

Luther's Letter To the Mayors and Councilmen of All the Towns of Germany



Martin Luther's Address to the Councilmen of all towns of Germany that they Establish and Maintain Christian Schools

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Grace and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Beloved rulers, wise and sagacious men, you all do know that I have been under ban and outlawry for well nigh three years. And I surely would keep silence now if I feared the commandments of men more than I fear God. For which cause also many in this our German land, both high and low, are even now denouncing my words and deeds and shedding much blood over them. But for all this, I cannot refrain from speaking; for God has opened my mouth and commanded me to speak, yes, to cry aloud, and to spare not, while at the same time he has ever been giving strength and increase to my cause — and that too, without any device or act of mine; for the more “they rage and set themselves, the more he laughs and has them in derision” (Psalm 2). And by this one thing alone, whosoever is not hardened in unbelief may see that this cause is of God. For this is ever the way with God’s word and work here on the earth. They manifest the greatest power precisely when men are the most eager to overthrow and destroy them.

Therefore, I will speak, and, as Isaiah says, “I will not hold my peace till the righteousness of Christ go forth as brightness, and his salvation as a lamp that burns.” And I beseech you all, my beloved rulers and friends, receive this my writing and exhortation with joy and lay it to heart. For whatever I am in myself, yet in this matter I can say, of a truth, with a pure conscience in the sight of God that I have not sought mine own good (which I could the more easily have secured by silence) but, out of a true heart, I speak to you and to the whole of Germany, even as God has ordained me to do, whether you hear or whether you forbear. And I would have you freely, cheerfully and in a spirit of love, give me your attention since, doubtless, if you obey me herein, you obey not me but Christ — and whoever does not follow my precepts, despises Christ and not me.

Wherefore I beseech you all, beloved rulers and friends, for

the sake of God and of poor neglected youth, do not count this a small matter, as some do, who, in their blindness, overlook the wiles of the adversary. For it is a great and solemn duty that is laid upon us, a duty of immense moment to Christ and to the world, to give aid and counsel to the young. And in so doing we likewise promote our own best interests. And remember, that the silent, hidden and malicious assaults of the devil can be withstood only by manly Christian effort.

Beloved rulers, if we find it necessary to expend such large sums as we do yearly upon artillery, roads, bridges, dykes, and a thousand other things of the sort, in order that a city may be assured of continued order, peace, and tranquillity, ought we not to expend on the poor suffering youth therein, at least enough to provide them with a schoolmaster or two? God the Almighty has, in very deed, visited us Germans with the small rain of his grace and vouchsafed to us a right golden harvest. For we have now among us many excellent and learned young men, richly furnished with knowledge, both of the languages and of the arts, who could do great good, if we would only set them to the task of teaching our little folks.

Do we not see before our very eyes, that a boy may now be so thoroughly drilled in three years, that, at fifteen or eighteen, be shall know more than hitherto all the high schools and cloisters put together have ever been able to impart? Yea, what other thing have the high schools and cloisters ever achieved, but to make asses and blockheads? Twenty, forty years would they teach you, and after all you would know nothing of Latin or of German either; and then, too, there is their shameful profligacy, by which bow many ingenuous youths have been led astray! But, now that God has so richly favored us, in giving us such a number of persons competent to teach these young folks, and to mould their powers in the best manner, truly it behooves us not to throw his grace to the wind and not to suffer him to knock at our door in vain. He is even now waiting for admittance; good betide us if we open to him — happy the man who responds to his greeting. If we slight him until he shall have passed by, who may prevail with him to return?

Let us bethink ourselves of our former sorrow and of the darkness wherein once we groped. I do not suppose that Germany has ever heard so much of God's word as now. Certainly we may search our history in vain for the like state of things. If we let all this slip away without gratitude and praise, it is to be feared that worse calamities and a deeper darkness will come upon us. My dear German brothers, buy, while the market is at your door. Gather in, while the sun shines, and the weather is fair. Apply the word and the grace of God to your hearts, while they are here. For this you should always bear in mind, that God's word and grace are a passing shower that goes, never to return. And do not, my German brothers, indulge in the delusive dream that it will abide with you forever. For an ungrateful and a scornful spirit will drive it away. Wherefore, lay hold of it, and keep it, you who may.

Idle hands never reap a harvest. God's command, so often communicated through Moses to the effect that parents should teach their children is thus taken up and enforced in the 78th Psalm, 3rd verse, *et seq.*, "which our fathers have told us, we will not hide them from their children, showing to the generations to come the praise of the Lord." And the 4th commandment God deemed of such vast importance that the punishment of death was decreed upon stubborn and disobedient children. And why is it, that we, the elder, are spared to the world, except to train up and instruct the young?

It is impossible that the gay little folks should guide and teach themselves. Accordingly God has committed to us, who are old and experienced, the knowledge which is needful for them and he will require of us a strict account of what we have done with it. Listen to Moses, in Deuteronomy, 32:7, "Ask your father, and he will show you; your elders, and they will tell you." But with us, to our sin and our shame be it spoken, it has come to this: that we must drive and be driven, before we can bring up our children aright, and seek their good. And yet, nature itself would seem to prompt us what to do, and manifold examples among pagan nations, to incite us to do it. There is not a brute animal that does not direct and instruct its young to act as befits its nature — unless we except the ostrich, of which God

said in Job 39:14-16, "which leaves her eggs in the earth," "she is hardened against her young ones, as though they were not hers." And what would it profit us, if we were faithful in the discharge of every other duty, and should become well-nigh perfect, if, withal, we failed to do precisely the thing for which our lives are lengthened out, namely, to cherish and watch over the young? I truly think that, of sins, there is none, for which the world is so culpable, and for which it merits such severe condemnation as this which we are guilty of with regard to our children, in: not giving them a right training.

Woe to the world, ever and forever! Children are daily born and are suffered to grow up among us, and there is, alas! no one to take the poor young people to himself, and show them the way in which they should go; but we all leave them to go whither they will. But, you say, "All this is addressed to parents. What have councilmen and magistrates to do with it?" This is very true, I grant you; but how if parents should not do it, what then? Who, I ask, will? Shall it be left undone, and the children be neglected? Will magistrates and councilmen *then* plead that they have nothing to do in the matter? There are many reasons why parents do not deal as they should by their children.

And, first, there are some who are not so pious and well-meaning as to do this, even when they have the ability; but, like the ostrich, which leaves her eggs in the dust and is hardened against her young ones, so they bring children into being, and there is an end of their care. But these children are to live among us, and to be of us in one common city. And how can you reconcile it with reason, and especially with Christian love, to permit them to grow up uncared for and untaught, to poison and to blast the morals of other children, so that at last these too will become utterly corrupt; as it happened to Sodom, Gomorrah, Gaba and many other cities?

And again, the majority of parents are, alas! entirely unfit to educate their children, knowing neither what to teach them, nor how to teach it. For they have learned nothing themselves, save how to provide for the body; and they must look to a special class, set apart for the purpose, to take their children and bring them up in the right way.

In the third place, there are quite a number of parents who, though both willing and capable, yet, by reason of their business or the situation of their families, have neither the time nor the place, convenient so that necessity compels them to get teachers for their children. And each would be glad to have one entirely to himself. This, however, is out of the question, for it would be too great a burden for men of ordinary means to bear. And thus, many a fine boy would be neglected because of poverty. In addition, so many parents die and leave orphans behind them. And what care guardians commonly give to them, if observation did not teach us, yet we could judge from what God calls himself, in Psalm 68:6, "a father of the fatherless," which is as much as to say that they are forsaken by all others. There are some, again, who have no children themselves, and who, on this account, take no interest at all in the welfare of the young.

In view of all this, it becomes councilmen and magistrates to watch over youth with unremitting care and diligence. For since their city, in all its interests, life, honor, and possessions is committed to their faithful keeping, they do not deal justly by their trust before God and the world, unless they strive to their utmost, night and day, to promote the city's increase and prosperity. Now, a city's increase consists not alone in heaping up great treasures, in building solid walls or, stately houses, or in multiplying artillery and munitions of war; nay, where there is great store of this and yet fools with it, it is all the worse, and all the greater loss for the city. But this is the best and the richest increase, prosperity and strength of a city: that it shall contain a great number of polished, learned intelligent, honorable, and well-bred citizens who, when they have become all this, may then get wealth and put it to a good use.

Since, then, a city must have citizens, and on all accounts its saddest lack and destitution were a lack of citizens, we are not to wait until they are grown up. We can neither hew them out of stones, nor carve them out of wood; for God does not work miracles so long as the ordinary gifts of his bounty are able to subserve the use of man. Hence, we must use the appointed means, and, with cost and care, rear up and mould citizens.

Whose fault is it, that now in every, city there is such a dearth of intelligent and capable men, but that of the magistrates, who have left the young to grow up like the trees of the forest, and have not given a thought to their instruction and training? You see how wild the trees grow – they are only good for fences or for firewood and are by no means fit for the use of the builder. Yet, we must have governments here upon the earth. How wild and senseless is the hope if clods and addle-brains rule us that somehow they will get wisdom and all will go well with us! Rather let us elect so many swine or wolves for rulers and place them over such as know not what it is to be ruled by men.

And besides, it is brutish recklessness to act merely for the present time, and to say, “as for us, we will rule now; but, we care not how it shall be with those who come after us.” Such men as these, who use their power only for their own individual honor and profit, ought not to rule over men, but over dogs or swine. For even when we exert our utmost diligence to train shrewd, learned, and competent men for rulers, we do not find it a very easy matter to reach our aim. What then can we expect, when we do absolutely nothing?

“This may be so,” you reply; “but, though we ought to have schools, and must have them, still what will it profit us to have Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and your other liberal arts taught in them? Will not German suffice to teach us all of the Bible and the Word of God that is essential to salvation? Alas! I fear me, that we Germans must ever be and continue to be mere brutes and wild beasts, as our neighbors with such good reason style us. I wonder that you do not say, “what have we to do with silks, wine, spices, and other productions of foreign lands; inasmuch as we have wine, corn, wool, flax, wood, and stone here in Germany, not only to supply our wants, but enough and in variety enough to minister either to comfort, dignity or luxury?”

And yet, these languages and these arts, which do us no harm, but are agreeable and useful alike, sources both of honor and profit, throwing light upon the Scriptures, and imparting sound wisdom to rulers, these we despise; while the productions of other lands, which do us no good whatever, we fret and

worry ourselves after to that degree that even success oftentimes proves no better to us than failure.

Of a truth, we are rightly called German fools and beasts! Surely, were there no other good to be got from the languages, the bare thought that they are a noble and a glorious gift from God, wherewith he has visited and enriched us, almost beyond all other nations, this thought, I say, ought to be a powerful motive, yes, an allurements to cultivate them. The cases are rare, indeed, where the devil has suffered the languages to be in repute in the universities and the cloisters; nay, these have almost always raised a hue and cry against them in the past ages, as likewise they do now. For the prince of darkness is shrewd enough to know that, where the languages flourish, there his power will soon be so rent and torn that he can not readily repair it. But now, since he cannot keep them from expanding into a vigorous growth, and from bearing fruit, he is at work, devising how he may render them dwarfed and sickly, if so be that they may decay and die of themselves. If an unwelcome guest comes to his house he sets before him so meager an entertainment, that he is forced to shorten his visit. Few of us, my good friends, perceive this craft and snare of the devil.

Wherefore, my beloved countrymen, let us open our eyes, and, thanking God for this precious jewel, let us keep fast hold of it, lest it be filched away from us, and the devil see his malicious purposes accomplished; for, though the gospel came in former times as now, day by day it comes to us, by the Holy Spirit alone, yet we cannot deny that at the first it was received through the languages, that its blessings are now spread abroad by their means, and by their means that it is to be kept in the world. For when God, by the apostles, sent the gospel to men, he sent the gift of tongues with it; and, before that time, he had used the Roman power as an instrument to diffuse the Latin and Greek languages far and wide over the whole world, in order that the gospel might spread rapidly through all the nations. And, in the same manner he has worked at the present day.

No man understood the reason why God caused the languages again to put on bloom and vigor, until now, at last,

we see that it was for the sake of the gospel which he purposed to bring to light and thereby make manifest and overthrow the kingdom of Anti-Christ. For that cause it was that he gave Greece into the hands of the Turks, in order that the Greeks, hunted out of their own land and scattered over the face of the earth, might carry with them out amongst the nations the knowledge of the Greek language and thereby cause a beginning to be made of learning the other languages also.

Now, since the gospel is so dear to us, let us hold fast to the languages. Nor should it be in vain to us that God has caused his Scriptures to be written in two languages only, the Old Testament in the Hebrew, and the New Testament in the Greek. These languages God has not despised, but has chosen them for his word, to the exclusion of all others; and we too ought therefore to honor them above all others. And St. Paul glories in this, as a special honor and advantage, of the Hebrew, namely, that God's word was written therein. "What advantage then bath the Jew? Much every way; chiefly because unto them were committed the oracles of God," Romans, 3:1-2.

King David, too, bestows a like praise upon it, in Psalm 147:19, "He shows his word unto Jacob, his statutes and judgments unto Israel. He has not dealt so with any nation," "nor to any nation revealed his judgments;" as though he would say: "God has, in this, consecrated and set apart the Hebrew tongue." And St. Paul, in Romans, 1:2, calls the *Scriptures* holy; doubtless because the Holy Word of God is contained therein. In like manner, also, may the Greek be called a sacred language, in that it was chosen before all other languages as that one in which the New Testament should be written and out of which it should flow as out of a fountain, into other languages by the means of translations, thus consecrating these too.

And let us bethink ourselves that haply we may not be able to retain the gospel without the knowledge of the languages in which it was written. For they are the scabbard in which this sword of the spirit is sheathed; they are the casket, in which this jewel is enshrined; the vessel, in which this drink is kept; the room, where this meat is stored. And, as we are taught in the gospel itself, they are the baskets, in which were gathered this

bread, these fishes, and these fragments. Indeed, should we overlook all this, and (which God forbid!) let go our hold on the languages, then we would not only lose the gospel, but would finally fall away to that degree, that we should be able neither to speak nor to write either German or Latin.

In this, let us take a lesson and a warning by the sad example of the universities and cloisters, where they have not only let the gospel slip away from their grasp, but have also either lost or corrupted both Latin and German so that the creatures have become but little better than brute beasts, knowing, neither how to read nor write, and, more than this, have well-nigh lost even their native intellect too. For this reason, the apostles themselves felt constrained to enclose and bind up, as it were, the New Testament in the Greek language; without doubt, to preserve it for us safe and intact, as in a holy ark. For they saw all that, which was to come to pass, and which even now has been fulfilled; namely, if it were committed to tradition alone, that, amid many a wild, disorderly, and tumultuous clash and commingling of opinions, Christianity would become obscured; which event it would be impossible to guard against and equally impossible to preserve the plain and simple truth, unless the New Testament were made sure and immutable by writing and by language!

Hence, we may conclude that, where the languages do not abide, there, in the end, the gospel must perish. That this is true, is manifest moreover, from history; for soon after the apostles' time, when the gift of tongues ceased, the knowledge of the gospel, faith in Christ, and the whole system of Christianity fell away more and more; and later, since the time that the languages went into disrepute, there has very little transpired in Christendom that has been worthy of note; but a vast number of frightful enormities have, on the other hand, been engendered, in consequence of ignorance of the languages. And now, that the languages have again dawned upon us, they have brought light with them, and they have accomplished such mighty results, that all the world is lost in amazement, and is forced to confess that we have the gospel in as great purity almost as did the apostles; nay, that it has come again in its pristine purity, and is,

beyond all comparison, purer than it was in the time of St. Jerome or St. Augustine.

The Holy Spirit understands this matter. He does not employ any light or needless means for his work and he has deemed the languages of such importance, that he has often brought them with him from heaven. Which fact alone ought to be a sufficient inducement to us to cultivate them with diligence and to pay them due honor; and not by any means to despise them now that he is again breathing into them the breath of life throughout the world.

“But,” you will say, “many of the Fathers have died without the languages, and they nevertheless have been saved.” Very true. But what do you say to this that they so often missed wide of the true sense of the Scriptures? How often is St. Augustine at fault in his commentaries on the Psalter, and elsewhere; and Hilary, too; yes, and all who, without the aid of the languages, have undertaken to expound the Scriptures? And, though they perhaps may have spoken the right thing, yet have they not betrayed an uncertainty, whether the passage in hand would bear the construction that they have put upon it? But, if we thus, with our own doubtful arguments and our stumbling references, approach to the defense of the faith, will not Christians be contemned and derided by such of their antagonists as are well-versed in the languages? And will not these become more stubborn in their unbelief, inasmuch as they will have good reason to conclude our faith a delusion?

To what is it owing that religion is now so generally scandalized? To the fact alone, that we are ignorant of the languages — and there is no help for it but to learn them. Was not St. Jerome constrained to translate the Psalms anew from the Hebrew solely because when there came up any controversy with the Jews, they silenced their opponents with the sneering remark, that the passage cited did not read thus and so in the Hebrew? Now, all the expositions of the ancient fathers, who treated the Scriptures without the aid of the languages, (though perhaps they advocated no unsound doctrines) are nevertheless quite often based upon doubtful, inaccurate or inappropriate renderings. And they groped about, like a blind man at a wall,

quite often failing altogether of the right text, and stupidly overlooking it in their enthusiasm, so that even St. Augustine himself was obliged to confess, in his treatise on the Christian doctrines, that a Christian teacher, who would interpret the Scriptures, must understand not only Latin and Greek, but Hebrew likewise; “for otherwise, it is impossible but that he will stumble on all hands.”

And truly, there is need of labor enough, even when we do know the languages. For this reason, it is one thing with the unlettered preacher of the faith, and quite another with the interpreter of the Scriptures, or the prophet, as St. Paul calls the latter. The unlettered preacher has at his command such a number of clear and intelligible texts and paragraphs in the vernacular, that he can understand Christ and his doctrine, lead a holy life himself, and preach all this to others; but, to set forth the sense of the Scriptures, to put one’s self in the van, and to do battle against heretics and errorists, this can never come about, except with the help of the languages.

Accordingly, we must ever, in the Christian church, have such prophets, who shall study and. expound the Scriptures, and, besides, shall be stalwart champions of the faith; for all which, a holy life and sound precepts are not enough. Hence, the languages are of the first necessity to a pure Christianity, as they are the source of the power that resides in prophets or commentators; although, we ought not to require every Christian or preacher to be such a prophet, as also St Paul admits, in 1 Cor. 12:8-9 and Eph. 4:11.

We thus see how it is that, since the apostles’ time, the Scriptures have remained so obscure; for, nowhere have any sure and reliable commentaries been written upon them. Even the holy fathers, as we said before, have often fallen into error, and, because they were ignorant of the languages, they very seldom agree, but one says one thing, and another another. St. Bernard was a man of great genius; so much so, that I would place him above all the eminent doctrinists, both ancient and modern. But yet, how often does he play upon the language of the Scriptures, (albeit in a spiritual sense,) thus turning it aside from its true meaning. Hence, the sophists averred that the

Scriptures were obscure, and that the word of our God was couched in perplexing and contradictory terms. But they did not see that all that was wanted, was a knowledge of the languages in which it was recorded. For nothing is more plain-spoken than God's word, when we have become thorough masters of its language. A Turk might well seem obscure to me, because I do not understand his speech, when a Turkish child of seven shall easily discern his meaning.

Hence, it is a rash undertaking, to attempt to learn the Scriptures through the expositions of the Fathers, and through reading their numerous treatises and glosses. For this purpose you ought to go direct to the language yourself. For the beloved Fathers, because they were without the languages, have at times descanted at great length upon a single verse, and yet cast such a feeble glimmer of light upon it, that their interpretation was, at last, but half right, and half wrong, And yet you will persist in painfully running after them, when, with the languages, you might be yourself in a position rather to lead than to follow. For, as the light of the sun dispels the shadows of the night, so do the languages render useless all the glosses of the Fathers.

Since now, it becomes Christians to regard the Scriptures as the one only book which is all their own, and since it is a sin and a shame for us not to be familiar with our own book, nor with the language and the word of our God, so it is a still greater sin and shame for us not to learn the languages, especially now that God is bringing to us and freely offering us learned men, and suitable books, and every thing which we need for this purpose, and is, so to speak, urging us to the task, so desirous is he to have his book open to us.

O, how joyful would those beloved Fathers have been if they could have come to the knowledge of the Scriptures and have learned the languages so easily as we now may do it! How great was their labor, how constant their diligence in picking up but a few of the crumbs, while we may secure half, yea, even the whole of the loaf, with scarce any trouble at all. And how does their diligence put our inactivity to the blush? Yes, how severely will God punish this our apathy and neglect! Again, in order to follow Paul's precept, in 1 Cor. 14: 29, to the effect that we must

judge of every doctrine of Christianity, we must, of necessity, first learn the languages. For it may chance that the teacher or preacher shall go through with the whole, of the Bible, explaining it as seems to him good, whether that be right or wrong, and none of his hearers can dispute him if none of them is competent to judge of his truth or error. But to judge we must know the languages, else we shall have nothing to guide us.

Hence, though the faith of the gospel may be set forth in a certain measure by the unlettered preacher, yet such preaching is weak at the best and we soon become wearied and discouraged, and we faint for lack of nutriment. But, where the languages are well understood, there all is freshness and strength the Scriptures are thoroughly winnowed, and faith is renewed day by day. Nor should we suffer ourselves to be led astray, because some magnify the spirit while they despise the letter. So, too, some, like the Waldensian brethren, deem the languages of no account whatever. But, my good friends, "the spirit is here, the spirit is there." I too have been in the spirit; and I too have seen spirits, (if I may glory of myself). And my spirit has proved some things while your spirit has been quietly sitting in a corner, and doing little more than making a vain-glorious boast of its existence.

I know, as well as another, that it is the spirit along which does almost every thing. Had I passed my days in obscurity, and had I received no aid from the languages toward a sure and exact understanding of the Scriptures, I might yet have led a holy life, and in my retirement have preached sound doctrine; but then I should have left the pope and the sophists, together with the whole body of Anti-Christ, just where I found them. The devil does not regard my spirit of near so much account as my, thoughts, and my writings upon the Scriptures. For my spirit takes nothing from him, save myself alone; but the Holy Scriptures, and the sayings therein contained, make the world too narrow for him and strip him of his power.

Therefore, I cannot accord my praise at all to my Waldensian brothers for the low esteem in which they hold the languages. For, though their precepts square with the truth yet they cannot but fail often of the right text, and they must necessarily ever be

unprepared and unequipped for the defense of the faith and the uprooting of false doctrines. And for this reason are they so obscure; and their speech is so warped from the standard of the Scriptures, that I greatly fear they *are* not or else *will* not *abide* in a pure faith. For it is, very dangerous to speak of the things of God otherwise, or in other words, than God himself employs. In a word, it *may* be that they have the witness of a holy life and sound doctrine among themselves; but, while they remain without the languages, they will fail precisely where others have failed, namely, in not searching the Scriptures with thoroughness and care, in order thereby to render themselves useful to others. But, since they now have the opportunity to do this, and yet will not do it, let them consider how they will answer for themselves before God.

Thus far I have spoken of the usefulness and the necessity of the languages in their bearing, on spiritual concerns and on the welfare of the soul. Now let us look to the body and ask, were there no soul, no heaven, nor hell, and were temporal affairs to be administered solely with a view to this world, whether these would not stand in need of good schools and learned teachers much more even than do our spiritual interests? Nor hitherto have the sophists interested themselves in this matter at all, but have adapted their schools to the spiritual order alone; so that it was counted a reproach to a learned man, if he was married and such an one was told, "you are of the world, for you have severed yourself from our order entirely" as if the spiritual order alone were pleasing in the sight of God, while the temporal, (as they style it) was given over to the devil and Antichrist.

It is needless for me here to argue, that all temporal government is of Divine origin and authority; for on this point I have spoken elsewhere, and that so fully that no one, I hope, will venture to deny it; but, the question now is, how to provide able and competent men to govern us. And in this the heathen might justly put us to shame and confusion of face, for they, the Greeks and Romans especially, gave diligent heed to the teaching and training of boys and girls, to fit them for all the various stations of temporal trust and authority, and yet they were entirely ignorant whether this was pleasing in the sight of

God or not; so that I blush for our Christians, when I think of it, and for our Germans above all who are clowns; yes, brute beasts, one might call them. For they say, "Of what use are schools, unless you intend to enter the service of the church?"

But surely we know, or ought to know, how necessary, how proper and how pleasing in the sight of God it is, for a prince, a lord, a magistrate, or any one in authority, to excel in learning and in wisdom, so that he may discharge the duties of his office in a Christian manner. If now, as for argument's sake, I have supposed there *were* no soul, and if we had no need at all of schools or of the languages for the sake of the Scriptures, or of God, yet it would be a sufficient reason for establishing in every place the very best of schools, both for boys and girls, that the world, merely to maintain its outward prosperity, has need of shrewd and accomplished men and women. Men to pilot state and people safely and to good issues; women to train up well and to confirm in good courses both children and servants.

Now, such men must first be boys, and such women, girls. Hence, it is our duty to give a right training and suitable instruction to these boys and girls. "Yes," you will say, "but every one can do this for himself, and can teach his sons and daughters, and bring them up under a good discipline." I answer, verily we see but too well, what sort of teaching and discipline this is. For where it is carried to the farthest extent and turns out well besides, it does not go any further than this, to impart an easy air, and respectful carriage; otherwise, the children appear to no more advantage than so many machines who do not know how to converse well upon a variety of topics and who are the very farthest from being able to give aid and counsel to others. But, if they were taught and trained in schools or elsewhere, where the masters and mistresses were learned and discreet, and could instruct them in the languages, arts, and histories, they would thus become familiar with the great deeds and the famous sayings of all times; would see how it fared with such a city, kingdom, province, man, or woman, and would bring before their eyes, as it were in a mirror, the whole world from the beginning, with all its character and life) its plans and achievements, its successes and failures: by all this they would

shape their sentiments, and to all this conform the course of their life in the fear of God.

From the same histories, too, they would gain wit and wisdom, and learn what to pursue and what to avoid in life, and so, by and by, be able to counsel or to govern others. But, the instruction which is imparted at home, without such schools, will make us wise only through our own experience. And before we get wisdom thus, we shall be an hundred times dead, and shall have passed our lives in folly; for, to perfect our experience, we need a long series of years. Since, then, young people are always full of frolic and life, and always seeking something to do, and finding their pleasure in action and since you can not curb their spirits, nor would it be a good thing even if you could, why should we not establish such schools. and unfold before them such arts? For now, by God's grace, matters have taken such a turn, that children are enabled to learn by means of pleasure, and, in sport, as it were, every thing, whether it be languages, arts, or histories. And our schools are no longer hells and purgatories, as they once were, where a boy was forever tormented with their cases and their tenses, and where he learned nothing, absolutely nothing, by reason of ceaseless flogging, trembling, woe and anguish.

If, now, we take so much time and trouble to teach children to play at cards, to sing and to dance, why shall we not also spend time enough to teach reading and the other arts, while they have youth and leisure, and while they show both an aptness and a fondness for such things? As for myself, if I had children and were able, I would teach them not only the language and history, but singing likewise; and with music I would combine a full course of mathematics. For what would it all require but a mere child's play, as the Greeks brought up their children of old? And what a wonderful people they were, and how well-fitted for all manner of occupations. And alas! how often do I lament my own case, in that I read so few of the poets and historians when I was young and that there was no one to direct me to them. But in their place I was compelled to flounder in all manner of vain philosophies and scholastic trash, true Serbonian dogs of the devil and with much cost and care,

and vast detriment besides so that I have had enough to do ever since, in undoing the harm, they did me.

"But," you say, "we cannot bring all our children up to be students. We cannot spare them. We need them to work for us." I answer, "I do not ask for the establishment of such schools as we have had hitherto where our young men have spent twenty or thirty years over Donatus or Alexander and yet have not learned any thing at all. We have now another world and things are done after a different pattern. And I ask no more than this, namely, that boys shall attend upon such schools as I have in view, an hour or two a day, and none the less spend the rest of their time at home or in learning some trade or doing whatever else you will. Thus both these matters will be cared for together, while they are young and opportunities, are favorable. For else, they would haply spend tenfold this time in gunning and ball-playing. So, too, your little girls may easily find time enough to go to school an hour a day, and yet do all their household duties; for they now devote more than that to overmuch play, dancing, and sleep.

It is very plain that all we need, is a cordial and earnest determination to train up our youth aright, and by this means furnish the world with wise and efficient men. For the devil is better pleased with coarse blockheads and with folks who are useful to nobody because where such characters abound, then things do not go on prosperously here on the earth.

Now, as for the most promising children, those who we may hope will become fitted for the position of teachers, either male or female, or of preachers, or to whom we shall look to fill other offices in the world and in the church; these we should leave more and longer at schools, or perhaps keep them there altogether as we read concerning the blessed martyrs who educated St. Agnes, Agatha, Lucia, and the like. For this purpose, too, were cloisters and monasteries first founded; but now, they have been turned aside to subserve other and most unholy uses. And perhaps it must needs have been so, for the shorn flock are well-nigh fleeced altogether. They have become for the most part wholly unfit either to teach or to guide for they know nothing except how to pamper their bodies. And this is no

wonder, for no one thing besides have they ever learned. But, verily, we must have men of another sort; men who shall dispense to us God's word and his ordinances, and who shall watch for the souls of the people. Such men, however, it will be in vain for us to look for if we suffer our present schools to decay, without establishing other and *Christian* schools in their place. And though the schools, as hitherto kept, may be still in existence, yet they can only furnish us with blind guides, perverse and corrupt in all their ways.

Hence, there is great need, not for the sake of the young alone, but also for the welfare and the stability of all our institutions, temporal and spiritual alike, that we should begin at once, and in good earnest, to attend to this matter. For if we delay too long, we may haply find no place for effort, however much we shall desire it, and our most poignant regrets will then be unavailing forever. Consider, for example, the great diligence that King Solomon exercised in this matter, and the interest that he showed in the young, in that, amid all his royal occupations, he found time to compose a book for their special instruction, viz: the Book of Proverbs. Consider Christ himself. how he called little children to him with what care he commended them to us, telling us withal that angels wait upon them, Matt. 18:2. And in this he shows us how great a service it is to bring them up well, and, on the other hand, that he is ever exceedingly angry when we offend or pervert them.

Wherefore, dearly beloved rulers, bend yourselves to the work which God so strictly enjoins upon you, which your office involves, which our youth stand so much in need of, and which neither the world nor the spirit can afford to do without. We have lain, alas! too long in the darkness of corruption and death; too long have we been German beasts. Let us now act as becomes reasonable beings, so that God may mark our gratitude for the good things he has given us, and that other lands may see that we, too, are men, nay, more, that we are men who can either learn somewhat from them, or impart somewhat to them so, through us, the world shall be made better.

I have done my part; and with longing have I desired to bring aid and counsel to this German land. That some, who

ought to know better, detest me for it, and throw my faithful counsel to the wind, all this I must let pass. I well know that others might have done better than I; but, since these have remained silent, I have spoken out, as well as it lay in me to do. Poorly though it has been said, it were better thus, than had I held my peace. And I am in hopes that God will awaken some of you, so that my true admonitions shall not be split upon the ground; and that, taking no thought of him who speaks, you may be moved, by the things spoken of, to bestir yourselves.

Finally, it is well for all those who eagerly desire to see such schools and studies established and sustained over Germany, to bear in mind the importance of sparing neither trouble nor expense, to the end that good libraries may be founded, especially in the large cities, since in them both means and opportunities are greater than elsewhere. For if the gospel, together with all the arts and sciences, are to be perpetuated, they must be enclosed and bound up in books and writings. And the prophets and apostles themselves, as I said before, did this very thing. And this was not only that those who minister to us both in temporal and in spiritual things might have wherewithal to read and to study, but also that good books themselves should be preserved and not be lost, so that we might have that knowledge of the languages, which now, by God's grace, we possess. We see, too, the importance that St. Paul attaches to this matter, where he commands Timothy, (1 Tim. 4:13) "to give attendance to reading;" and also where he bids him, (2 Tim. 4:13) bring with him when he came the parchments that be left at Troas.

Yes, all nations eminent in history have paid attention to this matter, the Israelites more than all. Moses, who made their first record, commanded the book of the law to be preserved in the ark of God and committed it to the keeping of the Levites. And, whoever desired it could there have a copy made for himself; Moses also, laid his prophetic injunction on the king that was to come, to obtain such copy from the Levites. Thus we see clearly that God ordained the Levitical priesthood, that they might, in connection with their other duties, keep and guard the books of the law. Afterward, the collection was enriched and rendered

more complete by Joshua, Samuel, David, Solomon, Isaiah, and other kings and prophets. Hence, arose the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament, which would never have been brought together or preserved had not God so solemnly and repeatedly commanded it to be done.

With this example in view, the monasteries and cloisters in former times founded libraries, albeit they contained but few good books. And what a pity it was, that more pains had not been taken to collect good books and form good libraries, at the proper time, when good books and able men were in abundance; but, alas, we know too well that, in the gradual lapse of time, all the arts and the languages went to decay, and, instead of books having the ring of the true metal, the devil brought in upon us a flood of uncouth, useless, and pernicious monkish legends; the "Florista," "Graecista," "Labyrinthus," "Dormi Secure," and the like, by the means of which the Latin tongue has become corrupt, and there are nowhere any good schools, doctrines, or systems of study remaining. But now, in these latter times, as it has been told us, and as we ourselves may see, there have arisen men who have restored though as yet in a very imperfect manner, the languages and arts; having picked them out of a few pieces and fragments of old books, that had long been given over to the dust and worms. Nor have they yet ceased from their labors, but are renewing them daily.

So we search for gold or jewels amid the ashes of some ruined city. In this matter it would be right and God would justly punish our ingratitude in not acknowledging his bounty, and taking means in time, and while we can, to keep good books and learned men among us, (but letting them pass by, as though they did not concern us). It would be right, I say, if he should suffer all this to leave us, and instead of the Holy Scriptures and good books, should bring us Aristotle back again, together with other pernicious books, which serve only to lead us ever further away from the Bible, that so we might be delivered over again to the monks, those minions of the devil and to the vain mummeries of the scholastic.

Was it not a burning shame that formerly a boy must needs study twenty years or longer, only to learn a jargon of bad Latin,

and then to turn priest and say mass? And, he, who finally arrived at this pinnacle of his hopes, was accounted happy; and happy was the mother who had borne such a son. But, for all this, he remained a poor illiterate man all his days, and was neither good to cluck nor to lay eggs. Such are the teachers and guides that we have had to put up with, who knew nothing themselves, and accordingly were unable to teach any thing that was either good or true. Yea! they did not even know how to learn any more than they did how to teach. And, why was this so? It was because there were no other books accessible, save the barbarous productions of the monks and sophists. Of course, in such a state of things, we could not look for any thing else than scholars and teachers as barbarous as the books which taught them.

A jackdaw never hatches a dove; neither will a fool make a wise man. Such is the reward of our ingratitude in not using diligence in the establishment of libraries, and in leaving good books to perish, while we have cherished and preserved useless ones. But, my advice is, that you do not carry home all sorts of books, without distinction, thinking of numbers only. I would have a choice exercised in this matter, so that we should not heap together the commentaries of all the jurists, the writings of all the theologians, the researches of all the philosophers, nor the sermons of all the monks. Nay, I would banish all such muck and mire, and provide me a library that should contain sterling books, books commended to me by learned men.

In the first place, the Holy Scriptures should be there, both in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and German; also in all other languages in which they might be contained. Next, I would have those books which are useful in learning the languages; as, for instance, the poets and orators, and that without inquiring whether they Pagan or Christian, Greek or Latin. For, from all such are we to learn grammar and style. Next, there should be books pertaining to the liberal arts; and likewise treatises on all the other arts, and on the sciences. And lastly, books on jurisprudence and medicine; though here, too, a wary choice is to be exercised. But, foremost of all, should be chronicles and histories, in whatever languages we could procure them; for

these are of singular usefulness, to instruct us in the course of the world, and in the art of government; and, in these, too, we may see the manifestation of God's wonderful works.

Oh! how many a worthy saying, how many a noble deed, said and done here in Germany, might we now have had, if they had not, alas! passed clean out of the memory of man! And this, for the reason that there was no one to record them — or, if they were recorded, that no one has preserved the record. This, too, is the reason that they know nothing of us in other lands; and all the world must fain call us German beasts who only know how to get substance and then consume it in gluttony and riotous living. But the Greeks and the Romans, and, for that matter, the Hebrews, too, have described the events that took place in their midst so minutely and faithfully, that, if but a woman or a child said or did any thing worthy or note, forthwith it was chronicled, so that all the world should read it and know of it. And yet, we Germans remain bound up, in ourselves, having neither a thought nor a wish that looks beyond our own interests.

But now in these days, God has so graciously come to our aid with all fullness both of art, learned men and books, it is time that we should reap and gather in of the choicest that we can find, and lay up great store of treasure, that we may have wherewith to maintain ourselves in the future out of these golden years, by reason of having improved the opportunity of this rich harvest. For there is danger that it may finally come to this, (and already things are tending that way,) that, through the agency of the devil, good books, which have been restored to us by the art of printing, shall be submerged under a flood of dissolute and pernicious works, in which there is neither sense nor reason; a flood that shall pour in again, as aforetime, and fill every nook and corner of the land. For the devil is surely plotting to bring back the former state of things, so that men shall again painfully stagger under a load of "catholicons," "floristas," "modernistas," and all the vile and abominable trash of the monks and sophists; so we shall again be ever learning, and never coming to the knowledge of the truth.

Wherefore, I beseech you, my beloved rulers and friends, let

this my faithfulness and diligence bear fruit in you. And, though there be some who deem me of too little consequence to give heed to my counsel, and despise me as one under the ban of tyrants, yet, I hope that one day they will see that I did not seek my own, but only the welfare and the happiness of the entire German nation. And though I were a fool, and yet should light upon some good path, it would be no disgrace to a wise man to follow me. And though I were a Turk and a heathen, yet, should Christians perceive that what I had said was not to my own profit but to that of others, even thus, they could not justly despise my efforts to serve them. There are times, too, when a fool may give better advice than a whole army of counselors. Moses suffered himself to be taught by Jethro (Exodus 18:17).

Now, I commend you all to the grace of God, and I pray him to soften your hearts, so that you may right earnestly espouse the cause of poor, needy, forsaken youth, and through divine help assisting you, and for the sake of a good and a Christian government here in our Germany, that you may aid and counsel them, in body and in soul, with all fullness and superfluity, to the praise and glory of God the Father, through our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.