

[Leipzig, between 1754 and 1766]

Most noble, most highly honourable Sir!

I would have to be very insensitive not to be touched by the extraordinary good will with which you honour me, [5] and I would be the most ungrateful of men if I had been able to read a letter<sup>3</sup> of such friendliness without acknowledging it in some way. No, my most worthy Sir, I accept your love and friendship with exactly the same uprightness with which you offer them to me, and I do not simply accept them, but beg you to do the same, and will strive to deserve them, the more so as I have perhaps not deserved them up to now. [10] I often become uneasy when I see that my writings arouse the good will of so many upright persons, for I wish not only to reach this happiness, but also to maintain it, and for this more merits are required than I possess. –

So you read my writings with pleasure, most honourable Sir, and also encourage others to read them? [15] As I truthfully say to you, I could hardly have hoped, without self-love, for this reward from the place<sup>4</sup> from which I received it. How happy am I if I may believe that I have contributed something to the preservation of taste and good mores even outside my native land! Does “The Christian”, one of my most recent stories, also have your approval? [20] I almost offer myself the answer Yes. Its content, your noble character, which you have unwittingly delineated to me in your letter, and my upright intention would seem to allow me this Yes. –

I would speak more with you, but that I am on the point of setting off for Carlsbad,<sup>5</sup> to where my most woeful illness – I mean *hypochondria* – calls me. [25] May it yet please God to bring me back from this place, which he has blessed for so many thousands of the sick and in which I have already often prayed before this year in tears and serenity of spirit, to bring me back, I say, in better health than that in which I journey there! But perhaps I am wishing for too much, perhaps even for something that would not be good for me. [30] Accompany me in the meantime with your wishes, most worthy Sir. If I am able to serve you here in Leipzig, in whatever way it might be, I would prove to you that I am not undeserving of the trust that you place in me. To all your friends, if they resemble you (and how should you have friends who do not resemble you?), I commend myself most excellently, [35] but to you I offer once again thanks for the letter, beautiful, eloquent and full of sentiment, with which you have delighted me, and I am, with the most complete respect,

Your most noble person's  
Most obedient servant  
Christian Fürchtegott Gellert.

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<sup>1</sup> BD: Original lost. NissenB.

<sup>2</sup> The noted poet and moral philosopher (1715-1769). Poems from his *Geistliche Oden und Lieder* (1757) [*Spiritual Odes and Songs*] were sent by numerous composers of the day, others still survive in the church hymnary. BD VII: There is no evidence that Leopold had sent Gellert Wolfgang's settings of his poems; nor is it certain that Wolfgang had received this book from Friedrich Karl von Bose in February, 1764. Cf. No. 0083/92-100.

<sup>3</sup> BD: No. 0114a (lost). Most probably written during the great journey, thus in the years 1763-1766. This is supported by the phrases “the place from which I received it” (line 16) and “outside my native land!” (line 18).

<sup>4</sup> BD: An address somewhere on the Mozart family's great journey?

<sup>5</sup> BD: Karlsbad was already noted as a health spa, open to the public since 1711. Goethe went there 13 times between 1785 and 1823.

[40] P.S. Esteemed Professor Formey<sup>6</sup> in Berlin has already translated a short novel of mine, Life of the Swedish Countess,<sup>7</sup> into French if you perhaps wish to read this work.

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<sup>6</sup> BD: Jean Henri Samuel Formey (1711-1797), French scholar in Berlin.

<sup>7</sup> BD: *Leben der schwedischen Gräfin* was published in 1746. The French translation appeared in two editions, 1754 and 1766, which sets the limits for the date of this letter.