dear Amsdorf, was caused by the state of my head, but in answer to your prayers it is now getting better. I am sorry to hear that you have been ill. May Christ restore and preserve you to us for long. I do not know what to hope for regarding the peace negotiations between the Emperor and us in religious matters. Our folks wrote that the Turk was advancing with an enormous army on Germany to attack Ferdinand and Charles. The Pope is French, and he and the King of France refuse help against the Turks. Behold this money, which the Popes have been collecting from the Indulgences for so many centuries, to use against the Turks. It is said that the Emperor will appeal to the German princes for the promised help, so the Diet and peace negotiations may soon be ended. Carlstadt has gone to Friesland to seek a fresh hiding-place, having only got the post of land overseer in Switzerland of which he had more than enough here.

May the Lord do what is well-pleasing in His eyes, to whom I commend you.

Martin Luther.
(Schutze.)

To The Princes Johann and Joachim of Anhalt

Luther rejoiced in the accession of the Anhalt Princes to the Evangelical faith in 1532. He sent them Hausmann as Court preacher.

May or June 1532.

Grace and peace in the Lord, Most Serene High-born Princes and Gracious Lords. That pious man, Nicolas Hausmann, comes to your Highnesses as Court preacher (*In Dessau*). I humbly commend him to you. He is an excellent man of the highest character, and a faithful expounder of God's Word, which he loves with his whole heart. May Christ cause him to bring forth much fruit. Amen. I do not doubt you will cherish him. I commit you to God, and if my poor prayers are of any avail, they are ever offered on your Graces' behalf.

Martin Luther.
Wittenberg.
(Walch, 21. 1242.)

To Some One Unknown

On July 25 the Emperor and Ferdinand most unwillingly signed a religious truce, knowing it would strengthen heresy, so the Elector succeeded in having the Protestant Church recognised for the first time.

August 19, 1532.

Grace and peace, honoured friend! Herr Christoph Stroebel and Herr Nicolas Hausmann have told me how God has not only blessed you in temporal things, but what is a thousand times better, has quickened you spiritually with love for the gospel, which I am delighted to hear, and pray God to strengthen and maintain you in this gracious condition till His appearing. For these are dangerous times, owing to seditious persons, false doctrines, and teachers. These mischievous persons creep about everywhere, and Satan does the same, trying to overthrow our faith; and at all times our reason blindly struggles against the truth, annoyed that our cause rests solely in God's power and strength. I can only write a few lines now, for we are all in deep grief at the departure of the pious Prince from this vale of tears.

I commend you to the grace of God our Saviour, and beseech you to help poor Christoph Stroebel in any way you can, which Christ will requite as done to Himself, and I shall thank you when told of it.

Martin Luther.

Wittenberg
(De Wette.)

To King Frederick of Denmark.

Luther pleads for the captive King Christian of Denmark.

September 28, 1532.

Grace and peace in Christ our Lord, who died for our sins, and rose again for our life! Your Majesty must perceive how God is the true and gracious Judge, seeing you always wished to be at peace with your cousin, King Christian, and God has ever given you the victory over him, for which you warmly thanked God, as well as used the victory in a God-fearing way; still, I am moved by the misery and the complaints of my gracious Lord, King Christian, and the fear of your proceeding against the captive, thereby damaging his faith in God, humbly to plead that your Majesty may follow Christ's example and have mercy on your captive cousin. For Christ died for His enemies, while we are only expected to show them mercy.

For had he been taken prisoner in battle, instead of after he had thrown himself upon your mercy, you would doubtless have treated him in a cousinly manner. How much more now, seeing he has resigned all and yielded himself up, like the prodigal son, to you as his father.? We must all plead for mercy from God, therefore your Majesty will do a glorious service in God's sight by treating the poor prisoner graciously; and such an act will be a source of consolation to you on your deathbed and a well-spring of joy in heaven, besides bringing you honour and glory on earth. For it is a noble work when great persons act nobly in high affairs, and is an example to all the world as well as a joy to the saints in heaven, and well-pleasing to the Divine Majesty. So act thus, as a fruit of your faith and a thank-offering to God, and for the prisoner's consolation, and a delight to us all. And at last your Majesty will confess with gratitude how grieved you would have been had you done otherwise.

May Christ endue your Majesty with His Spirit to act according to His good pleasure in everything. And pray take this presumptuous letter in good part, for thus does God command us to be solicitous for others.

Your Majesty's obedient

Martin Luther.
Wittenberg.
(De Wette.)

To the Leipsic People, who were Banished for the Gospel

October 4, 1532.

Grace and peace in Christ! Nowhere else is peace to be found till the Lord comes and overthrows the arch-enemy of peace. Wolf Breunlein (*a Leipsic bookseller*) has shown me your petition to Herzog George, with which I am much pleased; also, that you have lighted two torches to the devil, for this will bring great confusion on that stubborn head. If you cannot procure a certificate of your upright walk from him, still you have achieved much, seeing both God and the world, also Herzog George's adherents, testify that you suffer all this because of him, and solely for Christ's sake, for all know that you are being persecuted because the Emperor has granted peace to the Lutherans, which is a great grief to the miserable creature. But stand fast! Christ begins to reign, and will put an end to the drama. Here no one will taunt you with being banished, or hinder your business, for our gracious Lord stands firm by the Confession (Augsburg).

Therefore, pray speak only good words to the madcap, and forgive nothing - even as you have so well expressed matters in the petition. If it help, good; if not, it will do no harm, but rather further your cause in God's sight, who will soon make short work with the devil and his followers. It is written, "The Lord hath respect unto the lowly, but knoweth the proud afar off." So take comfort, dear friends! He only can appreciate what is sweet who has tasted the bitter.

Before attaining to glory, the heart must suffer deeply. "Ante gloriam conteritur cor." May God the Father strengthen you through His own Spirit in Christ, and not in Herzog George. For Christ lives - Herzog George dies. This is certain and will soon be proved. Amen.

Martin Luther.
(De Wette.)

To Nicolas Hausmann

Luther congratulates him on his settlement in Dessau.

November 6, 1532.

Grace and peace! I have allowed this letter to lie so long, dearest Hausmann, hoping to get it sent away any hour, but Aurelius always said he had no reliable messenger, till in my absence the ink-bottle was spilt over it, as you see. Pray forgive this. For the rest, thank Christ who permitted you to reach your destination in good health, and

receive a gracious reception from the Prince. Thank him from me, not so much for the wild boar as for his love to God's Word, which is a remarkable trait in this great hero. Commend me to God in your prayers, and afterwards to this excellent Prince.

I have invited Justus Jonas, Philip, Pommer, and Cruciger to dine with me as you wished, to celebrate the birthday of St. Martin, of Martin the son, and Martin the father. Would that you, too, could be present. There is nothing new here, except that, by the Prince's command, the church visitation will begin anew, and Justus Jonas is one of those chosen. Afterwards the sequestration will be set about in earnest, and I fear it will be too stringent. May our dear Lord cause it all to turn out for good. Amen.

Martin Luther.
(Walch, V. 21. 1400.)

Martin and Kathie's son Martin was one year old on November 9, 1532. Luther was 49 on November 10, 1532. Here are the birthdates of all Luther's children.

Johannes (Hans): June 7, 1526 (died 1575)

Elizabeth: December 10, 1527 (died August 3, 1528)

Magdalena: May 4, 1529 (died September 20, 1542)

Martin: November 9, 1531 (died 1565)

Paul: January 29, 1533 (died 1593)

Margaretha: December 17, 1534 (died 1570)

To Jonas von Stockhausen

Luther counsels him how to combat his satiety of life.

November 27, 1532.

Grace and peace in Christ! Dear sir and friend - Good friends have informed me that you are afflicted with weariness of life, and longing for death. Oh, dear friend, it is high time for you to mistrust your own thoughts, and listen to others who have overcome such temptations - nay, put your ear close to our mouths, and let our words sink into your heart, and God will comfort and strengthen you thereby. First, you know one must obey God's will, for He has given you life, and as yet does not will your death; so you must submit your thoughts to the said Divine will.

Our Lord Christ had much that was bitter in His life, but He would not lay it down without His Father's will, retaining it as long as He could, saying, "My hour is not yet come." And Elias, Jonas, and other prophets cried for death, through their sufferings, even cursing the day of their birth, and yet they were compelled to live on and put up with this weariness till their hour came.

Therefore, pluck up heart, and bid defiance to yourself, exclaiming, "My good fellow, when thou art so unwilling to live, then thou must live in spite of thyself, for God wills it so and I also. Throw your devilish thoughts into the abyss of hell, with their dying and death, for they are of no avail here, and grind your teeth together, determined to repulse those which have found refuge in your head, making you as stubborn as the worst of peasants, or a woman - nay, even harder, for they are not made of cast-iron!

If you thus struggle against yourself, God will assuredly help, and our prayers, with those of all pious Christians, will do the rest.

I herewith commit you to our dear Lord, the only Saviour, Christ Jesus, who will retain the mastery in your heart against the devil, and cause us all to rejoice in the marvellous help accorded to you, for which we hope and pray, as He has commanded and promised. Amen.

Martin Luther.
Wittenberg.
(De Wette.)

To Frau von Stockhausen

Luther writes regarding her husband's depression of spirits.

November 27, 1532.

Grace and peace in Christ, honoured, virtuous lady! I have written a hurried letter of consolation to your husband. The devil is your enemy, and that of your husband, because you love his enemy Christ. This is how he avenges himself on you, but Christ says, "Because I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." The suffering of his saints is very precious before God. In my haste I can write little now. But beware of leaving the man a moment alone, or leaving anything in his way, in case he do himself an injury. Solitude is sheer poison for him, and that is why the devil drives him to it.

But if he were entertained with all sorts of stories and news, perhaps even with those which might turn out to be false, or with fables about the Turks, Tartars, and such like, to make him laugh, and then immediately after quote comforting passages of Scripture to him, all this would do him no harm.

But whatever you do, see that he is not left solitary, in case he sink into meditation. Never mind although he is angry at such conduct, look as if you were sorry, and be a little cross. Accept these hasty lines. Christ, who causes your heartfelt sorrow, will

help you as He did lately. Only be steadfast, for you are the apple of His eye, and whoever touches it touches Him. Amen.

Martin Luther.
Wittenberg.
(De Wette.)

To Johann Bugenhagen

Luther approves of his intention to republish some of Athanasius's writings, especially that upon the Trinity.

{No date.}

Grace and peace in Christ! Your intention, most excellent of men, to reissue some of Athanasius's writings upon the Trinity has my warm approval. Among these I enjoyed immensely that which was held before an approving judge, under Constantine the Great, viz. the disputation between Athanasius and Arius. The very thought of the delight with which I devoured it as a young monk, when it was put in my hands by my spiritual director in Erfurt, doubtless a true Christian, even beneath the accursed cowl, is to this day one of my pleasantest recollections; and yet this was only a personal pleasure for my special benefit. But what you propose is something much greater. I behold Christ's spirit working in and through you in desiring to preserve and defend those doctrinal articles concerning the Trinity in their purity in the church of God, for whose maintenance that saintly man Athanasius did not shrink from drawing down upon himself all the demons in hell, in the world, and the whole kingdom of God.

Your resolution is therefore, most excellent Pommer, salutary and good in this depraved age, when all our articles of faith are being assailed by the emissaries of Satan, especially those on the Trinity, which certain sceptics and epicureans are beginning audaciously to scoff at; and they are ably assisted, not only by these Italian grammarians or rhetoricians, which they think they are, but by certain Italian -German serpents, who by word of mouth and in their writing scatter broadcast the bad seed, whereby they excite the admiration of their own followers and boast of their success.

But these Devils, or Epicureans, or Sceptics, or Lucians, or whatever kind of adventurers, Italian or German, they may be, are nowhere when brought into the presence of Him who said to our servant Jesus Christ, "Thou art my Son"; and again, "Sit thou at my right hand." Let us await the laurels these giants will carry away with them from those seemingly glorious assaults upon God. Such a gigantic war is nothing new; an Euseladus or a Typhoeus has nevertheless been overthrown once in a century, while our servant Jesus Christ has nothing else to do but overthrow these giants, and will not cease doing so till at last, as Israel says, the seed and the root shall along with

the branches be rooted up, and all the giants destroyed. We daily look for this, and pray that it may soon take place. Amen.

The grace of God be with you.

Martin Luther.
(Schatze.)

Epicureans, Greek philosophers whose sought pleasure, but with moderation to eliminate fear and pain, Mentioned in Acts 17:18

Sceptics: from the Greek word "sceptis" meaning inquiry. Questioning everything.

Lucians: Named after Lucian of Samosata (c. 120–180 AD) ridiculed religion and superstition.

Euseladus: Giant in Greek mythology

Typhoeus: Fire breathing giant in Greek mythology.