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## Erasmus's Pictures of Church Conditions

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## Erasmus's Pictures of Church Conditions

(Concluded)

*The Religious Pilgrimage* describes the visit of Erasmus and Dean Colet to the shrine of St. Thomas à Becket, "one of the most religious pilgrimages in the world." In the south porch of the church stand three stone statues of men in armor, who with wicked hands murdered the holy man, with the names of their countries—Tusci, Fusci, and Betri. They have the same honor done them that is done to Judas, Pilate, Caiaphas, and the band of wicked soldiers whose images you may see carved upon stately altars; and their names are added that no one after them might arrogate to himself the glory of the fact. They are set there in open sight to be a warning to wicked courtiers, that no one may hereafter presume to lay his hand on either bishops or the possession of the Church. For these three ruffians ran mad with horror of the act they had committed; nor had they come to themselves again had not holy Thomas been implored in favor of them. Iron grates enclose the place called the choir. You ascend to this by a great many steps, under which there is a certain vault that opens a passage to the north side. There they show a wooden altar consecrated to the holy Virgin; it is a very small one, and remarkable for nothing except as a monument of antiquity, reproaching the luxury of the present times. In that place the good man is reported to have taken his last leave of the Virgin when he was at the point of death. Upon the altar is the point of the sword with which the top of the head of that good prelate was wounded, and some of his brains that were beaten out, to make sure work of it. We most religiously kissed the sacred rust of this weapon out of love of the martyr.

Leaving this place, we went down into a vault underground; to that there belong two showers of relics. The first thing they show you is the skull of the martyr, as it was bored through; the upper part is left open to be kissed; all the rest is covered over with silver. There also is shown you a leaden plate with this inscription, Thomas Acrensis. And there hang up in a great place the shirts of hair-cloth, the girdles, and breeches with which this prelate used to mortify his flesh, the very sight of which is enough to strike one with horror and to reproach the effeminacy and delicacy of our age.

From thence we return to the choir. On the north side they open a private place. It is incredible what a world of bones they brought out of it, skulls, chins, teeth, hands, fingers, whole arms, all which we, having first adored, kissed; nor had there been any

end of it had it not been for one of my fellow-travelers who indiscreetly interrupted the officer that was showing them, an Englishman; his name was Gratian Pullus [Dean John Colet of St. Paul's], a man of learning and piety, but not so well affected to this part of religion as I could wish he were. He took out an arm, having yet some bloody flesh upon it; he showed a reluctance to the kissing it and a sort of uneasiness in his countenance; and presently the officer shut up all his relics again.

After this we viewed the table of the altar and the ornaments and after that those things that were laid up under the altar. All was very rich; you could have said Midas and Croesus were beggars compared to them if you beheld the great quantities of gold and silver. It made me sigh to think I had no such relics in my own house. A sacrilegious wish, I confess it, and I humbly begged pardon of the saint before I set foot out of the church.

After this we were carried into the vestry. Good God, what a pomp of silk vestments was there and of golden candlesticks! There we saw also St. Thomas's foot. It looked like a reed painted over with silver; it had but little of weight and nothing of workmanship and was longer than up to one's girdle. I saw no cross. There was a gown shown; it was of silk indeed but coarse and without embroidery or jewels, and a handkerchief, still having plain marks of sweat and blood from the saint's neck. We readily kissed these monuments of ancient frugality. They are not shown to everybody, but I have some acquaintance with the reverend prelate, William Warham, the archbishop, and he recommended me.

From hence we were conducted up higher; for behind the high altar there is another ascent as into another church. In a certain new chapel there was shown us the whole face of the good man set in gold and adorned with jewels; and there was a certain unexpected chance that near interrupted all our felicity. My friend Gratian lost himself extremely. After a short prayer he says to the assistant of him that showed us the relics, "Good Father, is it true, as I have heard, that Thomas, while he lived, was very charitable to the poor?" "Very true." "Then if this holy man was so liberal to the poor when he was a poor man himself and stood in need of charity for the support of his own body, do you not think he would take it well now, when he is grown so rich and wants nothing, if some poor woman having a family of children at home ready to starve, or daughters under danger of being under a necessity to prostitute themselves for want of portions, or a husband sick in bed and destitute of all comforts, if such a woman should ask him leave to make bold with some small portion of these vast riches for the relief of her family, taking it either as by consent or by gift or by borrowing?"

The assistant making no answer to this, Gratian, being a warm man, "I am fully persuaded," says he, "that the good man would be glad at his heart that, when he is dead, he would be able to relieve the necessities of the poor with his wealth." Upon this the shower of the relics began to frown and to pout out his lips and to look upon us as if he would have eaten us up; and I do not doubt but he would have spit in our faces and have turned us out of the church by the neck and shoulders but that we had the archbishop's recommendation. Indeed, I did in some measure pacify him with good words, telling him that Gratian did not speak this from his heart but had a droll way with him and also laid down a little money.

We read that the bishops of old were commended for selling the sacred vessels and relieving the poor with the money. And so they are commended at this day; but they are only commended; for I am of the mind, they neither have the power nor the will to follow the example.

Upon this, out comes the head of the college. He wears a miter, and has the revenue of an abbot—he wants nothing but the name. He opened us the box in which the remainder of the holy man's body is said to rest. It is not permitted to see the bones, nor can it be done without a ladder. But a wooden box covers a golden one, and that being craned up with ropes, discovers an inestimable treasure. Gold was its basest part. Everything sparkled and shined with very large and scarce jewels, some of them bigger than a goose's egg. There some monks stood about with the greatest veneration. The cover being taken off, we all worshiped. The prior, with a white wand, touched every stone one by one, telling us the name in French, the value of it, and who was the donor of it. The principal of them were the presents of kings. He had need to have a good memory.

Hence he carried us back into a vault. There the Virgin Mary has her residence; it is something dark; it is doubly veiled in and encompassed about with iron bars. I suppose she is afraid of thieves. And I never in my life saw anything more laden with riches. Candles being brought in, we saw more than a royal sight. It goes far beyond the Parathalassian virgin in wealth in appearance. What is concealed she knows best. These things are shown to none but great persons or peculiar friends.

In the end we were carried back into the vestry. There was pulled out a chest covered with black leather; it was set upon the table and opened. They all fell down on their knees and worshiped, pieces of linen rags, a great many of them retaining still the marks of the snot. These were those that the holy man

used to wipe the sweat off from his face and neck with, the snot out of his nose, or any other such sort of filth which human bodies are not free from.

Here again my friend Gratian behaved himself in none of the most obliging manners; for the gentle prior offered to him, being an Englishman, an acquaintance, and a man of considerable authority, one of the rags for a present, thinking he had presented him with a very acceptable gift; but Gratian unthankfully took it squeamishly in his fingers and laid it down with an air of contempt, making up his mouth at it as if he would have smacked it. For this was his custom if anything came in his way that he would express his contempt to. I was both ashamed and afraid. Nevertheless the good prior, though not insensible to the affront, seemed to take no notice of it; and after he had civilly entertained us with a glass of wine, dismissed us, and we went back to London.

In our journey to London, not far from Canterbury, on the left hand of the way, there is a little cottage of old mendicants. As soon as they spy a man on horseback coming, one of them runs out and sprinkles him with holy water and then offers him the upper leather of a shoe, with a brass ring to it, in which is a glass, as if it were some gem. Gratian rode on my left hand, next to this cottage; he was sprinkled with holy water and took it pretty well; but upon presenting the shoe, he asked what was meant by that. "This," says the poor man, "was St. Thomas's shoe." Gratian fell into a passion and, turning to me, said, "What would these brutes have? Will they make us kiss the shoes of all that have been good men? Why do they not as well give us their spittle and the other excrements of their bodies to kiss?" I pitied the poor old man and comforted him, being sorrowful, by giving him a little money. In my opinion Gratian was not angry altogether without a cause. I think it a piece of impudence to thrust slippers and shoes and stockings upon any one to be kissed. St. Thomas built this magnificent church at Canterbury and advanced the authority of the priesthood all over England, and now, after all, this fragment of his shoe maintains a conventicle of poor men.

While King Henry took a few little towns in France, Queen Katherine won the brilliant victory on Flodden Field, where from 500 to 1,000 English and 10,000 Scots incarnadined the innocent earth, and she went on pilgrimage to thank Our Lady of Walsingham, and Sir Arthur Plantagenet went to thank her for deliverance from shipwreck. And Erasmus, on May 8, 1511, from Cambridge wrote Andreas Ammonius: "I have undertaken a vow for the good success of the church. I intend to visit the Virgin of

Walsingham and to hang up some Greek verses there. If you ever go there, look for them." Here they are:

Hail, Jesus' Mother, blessed evermore,  
 Alone of women, God-bearing and Virgin!  
 Others may offer to thee various gifts,  
 This man his gold, that man again his silver,  
 A third adorn thy shrine with precious stones,  
 For which some ask a guerdon of good health;  
 Some, riches; others hope that by thy aid  
 They soon may bear a father's honored name  
 Or gain the years of Pylus' reverend sage.  
 But the poor poet, for his well-meant song,  
 Bringing these verses only, — all he has, —  
 Asks in reward for his most humble gift  
 That greatest blessing, piety of heart  
 And free remission of his many sins.

The pious priestly pilgrim says the shrine is very famous all over England, and you shall scarce find anybody in that island who thinks his affairs can be prosperous unless he every year makes some present to that great lady, greater or smaller, according as his circumstances are in the world. If you saw the inside of the chapel, you would say it was the seat of the saints, it is all so glittering with jewels, gold, and silver.

That religion may spread itself the more widely, some things are shown at one place and some at another. And there are always some at hand to show you what you have a mind to see.

Canons are not permitted lest under the color of religion they should prove irreligious and, while they are serving the Virgin, lose their own virginity. Only in the inner chapel, which I call the chamber of the holy Virgin, a certain canon stands at the altar to receive and keep that which is given. A certain religious modesty makes some give when anybody stands by who would not give a farthing if there were no witness of it or give more than otherwise they would give. There are some so devoted to human nature that, while they pretend to lay one gift on the altar, by a wonderful sleight of hand they steal what another has laid down. The Virgin would not thunder at them any more than God Himself does, whom they are not afraid to strip of His ornaments, and to break through the walls of the church to come at them.

In the wall enclosing the churchyard there is a gate so small a man can hardly squeeze through. A knight on horseback, pursued by enemies, would seek safety at the Virgin's altar, and both horse and horseman were on a sudden taken into the churchyard and the enemy left on the outside stark mad at his disappointment. A plate of copper that had the very image of

this knight that was thus saved was nailed on the door. There was also another plate that was an exact description of the chapel and the size of it. Then there was no doubt to be made of it.

Towards the east there is another chapel full of wonders. There we prayed a little; and there was shown us the middle joint of St. Peter's finger, large enough to be taken for that of a giant. I said, Peter must needs have been a very lusty man. At this one of the company fell a-laughing.

Before this chapel stood a house which, when all things were buried in snow, was brought there on a sudden from some place a great way off through the air ages ago. Under it a spring burst forth on a sudden at the command of the holy Virgin. The water was wonderfully cold and of great virtue in curing pains in the head and stomach. All parts of this ancient cottage seemed new. Excusing our dulness of apprehension, we turned ourselves to the heavenly milk of the blessed Virgin. O mother like her Son! For as He left us so much of His blood upon earth, so she has left us so much of her milk that it is scarcely credible that a woman who never had but one child should have so much, as though her child had never sucked a drop. And they tell us the same stories about our Lord's cross that is shown up and down both publicly and privately in so many places that, if all the fragments were gathered together, they would seem to be sufficient loading for a good, large ship; and yet our Lord carried the whole cross upon His shoulders. It may be said to be an extraordinary thing but not a wonderful one, since the Lord, who increases these things according to His own pleasure, is omnipotent. But I am afraid that a great many such things are forged for the sake of getting money. When both the mother and Son, Father and Spirit are robbed by sacrilegious persons, they don't seem to be moved the least in the world, so as to deter wicked persons, so much as by a nod or a stamp, so great is the lenity of the Divine Being.

That milk is kept upon the high altar in which Christ is in the middle, and His mother, for respect's sake, at His right hand; for the milk represents the mother. It is preserved in a crystal glass; it has been put in above 1,500 years ago. It is so concreted you would take it for beaten chalk tempered with the white of an egg. It is not shown open lest the milk of the Virgin should be defiled by the kisses of men; for I believe there are some who put lips to it that are neither pure nor virgin ones.

As soon as the officer sees us, he runs presently and puts on a surplice and a stole about his neck and falls down very devoutly and worships and by and by gives us the holy milk to kiss. Then we prostrated ourselves at the lowest step of the altar, and

having first paid our adoration to Christ, we applied ourselves to the Virgin in a prayer we had framed beforehand for this very purpose. . . . If my eyes did not deceive me, they were both pleased, for the holy milk seemed to give a leap, and the eucharist seemed to look somewhat bigger than usual.

In the mean time the shower of the relics came to us, without speaking a word, holding out such a table as they in Germany that take toll on the bridge hold out to you. We laid down some pieces of money, which we presented to the Virgin.

After this, by our interpreter (if I remember right), one Robert Aldridge, a well-spoken young man and a great master of the English tongue, I inquired as civilly as I could what assurance he had this was really the Virgin's milk. And, truly, I desired to be satisfied of this with a pious intention, that I might stop the mouths of some impious persons who are used to scoff at all these things. The officer first contracted his brow without speaking a word; thereupon I pressed the interpreter to put the same question to him again, but in the fairest manner that could be, and he did it in so obliging a manner that, if he had addressed himself to the mother herself in these terms, when she had but newly lain in, she would not have taken it amiss. But the officer, as if he had been inspired with some enthusiasm, looking upon us with astonished eyes and with a sort of horror, cursing our blasphemous expressions, said, What need is there for your putting this question when you have an authentic record? and had turned us out of doors for heretics had not a few pence pacified his rage. Just as we had been stunned with a cudgel or struck with thunder, we sneaked away, humbly begging his pardon for our boldness; for so a man ought to do in holy matters.

Thence we went to the little chapel, the dwelling of the Virgin Saint. In our way thither an expounder of sacred things, one of the minors, offers himself; he stares upon us as if he had a mind to draw our pictures; and having gone a little farther, another meets us, staring upon us after the same manner; and after him a third. I suspect that some sacrilegious person had stolen some of the Virgin's vestments and that I was suspected as the thief. Therefore, having entered the chapel, I addressed myself to the Virgin Mother in a prayer. So I kissed the altar, laid down some money, and withdrew.

I do not know whether the Virgin gave me a nod as a token that she had heard my prayer, for it was but an uncertain light, and she stood in the dark at the right side of the altar. And the check of the former officer had made me so dejected that I did not dare to lift up my eyes again. This adventure had a conclu-



sion the happiest of all, for I am put in courage again; for as Homer says, my heart was even sunk into my breeches.

After dinner we go to church again. It may be I was suspected of sacrilege; but I did not suspect myself. A clear conscience fears nothing. I had a great mind to see the record that the shower of the relics had referred us to. We found it at last; but it was hung up so high that he must have good eyes that could read it; and mine are none of the best nor none of the worst. Therefore, not willing wholly to trust to him in a matter of such moment, I went along with Adrisius as he read it.

I was ashamed of myself that I should doubt of a matter that there was made so plain before one's eyes, the name, the place, the order of the proceeding — in one word, there was nothing omitted. There was one William of Paris, a man of general piety, but more especially religious in getting together the relics of saints all over the earth, he having traveled over a great many countries and having everywhere diligently searched monasteries and churches, at last arrived at Constantinople (for this William's brother was a bishop there). When he was preparing to return home, the bishop acquainted him that there was a certain nun that had the Virgin's milk and that he would be the happiest man in the world if he could possibly get any of it, either for love or money or by any other means, for that all the relics he had hitherto collected were nothing compared to that sacred milk. Upon this William never was at rest till he had obtained one half of this milk, and having gotten this treasure, thought himself richer than Croesus.

He goes straight homeward but falls sick by the way. Finding himself in danger, he sends for a Frenchman, a faithful fellow-traveler, and makes him swear secrecy and then delivers the milk to him upon this condition, "that, if he got home safe, he should deposit that treasure on the altar of the holy Virgin that is worshiped in Paris in that noble church that has the river Seine on each side of it, as if itself gave place in reverence to the divinity of the Virgin." To sum up the matter in few words, William was buried; the other rides post, but he falls sick by the way, and thinking himself past recovery, he delivers the milk to an Englishman that was his fellow-traveler, making him take a solemn oath that he would perform that which he himself was to have done. The one dies, the other takes it and puts it upon the altar in the presence of all the canons of the place, those that at that time were called regulars, as they are yet at St. Genoveve. He obtained half this milk of them and carried it into England and made a present of it to this beyond-sea place, his mind being moved thereto by a divine impulse.

Further, that there might not be left the least room to doubt,

the very names of the bishops were set down that were authorized to grant releases and indulgences to such as should come to see the milk according to the power of them given, but not without some donation or another, for forty days in purgatory; for certain there is time there. When they have disposed of this stock of forty days, there ever and anon arises something for them to bestow, and it is in this quite otherwise than it is with the tub of the Danaids; for though that is continually filling, it is always empty; but in this, though you are continually drawing out, there is never the less in the vessel. If the remission of forty days were given to a hundred thousand men, every one would have that much. And if they had received forty days in the morning, they would upon asking receive forty days in the evening, yes, ten times over in an hour. One said, I wish I had such a cabinet at home. I would not wish for above three groats if they might be doubled and tripled after that manner.

But to return to my story, there was one argument added by a man of great piety and candor, which is, that, though the Virgin's milk, which is shown in many other places, is indeed venerable enough in that it was scraped off from stones, yet this was more venerable than all the rest because this was saved as it flowed from the Virgin's breast without touching the ground; the nun of Constantinople that gave it said so. It may be she had it of St. Bernard. He, when he was very old, had the happiness to taste milk from the same nipple which the child Jesus sucked, whence I wonder he was not rather called Lactifluous than Mellifluous. Some milk flowed from the Virgin's breast, but dropping upon the stone she sat upon while she was giving suck it concreted and was afterwards by Providence so multiplied.

These things being over, we were just on the point of going away, but walking about and looking round us to see if there was anything worth taking notice of, one of the chapel officers comes to me and asked my name. I told it him. He asked me if I was the person that a matter of two years ago set up a votive tablet in Hebrew letters. I told him I was. Can you write Hebrew, then? No; but they call Hebrew everything they cannot understand. But by and by, upon calling, as I suppose, came the head of the college, the posterior prior. He saluted me very courteously. Being requested, I turned the verses into Latin, word for word. He pulled out of his pouch a little piece of wood, cut off from the beam on which the Virgin Mother stood. The admirable fragranciness of it showed it to be a thing that was highly sacred. I, having received this present in the lowest posture of humility and bare-headed and having kissed it over and over, put it in my pocket. You may see it; but if you have eaten or drunk today or have had

to do with your wife last night, I would not advise you to look upon it. I would not exchange this little fragment for all the gold in Tagus. I will set it in gold and put it in a crystal case so that it may be seen through it.

When this hysteroprotos saw me so religiously transported with that small present, thinking I deserved to have things of greater moment imparted to me, he asked me if I had seen the Virgin's secrets. That word startled me a little, but I durst not ask him what he meant by the Virgin's secrets, for in matters so sacred there is danger in a slip of the tongue. I told him I had not seen them, but I had a very great desire to see them. Then I am conducted in as one in an ecstasy. A wax taper or two was lighted, and a little image was shown me that made no extraordinary figure, neither for magnitude, matter, nor workmanship, but of extraordinary virtue. At the feet of the Virgin there is a jewel that neither the Latins nor Greeks have given a name to. The French have given it a name from a toad because it has the resemblance of a toad in it so lively that no art can match it. And that which is the more miraculous is that it is a very small stone, and the image does not stand out of it but is included in the very body of the stone and may be seen through it. I should not have believed it myself if the whole tribe of divines had asserted it, unless I had seen it with these eyes, I say beheld it with these very eyes, and had experienced the truth of it. One of the company would not believe this story, "because I will not believe that asses fly."

And some persons of credit add that, if you put this toadstone into vinegar, it will move its legs and swim. It is dedicated to the Virgin because she has overcome, trampled upon, and extinguished, all uncleanness, malice, pride, avarice, and all manner of earthly desires. Afterwards he showed me the statues of gold and silver. This, says he, is solid gold, and this is only silver-gilt. He told me the weight of every one, the price, and the name of the donor. I being full of admiration at everything and congratulating the Virgin being mistress of so much wealth, says the officer to me, Inasmuch as I perceive you are so pious a spectator, I think I should not do fairly by you if I should conceal anything from you; therefore you shall see the greatest privacies the Virgin has. And presently he takes out of a drawer from under the altar a world of admirable things, the particulars of which, if I should proceed to mention, the day would not be long enough, so that thus far the journey succeeded to my wish. I satisfied my curiosity abundantly with fine sights and brought home with me this inestimable present, a pledge of the Virgin's love, given me by herself.

I made trial of the virtues of this piece of wood. Three or

four days ago I, being in a house of entertainment, found a man stark mad, whom they were just going to put into chains, I put this piece of wood privately under his bolster, and he fell into a sound sleep and slept a long time, and when he arose in the morning, he was as sober as ever. One thought the man was drunk, and sleep commonly cures that distemper. But the man himself told me that there was a woman appeared to him in his sleep of an incomparable beauty, that held forth a cup to him to drink. One said Hellebore, I believe. That is uncertain; but this is certain, that the man recovered his reason.

When Claudius died, the Senate voted him the apotheosis, placing him among the gods. Seneca, however, wrote the *Apokoluntosis*, placing him among the pumpkins. This farce likely gave Erasmus the idea for his *Julius Exklusus*. Pope Julius II had graciously dispensed Erasmus from the disabilities arising from his illegitimate birth, and the Pope's relative, Cardinal Riario, had been kind to Erasmus at Rome. But now the Pope was dead, Erasmus put him into a brilliant lampoon. The syphilitic "God on earth," the truculent, swashbuckling *condottiere*, soars for admission into heaven.

Peter — Hum! Signs of impiety in plenty and none of the other thing. Who are these fellows behind you? Faugh! They smell of stews, taverns, gunpowder. Have you brought goblins out of Tartarus to make war with heaven? Yourself, too, are not precisely like an apostle. Priest's cassock and bloody armor below it, eyes savage, mouth insolent, forehead brazen, body scarred with sins all over, breath loaded with wine, health broken with debauchery. You are Julius the Emperor come back from hell. . . .

Julius — Make an end, I say, or I will fling a thunderbolt at you. I will excommunicate you! . . .

Peter — What did you do?

Julius — I raised the revenue. I invented new offices and sold them. I invented a way to sell bishoprics without simony. When a man is made a bishop, he resigns the office which he holds already. He cannot resign what he has not got; so I made him buy something first, and in this way promotion brought me in six or seven thousand ducats besides the bulls. I recoined the currency and made a great sum that way. Nothing can be done without money. Then I annexed Bologna to the Holy See. I beat the Venetians. I jockeyed the Duke of Ferrara. I defeated a schismatical council [Pisa] by a sham council of my own [Lateran]. I drove the French out of Italy, and I would have driven the Spaniards out, too, if the Fates had not brought me here. I have set all the princes of Europe by the ears. I have torn up treaties,

kept great armies in the field. I have covered Rome with palaces, and I have left five millions in the treasury behind me. . . . And here you are keeping the door shut against one who has deserved so well of Christ and the Church. And I have done it all myself, too. I owe nothing to my birth, for I don't know who my father was; nothing to learning, for I have none; nothing to youth, for I was old when I began; nothing to popularity, for I was hated all round. . . . The Pope cannot be deposed for any crime whatsoever. Not for murder, not if he be a parricide; not for fornication; not for incest; not for simony, not for six hundred acts of simony; not for poisoning; not for sacrilege; not for blasphemy; not for all these crimes collected in a single person. Add six hundred more to them; there is no power which can depose the Pope of Rome. . . .

Peter — Fortunate Pope, who can cheat Christ with his laws. Quite true, the remedy in such a case is not in a council. The people ought to rise with paving stones and dash such a wretch's brains out.

In his characteristic manner Erasmus wiggled and wriggled and squirmed and equivocated in trying to deny authorship of the squib, and his friend Cardinal Campegi and others faulted him.

What authority is there for burning heretics? A divine quoted, A man that is a heretic after the first and second admonition reject; *devita* means *de vita*, put him out of life. Some laughed; some were convinced. He went on, Thou shalt not suffer a witch — *maleficus* — to live. Every heretic is a *maleficus*, an evil-doer. Ergo: the heretic is to be killed. This happened in the convocation of 1512, and Colet told the story to Erasmus, who put it in his *Dialogs*.

Erasmus followed Luther's *Monastic Vows* even in details. Prof. Adam Krafft, Crato Fuldensis, at Erfurt, lectured on the *Colloquies*, it is said; he lectured on *The Praise of Folly* in 1520.

Any wonder the *Dialogs* gave offense? Nicholas Bacchem of Egmond in Friesland, called Egmondanus, professor at Louvain, found four heresies in them. He was the prior of the Carmelites. The great wit retorted with a puny pun on "Carmel and Camel."

The Saxon Lambert Campester at Louvain got out an edition *In usum Delphini*, for which the author ridiculed him "of squinting eye but of yet more squinting mind." The wit!

Dionysius de Zannettinis, Bishop of Milopotamos, charged they were likely to make boys mock all religion. The great Joseph Scaliger criticized even the Latin of the Latinist.

Augustine Steuchus, a learned divine, wrote him: "How many noxious drafts you gave them to drink! How many fountains of

blasphemy you opened up! . . . Many also wonder why at your time of life you insidiously inject so many wicked things."

Vigneul-Marville called them "too free" and quoted Letri, the biographer of the Duke of Assuma, "This nobleman was spoiled in his youth by reading the *Colloquies* of Erasmus." Ambrosius Storch, Pelargus, a theologian of Freiburg or Koeln, complained all the youth had been corrupted by the book.

Bishop Cuthbert Tunstal was offended by them. Bishop Fisher scored them unsparingly for being obscene and tending to lessen the reverence for holy things. "Imitate St. Augustine, who corrected every error pointed out to him."

Correct error? He was no Augustine. The petty priest defended his errors. "They treat chastely those things which are lewd by nature, as, for instance, in the Youth and the Maiden and the Youth and the Harlot; and I consider that I have paid particular attention to it that tender youth shall derive nothing lewd from my writings."

He wrote Cardinal Wolsey: "One thing I have always seen to, that nothing should emanate from me that by its obscenity might corrupt youth. There is nothing in my *Colloquies* which is either obscene or impious or seditious."

To Archbishop Warham: "Of a surety they can show you nothing impious. . . . There is scarcely another book more conducive to the banishing from the minds of men opinions about silly things."

When it comes to obscenity and blasphemy, Erasmus simply had a bad case of "moral strabismus."

The Sorbonne in St. Maturin at Paris condemned the "erroneous, scandalous, and impious propositions in the book called *Familiar Colloquies* by Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam, in the year of our Lord 1526, in which work the author, as if he were a heathen, ridicules, satirizes, and sneers at, the Christian religion and its holy ceremonies and observances, tears them to shreds, and decrees their abolition."

The Committee on the Reformation of Morals of Pope Paul III in 1537 "advised that young people should not be permitted to learn them at school."

Luther wrote: "I had decided, my dear Spalatin, to tell no one of Erasmus's *Dialog*, my sole reason being that it was so delightful, so full of humor, so clever (that is, woven together in such an Erasmian way), that 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 lamentation."

That shows the deep gulf fixed between the two men.

Again: "In his *Colloquies* he compares Christ to Priapus, and whom he mocks in his *Colloquies* and especially in his detestable *Miscellany*. . . . He inflames the baser passions of young boys and regards Christ as I regard Klaus Narr" [the court fool].

Again: "When I die, I will forbid my children to read his *Colloquies*, for he says and teaches there many a godless thing under fictitious names, with the intent to assault the Church and Christian faith. He may laugh and make fun of me and other men, but let him not make fun of our Lord God. See, now, what poison he scatters in his *Colloquies* among made-up people and goes craftily at our youth to poison them."

Kaiser Karl agreed; he made a reading list for his sons but omitted the works of Erasmus.

Henry Barnard, LL.D., comments: "Terence is not responsible for the misuse that was made of him after the lapse of fifteen hundred years; but Erasmus, the theologian, is responsible for his frivolous book, nay, doubly so, inasmuch as he designed it for youth, even though they should become thereby Latinists of the first eminence. . . .

"The *Dialogs* at least cannot but have an injurious effect upon the moral sentiments of youth. Cold, unloving satire, frivolity and shuffling, act as poison upon the simplicity and artlessness of the young. . . . He is not the man to write books of instruction, to address children from a fatherly heart, and to care for the good of their souls.

"The unhappy man had no father's house, no country, no Church; in short, he had no object to which he could devote his powers in self-sacrifice; therefore did he become selfish, timid, and double-minded; for love was a stranger to his breast. We do not wonder, then, that he dissolved all connections with the upright, outspoken Luther, that true-hearted and affectionate pastor of his beloved Germans. . . . In Luther's *Table Talk* there are some impressions in regard to these *Dialogs* which teachers would do well to lay to heart. 'Erasmus,' says Luther, 'lurks behind the fence, does nothing openly, and never comes boldly into our presence, and for this reason are his books very pernicious. When I die, I will forbid my children to read his *Dialogs*; for in them he utters and teaches many a wicked sentiment by the mouths of his fictitious characters with the deliberate design to injure the Church and the Christian faith. Erasmus is a crafty knave; that one sees in all his books but especially in his *Dialogs*, in which he is particular to say, 'I myself do not speak here but my personages.' To Lucian I give some praise, for he comes out boldly and indulges in open mockery; but Erasmus sophisticates

everything which is from God and everything holy, and does it all in the name of holiness; and for this reason he is much more mischievous and corrupting than Lucian.'"

Almost a quarter of a century after Luther posted his Theses, in 1540, to be exact, Blessed Peter Faber, the first of the companions of St. Ignatius Loyola, reported on the conditions in Germany: "It is not the false interpretations of Scripture nor the sophistry which the Lutherans introduce into their sermons and disputes that have caused so many nations to apostatize and so many towns and provinces to revolt against religion. All the mischief is done by the scandalous lives of the clergy. . . . Would there were in the city of Worms only two or three churchmen who were not living openly with women or guilty of some other notorious crime and had a little zeal for the salvation of souls."

Milwaukee, Wis.

WM. DALLMANN

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### The Unionistic Campaign

(Some Informal Jottings)

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*The Presbyterian Guardian*, January 25, reports: "Dr. John A. Mackay, president of Princeton Theological Seminary and champion of Barthianism, is one of ten well-known Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Jewish leaders participating in an *interfaith* 'Institute on Religion' now being held in the Jewish synagog at Wilkes-Barre, Pa. The theme of the Institute is: 'Religious Values in American Democracy.' Speakers in addition to Dr. Mackay are: Gregory Feige, noted Roman Catholic writer; Dr. Louis Finkelstein, provost of the Jewish Theological Seminary; Dr. F. Ernest Johnson, professor of Religious Education, Columbia University; and Rabbi Louis M. Levitsky, rabbi of Temple Israel, Wilkes-Barre." The unionists have well-seasoned leaders. They do not even shy away from syncretistic practices.—These interfaith affairs are put on all over the country. *The Globe-Democrat* of St. Louis, February 6, reports on one held here. Dean Sidney E. Sweet (Episcopal) and Rabbi Ferdinand Isserman made the speeches in Temple Israel's Institute of Judaism. Bishop Scarlett (Episcopal) presided at the morning session and Dr. John W. MacIvor (Presbyterian) in the afternoon. (The good will binding these interfaith brotherhoods together cannot stand much of a strain. *Globe-Democrat*, January 24: "Rabbi Ferdinand Isserman of Temple Israel resigned last night from the Executive Board of the local chapter of the National Round Table of Christians and Jews after all five Catholic members of the Executive Committee had quit. The Catholic leaders resigned because Rabbi Isserman had criti-