

Luther and the Reformation

by Otto J. Eckert

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Much lies within the scope of this topic assigned for consideration during the five days of our institute this summer—much that the selection of just what to treat to the greatest advantage and for the greatest benefit in the limited time was not an easy one. Originally five separate units were planned, each treating a different individual in his contact and dealing with Luther. This series would have considered Luther and Carlstadt, Luther and Henry VIII, Luther and Erasmus, Luther and Melancthon, and Luther and Zwingli. But as material accumulated, it soon became evident that an attempt to handle *all* of these subjects in the limited time would result in doing justice to none of them. At first Luther and the Relationship of Church and State was given preference because of the great practical interest this subject bears for our time; but finally Luther and Erasmus was given first choice because it appeared that that topic was of even greater importance for us today.

In any of these topics Luther stands in the center—but not so much Luther himself but rather what Luther stood for and the evaluation for us of what he said and did. But we ought to take at least a few glances at Luther himself before going on.

His person is one of the most controversial of all times, greatly loved and violently hated. From his day down to the very present time you find that those who come in contact with him become either friend or foe, with few if any on the middle or neutral ground, and great extremes in both directions, especially among the earliest biographers of Luther. The first detailed account of Luther's life, written by his archenemy Cochlaeus in 1549, three years after the reformer's death, depicts Luther as a literal offspring of Satan,¹ begotten by the prince of darkness himself in an act of fornication with Margaret Luther—a veritable devil who from the beginning manifested such a strange and savage nature and behavior that Margaret later regretted that she did not immediately strangle him in his cradle. Cochlaeus carries this thought through to the very end where at Luther's death he has his "father," the devil, appear just in time to carry his spawn and loyal henchman off to hell, which well matches the other report originated in 1568, and still often heard, that Luther hanged himself in his bedroom from one of the bedposts, though it is known that Luther's death occurred not in the bedroom but in the living room of the place at which he stayed, and not in bed but on a bench upholstered in leather, and was caused by a stroke. In the spirit of Cochlaeus other biographers have called Luther "a frantic beast, filthy hog, a vacillating turncoat, frivolous liar, shameless sensualist, wrathful brawler, public seducer of nuns, a stinking blasphemer, dirty fellow, scamp, boor of boors, mucker, back biter, and blackguard" or have depicted him as one suffering from persecution—mania, megalomania, hallucinations, illusions, sexual hyperaesthesia, transitory dementia, and syphilis.

On the side opposite from the ones who can see no good whatever in Luther are those who idolize him to the point of seeing in him no flaw whatever. The large inside cover picture of Bainton's "Here I Stand" shows Luther with the Holy Ghost in the form of a dove above his head—a common way of portrayal by enthusiastic artists who represented the thought of those who consider Luther infallible or nearly so in everything he said or did. This idolizing of Luther found a ridiculous extreme in the cutting of splinters from the

¹ It seems strange to us today that any one should make the claim that Luther was a literal child of the devil. But in Luther's day people generally believed that a demon sometimes consorted with women in their sleep begetting children of demoniac nature. Such a demon was called an incubus. The counterpart, a female demon, called a succubus, was believed to take on human form and consort with men. Luther himself was given to this superstition and some of his opinions concerning it are found in the Erlangen Edition, volume 60, pages 37–42, where he several times mentions *die Melusina zu Lucelberg* as a succubus and holds the opinion that there are persons in this world fathered by the devil who are really not human beings but devils. Perhaps he included them in his mind when he wrote, "Though devils all the world should fill." But though Luther was given to much of the superstition of his day he was never taken in by it like Melancthon, who dabbled around with astrology and other superstitious practices. Luther evidently was not affected by the opinion of Cochlaeus and his followers that he was part devil.

wooden columns in the Luther house in Wittenberg. These splinters were considered to be a most potent remedy for toothaches. So some would put a halo on Luther's head and others a noose around his neck. As a result not all of what has been written about Luther is of historical value, especially that which is found in early biographies.

But beginning in the nineteenth century much has been brought to light concerning the general picture of the age in which Luther lived and touching directly on his person. It has changed and tempered the judgment of both friend and foe regarding the person of the great Reformer, though in the case of the latter the attacks on it have become all the more dangerous because of their greater subtlety as is seen from some of the literature put out to counteract the effects of the film "Martin Luther." Though they put on the mask of an impartial judge and refrain from the unhistorical brutal attacks of former times they carefully cull from the sources whatever puts a bad light on Luther.

These sources have been of great aid to recent Lutheran biographers known to us. They have enriched the writings of such men as Boehmer, Preserved Smith, McGiffert, Bainton and others. We hear the amusing letter written in Greek by the uninitiated and peeved Melanchthon, throwing vitriol at Luther with a masked reference that was an insult for both Luther and Katharine on the occasion of Luther's marriage, while faintly praising him. For this he probably had other reasons besides not being consulted about the marriage beforehand, because just at this time Luther was definitely breaking with Erasmus, for whom Melanchthon had a warm affection. More details are presented regarding events surrounding Luther's marriage—unromantic, yet sanctified by the spirit of Christ to become a faithful and harmonious union, all of which shows how utterly false are the claims that it was but an episode in the life of a gross sensualist who before entering it had lived in concubinage with three nuns at the same time—an accusation which Denifle bases on a humorous letter of Luther in which he speaks of anything but concubinage.

More light is cast by these sources on Luther's appearance and habits. We note with interest that at the Koburg in 1530 he appeared wearing spectacles and a long beard. We take a conscience-soothing look into his study to see a wilderness of disorder. Desks, tables, and chairs are covered with books, manuscripts, and letters. Every place on which anything could be laid is piled full, and often some things are lost altogether in the confusion of the place, especially since even before his marriage Luther kept a dog which only too often played havoc with his papers. In the last year before his marriage he had no one to take care of his room. We see his bed never made and never changed so that finally both bedclothes and straw begin to decay, with Luther too tired at night to notice it.

We learn to understand Luther's dealings in the bigamous marriage of Philip of Hesse in 1539 and 1540 better as we hear that Karlstadt, Capito, Melanchthon, and Bucer all shared his opinion that the permissions of the law of Moses regarding polygamy, though cancelled for the clergy I Tim. 3:2, were not cancelled for the laity. Melanchthon and Bucer signed Luther's opinion to Philip. In the Catholic camp many shared Luther's opinion, among them Cajetan. Luther acknowledged to the Elector of Saxony that he had already before followed the procedure he observed in Philip's case and that his preceptor in the monastery dealt likewise in many cases of that kind. This was in accord with the medieval doctrine of a *dispensatio in foro interno tantum*, which was the granting in the confessional of a secret dispensation for acts otherwise forbidden by secular or ecclesiastical law, provided they were not considered to be in conflict with the natural or revealed law. Here we also meet with the application of Luther's distinction between *mendacium perniciosum* and *mendacium officiosum* which he makes (Erl. 35, 18) in the case of the Hebrew midwives lying to save the male infants of their people, in which he does not follow his great teacher Augustine, who considered the white lie a sin and held that in the case of the midwives and also of Rahab, who lied to save the spies, only the faith but not the weakness is commended in the Bible. Besides, Luther was overwhelmingly moved by a great respect for the secrecy of the confessional, acquired in the Catholic Church, and subscribed to the saying: *Wer die Beicht nachsaget, dem soll man die Zunge hinten zum Halse heraus reissen*. Erl. 65, 207. This explains his unconditional demand at the Eisenach Conference in 1540 that Philip openly deny what everyone already knew, to which Philip replied: "I will not lie. Lies sound badly. No apostle ever taught a Christian to speak the untruth." In spite of the fact that Philip's words are perhaps due more to the insistence of Margaret's mother that

the marriage be publicly acknowledged than to his love for the truth, which he violated otherwise in connection with this case, we will still hold to what he said over against Luther. But we will judge him less harshly when we take all things into consideration.

To get back to the main issue, the bigamous marriage itself, and to add a little more background we offer a quotation from Preserved Smith's *The Age of the Reformation*, p. 507, where he says: "One of the striking aberrations of the 16th century, as it seems to us, was the persistent advocacy of polygamy as, if not desirable in itself, at least preferable to divorce. Many of the reformers thought polygamy less wrong than divorce on the biblical ground that whereas the former had been practiced in the Old Testament times and was not clearly forbidden by the New Testament, divorce was prohibited, save for adultery.—Popes, theologians, humanists like Erasmus, and philosophers like Bruno, all thought a plurality of wives a natural condition."

To see Luther's weakness as a common weakness of his entire age helps us to understand this weakness better, though we still see it as a weakness. But does a weakness necessarily destroy a man's greatness? And is it not often just in his weakness that we see that greatness? We see it in Luther's weakness; for he was big enough to acknowledge that he had been wrong and completely reversed his position in 1542 in his *Schrift wider die Bigamie* written against Nebulo Tulrichus, a humanist, I assume, of whom he says: "*Wer diesem Buben und Buche folget, und darauf mehr denn eine Ehefrau nimpt, und will dass es ein Recht sein soll, dem gesegne der Teufel das Bad im Abgrund der Höllen, Amen.—Moses ist todt. Lassets aber gleich sein, dass es bei den Vätern und Mose ein Recht gewesen wäre, als nimmermehr kann bewiesen werden, so hatten sie da Gottes Wort, das ihnen zuliess, das haben wir nicht.*" Here Luther, who was never interested in saving face, denies himself and comes out for the truth which he had beclouded, to regain the stature in which he stood in his writing *Wider die himmlischen Propheten* against the Iconoclasts in 1524 and 1525, a writing so fundamental in our theology in determining the *total* lack of force for us Christians in the New Testament of any argument based on *purely* Old Testament commands, prohibitions, or dispensations, *specifically* directed to the Jews, including even the Ten Commandments in that form in which they were given by Moses to Israel. What shall we say then of this notorious Philip of Hesse case but that though we see here a very human Luther, a child of his age, yet in the end he appears in his true greatness and certainly not in as bad a light as some, yes many, have put him.

The picture concerning the extent of the earthly possessions of Luther's parents and of Luther himself has also been altered to greater accuracy by recent discoveries. When Luther speaks of the poverty of his parents and tells us of his mother gathering sticks to provide heat for the household, he is giving a true picture of the time of which he is speaking. But the good foundry master Hans Luder and his frugal wife Margaretha managed so well that they eventually could provide for their family of four sons and four daughters and could think of sending their talented Martin off to school. By 1511 Luther's father was part owner of at least six shafts and two foundries and at his death, July 10, 1534, he left 1,250 Gulden. With the Gulden worth about \$7.00 in our money that would be \$8,750. But lately the Gulden has been figured as high as \$13.40 which would bring it close to \$18,000.00.—When Luther was promoted to the doctorate, his father came to the festivities with 25 teams of horses, a considerable expense if he bore it all himself.

Was not Luther himself also a man of means and are we not in disagreement with facts and figures when we think of him as a poor man? He was that in his monastery days because of the vow of poverty. He still was in 1523 when the Elector allowed him only nine Gulden, about \$65.00, a year for pocket money besides his clothes and keep. In 1525 at his marriage he had his books and clothes, but no revenue from the cloister, since he had abandoned the cowl. He had so small a university stipend that in 1526 he learned woodworking that he might be able to support his family in case of need. Katharine also had nothing, but he did not seem to be too much concerned about the situation because he said "I do not worry about debts, because when Katie pays one another comes." But if Luther didn't, Katie did. She had to watch him because he was in the habit of giving away valuable household articles, received as gifts, to the needy after his last Gulden had already gone the same way, and she sometimes hid some things so he couldn't give them away also. But they managed well with their garden, orchard, fish pond, barnyard with hens, ducks, pigs, and cows. Katie did the slaughtering herself. Later she managed a farm at Zulsdorf and the Brauerhaus, both acquired by Luther. Luther's fortunes gradually

changed, at least somewhat, but not as much as some would have us think. Records of the University of Wittenberg after the formative years for this institute during the Reformation show the income for university professors considerably increased. According to Schwiebert, who always figures the Gulden and Florin at \$13.40, 1913 evaluation, Luther was getting \$4,020 by that time and \$5,360 at the time of his death. In 1543 Luther evaluated his property for the *Türkensteuer* at 9,000 Gulden with a debt of 450 Gulden against it. His second will evaluates his books, jewels, including gifts such as rings, chains, silver, and gold gift coins, at 1,000 Gulden. With this addition Schwiebert estimates Luther's estate at 10,000 Gulden or \$134,000.00 at his death. This of course includes the largest donation, the Black Cloister, valued by Luther at 6,000 Gulden, giving it a value of over \$80,000.00 if figured at \$13.40 for the Gulden. \$134,000.00 is a lot of money. But does that figure in itself support the view that Luther was a rich man? In the first place what was the Gulden worth? Valued at \$1.34 in dollar terms of 1563 it has been brought up to \$13.40 in dollar terms of 1913 by some. In 1916 Boehmer however gives the Gulden a value of about \$7.20. The picture becomes more confusing when Smith in 1920 gives \$224 as the maximum received by a Wittenberg professor whereas Schwiebert speaks of \$5,360. And what about Luther's evaluation for the *Türkensteuer* of 6,000 Gulden for the Black Cloister? He certainly did not cheat on his tax report (unless somebody got a big bargain), for in 1563 his heirs sold it not for 6,000 but for 3,700 Gulden which Smith says was \$2,072, a great ways from the \$80,000 evaluation given it on the basis of 6,000 Gulden at \$13.40. All this is very confusing and perhaps should receive a great deal more study, but even with it the difficulty of comparing monetary and real estate values in ages so far removed from each other will always be a hindrance to arriving at exact figures.

It is far better to come to a conclusion on the basis of an observation of Luther's everyday life and circumstances, which is done especially by Bainton and McGiffert. The way Luther kept house was enough to impoverish him. Among those who stayed in the Black Cloister there were only a few paying boarders which Katie took in to support the family budget. But with 2 nieces, 6 nephews, a great niece, sometimes as many as 6 tutors for his children, and Muhme Lene as permanent members of his household, besides numerous monks and nuns who found themselves without occupation, and indigent pastors who spent varying lengths of time with him, his twelve table companions and other non-paying guests coming and going, and with his imprudent lending habits, Luther's purse was mostly empty. He often had no money of his own to loan to friends and signed notes for them so frequently that, to keep him from completely impoverishing himself, Lucas Cranach and others refused to honor his signature. In 1527 he had to pawn some silver goblets. In 1540 he had to go without his nightly glass of beer for weeks because there was none in the house and not a penny left to buy any with. He lists no cash among his possessions. Most of the considerable property he left was unproductive and not immediately negotiable, and Katie found herself in great difficulty to make both ends meet. McGiffert says: "She once complained that he might have been a rich man had he wished, but wealth was the last thing he cared for and with his disposition he could hardly have compassed it had he tried." He justly put himself in the category of the poor because of the large establishment that he kept as noted from the humorous verses he wrote in one of his records: *Ich armer Mann so halt ich Haus, Wo ich mein Geld soll geben aus; Da durft ich's wohl an sieben Ort, Und feihlt mir allweg hie und dort.—Bleib immer schuldig Rock und Schuh, Das heisst dann Hausgehalten auch, Dass im Hause bleibt kein Feuer und Rauch.* Erl. 65, 235. But that was as he wanted it for he held *Reichtum ist die allergeringste Gabe, die Gott dem Menschen geben kann.* Erl. 57, 354. A real estate appraiser may call Luther rich. But the facts of his life tell a different story. Luther was too generous to be rich.

But did he not also have some great weaknesses of character? Was he perhaps as some have called him "a glutton, a hop brother, a wine barrel, and a drunkard"? Perhaps no phase of Luther's life has been more thoroughly investigated than his use of food and alcoholic beverages. His physical appearance has been drawn in in this connection. He was somewhat corpulent in later life, a fact which has been adduced in what we cannot but call a low, small, and ignorant attempt to prove that he was a glutton and a wine bibber. But he was not a gourmet. He loved simple home fare. Melanchthon, who was closely associated with him for 28 years, often marveled how little meat and drink Luther required for his ample physique. He had a heavy, well developed bone structure and strong shoulders. Extremely thin during the first 38 years of his life, he began gaining in weight in 1520 or 1521 when he started eating more regularly, which he certainly was entitled to do, but it is

doubtful whether he ever weighed over 200 pounds which is not excessive for a man of his build or height which must have been a good average or above and evidently greater than that of Melanchthon of whom Luther speaks as *ein armes dürres Männlein*. Erl. 68, 72. Even a moderate protuberance about the middle would have been overemphasized by the loose and flowing gown Luther customarily wore and the paunch ascribed to him was perhaps to some extent not so much a matter of truth as of poetry. We are thinking here of Brander's song in Auerbach's wine cellar: *Es war eine Ratt im Kellernest, Lebte nur von Fett und Butter, Hatte sich ein Ranzlein angemässt als wie der Doktor Luther*—sent out into the English-speaking world in the translation, “Once in a cellar lived a rat, He feasted there on butter, Until his paunch became as fat, As that of Dr. Luther.” As to the things that have been used to prove that Luther was an alcoholic, for instance his signature to a letter as Doktor Plenus, his vomiting at Schweinitz in 1523 before the meal attributed to drinking too much Grueneberger wine, his words in a letter “I am not now drunk and indiscreet”—Doktor Plenus proves to be Doktor Johannes signed to a letter written for his boy Hans, the vomiting at Schweinitz occurred not once but over a period of days since Luther at this time was suffering from a siege of indigestion, and the words of the letter referred to above are merely an expression to emphasize the truth of what he was writing. These are just a few of the things used in an attempt to portray Luther a toper. All of them have, on closer examination, proved to have as little foundation as the invention of Luther's supposed illegitimate son, Andrew, who in reality was his nephew. It is a waste of time to consider more of them.

This does not mean that Luther was a teetotaler. He relished good wine and mentions vintages he prefers. He liked beer, some of it better than others, for instance Torgau and Naumburg beer better than Katie's home brew. He used it as an aid to his poor digestion and as a diuretic. He also found it beneficial for his insomnia and in his later years he sometimes took a more copious draught in the evening to combat it. In an age in which doctors often advised drinking, even copious drinking for various conditions, e.g. as a remedy for kidney stone—and in which Charles V was not considered immoderate though he took the equivalent of three bottles of wine with his meals—Luther must be considered as very moderate by comparison. His father, to be sure, over-indulged occasionally and historians state that Luther was rather mild in his judgment of those who occasionally over-indulged a bit after being engaged all week in difficult and dangerous work.² But he himself was never known to have had too much, and the very thought of his being an alcoholic is absurd in the face of the well known fact that alcoholics are always failures because they are incapable especially of fatiguing and continuous mental work. All told Luther wrote 350 treatises including translations and pamphlets. His productivity exceeds that of Augustine (232) and Origen and in spite of poor health continues unabated from 1521, when Denifle says he began drinking, to the end of his life. Luther the drunkard, the toper, the alcoholic is a myth so ridiculous that it is hardly worthy of consideration. No one in his day ever preached more against the vice of drunkenness than Luther, and his life was in accord with his preaching.

Another point at which Luther has been subjected to severe criticism is his language over against his adversaries, that is at least some of them. Boehmer says: “He does not fight them like the gallant author of the 20th century, he stabs them like wild boars, or mauls them with a flail like an uncouth peasant without mercy and without tiring.” See how he addresses them: Emser, whose coat of arms had a goat on it, becomes Bock Emser; Cochlaeus is referred to (Erl. 31, pp. 270 and 302) as Gauch, that is a cuckoo or fool, and then with a play on words *der Gäuchlius, Dr. Rotzlöffel*; Eck becomes Geck or Dreck; the knight Schwenkfeld, Stankfeld; Dr. Usingen, Dr. Unsinn; Dr. Crotus, Dr. Kroete (toad); the Franciscan Schatzgeier, Schatzfresser. These are but a few of the appellations Luther hurled at his opponents. But let us look at the background for these appellations. If Emser became the Bock zu Leipzig for Luther it is because he sent out his writing *Wider das*

² The only thing your essayist could find in support of this often repeated claim is contained in a sermon of Luther on I Pet. 4:8–11, written in 1525 against the prevalence of drunkenness among males in Germany. In this connection Luther says that it might be tolerated if at some time some one by mistake (*aus Versehen*) took one drink too much, or if some one wearied by much hard work and strenuous effort became a bit inebriated (*etwo räuschig*), or even if a woman took one little drink (*ein Trünklein*) more at a wedding than she was accustomed to taking at home. This can hardly be looked upon as a mild judgment on occasional intemperance. Luther is merely by comparison pronouncing a less severe one on occasional weakness and slight excess, which he then follows up with a blistering denunciation of habitual drunkards.

unchristliche Buch Martini Lutheri, Augustiners an den deutschen Adel etc. with the motto *Hüt dich, der Bock stösst dich*. If Cochlaeus became *der liebe Rotzlöffel* to Luther, there was a reason. The historian Myconius well characterizes this short statured coarse character as *das böse und zornige Gaukelmännlein* because of his bitter, satirical, frivolous, and unfounded attacks on Luther and his position. Luther says of him at Worms, *Man hätte sich des Gauchs schier zu Tode gelacht so närrisch er redet—das Gaeuchlin kann nichts, versteht nichts—und seine eigenen Papisten halten ihn für ein lauter Gaeuchlin*. The names Luther used were not mere names but usually expressions that hit the nail on the head. In spite of his sometimes too violent temperament in retort to something directed against him, that something was more coarse and rude than what he said. Consider the reply he gave to Henry VIII, “by his disgrace” King of England whom he called the *Luegenkönig* or king of lies,³ that “if he would spit lies all over his face he would spit the truth right down his throat.” That is mild considering what Henry said of Luther in beginning the fray. He called him “a cerberus sprung from the depths of hell—serpent—cunning viper who caresses only to bite” and said “May the hand of the executioner silence him so that for once at least he may be useful to the church by the terrible example of his death. This man seems to be in pains of labor; he travails in birth; and lo! he brings forth but wind. Take away the audacious covering of proud words, with which he clothes his absurdities—as an ape is clothed in purple, and what remains? A wretched and empty sophist.” This is an example of the vitriolic language employed by all of Luther’s opponents from Prierias down to Zwingli. Luther was but a child of his age, which makes what he said all the more striking, especially because he said it with a passion for the truth over against those who perverted it. Did not our Savior in like passion use terms such as “vipers, whited sepulchres, thieves, robbers, come to steal, to kill, and to destroy” and did not Paul speak of “dogs” and of “the concision”? That was, of course, dignified language, and we do not mean to defend the coarseness of Luther’s age, but merely to view Luther in the light of that age instead of in the light of our own.

But if Luther has been labeled an uncouth barbarian because of his rude language, far worse attacks have been made on him in an attempt to prove that he was foulmouthed. He has been called “a champion boor, dirty fellow, pig, buffoon, bawd, literary dirt slinger, lubber, and pornographer.” The pornography angle of such accusations can be quickly disposed of. Cochlaeus could become frivolous and downright filthy. Humanistic writings were sometimes not only filthy, but wanton (*Letters of Obscure Men*). Luther was never even frivolous, let alone filthy and wanton. Where is there anything in his writings that bears that character in an age where so much of it is found? But what about Luther’s letter to a melancholy friend, advising him to cheer himself up with *Zoetchen*—which has been mentioned even in Lutheran circles with the implication that Luther could relish an off color story? Boehmer points out that lexicographers show that *Zote* did not have the meaning it has today in Luther’s time but could mean a story or joke. But why not go to Luther in his writing (Erl. 26, 4) *Wider Hans Worst* where he calls a lie a *fauler lahmer Zote*, to see that this word like many others has changed its meaning in the course of time.

Yet we will have to acknowledge that judged by our standards Luther’s language sometimes appears to be in very poor taste. But considering the poor sanitation as brought out in Hyma’s description of a medieval village, or by Preserved Smith who mentions a law passed in Geneva that garbage would not be permitted to lie in the streets for more than 3 days in the summer and 8 days in the winter, considering also the uncleanly habits of eating and drinking in Luther’s day (no forks) and uncleanly personal habits (handkerchiefs not generally used), the indulgence toward fleas, lice, and other vermin, and the itch, we realize that standards were different in many respects and also in language. Many examples could be brought to prove this, if there were any value in it. People talked about that which filled the air with its aroma.⁴ Let us bear this in mind when judging Luther, also the fact that such expressions are extremely rare in his voluminous writings, so much so that finding them

³ An interesting sidelight is the letter sent by Luther to Henry VIII on September 1, 1525, in which he humbly apologizes for the vehemence of his reply to Henry, also that in 1535 Henry sent Luther a gift of 50 Gulden. Whether Luther himself declined it as he did the 25 Gulden Archbishop Albrecht of Mainz sent him as a wedding gift in 1525 (which Katie later accepted unbeknown to Luther) we do not know.

⁴ Various examples of Luther’s use of expressions in poor taste today were here given in the lecture. In spite of their coarseness for us today, they show a deep earnestness and great effectiveness in driving a point home.

is like coming across a needle in a haystack, and when taken from his table talks may not always be authentic or exact because of the way these talks were reported, recorded, gathered, and edited. Suffice it to say that if Luther lived in our day he would never use some of his expressions any more than he would think of taking the mixture of horse manure and garlic he so trustingly took when the doctors prescribed it for him when he was sick at Smalkald.

We must consider Luther in his time, not only regarding what has so far been mentioned but also regarding such controversial questions as Luther's views on the relationship of church and state. For we begin to realize how much some have misrepresented Luther in defense of their wrong position only when we become more acquainted with the actual facts and the background. When this is done we may find weaknesses, but how exceptionally well does not this man stand up even under the most grueling scrutiny of his life, character, and theology—this man whom McGiffert in dedicating his “Martin Luther” to his wife calls “The most human of the world's great men.”

In the life of this “most human of the world's great men” there are three things that are mentioned much more by some historians than his unfortunate affair with Philipp of Hesse as having greatly harmed the cause of the Reformation. They are his marriage, his dealing in the peasants' war, and his alienation of the great mass of humanists, among whom at first were found many of his warmest admirers and supporters, finally his dealings with Erasmus, the foremost among them. This alienation McGiffert calls one of the tragedies of Luther's career and Smith deplors what he calls Luther's “haste and rashness” and says: “On failing to secure the support of the humanists Protestantism lost heavily, and especially abandoned its chance to become the party of progress.” Hyma says the spread of Lutheranism was checked by Luther's antagonizing Erasmus and the humanists.

The humanists stood for mental culture and liberal education. They studied the *litterae humaniores*, the literature that dealt with humanity and therefore often called the humanities, such as classical and polite literary productions, especially the ancient languages and classics, rhetoric, poetry, and philosophy. They emphasized the human aspect of things and accorded a very prominent place to the human factor in setting up the classical achievements and refinements in form and beauty of the ancient world as a cultural ideal over against less cultured native civilizations. This explains their varied interests. In his study of Hebrew Reuchlin for instance included not only the Old Testament but devoted perhaps even more time to a study of the Cabbala, on which he wrote his *De verbo mirifico* and his *De arte cabbalistica*. Erasmus concerned himself not only with the New Testament but also with the works of Seneca, Pliny, Demosthenes, Terrentius, Ptolemaeus, and Plato. In order to indicate a rising to a higher cultural level or so-called “classical rebirth” many of the humanists exchanged their native names for Greek or Latin names. Gerhard Gerhardson became Desiderius Erasmus; Schnitter, Agricola; Koepflin, Capito; Schwarzerd, Melanchthon, etc. Humanism began in the 14th century in Italy where Dante, Boccaccio, and Petrarca are found among its advocates, and from there spread to various universities on the European continent and in England as a most important factor in the Renaissance. It also, by God's direction, played an important part in the Reformation.

There are three points in which Luther was much attracted by humanism: 1. Its cultivation of the languages, particularly the Hebrew and the Greek languages, 2. Its denunciation of the vice and corruption rampant in the papacy in Luther's time, 3. Its critical attitude over against the position established in the decadent scholasticism of Luther's day. Let us consider the three points of meeting interest in their turn.

The *Psalterium Quintuplex* of the French humanist LeFevre D'Etaples besides offering a commentary on the Psalms supplied a Hebrew text. Luther used it in his lectures on the Psalms. Reuchlin's *Vokabular* was probably used by him. No doubt Reuchlin's Hebrew Grammar of 1506, though not specifically named, was among the books mentioned under his name as being in the Wittenberg library. It is also known that Capito, who edited a small Hebrew Grammar and a Hebrew Psalter, had not too infrequent contact with Luther and Wittenberg. Luther corresponded with him. In 1516 Luther began using Erasmus' Greek New Testament, and it was the second edition of Erasmus' text that he used at the Wartburg in translating the New Testament finished in 1522. How could Luther have accomplished this task and the even greater task of translating the Old Testament, which he finished in 1534, without the tools provided under God's direction by humanistic endeavors? How could he ever have become the exegete that he was but for them? Studies of Luther's marginal

notes show that Luther knew very little Greek and Hebrew as late as 1511 when he still followed the old medieval methods of giving first crude word for word explanations, called *Glossae*, based on the Vulgate, followed by a more detailed interpretation called *Scholia*. He did not begin to study Greek seriously until 1514 and Hebrew somewhat later. If he would have had to make his own tools it is doubtful whether he would ever have begun such a study. Since he was too busy to make the tools, the Lord saw to it that the humanists made them for him. Luther appreciated this. He says of it in speaking of Erasmus: “*Ich halte selbst viel von Erasmo, gebe ihm selbst viel hohen Preis, weiss auch wohl dass Erasmus ein teurer grosser Mann ist und weiss es vielleicht besser denn dieselben groben Esel, Pfaffen, Mönche und Papisten, die es nur von hören sagen haben. Ich weiss fast wohl, dass Gott Erasmo in Lehre, Künste, Gezunge, Uebunge, Lateinisch, Griechisch, im Schreiben und Reden besonders hohe Gaben gegeben hat vor andern.*”⁵

Regarding the second point, the denunciation of current corruption and vice in the church, both Luther and the humanists saw the same wrongs and both directed themselves against them. Gregory’s introduction of the celibacy and subsequent violation of God’s command not to put asunder what He has joined together by breaking up the existing marriage of priests, bore its evil fruits. Priests continued to live secretly with the wives forbidden them by the pope. Some unmarried priests followed them in living secretly in concubinage. In places the priest paid the bishop a regular tax for the woman with whom he lived and each child he had with her (D’Aubigne 1, 63). Smith states that the “church not only winked at brothels but frequently licensed them herself.” Because of these circumstances the corruption of at least some of the clergy was great in many places. But this corruption reached up to the top into the Vatican itself. We think especially of Pope Alexander VI, Rodrigo Borgia, who first lived with a Roman lady in an illicit relationship and then continued to live in the same illicit relationship with one of her daughters, Rosa Vanozza, with whom he had five children. Archbishop and a cardinal, he bribed each cardinal at a stipulated price to be elected Pope, taking the name of Alexander VI. He created his dissolute son, Caesar, Archbishop of Valencia and bishop of Pampeluna, celebrated his daughter Lucretia’s wedding in the Vatican in the presence of his mistress, Julia Bella, with licentious plays and songs. Hinting at incest of the papal court is the poem some would place as epitaph on Lucretia’s tomb: *His jacet in tumulo Lucretia nomine, sed re—Thais, Alexandri filia, sponsa, nurus*, (here lies in the grave one called Lucretia but in fact a Thais, Alexander’s daughter, wife, and daughter-in-law).⁶ Poisonings, murders—one of them committed by Caesar while the Pope clasped the victim, who had fled to him for refuge, in his arms with the blood of the victim spurting into the pope’s face—and intrigues fill the life of this pope, which came to an end when he died of poisoned food that he had intended for a cardinal—an event at which according to various records referred to by historians “the whole city ran together and could not satiate their eyes with gazing on this dead viper.” No wonder Luther heard it commonly said in Rome and on his journey there: “If there is a hell then Rome is built on it.” If there was such wickedness in high places what else could be expected in the life of the common clergy? Drunkenness, immorality, purchase of church offices by money (Albrecht of Mainz), yes, almost every vice and sin flourished in the visible church, winked at and even sanctioned by the church itself. The humanists if only out of their feeling for civic virtue opposed this corruption. Dante placed the most powerful of the popes in hell, and drew horrible descriptions of monks and clergy. Petrarch boldly called for reestablishment of the primitive order of the church. Erasmus too, like many men of letters, stood with Luther against the corruption of Rome.

Now as to scholasticism: Both Luther and the humanists held it in low esteem, though for entirely different reasons. The humanists opposed it because the cut and dried position it had arrived at hindered all freedom of thought by demanding a blind submission to the teachings of the church and papal authority. Luther on the other hand condemned it not only because it supported the authority of the Pope but especially because

⁵ “I greatly esteem Erasmus, accord him high praise, and know very well that he is indeed a great man, yes, realize that much better than those uncouth asses, the priests, monks, and papists who have it only from hearsay. I understand full well that God has endowed Erasmus above all others with an especial measure of talents in teaching, arts, languages, writing, and speaking.”

⁶ The irony of this verse lies in the fact that Lucretia is the name of a Roman lady of the Tarquin family who valued her chastity so highly that she took her life when she was ravished, and that Thais is the name of a notorious Greek courtesan associated with Alexander the Great.

of its exaltation of human reason in carrying pagan philosophy into the church and joining it with Christian doctrine in a wedding in which pagan philosophy will ever wear the pants to hinder the course of Christ's unconditioned Gospel and the freedom of faith, as we shall see in the following lectures.

One must go back to Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle to brush up a bit on the true nature of scholastic theology which was often much more philosophy than theology and often nothing but philosophy. In fact the scholastics were the philosophers of their time and like the old philosophers concerned themselves speculatively in seeking truth. The philosophers dealt with the age old whys stated in modern verse in the words:

We are born; we laugh; we weep;
 We love; we droop; we die;
 Ah! Wherefore do we laugh or weep?
 Why do we live or die?
 Who knows that secret deep?
 Alas not I.

Socrates (b. 469 B.C.) condemned to drink the hemlock cup on the charge that he had corrupted the youth by misleading them to reject the gods of the state, spoke of the mysterious inner voice (τὸ δαιμόνιον) to be followed in connection with his "know thyself" (γνῶθι σεαυτὸν) in striving for wisdom and virtue while drawing near to the deity in the search of truth. In this striving one should be an αὐτουργός (a ruler of one's self) exercising σωφροσύνη (considered moderation in all things) by constant learning and practice, to gain both in ἀρετή (virtue) and ἐπιστήμη (knowledge) thus to rise to the καλοκαγαθόν (the beautiful and good) to find true happiness not only in this but also in the future life; for Socrates taught the immortality of the soul and stated that no evil could come to a good man either in life or death and that goodness can be achieved by all. Regardless of whether a man's natural inclination and ability for carrying out such a program toward goodness is weak or strong he can by constant application to learning and practice develop that ability and gain ἀρετή. *Nihil novi sub soli*. Erasmus with his *facultas se applicandi ad gratiam* is Socrates' echo; and how Socrates would have hated Luther who certainly did not agree with his Boy Scout theology. But we are getting ahead of ourselves.

The striving for the καλοκαγαθόν becomes the ἔρωξ in Socrates' pupil Plato 427–34. ἔρωξ is the innate desire that moves the soul to rise out of ignorance into the sphere of ideas. These ideas (εἶδη sometimes ιδέαι) are found as realities in the only thing that really exists, the οὐσία. Berkely speaks very much like Plato when he says: "All the choir of heaven and furniture of earth, in a word all those bodies which compose the mighty frame of the world, have not any substance without the mind.... So long as they are not actually perceived by me, or do not exist in my mind, or that of any other created spirit, they must either have no existence at all, or else subsist in the mind of some Eternal Spirit." Plato's ideas are creative powers, or patterns, expressions of the δημιουργός, the great architect of the universe, *an inferior god or spirit* who carries out the thought of "being" found in the genera and species and individual entities of creation. Men's souls preexisting by themselves originally moved in the sphere of ideas.⁷ Human courage drew man upward to the οὐσία, his longing downward

⁷ False conceptions concerning the origin of human souls crept into the Church from pagan philosophy. So called Pre-existentism which holds that all souls were created at the beginning and placed in a *limbus animarum* to be released into human bodies at the time of their conception, was taught by Origen with the Platonic slant of a fall of souls in their state of preexistence - it was rejected by the Fifth Ecumenical Council in Constantinople in 553 A.D. But Aristotelian influence has firmly entrenched itself in the predominant teaching of Creatianism in the Roman Catholic Church and in Calvinism. Creatianism holds that a soul is created separately by God for each body at the time of conception or according to some on the fortieth day. Over against these false conceptions stands Traducianism or Generatianism, which teaches that the human soul is generated *per traducem* (offshoot) at the same time with the body in the *creatio continuata* and not in a new *creatio immediata*. This is in keeping with the scriptural doctrine of original sin. The Formula of Concord teaches Traducianism in connection with this doctrine in the Solida Declaratio when it speaks of "the whole nature of man as it is generated in a natural manner from the parents according to the body and the soul—*tota enim hominis natura qualis naturali modo a parentibus generatur, corpore et anima*." Some have facetiously said that this matter is settled by the lines in our hymn book: "*Es kommen alle Seelen aus Epha mir Kamelen*." This whole question has many ramifications and is interesting not

to the material ὕλη. There was a fall of man, since the downward longing won, and as a result the soul of man (πνεῦμα) is incarcerated in an earthly body. At first unmindful of its heavenly origin it is seized with ἔρωσ, a homesickness or nostalgia for the heaven of its preexistence. As recollections of its preexistence dawn in the soul, it begins more and more in its longing to remember what it already knew beforehand in this state of preexistence and in its striving purifies and frees itself of the bonds of the physical, material, and sensual to return to God. The ideal to strive for is the good, which is thought of as beautiful and moderate. Happiness is identified with virtue. Virtue is wisdom, courage, moderation sometimes summed up in the word δικαιοσύνη (*justice*), which is also called ὁσιότης which comes from ὅσιος (sanctioned by divine law or by the law of nature, sacred, approved by God). Thus Plato's philosophy seeks to lead man over the visual and sensual by awakening in his heart a homesickness and a recognition of the ideas of the beautiful, true, and good (lost by the soul in its preexistent state), to rise by the power of desire or will to happiness in time and eternity by his own δικαιοσύνη.⁸

Plato has sometimes been called the Attic Moses because of his οὐσία which reminds one of the עֶזְרָאֵל הַיְהוָה, expressing the absolute being of God in the Old Testament. Others speak of him as approximating Christian thought with his creative εἶδη which reminds of the λόγος by whom all things were made. Augustine is profuse at times in his praise of Plato as being almost Christian in some of his thoughts. But though Plato recognized the Eternal Power and Godhead probably better than any other philosopher, he never found the way to God. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God. They are foolishness to him, neither can he know them for they must be spiritually discerned." Plato was an A-1 Mason. Much of Plato indirectly got into the scholasticism of the Middle Ages which Luther had to deal with.

The next of the great Greek philosophers—sometimes called "the greatest of them all" is Aristotle (384–322 B.C.), a pupil of Plato. Aristotle's logical works first got into the church translated from the original Greek through Boethius (480–524). Though his philosophy was known through Porphyry, his philosophical works translated from the original did not get into the western world until the 13th century when the original manuscripts again became available in 1203 through the conquest of Constantinople (Alexander of Hales). He differed sharply with Plato in denying the independent reality of ideas. *Universalis sunt in re, non ante rem*. Philosophically Aristotle leads into pantheism and into teaching the eternity of the universe, making God dependent on the universe or, otherwise stated, the universe a necessity for the existence of God, the pure substance, the unmoved mover of the universe, unchanged but the cause of change, the attractive cause for all motion. He spoke of pure spirits or eternal substances corresponding to Plato's lower astral gods creating the harmony in Plato's cosmos. He made the happiness of man, Plato's microcosm, dependent on a recognition of these substances and putting one's self in harmony with them. But he knew of no personal life beyond the grave like Plato. Plato saw the soul as living before birth becoming entangled with matter in its life here below, only to free itself and return to its origin to continue its life there after death for all eternity. Aristotle on the other hand found soul and body, mind and matter, reason and substance, together everywhere. In man they found a supreme manifestation. In this thinking of Aristotle personal immortality is ruled out since at death all perishes except the only surviving part of the soul, which is creative reason. It is a part of God and returns to be absorbed in God. From this it is apparent that Aristotle's philosophy was a literal pantheistic deification of human reason as a part of the highest wisdom, which is God. Aristotle sounds much like Einstein who says: "The most beautiful and most profound emotion we can experience is the sensation of the mystical. It is the power of all true science... To know that what is impenetrable to us really exists, manifesting itself as the highest wisdom

only because it shows how much pagan philosophy concerned itself with the soul but also how the pagan teachings regarding the origin of souls are embraced on the one hand by those who deny man's total depravity in spiritual things and on the other by various isms (Mormonism, Spiritualism) with fantastic teachings and weird practices.

⁸ The adjective ὅσιος is found in Acts 2:27; Acts 13:34–35; I Tim. 2:8; Titus 1:8; Heb. 7:26; where it is rendered "holy" KJV It is used adverbially as ὁσίως in I Thess. 2:10, where it is rendered "holily." Ὀσιότης translated with "holiness" is found in Luke 1:75 and Eph. 4:24. The frequent occurrence in the NT of δικαιοσύνη, used by Plato as synonym for ὁσιότης, is well known especially in the meaning of a righteousness that avails before God. This a man must acquire for himself according to Plato.

and the most radiant beauty which our dull faculties can comprehend only in their most primitive forms—this knowledge, this feeling, is at the center of true religiousness.”

Aristotle was much used by the scholastics though they asserted that this pagan teacher was dependable in his philosophy only in the limited sphere of the earthly and the natural. Especially his *Organon*, of which nothing has been said so far, was held in high esteem. It contained the rules of logic which hardly have been improved on to this day. There are his categories οὐσία (substance), πῶσον (number), ποῖον (quality), πρὸς τι (relation), ποῦ (place), πότε (time), ποιεῖν (action), πάσχειν (suffering action), eight altogether, to which he later added κεῖσθαι (lying) and ἔχειν (having). There are his methods of inductive and deductive reasoning and classified syllogisms, according to which the students in Luther’s day and Luther himself were most thoroughly trained and gruellingly drilled in methodical thinking which in no small measure accounted for Luther’s tremendous logical powers. The proper use of reason in methodical thinking and logical argumentation on the basis of the Scriptures is a great asset to us as theologians. Luther always treasured the training he had received on the basis of Aristotle’s *Organon* very highly and used it to his opponents’ confusion and dismay.

In other respects Luther considered Aristotle to have been a bane to the church and he could speak with authority. In 1508 his order’s chair in the arts faculty in Wittenberg was assigned to Luther. Four times a week he had to lecture for a full hour on Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* and lead students’ disputations on it three evenings a week. The *Nicomachean Ethics*, so named in honor of Aristotle’s son, Nicomachus the younger, poses the questions, “What is the highest good?” and gives the answer that it is the life of reason through the practice of the golden mean—the middle course between the two extremes of conduct. You may be overdoing or underdoing your duty or doing just right, which is the golden mean, the rational course. Liberal e.g. would be the golden mean between extravagant and stingy, moderation the golden mean between abstemiousness and gluttony, etc. Man is not pictured by Aristotle as an individual self but as a social self, whose good life according to the golden mean will sooner or later be repaid with interest within society. When we study the *Nicomachean Ethics*, we find much casuistry in the evaluation of character as Aristotle determines the mean between “the greater and the less according to arithmetical equality.” We bring an example from Book 4 of the *Nicomachean Ethics*: “The question arises whether a man is unjust in each particular form of injustice, say a thief, or adulterer, or robber, by doing acts of a given character. We may say, I think, that this may not of itself make any difference. A man may, for instance, have connections with another’s wife, knowing well with whom he was sinning, but he may have done it not of deliberate choice but from the impulse of passion; of course he acts unjustly, but he has not necessarily formed an unjust character; that is, he may have stolen yet not be a thief; or committed an act of adultery but still not be an adulterer, and so on in other cases which might be enumerated.” This perhaps answers a question that many of us have asked, and that is why it was possible—as is stated by various historians—that the question whether *fornicatio simplex* was a sin at all was so much debated in the church at Luther’s time and even came up at Luther’s table.

There is no doubt that the ethics of Aristotle had a tremendous influence on the church’s thinking in practical moral issues. In his writing 1520 “*An den christlichen Adel deutscher Nation von des christlichen Standes Besserung*” Luther condemns the plaguing of the church in the universities through Aristotle carried on “*Mit unnützer Arbeit studieren und Kost so viel edler Zeit und Seelen umbsonst beladen.*”⁹ Next to Aristotle’s materialistic philosophy he condemns “*Das Buch Ethicorum, ärger denn kein Buch, stracks der Gnaden Gottes und christlichen Tugenden entgegen, das doch eins der besten wird gerechnet.—Nur Aristotelis Bücher von der Logica, Rhetorica und Poetica sind zu behalten—junge Leut zu üben wohl reden und predigen.*”¹⁰

Luther’s opinion of Aristotle well coincides with Dante’s, who at the end of *Canto IV* of Hell looking into hell’s first circle says: “Then when a little more I raised my brow, I spied the master of the sapient throng, seated amid the philosophic train. Him all admire, all pay him reverence due. There Socrates and Plato both I marked, nearest to him in rank.” Dante did better than some Lutheran theologians who got into the errors of modern theology like Valentine of the old General Synod who says: “That even the heathen are saved if they

⁹ “With much useless effort in study and at the expense of so much precious time and purposeless burdening of souls.”

¹⁰ “The Book of Ethics, considered one of the best, is in direct conflict with the grace of God and Christian virtues. – Only Aristotle’s books on logic, rhetoric, and poetry should be retained to train young people to speak and preach well.”

lived according to the light afforded them.”¹¹ Nor should it ever be said that they are near the kingdom of God because of the guidance of that light even though they are not yet in it, as Reu says of the noble heathen. This is contrary to the scriptural doctrine of conversion. Socrates with his honor, *To Daimonion*, the white aproned Plato with Mr. *Demiourgos*, the prince of this world in disguise, and the high browed Aristotle with the god of reason, can by their light lead us only to where they have gone; and before we speak of noble heathen let us remember what Paul says about them in Rom. 1:27: “And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly.” Socrates, the great progenitor of Plato and Aristotle, might better have been condemned for corrupting the young men for another reason than that of destroying their faith in the traditional gods of the state. He practised sodomy with his pupils and advised them to go to prostitutes. We don’t blame Xantippe for dousing him with water.¹² But perhaps she like Socrates and the others thought nothing of these things. That was the way of the heathen world, the spirit of whose great philosophers controlled some of the popes and crept into the scholasticism of the church in more ways than one, as we shall presently see.

Beginning with Augustine (354–430) who was strongly influenced by the two pagan Neo-Platonists, Plotinus (205–270) and Porphyry (232–304), Greek philosophical thought was transmitted to the church. His idea of the relationship of time and eternity expressed in the *nunc fluens*, the now flowing, for the one and the *tota simul*, the absolute simultaneity, for the other comes from Plato who philosophically came close to what is known today as the spacetime continuum of Einstein, who embodied time as fourth dimension of a mathematical *tota simul*. The first three arguments of Thomas Aquinas for the existence of God were taken from the Jewish philosopher Maimonides. They were added to and enlarged upon in the later scholastic system. We think of Anselm’s ontological proof in which he says after a lengthy argumentation: “Hence, there is no doubt that there exists a being than which nothing greater can be conceived, and it exists both in the understanding and in reality.” The five arguments for the existence of God of Thomas Aquinas are: 1. From motion, in which he arrives at a first mover put in motion by none other; 2. From the efficient cause regarding which He says: “Therefore it is necessary to admit a first efficient cause”; 3. The argument of possibility and necessity in which he says: “Therefore we cannot but postulate the existence of some being, having itself its own necessity causing in others their necessity. For this being is a necessity for the existence of anything else.” 4. From graduation: “There must be something which is truest, best, and noblest.” 5. From the governance of the world, in which he says: “Therefore some intelligent being exists by whom all natural things (which lack intelligence) are directed to their end.”

In connection with these and many other speculations about God, His existence, nature, etc., scholastic theology, or rather philosophy, like the philosophies of the ancient world, was much occupied with the question of realism and nominalism. Plato was a realist. To him ideas, universal concepts, are real as creative principles in the mind of the οὐσία. Whiteness e.g. really exists. There is such a thing, such a *res*, as whiteness. Aristotle on the other hand considered no concept to exist by itself. He held that there is no such a thing as whiteness. It does not exist as a *res*. It is only a name (*nomen*) for an evidence found in things that have real existence, though Aristotle did not go as far as the later nominalists, since in employing both the inductive and deductive method of reasoning he did arrive at generic concepts. For the real nominalist, man as a genus does not exist,

¹¹ The same thought is variously expressed in Roman Catholic writings. Devivier and Messmer in their *Christian Apologetics* speak of such whose unbelief is not voluntary but due to invincible ignorance depending on circumstances and state that “He who shall have followed the light of reason and lived in conformity with what he believes is truth cannot be lost” (p. 468). Rolfus and Braendle in *Die Glaubens- und Sittenlehre der Katholischen Kirche* state: “dass diejenigen, welche ohne ihre Schuld (auch Heiden) ausserhalb der Kirche stehn, dabei aufrichtig den wahren Glauben suchen und nach bestem Wissen Gottes Gebote halten—ebenfalls die ewige Seligkeit erlangen können” (p. 372). [Those found outside of the Church through no fault of their own (also the heathen) who sincerely seek the true faith and keep God’s commandments to the best of their knowledge—also can obtain eternal salvation.] Many similar passages could be quoted from other works bristling with work righteousness.

¹² Socrates came home one day to be met by Xantippe with a tirade that she followed up by pouring a pail of water over him. Whereupon Socrates is reported to have said, “First it thunders, then it rains.”

only individual people. Man is nothing but a name. For the realist the concept man is the real thing, the *res*.¹³ The Scotists, the Thomists, and all other great schoolmen were realists—with the exception of Abelard and Occam. Abelard tried to avoid both nominalist and realist extremes by maintaining “that the universal is neither a thing nor a concept but a logical term which is related to both things and concepts.” He concluded that universals exist *non ante rem, nec post rem, sed in re*. His most famous opponent was Bernard of Clairvaux (b. 1091). Occam (1220–1349), an extreme nominalist, is at the beginning of the end for scholastic theology. He stated that only individuals are real, singly; there is no such a thing as an individual universalized. The object of scientific inquiry or research is always the individual, never the universal, and the object perceived exists before the act of perceiving it. Nothing exists before the knowledge of the object except the object that is known, and the object of the senses and the intelligence must be the same. He says: “From sensation, which gives only singular things, arises memory, from memory experience, and through experience we obtain the universal.—Every universal is one singular thing and is universal only by the signification of many things.—It is possible to have intuitive knowledge, both sensitive and intellectual, of a thing which does not exist.... This intuitive vision, whether sensitive or intellectual, is an absolute thing, distant in place and subject from the seen object, therefore vision can remain after the star has been destroyed.” Universals are therefore in themselves mere fiction and since in Occam’s reasoning all actions are caused by individual agents which are individualized realities differing each from the other, we can never arrive at a knowledge of the cause by analyzing the effect. There must be a cognition of the cause itself. Divine nature is thus unintelligible to us. We cannot know certainly that God is, and all the customary proofs are only arguments as to the probability of His existence. They could perhaps lead to the conclusion that there are some first causes for the universe. Like Kant, Occam arrives at the conclusion that we can have no knowledge of the existence of God by pure reasoning. This was a fiat contradiction tradition of scholastic theology, eg., that of St. Thomas who with his five reasons for the existence of God insisted that man can arrive at a certain proof of the existence of one God by reason alone, without the help of revelation. Occam could well have been Faust who says:

*Habe nun, ach! Philosophie,
Juristerei und Medizin,
Und, leider, auch Theologie
Durchaus studiert, mit heissem Bemüh’n.
Da steh’ ich nun ich armer Tor!
Und bin so klug als wie zuvor;
Heisse Magister, heisse Doktor gar,
Und ziehe schon an die zehen Jahr,
Herauf herab, und quer und krumm,
Meine Schüler an der Nase herum—
Und sehe, dass wir Nichts wissen können!
Das will mir schier das Herz verbrennen.*

(I’ve plodded through philosophy,
And also law and medicine
Together with theology,
With ardent zeal—yet all in vain.

¹³ As to the question of Realism vs. Nominalism approximately the following was stated at the end of this lecture: Philosophically or better said theologically realism favors the absoluteness of God whereas nominalism makes Him a contingency and leads into pantheism. Also there is such a thing as a universal concept in God’s creation since He made each according to its kind (Gen. 1:11–12, 21 and 24. No evolution in matter but only the determining of species in the mind of God). Dialectically, however, nominalism has its place in the process of inductive reasoning. Our interest in nominalism in this course is found mainly in its destructive impact on the concepts of authority set up in the *via antiqua*. God used the negative forces of nominalism in His way in the Reformation to prepare the way for the positive message of Luther.

Poor fool I am, know nothing more,
 Am no bit wiser than before.
 Called master and doctor profound,
 Full ten years now I led around,
 Back and forth and to and fro,
 My pupils by the nose and know
 No mystery's solved by human mind.
 This burns my heart—no rest I find.)

What a mighty blow did not Occam deal the whole system of scholastic theology built up by reasoning as it was on heterogeneous elements taken from Scripture, tradition, and pagan philosophy! His nominalism attacked other ideas, concepts of authority such as the temporal power of the pope and the infallibility of the pope. His followers, e.g. Trutvetter under whom Luther studied in Erfurt, questioned the value of the church fathers and later tradition. The humanists were in sympathy with Occam's *Via Moderna* as over against the *Via Antiqua* of the Thomists and Scotists, and Luther must have benefited by his critical attitude of false man-made authorities, especially the authority in spiritual matters of human reason of which Luther said: "*Die Vernunft fasset und begreift nichts denn leibliche Dinge und ist eitel Finsternis in göttlichen Dingen,*" and "*Frau Hulde, die natürliche Vernunft, des Teufels Hure.—Ehe wir derselben Erzhuren und Teufels Braut antworten, wollen wir zuvor dürre, helle Sprüche darlegen, die der Teufel nicht soll umbstossen.*"¹⁴ Thus Occam indirectly influenced Luther in his stand at Marburg over against the humanist, Zwingli, in which Luther stated that he cared little about mathematics or what is against nature, provided it is not against faith, and that he would have nothing to do with mathematical proofs but that since his Lord Jesus Christ said: "*Hoc est corpus meum*" he believed that the body was really there.

In his insistence on the Scriptures as an authority over against reason Luther also followed Occam; for Occam was not purely negative and iconoclastic. He did offer man something to lean on after he had deprived him of the prop of reason. That was revelation, and there he emphasized the importance of Scripture, but finally he made all theology rest on the authority of the church and in that point returned to the position of being a good Catholic, ever being careful to protect his daring theories with such constantly recurring phrases as "O, I believe everything that the church explicitly believes and nothing else" and "I am ready to submit my reason to the authority of the church, and to believe with my heart and teach with my tongue all that the church teaches." He even upheld the authority of the pope in his *On the Sacrament of the Altar* when he said that whenever there was a dispute among theologians, "recourse was to be had to the Pope."

Occam and his followers furnish an outstanding example of how little it means to say that Scripture is your authority if you place another authority above the Scriptures (be it church father, committee, synod, bishop, or pope) and blindly follow that authority without studying the Scriptures for yourself. But Occam himself got into trouble with the Pope later in his life and called him a heretic. Occam had a very doubtful theology in more than one respect. Though he greatly stimulated Luther, Luther was not an Occamist, as some would claim—least of all an "ossified Occamist." The *Using* who became *Dr. Unsinn* to Luther was his former teacher at Erfurt. He said some very hard things about the writings of Biel he studied there and called the Occamists in general "swinish theologians," directing many of the things said in his disputes especially against them and their teachings.

Let us go into a little more detail regarding scholasticism, which found the beginning of its end in Occam, and see how the humanists and Luther dealt with it. It had accomplished about all it could accomplish in its aim and purpose which was to maintain the authority of the church, to defend its tradition and teaching, to prove the latter to be reasonable, and to uphold it against Jew, Mohammedan, and heretic by reasonable argumentation. An example of this are Aquinas' *Summa Theologica* and *Summa contra Gentiles* which are full

¹⁴ "Reason grasps and comprehends only the temporal and gropes in total darkness when it comes to the Divine. - Dame Hulda, natural reason, is the devil's harlot. - Before answering this arch-harlot, this bride of the devil himself, we shall bring forth pointed, clear passages that the devil will not bowl over."

of attempts to reconcile the teachings of the church with Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy, to show that the doctrine of the church is not at variance with enlightened reason. In all these efforts neither the interpretation of Scriptures nor an examination of the history of the church found much place. The original languages of the Bible were neglected and unknown. In fact the Bible was unknown to many, among them prominent men. One of the doctors of the Sorbonne said to the humanist, Robert Stephan: *Miror quid isti invenes nobis semper allegent novum testamentum. Per deum! ego plus habebam quam quinquaginta annos, quod nesciebam, quod esset novum testamentum.*—“I am surprised that these young men are always coming with the New Testament. By God! I am past fifty and didn’t know that there is a New Testament.” Erasmus speaks of theologians, some of them 80 years old, who had never in their whole life opened a New Testament. A very exceptional case is the Franciscan Nicolaus de Lyra (d. at Paris 1340), noted Hebrew student, whom the Catholics criticized with the verse: *Si Lyra non lyrasset, Lutherus non saltasset.* – “Had Lyra not lyred, Luther would never have danced.” Aristotelian logic reigned supreme as the queen of theology to uphold a biased position by dialectic subtleties and trivial distinctions without consideration for things themselves. Scripture was crudely used if at all, and when used its truths were kicked around as footballs of self-interest. Here one has to think of Luther’s words on the sophists: *Theologia heisst mataiologia*¹⁵, and on Eck of whom he said: *Der faehrt ueber die Schrift wie die Sau ueber den Habersack*.¹⁶

Eck, Prierias, Latomus, and the Paris University met Luther’s arguments by seeking to bludgeon him with statements that to them were not to be questioned, since the authority of the church placed them in the category of absolute truth. In one of the words of Swift: “Sets of phrases cut and dried evermore their tongues supplied.” *Roma locuta res finita*. Still we do not wish to disparage some of the good achievements of scholasticism, e.g. Anselm’s *Cur deus homo* which stands right on the *passive* obedience of Christ, nor belittle the painstaking diligence and intellectual acuity with which many of its fine distinctions were made in its best days. But being predominantly a matter of the intellect it could lead only to something cut, dried, and cold, which left its adherents in its worst days to spend their time with subtle often nonsensical disputations on insignificant and unimportant questions for want of having anything more to talk about. The often heard claim that they tried to establish how many angels can dance on the point of a needle is challenged; but one can well imagine them debating the question of whether Adam had a navel or not. That they did argue the proposition that the pope is more merciful than Christ is a matter of record. They concluded that the pope is more merciful, since he gets people out of purgatory, which Christ does not do. Luther tells of a monk who preached a two-hour lenten sermon on the question: *Utrum quantitas realiter distincta sit a substantia?* The monk brought in the case of a man not being able to get his head through a hole because his head was too large, and attempted to determine whether it was the size of the head or the head itself that could not go through the hole. A much-debated problem was the one of whether a pig being led to the market at the end of a rope by its owner was held by the rope to which it was tied or by the farmer who held the other end of the rope.

You can well understand such disputing if you consider the opening sentences of Peter Lombard’s (1160) universally used *Sententiae*, which Luther also taught when he became *Sententiarius* in 1509. These sentences are as follows: No. 1. “The cause of the cause is also the cause of the caused. For the cause is that through which something is. Everything existing has its existence through that which produces its cause. The first statement is a description; the second a fundamental truth. Therefore the cause of the cause is also the cause of the caused. Consequently if A is the cause of B, B the cause of C, it is manifest that A is the cause of C, for if A is the cause of B and B cause of C, then C according to the explanation of the cause, owes its existence to B, B admittedly owes its existence to A, since A is its cause and C has its existence from B, consequently A is also the cause of C.” No. 2. “Every cause of a subject is also a cause of its accidental quality. For this or the accident has its existence through the subject; by means of the explanation of the cause the subject is the cause of the accidental quality; but according to the preceding theorem the cause of the cause is the cause of the caused; therefore every cause of the subject is also the cause of its accidental quality.” Lombard’s *Sententiae* do

¹⁵ “Theology has become idle prattle.”

¹⁶ “He tears into the Scriptures like a sow tears into a bag of oats.”

not always deal entirely in such abstract terms. But the above examples give an idea of the dialectic schedules according to which thoughts were often split up so that the woods could not be seen because of the trees. The result was a floundering around in a multitude of chain syllogisms that produced an almost endless number of arguments, counter-arguments, definitions, and distinctions that yielded nothing of any real value and placed medieval scholasticism in a corner with the dunce's cap on its head. In fact it has produced the very word "dunce," a reference to Scotus (1265–1308) born in Dunse, Ireland. His followers were called Scotists or Dunsers. Of them Tyndale says that when they saw their hair-splitting divinity give way to modern theology "the old barking curs raged in every pulpit" against the classics and new notions. Thus their name came to be used to indicate a person who doesn't want to learn anything—cf. Samuel Butler in his satire on the Puritans, *Hudibras*, where the lines occur:

He knew what's what and that's as high
As metaphysic wit can fly—
A second Thomas, or at once
To name them all, another Dunse.

Luther shared many of the feelings and opinions of the humanists concerning the ignorance, pride, and folly of this decadent scholastic system so intimately entwined with the superstitions, errors, and corruption he had to face. For that reason he at one time was greatly impressed by humanism—so much that he changed his German name Luder to the Greek Eleutherios (free, liberal, freeing, delivering) and used that as a signature, but not for long. There is a letter of his to Spalatin in 1518 with that signature. He soon gave it up, but never took back his real name Luder. He changed it to Luther, so that the fact that we today are known as Lutherans and not as Luderans is due to Luder's sympathies with humanism.

The following quotations from Erasmus, the foremost of humanism's exponents, show how the humanists like Luther, as we well know, attacked the follies of popery that the scholastics defended. Well-known is Erasmus' remark: "Luther has touched the crown of the Pope and the bellies of the priests." Here is another from his *Praise of Folly* in which he has *Moria* (Folly) unveil the ignorance, filthiness, absurdities, and superstitious foibles of the monks of whom Erasmus has her say: "They all belong to me, these folks whose greatest pleasure is in relating miracles, or listening to marvelous lies and who make use of them in an especial manner to beguile the dullness of others, and to fill their own purses (I speak particularly of priests and preachers)! In the same category are those who enjoy the foolish but sweet persuasions that if they chance to see a piece of wood or a picture representing Polyphemus or Christopher they will not die that day. - Alas! What follies, I am almost ashamed of them myself! Do we not see every country claiming its peculiar saint? Each trouble has its saint and every saint his candle. This cures the toothache; that assists women in childbed; a third restores what a thief has stolen; a fourth preserves you in shipwreck; and a fifth protects your flocks. There are some who have many virtues at once, and especially the Virgin-mother of God in whom the people place more confidence than in her Son. - If in the midst of all these mummeries some wise man should rise and give utterance to these harsh truths: 'You shall not perish miserably if you live like Christians; you shall redeem your sins, if to your alms you add repentance, tears, watchings, fastings, and a complete change in your way of life; - this saint will protect you if you imitate his conduct;'—if, I say, some wise men should charitably utter these things in their ears, Oh! Of what happiness would he not rob their souls, and into what trouble, what distress would he not plunge them! The mind of man is so constituted that imposture has more hold upon it than truth. If there is one saint more apocryphal than another—a St. George, St. Christopher, or St. Barbara—you will see him worshipped with greater fervency than St. Peter, St. Paul, or even Christ Himself." But he does not stop with the monks and priests. He has *Moria* proceed to the bishops "who run more after gold than after souls, who think they have done enough for Jesus Christ, when they take their seats complacently and with theatrical pomp, like Holy Fathers, to whom adoration belongs, and with blessings or anthems." *Moria* goes up the ladder to the popes themselves when she goes on to say: "Can there be any greater enemies to the church than these unholy pontiffs, who by their silence allow Jesus Christ to be forgotten; who bind him by their mercenary regulations;

who falsify His doctrine by forced interpretations; and crucify Him a second time by their scandalous lives?” At another place in *Praise of Folly* he ridicules the theologians who spend all their time discussing such absurdities as whether God could have redeemed men in the form of a woman, a devil, an ass, a squash or a stone, others who explain the mystery of the Trinity. *Praise of Folly* which appeared in twenty-seven editions¹⁷ during the life of Erasmus and was translated into every European tongue, has much more to say; but these excerpts (all statements of which we could not subscribe to) show how the great humanist dealt out blows to enemies he and Luther shared, the monks, the priests, the bishops, and the very Antichrist himself. All this moved Luther in his formative years to the deepest admiration for one whom he considered to be a bold and able champion of the truth. In a letter to Erasmus in 1514 Luther calls him his crown and his hope, acknowledges his great skill, learning, and masterful mind which has enriched his own spirit and the spirit of all, expresses his love and gratitude with which he is devoted to him before God, and asks him to acknowledge him as his little brother in Christ who is much interested in him and loves him very much, being conscious of his lack of capability before him. He signs the letter “Brother Martin Luther.”

But there was a great difference between what humanism stood for and what Luther stood for—a difference of which he was at first not fully aware. This difference showed itself (to take an example) in the attitude of the two men toward the *Epistolae Virorum Obscurorum*, a literary caricature of the age that breathes the spirit of humanism but not the spirit of Luther. The name *Epistolae Virorum Obscurorum* was an imitation of the name given to a genuine set of letters published by Reuchlin’s friends in 1514 under the title *Epistolae Illustrium Virorum* to defend the praiseworthy efforts towards learning and progress made by Reuchlin who had been violently attacked by the converted Jew Pfefferkorn (1469–1522) and the Dominicans, the enemies of Reuchlin, the supposed authors of these fictitious letters. The Dominicans are portrayed corresponding with one another and especially with their Professor Eratius at Cologne on their own affairs, current events, theological subjects, dialectics, and teaching methods. They debate many idiotic and useless questions revealing gross ignorance and great pride at the same time, and unashamedly relate the low adventures and debaucheries of the monks and many scandalous particulars in the conduct of the inquisitor Hochstraten through whom Pfefferkorn and the Dominicans worked in their attacks on Reuchlin and the Jews.

Pfefferkorn, a man of mediocre learning and talent, was intent on the conversion of all his former fellow-Jews and attacked them as anti-Christian and dangerous in his *Judenspiegel* (1507), *Judenbeichte* (1508), and *Judenfeind* (1509). He considered the destruction of all Hebrew writings not in accord with Christianity necessary for achieving his aim and interested Emperor Maximilian in the carrying out of such a project. Maximilian sought the opinions of various people as to just what books were to be destroyed. Among those consulted was Reuchlin. In Reuchlin’s opinion only *Nizachon* and *Toldat Jeschu*, two very slanderous anti-Christian writings, were to be destroyed, but the *Talmud*, the *Cabbala*, Raschi’s, Levi’s, and Kimchi’s *glossae* and commentaries of the Old Testament (which contain valuable exegetical helps), the sermon and song books of the Jews, and their philosophical, scientific, poetical, and satirical writings should not be destroyed if not slanderous and hostile to Christianity. Reuchlin’s moderate opinion aroused the ire of Pfefferkorn. He called him a *Judengoenner*. Reuchlin defended himself in his *Augenspiegel*, which got into the hands of Hoogstraten (b. 1485, 2 yrs. after Luther) or Hochstraten, at that time Dominican prior or professor of theology at Cologne, where he had come from Louvain. He also had the office of *haereticae pravitatis inquisitor*—inquisitor of heretical aberration. He cited Reuchlin before him because of what he deemed heresies contained in the *Augenspiegel*. In this action the prominent Dominican teacher at Cologne, Ortvinus Gratius, was also much involved. This is the same Hoogstraten who wanted to burn Luther at the stake as a heretic. He was what is known in German as a *Ketzermeister*. He died in 1527, denounced as *pestis Germaniae* by the humanists. His Dominicans were sometimes referred to as *domini canes*—the Lord’s bloodhounds.

Though the *Epistolae Virorum Obscurorum* claimed to be written by Hochstraten and Dominicans who used names such as Genselinus, Dollenkopfius, Misladerius, and Vickelphius, they were actually produced by humanists as a reaction to Hochstraten’s condemnation of Reuchlin’s *Augenspiegel*—perhaps by Crotus

¹⁷ The first edition of *Praise of Folly* appeared about 1509.

Rubianus, Ulrich von Hutten, Herman of Muenahr, Herman von dem Busche, Petrejus Eberbach, and Coban Hesse among others. We said “perhaps.” The whole thing was like a clever Halloween trick in which the culprits, though suspect, were really never caught even though much effort was made to do so, with the Dominicans (whose proud order had produced two popes and the great Aquinas) raging and demanding that Leo X issue a severe bull against all who should dare to read these letters, which for a time were considered to be genuine by some, especially by the Franciscans in England. Taking action against the printing of the letters was as difficult as discovering the authors, since like in the case of the *Menace* the place of printing was changed continually and covered up by indicating a false place in the publication. The eel could never be caught and the laughter was great, especially because the case that Hoogstraten and his Cologne theologians brought against Reuchlin’s *Augenspiegel* never did come to any settlement. According to Erasmus Hoogstraten declared that he proceeded against Reuchlin against his better judgment. This is supposed to have been shortly before his death, which many believe was hastened by the grief the *Epistolae Obscurorum Virorum* caused him.

The full effect of the irony and satire of these letters is felt only when they are read in the crude Latin in which they are written. Excerpts taken at random from the original were presented and translated in the course of this lecture. It should suffice here to bring only a few of them in free translation without presenting the original except where it serves to bring out the humorous slant better. First we take note of the explanation given for the name of these letters: “Magister Ortvinus, a very profound and speculative man mystically called his friends obscure men because truth is found in the obscure. Therefore Job says that God reveals deep things out of darkness and Micah states that the Lord will be his light when he sits in darkness.” What kind of darkness is meant becomes apparent when we come across a letter by Magister Petrus Zepfelius addressed to his former teacher at Cologne describing a new method of teaching Zepfelius is using in his school. He brings the example of the following syllogism: *Mulier genuit te vel asinus. Sed Nulla Mulier genuit te. Ergo asinus genuit te.*¹⁸ The letter goes on to say that certain *docti clerici et philosophi* criticized this syllogism on the ground that a woman does not beget but bears (*non gignit sed parit*). Zepfelius is satisfied only in part with this criticism since there still remains one scruple for him regarding it which he will soon present to his teacher. Meanwhile he would ask him to render an opinion regarding another one of his syllogisms, which he presents as follows: *Asinus habet pedem. Tu babes pedem. Ergo tu es asinus.*¹⁹ He wonders whether one ought not distinguish between a rational and an irrational foot, which might deprive the argument of its force. However he is not quite sure of this and awaits the opinion of his master on the matter. Another example of how these very learned men who sat in darkness let their lights shine is brought in an evaluation of a book on etymology by the Monk Bartvicus Animalius contained in a letter by Professor Johannes Kanocknyx (*kann auch nichts*—also knows nothing). Kanocknyx highly praises the German language as a treasure chest from which all other languages borrow. As an example he brings the Latin word *cucumis*, which means cucumber, and claims that it is derived from the German word *Kuhmist* (cow dung) since cucumbers thrive in *Kuhmist*. The reduplication of the first syllable indicates that they multiply and grow large in *Kuhmist*—*quia cucumes, libenter crescunt et fiunt magni in Kumist et his ponitur syllaba Ku quia significat multitudinem*. In connection with this explanation Kanocknyx highly compliments Animalius on the way he teaches the *originantia vocium* to show how rich the German tongue is and urges him very much to publish his book, for then he will have great honor in the learned world, and his honor, name, and praises will remain forever (*tunc enim apud doctum mundum magnum honorem habebis et semper honos, nomenque tuum, laudesque manebunt*). Excerpts of other letters do not deserve the dignity of being presented. They relate the experiences, problems, squabbles, predicaments, and ludicrous dilemmas of these fictitious heroes, particularly in their amorous adventures with mistresses, courtesans, and other men’s wives. Portions of these are wanton, lewd, filthy, and sacrilegious to the point of blasphemy in bringing in scripture passages and references to sacred things in connection with what can only be called pornography. The letters condemn Reuchlin and praise, defend, and excuse Hoogstraten, Pfefferkorn, and

¹⁸ “Either a woman or an ass has begot you. No woman begot you. Therefore you have been begotten by an ass.”

¹⁹ “An ass has a foot. You have a foot. Therefore you are an ass.”

Gratius in such a way as to give the impression of genuineness. But their very crudeness and subtle satire lampoon Reuchlin's opponents and serve rather to defend while claiming to condemn Reuchlin.

These humanistic caricatures of their age contain more truth than poetry in spite of their fictitious character and insofar are of historical value. The fact that they created such a stir shows that they placed the finger on the sore spots, the ignorance, conceit, indolence, incompetence, intemperance, corruption, and immorality of the clergy of Luther's day, particularly of some of the monks of whom Luther said: *Die Mönche führen nicht ein geistlich, sondern ein wollüstig Leben; sie verachten und verkleinern die andern Stände, auf dass sie von fremden Gütern genährt, und das Regiment über die ganze Welt haben und in höchster Herrlichkeit leben mögen.*—"The monks lead a sensual not a spiritual life; they despise and belittle the calling of others to feed on their goods and rule the whole world so they may live in highest splendor." Woe to the church when those who should be watchmen on Zion's walls become indifferent and take it easy in any respect to seek a peaceful and comfortable life, serving not the Lord Christ but their own thoughts and selfish interests whatever these may be.

Erasmus like most humanists was at first pleased, especially with some of the letters. They amused him as a "barbaric treatment of barbarism" which he also held in derision, of course, in a more refined manner. Although later, when his name was repeatedly drawn into some of the letters, he resented the implication that he had a part in these undignified productions, which could harm humanism's cause, and expressed his dissatisfaction concerning them. He was a selfish spirit, also sometimes inclined to levity in dealing with sacred things because he himself was lacking deep conviction. Witness the joke he played on Thomas More when after having debated the question of transubstantiation with him he took More's horse, loaned to take him to the port, with him to the continent and answered More's indignant letter rebuking him for it with the words:

*Quod mihi dixisti de corpore Christi:
Crede quod habes, et habes;
Hoc tibi rescribo tantum de tuo caballo:
Crede quod habes, et habes;*

(You said of the bodily presence of Christ:
Believe that you have and you have Him;
Of the horse that I took my reply is the same:
Believe that you have and you have him.)

Erasmus was the most religious of the humanists. He gave many assurances in his Philosophy of Christ that he wished to restore the Christian Church to its pristine purity by returning to the simple Christianity of the first church as laid down in Scripture. But he was still a humanist and his exaltation of the human element blinded him to the sanctity of the divine so that he did not see the fundamental issue in the Reformation. Basically humanism substitutes faith in man for faith in God. Today the term humanism is often used in just that sense. In an article on Unitarianism by Dr. Pullman appearing in the *Saginaw News* of January 29, 1954, Unitarianism is defined as "A belief in man and human nature, believing that man must begin with himself and what he has and must find in himself sources of insight and character before he can expand that belief to God. - Unitarians believe in the naturalistic, humanistic, and perhaps radicalistic position of man and are strongly set against underrating human nature." Though Erasmus was not a Unitarian, he still subscribed to the principle expressed in the above quotations. For that reason he could be satisfied with a mere external Reformation and not criticize too severely, perhaps even sympathize a bit with, ... a crude attempt at reform in mere externals in scholarship and morals like that made by the *Epistolae Virorum Obscurorum*.

Luther on the other hand was not satisfied with merely pricking boils while ignoring some deep-seated derangement of the system. He realized that the gospel would never triumph by any ridicule of, and any satire on abuses of the church, especially not the kind contained in the *Epistolae Virorum Obscurorum*. He loudly condemned them, called them absurdities, productions of an ill-regulated mind, and said whoever wrote them

was a *Hanswurst*—a clown. He was interested in the fundamental issue, concerning the complete impotence of the human will in divine things, and in that Luther was anything but a humanist. Nor was there even the slightest taint of humanism in him in this respect. With this we have come to the very heart of Luther's theology, a theology in which we will ever have to stand with him, if we are to be true to what the Word tells us instead of following heathen philosophy, Catholic tradition, and humanistic speculation.

From what was said about the philosophy of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle it is apparent that the will was acknowledged as the important factor in attaining the *καλοκαγάθον* in the upward struggle of the soul in the achieving of harmony through the practice of the golden mean and in striving for the *summon bonum*. Plato speaks much of the freedom of the will as necessary to the attainment of the good life, and of the power of the will whereby evil is overcome. For Aristotle, too, all morality depends on a freedom of the will. A man cannot be good unless there is freedom for him to choose either the good or bad. When these Platonic and Aristotelian thoughts regarding the will were carried into the church, the great doctrines of justification, conversion, and election were paganized by a ruling out of the *Sola Gratia* from every one of them.

How the scholastics exalted the will of man! Boethius after debating the question whether things come to pass because they are foreseen by God states that as far as a foreseen thing is concerned it is "necessary when referred to the Divine knowledge; but when weighed down by its own nature it seemeth altogether free and absolute. So that God beholdeth those future things, which proceed from free-will as present; these things, therefore, being referred to the divine sight are necessary by the condition of divine knowledge, and considered by themselves they lose not absolute freedom of their own nature."

What Boethius says here is well and good when applied merely to the sphere of earthly things in which man to a certain extent has a free will and can choose to lead an outwardly respectable life. But as soon as it encroaches on the spiritual realm and places man's conversion among those things foreseen by God, as proceeding at any point and even in the slightest degree from free-will, salvation is ultimately made dependent upon the power and efforts of the natural will of man. Thus it is depicted as necessary by the condition of the divine knowledge of human effort as its cause and never as the result of God's choosing man to faith from eternity and bringing Him to faith in time, by working in him both to will and to do of His good pleasure and of His own will and grace. In this the Scripture truth that man is by nature dead in trespasses and sins and without any free-will in the spiritual sphere is brushed aside to support the statement: *Hominis voluntas in conversione non est otiosa, sed agit aliquid*. "The human will is not idle in conversion but does something." That is the position developed by scholastic theology as is seen when we next turn to Bernard of Clairvaux, of whom Luther often spoke highly.

Bernard said some fine things in his sermons, for example "Christ is not only called a righteous one but is righteousness itself and the justifying righteousness. He is as mighty in justifying, as He is rich in forgiving. Therefore may he who is crushed by his sins and hungers and thirsts after righteousness, only believe on Him who justified the ungodly, and justified by faith alone, he will have peace with God." But Bernard was a mystic who made much of learning to know God by loving Him through your own effort. In fact in his mysticism (mysticism and scholasticism often run together) he ventured to affirm that it was possible through a careful control and regulation of the process of perception gradually to convert the impulse of natural egotism into the noble passion of the true love of God through the exertion of the will. Sanctification was a source of faith for him. He said, "You know God only as much as you love Him" and consequently went off on a tangent when it came to the power of the human will. We can understand why Luther says that he was a *trefflicher Heiliger* in his personal faith but not in *Schriften und Disputationen vom freien Willen*.²⁰ No doubt Luther read Bernard's treatise concerning *Grace and Free Will* written about 1128 where he says: "Take away free-will and there remaineth nothing to be saved, take away grace and there is no means whereby it can be saved. This work of salvation cannot be wrought without two factors: the one, that by which it is wrought, the other that for which and in which it is wrought. Salvation is given by God alone and it is given *only* to free-will: Even as it cannot be wrought without the consent of the receiver it cannot be wrought without the grace of the giver. Accordingly

²⁰ "An excellent saint, but not- in his writings and disputations on free-will."

free-will is said to co-operate with the grace that worketh salvation when the free-will consenteth, that is to say, is saved, for to consent is to be saved.”

Next an excerpt from the *Summa Theologica* of the real teacher of Rome, the Dominican Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), from the fourth article in the treatise of divine government which treats the question whether God moves the created will, in which Thomas says on Phil. 2:13: “It is God that worketh in us both to will and to do... I answer that just as the intellect is moved by the object and by the giver of the power of understanding, as was stated above, so the will is moved by its object, which is the good, and by Him who creates the power of willing. To be moved voluntarily is to be moved from within, that is by an interior principle... If the will were so moved by another as in no way to be moved from within itself, the act of the will would not be imputed for reward or blame. But since its being moved by another does not prevent its being moved from within itself, as we have stated, it does not therefore forfeit the motive for merit or demerit.” This is the semi-pelagianism that will not accept the truth that man after the fall is a slave to sin because of the total lack of any power of the human will in spiritual matters. It holds that by his earnest efforts congruous to his best inner nature man can win God’s approval by the *meritum de congruo* in appreciation of which or as a reward for which God would grant the *prima gratia*. This helps man to rise until he is ready to receive the *meritum de condigno*, which is the merit sufficient for receiving Christ’s saving Grace. This makes salvation dependent on the will of man. It is the fundamental doctrine of the Antichrist, the source of all the errors of popery, revealing its Socratist, Platonic, and Aristotelian paganism and its kinship to Buddhism with its laws according to which you reach Nirvana by efforts of your will—in fact to every kind of naturalistic religions which all, while speaking of some sort of grace from God, proclaim that it is obtained only through an exertion of the natural will of man. This is the element found not only in the ancient philosophies of the Grecian world, but in the modern philosophy (e.g. Kant’s categorical imperative), as well. It forms the basis of the theology of the Antichrist, who might well have penned the lines:

*Gerettet ist das edle Glied
Der Geisterwelt vom Bösen:
Wer immer strebend sich bemüht,
Den können wir erlösen.
Und hat an ihm die Liebe gar
Von oben Teil genommen,
Begegnet ihm die sel’ge Schar
Mit herzlichem Willkommen.*

(This member of the spirit sphere
From evil now is rescued:
We can free all who ever here
Nobly striving seek what’s good;
So that at last when that great love
Communes with them from heaven above
The happy throng of all the blest
With joy will lead them to their rest.)

And the Antichrist could also subscribe to those other lines of the neo-pagan Goethe which suggest “the eternal womanly” (mentioned in connection with Mary, the *Mater gloriosa*) as the symbol of a pure love, free from all earthly desires, as an ideal to sinful man in his spiritual conflicts, to be the guiding star that leads him on in his struggling upward (Plato’s *Eros*) when they say:

*Alles Vergängliche
Ist nur ein Gleichnis;*

*Das Unzulüŋgliche
Hier wird's Ereignis;
Das Unbeschreibliche
Hier ist's getan;
Das Ewig-Weibliche
Zieht uns hinan.*

(In things that pass on earth
Mere symbols we're seeing;
What they lack now in worth
Here comes into being.
Most indescribably
Here it is done;
Th' eternal womanly
Leading us on.)

It is the pagan element of Mariolatry in the Roman Catholic system that here comes into the question. It looks upon Mary as the ideal woman who leads men to Christ. In a radio address entitled "The Madonna of the World" delivered by the Rt. Rev. Msgr. Fulton J. Sheen on February 4, 1951 it is said that Hindus, Buddhists, and Pagans in general can say "Hail Mary" because they believe in an ideal woman and that "Mary is among them preparing them for grace," also that "In all lands where there is an ideal woman, or where virgins are venerated, or where one lady is set above all ladies, the ground is fertile for accepting the Woman as the prelude to embracing Christ.—She is the fertile soil from which in God's appointed time, the faith will flourish and bloom in the East."

Could the thought that natural man can set up a true spiritual ideal, that he has cognition of true spiritual values, and that his striving and achievements are a prelude to receiving divine grace be more clearly implied? Or otherwise stated: Could Rome's claim for the power and the freedom of the will of natural man in preparing himself for the reception of grace be more pointedly set forth than by ascribing such value to the worship of female goddesses in naturalistic religions? We are not surprised that Rome's exponents speak as they do when we consider Canon IV of its Council of Trent which states: *Si quis lib erum hominis arbitrium, post Adae peccatum, amissum et extinctum esse dixerit, aut rem esse de solo titulo: imo titulum sine re, figmentum denique a Satana invecum in Ecclesiam, anathema sit.*" (If anyone says that man's free will is lost or extinguished after Adam's sin or that it is a thing in name only, indeed a name without substance, a figment carried into the Church by Satan, let him be anathema.)

A figment of Satan brought in by pagan philosophers—that is exactly what Luther calls the doctrine of the free will in a New Year's Day sermon on Gal. 3:23–29 (Erlangen 2. Auflage 7, 311–312) where he speaks out sharply and clearly stating: *Und die heidnische Meister haben ihn (Christum) uns so frevelich vertilget und geschweiget mit ihren greulichen und höllischen Träumen solcher Verführung.—Darnach fahren sie daher mit dem freien Willen und natürlichen Werken, und wollen sich damit zur Gnade bereiten und geschickt machen, schlechts den Himmel stürmen. Dieweil denn Gott seine Gnade gibt solchen Wirkern und durch ihren eigenen Fleiss Bereitem, so muss Christus ein Hanfputzen bleiben. Was dürfen sie sein, wenn sie die Gnade in ihrem eigen Namen und Thun mügen erlangen? Wie sie öffentlich nicht alleine lehren, sondern auch verfechten mit Papsts Bullen und aller Macht und verdammen die Widerlehre als die höchsten und ärgesten Ketzerei. Darum hab ich verwarnet, und warne noch jedermann, dass er wisse, wie der Papst mit den hohen Schulen habe Christum und das ganz Neu Testament weiter aus der Welt verworfen, denn die Jüden oder Tarken je getan haben. Darum ist der Papst der rechte Antichrist und seine hohen Schulen des Teufels eigen Tabernen und Hurhäuser. Was soll Christus, wenn ich Gottes Gnade durch mein eigen natürlich Bereiten erlangen kann? Oder was will ich mehr haben, so ich die Gnade habe? Darumb lasset uns fur solchem höllischen Gift uns hüten und Christum den tröstlichen Heiland nicht verlieren. Es muss Christus hie sein fur allen Dingen. Wahr*

ists, dass, wie David im Psalm 32 (v. 2) und Paulus Roma. 4 (v. 8) sagt, der selig ist, dem Gott seine Sunde nicht zurechnet. Aber das führet St. Paulus dahin, dass allein dem Gläubigen in Christo solch göttliches Rechnen widerfähret, nicht dem freien Willen oder Natur um ihrer Werk willen.—Und ist auch unmöglich die Gnad zu erlangen denn allein durch denselbigen (Christum). (“Those heathen masters have thus outrageously destroyed and silenced Christ for us with their abominable and hellish dreams that lead men astray. Accordingly they boastfully parade man’s free will and his natural works, desiring thereby to prepare themselves for grace and make themselves fit for it so that they might take heaven itself by storm. Should God give His grace to these workers who seek to prepare themselves for it by their own effort, Christ would be nothing but a cleaning rag. What would they not be if they could obtain grace in their own name and through their own doing? Which is just what they not only teach publicly but also defend through papal bulls and with all their might, condemning any teaching to the contrary as the greatest and worst heresy. Therefore I have warned and still warn everyone, that he might know that the pope with his schools of higher learning has thrown Christ and the New Testament farther out of the world than the Jews or Turks have ever done. That is why the pope is the true Antichrist and his schools of higher learning are the devil’s own taverns and brothels. Where does Christ fit in if I am to obtain God’s grace by my own natural preparation? Therefore, let us beware of this hellish poison lest we lose Christ our consoling Savior. For here Christ must be placed above all else. It is true as David says Ps. 32:2 and Paul Rom. 4:8 that he is blessed to whom God does not impute iniquity. But Paul shows this to mean that God does this only for the believer in Christ, not for free will or nature because of their works; and it is also impossible to become partaker of grace except through Christ alone.”) So far Luther on the free-will in this place in which he proclaims that Christ not only completely merited the forgiveness of sins for us but that Christ is also the sole power through which this forgiveness is appropriated by us in faith. That is the cardinal truth of the Reformation.

Lest we underestimate Luther’s tremendous task let us consider the avalanche of vicious philosophical speculation against which he had to direct himself in no uncertain terms in the cause of this truth. For this task he was well fitted because he deeply discerned that the basic element of Romanism, carried into the Church from the sin darkened minds of ancient philosophers by way of scholasticism, is heathenish in spite of its Christian garb. The more we study it the more we too realize this. That does not mean that there are no true children of God in the Catholic Church. How many find Christ in the veneer of truth that is still found there only God knows. But considering Romanism as such it cannot be denied that paganism and Romanism are sisters under the skin. God grant us the grace to stand firmly against its seductive error wherever it appears, for it appears in many forms and is not only found in the Church of Rome!

Nothing could have placed Luther more squarely before the Roman position on the will than the teachings of Occam. That is very well stated by Boehmer, from whose, *Luther in the Light of Recent Research* we quote the following: “The young monk had heard lectures at the university only with the Occamists or philosophers of the ‘modern’ school, and thus when he entered into the monastery he had the firm conviction: man can do all that he wills. He can, for instance, fulfill the Ten Commandments to the last letter, if he only wants to; he can love God with his whole heart, with his whole soul and with all his powers, if he only wants to; he can even force his reason to believe that black is white, in fact, he can create in himself every imaginable concept, sensation and feeling, moral and immoral passion, and do this at any time, unhampered and completely, if he only uses his will. For, because the will is the all-determining psychic force it is itself determined by nothing, never weakened or strengthened, increased or decreased at any time by any good or evil deed. On the contrary, it remains ever unchanged, the same in quantity and quality; like the needle of a compass it always returns to its characteristic stable balance, no matter how often it is diverted in the direction of ‘good’ or in the direction of ‘evil’.”

This sounds much like the advice for success given by modern quacks in practical psychology to the effect that you can accomplish anything, if you only arouse the latent powers of your will and set your will to do it. Applied in spiritual matters this doctrine of the will serves an evil purpose in the hands of the Pope, who uses it either as a bellows to inflate the self-righteousness of the pharisaic human ego or else as a veritable pitchfork to torment souls in time and destroy them eternally in hell. It tormented Luther, again and again, driving him to

the brink of despair, as is well known. He had spiritual advisers who helped him very much, e.g. Staupitz. Fortunately Luther got into an Augustinian monastery. That was in 1505. God works in a mysterious way His wonders to perform. What would have been Luther's future development had he become a Dominican or Franciscan? In the Augustinian monastery he got acquainted with Augustine's works and, having learned to love them, studied them all. A marginal gloss to the works of St. Augustine in Luther's hand of the years 1508–1509 shows passionate enthusiasm for Augustine and great aversion to that prince of medieval philosophy, Aristotle.

Augustine (b. 354, died as bishop of Hippo 430) was at first a follower of the dualism of Manes or Mani who taught that there were two eternal opposing substances eternally opposing one another, light and darkness, and that man had a possibility while on earth to transcend the body and become part of the kingdom of light. Failing in this he would be chained to the earth in a reincarnation on a lower plane as an animal or insect. Manichaeism emphasized the striving of the human will as did also the philosophy of Plotinus (204–269 A.D.) and other Neoplatonists Augustine studied. It did this by advocating a long purgatorial process in the practice of ascetic virtues to throw off the fetters of matter. The ultimate triumph of light would come about by the destruction of this present world in a tremendous conflagration. The only place given Jesus in this system was that of a teacher sent from the sun to show men how to rise above the bondage and the darkness of their corporal prison (the body) and become part of the kingdom of light. In this system with its many accretions from Buddhism and ancient Babylonian religion Augustine was confronted again and again with the problem of the human will. One of his earliest writings after his conversion, *De gratia et libero arbitrio* (on grace and free will), was directed against Manichaeism. But in it he describes man's freedom after the Fall in terms incompatible with his later position based on a deeper knowledge of the Scriptures. This position he declared especially in directing himself against Pelagianism, which he encountered in the Church. Pelagianism denied the doctrine of original sin. It ascribed to man the ability to achieve a completely good life of his own choice and doing, and rejected the teaching of any impairment of man's freedom of action in the spiritual sphere. It believed in an innate goodness of natural man.

Here a digression: The statement that it was fortunate that Luther entered an Augustinian monastery and thoroughly acquainted himself with Augustine's writings is not a blanket subscription to everything that Augustine wrote and taught. Nor did Luther accept Augustine *in toto*. For Augustine was much influenced by Platonic philosophical thought and therefore did not reach the clarity in the doctrine of sin and grace set forth by Luther, who went way beyond Augustine to rest on the clear Word alone. In his *On the Morals of the Catholic Church* Augustine speaks of the four Platonic and Aristotelian virtues, temperance, fortitude, justice, and prudence, which in his *City of God* he calls nothing but splendid vices in the heathen. He portrays them as transformed into virtues when faith and hope and love undergird them in the Christian. These virtues which philosophy can only talk about are thus given by grace to the Christian and "eternal life is the reward" for living the Christian virtuous life. So says Augustine, adding "nor can the reward precede the desert, nor be given to a man before he is worthy of it." What is implied is that God helps us to become virtuous in order that we might merit the reward of eternal life from Him. Even though Augustine here speaks of an undergirding by faith, he is nevertheless teaching justification by works and not alone by faith in the merits of the Savior.

This strange twist of thought in Augustine (which contradicts other things that he said) smacks very much of Plato's *Eros* or striving upward for the *summum bonum*, the highest good. Augustine's *caritas* or love for God could well be a substitute for it. It exists in the justified alongside of *cupiditas*, which seeks the things below in the sensual and material and not the things above, which are the sole interest of the *caritas*. According to Augustine's *caritas* doctrine our righteousness exists in part in this: that the spirit rules over our body and Christian reason over our sensual desires. That part of our being called *caritas* has justifying merit before God. It is not in need of forgiveness, but only the *cupiditas*, which seeks the things below. As we conquer this *cupiditas* we become less in need of forgiveness. Thus our sanctification adds to our justification by Christ in whom we are only *ex parte iustificati*. Our righteousness is not perfect. *Iustificati sumus; sed ipsa iustitia cum proficimus crescit* (We are justified but our justification grows as we progress). So Augustine. In this Luther did not follow Augustine at all. For Luther all of man, *totus homo*, is in need of the forgiveness of sin, not only his

sensual side. Even the best deeds of the saints are not merits in that sense that they are not also sins, because the deeds of the Christian are tainted by sin even at the highest level. God is not pleased with the work of the justified man because it is substantially without sin but because it is covered by the forgiveness of sin. For Luther man is not *ex parte iustificatus* but *totaliter iustus* (completely just), while at the same time being *totaliter peccator* (completely a sinner). His righteousness or *iustitia* is always a *iustitia aliena* (a righteousness coming from without), the righteousness of Christ imputed to him, and never even in the slightest degree one coming from within himself, since none of man's works have the merits of justifying him before God. So Luther in the sixth thesis of the Heidelberg Disputation where he says: *Non sic sunt opera Dei merita, de iis, quae per hominem fiunt, loquimur, ut eadem non sint peccata.* (God's works, we are speaking of those done through man, are not merits in the sense that they are not also sins). This Augustine failed to discern because of his Platonism.

It explains why Romanism finds a strong support in him for its *gratia infusa* and *fides caritate formata*. In much else that he wrote Augustine was also very much too much of a philosopher, for instance in his writings against the Manicheans, which are filled with Neoplatonic speculations. Among other things in which we cannot go along with Augustine, we find his teaching a *gratia irresistibilis* (an irresistible grace) and his limiting the atonement of Christ only to the elect. In Augustine the rudiments of Romanistic and Calvinistic errors are found mingled with the truth.

This leaves various ambiguities in his writings. An explanation for them is offered by J. N. Figgis, quoted in *A Companion to the Study of St. Augustine* by Battenhouse, as follows: "In Augustine there were struggling two men, like Esau and Jacob in the womb of Rebecca. There was Augustine of Thagaste, of Madoura, of Carthage, of Rome, of Milan, the brilliant boy, the splendid and expansive youthful leader, 'skilled in all the wisdom of the Egyptians,' possessed of the antique culture, rhetorical, dialectic, Roman—the man of the world, the developed humanist with enough tincture of Platonism to gild the humanism; and there is the Augustine of the 'Confessions,' of the 'Sermons,' of the 'De Civitate,' the monk, the ascetic, the other-worldly preacher, the biblical expositor, the mortified priest." We might add that in his later life Augustine became more and more the biblical expositor.

But these ambiguities did not hinder Luther from taking much good out of the many good things Augustine said. He strengthened Luther in his critical attitude toward human reason and the findings of philosophy and in his reliance on the Word alone. For instance Augustine said: "Not in the self-same words but to the very same purpose, enforced by many and diverse reasons, I read in certain books of the Platonists, translated from Greek into Latin, that the Word was with God and the Word was God. But that the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, that I read not there." In speaking in *De civitate Dei* (Book 18, ch. 61) on the dissension of philosophers and the concord of the canonical Scriptures he berates the confusion philosophy must lead to when he says: "Was not Aristippus there with his bodily *Summum Bonum*, and Antisthenes with his mental? Both were famous Socratists, and yet both were contrary to each other in their subjects of beatitude. The one bade a wise man escape from ruling, and the other bade him take it; and both had full and frequent audience. Did not all of them defend their opinions in public in the famous porch, in schools, in gardens, and likewise in all private places? One held there was one world, another a thousand. Some hold that the world was created, some not created. Some hold it eternal, some not eternal. Some say it is ruled by the power of God, others by chance. Some say the souls are immortal, others mortal; some transfuse them into beasts, others do not. Some of those who make them mortal say they die soon after the body, others say they live longer, yet not forever. Some place the chiefest good in the body, some in the soul, some in both. Some add external goods to the soul and the body. Some say the senses are always true, some say but sometimes, some say never. These and millions more of dissensions do the philosophers bandy. And what people, state, kingdom, or city of all the diabolical society has ever brought them to the test or rejected the one and received the other? Has it not rather given nourishment to all confusion in its very bosom, and upheld the rabble of curious janglers, not about lands, or cases in law, but upon main points of misery and bliss? So fully and so fitly was their society suited to the name of Babylon, which (as we said) signified confusion. Nor cares their king, the devil, how much they jangle, for it procures him the larger harvest of variable impiety." We will add that whatever variableness there was in

the impiety it invariably emphasized the power of the will in achieving whatever it considered its *Summum Bonum*.

It was especially in what he wrote concerning this point that Augustine exerted a powerful influence in counteracting the teaching of the freedom of the will that had been so deeply impressed upon Luther to his terror by the Occamists. For regardless of what other failings Augustine had he quite consistently fought the Pelagian heresy concerning the freedom of the will of natural man after the Fall. Before the Fall man, so Augustine said, had freedom of the will. *Potuit peccare et potuit non peccare. Potuit mori et potuit non mori*. (He could choose to sin or not to sin, to die or not to die.) But after the Fall, man is in a state of spiritual death which leads through physical death to eternal damnation, so that all of humanity is a *massa perditionis*, a forlorn hope on the way to eternal death. Salvation from this lot comes not as a result of an effort of the natural will of man and of man's own choosing, but has its cause only in the grace of God who chooses man to faith in eternity, brings him to faith in time and keeps him by His power through faith unto salvation. In this his final position in the question Augustine stood firm, retracting anything that he had said to the contrary. In his *Predestination of the Saints* he says: "For I did not think that faith was preceded by God's grace, so that by its means there would be given to us what we might profitably ask, except that we could not believe if the proclamation of the truth did not precede. But that we should consent when the Gospel was preached to us I thought was our own doing and came from ourselves. And this my error is sufficiently indicated in some small works of mine written before my episcopate... I discovered little concerning the calling itself which is according to God's purpose... That even the merit (? - the question mark is ours) itself of faith is God's gift, I neither thought of inquiring into nor did I say." What about those who are lost? Here is something from Augustine on II Thess. 2:11 in his *City of God* Book XX, ch.19 that suggests an answer. There he says: "Whereupon the Apostle adds this: 'Therefore God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie.' God shall send it; because his just judgment permits it, though, the devil's malevolent desire performs it, that all they might be condemned, which believe not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness. Thus being condemned, they are seduced, and being seduced, condemned. But their seducement is by the secret judgment of God, justly secret, and secretly just; even His that has judged continually, ever since the world began. But their condemnation shall be the last and manifest judgment of Jesus Christ, that judges most justly and was most unjustly judged Himself." We can hardly infer a decree to eternal damnation from this; though some of the things Augustine said pointed that way, e.g. his *gratia irresistibilis* and his limiting the benefit of Christ's death to the elect. Augustine lacked clarity also in the doctrine of election. But in what is quoted above he places the blame not on God's will but on the malevolence of the devil and on the lost themselves in their particular case and refuses to solve the mystery of their perdition leaving it to the hidden counsel of God whose judgment on man and his depraved and impotent will is ever just even though we cannot see it now. But what we should see clearly is the grace Augustine exalted in Him of whom he says in his Confessions: "But the Only Begotten is Himself made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and is numbered among us."

These and many other things found in Augustine dashed the idol of the Occamists, the will of natural man, to the ground like Dagon of the Philistines, and could not but have exerted a tremendous influence on Luther as by the grace of God he was turned away from the pagan exaltation of the human will to the power of the cross to see all the philosophy of men in the light in which he portrays it in his *Lectiones in Genesin* (ch. 6, v. 5). There he writes the following: *Sic videas, alicubi philosophos non inepte disputare de Deo, de providentia, qua omnia gubernat Deus. Haec quibusdam etiam adeo videntur pie dicta ut tantum non ex Socrate, Xenophonte, Platone prophetas faciant; sed quia haec sic disputant, ut ignorent, Deum misisse filium suum Christum in salutem peccatorum, hae ipsae praeclarae disputationes sunt summa Dei ignorantia, et merae blasphemiae secundum huius loci sententiam, quae simpliciter pronuntiat omnem fictionem, studium omne humani cordis tantum esse malum.* (So you see that the philosophers sometimes dispute with no little skill about God and the providence in which He rules over all things. To some they seem to speak so piously that they would almost place Socrates, Xenophon, and Plato among the prophets; but since they are ignorant of the fact that God sent His Son into the world to save sinners, even their most excellent disputations betray the deepest ignorance of God and are mere blasphemies according to this passage, which simply declares every

fiction and striving of the human heart to be only evil.) In the original the noun for fiction is derived from the verb פָּצַר which means to form or fabricate. The noun used for striving or *studium* in the original comes from the verb בָּשַׁב, to devise or plan. Intellectually man may be able to recognize the Eternal Power and Godhead, so that he has no excuse; but his evil strivings בְּתַשְׁבָּחַתֵּי הַלֵּב make every fabrication פָּצַר of his heart evil. ALL NATURAL KNOWLEDGE OF GOD IS PERVERTED BY THE WILL OF NATURAL MAN AS SOON AS IT COMES TO ANY APPLICATION IN THOUGHT, WORD, OR DEED. This is a basic truth to be considered in our attitude toward anything the world offers in religion and morals or toward any teaching in the church that ascribes any merit whatever to the natural will of man. We need ever and again to go into the Word for the clear insight and the deep conviction expressed by Luther here and in such statements as the following taken from his Table Talks where he says: *Der Wille des Menschen wirkt und tut nichts überall dazu in seiner Bekehrung und Rechtfertigung. Non est efficiens causa iustificationis, sed materialis tantum, sondern leidet nur und ist die Materia, in welcher der Heilige Geist wirket (wie der Töpfer aus dem Ton einen Topf macht), auch in denen, die da widerstreben und widerspenstig sind, wie in Paulo. Aber nachdem er in solchem widerstrebenden Willen gewirkt hat, alsdann schafft und machet er auch, dass der Wille mitwillige und gleich mir ihm übereinstimme.—Wer des Menschen freien Willen verteidigen will, dass er etwas in geistlichen Dingen vermöge und mitwirken könne, auch im Geringsten, der hat Christum verleugnet.—Erlangen v. 58, 224 and 222.* (At no point does the human will do or effect anything whatever toward conversion and justification. It is only the object of justification and nowise the cause, being entirely passive as the matter in which the Holy Spirit works (like the clay out of which the potter molds a pot) also in those who resist and are obstinate like Paul. But after the Holy Spirit has worked in such a rebellious will, He brings it about that this will complies and is in agreement with Him.—Whoso defends the free will of man as though it has any power and can cooperate in the spiritual sphere, even in the slightest degree, has denied Christ).

This doctrine of the depravity of the human will was clearly pronounced by Luther as early as in 1518 against semi-Pelagian scholastics. By that time he had learned to consider the human will as but dung in the light of the glory of Christ's righteousness. His Tower Experience occurred already in 1514 according to some conjectures. In 1517 against the scholastics, in 1518 at the *Heidelberg Disputation*, in 1519 in his controversy with the Minorites (Franciscans) Luther stated his position on the freedom of the will. This question was also injected in the controversy beginning in 1521 with the Paris University, the Sorbonne. The following are some samples of Luther's statements on *freedom of the will* from the writings and the times mentioned above—statements which he supports by quotations from Augustine and numerous Scripture passages (Rom. 3:10; Rom. 7:15f.; II Cor. 3:6; John 15:5; John 6:65; I Cor. 4:7; John 8:34; John 3:27): "If the grace of God is excluded, man can in no wise keep God's commandments nor prepare himself for grace either *de congruo* or *de condigno*" (1516). "It is false to say that the will can by nature follow the correct precepts of reason; for the will does not have in its power to will or not to will what is proposed to it. To say this, is not against Augustine who says: 'Nothing is so in the power of the will as the will itself'" (1517). "Of his own powers it is impossible for falling man not to fall. Only through outside power can falling man not fall" (1518). "Man's will was free (before the Fall) and can again become free by grace but outside of grace is a truly enslaved will" (1519). May these few samples picked at random suffice to show how this question came up again and again in the maze of many other subjects of controversy such as indulgences, sacraments, penance, purgatory, authority of the pope, monastic vows, etc., bandied about between Luther and Tetzl, Eck, Prierias, Latomus, Emser, Henry VIII, and others.

In this situation the Pope was ready to swallow many a bitter pill but never Luther's doctrine on the human will. He could take Erasmus' *Praise of Folly*—many editions of it, with its bitter satire on monk, priest, bishop, and pope,—yes forget all about it when Erasmus became an antagonist of Luther—even to the extent of sending Erasmus a diploma full of good will and honorable testimonials, regarding which Erasmus in almost childish vanity wrote to an intimate friend: "The Pope has sent me a diploma full of good will and honorable testimonials. His secretary declares that it is an unprecedented honor and that the Pope himself dictated it word for word." Oh how Erasmus placed honor above truth! To seek honor is a human frailty. To ever permit it to go to the point of placing honor and for that matter friendship, expediency, or anything else, above truth is to be

blinded by the devil himself and to set a snare for others to be entrapped in his delusions. Such delusions Erasmus would support in pride, weakness, vacillation, and false love for peace and harmony. The Pope knew him. The Pope was also wise enough to admit that abuses had to be corrected and so was willing to give Erasmus the praise he loved in spite of his satires which after all did not touch the sore spot produced by Luther's constant pommeling him on the doctrine of the will. Reuchlin's case was dragged out and finally forgotten. After all he too was not kicking the Pope's pet poodle, the doctrine of the freedom of the will, and it might be best not to appear hostile to learning. The bull against the reading of the *Epistolae obscurorum virorum* was never issued. They too did not really step on the Pope's corns even though they did make some embarrassing revelations. But why stir around in the dirt and rile it up where the real issue was not involved? So the Dominicans were left to stew in their own juice and poor Hoogstraten (one must feel sorry for people like him) died in grief let down by those who had prodded him on, as so often happens to the pawns of a selfish cause in which they have outlived their usefulness. Correction there had to be. That is admitted by the Catholic church today, e.g. in its writings against the film Martin Luther, and that was sensed, whether they wished to admit it or not, by the church authorities in Luther's day and they would carry it out in time. But they would not change their basic position. What a sad reflection on the Lutheran name is not the article on Lutheranism in *Look Magazine* written by a Lutheran in which it is stated that the Catholic Church has reformed since the day of Luther. It has not reformed, for the correction of external abuses is not reformation. It has only refined its poison to be all the more deadly. To truly reform it would have given up its doctrine on the human will which it ever staunchly upheld. In its efforts to do this against Luther the one who lent his hand to the devil's cause was Erasmus, the Judas of the Reformation, once warmly loved and highly respected but soon mistrusted by Luther.

In his many unionistic endeavors Erasmus, no doubt, would have preferred to avoid a direct encounter with Luther. For it was not until after the Louvain and Cologne faculties, a special nuncius from the Pope, Duke George of Albertine Saxony, and King Henry VIII had urged and prodded Erasmus to attack Luther that Erasmus jumped at Luther's throat with his *De libero arbitrio*. That was in April 1524.

Once before Henry VIII had himself carried the ball for the Pope against Luther. That was in his writing of 1521 against Luther's *Babylonian Captivity of the Church*. Then the Pope gave him the title *defensor fidei*, a title similar to the "Most Christian" and "Catholic" already borne by the kings of France and Spain and highly coveted by Henry who wanted to stand on an equal basis with these two kings. Erasmus stood in high favor with Henry and received not only great honors but also an annual pension from the king; and it was especially Henry's persistent urging that finally moved Erasmus to step up openly against Luther. Luther found out about it and most earnestly and humbly pleaded with Erasmus in a letter of April 1524. In this letter he still calls him "highly loved" Erasmus, and expresses his appreciation of Erasmus' achievements in languages, and hopes that he would refrain from public attack on him, since it would have little effect. He would not ask him to come over into his camp, but wishes from the bottom of his heart that he would not become a spokesman for the opposition and would choose rather to stay on the sidelines as a spectator of Luther's tragedy. But Erasmus would not be dissuaded. His *De libero arbitrio* was published in the autumn of 1524 when Erasmus wrote to Henry VIII: "The die is cast, the book on free will is published. I have done a bold thing, believe me. I expect nothing less than to be stoned for it. But I take comfort from your majesty's example, whom the rage of these people has not spared."

These words are ridiculous. What a farce! Can a rabbit roar like a lion or a mouse trumpet like an elephant? A man more interested in learning than in truth, in friendship and honor above defending truth, a middle of the road man who for the sake of peace and security would compromise the truth, so lacking both in personal courage and courage of conviction that he could not stand up under the urging and prodding of a few friends, let alone the prospect of being stoned, claims heroism in an act that betrayed the very Reformation, which he claimed to champion and whose way he perhaps more than any other person prepared by his writings and discourses. No wonder Luther said: *Trotz nicht allein dem Könige und Erasmo, sondern auch ihrem Gott und allen Teufeln.—Doch ich verdenke den König wahrlich nicht, weil er so viel Engelloten solchen Gesellen jährlich gibt, dass er auch wiederumb ihrer Kunst, Büberei und Heuchelei wohl brauche, und wünsche ihm, dass er sie mücht erkennen, was sie an ihm suchen. Engelloten mögen wohl kluge und sprachreiche Leute*

machen, wie Persius spricht, dass auch die Elster sollten zuletzt wohl reden lernen, wenn nur Geld furhanden wäre. (I will defy both the king and Erasmus, their god and all devils.—But in truth I do not blame the king, who gives these fellows so many English ducats every year, if he in return makes good use of their skill, knavery, and hypocrisy; though I wish that he would realize what they are really looking for in him. English ducats make men wise and eloquent, just as Persius says, that even magpies will finally learn to speak well if only there is money in it). This brings in another angle—that of personal security—from which Erasmus could have viewed this matter. “They that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple,” Rom. 16:18. That applies not so much to any purely materialistic consideration Erasmus may have had but above all to his whole humanistic inclination in which he was influenced by his own belly, that is fleshly appetites and interests. With the blind carnal reasoning of a true humanist he exalted the human will like the philosophers of old and the scholastics of the church, placed reason and learning above true theology, was satisfied to reform the church externally and leave the basic controversy untouched in the interest of the false security of superficial peace and outward order. Ruled by his high regard for humanistic culture and refinement he could well have spoken the words of Shaftesbury: “To philosophize in a just sense is but to carry good breeding a step higher. For the accomplishment of breeding is to learn what is decent in company or beautiful in arts; and the sum of philosophy is to learn what is just in society, and beautiful in nature and the order of the world.” Like other humanists Erasmus was more interested in the order of this world than the hope for the next. Some were nationalists like Hutten, others like Erasmus were internationalists working for the establishment of a world order for peace and security. A unified church was part of the picture of Erasmus’ world order for which he would sacrifice truth as a matter of expediency.

For that reason religion was chiefly civic righteousness for Erasmus. Melanchthon sizes him up well in this respect with the following words prefacing Luther’s *De servo arbitrio* in the *Latina Opera* of the Erlangen edition: *In rebus theologicis duo potissimum requirimus, alterum, quo nos consolemur adversus mortem et iudicium Dei, quoque animum erigamus adversus omnes insidias Satanae, adversum vim portarum infernarum. Ea demure vera, evangelica et christiana praedicatio est, ignota mundo et omni rationi humanae. Hanc profitetur Lutherus. Et haec iustitia cordis est, quae postea bona opera parit. Alterum boni mores, civilitas. Haec fere Erasmus docet, sed et gentiles philosophi docuere. At quid, quaeso, cum philosophis Christo? A ut spiritui Dei cure caeca ratione hominum? Qui hoc genus sequuntur caritatem quidem docent, sed fidem non docent. Porro nisi ex fide dimanet caritas, ea iam Pharisaismus est, sicut est, non caritas.* (In theological matters there are two things that we especially ponder: The one is that wherewith we console ourselves against death and the judgment of God and lift up our hearts against all the wiles of the devil and the power of the very gates of hell. This is the true and evangelical Christian preaching, unknown to the world and all human reasoning. This is what Luther professes. It is the righteousness of the heart which afterward brings forth good works. The other thing consists in good manners and civility. This is what Erasmus chiefly teaches, but so have also the pagan philosophers taught. But what has Christ in common with the philosophers or the Spirit of God with the blindness of human reason? They who follow this way teach a certain charity, but never faith. But where charity does not flow out of faith it is nothing but Pharisaism and is not really charity at all.) We might well ask Melanchthon’s questions in connection with any alliance with the world in scouting and the military chaplaincy.

But let us briefly examine Erasmus’ diatribe *De libero arbitrio*. Erasmus’ diatribe is directed against article 36 of Luther’s *Assetrio omnium articulorum Martini Lutheri per Bullam Leonis X novissimam damnatorum*. There Luther states, “The free will after the Fall of Adam, that is after sin had been committed, is a name only and when it performs its own (*quod in se est*) commits mortal sin.” Erasmus begins with masked satire stating that many with their ears stopped up will cry out: “This is going against the stream when Erasmus dares to start a controversy with Luther, like a gnat attacking an elephant. But no one should consider it improper if he (Erasmus) contradicts him (Luther) openly in moderate disputing in order to bring out the truth.” But he does not bring out the truth. On the contrary he would veil it and not have common people disturbed and offended by disputing doctrines even where they are in error such as is the case in their opinion that works of satisfaction are necessary in penance. One must even put up with some errors, for if we try to eliminate them we

do much greater harm than by remaining silent about them; just as is the case with certain bodily ailments, leprosy for example which could be cured by the warm blood of slain infants. In proof of this position he brings Paul's words: "All things are lawful for me but all things are not expedient." This argument he also uses in the interest of refraining from controversy in the Church. You can choose to close an eye to error. Besides there is a distinction in doctrines. Some it is necessary to know, others unnecessary, some are dark and buried in deep mystery, others simple, clear, and manifest. The Scripture is dark in many things, and Erasmus would subject his reason and opinion to the Scripture and the Church regardless of whether he grasps or understands its decisions or not. One must not try to settle everything. Erasmus contends for a great latitude of theological opinion.

As to the question itself Erasmus mentions three opinions: "Some think," he says, "that man can neither will, nor begin, still less perform any good thing without the special and constant aid to divine grace, and this opinion seems probable enough. Others teach that the will of man has no power but for evil, and that it is grace alone that works any good in us; and lastly, there are some who assert that there never has been any free will, either in angels, or in Adam, or in us, whether before or after grace received; but God works in man whether it be good or evil and that everything that happens, happens from an absolute necessity." Weasel words. Compare the first two opinions, both of which are correct *in scriptura*. But when Erasmus brings the two as separate opinions he subtly rules out the "no power but for evil" out of the first statement, the only one to which he subscribes (half heartedly in true Erasmian fashion), and has conceded nothing, yes actually maintained his position *in controversia*. Statements that in themselves are 100% correct *in scriptura* can at the same time be 100% false *in controversia*. A positive statement can become very negative in its setting and very deceptive by a clever manipulation of words. So can so-called purely "positive" teaching when it sidesteps an issue in a situation where it should be squarely faced. Erasmus said "yes" and "no" at the same time. He spoke out of both sides of his mouth. He put up a very weak defense for his free will but at the same time never conceded that he was wrong or that there might be any truth in Luther's position which he did not refute. That is his method throughout *De libero arbitrio*. Luther says to him in his *De servo arbitrio*: "My dear Erasmus, your reason is leading you in circles. You desire to walk on eggs and crush none of them and walk between glasses and touch none of them, and in consequence you fall over things and into things, and trample everything to pieces, with the result that you first say yes and then no, then no then yes again, and no one knows what you are concluding or not concluding." At another place in *De servo arbitrio* Luther says to Erasmus: "You are slipperier than any eel." There was much reason for Erasmus' slipperiness. After all he was trying to heal the breach between Wittenberg and Rome, to preserve the external unity of the church and was using all his wiles and all his guiles to promote his unionistic schemes, which were born of the flesh and not of the Spirit in spite of their pious claims.

But basically he did not desert the papistic doctrine of the will in this scheming. A few quotations from his *De libero arbitrio* will soon show that. Here is his opinion on Gen. 6:5 which Luther explained in his *in Genesin* quoted before as stating *Omnem fictionem, studium omne humani cordis tantum esse malum*. Says Erasmus about this passage: "The inclination which is found in most (sic) people, does not entirely cancel out the freedom of the will. Although this inclination cannot be entirely overcome without the help of God's grace. If God does everything according to a certain necessity and no part of the change of mind depends on our will, then why did God give them a chance for repentance?" To John 1:12 he says: "Again John writes, 'He gave them power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.' How would the power to become God's children be given to those who are not yet His children if our will has no freedom?" At another place he begins a whole list of what he calls contradictory passages saying: "David prays, 'Create in me a clean heart, O God' (Ps. 51:12). Paul on the other hand says, 'He that purifieth himself,' and Ezekiel says, 'Make you a new heart and a new spirit.' Ezek. 18:31." He follows this with a list of similar passages in which some state that God performs His work in man and others describe man as performing this work. Erasmus concludes: "These passages seem to contradict each other, but can easily be brought into harmony with each other, by merely combining the effort and striving of our will with the assistance of Divine Grace." So Erasmus goes on and on. Fine language without any real substance for he never goes in on the real point, which is the distinction

between the totally depraved natural will and the regenerated will brought into being alone by God through His Word and Spirit. Luther admires the language and style as much better than his own but not the substance. He tells Erasmus he is serving up dirt in gold and silver vessels. Luther says about the substance of *De libero arbitrio*: *Wie ich dasselbe gelesen hah, hah ich oft gedacht ich wollts hinter die Bank werfen.* (When I read it I often felt like throwing it behind the bench.) A person doesn't get very far into it before you feel like doing the same. It reminds one of the story of Rastus suing for a divorce because his wife talked too much. He was asked by the judge: "Well, just what does she talk about?" Whereupon Rastus answered: "Judge, that am just it. She don't say." Erasmus didn't really say either. Whoever invented the merry-go-round might well have read *De libero arbitrio*. Erasmus lacked either the courage or the conviction or perhaps both, to say what he meant or to mean what he said, and was everlastingly halting between two opinions. No wonder a writer, Secundus Curio, in one of his works depicts Erasmus as being neither in the Catholic nor in the Protestant heaven, but incessantly wheeling in never ending circles between the two. Was it in a wheel chair or on a bicycle? No doubt, Erasmus changed off, for this cultured and eloquent theological midget, swayed by human judgment, wisdom, and diplomacy, never would stay on one thing long when facing the giant Luther. It takes more than Greek and Hebrew and a knowledge of the classics to make a theologian.

But what about Luther's reply to Erasmus? The gnat buzzed and the elephant trumpeted. Loud and clear the clarion tone resounded through the jungle of Socratist, Aristotelian, scholastic, patristic, traditionalistic, sophistic, hierarchical, philosophic, humanistic, rationalistic, papistic, and synergistic Pelagian paganism, sanctimoniously clothed in Christian garb and defended in Erasmus' unctious effort to heal the breach in the Catholic Church and preserve its external unity. But Luther would not let himself be fooled or be fooled with. With the roar of the lion he replied in one of the best, if not the best, of his productions, *de servo arbitrio*. Yet the roar came from the Word which Luther humbly, courteously, and skilfully defended. He praised Erasmus highly (*hoc in te vehementer laudo et praedico*) that he alone above all had touched on the thing of prime importance (*quod solus prae omnibus rem ipsam es aggressus*) and had not wearied him with *alienis causis de papatu, purgatorio, indulgentiis, ac similibus nugis potius quam causis* (with things like the papacy, purgatory, and indulgences which do not strike at the heart of the matter and are mere trifles when compared with what is basic in the issue). Shortly after came Luther's famous word: *Unus tu et solus cardinem rerum vidisti, et ipsum iugulum petisti, pro quo ex animo tibi gratias ago, in hac enim causa libenter versor, quantum favet tempus et otium* (You alone have seen the fundamental principle of things and have grabbed me right by the throat. For this I heartily thank you, since this is the one point I delight to deal with as much as time and leisure permits). He earnestly pleaded with Erasmus saying: "*Mi Erasme*, dear Erasmus, for Christ's sake I pray that you hold yourself to what you have promised in saying that you will yield to any one who teaches better things. Do not consider the person. I acknowledge that you are a great man blessed by God with many and noble gifts, not mentioning others, your genius, erudition, and your eloquence which borders on the miraculous. I truly am nothing and have nothing, except that I glory in being a Christian. God taught Moses through Jethro and Paul through Ananias." But though humble and courteous throughout—exceptionally so for a controversial writing in those days—*de servo arbitrio* took a firm and unyielding stand. A man with the genius of Luther could not but have sensed that its uncompromising position on the human will over against humanism would destroy every hope of restoring the external unity of the Church and would make his separation from the body of Rome in which he had been reared definite and final.

Luther had not always taken that position. In an explanation that he promised Miltitz he would publish and finally did publish in Feb., 1519, less than 16 months after posting his *Ninety-five Theses*, he says: "That the Roman Church is honored by God above all others, is what we cannot doubt. St. Peter, St. Paul, forty-six popes, many hundreds of thousands of martyrs have shed their blood in its bosom, and have overcome hell and the world, so that God's eye regards it with especial favor. Although everything is now in a very wretched state there, this is not a sufficient reason for separating from it. On the contrary the worse things are going on within it, the more should we cling to it; for it is not by separation that we shall make it better. We must not desert God on account of the devil or abandon the children of God who are still in the Roman Communion because of the

multitude of the ungodly. There is no sin, there is no evil that should destroy charity or break the bond of union. For charity can do all things, and to unity nothing is difficult.”

But a different attitude toward Rome had developed in Luther. We see it in *de servo arbitrio* when he answers Erasmus’ argument that one must not reveal and attack wrong decrees of councils publicly before everyone and cause people to despise the councils and the fathers. Luther tells Erasmus that “he (Erasmus) is talking for the Pope who loves to hear such things more than Paul and all the gospels. Human ordinances cannot be placed beside the Word of God. This the Pope does not like to hear, for he does not want his kingdom devastated and destroyed—a kingdom built upon lying snares, enslaving of consciences, murder of souls and robbery.—It does not help you to look for the right understanding of Scripture where the largest number of people are found and in the biggest number of important bishops and councils.” The Luther of 1517 and even of 1519 before *Exsurge Domine*, 1520, still had many of the shackles of Rome on him. Read his *Ninety-five Theses!* Besides he still hoped for a change in Rome. In both respects his opinion has crystallized much more by 1524.

Let us briefly examine *de servo arbitrio*. Three parts follow a general introduction. The first part deals with Erasmus’ definition that “free will is the ability of the human will according to which man may either turn toward or away from that which leads to eternal salvation,” and refutes his arguments for this proposition. In the second part Luther defends his position with a correct interpretation of the passages that speak against free will, and finally in part three Luther proves that God’s grace does everything, free will nothing. Much is found within the scope of these parts in which Luther discusses philosophers, church fathers, scholastics, the achievements of the so-called noble heathen, human authorities such as bishop, council, and pope, the true nature of the church, Law and Gospel, justification, faith, the clarity and authority of Scripture, and the need for taking a definite position on it instead of saying like Erasmus that he does not delight in definite statements. Since the Holy Ghost is no *scepticus*, Christians too should be of firm conviction and not say yes and no at the same time. We could go on and on. *De servo arbitrio* offers a rich and varied repast, especially because of the many scripture passages Luther treats. What it presents on them alone is worth any effort one may put into it.

As for a thorough study of *de servo arbitrio*, this is out of the question here just as it was out of the question with *de libero arbitrio*. You could well spend more than a week on these two books. But just a sample of Luther’s dealing with the arguments of Erasmus from *de servo arbitrio*, Part I: “Another passage brought forth in your diatribe comes from Genesis 4, where the Lord says to Cain: ‘Let lust to sin be under you and you rule over it’ or as otherwise interpreted ‘let lust bow before you and be its lord.’ Regarding this passage your booklet holds that lust to evil can be overcome by us and that it does not drive us to sin.—But what has not been omitted here? Does this not mean that free will is God? What need have we of the Holy Spirit? What need of Christ? Yes, what need have we of God if free will can overcome lust to sin and to evil? And what becomes of your first opinion (please, recall the three propositions of Erasmus mentioned in the last lecture) which you hold to be good, the opinion which says that free will cannot will the good or delight in that which is good, since you now say free will is able to overcome evil and lust for evil, even though it can have no desire for the good? This diatribe is too much against itself and speaks without deliberation.”

In this connection Luther makes it very clear that he is speaking only of the ability of the natural will of man to achieve the good in man’s relationship to God, i.e., in gaining eternal life in justification and conversion. In these things man is by nature a bondsman of Satan and can by no means deliver himself. His will is like a horse ridden by Satan from whose power only God’s grace can deliver him, though in the external things of this world and this life Luther clearly states that man has freedom to choose between different courses of action. Thus *de servo arbitrio* is of great importance in connection with the doctrines of conversion and election. Franz Pieper says somewhere that Erasmus presented about every argument found among those who stand wrong in these doctrines in his *de libero arbitrio*. To this may well be added that Luther met them all in his *de servo arbitrio*. The following paragraph summarizes what Luther has to say on both of these doctrines: “*Quod multi convertuntur et salvantur, agnoscendum est solius divinae gratiae opus esse; quod multi non convertuntur et pereunt, agnoscendum est ipsorum pereuntium culpa unice fieri, in qua pia simplicitate mens christiana secure acquiescere possit si vel maxime omnibus difficultatibus, praesertim iis, quae circa individua hominem*

convertendorum moventur, sese non possit expedite” (That many are converted and saved must be acknowledged to be due to divine grace alone. That many others are not converted and perish comes about solely by their own fault. In this simple divine truth the Christian mind can rest secure even though it cannot at all solve all the problems that come up especially in connection with the individual case of those to be converted). The elect are chosen and saved by God’s grace alone. The lost are lost by their own fault alone. Why some are lost and not others is something we cannot figure out. That is a mystery. Nor should we question God whose ways are past finding out but ever just. Luther brings Rom. 11:33 toward the end of *de servo arbitrio* in carrying out the thought that the one true God is incomprehensible and unattainable to human reason and that it is self-evident—yes, necessary, that His justice too is incomprehensible. Luther tries to solve no mysteries and so does not fall either into the error of teaching a double decree or that of teaching an irresistible grace.

Another thing that Luther brings out toward the end of his *de servo arbitrio* is the comfort found in the thought that we are saved by God’s grace alone and not by our own will. He says that “since God has taken salvation away from his (Luther’s) *arbitrium* and placed it in His own and promised to keep him not by his own (Luther’s) working and running but by God’s grace and mercy, he can be certain that he is secure, since God is true and does not lie, and so great that no devil nor any other opposition can overpower God or take him away from God. Thus some at least, if not all, are saved. But by the power of the will not a single one could be saved. All would be lost.” So Luther’s *de servo arbitrio* brings us to the very heart and center of the issues of the Reformation, of Luther’s theology, and of true Lutheran theology. With it all who like Luther take their position on God’s Word alone will stand without compromise over against every humanistic, liberal, and unionistic encroachment on divine truth in the church and the world.

But did Erasmus give ear to the council of Jethro (Ex. 18:24) and did the scales fall off his eyes when the hands of Ananias were firmly and yet courteously and gently put on him? He had failed to impress Luther and stood there like one who had fallen into a puddle in trying to get out of the rain. Luther’s answer only irritated him. His heart hardened itself against the truth. He now showed his true colors. He wrote to Luther: “The same admirable ferocity which you formerly used against Cochlaeus and against Fisher, who provoked you to it by reviling, you now use against my book in spite of its courtesy.—It terribly pains me, as it must all good men, that your arrogant, insolent, rebellious nature has set the world in arms,—as if it were your chief aim to prevent the tempest from ever becoming calm, while it is my greatest desire that it should die down.—I should wish you a better disposition, were you not so marvellously satisfied with the one you have.” He rushed into print with his *Hyperaspistes* (shield-bearer or defender) which claimed to defend his *de libero arbitrio* but was in reality an attack on Luther whom he accuses of barbarism, falsehood, and blasphemy, and goes on to say: “I predict that no name under heaven will hereafter be more execrated than Luther’s.”

Luther never answered. He wrote to Amsdorf in February 1534: “*Ich habe aber weiter nichts ausgerichtet, als dass ich die Otter gereizt habe, die dann aus ergrimtem Geist viperaspides* (viper, snake; *aspis* either shield or asp, note the play on words) *geboren hat, eine Nachkommenschaft, die des Vaters wuerdig und ihm sehr aehnlich ist. Auf die Sache selbst aber hat er gar nichts geantwortet; darum ich von der Zeit an alle Hoffnung von seiner Theologie habe fahren lassen*” (The only thing I accomplished was to irritate the adder to bring forth *viperaspides* (viper and asps) out of his enraged spirit—a progeny very worthy of and much like its father. On the matter itself he did not answer. For that reason I gave up all hope for his theology from that time on). At another time he said of Erasmus “that he was the worst foe of Christ that has arisen for the last thousand years.” Luther was through with Erasmus. His knowledge of Greek no longer blinded him. He said of him: “*Non est Graecus sed graculus*” (He is not a Greek scholar but a jackdaw). That was on an occasion after he had written on a table: *Res et verba Philippus.—Verba sine re Erasmus.—Res sine verbis Martinus Lutherus.—Nec rem nec verba Carolstadius* (Philip has substance and words. Erasmus has words but no substance. Luther has substance without words. Carlstadt has neither substance nor words). The break between Luther and humanism was complete. The hope of reconciling Wittenberg and Rome had vanished and with it all possibility of preserving church union under the papacy. In addition a sharp line had been drawn between the

liberal humanistic and the sound scriptural and confessional element in the Protestant world. This was, of course, to the regret of many.

But was that the great tragedy in Luther's life that some deplore it to be? Not from the scriptural and truly confessional viewpoint. For had Luther not spoken out clearly against Erasmus, had he not taken a determined and uncompromising stand against him, the real cause of the Reformation would have been lost entirely. There would have been a reformation of morals but never of doctrine. Erasmus' schemes for church union would then well have succeeded and humanly speaking there might never have been a Lutheran Church—at least not a soundly biblical one. So Luther's *de servo arbitrio* is as important in the interest of scriptural doctrine and true Lutheranism as his stand at Worms. Without it all that was gained there would have been dissipated in humanistic compromise, and Melancthon, who personally never broke with Erasmus and secretly shared many of his convictions, might have had his day at Augsburg—1530—when he said to the papal legate: “We have no doctrine in which we differ from the Roman Church (*Dogma nullum habemus diversum ab ecclesia Romana*); we venerate the universal authority of the Roman Pontiff, and we are ready to obey him, provided he does not reject us, and that of his clemency, which he is accustomed to show towards all nations, he will kindly pardon and approve certain little things that it is no longer possible for us to change.—Now then will you reject those who appear as suppliants before you? Will you pursue them with fire and sword?—Alas! Nothing draws upon us in Germany so much hatred as the unshaken firmness with which we maintain the doctrine of the Roman Church! But with the aid of God we will remain faithful, even unto death, to Christ and to the Roman Church, although you should reject us.”

Luther could have at this time graciously compromised and received high honors from the Pope, but instead he wrote to Melancthon: “There can be no concord between Christ and Belial. As far as regards me, I will not yield a hair's breadth (*at certe pro mea persona, ne pilum quidem cedam*). Sooner than yield, I should prefer suffering everything, even the most terrible evils. Concede so much the less, as your adversaries require the more.” Before that he had written to Melancthon: “*Tantum opus est fide, ne causa fidel sit sine fide*—(We must only have faith lest the cause of faith should be found without faith). If we fall, Christ falls with us.—I would rather fall with Christ than remain standing with Caesar.” Would a Luther different from the one who stepped up so firmly in *de servo arbitrio* have been able to restrain the unionistic Melancthon who favored the Erasmic position at Augsburg? And can there ever be a toning down of error and compromise of truth in his true followers? The humanistically cultured historian laments Luther's break with Erasmus and humanism. Let us praise God for it from the bottom of our hearts! For after all Erasmus and Luther stood opposed to each other as representatives of two entirely different principles of thought and procedure.

In regard to this a little more detail than given in the previous lecture is desirable. Truth meant little and expediency everything to Erasmus who, as Luther put it, might well expose error but would never teach the truth. So his repeatedly urging a return to the Bible and pure and simple Christianity in his *Philosophy of Christ* really meant nothing. In the interest of church union he would reduce the articles of faith to a minimum (*Quae pertinent ad fidem quam paucissimis articulis absolvantur*). He said: “The essentials of our religion are peace and unanimity. They can hardly exist unless we make definitions about as few things as possible and leave many questions to individual judgment.” He could tolerate and even submit to what he recognized as error merely to preserve an external union for the sake of expediency. He said: “I would rather see things left as they are than to see a revolution which may lead to one knows not what. Others may be martyrs if they like.”²¹ With

²¹ The spirit of a martyr is exactly what Albrecht Dürer hoped for in Erasmus in 1521 when it was thought that Luther had been killed following his disappearance after the diet of Worms. Dürer writes in his diary: “*O Erasme Rotterdame, wo wiltu bleiben? Sieh, was vermag die ungerecht tyranney der weltlichen gewahlt der macht der finsternuss? Hör, du, du ritter Christi, hervor neben den Herrn Christum, beschüz die wahrheit, erlang der martärer cron.*” (Oh! Erasmus of Rotterdam, where would you find refuge? Behold what the unjust tyranny of earthly might and the power of darkness are capable of! Hearken, you knight of Christ, ride forth to the side of the Lord Christ; defend the truth; win the martyr's crown!)—But Erasmus did not ride forth. He dismounted. In that very same eventful year (1521) he wrote to Richard Pace: “I obey the decrees of emperor and pope when they are right, because that is my duty; when they are wrong I bear it, because that is the safe plan. This I believe to be permitted even to good men if there is no hope for improvement.” In 1530 he suggested an ecumenical council of much more than three years duration, and at another time an assembly of scholars from every part of the realm, to hear complaints and discuss doctrines indefinitely, while things would be left to go on in

these leanings he naturally never was at heart a friend of Luther, whom he considered “intemperate” in his position. When Luther first began to rise Erasmus actually beat upon his breast and cried out in dismay: “*Quis enim suspicaturus erat hanc fatalem tempestatem exorituram in orbe*” (Who ever suspected that such a fatal tempest would arise in the world)?

What else could result from a position and viewpoint such as Erasmus had but the double dealing and double talk we find in his writings and letters? At the same time (1519) that he wrote to Frederick of Saxony to prevent an innocent man (Luther) from being surrendered, he did his best to keep Frobenius from publishing any of Luther’s writings. He reveals his trickiness when he writes: “We must not invariably tell the whole truth. Much depends on how the truth is made known.” In his *Spongia*, a reply to Hutten who wanted Erasmus to declare where he stood regarding Rome, Erasmus presents what might well be one of the best examples of talking out of both sides of the mouth in all literature when he writes, “I have never spoken inconsistently of the Roman See. Tyranny, greed, and other vices, ancient grounds of complaint common to all good men, I have never approved. Nor have I ever totally condemned indulgences, though I have always hated this shameless trade in them. What I think about ceremonies, my books declare in many places. But when have I abused the Canon Law or the papal decretals?, etc.” No wonder Duke George once indignantly said to Erasmus, “Wash me the fur without wetting it!” when he received an ambiguous answer from him. That was Erasmus’ method. He would wash without wetting, half say one thing and not condemn another—a man of ifs and buts, of foolish hopes and craven fears, hemming and hawing and postponing any decision, and seeking to delay every action that might disturb a peace he knew was false. So even his loudest barks against error had no bite. In the words of the Indian song they were “heap big smoke but not fire.”

But there was fire in Luther. He would not cry “Peace” where there was no peace but stood for the truth openly, courageously, and without any duplicity in what he said or did, regardless of any consequences. In 1534 he said regarding another attempt of Erasmus in the interest of restoring union: “*Ich glaube zwar selbst wohl, dass vielleicht Erasmus und seine Juenger aus guter Meinung der Sache oder Unruhe raten moechten, durch solche Mittelstellung und beiderseitiges Zugutehalten gegen einander, naemlich aus Furcht, es moechte zu einem gefaehrlichen Ausbruch kommen. Aber Gewissen und Wahrheit kann derartige Eintracht nicht leiden. Denn ein anderes ist die Einigkeit des Glaubens, ein anderes die Einigkeit der Liebe*” (I believe myself that Erasmus and his disciples may perhaps have good intentions to help in the disturbed state of affairs by following a middle course and seeking to bring about a better mutual understanding, lest things might lead to a perilous end. But conscience and truth cannot tolerate such an agreement. For the unity of faith is one thing and unity in love quite another).

This position of Luther has been much condemned in the world and also by the liberal factions in the church. Erasmus is held up as a man of intellect, sensitive, cautious, and of much wider vision and profounder knowledge than Luther, a man of reason rather than one of passion who espoused “a religion of humanity rather than one of fanatical belief”. On the other hand Luther is called a contentious, unreasonable fanatic who drew the startling inferences of an irrational faith without any reserve, a man of revolution rather than reformation. Other secular writers speak of Luther’s dissimilarity to Erasmus in much more approving terms like Emerson who says in his *Desiderius Erasmus*, “The boldness of Luther was not that of a man defiant by nature, who enjoys the game of give and take, but rather that of a man who puts off the moment of his attack until he can do so no longer and then lets himself go, driven from behind, as it were, by a will greater than his own.” That will was the will of God to which Luther was obedient in subjecting reason to faith and upholding and defending every jot and tittle of the Divine Word. This was the great point of dissimilitude between him and Erasmus, and we are fortunate in having the theology of his forceful *de servo arbitrio* to follow in this point.

Before concluding, some false conceptions and misrepresentations must be cleared up concerning *de servo arbitrio*, which stands so much in the center of this series of lectures. Various historians hold that Luther’s

the hope that they would somehow eventually quiet down by themselves. Where Luther would yield nothing and not even shrink from martyrdom for the sake of the truth, Erasmus would put up with almost anything to escape martyrdom in spite of the truth. In all this nobody ever has to know exactly for whom or for what he himself stood; but one of the *epistolae obscurorum virorum* well puts it in the four words: “*Erasmus est pro se.*”

view on predestination in this writing coincides with that of Calvin. Is this true? Calvin taught an arbitrary double decree: the one to salvation reflecting God's grace, the other to damnation reflecting His holiness and justice. Likewise a double offer of salvation: the one expressing a *voluntas beneplaciti* (a will of delight) with *gratia irresistibilis* (irresistible grace) to the elect, the other expressing a *voluntas signi* (a mere sham or sign offer), given to the reprobate to whom the means of grace are only *signa inania* (empty signs), since they have been predestined to damnation. He expresses the same principle as the Koran which says *Surah II, The Cow, 6–7*: “As for the disbelievers whether thou warn them or warn them not, it is all one for them; they believe not. Allah hath sealed their hearing and their hearts, and on their eyes there is a covering. Theirs will be an awful doom.” This is sometimes called the *decretum horribile*.

There are statements in Luther's *de servo arbitrio* which some have taken from their context in an unfair effort to prove that Luther taught such a decree. Rohnert mentions the following examples though he himself does not join those who roundly condemn them: “*Immutabiliter omnia facit et voluntati ejus neque resisti neque eam mutari aut impediri potest....Ridiculus fuerit, si non omnia possit et faciat aut aliquid sine ipso fiat.—Est itaque et hoc imprimis necessarium et salutare Christiano nosse, quod deus nihil praescit contingenter, sed quod omnia incommutabili et aeterna infallibilique voluntate et praevidit, et proponit et facit* (It would be ridiculous to assume that He did not have all power and did not do everything or that anything happens without Him.—It is therefore especially necessary and salutary for a Christian to know that God foreknows nothing casually but that He foresees, proposes, and does all things in his immutable and eternal infallible will) and then goes on to say: “*Hiernach koennte es allerdings scheinen, als ob nach Luther's Meinung Gott alles, was er wolle, pure mit Zwang durchsetze; mithin auch des Menschen Seligkeit oder Verdammnis von einem decretum Dei abhaenge. Daran aber hat Luther nicht im entferntesten gedacht, sondern er hat mit jenen—allerdings nicht sehr gluecklich gewaehlten—Worten nur das sagen wollen, was auch sonst die Schrift lehrt, naemlich, dass alles, Gutes wie Boeses, dem Willen Gottes unterworfen ist, und dass Gott das Boese nicht bloss zulaesst, sondern es auch so leitet, dass es dem goettlichen Heilsplane dienen muss*” (Accordingly it may seem that Luther is of the opinion that God carries out all He wills purely by force; so that also man's salvation or damnation depends on an absolute decree of God. But that thought was farthest removed from Luther's mind. With these not too well chosen words he only wished to say what the Scriptures also teach, namely that all things, both good and bad, are subject to the will of God, so that He not only permits evil but controls it so that it must serve His divine plan of salvation).

Except for the remark on the choice of words this is well spoken. This must be said in spite of the fact that Rohnert says we have “*eine den Calvinismus anstreichende Lehre von der Gnadenwahl*” (A doctrine of predestination bordering on Calvinism). Also well spoken is what Rohnert says later on in stating that Luther never taught that the will was forced but showed in the examples of Judas and Pharaoh that *they chose* to act as they did, which places the blame not on the will of God but on them. Here Luther's emphasis is on the sovereignty of God in what He foresaw (*praevidit*) and proposed and did (*proponit et facit*) so that their evil deeds had to serve His plan of salvation. Were Luther's words so ill chosen? No. For he is not teaching an absolute determinism or blind fatalism which says, “If you're supposed to hang, you'll never drown. You can eat all the arsenic you want and you'll never die before the day set for you, nor can you postpone that day by the best medical attention or anything that you may do or not do.” The fact that in respect to God everything must necessarily happen as He foresees and directs it in His providence, does not mean “that God carries out all He wills purely by force” and that in respect to man there is no freedom and no contingency in the development of things which certainly can be changed by human acts. Here too we must in faith accept the one thing and not reject the other, even though our reason does not grasp it. Luther did not try to solve mysteries, nor should we.

Another unjust criticism concerning Luther's *de servo arbitrio* is that it is philosophical rather than theological. Henry Eyster Jacobs says in his *Martin Luther, 1909*: “The overpowering influence of Augustine determined probably more than one passage.—In this treatise Luther attempts to meet Erasmus on a philosophical rather than on a theological basis.” But must not Luther's own background, which was at the same time the background of the whole controversy, be considered? Luther had come up the hard way wading through Aristotle and Plato in his scholastic training. Aristotle with his pantheistic materialistic philosophy

made the world a necessity and eternal, and God a contingency dependent on the world. Luther thoroughly hated his philosophy and called him *der leibhaftige Teufel selbst* (the very devil himself). Like Augustine, who philosophically was a Neoplatonist, he was more favorably inclined to Plato's philosophy which made the οὐσία or Eternal Being absolute or a necessity and the world and what transpires in it dependent on it as a contingency. In his *Heidelberg Disputation* he rejects Aristotle because he evilly opposes and ridicules the "ideas" of Plato (*male reprehendit ac ridet Platoniarum idearum*) and goes on to say that the communion of ideas Plato expresses is much more ingenious (*Sed ingeniosius participatio idearum a Platone*).

Plato's "ideas" led to Augustine's *nunc fluens* and *tota simul*. The *nunc fluens* taking place in time is seen as a *tota simul* or everything at once in the mind of God, since God sees past, present, and future in one picture from eternity, or otherwise expressed the *nunc fluens* is the *tota simul* of ideas in the eternal mind of God and in His infallible foreknowledge, so that what He foresees will happen. Such thoughts are in the background of some of the things that Luther says in *de servo arbitrio*. But are they necessarily philosophical and not theological just because Luther employs the philosophical terms of his day such as *necessitas*, *absoluta necessitas*, *necessitas consequentiae*, *necessitas consequentis*, and *contingenter*? Certainly not. For the Scriptures tell us that before God 1000 years are as one day and one day as 1000 years, that His foreknowledge is infallible, and that He rules supreme in all things that happen. One cannot but sense the influence of Augustine on Luther in *de servo arbitrio*. But that influence was good. It led Luther deeper into the Scriptures. They and not "a philosophical basis" are the basis on which Luther meets Erasmus.

It is on this basis that Luther portrays God as absolute and sovereign in all things. That pertains to the loss of Judas which God foresaw in His infallible foreknowledge and justice though He did not will or cause it. That pertains also to the saved whose salvation has its sole cause in God (*solius divinae gratiae opus*) who chooses man to faith from eternity, brings him to faith by His means of grace in time, and keeps him in faith to the end. Luther refuses to solve the mystery of why not all are chosen and thus remains consistent in his acknowledgment of the absolute sovereignty of God in whom he will ever trust though His ways are hidden from him. That Luther like Augustine does not make the careful distinction between will and foreknowledge that the *Formula of Concord* and the later dogmaticians make is due largely to the fact that Luther emphasizes God's sovereignty with all the force at his command as he stands in dreadful veneration on the bleak mountain tops in the awesome glow of the majesty of the *absconditus deus* (the hidden God) and then descends into the green pastures in the valley to see the *deus revelatus* (God revealed) on his own level in Christ come down from heaven and find peace in Him. Luther daringly scales the heights and probes the depths in faith while Erasmus, the rationalist and humanist, timidly paddles around on the surface with his reasoning.

How has *de servo arbitrio* fared in the Lutheran Church? Boak, Hyma, and Slosson say (p. 15) in *The Growth of European Civilization*: "The Lutherans, however, gradually drifted away from Luther's original conception of predestination which was identical with the Calvinistic view. After 1530 they emphasized the importance of personal faith.—The Calvinists continued to maintain Luther's own doctrine, which Calvin had probably hit upon after reading Luther's early works." But what about the *Formula of Concord* which fully subscribes to Luther's position on the will and even refers to Luther's *de servo arbitrio* in the *Solida Declaratio* in making its position clear? That Melancthon dragged in Erasmus' *facultas se applicandi ad gratiam* in his *Loci* in 1548 and began to speak of *dissimilis actio* in man is granted. But the thirty years of bitter conflict, centering to a great extent around the synergistic statements of Melancthon, resulted in a complete vindication of Luther's position on the will. Though election itself was not really touched upon in these controversies, there were rumblings regarding this doctrine. Differences could be noted between the Philippists on the one hand and such men as Flacius, Brenz, Wigand, Amsdorf, Hesshus, and Heerbrand on the other. Then there was the controversy between Zanchi who upheld the so-called *donum perseverantiae* (that one who had once received faith could never fully lose it), while Marbach denied it, as a result of which a formula of agreement was signed in 1563 probably drawn up by Jakob Andreae. Thus differences had come to be felt even though there was no open controversy, which explains the statement of the *Formula of Concord* on election: "Concerning this article no public dissension has occurred among the theologians of the Augsburg Confession." But there were enough rumblings to move the framers of the *Formula of Concord* to come with a clear-cut statement on election in the

last minute, no doubt in order to forestall any future strife by taking a firm and fixed stand on the question. Even without this stand the *Formula of Concord* supports Luther in his views of election by its clear-cut position on the will which can lead you only to the conception of an election to faith, never in view of it. So there certainly is no basis for any claim that the Lutheran Church forsook the position of Luther; for its latest confessional writing upholds him in every respect, and no one can reject Luther without at the same time rejecting our confessions. That must be said in spite of the fact that dogmaticians later departed from Luther with the *intuitu fidel* and *zweite Lehrtropus* (cf. *Quartalschrift* of January 1955, page 8).

Lastly, what about the claims that Luther disavowed his *de servo arbitrio* later on? Henry Eyster Jacobs says in his “Martin Luther”: “In the haste of his composition he (Luther) reiterates the phrases of his master Augustine concerning matters that he has not as yet thoroughly solved in his own mind.” This gives the impression that *de servo arbitrio* is an immature product of Luther’s pen. Philippi says in his “*Kirchliche Glaubenslehre*” IV, I 36–37: “Luther machte zur Sicherstellung der evangelischen Heilsbasis seinen wahrhaft gigantischen Ausfall gegen diesen theologischen Zwerg (Erasmus) in seiner Schrift *de servo arbitrio*.—Doch acceptirte Luther (mir ueberkuehnm Glaubensstrotze) eben nur die vom Gegner gebotene Position und liess sich nur durch den Gegensatz momentan—weit ueber das Ziel hinausfuehren—und hat seine frueheren dahinein-schlagenden Aeusserungen (fuer eine absolute Praedestinationslehre) durch Zurechtstellung zurueckgenommen” (In order to fortify the evangelical basis of salvation Luther made his truly gigantic attack—in the over daring defiance of his faith—on this theological dwarf [Erasmus], in his writing *de servo arbitrio*.—However in restricting himself to the position his opponent offered he momentarily permitted himself to be carried far beyond the mark—and retracted his earlier statements [concerning an absolute predestination doctrine] by correction).²²

Stellhorn in his Dogmatico-Historical introduction to his “The Present Controversy on Predestination,” found in the 802 page volume “The Error of Missouri,” edited by Schodde, Columbus 1897, says: “According to Walch in his edition of Luther’s works, Lutheran theologians as to their opinion on this work can be divided into three classes. The first class thinks that “Luther has expressed himself on predestination in this book in such a manner that he in fact agrees with Calvin.”—The second class maintains “that Luther used expressions which in themselves are not to be approved”, but that he is to be excused in as much as at that time “the light of evangelical knowledge had not fully dawned for him” and that he treated the matter “more philosophically than theologically.” The third class (which Stellhorn calls a very small one) holds that there is “nothing erroneous and questionable contained in these expressions (of *de servo arbitrio*), but that everything is correctly set forth in them, if only they are taken in Luther’s sense.” Stellhorn then unfairly brings in various expressions where Luther especially emphasizes the sovereignty of the hidden God (*deus absconditus*) as a warning against trying to solve mysteries with our reason, and places himself in the first class, claiming that the expressions of *de servo arbitrio* do not contain the doctrine of the later Luther or the confessions of the Church bearing his name. In support of his claim he brings in the *Solida Declaratio* with its reference to Luther’s *in Genesin* in mentioning *de servo arbitrio* and leaves the impression that Luther is there guarding against misunderstanding this writing because of its supposed shortcomings.

Before considering the facts let us first consider the inclination of these men who have been quoted as either making disparaging remarks about *de servo arbitrio* or claiming that Luther changed his position. Philippi, Rohnert, Stellhorn, and Jacobs are all *intuitu fidei* men who have lent their weight and influence to the promulgation of the so-called *zweiter Lehrtropus* by which they make something entirely different out of that in any event very dangerous expression *intuitu fidei* than what it was originally intended to be, viz. a defense against the naked decree of Calvin. Under its cover they subtly bring in the old Erasmian and Philippistic synergism. It is easy to understand why those of such a bent should carry a chip on their shoulder against *de servo arbitrio* and even against Luther for taking the position he took.

²² We here ask on what other basis should Luther have met Erasmus than the one Erasmus offered and what is wrong about demolishing that basis by a truly gigantic effort?

Regardless of whether Luther changed or not we will still have to take *our* position on the basis of the Scripture truths he set forth and not on a later change in *his* position on them if there would be such a change. But there was no change in Luther. His discussion of Predestination in chapter 26 of his *in Genesin*, where he refers especially to his *de servo arbitrio*, certainly does not indicate it. It is found in Vol. 6 of the Erlangen edition of his *Latina Opera*.

Here he deals with the attempts of reason to solve the hidden mysteries of God and with the doubts of those who fear they will not be saved because they are not sure that they are chosen. He most solemnly warns against idle, useless, and extremely dangerous speculations. He says: “So I have therefore taught in my booklet *de servo arbitrio* that one must dispute either on the hidden God or God as He has revealed Himself.—Thoughts that desire to search out what is beyond the revelation God gives us are devilish thoughts (*cogitationes diabolicæ*) by which we accomplish nothing more than to steep ourselves into perdition.—Moses desired that God should show him His face. But the Lord replied (Ex. 33:20): ‘I will show you my back, for my face you cannot see.’ This curiosity which tempts and drives us to seek God by way of natural speculation is original sin itself. It is indeed a very great sin and a foolish and vain effort.—Insofar as God has not revealed Himself there is no faith, no knowledge, and no cognition (*De Deo quatenus non est revelatus nulla est fides, nulla scientia et cognitio nulla*).—Unless you wish to fall into despair and into hatred and blasphemy of God, refrain from speculation on the hidden God and leave off vainly striving to see His face.” He then urges to turn to the *Deus revelatus* (God as He is revealed) saying: “God places His counsel and will before you saying, ‘I will gloriously reveal my foreknowledge and predestination to you but not, as you imagine, by way of your reason and carnal wisdom. Thus will I do it: I, the hidden God, will become the revealed God and yet remain one and the same. I will become incarnate, that is I will send my Son. He will die for your sins and rise again from the dead and so fulfill your desire to know whether you are predestined to life or not. See, here is My Son, hear Him (Matt. 17:5), see Him in the manger, in the lap of His mother, and extended on the cross. Behold what He does and says. There you will find Me with certainty. For who sees Me, says Christ, sees the Father Himself John 14:9.—Here is the book of life in which you are written (*Ibi enim est liber vitae in quo scriptus es*). So God reveals His will through Christ and the Gospel.—You have the Gospel, are baptized, have forgiveness and are a Christian; and yet you doubt and say you do not know whether you believe or not, though you hold that which is told you of Christ in the Word and Sacraments to be true.”

Luther concludes his 10 page discourse which begins with his reference to *de servo arbitrio* in his *in Genesin* by saying: “These are the things I earnestly desire to teach and admonish with accuracy; because after my death many will bring out my books to confirm their various errors and phantasies. Now I have written among other things that everything is absolutely necessary (*esse omnia absoluta et necessaria*): but at the same time I added that we must also look upon the revealed God.—He is called Jesus Christ, the Lord of Hosts, and there is no other God. So I have often spoken also in other places. But they will pass over all of them and seize only upon those that deal with the hidden God. Therefore may you, who now hear me, remember that I have thus taught, that one must not try to find out about the predestination of the hidden God but should find peace in the call and the ministry of the Word. For here you can become certain of your faith and salvation and say: ‘I believe in the Son of God who says that he that believeth in the Son has everlasting life (John 3:36).’ For in Him there is no damnation or wrath but the good will of the Father. So I have also taught in my other books, and do so teach now with my living voice. Therefore I stand vindicated (*Ideo sum excusatus*).” The verb *excuso* is a combination based on *ex* and *causa* and means to be taken out of the cause placed against you. Menge gives “justify” as one of its meanings. Could anyone possibly take Luther’s “*excusatus sum*” as an apology for things said in *de servo arbitrio* when he distinctly says in beginning his discourse: *Sic igitur in libello de servo arbitrio—docui* (So I have therefore taught in *de servo arbitrio*) and bases what follows on the distinctions he has made in this writing of his? The *Solida Declaratio* does not understand it that way when it brings in *de servo arbitrio* saying about the freedom of the will: “*Hoc negotium D. Lutherus in libro suo de servo arbitrio contra Erasmum egregie et solide explicuit.—Postea in commentario illo praeclaro quem in Genesin scripsit (praecipue in explicatione 26. capituli) eandem (sententiam) repetivit et declaravit*” (Dr. Luther has expounded this matter excellently and thoroughly in his book against Erasmus, *de servo arbitrio*.—Later in his outstanding

commentary on *Genesis*, especially in the 26th chapter, he repeated and proclaimed the same view). Nor can we imagine Luther apologizing, for in various letters in 1534 he upholds this writing. In 1537 he wrote to Capito that the only products of his pen he never regretted writing are the two catechisms and *de servo arbitrio*. To his dying day Luther upheld *de servo arbitrio*.

Considering the basis of the argument, the background, the points Luther is driving at, and the profundity of this writing, we choose ever to stand with him in this diatribe so rich in laying down the principles of true theology in what it says on the clarity of Scripture, its sole authority, Law and Gospel, Christ's redemptive work, flesh and spirit, the true and the false church etc. It is a triumphant testimony of faith against human wisdom in the Church and particularly against the pietistic and sanctimonious wisdom of the humanistic world, which would have us identify ourselves with the humanistic elements in the social and cultural pattern of our day.

We conclude with a quotation from Luthardt found in Stellhorn: "It (*de servo arbitrio*) is a powerful composition, defiant and confident, bold in word and thought, full of holy zeal, of mighty earnestness, written from the deepest conviction of his soul. It is one of the most important and richest of Luther's writings. And it is easily understood that in later years, when he was displeased with his other writings and with Saturnine hunger would have destroyed these children of his spirit, he named this work beside the Catechism as among those which he could acknowledge as his true writings. For scarcely anywhere else do the waters of his soul pour themselves forth with equal power and richness."

What shall we say to these things? The spirit of the ancient philosophers still confronts us in the neopaganism of the world about us. That of Erasmus has taken over in the rationalism of the liberal churches of our day. The ghost of Melancthon stalks about where banners bearing Luther's name are flying. So there will be many trials and much contradiction encountered as we go about in our private pastoral work and as public witnesses in the church proclaiming, upholding, and defending the glorious truth that Luther taught. Sometimes our hearts may feel faint as we feel we are getting nowhere. But if our faint hearts tremble let us listen to Luther's words to Melancthon at Augsburg in 1530 when the great Reformer wrote: "Let the matter be ever so great, great also is He who has begun and who conducts it; for it is not our work—'Cast thy burden on the Lord; the Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him.' Does He say that to the wind, or does He throw His words before the animals? It is your worldly wisdom that torments you and not theology. As if you, with your useless cares, could accomplish anything! What more can the devil do than strangle us? I conjure you, who in all other matters are so ready to fight, to fight against yourself as your greatest enemy." These words came from the same pen that wrote as follows: "Hardly can I breathe for storms and faint-heartedness." Yes, Luther had his battles with himself too; but he won against all his foes saying: "With might of ours can naught be done. Soon were our loss effected; But for us fights the valiant One Whom God Himself elected." In His might let us too carry on all our work in proclaiming THE UNCONDITIONED GOSPEL OF FULL AND FREE SALVATION IN CHRIST ALONE, *SOLA GRATIA, SOLA FIDE, SOLA SCRIPTURA!* CHRIST IS ALL IN ALL, THE ALPHA AND OMEGA.

We through Him walk without fainting,
 To our goal unwearied run,
 Mount on wings like eagles rising
 O'er fears till life's work is done.
 Be Thy Word our Sun and Shield;
 None of it, Lord, let us yield!
 Lead Thou on, O mighty Savior,
 Till the vict'ry's won forever!
 (Written on Isaiah 40:31 to the meter of *Werde munter*.)

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