

To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany that they Establish and Maintain Christian Schools

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To the Burgomasters and Councilmen of all cities in Germany. Martin Luther.

Grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Prudent, wise and dear Sirs: Having been put under the ban some three years ago and declared an outlaw, I should have remained silent had I feared the command of men more than God. There are indeed many persons in Germany, both great and small, who on that account, still attack my speaking and writing and shed much blood over it. But God has opened my mouth and bidden me speak, and is mightily supporting me and, without my help, strengthening and spreading my cause the more they rage, and seems to be laughing and mocking at their rage, as it is said in the second Psalm. By this token alone everyone who is not hardened can see that this cause must indeed be of God, for it plainly bears the mark of a divine word and work, which always thrive best when men are most determined to persecute and suppress them.

Therefore I will speak, as Isaiah says, and not hold my peace as long as I live, until Christ's righteousness go forth as brightness and His saving grace be lighted as a lamp. And I pray you now, all my dear sirs and friends, to receive kindly and lay to heart this writing and admonition of mine. For, no matter what I may be personally, I can boast before God with a good conscience that I am not seeking my own advantage, which I could attain far better by remaining silent, but am dealing in hearty good faith with you and with the whole German land, to which I have a divine commission, let men believe it or not. And I wish to assure you and declare to you, frankly and confidently, that if you heed me in this matter, you heed not me but Christ, and that if you heed me not, you despise not me but Christ. For I know and am well aware of what I am saying and teaching and for what purpose I say it, and everyone who is willing rightly to consider my teaching will discover it for himself.

First of all, then, we are experiencing today throughout Germany how schools are everywhere allowed to go to wrack and ruin; universities are growing weak, monasteries are declining. This grass is like to wither and the flower thereof fade, as Isaiah says, because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it in His Word, and shineth with so great heat upon it through the Gospel. For since it is becoming known, through God's Word, how unchristian and devoted only to men's bellies those institutions are; and especially since the carnal multitude see that they are no longer obliged or able to drive their sons and daughters into monasteries and cathedral schools, and to turn them out of their own houses and possessions and plant them in other people's possessions, no one is any longer willing to have children educated. "Tell us," they say, "why should we send them to school, if they are not to become priests, monks and nuns? They had better learn such things as will help them to make a living!"

From this confession of theirs it is very evident what such people are thinking and on what their minds are set. For if they had not sought only the belly and a temporal living for their children when they sent them into the monasteries and cathedral schools or into the spiritual estates, but had been

earnestly concerned for their salvation and blessedness, they would not thus fold their hands, relapse into indifference and say: "If the spiritual estate is no longer to count for anything, then we will let education be and not bother our heads about it." They would rather say: "If it is true, as the Gospel teaches, that this estate is dangerous to our children, why then, dear sirs, show us another way to educate them that will be pleasing to God and profitable to them; we certainly want to provide not only for the bellies of our dear children, but also for their souls." That, at least, is what true, Christian and faithful parents would say.

But it is not surprising that the Evil One takes this attitude and inspires carnal and worldly hearts to neglect the children and youths. Who can blame him for it? He is a prince and god of this world. How can he possibly be pleased to see his nests, the monasteries and the spiritual gangs, destroyed by the Gospel, in which nests he corrupts above all the young folk, who mean so much, yea, everything to him? How can he be expected to permit or promote the proper training of the young? He would indeed be a fool to suffer and help men to establish in his kingdom the very thing by which that kingdom must be most speedily overthrown, as would surely happen if he lost that choice morsel, the dear youth, and had to permit them to be saved for the service of God at his expense and by means of his possessions.

It was a most prudent course, therefore, that he adopted in the days when Christians had their children taught and trained in a Christian manner. The young multitude bade fair to escape him entirely and to work intolerable havoc to his kingdom. Then he went to work, spread his nets and set up such monasteries, schools and estates that it was not possible for a boy to escape him without a miracle from heaven. Now, however, that he sees his snares exposed through God's Word, he flies to the other extreme and will not suffer anyone to study at all. It is again a right and prudent course that he pursues, in order to preserve his kingdom and by all means to retain the young. If he has them in his possession, they will grow up under him and remain his; who will take anything from him? He thus possesses the world in peace. For if a really crushing loss is to be inflicted upon him, it must come through the young people, reared in the knowledge of God and spreading and teaching others God's Word.

No one believes what a dangerous design of the devil's this is. It goes forward so silently that no one perceives it, and the harm is done before one can prevent it. Men fear the Turks and wars and floods, for in such matters they understand what is harmful and what is beneficial. But what the devil has here in mind, no one sees, no one fears, it proceeds so quietly. And yet everyone who would give a gulden to fight the Turks, if they were at our very door, ought properly to give a hundred gulden to this cause, even if only one boy could be trained therewith to become a true Christian man; for a true Christian man is better and worth more than all men upon earth.

Therefore, I pray you all, my dear sirs and friends, for God's sake and the poor youths', not to treat this subject as lightly as some do, who are not aware of what the prince of this world intends. For it is a serious and important matter that we help and assist our youth, and one in which Christ and all the world are mightily concerned. By helping them we shall be helping ourselves and all men. And reflect that these secret, subtle and crafty attacks of the devil must needs be met with deep Christian seriousness. If it is necessary, dear sirs, to expend annually such great sums for firearms, roads, bridges, dams and countless similar items, in order that a city may enjoy temporal peace and prosperity, why should not at least as much be devoted to the poor, needy youth, so that we might engage one or two competent men to teach school?

Moreover, every citizen should be moved by the following consideration. Formerly he was obliged to give up so much money and property for indulgences, masses, vigils, endowments, testaments, anniversaries, mendicants, brotherhoods, pilgrimages, and other like humbug; but now that he is rid by the grace of God of all that robbing and giving, he ought, out of gratitude to God and for His glory, to give a part of that amount for schools in which to train the poor children, which would indeed be a good and precious investment. If the light of the Gospel had not dawned and set him free, he would have to give up to the above-mentioned robbers ten times as much and more forever, without any return. He should also know that where there is objection and opposition to this proposal, the devil is assuredly present, who did not object when men gave their money for monasteries and masses, and poured it out in streams, for he perceives that this work is not to his advantage. Let this then, my dear sirs and friends, be the first consideration to move you, that we must upset this scheme of the devil, our most dangerous and subtle foe.

Our second consideration is found in the words of St. Paul in 2 Corinthians 6:1, that we receive not the grace of God in vain nor neglect the day of salvation. For Almighty God has indeed graciously visited us Germans and proclaimed a true year of jubilee. We have at present the most excellent and learned young men, adorned with the languages and all arts, who could be of much service if we made use of them as instructors of the young. Is it not evident that we are now able to prepare a boy in three years, so that at the age of fifteen or eighteen he will know more than all universities and monasteries hitherto? Indeed, what did men learn in those institutions but how to become asses, blockheads and dunces! For twenty and forty years one sat over one's books without acquiring either Latin or German. I say nothing of the shameful and vicious life, by which the excellent youths were miserably corrupted.

It is true that, rather than have the universities and monasteries continue as before, with no other place for youth to study and live, I should wish no boy ever to study nor to be able to speak; for it is my earnest intention, prayer and desire, that those ass-stables and devil's-schools should either sink into the abyss or be converted into Christian schools. But now that God has so richly blessed us and has given us so many men able to instruct and train our young people aright, surely we ought not to despise the grace of God nor suffer Him to knock in vain. He is standing at our door; happy are we if we open to Him! He is calling to us; blessed is he that answers him! If we let Him pass by, who will bring Him back?

Let us consider our former misery and the darkness in which we sat. Germany, I trow, has never heard so much of God's Word as now; at least we find nothing like it in history. If we permit it to go by without thanks and honor, it is to be feared we shall suffer a still more dreadful darkness and plague. Buy, dear Germans, while the fair is at your doors; gather in the harvest while there is sunshine and fair weather; use the grace and Word of God while they are here. For, know this, God's Word and grace is a passing rainstorm, which does not return where it has once been. It came to the Jews, but it passed over; now they have nothing. Paul brought it to the Greeks, but it passed over; now they have the Turk. Rome and the Latins had it, too; but it passed over; now they have the pope. And you Germans must not think you will have it forever; for ingratitude and contempt will not suffer it to remain. Take and hold fast, then, whoever can; idle hands cannot but have a lean year.

Our third consideration is by far the most important of all; it is the command of God. Its importance is seen in that He so frequently through Moses urges and enjoins parents to instruct their children that it is said in Psalm 78:5, "How straitly he commanded our fathers that they should give

knowledge unto their children and instruct their children's children." It is seen also in the fourth commandment, in which He so urgently enjoins children to obey their parents that He would even have disobedient children sentenced to death. Indeed, for what other purpose do we older folk exist than to care for, instruct and bring up the young? The foolish youths cannot possibly instruct nor protect themselves; God has therefore entrusted them to us who are old and know by experience what is good for them, and He will compel us to render a strict account. Hence Moses also commands, "Ask thy father, and he will shew thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee."

But it is a sin and a disgrace that we must needs urge and be urged to train our children and youths and seek their best interests, when nature itself should drive us to do this and the examples even of the heathen afford us manifold instruction. There is not an irrational animal but looks after its young and teaches them what they need to know, except the ostrich, of which God says that she is hardened against her young ones, as though they were not hers, and leaves her eggs in the earth. And what would it profit us if we possessed and performed all else and became utter saints, and yet neglected the chief purpose of our life, namely, the care of the young? I believe also that among outward sins none so heavily burdens the world in the sight of God nor deserves such severe punishment as the sin we commit against our children by not giving them an education.

When I was a lad they had this maxim in the schools: *Non minus est negligere scholarem quam corrumpere virginem*, — It is just as bad to neglect a pupil as to corrupt a virgin. This was said in order to frighten schoolmasters, for there was then no more grievous sin known than corrupting a virgin. But, dear Lord God, how small a sin is corrupting virgins or wives (which being a bodily and known sin may be atoned for) compared with the sin by which precious souls are neglected and corrupted (which is neither regarded nor known as sin and is never atoned for). O woe unto the world forever and ever! Children are daily born and grow up among us, and there is, alas! no one to care for or to direct them; we let them go on as they will. The monasteries and foundations should see to it, but they are the very ones of whom Christ says in Matthew 18, "Woe unto the world because of offenses! Whoso shall offend one of these young ones that believe in me, it were well for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and he were drowned in the depth of the sea." They are nothing but devourers and destroyers of children.

"Ah," you say, "but all that is addressed to parents; what business is it of councilmen and magistrates?" Very true: but if the parents neglect it, who is to see to it? Shall it on that account remain undone and the children be neglected? In that case, how will magistrates and councilmen excuse themselves by saying it is no business of theirs? There are various reasons why parents neglect their duty.

In the first place, there are those who lack the piety and decency, even if they had the ability, to do it. Like the ostrich, they are hardened against their young, and are content to have cast the eggs from them and to have brought children into the world; they will do nothing more. But these children must live among us and with us in the same city. How then can reason and above all Christian love suffer them to grow up untrained and to poison and pollute other children, until at last the whole city perish, as it happened in Sodom and Gomorrah, Geba, and other cities. Secondly, the great majority of parents are, alas! unfitted for this work and do not know how children are to be trained and taught, for they themselves have learned nothing but how to provide for the belly; whereas it takes persons of exceptional ability to teach and train children aright. Thirdly, even if parents were able and willing to do it themselves, they have neither the time nor the opportunity for it, what with

their other duties and housework. Necessity compels us, therefore, to engage public schoolteachers for the children, unless everyone were willing to engage an instructor of his own. But that would be too heavy a burden upon the common man, and many a promising boy would be neglected on account of poverty. Besides, many parents die and leave orphans, and if we do not know by experience how these are cared for by their guardians, God Himself tells us by calling Himself the Father of the orphans, as of those who are neglected by everyone else. Moreover, there are some who have no children of their own, and who for that reason take no interest in the training of children.

It therefore becomes the business of councilmen and magistrates to devote the greatest care and attention to the young. For since the property, honor and life of the whole city are committed to their faithful keeping, they would fail in their duty toward God and man if they did not seek its welfare and improvement with all their powers day and night. Now the welfare of a city consists not alone in gathering great treasures and providing solid walls, beautiful buildings, and a goodly supply of guns and armor. Nay, where these abound and reckless fools get control of them, the city suffers only the greater loss. But a city's best and highest welfare, safety and strength consist in its having many able, learned, wise, honorable and wellbred citizens; such men can readily gather treasures and all goods, protect them and put them to a good use.

Thus it was done in ancient Rome. There boys were trained in such a way that by the time they were fifteen, eighteen or twenty years of age they were thoroughly conversant with Latin and Greek and the various liberal arts, as they are called, and immediately entered upon a military or a political career. In this way they became intelligent, wise and competent men, skilled in all knowledge and experience, so that if all the bishops, priests and monks in Germany today were rolled into one they would not equal one Roman soldier. As a result, their cause prospered; they had capable and trained men for every position. Thus there has always been forced upon men everywhere, even among the heathen, the necessity of maintaining schoolmasters, if a nation was to be brought to a high standard. Hence St. Paul draws the word "schoolmaster" from the common practice of mankind, when he says in Galatians 4, "The law became our schoolmaster."

Since, then, a city should and must have men, and there is everywhere a lack of such men and complaint that they cannot be found, we dare not wait until they grow up of their own accord (nor can we hew them out of stone nor carve them out of wood); and since God will work no miracles so long as men can solve their problems by means of the other gifts He has granted them: therefore we must do our part and spare no labor or expense to train and produce such men. Whose fault is it that there are at present in all cities so few capable men, but the fault of the authorities who have left the young to grow up like saplings in the forest and have given no thought to their instruction and training! As a result, they have grown so misshapen that they cannot be used for building purposes, but are mere brushwood, fit only for fuel.

The civil government must certainly continue. Shall we then permit none but clods and boors to rule, when we can get better men? That would indeed be a barbarous and foolish policy. We might as well make rulers of swine and wolves, and set them over those who will not consider how they may be ruled by men. Moreover, it is inhuman perversity to think no further than this, "We will rule now; what concern is it of ours how they will fare who come after us?" Not over human beings, but over swine and dogs should such persons rule, who seek only their own profit or honor in governing. Even if we took the utmost pains to train up none but able, learned and skilled rulers, there would still be

room enough for toil and labor in order that the government might prosper. How shall it prosper if no one takes any pains at all?

“But,” you say again, “granted that we must have schools, what is the use of teaching Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and the other liberal arts? We can still teach the Bible and God’s Word in German, which is sufficient for our salvation.” I reply: Alas! I know well that we Germans must always remain brutes and stupid beasts, as neighboring nations call us and as we richly deserve to be called. But I wonder why we never ask: What is the use of silks, wine, spices, and strange foreign wares, when we have in Germany not only wine, grain, wool, flax, wood and stone enough for our needs, but also the very best and choicest of them for our honor and ornament? Arts and languages, which are not only not harmful, but a greater ornament, profit, honor and benefit, both for the understanding of Scripture and for the conduct of government, these we despise; but we cannot do without foreign wares, which we do not need, which bring us in no profit, and which reduce us to our last penny. Are we not justly dubbed German fools and beasts?

Truly, if there were no other use for the languages, this alone ought to rejoice and move us, that they are so fine and noble a gift of God, with which He is now richly visiting and endowing us Germans, more richly indeed than any other land. There is little evidence that the devil suffered them to be revived through the universities and monasteries; these have, on the contrary, always raged against them and are still raging. For the devil smelt a rat and perceived that if the languages were revived, there would be a hole knocked in his kingdom which he might have difficulty stopping. Since he was unable, however, to prevent their being revived, his aim is now to keep them on such slender rations that they will of themselves decline and pass away. They are like an unwelcome guest who has come to his house; so he determines to show him such entertainment that he will not tarry long. Very few of us, my dear sirs, see through this wicked plot of the devil.

Therefore, my beloved Germans, let us open our eyes, thank God for this precious treasure, and guard it well, lest it be again taken from us and the devil have his will. For though the Gospel has come and daily comes through the Holy Spirit alone, we cannot deny that it has come by means of the languages, by which it was also spread abroad, and by which it must be preserved. For when God desired through the apostles to spread abroad the Gospel in all the world, He provided tongues for that purpose. And before that He had spread the Greek and Latin languages, by means of the Roman empire, throughout all lands, in order that His Gospel might the more speedily bear fruit far and wide. He has done the same now. No one knew for what purpose God suffered the languages to be revived, until we now begin to see that it was for the sake of the Gospel, which He intended afterwards to reveal, in order to expose and destroy thereby the kingdom of antichrist. To this end He also gave over Greece to the Turk, in order that the Greeks, driven out and scattered, might spread their language and give an incentive to the study of other languages as well.

In proportion, then, as we prize the Gospel, let us guard the languages. For not in vain did God have His Scriptures set down in these two languages alone — the Old Testament in Hebrew, the New in Greek. The languages, therefore, that God did not despise but chose above all others for His Word, we too ought to honor above all others. For St. Paul declared it to be a peculiar glory and distinction of Hebrew that God gave His Word in that language, when he said in Romans 3:1, “What profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because unto them were committed the oracles of God.” King David also boasts in Psalm 147:19, “He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation nor made known to them his

judgments." Hence Hebrew is called a sacred language, and St. Paul terms it in Romans 1:2 "the holy scriptures," doubtless because of the holy Word of God contained therein. Similarly, the Greek language may be called sacred, because it was chosen above all others as the language in which the New Testament was to be written and from which, as from a fountain, it flowed by translation into other languages and made them also sacred.

And let us be sure of this: we shall not long preserve the Gospel without the languages. The languages are the sheath in which this sword of the Spirit is contained; they are the casket in which we carry this jewel; they are the vessel in which we hold this wine; they are the larder in which this food is stored; and as the Gospel itself says, they are the baskets in which we bear these loaves and fishes and fragments. If through our neglect we let the languages go (which may God forbid!), we shall not only lose the Gospel, but come at last to the point where we shall be unable either to speak or write a correct Latin or German. As proof and warning of this, let us take the wretched and woeful example of the universities and monasteries, in which men not only unlearned the Gospel, but corrupted the languages so that the miserable folk were fairly turned into beasts, unable to read or write a correct German or Latin and wellnigh losing their natural reason to boot.

Hence the apostles themselves considered it necessary to put the New Testament into Greek and to bind it fast to that language, doubtless in order to preserve it for us safe and sound as in a sacred ark. For they foresaw all that was to come and now has come to pass, and knew that if it were contained only in men's heads, wild and fearful disorder and confusion, and many various interpretations, fancies and doctrines would arise in the Church, which could be prevented and from which the plain man could be protected only by committing the New Testament to writing and language. Hence it is certain that unless the languages remain the Gospel must finally perish.

This has been proved and is still shown by experience. Immediately after the days of the apostles, when languages ceased, the Gospel, the faith and the whole Church gradually dedined, until they sank under the pope to the lowest depth; and after the languages declined very little that is excellent was witnessed in the Church, but a great many dreadful abominations arose because the languages were unknown. On the other hand, since the languages have been restored, they bring with them so bright a light and accomplish such great things that the whole world wonders and is forced to confess that we have the Gospel quite as purely as the apostles had it, and that it has altogether attained to its original purity, far beyond what it was in the days of St. Jerome or St. Augustine. In short, the Holy Spirit is no fool and does nothing unadvisedly or uselessly; He regarded the languages as of so great value and necessity to the Church that He oftentimes brought them down with Him from heaven. This alone should be a sufficient incentive for us to pursue them with diligence and reverence and not to despise them, for He Himself has now again revived them upon earth.

"But," you say, "many of the fathers were saved and even became teachers without languages." That is true. But how do you account for the fact that they so frequently erred in the Scriptures? How often does not St. Augustine err in the Psalter and in other expositions! Likewise St. Hilary, and indeed all of them who attempted to expound Scripture without the languages. And even though what they said now and then was true, they were not sure whether it really belonged in the passage into which they read it. For example, it is correct to say that Christ is the Son of God; but it must have sounded like a jest to their opponents when they proved this from Psalm 110, *Tecum principium in die virtutis tuae*, whereas in the Hebrew there is not a word about the Deity in this passage! Now when men defend the faith with such uncertain arguments and mistaken prooftexts, are not

Christians put to shame and made a laughing-stock in the eyes of opponents who know the language? And the latter become only the more hardened in their errors and have a good pretext for regarding our faith as a human dream.

What is the reason that our faith is thus put to shame? It is because we do not know the languages; and there is no other way out than to know the languages. Was not St. Jerome obliged to make a revised translation of the Psalter from the Hebrew, because when we dispute with Jews on the basis of our Psalter they laugh at us and say our version does not agree with the Hebrew? Now the expositions of all the early fathers who treated the Scriptures without languages, even when their teaching is not wrong, are of such a nature that they very often employ uncertain, inconsistent and inappropriate language; they grope like a blind man along a wall, so that they very frequently miss the sense of their text and twist it like a nose of wax to suit their fancy, as in the verse mentioned above, *Tecum principium*, etc. Even St. Augustine is obliged to confess, as he does in his *De doctrina christiana*, that a Christian teacher who is to expound the Scriptures must know, in addition to Latin, also Greek and Hebrew; otherwise it is impossible not to stumble constantly, nay, there is room enough for labor and toil even when one is well versed in the languages.

There is a great difference, therefore, between a simple preacher of the faith and an expositor of Scripture, or as St. Paul puts it, a prophet. A simple preacher, to be sure, is in possession of so many clear passages and texts from translations that he can know and teach Christ, lead a holy life and preach to others. But to interpret Scripture, to treat it independently, and to dispute with those who cite it incorrectly, to that he is unequal; that cannot be done without languages. Yet there must always be such prophets in the Church, who are able to treat and expound the Scriptures and also to dispute; a saintly life and correct doctrine are not enough. Hence languages are absolutely necessary in the Church, just as prophets or expositors are necessary, although not every Christian or preacher need be such a prophet, as St. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4.

Thus it has come about that since the days of the apostles the Scriptures have remained obscure and no trustworthy and enduring expositions have anywhere been written. For even the holy fathers frequently erred, as has been said, and because of their ignorance of the languages seldom agree; one says this, another that. St. Bernard was a man of lofty mind, whom I almost venture to set above all other celebrated teachers both ancient and modern; and yet he often trifles with Scripture, albeit in a pious spirit, and in many of his quotations departs from its true sense. For this reason the sophists also claimed that Scripture was obscure; they held that God's Word was by its very nature obscure and employed a peculiar speech. They do not see that the whole trouble lies in ignorance of the languages; if we understood the languages there would be no simpler speech anywhere than God's Word. A Turk's speech must needs be obscure to me; a Turkish child of seven would easily understand him, whereas I do not know the language.

Hence it was also a stupid undertaking to attempt to learn the meaning of Scripture by reading the expositions of the fathers and their numerous books and glosses. Instead of this, men should have given themselves to the study of languages. For because they were without languages the dear fathers at times belabored a text with many words and yet caught barely an inkling of its meaning; their comment is half guess work, half error. And yet you run after it with much labor, when you could meanwhile by means of the languages find a much better interpretation than the one you are following. For in comparison with the comments of all the fathers, the languages are as sunlight to shadow. Since, then, it becomes Christians to use the Holy Scriptures as their own and only book, and

it is a sin and shame not to know our own book nor to understand our God's speech and words, it is a still greater sin and loss if we do not study the languages, the more that God is now offering and giving us men and books and every aid and inducement to this study, and desires His Bible to be an open book. How glad would the dear fathers have been if they had had our opportunity of learning the languages and coming thus equipped to the Holy Scriptures! What toil and labor it cost them barely to gather up the crumbs, while we may have the whole loaf with but half their labor, indeed, with scarce any labor at all. Oh, how their diligence puts our indolence to shame; nay, how strictly God will judge our lack of diligence and gratitude!

Here belongs also what St. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 14:27, namely, that there should be in the Church those who will judge all teaching. To this end it is undoubtedly necessary to know the languages. For the preacher or teacher may expound the Bible from beginning to end after his own fashion, hit or miss, if there is no one present to judge whether his teaching be right or wrong. But in order to judge, men must know the languages, otherwise it is impossible. Therefore, though the faith and the Gospel may be proclaimed by simple preachers without the languages, such preaching is flat and tame, men grow at last wearied and disgusted and it falls to the ground. But when the preacher is versed in the languages, his discourse has freshness and force, the whole of Scripture is treated, and faith finds itself constantly renewed by a continual variety of words and works. Hence Psalm 128:9 likens such studies in the Scriptures to a chase when it declares that God discovereth the dense forest to the deer; and Psalm 1:3 likens them to an ever green tree beside ever fresh waters.

Nor should we be led astray because some boast of the Spirit and despise the Scriptures or others, like the Waldensian Brethren, consider the languages unnecessary. But, dear friend, you may say what you will about the Spirit, I too have been in the Spirit and have seen the Spirit, perhaps more of it (if it comes to boasting of one's own flesh) than they with all their vaunting shall see in a year. My Spirit, moreover, has given some account of itself, while theirs sits very quietly in its corner and does little but sing its own praise. But I know full well how perfectly the "Spirit" does all things: I should indeed have failed egregiously if the languages had not aided me and given me a certain and positive knowledge of Scripture. I too could have lived uprightly and preached the truth in seclusion, but I should then have left undisturbed the pope and the sophists with the whole antichristian realm. The devil has not so much respect for my spirit as he has for my speech and pen when they deal with Scripture. For my spirit takes from him nothing but myself alone, but Holy Scripture and the languages leave him but little room on earth, and that means a loss to his kingdom.

Nor can I at all commend the Waldensian Brethren for depreciating the languages. Even if they taught the truth, they must nevertheless frequently miss the right sense of a text and are also unequipped and unskilled in the defense of the faith against error. Moreover, their teaching is so obscure and expressed in so peculiar a form, departing from that of Scripture, that I am afraid it may not be pure or may not continue pure. For there is great danger in speaking of divine things in a different manner and in different terms from those employed by God Himself. In short, they may lead holy lives and teach holy things among themselves, but as long as they remain without the languages they cannot but lack what all the rest lack, namely, the ability to treat Scripture with certainty and thoroughness and to be useful to other nations. But since they could do this and refuse, let them see how they will answer for it to God.

Well, this may suffice concerning the necessity and value of languages and Christian schools for the spiritual realm and the salvation of souls. Let us now consider also the body. Let us suppose that

there were no soul and no heaven or hell and we had to consider only the temporal government after the manner of the world, and let us see whether it does not need good schools and educated persons more sorely even than the spiritual realm. Hitherto the sophists have shown no concern whatever for the temporal government, and have confined their schools so exclusively to the spiritual estate that it was well nigh a disgrace for an educated man to marry; he had to hear such remarks as, "Behold, he is turning secular and does not care to become a spiritual!" just as if their spiritual estate were alone pleasing to God and the secular estate, as they call it, were altogether of the devil and unchristian. But in the sight of God they themselves become meanwhile the devil's own, and (as happened to Israel in the Babylonian captivity) this poor populace has alone remained in the land and in the right estate, while the better people and the leaders were carried off to the devil with tonsure and cowl to Babylon. It is not necessary here to state that the temporal government is a divine order; I have elsewhere so fully treated this subject that I trust no one has any doubt about it. The question is rather, how to get good and skilled persons into the government. In this we are challenged and put to shame by the heathen, who in former times, especially in Rome and Greece, without knowing whether this estate was pleasing to God or not, were so earnest and diligent in educating and fitting their boys and girls for it that when I think of this I blush for us Christians, and especially for us Germans, who are such utter blockheads and beasts that we can ask, "Pray, what good are schools if one is not to become a spiritual?" We certainly know, or should know, how necessary and useful a thing it is and how well pleasing to God, when a prince, lord, councilman or any other ruler is educated and trained to conduct himself in his office as a Christian should.

If then there were no soul, as I have said, and if there were no need at all of schools and languages for the sake of the Scriptures and of God, this one consideration should suffice to establish everywhere the very best schools for both boys and girls, namely, that in order outwardly to maintain its temporal estate, the world must have good and skilled men and women, so that the former may rule well over land and people and the latter may keep house and train children and servants aright. Now such men must come from our boys and such women from our girls. Therefore the thing to do is to teach and train our boys and girls in the proper manner. But I said above that the common man does nothing to bring this about; he cannot, he will not, he does not know how. Princes and lords ought to do it, but they must needs ride in sledges, and drink, and take part in masquerades; they are burdened with high and important business in cellar, kitchen and bedroom. And though some of them would gladly do it, they must stand in fear of the others, lest they be taken for fools or heretics. It rests, therefore, dear councilmen, altogether with you; you have also more opportunity for doing it than princes and lords.

"But," you say, "everyone may instruct his sons and daughters himself, or at least train them by means of discipline." I reply: We know indeed what such teaching and training amount to. Even when the severest discipline is applied and has turned out well, the net result is a certain enforced outward respectability; underneath are the same old blockheads, unable to converse on any subject or to be of assistance to anyone. But if children were instructed and trained in schools or elsewhere where there were learned and well-trained schoolmasters and schoolmistresses to teach the languages, the other arts, and history, they would hear the happenings and the sayings of all the world and learn how it fared with various cities, estates, kingdoms, princes, men, and women; thus they could in a short time set before themselves, as in a mirror, the character, life, counsels and purposes, success and failure of the whole world from the beginning. As a result of this knowledge, they could form

their own opinions and adapt themselves to the course of this outward life in the fear of God, draw from history the knowledge and understanding of what should be sought and what avoided in this outward life, and become able also by this standard to assist and direct others. But the training which is undertaken at home, apart from such schools, attempts to make us wise through our own experience. Before that comes to pass we shall be dead a hundred times over, and shall have acted inconsiderately all our life; for much time is needed to acquire one's own experience.

Now since the young must romp and leap or at least have something to do that gives them pleasure, and since this should not be forbidden (nor would it be well to forbid them everything), why should we not furnish them such schools and lay before them such studies? By the grace of God it has now become possible for children to study with pleasure and in play languages, the other arts, or history. The kind of schools we attended are a thing of the past — that hell and purgatory in which we were tormented with cases and tenses, and yet learned less than nothing with all the flogging, trembling, anguish and misery. If we take so much time and trouble to teach children card-playing, singing and dancing, why do we not take as much time and trouble to teach them reading and other branches, while they are young and have the time, and are apt and eager to learn? For my part, if I had children and could accomplish it, they should study not only the languages and history, but singing, instrumental music, and all of mathematics. For what is all this but mere child's play? In these branches the Greeks in former times trained their children, who grew up into men and women of wondrous ability, skilled in every pursuit. How I regret now that I did not read more poets and historians, and that no one taught me them! I was obliged instead to read, with great cost, labor and injury, that devil's filth, the philosophers and sophists, from which I have all I can do to get myself clean.

Now you say, "But who can spare his children for so long a time, and train them all to be young gentlemen? There is work for them to do at home, etc." I reply: It is not in the least my intention to have such schools established as we had heretofore, in which a boy sat over his Donatus and Alexander for twenty or thirty years and yet learned nothing. We are living in a new world today and things are being done differently. My idea is to let boys go to such a school for one or two hours a day, and spend the remainder of the time working at home, learning a trade or doing whatever their parents desired; so that both study and work might go hand in hand while they were young and able to do both. They spend at least ten times as much time with their peashooters or playing ball or racing and tussling. In like manner, a girl can surely find time enough to go to school one hour a day and still attend to all her duties at home; she sleeps, dances and plays away more time than that. There is only one thing lacking, and that is the earnest desire to train the young people and to benefit and serve the world with well-bred men and women. The devil very much prefers coarse blockheads and ne'er-do-wells, lest men live too comfortably on earth.

But the exceptional pupils, who give promise of becoming skilled teachers, preachers and holders of other spiritual positions, should be kept longer at school or altogether dedicated to a life of study, as we read of the holy martyrs who had the training of Sts. Agnes, Agatha, Lucy and others. That was how the monasteries and cathedral schools originated, which have now, however, been perverted to a very different and damnable use. And there is great need of such advanced study, for the shaven crowd is fast dwindling; besides, most of them are unfit to teach and rule, for all they know is how to care for the belly, which is indeed all they have been taught. We must certainly have men to administer God's Word and Sacraments and to do pastoral work among the people. But where shall we get them if we let our schools decline and do not replace them with others that are Christian? For

the schools that have been maintained hitherto, even if they were not to pass away, can produce nothing but lost and pernicious deceivers.

It is highly necessary, therefore, that we take up this matter in all seriousness and without loss of time, not only for the sake of the young, but in order to preserve both our spiritual and our temporal estate. If we miss this opportunity, we may perhaps find our hands tied later on when we would gladly attend to it, and may be compelled in vain to suffer, in addition to the loss, the pangs of remorse forever. For God is generously offering us His help, He stretches forth His hand and gives us all things needful for this work. If we despise His offer we are judged already with Israel, of whom Isaiah says, "I have spread out my hands all the day unto the unbelieving and rebellious people"; and Proverbs 1:24, "I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; ye have set at nought all my counsel: therefore I will also laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh upon you." Of this let us beware! Consider, as an example, the great zeal of King Solomon in this regard; so deeply concerned was he for the young that in the midst of his royal duties he prepared for them a book called Proverbs. And consider Christ Himself — how He draws young children to Himself, how urgently He commends them to us, and how He praises the angels that attend them (Matthew 18:5), in order to show us how great a service it is to train the young well; on the other hand, how terrible is His anger when men offend them and let them perish!

Therefore, dear sirs, take seriously this work, which God so urgently requires of you, which your office lays upon you, which is so necessary for the young, and without which neither the temporal nor the spiritual realm can exist. Alas! we have rotted and perished long enough in darkness; we have too long been German beasts. Let us for once make use of our reason, so that God may behold our gratitude for His benefits, and other lands see that we, too, are human beings, able to learn useful things from them or teach them to them, in order that through us, too, the world may be made better. I have done my part. It has truly been my purpose to help and benefit the German nation. If some despise me for this and refuse to listen to my sincere advice, because they think they know better, I cannot help it. I know indeed that others could have done this better; it is only because they hold their peace that I am doing it as well as I can. It is surely better to have spoken on the subject, however inadequately, than to have remained altogether silent. I hope that God will stir up some of you, so that my well-meant advice may not be in vain, and that you will not consider him that utters it but fix your mind on the cause itself and let it fix itself in your mind.

Finally, one thing more should be well considered by all who earnestly desire to have such schools and languages established and maintained in Germany. It is this: no effort or expense should be spared to found good libraries, especially in the larger cities, which can well afford it. For if the Bible and all the arts are to be preserved, they must be contained and held fast in books and writings, as was done by the prophets and apostles themselves, as I have said above. This is necessary, not only that those who are to be our spiritual and temporal leaders may have books to read and study, but that the good books, the arts and the languages that we now have through the grace of God may be preserved and not lost. St. Paul, too, was concerned for this, when he commanded Timothy to give attendance to reading, and bade him bring with him the parchment left at Troas. Indeed, all kingdoms that attained preeminence gave attention to this matter, especially the people of Israel, among whom Moses was the first to undertake this work, when he had the book of the law preserved in the ark of God and gave it in charge of the Levites, from whom whoever needed it might obtain a copy; he even commands the king to procure from them a copy of this book. Thus we see how God appointed the levitical priesthood, among its other duties, to watch over and have the care

of books. Afterwards this library was added to and improved by Joshua, then by Samuel, David, Solomon, Isaiah, and thus continuously by many other kings and prophets. Whence have come the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament, which would never have been collected or preserved if God had not required such care to be bestowed upon them.

Following this example, the cathedral schools and monasteries also established libraries in former days, although there were few good books in them. What a loss it was not to have attended to the securing of books and good libraries in those days when there were books and men enough for that purpose, was plainly seen afterwards when all arts and languages gradually declined, and instead of good books the stupid, useless and harmful books of the monks, Catholicon, Florista, Graecista, Labyrinthus, Dormi secure, and the like ass's dung, were introduced by the devil. Consequently the Latin language became corrupted and there remained nowhere a decent school, course of instruction or method of study, until, as we have experienced and observed, men recovered with much toil and labor the languages and arts, although only imperfectly, from bits and fragments of old books hidden among dust and worms, and are still searching laboriously for them everyday, as men dig for treasures and jewels in the ashes of a ruined city.

It served us right, and God properly rewarded us for our ingratitude in not considering His benefits nor providing, while we had the time and the ability, for the continuance among us of good books and learned men. When we neglected this, as though it was no concern of ours, He in turn did the same, and instead of Holy Scripture and good books suffered Aristotle to come in with countless hurtful books that only drew us farther away from the Bible. In addition to these He let in those devil's masks, the monks, and the phantoms of the universities, which we endowed with superhuman gifts, and received and loaded upon our own necks a host of doctors, preachers, masters, priests and monks, that is to say, great coarse fat asses adorned with red and brown birettas, resembling a sow with a golden chain and jewels, who taught us nothing good, but made us only the blinder and more stupid, and in return devoured all our goods and filled all monasteries and indeed every corner with the filth and dung of their vile, poisonous books, which it is appalling to contemplate.

Was it not a cruel misfortune that a boy was obliged heretofore to study twenty years and more, only to learn enough bad Latin to become a priest and read mass? Whoever got as far as this was counted blessed. Blessed was the mother that bore such a child! And yet he remained all his life a poor ignoramus, fit neither to cackle nor to lay eggs. Such teachers and masters we were obliged to put up with everywhere, who knew nothing themselves and could teach nothing good or worthwhile, nay, who did not even know how to study and teach. Where was the fault? There were no other books than those stupid books of the monks and sophists. What else could come from them but pupils and teachers as stupid as the books they used? A daw cannot hatch doves, and a fool cannot produce a sage. That is the reward of ingratitude, because men did not found libraries, but let the good books perish and kept the poor ones.

But my advice is not to huddle together indiscriminately all sorts of books and to look only to their number and quantity. I would gather only the best; there is no need of collecting the commentaries of all jurists, the sentences of all theologians, the questions of all philosophers, and the sermons of all monks. Indeed, I would throw out all such dung and furnish my library with the right sort of books, consulting with scholars as to my choice. First of all there should be in it the Holy Scriptures in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, German, and in whatever other languages they might be had. Then the best

commentaries, and if I could find them, the most ancient, in Greek, Hebrew and Latin. Then books that aid us in acquiring the languages, such as the poets and orators, no matter whether heathen or Christian, Greek or Latin; for it is from such books one must learn grammar. Then should come books of the liberal arts and all the other arts. Lastly, books of law and of medicine, though here too a careful choice among commentaries should be made.

Among the chief books, however, should be chronicles and histories, in whatever language they may be had; for they are of wondrous value for understanding and controlling the course of this world and especially for noting the wonderful works of God. How many fine tales and maxims we should have today of things that took place and were current in German lands, not one of which is known to us, simply because there was no one to write them down, and no one to preserve the books had they been written. That is why nothing is known in other lands about us Germans, and we must be content to have all the world call us German beasts, who know only how to war, gorge and guzzle. The Greeks and Romans and even the Hebrews recorded their history so accurately and diligently that if but a woman or a child did or said anything unusual, all the world must read and know it. Meanwhile we Germans are still nothing but Germans and will always remain Germans.

Since, then, God has at present so graciously bestowed upon us an abundance of arts, scholars, and books, it is time to reap and gather in the best, so far as we are able, and to lay up treasure in order that we may preserve for the future something of these years of jubilee and not lose this bountiful harvest. For it is to be feared (and a beginning is already being made) that men will go on writing new and different books until at last, through the agency of the devil, the good books which have now been produced and printed will again be suppressed and the bad and hurtful books with their useless and senseless rubbish will once more swarm back and litter every nook and corner. For the devil assuredly intends that we should again be burdened and tortured with Catholicons, Floristas, modernists, and the cursed dung of the monks and sophists, just as before, forever studying and yet never learning anything.

Therefore I beseech you, my dear sirs, to let this my sincerity and zeal bear fruit among you. Should there be any who count me too insignificant to profit by my advice, or who despise me as one condemned by the tyrants, I pray them to consider that I am not seeking my own advantage, but only the welfare and salvation of all Germany. Even if I were a fool and had hit upon a good idea, certainly no wise man should think it a disgrace to follow me. And if I were a very Turk and a heathen, and my plan were nevertheless seen to benefit not myself but the Christians, they ought not in fairness to spurn my offer. It has happened before that a fool gave better counsel than a whole council of wise men. Moses was obliged to receive instruction from Jethro.

Herewith I commend you all to the grace of God. May He soften and kindle your hearts, that they may be deeply concerned for the poor, miserable and neglected youths and with the help of God assist and help them, to the end that there may be a blessed and Christian government in German lands as to body and soul, with all plenty and abundance, to the praise and glory of God the Father, through Jesus Christ our Savior.

Amen