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Erasmus on Luther

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Tage und 1,335 Tage, wo der Antichrist wüthen, wo aber auch sein Greuelwesen zu Ende kommen wird, Zahlen, die ihre besonderen Schwierigkeiten haben und mit denen der menschliche Verstand viel zu tun gehabt hat, B. 11. 12. Die Zahlen werden wieder symbolisch zu fassen sein, und sie zeigen an, daß Gott die Trübsal und Heimsuchung nicht länger dauern läßt, als er in seinem ewigen Räte bestimmt hat. — Daran wollen wir uns genügen lassen und nicht Wortwitz treiben. Und endlich kommt das Schlußwort, das Abschiedswort an Daniel, das Trostwort: „Du aber, Daniel, gehe hin, bis das Ende komme, und ruhe, daß du aufstehst in deinem Teil am Ende der Tage“, B. 13.

Wir sind am Ende. Es war nur wie ein Flug durch diese schwierigen letzten Kapitel. Längst nicht alle Schwierigkeiten sind besprochen und erklärt worden. Auch der gelehrteste und erleuchtetste Schriftausleger wird hier sich bescheiden müssen und die mannigfaltige Weisheit Gottes anstaunen. Aber das ist klar und gewiß, daß das ganze Buch Daniel lehrt: Durch Nacht zum Licht, durch Kreuz zur Krone, durch Trübsal zum Reich, auf rauher Bahn geht's himmelan. *Per aspera ad astra.* *Darkness and light both speed God's glorious way.* Das ist der Weg der Kirche Gottes. So war es im Alten Testament, so ist es auch im Neuen Testament. Was Luther von dem Propheten Hiesekiel einmal sagt, daß wir wohl in diesem Leben nicht alles verstehen werden,¹²⁾ das gilt auch, und vielleicht noch in erhöhtem Maße, von dem Propheten Daniel. Wer da meint, die Schrift durchaus zu verstehen und nichts mehr lernen zu können, der mache sich an dieses Buch. Aber wer in rechter Heilsbegierde den finden will, von dem alle Propheten reden und weissagen, der findet auch in diesem Buche den Menschensohn, den Messias, den Stifter des Gottesreiches, der immer für seine Kirche streitet gegen den Satan, gegen die Welt und gegen den Antichristen und der, wenn es aufs höchste gekommen ist, seine Kirche erretten und ewig beseligen und verherrlichen wird.

L. FÜRBRINGER

Erasmus on Luther

1518—1523

Erasmus, like Luther, was an Augustinian; like Luther, a priest; like Luther, a preacher — at Paris; like Luther, a Doctor of Theology — of Turin; like Luther, a teacher — at Cambridge 1511—1514.

Andreas Carlstadt declared Erasmus "the prince of theologians," superior to St. Ambrose and St. Augustine.

"I do not see among the old theologians any they can legitimately prefer to you," wrote Budé.

12) XIV, 53.

John Eck informed him, "Almost all scholars are **Erasmians.**" Calvin calls him "the honor and delight of letters."

Melanchthon was "a simple soldier under the standards of **Erasmus.**"

In the beginning he was to Luther "our honor and our hope, the king of literature."

To Chausonette he was the "divine Erasmus," the "new evangelist."

Conrad Mutianus and Beatus Rhenanus testified he merited the honors of a god. Wilhelm Nesen wrote: "Thou hast the power to bestow immortality."

He was courted by four kings and the Kaiser, by bishops, cardinals, and four Popes, many of whom gave him pensions and valuable presents.

"In countless letters I was addressed as **Thrice-great Hero, Prince of Letters, Sun of Studies, Champion of True Theology.**"

To this unique *arbiter elegantiarum* of the intelligentsia of Europe, at the request of Luther, about the close of 1516, Spalatin wrote: An Augustinian, a great admirer, said the great scholar had not correctly interpreted the "*iustitia*" in Romans and had paid too little attention to original sin.

Keen eyes!

The little rift within the lute,
That by and by will make the music mute.

A cat may look at a king, but a king need not look at a harmless, necessary cat. No answer from Olympus. Though Spalatin asked for one, none came to the obscure monk in an obscure mud-hole at "the end of civilization."

Luther to John Lang on March 1, 1517: "I am reading our Erasmus, but every day my regard for him grows less. That he should so boldly attack the religious and the clergy for their ignorance pleases me; but I fear he does not sufficiently vindicate the rights of Christ and the grace of God. . . . How different is the judgment of the man who yields something to free will from one who knows nothing but grace! Human matters weigh heavier than divine with Erasmus."

To Spalatin in November, 1517, on Erasmus's *Colloquies*: "The reader is compelled to laugh and jest over the vices and miseries of the Church of Christ, which ought rather to be complained of before God by every Christian with the greatest lamentations."

Erasmus sends greetings to Luther in January, 1518, and on March 5 forwards the *Theses* to Sir Thomas More, the greatest Englishman, and to John Colet, the famous Dean of St. Paul's, and complains to him: "The Roman Curia must be lost to all sense of

shame; for, what can be more shameless than these repeated indulgences?"

In May Erasmus expressed his candid admiration of the *Theses* to Capito, and on September 3 Capito wrote Luther: "The opinion Erasmus has of you, that is, how honorably and sincerely he admires your disputation on indulgences."

Erasmus to Rector John Lang at Erfurt on October 17: "I hear that Luther is approved by all good men. . . . I think his *Theses* will please all, except a few about purgatory, which they who make their living from it don't want taken from them. I have seen Prierias's bungling answer [the *Dialog*]. Luther has said many things excellently well. . . . Unless we stand by him when he is right, no one hereafter will dare speak the truth. . . . He has been a public benefactor by forcing the controversialets to examine the early Fathers for themselves. . . . I do not understand what possessed Eck to take up arms against Luther. I perceive the rule of the Roman bishop as it is now to be the pest of Christendom."

W. S. Lilly, secretary of the Catholic Union of Great Britain, writes: "It is one of Erasmus's sharp and true sayings: 'Christ drove out of the Temple those who bought and sold; but those who buy and sell have driven Christ out of the Church.' Kaiser Maximilian declared the Papal Court drew out of Germany a revenue a hundredfold greater than his own."

Spalatin reports about Luther's firm stand before Cajetan at Augsburg: "Erasmus of Rotterdam gave Doctor Martin great applause, as did almost all the University of Louvain, and many eminent persons in divers lands."

Urged by Wolfgang Capito, Luther, on March 28, 1519, wrote Erasmus to get him to come out openly for Luther's cause.

Audin, a French Catholic, comments: "What an adept he is in the language of adulation and the artifices of epistolary style! Would he not be taken for one who had grown old in the courts of Italy?"

Odd! A German "boor" with a fine Italian hand!

Erasmus answered on May 30: "Dearest brother in Christ: Your letter showing the keenness of your mind and breathing a Christian spirit pleased me very much. I cannot tell you what commotion your books are raising here. . . . In England there are men who think well of your writings, and they the very greatest. You have friends here, too, one in particular. What you have done, keep on doing. I have cast some looks into your commentaries on the Psalms; they look mighty good to me, and I hope they'll do much good. In the cloister at Antwerp there is a prior, a pure Christian man, who loves you boundlessly; as he says, he was formerly your pupil. He is almost the only one who preaches

Christ; the rest preach either fables or for their pocket. The Lord Jesus grant you from day to day more and more of His Spirit to the glory of His name and the good of all."

Cardinal Campegi was offended at this letter of his friend.

Audin calls Erasmus "one of the glories of Catholicism"; but he comments: "Erasmus deceived Luther, for that he *had* read the *Theses* on indulgences is proved by his correspondence with his friends at that time. This was one of the lies peculiar to Erasmus and which invariably told against himself. . . . In the history of the sixteenth century there is not to be found a more weak or effeminate soul than his. . . . Of religious conviction, or avowed creed, there is none. . . . The Franciscans considered him the great dragon of the psalmist, whose head was to be crushed."

On the same day Erasmus wrote Lang of Erfurt: "I hope that the endeavors of yourself and party will be successful. All the best minds are rejoiced at Luther's boldness. We shall never triumph over feigned Christians unless we first abolish the tyranny of the Roman See and of its satellites, the Dominicans, the Franciscans, and the Carmelites. But no one could attempt that without a serious tumult."

To the Elector Frederick on April 14, 1519: "Every one who knows the man approves of his life, since he is as far as possible from suspicion of avarice or ambition; and blameless morals find favor even among heathen. All those who attack him do it with ferocity, raging against him, but neither warning nor teaching him, as though they thirsted for blood rather than the salvation of souls. May the Duke prevent an innocent man from being surrendered under the cloak of piety to the impiety of a few!"

To Melanchthon on April 22: "Every one here at Louvain speaks well of Luther personally. . . . He seems to have said some things well."

On May 18 he wrote Wolsey, England's most magnificent cardinal and statesman: "The man's life is approved by the unanimous consent of all, and the fact that his character is so upright that even his enemies find nothing to slander in it must considerably dispose us in his favor." He was not vain enough to pass a judgment on a man so remarkable. "Erasmus will always be found on the side of the Roman See."

Erasmus heard Luther at Leipzig held Popes and councils had erred and many of Huss's articles condemned at Constance were Christian, and cried out: "I fear that Martin will perish for his uprightness; but Eck ought to be called 'Geck'" — fool.

Erasmus wrote Pope Leo X in August, 1519, saying men of letters praised God for such a pastor, the perfect man of Plato, gold tried in the fire, now the iron age become golden, Hercules,

Ulysses, Marius, Alexander, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, and asked to be allowed to dedicate the *Jerome* to him.

To Bishop John Fisher of Rochester on October 17, 1519: "The Elector of Saxony has written to me twice. He tells me that in supporting Luther, he is supporting rather a principle than a person. He will not permit innocent men to be oppressed in his dominions by malicious persons who rather seek themselves than Christ."

To the Elector-Cardinal-Archbishop of Mainz, the Primate of Germany, on November 1, 1519: "The best men are those who are least offended by Luther. . . . His enemies admit that he is a person of good character. . . . A spirit which shows splendid marks of Christian doctrine ought not to be borne down and extinguished. . . . They shout out 'heresy, heretic, heresiarch, schismatic, Antichrist,' and not a word besides. . . . Propositions taken out of Luther's writings have been condemned as heretical which are found in Bernard and Augustine and from them are received as orthodox and edifying. . . . They thirst for human blood, so eager are they for the capture and destruction of Luther. Such conduct is worthy of butchers, not of divines. The Louvain theologians may call themselves meek, but they are thirsting for Luther's blood and demand that Luther shall be arrested and executed. . . . The Gospel of Christ has faded out; in a little while the last spark of Christianity would have been extinguished, and we should have been enslaved in a worse than Jewish ceremonial. . . . What unworthy motive could Luther have had? He wants no promotion. He wants no money. . . . The sacred writers are set aside as antiquated. No word of Christ is heard in the pulpits. . . . If Luther has been intemperate, this is the explanation of it. . . . He has spoiled the trade in indulgences. . . . He places the Gospel above scholastic dogmatism. . . . To know Greek is heresy. To speak grammatically is heresy. . . . I think it is their fault if Luther has written too intemperately. . . . About those propositions of Luther's to which they object, I make no question at present; what I do question, however, are the method and the occasion adopted. Luther has dared cast doubts on indulgences; but others before him have made exceedingly rash statements about them. He has had the temerity to speak somewhat moderately about the power of the Roman Pontiff, but others had previously written of it in extravagant terms, of whom the principal writers were the three Dominicans Alvarus, Sylvester, and the Cardinal of St. Sixtus. He has been so bold as to contemn the conclusions of St. Thomas, which, however, the Dominicans esteem almost more than the four gospels. He has presumed to raise some scruples about the matter of Confession, a subject which

the monks use perpetually for entangling the consciences of men. He has not hesitated in a measure to cast aside the judgments of the Schoolmen, to which these latter attach too much importance, although they are not in exact accord about them; for they change them eventually, introducing new ones to take the place of the old.

It has distressed pious minds to hear in the universities scarcely a single discourse about the doctrine of the Gospel, to see those sacred authors, so long approved by the Church, now considered antiquated, to hear in sermons very little about Christ, but a great deal about the power of the Pope and the opinion of recent writers thereon. Every discourse openly manifests self-interest, flattery, ambition, and pretense. Even though Luther has written somewhat intemperately, I think that the blame should rest on these very happenings. . . . And yet some who are causing these tumults are not doing it from a zeal for the Pontiff, but are abusing his power for their own enrichment and unjust domination. . . . In these tempestuous times there are many things of which he [the Pope] is not aware, many things also which, even if he wished to do so, he could not control. . . .

"Luther has written much that was imprudent rather than impious, of which the worst in their estimation is that he pays little tribute to Thomas, that he lessens the profits from the indulgences, that he shows small regard for the Mendicant Orders, that he defers less to the dogmas of the schools than to the gospels, and that he pays no regard to the crafty subtleties of human disputants."

He has "certain sparks of an excellent spirit. . . . He is not striving after either honors or riches . . . at whose writings the best minds take no offense." He should not "be suppressed but rather brought to a right frame of mind."

This letter scandalized the papists.

The Spaniard Zuniga, called Stunica, attacked him fiercely as the "prince and banner-bearer of the Lutherans."

When a false report of Erasmus's death reached Louvain, the Dominicans were jubilant that he had died "without light, without the cross, without God."

To Martin Lipsius of Brussels in 1519: "They are starting a foolish and pernicious tragedy against Luther."

On March 14, 1520, Hermann Hump, who lived with Erasmus, wrote Luther that Erasmus almost adored him, though he kept his opinion for his table companions.

To Alois Marlian, Bishop of Tuy in Galicia, on March 20: "They would devour Luther offhand. They may eat him boiled or roast, for all that I care. . . . Luther ought to be answered and

not crushed. . . . Piety requires that we should at times conceal the truth. . . . Perhaps we must admit with Plato that lies are useful to the people. . . . No one believes how deeply Luther has crept into the minds of many nations nor how widely his books have been translated into every tongue and scattered everywhere."

To Justus Jonas on April 9: "I would not have the Dominicans know what a friend I am to Luther."

To Melancthon in May, 1520: "It was decided that his books should be burned in England; but I stopped this by writing to Cardinal Wolsey. . . . Almost all good men favor Luther. . . . Commend me to Luther. . . . Luther's reply to the condemnation of Koeln and Louvain pleased me wonderfully."

Despite Erasmus, on May 12, King Henry, Cardinal Wolsey, the foreign ambassadors, and 30,000 Londoners heard Bishop John Fisher of Rochester preach *again ye pernicious doctryn of Martin Luther* and saw Luther's books go up in smoke.

To George Spalatin, July 6, thanking the Elector for his gold medal: "May Christ direct Luther's actions to God's glory and confound those who are seeking their own interests! In Luther's enemies I perceive more of the spirit of this world than of the Spirit of God. . . . What Luther says may be true, but there are times and seasons. Truth need not always be proclaimed from the housetop."

At the famous meeting on the Field of Cloth of Gold in July, 1520, King Henry slapped Erasmus on the back and said, "Why don't you defend that good man Luther?" "Because I am not enough of a theologian." "You are a good fellow, Erasmus," and he sent him away with fifty ducats.

To Pirkheimer, on September 5, 1520, Erasmus expressed his great sorrow that "a man from whom he had hoped so much good should have been driven wild by rabid clamors." Again: "I could agree with Arians or Pelagians if the Church should approve what they taught."

To Gerard Geldenhauer of Nimeguen, on September 9, 1520: "This tragedy first arose from hatred to good literature and from the stupidity of the monks. . . . If I consent to refute Luther, a bishopric is mine."

To Francis Chisigat at Rome, on September 13: "This Luther business . . . has been ill managed from the first. It rose from the avarice of a party of monks. . . . Their stupid screams have more recommended Luther to the multitude than any other thing. I told them they must answer him, and no one has done it. . . . A suffragan of the Bishop of Tournay at Bruges, with a pair of eyes bleared with the wine he had been drinking, stormed for a whole hour at both of us [Erasmus and Luther], producing nothing which

we had written, but calling us beasts, blockheads, asses, geese, and such like. . . . The bull has lost Luther no friends. . . . Luther's party grows stronger daily."

Pope Leo X begged Erasmus for help against Luther; but on September 13 he wrote: "I have favored the good things in Luther; rather, I have favored the glory of Christ in him. . . . Free and generous minds rejoice to be taught; they are unwilling to be driven. Luther wrote well on the Scriptures. It was above the mediocrity of my learning and talents [to write against him]. It is much easier to conquer Luther with bulls and smoke than with arguments. . . . There are many things in Luther's books which are worthy of being known. . . . All who have written against him have composed nothing worth reading. . . . Among those who wish Luther dead I see no good man. The letters of Hadrian of Utrecht [later Pope] are full of bitterness; he favors disciples worthy of himself, vain, deceitful, ambitious, and revengeful."

The Pope, on January 16, 1521, again requested Erasmus to write against Luther.

To Gottschalk Rosenmond, rector of the University of Louvain, October 18, 1520: "There are good and learned men who maintain that Luther has written nothing for which there is not sound authority. . . . There are thousands of Rabbis who are gods in their own eyes. Not one of them has attempted a real reply. . . . By burning his books, you may rid him off your bookshelves, but not rid him out of the hearts of mankind. . . . Luther took his errors, if errors they are, from the apostles and the Fathers, and it is unfair to denounce an innocent man from the pulpit to an ignorant mob." He asked for solid arguments.

At the Inn of the Wild Man at Louvain, Marino Caraccioli and Geronimo Aleander renewed the offer of a fat bishopric; but Erasmus replied: "Luther is so great that I shall not write against him. He is so great that I do not understand him; his value is such that I derive more instruction from a single small page of his than from the whole of St. Thomas" — the most learned of all the Romanists.

To Frederick the Wise in "The Three Kings" at Koeln on November 5, 1520: "Luther made two mistakes: he laid hands on the Pope's crown and the monks' bellies. The best and godliest men have not been hurt by Luther's *Theses* but by the papal bull, which does not beseem the mildness of a vicar of Christ. By two universities Luther has been condemned but not refuted. He has with fairness demanded to be judged by an impartial judge since he is himself upright and impartial and seeks nothing for himself. The Pope cares more for his own glory than for Christ's. What has

been written till now against Luther is disapproved also by those unfavorable to him."

At the same time he wrote some *Axioms*:

"That being a man without ambition, he was less suspected of heresy.

"That they who condemned him deserved to be condemned themselves for sayings offensive to pious ears.

"That most evangelically minded men were not incensed by Luther's opinions.

"That the Pope's unmerciful bull was disapproved of by all honest men."

Frederick sent Erasmus a chamois gown but said to Spalatin, "What sort of man is Erasmus anyway? One never knows where he is."

Cousin George cried out: "The plague take him! You never can tell what he means. I really prefer the Wittenbergers, for at least they say yes or no."

Erasmus to Conrad Peutinger on November 9: "The virulence of Luther's pamphlets increases."

To Cardinal Campeggi on December 6, 1520: "Luther has received rare talents from nature, a genius wonderfully adapted to explain the obscurities of the Bible, making the light of the Gospel flash forth. . . . His life was praised by those who did not share his doctrines. . . . Therefore I have been favorable to Luther. I say favorable rather less to Luther than to the glory of Christ. . . . I perceived that the better a man was, the less he was Luther's enemy. . . . Not a creature hitherto has given him any friendly counsel at all. No one has yet answered him or pointed out his faults. They have merely howled out 'heresy and Antichrist!' . . . Persecute a man of unblemished life, in whose writings distinguished and excellent persons have found so much to admire? . . . Others may be martyrs if they like. I aspire to no such honor. A pure pulpit is more important than even the blessed Mass. I am not so imprudent as to resist one [Luther] whom it is hardly safe for kings to oppose. No one is better able than Luther to arouse warmth for evangelical doctrine. Refute clearly his erroneous views and believe warmly his just ones. Persuasion is the plan. It is the mark of asses to be compelled, of tyrants to compel."

To Marcus Laurinus, Dean of the College of St. Donatianus at Bruges: "So far I have pronounced no verdict on the dogmas of Luther, for many reasons, but principally because I perceived the matter to lie beyond the scope of my comprehension, . . . my very greatest offense. In my *Paraphrases*, in which I explain the ninth chapter of the Apostle St. Paul to the Romans, I attribute a small degree of efficacy to free will, following therein Origen and

Jerome. . . . No one is damned except by his own fault; no one is saved unless by the grace of God. . . . A trust in works, which I confess to be the greatest pest of religion."

To an "Influential Personage" on January 28, 1521: "The bull with all its terrors has not turned the common people from Luther."

To Nicholas Beraldus on February 16, 1521: "For Luther I do not trouble myself. . . . If some succeed, nothing will be left but to write the epitaph of the Gospel."

To Nicholas Everard, President of the Estates of Holland, on February 25, 1521: "Luther acts like the proverbial goat, who jumps into a ditch without looking to see how he can get out again. I only wonder that the man is still alive. Aleander is a complete maniac—a bad, foolish man. . . . I hear they are now using poison, and at Paris some who were open defenders of Luther were suddenly put out of the way. The enemies of the Roman See are to be removed by poison with the Pope's blessing. This is an art in which Aleander has great skill."

To Jodocus Justus Jonas on May 10, 1521: "I doubt whether in the whole history of Christianity the heads of the Church have been so grossly worldly as at the present moment. It was on this account that Luther at first received more applause than I fancy has fallen to the lot of any mortal for several centuries past. It was supposed that a man had arisen free from all the passions of the world who would apply a remedy to the great evils under which we were groaning. . . . I greatly wonder what demon inspires Luther. . . . Out comes the *Babylonish Captivity* and the burning of the *Decretals*, and the wound becomes past cure. Luther has wilfully provoked his fate."

To Louis Ber, provost of St. Peter's College at Basel, on May 14, 1521: "Luther seems to me to act as if he set no value on his life."

To another on May 24: "The Lutheran drama is over."

Luther to Beatus Rhenanus on June 29: In the *Enchiridion of the Christian Soldier* Erasmus imitates Plato more than Christ."

Erasmus to Archbishop Warham: "Luther has made a prodigious stir. . . . If the enemies of light are to have their way, we may write on the tomb of the ruined Church: 'Christ did not rise again.'"

To Richard Pace, Dean of St. Paul's, on July 5: "They assert that Luther has borrowed some of his doctrines from my works, as if he had not borrowed more from Paul's epistles. . . . Many indeed of his doctrines and exhortations are excellent. . . . I have no inclination to risk my life for the truth. I fear if trouble comes,

I should imitate Peter. When Popes and the emperors decree what is . . . wrong, I submit, and that is the safe course."

To Lord Mountjoy, July (?) 5, 1521: "Every one admits that ecclesiastical discipline has fallen away from the sincerity of the Gospel, that Christian people are much oppressed in many ways, and that the consciences of men are entangled in various perplexities. For such evils it seemed to good and learned men that Luther was about to bring forward a remedy. . . . I was greatly amused at that critic who gathered from his conversation with Luther that he was only a butt and a blockhead and unskilled in all theology. Would that Luther had the same amount of moderation that he has of theological erudition! . . . To call Luther a dolt is very easy; but to defend the faith with suitable arguments is certainly most difficult to me. And so far others have not succeeded very well."

To Peter Barbirius on August 13, 1521: "I was not qualified"—to write against Luther.

To Archbishop Warham on August 24: "Every corner of the world has been disturbed by Luther. All admit that the corruptions of the Church required a drastic medicine. But drugs wrongly taken make the sick man worse. The King of Denmark laughed and answered that small doses would be of no use. The whole system needed purging. . . . The lean and barren dogmatists have now fastened on Luther like the Greeks on Hector." As soon as he has time, he will read all the books on each side of the Lutheran controversy.

To Paul Bombasius on September 23, 1521: "It is easy to say, 'Write against Luther'; but for this more things are needed, as Hesiod says, than for making a wagon."

To the secretary of the Prince of Nassau on November 19, 1521: "The papal party have acted like fools. The whole affair has been mismanaged by a parcel of stupid monks. . . . They have not answered Luther. They have only cursed him and lied about him. A Jacobite at Antwerp accused him of having said Christ worked His miracles by magic. A Carmelite said at the French court that Luther was Antichrist and Erasmus his forerunner. . . . Another Minorite, named Matthias, said that, if the people wanted the Gospel, they must take it from their pastor, though he had slept the night before with a harlot. . . . No one would believe how widely Luther has moved men. His books are everywhere and in every language."

To Pirkheimer: "I watch earnestly how the Lutheran tragedy is to end. Some spirit is in it, but whether God's Spirit or the other one I know not." "Learned theologians whom I have con-

sulted on the ninth of Romans tell me my fault is that I have attached the faintest possible power to man's free will!"

To Wolsey on March 7, 1522. He had advised Luther against publishing his *Assertions* and his *Babylonian Captivity*; but the books pleased almost everybody.

To the French Franciscan confessor of Kaiser Karl, John Glapio: "The Lutherans call me a Pelagian."

When Luther heard Erasmus was about to oppose his teaching on free will, he wrote Spalatin on May 15, 1522: "Erasmus has at last shown in his correspondence his profound hate for Luther and his doctrine; but his language astutely simulates friendship. He will lose by it all his glory and all his renown. Better is the open and frank hostility of Johann Eck. I detest the shifty policy and the cunning of this man, now my friend, now my enemy."

Erasmus to the president of the Senate of Mechel on July 14: "Here at Basel we have 100,000 men who detest Rome and are Luther's friends."

To Mosellanus on August 8, 1522: The Kaiser, Henry VIII, and certain cardinals "all want me to attack Luther. I do not approve Luther's cause but have many reasons for preferring any other task to this."

To Duke George of Saxony on September 3: "No one can deny that Luther had an excellent cause. Christ had almost disappeared, and when Luther began, he had the world at his back. The Gospel light had to be rekindled. The world was asphyxiated with scholastic opinions, with human constitutions; nothing was heard of but indulgences and the power of the Roman Pontiff. They replied in language disgraceful to Christian men. They would not admit that Luther was right, and only cursed. And among the rulers of the Church there were those who seek not the things which are of Christ but who, like Demas, love this present world. The Pope's furious bull only made the flames burn hotter. The Emperor followed with an equally savage edict. If violence is used, 200,000 men need only a leader to defend Luther."

Hadrian of Utrecht, professor at the University of Louvain, tutor of Kaiser Karl V, his regent of Spain, where he condemned 25,000 heretics, wrote a book against Luther's *Babylonish Captivity*, "a devilish book," its Gospel freedom "a bondage of the devil," its heresies too crude for a theological student, the author "worse than Mohammed." He became Pope Hadrian VI.

Cornelius Aurelius, canon of Gouda, in his *Apocalypsis* severely scores the corruptions of the Papacy and calls on Hadrian to reform the Church.

So does Joannes Ludovicus Vives and Zaccaria da Rovigo and Cardinals Campeggi and Schinner. Cardinal Egidio Canisio of

Viterbo, general of the Augustinians, remonstrated with the Pope for entrusting the indulgences to the Minorites.

The honest Dutchman admitted to the Reichstag at Nuremberg in 1522 that Luther was God's punishment for the corruptions spread from the Pope to the prelates, from the head to the members, and ended by cheerfully demanding the burning of that fool and scoundrel Luther, like Huss at Constance.

The Pope had no success. Why not?

Prof. Dr. Ludwig Freiherr von Pastor admits the prelates were "steeped in worldliness" and "the Catholic princes were for the most part 'out-and-out Lutherans.'"

King Francis I declared "the real Turk was the clergy." He threatened to treat Pope Hadrian as Philip had treated Boniface VIII. Yet Hadrian did not break with Francis, "who would become a protector of the Lutheran heresy."

On December 1, 1522, the distressed Pope wrote his old pupil Erasmus: "You possess a powerful genius, varied erudition, and a facile pen, such as very few others, I might even say, none within our memory, have ever possessed. . . . Confound, pull down, and expose to derision by the strongest reasons and authorities of Holy Writ, these stupid, uncouth, and malignant heresies, not invented by Martin Luther at all, but . . . again dug up from hell. . . . Luther and his partisans . . . are carnal and contemners of authority. Do you therefore hesitate to use your pen against the madness of those whom God already seems to have cast away from His presence? . . . Arise, arise, to the rescue of God's cause! Accomplish this work of salvation. All the treasures of our libraries are open to you; I offer you my own society and that of all the learned men of Rome."

Audin says the Pope held Erasmus to be the Messiah to save the Church. But on December 22 the Messiah refused. "I, who formerly used to be addressed in hundreds of letters as Thrice-greatest Hero, Prince of Letters, Star of Germany, Sun of Learning, High Priest of the *Belles-lettres*, Defender of Sound Theology, am now either passed in silence or painted in very different colors. . . . As to my writing against Luther, I have not learning enough. . . . I could bring a hundred passages where Paul seems to teach the doctrines which they condemn in Luther."

On December 23 the Pope posthaste again beseeches him: "Write as fiercely as you can against Luther; declare war on all Lutherans."

Audin says: Erasmus perhaps did not say all the truth to his former teacher of theology. He was "afraid of the Wittenberg eagle, whose wings were now expanded, its fiery eye, and, above all, its

talons, which had drawn blood, and left marks on the faces of so many monks."

Hadrian in 1523 lettered the Elector Frederick: "Luther is destroying the Church of Christ with murderous weapons, this apostate, this devil!"

On February 1, 1523, Erasmus lettered Dean Laurinus of S. Donatianus College at Bruges he had never given an opinion on Luther's teaching, had never set himself in opposition to Luther. And he couldn't see why he was attacked for giving "a small degree of efficiency to free will in Rom. 9, when all the theologians, both ancient and modern, agree with him."

Erasmus to Spalatin on March 12, 1523: "Should Luther go under, neither God nor man could longer endure the monks; nor can Luther perish without endangering a greater part of the pure Gospel truth."

To Hadrian's chaplain, Peter Barbirius, on April 17, 1523: "I prefer the Pontiffs, the bishops such as they are, to these pseudo-Pharisees, who are much more intolerable." Luther had done a great work; yet many of his followers believed more earnestly in faith without works than in faith itself. "Would that Luther's charges against the tyranny, baseness, and avarice of the papal court were not true!"

To Bishop Cuthbert Tunstall in June, 1523: "I hear of some things in Luther's writings that are blamed, which, if they were calmly discussed amongst the learned and upright, would add something to spiritual and evangelical vigor, from which indeed the world has too much degenerated."

Erasmus heard of the burning of the Augustinians Heinrich Voes and Johann von Esch for Lutherans at Brussels on July 1, 1523, and wrote: "I seem to myself to teach almost the same things as Luther, only without sedition and violence."

To Sylvester Prierias in 1523: "I must own many of the reforms urged by that man are necessary."

In the *Sponge* against Hutten of September, 1523, Erasmus declares he did not envy Luther's fame; he "would rather be obscurer than any dog than enjoy a reputation such as his."

Nicholas of Egmond, an enemy, as early as 1520 said before the rector of Louvain University: "So long as Erasmus refuses to write against Luther, we take him to be a Lutheran."

Vives, a friend, wrote in 1522: "That you are looked upon as a Lutheran here is certain."

Duke George lettered: "It is your fault that Luther has made such conquests in Germany; you could have stopped the eagle in his flight."

Erasmus admitted to Pirkheimer on July 21: "Martin Luther

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wrote me kindly. I did not dare to reply with equal kindness on account of the sycophants" — the papists.

Bishop Tunstall on June 5 or July 7, 1523, wrote Erasmus Luther had made God the author of all wickedness by denying free will and had abolished the Mass, the next step to abolishing Christ, and called on Erasmus by all that is holy to grapple with this Cerberus, this Proteus, nay, rather, this atheist.

Hesius to Blossius on October 26, 1523: "It would have been better for Christianity if Erasmus had never touched theology or written anything on these matters. Many people think he would have done less evil in openly siding with Luther than by walking on two feet and seeming to range himself now with one party, now with the other."

To Cardinal Campeggi on January 19, 1524: "I am become like Hercules. For, while I am fighting here with the Lutherans as with a many-headed hydra, a crab has inserted his teeth in my foot at Rome. Again Stunica . . . has made me out to be a follower of Luther, whether I will or not."

Pope Clement VII was the third Holy Father to beg Erasmus to do what he could against Luther and early in 1524 sent him 200 florins.

Erasmus reasoned: "If, as it appears from the wonderful success of Luther's cause, God wills all this and He has perhaps judged that such a drastic surgeon as Luther is necessary for the corruption of these times, then it is not my business to withstand Him."

WM. DALLMANN

That Review of Pastor Goerss's Book in the "Lutheran"

On page 18 of the *Lutheran* of March 16 we find a review of Pastor Daniel F. Goerss's book of sermons "In the Upper Room." The reviewer, Rev. Carroll J. Rockey, while bestowing some praise upon these sermons, takes issue with Rev. Goerss on a number of statements. A few of these he classifies as minor points. We shall not enter upon a discussion of them; they are comparatively insignificant.

But then he "takes decided issue" with a major tenet, as he calls it. He attacks the statement of Rev. Goerss concerning election. Rev. Goerss had written that believers in Christ are elected to be believers by God Himself, even as God reveals to us that He has predestinated us believers unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself according to the good pleasure of His will, and that He has chosen us believers in Christ before the foundation of the world. We are surprised that any one who