

A Sermon on Keeping Children in School (1530)

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(Those sections of the sermon that appear in boldface are sections in which Luther discusses important aspects of the doctrine of the Public Ministry, or in which he touches on matters that are closely related to the doctrine of the Public Ministry.)

To the honorable and wise Lazarus Spengler, syndic of the city of Nürnberg, my especially dear sir and friend: grace and peace in Christ, our dear Lord and faithful Savior. Amen.

Honorable and wise dear sir and friend, I have composed a sermon to the preachers here and there to the effect that they should exhort people to keep their children in school. It has grown on me to the point where it has almost become a book, though I have forcibly restrained myself to keep it from becoming altogether too big, so full and rich is this subject. I hope that it may do much good, and I have published it under your name with the sole thought that it may thereby receive greater attention and, if worthy, be read by the people of your city. For although I can well believe that your preachers will be diligent enough in this matter – they have been endowed by God with great gifts – to understand and promote the cause without any need, thank God, of admonition or instruction on my part, still it does no harm to have many people agreeing with one another and opposing the devil the more strongly.

For it is hardly likely that in so great a city with such a large population the devil will not try his arts and tempt some to despise the word of God and the schools. This is true particularly because there are many things there (especially trade and commerce) to turn the children away from the schools to the service of Mammon. The devil undoubtedly thinks that if he could cause the word and the schools to be despised in Nürnberg, his purpose would in large measure have been accomplished, for he would have set an example that would carry great weight throughout Germany and be a real blow to the schools in all the other cities. For Nürnberg truly shines throughout all Germany like a sun among the moon and stars, and what is practiced there has a powerful influence on other cities.

But praise and thanks be to God, who has long since countered the devil's intentions and put it into the heart of an honorable and wise council to found and equip such a splendid and excellent school. They spare no expense to find and secure the very finest people, so that it can be said without boasting that no university, not even Paris, has ever been so well provided with teachers. (Everyone who has ever studied in the universities as I have will have to say the same thing, for I know what they are and have learned what they teach; I still know them only too well!) This is indeed a magnificent achievement. It is a credit to your distinguished city and a fitting honor to its widely renowned council. For in this they have shown generous Christian consideration of their subjects, contributing faithfully to their eternal salvation as well as to their temporal well-being and honor. God will assuredly strengthen such a work with ever increasing blessings and grace, though the devil must strive against it for a while since he

cannot be happy when so excellent a tabernacle is built to the Lord in this sun. He must assemble clouds and mist and dust, trying in every way to keep such glory from shining too far, or at least to dim its splendor. What else could he do?

For this reason I hope that the citizens will recognize the fidelity and love of their lords, and help earnestly to support this work by keeping their children in school, since without cost to themselves their children are so bountifully and diligently cared for, with everything provided for them. This will happen only if the preachers get behind it. If they do not urge it, the common man will be beset and overcome by thoughts from Satan, and he will easily give up. Other responsibilities will keep him from thinking the matter through, as a preacher can, and seeing how important it is, how much is to be gained – or lost. This is why we must be patient with such people as long as they are not obdurate or wicked. I know Nürnberg well enough to know that it has, thank God, many fine Christian people who gladly and from the heart do that which they ought to do, provided they know or are told what that is. They have a reputation for this, not only with me, but far and wide, and there is no reason to fear that they will fail in this matter. There may, of course, be an occasional idolater, a servant of Mammon [Matt. 6:24], who will take his son out of school and say, “If my son can read and do arithmetic, that is enough; we now have books in German, etc.” Such a person sets a bad example for all the other good citizens. With the best of intentions they imitate him, thinking it the right and only thing to do, without realizing the harm involved. The preachers can be of real help in such a situation.

Every community, and especially a great city, must have in it many kinds of people besides merchants. It must have people who can do more than simply add, subtract, and read German. German books are made primarily for the common man to read at home. But for preaching, governing, and administering justice, in both spiritual and worldly estates, all the learning and languages in the world are too little, to say nothing of German alone. This is particularly true in our day, when we have to do with more than just the neighbor next door. But these idolaters forget all about this matter of governing. They do not realize that without preachers and rulers they could not serve their idol a single hour.

Of course, I can understand that among so many people there may be an occasional idolater who would not care whether honor or shame came to the noble city of Nürnberg, so long as he got his two cents. But then people ought not to care about such a despicable idolater either. They should ignore him and his bad example, figuring that the greater the reputation that comes to our city when our honorable council deals so earnestly and faithfully with the schools, the greater would be the shame if our citizens were to despise the faithfulness and generosity of our lords, and the greater would be their share in the bad example and offense we give to all the other cities, which could then say, “Well, if that is what they do at Nürnberg – and they have fine people there too – why should we do any better?”

You idolater, if you will give no thought to what God and honor require, and will think of nothing but Mammon, God will find others who will give thought. Thank God that I have known several cities where although the council cared nothing for the word or the schools, there were many upright citizens who by daily persistence compelled the council to found schools and churches. God willing, therefore, Nürnberg will not come to such a sorry pass on account of you that the citizens follow your example and despise the schools which an honorable council has faithfully established and maintained at such great cost, while in much smaller cities the citizens have secured schools for themselves, even though their councils thought nothing of them.

But here I am talking on and on, dear sir and friend. I suppose it lies in the nature of these things that there has to be much talk about them. In this case what I have been trying to do is to speak in your name to all the citizens of your city, and I hope that you will not take offense. Indeed, I hope you will continue to push and promote this matter, as you have been doing anyway all along. God knows, I mean it well.

May Christ our Lord strengthen and preserve you until that day when, God willing, we shall see each other with joy and in another form. For he who has given you so much to do for his work and word as you have done till now, will also go on and complete it all. To him be praise and thanks forever. Amen.

Your obedient servant,
MARTIN LUTHER

From Martin Luther to all my dear friends, pastors, and preachers who truly love Christ: Grace and peace in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

My dear sirs and friends, you see with your own eyes how that wretch of a Satan is now attacking us on all sides with force and guile. He is afflicting us in every way he can to destroy the holy gospel and the kingdom of God, or, if he cannot destroy them, at least to hinder them at every turn and prevent them from moving ahead and gaining the upper hand. Among his wiles, one of the very greatest, if not the greatest of all, is this – he deludes and deceives the common people so that they are not willing to keep their children in school or expose them to instruction. He puts into their minds the dastardly notion that because monkery, nunning, and priestcraft no longer hold out the hope they once did, there is therefore no more need for study and for learned men, that instead we need to give thought only to how to make a living and get rich.

This seems to me to be a real masterpiece of the devil's art. He sees that in our time he cannot do what he would like to do; therefore, he intends to have his own way with our offspring. Before our very eyes he is preparing them so that they will learn nothing and know nothing. Then when we are dead, he will have before him a naked, bare, defenseless people with whom he can do as he pleases. For if the Scriptures and learning disappear, what will remain in the German lands but a disorderly and wild crowd of Tartars or Turks, indeed, a pigsty and mob of wild beasts? But he does not let them see this now. He blinds them in masterly fashion so that, when it comes to the point where their own experience compels them to see it, he can laugh up his sleeve at all their weeping and wailing. However much they may wish it, they will then be able to do nothing about it; they will have to admit that things have gone on too long. Then they will be willing to give a hundred gulden for half a scholar, where today they will not give ten gulden for two whole scholars.

And it will serve them right. Because they are not now willing to support and keep the honest, upright, virtuous schoolmasters and teachers offered them by God to raise their children in the fear of God, and in virtue, knowledge, learning, and honor by dint of hard work, diligence, and industry, and at small cost and expense, they will get in their place incompetent substitutes, ignorant louts such as they have had before, who at great cost and expense will teach the children nothing but how to be utter asses, and beyond that will dishonor men's wives and daughters and maidservants, taking over their homes and property, as has happened before. This will be the reward of the great and shameful ingratitude into which the devil is so craftily leading them.

Now because it is a part of our duty as pastors to be on guard against these and other wicked wiles, we must not shut our eyes to a matter of such great importance. On the contrary, we must advise, exhort, admonish, and nag with all our power and diligence and care, so that the common people may not let themselves be so pitifully deceived and deluded by the devil. Therefore let each of us look to himself and remember his office so that we do not go to sleep in this matter and allow the devil to become god and lord. For if we are silent about this and shut our eyes to it, and the young people are neglected and our offspring become Tartars or wild beasts, it will be the fault of our own silence and snoring, and we shall have to render full account for it.

I know very well that many of you, without any exhortation on my part, are acting in this matter and would do so anyway better than I can advise. Moreover, I have already published a message to the councilmen in the cities. Nevertheless, because some may have forgotten this, or would be more persistent as a result of my example, I have sent you this sermon of mine, which I have preached more than once to our people. **From it you can observe that I am working faithfully with you in this matter, and that we are doing our best everywhere and are guiltless before God in the conduct of our office. The case is truly in our hands because we see that even the clergy, who are called spiritual, appear to take the view that they would let all schools, discipline, and teaching go by the board, or themselves even help to destroy them, simply because they cannot have their own way with them as they once did.** This too is the devil's doing, through them. God help us. Amen.

A Sermon on Keeping Children in School

Dear friends, the common people appear to be quite indifferent to the matter of maintaining the schools. I see them withdrawing their children from instruction and turning them to the making of a living and to caring for their bellies. Besides, they either will not or cannot think what a horrible and un-Christian business this is and what great and murderous harm they are doing everywhere in so serving the devil. For this reason I have undertaken to give you this exhortation, on the chance that there may be some who still have at least a modicum of belief that there is a God in heaven and a hell prepared for unbelievers, and that by this exhortation they might be led to change their minds. (Actually, almost everybody is acting as if there were neither a God in heaven nor a devil in hell.) I propose, therefore, to take up the question of what is at stake in this matter in the way of gains and losses, first those that are spiritual or eternal, and then those that are temporal or worldly.

I hope, indeed, that believers, those who want to be called Christians, know very well that the spiritual estate has been established and instituted by God, not with gold or silver but with the precious blood and bitter death of his only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ [I Pet. 1:18-19]. From his wounds indeed flow the sacraments (they used to depict this on broadsides). He paid clearly that men might everywhere have this office of preaching, baptizing, loosing, binding, giving the sacrament, comforting, warning, and exhorting with God's word, and whatever else belongs to the pastoral office. For this office not only helps to further and sustain this temporal life and all the worldly estates, but it also gives eternal life and delivers from sin and death, which is its proper and chief work. Indeed, it is only because of the spiritual estate that the world stands and abides at all; if it were not for this estate, the world would long since have gone down to destruction.

I am not thinking, however, of the spiritual estate as we know it today in the monastic houses and the foundations with their celibate way of life, for it has long since fallen from its glorious beginning and is now nothing more than an estate founded by worldly wisdom for the sake of getting money and revenues. There is nothing spiritual about it

except that the clergy are not married (they do not need marriage for they have something else in its place); except for this, everything about it is merely external, temporal, perishable pomp. They give no heed to God's word and the office of preaching – and where the word is not in use the clergy must be bad.

The estate I am thinking of is rather one which has the office of preaching and the service of the word and sacraments and which imparts the Spirit and salvation, blessings that cannot be attained by any amount of pomp and pageantry. It includes the work of pastors, teachers, preachers, lectors, priests (whom men call chaplains), sacristans, schoolmasters, and whatever other work belongs to these offices and persons. This estate the Scriptures highly exalt and praise. St. Paul calls them God's stewards and servants [I Cor. 4:1]; bishops [Acts 20:28]; doctors, prophets [I Cor. 12:28]; also God's ambassadors to reconcile the world to God, II Corinthians 6 [5:20]. Joel calls them saviors. In Psalm 68 David calls them kings and princes. Haggai [1:13] calls them angels, and Malachi [2:7] says, "The lips of the priest keep the law, for he is an angel of the Lord of hosts." Christ himself gives them the same name, not only in Matthew 11[:10] where he calls John the Baptist an angel, but also throughout the entire book of the Revelation to John.

This is why the ancients greatly avoided this estate. Because of its great dignity and honor they so dreaded to take the office upon them that they had to be forced and driven into it. To be sure, there have been many since then who have praised this estate highly, though more because of the saying of mass than because of the preaching. This praise and glorification grew to the point where the office and estate of the priesthood (that is, of the sacrificing of the mass) was placed above Mary and the angels because the angels and Mary could not say mass but a priest could. A new priest and his first mass were glorious, and blessed was the woman who bore a priest [Luke 11:27]. **The office of preaching the word, however, which is the highest and chief of all, was not regarded so highly.** In a word, a priest was a man who could say mass, even though he could not preach a word and was an unlearned ass. Such in fact is the spiritual estate even to the present day.

Now if it is true and certain that God himself has established and instituted the spiritual estate with his own blood and death, we may conclude that he will have it highly honored. He will not allow it to be destroyed or to die out, but will have it maintained until the Last Day. For the gospel and the church must abide until the Last Day, as Christ says in the last chapter of Matthew [28:20], "Lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age." But by whom then shall it be maintained? Oxen and horses, dogs and swine will not do it; neither will wood and stone. We men shall have to do it, for this office is not committed to oxen and horses, but to us men. But where shall we get men for it except from those who have children? If you will not raise your child for this office, and the next man will not, and so on, and no fathers or mothers will give their children to our God for this work, what will become of the spiritual office and estate? The old men now in the office will not live forever. They are dying off every day and there are no others to take their place. What will God finally say to this at last? Do you think he will be pleased that we shamefully despise his office, divinely instituted to his honor and glow and for our salvation and won at such a price – so despise it that we ungratefully let it fade away and die?

He has not given you your children and the means to support them simply so that you may do with them as you please, or train them just to get ahead in the world. You have been earnestly commanded to raise them for God's service, or be completely rooted out – you, your children, and everything else, in which case everything you have done for them is condemned, as the first commandment says, "I visit the iniquities of the fathers upon the children to the third and

fourth generation of those who hate me” [Exod. 20:5]. **But how will you raise them for God’s service if the office of preaching and the spiritual estate have fallen into oblivion?**

And it is your fault. You could have done something about it. You could have helped to maintain them if you had allowed your child to study. And where it is possible for you to do this but you fail to do so, where your child has the ability and the desire to learn but you stand in the way, then you – and mark this well! – you are guilty of the harm that is done when the spiritual estate disappears and neither God nor God’s word remains in the world. To the extent that you are able you are bringing about its demise. You refuse to give one child – and would do the same if all the children in the world were yours. So far as you are concerned, the serving of God can just die out altogether.

It does not help your case to say, “My neighbor keeps his son in school, so I don’t need to.” For your neighbor can say the same thing, and so can all the neighbors. **Meanwhile, where is God to get people for his spiritual office?** You have someone you could give, but you refuse – as does your neighbor. The office simply goes down to destruction so far as you are concerned. **But because you allow the office instituted and established by your God and so clearly won to go to ruin, because you are so horribly ungrateful as to let it be destroyed, you yourself will be accursed.** You will have nothing but shame and misery both for yourself and for your children, or be so tormented in other ways that both you and they will be damned, not only here on earth but eternally in hell. This will happen so that you may learn that your children are not so wholly yours that you need give nothing of them to God. He too will have what is rightfully his – and they are more his than yours!

And lest you think I am being too severe with you in this matter, I shall lay before you a partial statement of the gains and losses you are effecting – for who can recount them all? – such that you will have to admit yourself that you indeed belong to the devil and rightly deserve to be damned eternally in hell if you acquiesce in this fault and do not amend your ways. **On the other hand, you may rejoice and be glad from the heart if you find that you have been chosen by God to devote your means and labor to raising a son who will be a good Christian pastor, preacher, or schoolmaster, and thereby to raise for God a special servant, yes (as was said above), an angel of God, a true bishop before God, a savior of many people, a king and prince in the kingdom of Christ, a teacher of God’s people, a light of the world – indeed, who can recount all the distinction and honor that a good and faithful pastor has in the eyes of God? There is no dearer treasure, no nobler thing on earth or in this life than a good and faithful pastor and preacher.**

Just think, whatever good is accomplished by the preaching office and the care of souls is assuredly accomplished by your own son as he faithfully performs this office. For example, each day through him many souls are taught, converted, baptized, and brought to Christ and saved, and redeemed from sin, death, hell, and the devil. Through him they come to everlasting righteousness, to everlasting life and heaven, so that Daniel [12:3] says well that “those who teach others shall shine like the brightness of the firmament; and those who turn many to righteousness shall be like the stars for ever and ever.” Because God’s word and office, when it proceeds aright, must without ceasing do great things and work actual miracles, so your son must without ceasing do great miracles before God, such as raising the dead, driving out devils, making the blind to see, the deaf to hear, the lepers clean, and the dumb to speak [Matt. 11:5]. Though these things may not happen bodily, they do happen spiritually in the soul, where the miracles are even greater, as Christ says in John 14[12], “He who believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do.” If the single believer can accomplish these things working independently with individuals, how much more will the preacher

accomplish working publicly with the whole company of people? It is not the man, though, that does it. It is his office, ordained by God for this purpose. That is what does it – that and the word of God which he teaches. He is only the instrument through which it is accomplished.

Now if he accomplishes such great things spiritually, it follows that he also does bodily works and miracles, or at least gets them started. For how does it happen that Christians will rise from the dead at the Last Day, and that all the deaf, blind, lame, and other sufferers of bodily ills must lay aside their ailments? How does it happen that their bodies will not only become healthy, sound, and beautiful, but even shine as bright and fair as the sun [Matt. 13:43], as Christ says? **Is it not because here on earth, through God's word, they have been converted, become believers, been baptized and incorporated into Christ? Thus Paul says in Romans 8[:11] that God will raise up our mortal bodies because of his Spirit which dwells in us. Now how are men helped to this faith and to this beginning of the resurrection of the body except through the office of preaching and the word of God, the office your son performs?** Is this not an immeasurably greater and more glorious work and miracle than if he were in a bodily or temporal way to raise the dead again to this life, or help the blind, deaf, dumb, and leprous here in the world, in this transitory life?

If you were sure that your son would accomplish even one of these works in a single human being, that he would make one blind man to see or one dead man to rise, snatch one soul from the devil or rescue one person from hell, or whatever else it might be, ought you not with utmost joy devote all your means to train him for this office and work? Ought you not leap for joy that with your money you are privileged to accomplish something so great in the sight of God? For what are all the foundations and monastic houses of our day with their self-appointed works in comparison with one such pastor, preacher, or schoolmaster? To be sure, they were originally founded long ago by pious kings and lords precisely for this precious work of training such preachers and pastors. But now, sad to say, the devil has brought them to such a wretched state that they have become death traps, the very ramparts of hell, to the hurt and detriment of the church.

Now just look at what your son does – not just one of these works but many, indeed, all of them! And he does them every day. Best of all, he does them in the sight of God who, as we have said, looks upon them so highly and regards them as precious, even though men may not recognize or esteem them. Indeed, if all the world should call your son a heretic, deceiver, liar, and rebel, so much the better. That is a good sign that he is an upright man, like his Lord Christ. For Christ too had to be a rebel, a murderer, and a deceiver, and be condemned and crucified with the murderers. What would it matter to me as a preacher if the world were to call me a devil, so long as I knew that God calls me his angel? Let the world call me a deceiver as much as it pleases, so long as God calls me his faithful servant and steward, the angels call me their comrade, the saints call me their brother, believers call me their father, souls in anguish call me their savior, the ignorant call me their light, and God adds, “Yes, it is so,” and the angels and all creatures join in. Ah! How prettily the world, with the devil, has deceived me with its slanders and scoffing! How the dear world has hurt me and gained at my expense!

I have spoken so far about the works and miracles which your son does for individual souls, helping them against sin, death, and the devil. Beyond that, however, he does great and mighty works for the world. He informs and instructs the various estates on how they are to conduct themselves outwardly in their several offices and estates, so that they may do what is right in the sight of God. Every day he can comfort and advise those who are troubled, compose difficulties, relieve troubled consciences, help maintain peace and settle and remove differences, and countless other works of this kind. For a preacher

confirms, strengthens, and helps to sustain authority of every kind, and temporal peace generally. He checks the rebellious; teaches obedience, morals, discipline, and honor; instructs fathers, mothers, children, and servants in their duties; in a word, he gives direction to all the temporal estates and offices. Of all the good things a pastor does these are, to be sure, the least. Yet they are so high and noble that the wisest of all the heathen have never known or understood them, much less been able to do them. Indeed, even to the present day no jurist, university, foundation, or monastery knows these works, and they are not taught either in canon law or secular law. For there is no one who regards these offices as God's great gifts, his gracious ordinances. It is only the word of God and the preachers that praise and honor them so highly.

Therefore, to tell the truth, peace, the greatest of earthly goods, in which all other temporal goods are comprised, is really a fruit of true preaching. For where the preaching is right, there war and discord and bloodshed do not come; but where the preaching is not right, it is no wonder that there is war, or at least constant unrest and the desire to fight and to shed blood. We can see even now how the sophists can do nothing but cry bloody murder and spit fire. They shed the blood of innocent priests who get married even though the pope and their own canon law in punishing such clerical marriages at most merely suspend the priest from office, without so much as touching his person or property or Christian honor, much less condemning him to hell or regarding him as a heretic. This the jurists and everybody else will have to concede. It was even made a law at the Diet of Nürnberg. But these blind bloodhounds have given up preaching and bergen themselves to lies, and this is why they cannot desist from murder. The devil their god does the same; according to John 8[:44] he was "from the beginning" and still is "a liar and a murderer."

A true pastor thus contributes to the well-being of men in body and soul, in property and honor. But beyond that see how he also serves God and what glorious worship and sacrifice he renders. For by his work and word there are maintained in this world the kingdom of God, the name and honor and glory of God, the true knowledge of God, the right faith and understanding of Christ, the fruits of the suffering and blood and death of Christ, the gifts and works and power of the Holy Spirit, the true and saving use of baptism and the sacrament, the right and pure teaching of the gospel, the right way of disciplining and crucifying the body, and much more. Who could ever adequately praise any one of these things? And what more can still be said? How much he accomplishes by battling against the devil, the wisdom of this world, and the imaginations of the flesh; how many victories he wins; how he puts down error and prevents heresy. For he must strive and fight against the gates of hell [Matt. 16:18] and overcome the devil. This too is not his own doing; it is accomplished by his office and his word. These are the innumerable and unspeakable works and miracles of the preaching office. In a word, if we would praise God to the uttermost, we must praise his word and preaching; for the office and the word are his.

Now even if you were a king, you should not think you are too good to give your son and to train him for this office and work, even at the cost of all that you have. Is not the money and the labor you expend on such a son so highly honored, so gloriously blessed, so profitably invested that it counts in God's sight as better than any kingdom or empire? A man ought to be willing to crawl on his hands and knees to the ends of the earth to be able to invest his money so gloriously well. Yet right there in your own house and on your own lap you have that in which you can make such an investment. Shame, shame, and shame again upon our blind and despicable ingratitude that we should fail to see what extraordinary service we could render to God, indeed, how distinguished we could be in his sight with just a little application of effort and our own money and property.

The sophists accuse us Lutherans of not teaching good works. Isn't that great! They know so much about good works! Are not these things we have been speaking of good works? What are all the works of the foundations and monasteries compared with these glorious miracles? They are like the cawing of jackdaws and ravens, though not as good. For the daws at least like to caw; they do so gladly. But the sophists take no pleasure in their croaking; they caw reluctantly, like the hoopoes and owls. Now if it was formerly the custom to think highly of new priests and their first masses, and if fathers and mothers and all their friends were glad that they had raised a son to be an idle, lazy, useless mass-priest or glutton who puts God to shame with his blasphemous sacrifice of the mass and his wasted prayers and scandalizes and defrauds the world with his unchaste life, how much more should you rejoice if you have raised a son for this office of preaching in which you are sure that he serves God so gloriously, helps men so generously, and smites the devil in such knightly fashion? You have made of your son such a true and excellent sacrifice to God that the very angels must look upon it as a splendid miracle.

You ought also to know the harm that you are doing if you take the opposite course. If God has given you a child who has the ability and the talent for this office, and you do not train him for it but look only to the belly and to temporal livelihood, then take the list of things mentioned above and run over the good works and miracles noted there, and see what a pious hypocrite and unproductive weed you are. For so far as it is up to you, you are depriving God of an angel, a servant, a king and prince in his kingdom; a savior and comforter of men in matters that pertain to body and soul, property and honor; a captain and a knight to fight against the devil. Thus you are making a place for the devil and advancing his kingdom so that he brings more souls into sin, death, and hell every day and keeps them there, and wins victories everywhere; the world remains in heresy, error, contention, war, and strife, and gets worse every day; the kingdom of God goes down to destruction, along with Christian faith, the fruits of the suffering and blood of Christ, the work of the Holy Spirit, the gospel, and all worship of God; and all devil worship and unbelief get the upper hand. All of this need not have happened and could have been prevented, things could even have been improved, if your son had been trained for this work and entered it.

Suppose God were to address you on your deathbed, or at the Last Judgment, and say, "I was hungry, thirsty, a stranger, naked, sick, imprisoned, and you rendered me no service. For in that you have not done it to people on earth and to my kingdom or gospel, but have helped put them down and allowed men's souls to perish, you have done this to me. For you could have helped. I gave you children and material means for this purpose, but you wantonly allowed me and my kingdom and the souls of men to suffer want and pine away – and you thereby served the devil and his kingdom instead of me and my kingdom. Well, let him be your reward. Go with him now into the abyss of hell. You have not helped to build but to weaken and destroy my kingdom in heaven and on earth; but you have helped the devil to build and increase his hell. Live, therefore, in the house that you have built!"

How do you think you will stand then? You will not be tainted by little drops of sin, but inundated by whole cloudbursts of it – you who now give no heed but just go nonchalantly along as if you were doing well in keeping your child from an education. But then you will have to say that you are justly condemned to the abyss of hell as one of the most odious and vile men who ever lived. Indeed, if you were to consider these things even now, while you are living, you would be truly horrified at yourself. For no conscience can bear to be found guilty of even one of the things that have been mentioned; how much less can it bear it if suddenly all these things, more than can be numbered, fall on it all at once? Your heart will then have to cry out that your sins are more than the leaves and the grass, indeed, greater than heaven and earth; and you will say with Manasseh, king of Judah, "The sins I have committed are more in number than the sands of the sea; my transgressions are multiplied" [Pr. of Man. 9]. Even the

law of nature tells you that he who is able to prevent injury but does not do so is guilty of the injury because he certainly desired and willed it and would have inflicted it himself if he had had occasion or opportunity. These people, therefore, are certainly no better than the devil himself because they are so angry with both God and the world that they help to ruin both heaven and earth, and serve the devil faithfully. In a word, if we cannot adequately denounce the devil, neither can we adequately denounce these people who hinder the work and office of God, for they are the devil's servants.

In saying this I do not mean to insist that every man must train his child for this office, for it is not necessary that all boys become pastors, preachers, and schoolmasters. It is well to know that the children of lords and other important people are not to be used for this work, for the world also needs heirs, people without whom the temporal authority would go to pieces. I am speaking of the common people, who used to have their children educated for the sake of the livings and benefices but now keep them away from learning to earn a livelihood. Even though they need no heirs they keep their children out of school, regardless of whether the children have the ability and talent for these offices and could serve God in them without privation or hindrance. Boys of such ability ought to be kept at their studies, especially sons of the poor, for all the endowments and revenues of the foundations and monasteries are earmarked for this purpose. In addition, though, other boys as well ought to study, even those of lesser ability. They ought at least to read, write, and understand Latin, for we need not only highly learned doctors and masters of Holy Scripture but also ordinary pastors who will teach the gospel and the catechism to the young and ignorant, and baptize and administer the sacrament. That they may be incapable of doing battle with heretics is unimportant. For a good building we need not only hewn facings but also backing stone. In like manner we must also have sacristans and other persons who serve and help in relation to the office of preaching and the word of God.

Even though a boy who has studied Latin should afterward learn a trade and become a craftsman, he still stands as a ready reserve in case he should be needed as a pastor or in some other service of the word. Neither will such knowledge hurt his capacity to earn a living. On the contrary, he can rule his house all the better because of it, and besides, he is prepared for the office of preacher or pastor if he should be needed there. It is especially easy in our day to train persons for teaching the gospel and the catechism because not only Holy Scripture but also knowledge of all kinds is so abundant, what with so many books, so much reading, and, thank God, so much preaching that one can learn more now in three years than was formerly possible in twenty. Even women and children can now learn from German books and sermons more about God and Christ – I am telling the truth! – than all the universities, foundations, monasteries, the whole papacy, and all the world used to know. Ordinary pastors, however, must be able to use Latin. They cannot do without it any more than scholars can do without Greek and Hebrew, as St. Augustine says and canon law even prescribes.

But you say, "Suppose things turn out badly and my son becomes a heretic or a knave? As they say, 'The learned are daft.'" Well, you have to take that chance. Your diligence and labor will not be lost. God will have regard for your faithful service and count it as though it had turned out well. You simply have to take the chance as you would in any other occupation for which you might train your son. How was it with the good Abraham? His son Ishmael did not turn out well; neither did Isaac's son Esau, or Adam's son Cain. Should Abraham therefore have given up training his son Isaac, or Isaac his son Jacob, or Adam his son Abel for the service of God? How many bad kings and people there were among the holy and chosen nation of Israeli? With their heresies and idolatries they brought on all kinds of trouble and killed all the

prophets. Ought Levi the priest to have let the whole nation go on that account, and no longer trained anyone for the service of God? How many bad priests and Levites were there among the tribe of Levi, which God himself had chosen for the priesthood? How many people has God on earth who misuse all his kindness and all his creatures? Ought he on that account to desist from his kindness and let no man live? Ought he cease to do good?

Moreover, that you may not worry too much about where your son's living will come from if he gives himself to learning and to this divine office and ministry, God has not left you or forgotten you in this matter either, so you need not worry or lament. He has promised through St. Paul in I Corinthians 9[:14] that "those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel"; and Christ himself says in Matthew, "The laborer deserves his wages; eat and drink what they have" Under the Old Testament, so that his office of preaching might not perish, God chose and took the whole tribe of Levi, that is to say, one-twelfth of the whole nation of Israel, and gave them the tithe from the whole nation, besides the first-fruits, all kinds of sacrifices, their own cities and pasture lands, fields and meadows, cattle, and all that goes with them. Under the New Testament, see how in former times emperors, kings, princes, and lords gave to this office rich possessions, which the foundations and monasteries now have in more abundance than even the kings and princes themselves. God will not and cannot fail those who serve him faithfully, for he has bound himself by the promise given in Hebrews 13[:5], "I will never fail you nor forsake you."

Think, too, how many parishes, pulpits, schools, and sacristanships there are. Most of them are sufficiently provided for, and vacancies are occurring every day. What does this mean except that God has provided kitchen and cellar for your son in advance? His living is ready for him before he needs it; he does not have to scrape it together for himself. When I was a young student I heard it said that in Saxony there were (if I remember rightly) about eighteen hundred parishes. If that is true, and every parish required at least two persons, a pastor and a sacristan (except that in the cities there are preachers, chaplains, assistants, schoolmasters, and helpers), then in this one principality about four thousand educated persons are needed, of whom about one-third die off every ten years. I would wager that in half of Germany today there are not four thousand pupils in the schools. Now I estimate that there are scarcely eight hundred pastors in Saxony; how many will that make for the whole of Germany? I would like to know where we are going to get pastors, schoolmasters, and sacristans three years from now. If we do nothing about this, and if the princes especially do not try to see that the boys' schools and the universities are properly maintained, there will be such a scarcity of men that we shall have to give three or four cities to one pastor and ten villages to one chaplain, if indeed we can get even that many men.

The universities at Erfurt, Leipzig, and elsewhere, as well as the boys' schools here and there, are so deserted that it is distressing to behold; little Wittenberg now does better than any of them. The foundations and the monasteries, I suppose, will also feel the scarcity, but who cares? Cocky as they are, they are going to have to come down off their high horse and accept – even recruit – people into their chapters whom they formerly would not have looked at twice. Let your boy go on with his studying, therefore, and do not worry; perhaps if the world lasts a while longer and God gives the princes and the cities grace to act, the property of the foundations and monasteries will be restored to the use for which it was originally intended. And why worry anyway about the belly? Christ stands there and says, "Do not be anxious about what you shall eat and drink. Your heavenly Father knows well that you need all this. Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well"

[Matt 6:31-33]. If anyone does not believe Christ, he can just go on worrying – and die of hunger too!

Although it is true that a few years ago many pastors did suffer great want, and many still do, that is due to the convulsions of our time: people are so wicked, ungrateful, and avaricious that they even persecute the gospel. By this God is trying us to see whether we are upright and sincere. We must think of our time as being like that of the martyrs, for then, too, godly teachers suffered great want and poverty, as Paul himself boasts [II Cor. 11:27], and Christ also prophesied in Matthew 9[15], “When the bridegroom is taken away from them, then they will fast.” This is the fasting that is true to the gospel. Then, too, whenever God’s word has come forth hard times have almost always come with it. In the days of Abraham [Gen. 12:10], Isaac [Gen. 26:1], Jacob and Joseph [Gen. 41:56], Elijah [I Kings 18:2], and Elisha [II Kings 4:38] there was, besides the great light of truth, cruel famine. And in the beginning of the gospel there was a great famine throughout the world [Acts 11:28]. This of course has to be blamed on the dear gospel and the word of God, not on the world’s former misdeeds and present obstinate ingratitude! Thus did the Jews blame all their misery on the teaching of Jeremiah [Jer. 44:16ff.]. And the Romans, when they were overthrown by the Goths, knew nothing to blame it on except the fact that they had become Christians. Indeed, it was to refute this charge that St. Augustine wrote a great book, *De civitate dei*.

Well, they can say what they please – the world is still the world. As in those days the liars were exposed and destroyed, so shall it be today, so that Christ and his word may yet abide. He sits exalted and immovable, as it is written, “The Lord said to my Lord, ‘Sit at my right hand’” [Ps. 110:1]. There he sits; if anyone is wicked and wants to pull him down, let him do so! But as long as he remains seated there, we too shall remain; and that is that! To put it in a word, your son can easily get as good a living from the preaching office as from a trade – unless of course you are thinking of great wealth and of making your son a great lord in the eyes of the world, such as the bishops and canons are. If that is what you are after, then what I am saying does not concern you. **I am speaking here only to believers, who respect and honor the preaching office above all riches as being, next to God himself, the greatest treasure ever given to men. I would have them know how great is the service they can and ought to render God in this matter, as men who would rather participate in this work, even though the material rewards be few, than to have this world’s goods and be without this work. Such men will recognize that the soul is more than the belly, and that though the belly be surfeited it will still be obliged to leave everything else behind at death. But those who seek [true] riches will take all their goods with them, leaving nothing behind; that is for sure!**

So much then for the first part of this sermon, a brief and cursory account of the spiritual gains and losses which accrue from the maintenance and neglect of the schools.

The second part will deal with the temporal or worldly gains and losses. **And in the first place, it is true that the office of temporal authority cannot at all be compared with the spiritual office of preaching, as St. Paul calls it [Col. 1:25]; for it is not purchased at so dear a price as the preaching office, by the blood and dying of the Son of God. Neither can it therefore do such great wonders and works as the preaching office. For all the works of this estate belong only to this temporal, transient life. They protect body, wife, child, house, property, and honor, and whatever else pertains to the needs of this life. As far, then, as eternal life surpasses this temporal life, so far does the preaching office exceed the temporal office – even as the substance surpasses the shadow. For worldly lordship is an image, shadow, or figure of the lordship of Christ. The office of preaching – where it exists as God ordained it – brings and bestows eternal righteousness, eternal peace, and**

eternal life; thus does St. Paul extol it in II Corinthians 4. Worldly government, on the other hand, preserves peace, justice, and life, which is temporal and transient.

Nevertheless, worldly government is a glorious ordinance and splendid gift of God, who has instituted and established it and will have it maintained as something men cannot do without. If there were no worldly government, one man could not stand before another; each would necessarily devour the other, as irrational beasts devour one another. **Therefore as it is the function and honor of the office of preaching to make sinners saints, dead men live, damned men saved, and the devil's children God's children, so it is the function and honor of worldly government to make men out of wild beasts and to prevent men from becoming wild beasts.** It protects a man's body so that no one may slay it; it protects a man's wife so that no one may seize and defile her; it protects a man's child, his daughter or son, so that no one may carry them away and steal them; it protects a man's house so that no one may break in and wreck things; it protects a man's fields and cattle and all his goods so that no one may attack, steal, plunder, or damage them. Protection of this sort does not exist among the beasts, and if it were not for worldly government there would be none of it among men either; they would surely cease to be men and become mere beasts. Do you not think that if the birds and beasts were to see the worldly government that exists among men they would say – if they could speak – “O men! Compared with us you are not men but gods! What security you have, both you and your possessions, while among us no one is safe from another regarding life, home, or food supply, not even for a moment! Shame upon your ingratitude – you do not even see what a splendid life the God of us all has given you compared with us beasts!”

It is certain, then, that temporal authority is a creation and ordinance of God, and that for us men in this life it is a necessary office and estate which we can no more dispense with than we can dispense with life itself, since without such an office this life cannot continue. That being true, it is easy to understand that God has not commanded and instituted it only to have it destroyed. On the contrary, he wills to have it maintained, as is clearly stated by Paul in Romans 13[:4], and in I Peter 3 [2:13-14], to protect those who do good and to punish those who do wrong. Now who will maintain this office except us men to whom God has committed it, and who truly need it? The wild beasts will not maintain it, nor will wood and stone. And what men are capable of doing it? Certainly not those who would rule only with the fist, as many now think to do. For if men were to rule solely by the fist, the end result would surely be a bestial kind of existence: whoever could get the better of another would simply toss him into the discard pile. We have enough examples before our eyes to see what the fist can accomplish apart from wisdom or reason.

This is why Solomon says in Proverbs 8[:14-15] that wisdom, not force, must rule. He speaks of wisdom this way, “I, Wisdom, have counsel and sound wisdom. I have insight, I have strength. By me kings reign, and rulers decree what is just.” And Ecclesiastes 10 [9:18, 16] says, “Wisdom is better than weapons of war”; and again, “Wisdom is better than might.” All experience proves this and in all the histories we find that force, without reason or wisdom, has never once accomplished anything. Indeed, even murderers and tyrants, if they are not clever enough to adopt for themselves and among themselves some kind of laws and regulations to control and limit the power of the fist (even though these be equally wicked), will not be able to continue; they will fall out among themselves and perish by each other's hand. Briefly, then, it is not the law of the fist but the law of the head that must rule – not force but wisdom or reason – among the wicked as well as among the good.

Accordingly, since the government in our German lands is supposed to be guided by the imperial law of Rome, and this law is our government's wisdom and reason, given it by God, it follows that this government cannot be maintained and will inevitably perish unless this law is

maintained. Now who will maintain it? Not fist and weapons; heads and books must do it. Men must learn and know the law and wisdom of our worldly government. It is a fine thing, to be sure, if an emperor, prince, or lord is by nature so wise and able that he can instinctively hit upon what is right, as could two men I knew, Duke Frederick of Saxony and Sir Fabian von Feilitzsch, to speak only of men no longer living. Such rulers are pretty rare birds. It would be dangerous to make an example of them because others may not have this power by nature. In ruling it is better to stick to the written law, which carries with it greater recognition and respect and obviates the need for special gifts or charisms.

Thus the jurists and scholars in this worldly kingdom are the persons who preserve this law, and thereby maintain the worldly kingdom. And just as in the kingdom of Christ, a pious theologian and sincere preacher is called an angel of God, a savior, prophet, priest, servant, and teacher (as has been said above), so a pious jurist and true scholar can be called, in the worldly kingdom of the emperor, a prophet, priest, angel, and savior. Again, just as in the kingdom of Christ a heretic or false preacher is a devil, thief, murderer, and blasphemer, so in the emperor's house or realm a false and faithless jurist is a thief and a knave, a traitor, scoundrel, and devil for the whole empire. Now when I speak of the jurists I mean not only the doctors but the whole profession, including chancellors, clerks, judges, lawyers, notaries, and all who have to do with the legal side of government; also the counselors at the court, for they too work with law and exercise the function of jurists. And just as the word "counselors" is not far from the word "traitors," so the deeds of the two are not far apart. These bigwigs sometimes "counsel" their lords so effectively that no traitor could do a better job of deceiving them.

You see, then, how much good a pious jurist or legal scholar can produce. Indeed, who can recount it all? For any ordinance and work of God constantly produces so much great fruit that it cannot be counted or comprehended. For one thing, the jurist with his law book (by God's ordinance) maintains and helps to further the whole worldly government – emperor, princes, lords, cities, land, and people, as was said above; for all these must be preserved by wisdom and law. But who is able adequately to praise this work alone? By it you receive protection of life and limb against neighbors, enemies, and murderers. Then, too, you have peace and tranquillity for your wife, daughter, son, house and home, servants, money, property, lands, and everything that you have. For all of this is comprehended in, encompassed by, and hedged about with law. What a great thing this is can never be fully told in any book; for who can adequately describe what an unspeakable blessing peace is, and how much it both gives and saves even in a single year?

All these great works your son can do. He can become such a useful person if you will hold him to it and see him educated. And you can have a share in all this, and invest your money that profitably. It ought to be a matter of great honor and satisfaction for you to see your son an angel in the empire and an apostle of the emperor, a cornerstone and bulwark of temporal peace on earth, knowing for a certainty that God so regards it and that it really is true. For although such works do not make men righteous before God or save them, nevertheless, it is a joy and comfort to know that these works please God so very much – and the more so when such a man is a believer and is in the kingdom of Christ, for he thereby thanks God for his benefits, bringing to him the finest thankoffering, the highest service.

You would have to be a gross, ungrateful clod, worthy of being numbered among the beasts, if you should see that your son could become a man to help the emperor preserve his empire, sword, and crown; to help the prince rule his principality; to counsel and help cities and lands; to help protect so many men's bodies, wives, children, property, and honor – and yet would not risk enough on it to let him study and come to such a position. Tell me, what do all the

foundations and monasteries do that can begin to compare with this? I would take the work of a faithful, pious jurist and clerk over the holiness of all the priests, monks, and nuns, even the very best. And if these great and good works do not move you, then you ought at least to be moved by the honor and good pleasure of God, knowing that by this means you thank him so gloriously and render him such great service, as has been said. We shamefully despise God when we begrudge our children this glorious and divine work and stick them instead in the exclusive service of the belly and of avarice, having them learn nothing but how to make a living, like hogs wallowing forever with their noses in the dunghill, and never training them for so worthy an estate and office. Certainly we must either be crazy, or without love for our children.

But listen still further. Suppose God means to have his way with you and demands your son for this office! For you surely owe it to your God to help maintain this estate if you can. Yet it cannot possibly be maintained unless people keep their children studying and in school; there is no doubt about that. **Indeed, there is need in this office for abler people than are needed in the office of preaching, so it is necessary to get the best boys for this work; for in the preaching office Christ does the whole thing, by his Spirit, but in the worldly kingdom men must act on the basis of reason – wherein the laws also have their origin – for God has subjected temporal rule and all of physical life to reason (Genesis 2[:15]). He has not sent the Holy Spirit from heaven for this purpose.** This is why to govern temporally is harder, because conscience cannot rule; one must act, so to speak, in the dark.

Now if you have a son who is able to learn, and you are in a position to keep him at it, but do not do so, if you go your way without even asking what is to become of worldly government and law and peace, then you are doing all in your power to oppose worldly authority, like the Turks, indeed, like the devil himself. For you are taking from empire, principality, land, and city, a savior, comforter, cornerstone, helper, and deliverer. So far as you are concerned the emperor will lose both sword and crown, the land will lose its peace and tranquillity. And you will be the one who is responsible when – as much as it is up to you – no man will have any security for his person, his wife, child, house, home, and property. You blithely hack them all to pieces, causing men to become mere beasts who devour one another in the end. This is what you assuredly are doing, especially if you knowingly keep your son from this wholesome estate for the sake of the belly. Now are you not a fine, useful man in the world? Every day you use the empire and its peace, and in return, by way of thanks, you rob it of your son and stick him in the service of avarice. In so doing you are striving as best you can to see to it that there will be no one to help maintain the empire and law and peace, and that everything will go down to destruction, even though it is only by this empire that you have and maintain your own life and limb, property and honor.

What do you think you have deserved by this? Are you even worthy to dwell among men? But what will God, who has given you child and property with which to serve him by keeping your son in his service, say to this? Is it not a service of God to help maintain his ordinance of worldly government? Now you neglect that service as if it were no concern of yours, or as if you were more free than other men and did not have to serve God but could do just as you please with your child and property, even though God and both his worldly and spiritual kingdoms should fall into the abyss. Yet at the same time you want to make daily use of the empire's protection, peace, and law; you want to have the preaching office and the word of God ready for you and at your service. You want God to serve you free of charge both with preaching and with worldly government, so that you can just calmly turn your child away from him and teach him to serve Mammon alone. Do you not think that God will some day pronounce a benediction over your avarice and concern for the belly such as will destroy you both here and hereafter together with your child and all that you have? Dear fellow, is not

your heart terrified at this abominable abomination – your idolatry, despising of God, and ingratitude, your destruction of both these institutions and ordinances of God, yes, the injury and ruin that you inflict on all men? Well, I have told you and warned you. Now you see to it! Having heard both the gains and the losses that are involved, you can just do as you please: God will reward you accordingly.

I shall say nothing here about the pure pleasure a man gets from having studied, even though he never holds an office of any kind, how at home by himself he can read all kinds of things, talk and associate with educated people, and travel and do business in foreign lands; for there are perhaps very few people who are moved by this pleasure. But since you are so bent on the pursuit of Mammon and the making of a living, see what great wealth God has put at the disposal of the schools and scholars so you will have no need to despise learning and knowledge for fear of attendant poverty. Just look, emperors and kings must have chancellors and clerks, counselors, jurists, and scholars. There is no prince who does not need to have chancellors, jurists, counselors, scholars, and clerks. All the counts, lords, cities, and castles must have syndics, city clerks, and other scholars. There is not a nobleman who does not need a clerk. And to speak also about men of ordinary education, there are also the miners, merchants, and businessmen. Just count the number of kings, princes, counts, lords, cities, villages, and other places. Where shall we be getting the educated men three years from now, when here and there the shortage is already beginning to be felt? I really believe that kings will have to become jurists, princes chancellors, counts and lords clerks, and mayors sextons.

Unless something is done about this quickly, we must all become Tartars or Turks – either that or incompetent schoolmasters will become doctors and counselors at court. This is why I hold that there was never a better time to study than right now, not only because knowledge is so abundant and cheap, but also because of the great wealth and honor to which it leads. Those who study in these times will become so highly prized that two princes and three cities will yet compete for one scholar. For whether you look above you or about you, you find that in these next ten years countless offices will be waiting for educated men; yet very few are being trained to fill them. And not only has God appointed such great wealth for schools and scholars, but it is honorable and divine wealth, earned in a divine and honorable estate by many glorious, good, and useful works which please God and are a service to him. The avaricious man, on the contrary, earns his wealth with spite (even though his works are not godless and sinful) and with hateful works, about which he cannot have a glad conscience or say that they are a service of God. For my part, I would rather earn ten gulden by a work that is a service of God, than a thousand gulden by a work that is not a service of God but serves only self and Mammon.

Beyond this honestly gotten wealth, there is also the honor which accrues to them. Chancellors, city clerks, jurists, and the people who hold such offices also sit in high places and help to counsel and rule, as has been said. They are in actual fact lords upon earth, even though they are not that by virtue of their own person, birth, or estate. For Daniel says that he had to do the king's work [Dan. 8:27]. And that is true: a chancellor must go about the work or business of the emperor, king, or prince; a city clerk must do the work of the council or the town. And they do this with God and with honor, to which God adds blessing, good fortune, and success. And when an emperor, king, or prince is not at war but simply goes about the business of ruling in accordance with the law, what is he but a clerk or jurist, so far as his works are concerned? He is dealing with the law, and that is the work of a clerk or jurist. And who actually rules the land and people in time of peace? Is it the fighting men or their officers? I think it is the pen that does it. And what is the avaricious man doing in the meantime with his Mammon? He attains no such honor but defiles himself all the while with his rust-eaten money [Matt. 6:19].

The Emperor Justinian himself declares, “*Oportet maiestatem imperatoriam non solum armis decoratam, sed etiam legibus armatam esse.*” “Imperial majesty,” he says, “must not only be adorned with arms, but also armed with laws.” See how marvelously this emperor turns his words about. He calls the laws his armor and weapons, and he calls arms his decoration and adornment; he would make his clerks his knights and fighting men. That is excellently put, for the laws are indeed the true armor and weapons which maintain and protect land and people, yes, the empire and worldly government itself, as has been sufficiently stated above. Wisdom is indeed better than might [Eccles. 9:16], and pious jurists are the true knights who defend the emperor and the princes. One could cite many passages to this effect from the poets and the histories, but it would take too long. Solomon himself declares in Ecclesiastes 9[15] that a poor man by his wisdom delivered a city from a mighty king.

By this I do not mean to say that we should despise, reject, or do away with soldiers, fighting men, and those whose business is war. They too, when they are obedient, help with their fist to maintain peace and protect things. Every occupation has its own honor before God, as well as its own requirements and duties. For once, though, I must also praise my own – because my neighbors have fallen out with it and there is danger that it may come into contempt – even as St. Paul also praises his office so constantly that some think he goes too far and is guilty of pride. Whoever wants to praise and honor soldiers and the fist will find ground enough for doing so, as I myself have – I hope – intentionally and extensively done in another little book. For the jurists and pen-pushers do not please me either when they so praise themselves as to despise or ridicule other estates, as if they were everything and no one else in the world amounted to anything except themselves, as the “shavelings” and indeed the whole papacy used to do. All the estates and works of God are to be praised as highly as they can be, and none despised in favor of another. For it is written, “*Confessio et magnificentia opus ejus,*” “What God does is fine and beautiful”; and again in Psalm 104[31], “God rejoices in his works.” **These ideas ought to be impressed particularly by the preachers on the people from their youth up, by schoolmasters on their boys, and by parents on their children, so that they may learn well what estates and offices are God’s, ordained by God, so that once they know this they will not despise or ridicule or speak evil of any one of them but hold them all in high regard and honor.** That will both please God and serve the cause of peace and unity, for God is a great lord and has many kinds of servants.

We find, too, some swaggers who fancy that the name “writer” is scarcely worth either speaking or hearing. Well, do not let that worry you! Remember that these guys occasionally have to have their little jokes; well, let them enjoy it! You are still a writer in the eyes of God and of the world. However much they swagger, you notice that they still pay the highest honor to the quill: they put it atop their hats and helmets as if to confess by this very act that the pen is indeed supreme in the world and that without it they would be neither equipped for battle nor able to walk about in peace, much less swagger so boldly. For they too must make use of the peace which the emperor’s preachers and teachers, that is, the jurists, teach and maintain. You see, therefore, that they put the tool of our trade, the good quill, on top, and rightly so, whereas the tool of their trade, the sword, they gird about their loins where it hangs handsomely for their purposes. On their heads it would not be becoming – there the feather must wave. So if they have sinned against you, this is their penance, and you should forgive them.

But that brings me to this, that there are many bigwigs for whom the business of writing is a hateful thing because they do not know, or do not consider, that it is a divine office and work. They do not see how necessary and useful it is to the world. And if they were to see it – God forbid! – their knowledge in any case would have come too late. This, therefore, is what you ought to do. Pay no attention whatever to them. Instead just look around at such fine, pious

noblemen as Count George of Wertheim, Baron Hans von Schwarzenberg, Baron George von Frundsberg and others of blessed memory – not to mention those who are still living – and take comfort in such men. Remember that for the sake of one man, Lot, God honored the whole land of Zoar [Gen. 19:21]; for the sake of a single Naaman, the whole land of Syria [II Kings 5:1]; for the sake of one Joseph, the whole kingdom of Egypt [Gen. 41:53-56]. Why should not you also, for the sake of the many honest noblemen whom you doubtless know, honor all the nobility? And when you look at them you must think that there is not a bad one left. How could it be that untimely fruit should not fall from the fair tree of the nobility, and that some of the fruit should not be wormy and warty? That does not necessarily make the tree bad and worthy of condemnation.

This is how the children of God look at things, for God himself spares the whole human race for the sake of one man, whose name is Jesus Christ; if he were to look at men alone, he would have nothing but wrath. **The preaching office and temporal authority of course cannot do this; they cannot ignore or shut their eyes to evil. For they must punish the bad, one with the word, the other with the sword.** In saying all this I am speaking to individual Christians. I am saying that they should learn to distinguish between God's work and men's wickedness. In all of God's offices and estates there are many wicked men; but the estate itself is good and remains good no matter how much men misuse it. You find many bad women, many false servants, many unfaithful maids, many despicable officials and counselors; nevertheless, the estates themselves – wife, servant, maid, and all the offices – are God's institution, work, and ordinance. The sun remains good, even though everyone misuses it, one to rob and another to kill, one to do this kind of evil and another that. And who could do any evil at all if he did not have the sun to light his way, the earth to hold him up and nourish him, and the air to keep him alive – in short, God himself to sustain him? The saying remains true, "The whole creation was subjected to futility, but not of its own will" (Romans 8[:20]).

Some think that the office of writer is simple and easy, that real work is to ride in armor and suffer heat, cold, dust, thirst, and other discomforts. It is always the same old story: no one sees where the other's shoe pinches; everyone is aware only of his own problems and thinks the other fellow has it made. True, it would be hard for me to ride in armor; but on the other hand I would like to see the horseman who could sit still with me all day and look into a book – even if he had nothing else to care for, write, think about, or read. Ask a chancery clerk, preacher, or speaker whether writing and speaking is work! Ask a schoolmaster whether teaching and training boys is work! The pen is light, that is true. Also there is no tool of any of the trades that is easier to get than the writer's tool, for all that is needed is a goose feather, and you can pick them up anywhere free of charge. But in writing, the best part of the body (which is the head) and the noblest of the members (which is the tongue) and the highest faculty (which is speech) must lay hold and work as never before. In other occupations it is only the fist or the foot or the back or some other such member that has to work; and while they are at it they can sing and jest, which the writer cannot do. They say of writing that "it only takes three fingers to do it"; but the whole body and soul work at it too.

I have heard it said of the noble and illustrious Emperor Maximilian that when bigwigs complained that he was using so many writers in ambassadorial and other posts he said, "What else can I do? You cannot be used, so I have to take writers." He is also supposed to have said, "I can make knights, but I cannot make doctors." I once heard too of a fine nobleman who said, "I want my son to study. It takes no great skill to hang two legs over a horse and become a knight; in fact I taught him that myself already." That was very well put. Once more, I do not want this to be understood as though I were speaking against the knight's estate, or any other estate. I am speaking only against the worthless swaggerers who despise all learning and

wisdom and can boast of nothing except wearing armor and hanging two legs over a horse – though they are seldom actually called upon to do so and in return have enough of comfort, pleasure, joy, honor, and wealth the whole year round. It is true, as they say, that learning is easy to carry but armor is heavy. On the other hand, though, the wearing of armor is easily learned whereas learning is not easily acquired, nor easily put to work.

To bring all this talk to an end, we ought thus to know that God is a wonderful lord. His business is to take beggars and make them into lords, even as he makes all things out of nothing, and no one can disrupt him in his work. He has the whole world sing of him, in Psalm 113[:5-8], “Who is like the Lord our God, who is seated on high, who looks far down? He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the dunghill, to make them sit with princes, with the princes of his people.” Look about you at the courts of all the kings and princes, at the cities and the parishes, and see whether they do not contain many striking examples of the fulfillment of this psalm. There you will find jurists, doctors, counselors, writers, preachers, who for the most part were poor and who have certainly all attended school, and who by means of the pen have risen to where they are lords – as this psalm says – helping to rule land and people like princes. It is not God’s will that only those who are born kings, princes, lords, and nobles should exercise rule and lordship. He wills to have his beggars among them also, lest they think it is nobility of birth rather than God alone who makes lords and rulers. They say, and rightly so, that the pope too was once a schoolboy. Therefore do not look down on the fellows who come to your door saying, “Bread for the love of God,” and singing for a morsel of bread; you are listening – as this psalm says – to the singing of great princes and lords. I too was such a crumb collector once, begging from door to door, especially in my beloved city of Eisenach – though afterward my dear father lovingly and faithfully kept me at the University of Erfurt, by his sweat and labor helping me to get where I am. Nevertheless, I was once a crumb collector, and I have come so far by means of the writer’s pen – as this psalm says – that I would not now change places with the Turkish sultan, giving up my knowledge for all his wealth. Indeed, I would not exchange what I know for all the wealth in the world multiplied many times over. Without any doubt, I should not have come to this if I had not gone to school and become a writer.

Therefore go ahead and have your son study. And even if he has to beg bread for a time, you are nonetheless giving to our Lord God a fine bit of wood out of which he can carve you a lord. **That is the way it will always be: your son and my son, that is, the children of the common people, will necessarily rule the world, both in the spiritual and the worldly estates, as this psalm testifies. For the rich misers cannot and will not do it; they are the Carthusians and monks of Mammon, whom they must serve day and night. The born princes and lords cannot do it alone; they are particularly unable to understand anything at all about the spiritual office. Thus both kinds of government on earth must remain with the middle class of common people, and with their children.**

And do not be disturbed because the run-of-the-mill miser despises learning so deeply and says, “Ha, if my son can read and write German and do arithmetic, that is enough. I am going to make a businessman of him.” They will soon quiet down; indeed, they will be glad to dig twenty feet into the earth with their bare hands just to get a scholar. For if preaching and law should fail, the businessman will not be a businessman for long; that I know for sure. **We theologians and jurists must remain or everything else will go down to destruction with us; you can be sure of that. When the theologians disappear, God’s word also disappears, and nothing but heathen remain, indeed, nothing but devils. When the jurists disappear, then the law disappears, and peace with it; and nothing but robbery, murder, crime, and violence remain, indeed, nothing but wild beasts.** But what earnings and profits the

businessman will have when peace is gone, I shall let his ledger tell him; and what good all his wealth will do him when the preaching comes to an end, his conscience will surely show him.

It is particularly vexing that such rude and un-Christian words are spoken by those who claim to be so thoroughly evangelical. They know how to get the better of everyone and shout down their opponents with Scripture; yet they begrudge both God and their own children the honor and the material means that would be involved in sending their children to school so that they may attain to these splendid and divine estates in which they can serve God and the world – even though it is plain and certain that these estates are established and ready and well provided with both wealth and honor. On the contrary, they turn their children away from such estates and push them instead into the service of Mammon, in which nothing is plain and certain, which is necessarily full of danger to body, soul, and property, and which in addition is not and cannot be a service of God.

At this point I should also mention how many educated men are needed in the fields of medicine and the other liberal arts. Of these two needs one could write a huge book and preach for half a year. **Where are the preachers, jurists, and physicians to come from, if grammar and other rhetorical arts are not taught? For such teaching is the spring from which they all must flow. To speak of this here in detail would be too big a task. I will simply say briefly that a diligent and upright schoolmaster or teacher, or anyone who faithfully trains and teaches boys, can never be adequately rewarded or repaid with any amount of money, as even the heathen Aristotle says. Nevertheless, this work is as shamefully despised among us as if it amounted to nothing at all. And still we call ourselves Christians! If I could leave the preaching office and my other duties, or had to do so, there is no other office I would rather have than that of schoolmaster or teacher of boys; for I know that next to that of preaching, this is the best, greatest, and most useful office there is. Indeed, I scarcely know which of the two is the better. For it is hard to make old dogs obedient and old rascals pious; yet that is the work at which the preacher must labor, and often in vain. Young saplings are more easily bent and trained, even though some may break in the process. It surely has to be one of the supreme virtues on earth faithfully to train other people's children; for there are very few people, in fact almost none, who will do this for their own.**

We can see with our own eyes that the physicians are lords; experience teaches clearly that we cannot do without them. It is not the practice of medicine alone, however, but Scripture too that shows it to be a useful, comforting, and salutary estate, as well as a service acceptable to God, made and founded by him. In Ecclesiasticus 38[1-8] almost an entire chapter is devoted to praise of the physicians, "Honor the physician, for one cannot do without him, and the Lord created him; for all healing comes from God. The skill of the physician lifts up his head, and in the presence of great men he is admired. The Lord created medicines from the earth, and a sensible man will not despise them. For as in the time of Moses the bitter water was made sweet with a tree, so it was his will to make known to men thereby what medicine can do. And he gave skill to men that he might be glorified in his marvelous works. For by them the physician can take away all kinds of pain, and make many sweet and good confections, and prepare salves whereby the sick become well; and of these works of his there shall be no end." But I have already said too much about this; the preachers will be able to expand upon these points more fully, and show the people better than I can write about it the gains and losses they can effect in this matter for the whole world, and for our descendants.

Here I will leave the matter, faithfully exhorting and urging everyone who can to help in this cause. **Only think for yourself how many good things God has given and still gives to you each day free of charge: body and soul, house and home, wife and child, worldly peace,**

the services and use of all his creatures in heaven and on earth; and besides all this, the gospel and the office of preaching, baptism, the sacrament, and the whole treasure of his Son and his Spirit. And all of this not only without any merit on your part, but also without cost or trouble to you; for you do not now have to support either schools or pastors, as you would be bound to do according to the gospel. Yet you are such an accursed, ungrateful wretch that you will not give a son into training for the maintenance of these gifts of God. You have everything, all of it free of charge; yet you show not a particle of gratitude. Instead you let God's kingdom and the salvation of men's souls go to ruin; you even help to destroy them.

Ought not God to be angry over this? Ought not famine to come? Ought not pestilence, flu, and syphilis find us out? Ought not blind, fierce, and savage tyrants come to power? Ought not war and contention arise? Ought not evil regimes appear in the German lands? Ought not the Turks and Tartars plunder us? Indeed, it would not be surprising if God were to open the doors and windows of hell and pelt and shower us with nothing but devils, or let brimstone and hell-fire rain down from heaven and inundate us one and all in the abyss of hell, like Sodom and Gomorrah [Gen. 19:24]. **If Sodom and Gomorrah had had or seen or heard as much as we, they would surely have remained until this day [Matt. 11:23].** For they were not one tenth as wicked as Germany is today, for they did not have God's word and the preaching office. We have both, free of charge, yet act like men who want God, his word, and all discipline and honor to go to ruin. Indeed, the fanatics have actually begun to suppress the word of God, and the nobles and the rich too have attacked it to overthrow discipline and honor – so that we may become the kind of people we have deserved to be!

For we have the gospel and the preaching office only by the blood and sweat of our Lord. He won them by his anguished, bloody sweat. He earned them by his blood and cross, and gave them to us. We have them without any cost to ourselves, having done nothing and given nothing for them. Ah, God! How bitter it was for him! Yet how kindly and gladly he did it! How greatly the dear apostles and all the saints suffered that these things might come to us! How many have been put to death for them in our own time!

To boast a bit myself, too, how many times have I had to suffer – and will yet suffer – the pains of death for them, that I might thereby serve my countrymen! But all this is nothing compared with what Christ, God's Son and our dear heart, has given for them. Yet by all this suffering he will have earned from us only this, that some men persecute, condemn, blaspheme, and consign to the devil this dearly-bought office of preaching the gospel, while others keep hands off, supporting neither pastors nor preachers and giving nothing toward their maintenance. Besides this, they turn the children away from this office, so that it will soon go to destruction, and Christ's blood and agony will be in vain. Still, they go their way undisturbed, having no qualms of conscience, no repentance or regret, for this hellish and more than hellish ingratitude, this unspeakable sin and blasphemy. They show neither fear nor awe of God's wrath, neither desire nor love for the dear Savior in return for his bitter pain and agony. Instead, with these terrible abominations they still claim to be evangelicals and Christians!

If this is the way things are to go in the German lands, then I am sorry that I was born a German, or ever wrote or spoke German; and if I could do it with a good conscience, I would give my aid and counsel to have the pope come back to rule over us, and with all his abominations to oppress and shame and ruin us worse than before. Formerly, when people served the devil and put the blood of Christ to shame, all the purses stood wide open. There was no limit to men's giving to churches, schools, and all sorts of abominations. Children could be driven, pushed, and forced into monasteries, churches, foundations, and schools at

unspeakable cost – all of which was a total loss. **But now when men are to establish real schools and real churches – no, not establish them but just maintain them in a state of good repair, for God has established them and also given enough for their maintenance – and we know that in so doing we keep God’s word, honor Christ’s blood, and build the true church, now all the purses are fastened shut with iron chains. Nobody can give anything. And besides, we tear the children away. We will not allow them to be supported by the churches (to which we give nothing) and to enter these salvatory offices in which, without any effort on their part, even their temporal needs are met. We will not allow them to serve God and to honor and preserve Christ’s blood, but push them instead into the jaws of Mammon while we tread Christ’s blood underfoot – and yet are good Christians!**

I pray that God will graciously let me die and take me from here, that I may not see the misery that must come over Germany. For I believe that if ten Moseses stood and prayed for us [Exod. 17:11], they would accomplish nothing. I feel, too, when I would pray for my beloved Germany, that my prayer rebounds; it refuses to ascend as when I pray for other things. For it simply must be so: God will save Lot and inundate Sodom [Gen. 19:29]. God grant that in this matter I must be lying, a false prophet! This would be the case if we were to reform and honor our Lord’s word and his precious blood and death differently from what we have been doing, and if we were to help and train our young people to fill God’s offices, as has been said.

But I hold that it is the duty of the temporal authority to compel its subjects to keep their children in school, especially the promising ones we mentioned above. For it is truly the duty of government to maintain the offices and estates that have been mentioned, so that there will always be preachers, jurists, pastors, writers, physicians, schoolmasters, and the like, for we cannot do without them. If the government can compel such of its subjects as are fit for military service to carry pike and musket, man the ramparts, and do other kinds of work in time of war, how much more can it and should it compel its subjects to keep their children in school. For here there is a worse war on, a war with the very devil, who is out to secretly sap the strength of the cities and principalities, emptying them of their able persons until he has bored out the pith and left only an empty shell of useless people whom he can manipulate and toy with as he will. That is, indeed, to starve out a city or a land and destroy it without a battle, before anyone is even aware of what is going on. The Turk has quite a different approach. He takes every third child in his whole empire and trains it for what he will. How much more ought our lords, then, to take some boys for schooling, since that would not be to take the child away from his parents, but to train him for the benefit of the whole community – and the good of the parents too – and for an office in which enough is given him.

Therefore let everyone be on his guard who can. **Let the government see to it that when it discovers a promising boy he is kept in school. If the father is poor, the resources of the church should be used to assist. Let the rich make their wills with this work in view, as some have done who have established scholarship funds. This is the right way to bequeath your money to the church, for this way you do not release departed souls from purgatory but, by maintaining God’s offices, you do help the living and those to come who are yet unborn, so that they do not get into purgatory, indeed, so that they are redeemed from hell and go to heaven; and you help the living to enjoy peace and happiness. That would be a praiseworthy Christian testament. God would have delight and pleasure in it, and would bless and honor you in return by giving you pleasure and joy in him.**

Well, then, my beloved Germans, I have told you enough. You have heard your prophet. God grant that we may obey his word, in praise and thanksgiving to our dear Lord for his precious

blood so freely offered for us; and may he preserve us from the abominable sin of ingratitude and forgetfulness of his blessings. Amen.

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