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GUIDE TO MARTIN LUTHER'S  
DE SERVO ARBITRIO (1525)

## 1. Sources and literature

The dispute between Erasmus and Luther is evident in their correspondence since 1516. Important letters are printed in German translation in *W<sup>2</sup>* (Martin Luthers Sämtliche Schriften, hg. v. Johann Georg Walch, vol. 18: Reformations-Schriften, 1888), and the editorial introductions to the editions trace the discussion. In 1524, Erasmus published his treatise *De libero arbitrio διατριβή sive collatio* (VD16 E 3147), to which Luther responded in 1525 with *De servo arbitrio* (VD16 L 6660). Erasmus' *Diatribē* has not yet been edited in the Amsterdam edition (Opera Omnia Desiderii Erasmi [ASD]), so that researchers have to use either the Leiden edition (Desiderii Erasmi Roterodami Opera Omnia, vol. 9, 1706, 1215–1248 [LB]) or Johann von Walter's edition (Erasmus, *De libero arbitrio diatribe sive collatio*, 1910), which also forms the basis of the Latin-German study edition in Erasmus' *Ausgewählte Schriften* (ed. Werner Welzig, vol. 4, 1969, 1–195 [AS]). Luther's book was edited in WA 18:551–787 by Albert Freitag, with a detailed introduction; both the edition and the introduction are still usable, and because WA 18 is often cited in the research literature, it is advisable to have this edition at hand. In twentieth-century Germany, many also used the edition in *Luthers Werke in Auswahl* published by Otto Clemen (vol. 3, 1929, 94–293 [CI]). As part of *Studienausgabe* of Luther's writings published in the late 1970s and 1980s, the Latin text was re-edited, with the introduction and commentary reflecting more recent research (vol. 3, 1983, 170–356 [LStA]). All three editions mentioned (WA 18 – CI 3 – LStA 3) can be used and cited for academic work. The authoritative English translation is that published by Philip S. Watson in *Luther's Works* (vol. 33, 1972 [LW]). Erasmus' and Luther's tracts are available in one volume in English translation: *Luther and Erasmus: Free Will and Salvation*, translated and edited by E. Gordon Rupp and Philip S. Watson, 1969. And there is a selection from Erasmus' three contributions to the controversy together with a selection from Luther's *De servo arbitrio* in English translation: *Erasmus and Luther. The Battle over Free Will*, ed. Clarence H. Miller, 2012.

Those seeking basic information about *De servo arbitrio* can consult not only the introductions to the editions and translations, but also the accounts of Luther's biography and theology, where the book and the controversy to which it belongs are discussed. In addition, there are numerous monographs and articles that either deal with *De servo arbitrio* or discuss the writing in other contexts. Many of these are studies of systematic theology, because Luther's controversy with Erasmus invites discussion of a number of fundamental questions: the relationship between divine governance (*praedestinatio*) and human freedom (*liberum arbitrium*), the nature and understanding of the Bible (*claritas scripturae*), the distinction between the hidden and revealed God (*deus absconditus/revelatus*), and the certainty of faith (*assertio*). The following selection is arranged by publication date and contains contributions that are oriented toward either church history or systematic theology:

- KARL ZICKENDRAHT, *Der Streit zwischen Erasmus und Luther über die Willensfreiheit*, 1909
- FERDINAND KATTENBUSCH, *Deus absconditus bei Luther* (in: *Festgabe für D. Dr. Julius Kaftan zu seinem 70. Geburtstag*, 1920, 170–214)
- ERDMANN SCHOTT, *Luthers Lehre vom servum arbitrium in ihrer theologischen Bedeutung* (*Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie* 7, 1930, 399–430)
- MARTIN DOERNE, *Gottes Ehre am gebundenen Willen. Evangelische Grundlagen und theologische Spitzensätze in De servo arbitrio* (*Lutherjahrbuch* 20, 1938, 45–92)

- JOHN DILLENBERGER, *God Hidden and Revealed: The Interpretation of Luther's Deus Absconditus and its Significance for Religious Thought*, 1953
- HANS JOACHIM IWAND, *Die Freiheit des Christen und die Unfreiheit des Willens* [1957] (in: Id., *Um den rechten Glauben. Gesammelte Aufsätze*, 1959, 247–268)
- HELLMUT BANDT, *Luthers Lehre vom verborgenen Gott. Eine Untersuchung zu dem offenbarungsgeschichtlichen Ansatz seiner Theologie*, 1958
- RUDOLF HERMANN, *Von der Klarheit der Heiligen Schrift. Untersuchungen und Erörterungen über Luthers Lehre von der Schrift in "De servo arbitrio"* [1958] (in: Id., *Studien zur Theologie Luthers und des Luthertums*, 1981, 170–255)
- ALFRED ADAM, *Der Begriff "Deus absconditus" bei Luther nach Herkunft und Bedeutung* (*Lutherjahrbuch* 30, 1963, 97–106)
- HARRY J. MCSORLEY, *Luthers Lehre vom unfreien Willen nach seiner Hauptschrift De Servo Arbitrio im Licht der biblischen und kirchlichen Tradition*, 1967 (English translation: *Luther: Right or Wrong? An Ecumenical-Theological Study of Luther's Major Work, The Bondage of the Will*, 1969)
- KLAUS SCHWARZWÄLLER, *Sibboleth. Die Interpretation von Luthers Schrift De servo arbitrio seit Theodosius Harnack. Ein systematisch-kritischer Überblick*, 1969
- KLAUS SCHWARZWÄLLER, *Theologia Crucis. Luthers Lehre von der Prädestination nach De servo arbitrio*, 1525, 1970
- HERMANN DÖRRIES, *Erasmus oder Luther. Eine kirchengeschichtliche Einführung* (in: *Kerygma und Melos, Festschrift Christhard Mahrenholz*, 1970, 533–570)
- GOTTFRIED KRODEL, *Erasmus-Luther: One Theology, One Method, Two Results* (*Concordia Theological Monthly* 41, 1970, 648–667)
- LINWOOD URBAN, *Was Luther a Thoroughgoing Determinist?* (*Journal of Theological Studies* 22, 1971, 113–139)
- OTTO KUSS, *Über die Klarheit der Schrift. Historische und hermeneutische Überlegungen zu der Kontroverse des Erasmus und des Luther über den freien oder versklavten Willen* (in: *Schriftauslegung. Beiträge zur Hermeneutik des Neuen Testaments und im Neuen Testament*, ed. Josef Ernst, 1972, 89–149)
- EBERHARD JÜNGEL, *Quae supra nos nihil ad nos. Eine Kurzformel der Lehre vom verborgenem Gott, im Anschluß an Luther interpretiert* [1972] (in: Id., *Theologische Erörterungen*, vol. 2: *Entsprechungen: Gott – Wahrheit – Mensch*, 2002, 202–251)
- BRIAN A. GERRISH, *"To the unknown God." Luther and Calvin on the Hiddenness of God* (*Journal of Religion* 53, 1973, 263–292)
- ROBERT D. SHOFNER, *Luther on the 'Bondage of the Will': An Analytical-Critical Essay* (*Scottish Journal of Theology* 26, 1973, 24–39)
- JOHN W. O'MALLEY, *Erasmus and Luther, Continuity and Discontinuity as Key to Their Conflict* (*Sixteenth Century Journal* 5/2, 1974, 57–65)
- BERNHARD LOHSE, *Marginalien zum Streit zwischen Erasmus und Luther* [1975] (in: Id., *Evangelium in der Geschichte. Studien zu Luther und der Reformation*, 1988, 118–137)
- DIETRICH KERLEN, *Assertio. Die Entwicklung von Luthers theologischem Anspruch und der Streit mit Erasmus von Rotterdam*, 1976

- HEINRICH BORNKAMM, Martin Luther in der Mitte seines Lebens. Das Jahrzehnt zwischen dem Wormser und dem Augsburger Reichstag, 1979, 368–405
- GEORGES CHANTRAINE, Erasme et Luther – libre e serf arbitre. Étude historique et théologique, 1981
- MARJORIE O’ROURKE BOYLE, Rhetoric and Reform: Erasmus’ Civil Dispute with Luther, 1983
- Humanismus und Reformation – Martin Luther und Erasmus von Rotterdam in den Konflikten ihrer Zeit, ed. Otto Hermann Pesch, 1985 [essay collection]
- GÜNTER BADER, Assertio. Drei fortlaufende Lektüren zu Skepsis, Narrheit und Sünde bei Erasmus und Luther, 1985
- JAMES D. TRACY, Two Erasmuses, Two Luthers: Erasmus’ Strategy in Defense of De Libero Arbitrio (Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte 78, 1987, 37–60)
- JOACHIM MEHLHAUSEN, Forma Christianismi. Die theologische Bewertung eines kleinen katechetischen Lehrstücks durch Luther und Erasmus von Rotterdam (Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche 87, 1990, 437–455)
- REINHARD BRANDT, Die ermöglichte Freiheit. Sprachkritische Rekonstruktion der Lehre vom unfreien Willen, 1992
- Widerspruch. Luthers Auseinandersetzung mit Erasmus von Rotterdam, ed. Kari Kopperi, 1997 [essay collection]
- ROBERT ROSIN, Reformers, the Preacher, and Skepticism. Luther, Brenz, Melanchthon, and Ecclesiastes, 1997, 79–150
- WERNER OTTO, Verborgene Gerechtigkeit. Luthers Gottesbegriff nach seiner Schrift De servo arbitrio als Antwort auf die Theodizeefrage, 1998
- HENNING GRAF REVENTLOW, Die Rolle der Kirchenväter im Streit zwischen Erasmus und Luther. Eine neue Besinnung (in: Die Patristik in der Biblexegese des 16. Jahrhunderts, ed. David C. Steinmetz, 1999, 49–70)
- THOMAS REINHUBER, Kämpfender Glaube. Studien zu Luthers Bekenntnis am Ende von De servo arbitrio, 2000
- MELANIE BEINER, Intentionalität und Geschöpflichkeit. Die Bedeutung von Martin Luthers Schrift “Vom unfreien Willen” für die theologische Anthropologie, 2000
- ROBERT KOLB, Bound Choice, Election, and Wittenberg Theological Method. From Martin Luther to the Formula of Concord, 2005
- THOMAS KAUFMANN, Luther und Erasmus [2005] (in: Luther Handbuch, ed. Albrecht Beutel, <sup>3</sup>2017, 173–183)
- GERHARD O. FORDE, The Captivation of the Will. Luther vs. Erasmus on Freedom and Bondage, 2005
- THEODOR MAHLMANN, Die Interpretation von Luthers De servo arbitrio bei orthodoxen lutherischen Theologen, vor allem bei Sebastian Schmidt (1617–1696) (in: Luthers Erben. Studien zur Rezeptionsgeschichte der reformatorischen Theologie Luthers, eds. Notger Slenczka and Walter Sparr, Tübingen, 73–136)
- MARKUS MATTHIAS, Zur Auseinandersetzung um Martin Luthers “De servo arbitrio” im 16. Jahrhundert (Luther-Bulletin 19, 2010, 40–67)
- EILERT HERMS, Opus Dei gratiae: Cooperatio Dei et hominum. Luthers Darstellung seiner Rechtfertigungslehre in De servo arbitrio (Lutherjahrbuch 78, 2011, 61–135)

- ANDERS KRAL, Valla-Style Determinism and the Intellectual Background of Luther’s *De servo arbitrio* (*Harvard Theological Review* 108, 2015, 402–422)
- KLAUS W. MÜLLER, Zur “*voluntas Dei abscondita*” bei Martin Luther. Tradition und Innovation (*Lutherjahrbuch* 84, 2017, 118–169)
- WILLEM VAN VLASTUIN, *Sola Scriptura*: The Relevance of Luther’s Use of *Sola Scriptura* in *De Servo Arbitrio* (in: *Sola Scriptura. Biblical and Theological Perspectives on Scripture, Authority, and Hermeneutics*, eds Hans Burger et al., 2018, 243–259)
- STEPHEN PAULSON, Luther’s Outlaw God, vol. 1–3, 2018–21
- PATRICK BAHL, “*Solus spiritus*”? Luthers Rede vom Heiligen Geist in “*De servo arbitrio*” zwischen Abgrenzungsargumentation und Unterscheidungslehre (*Lutherjahrbuch* 88, 2021, 69–112)
- Luther und Erasmus über Freiheit. Rezeption und Relevanz eines gelehrten Streits, eds Jörg Noller and Georg Sans, 2020 [essay collection]
- MIIKKA RUOKANEN, Trinitarian grace in Martin Luther’s *The Bondage of the Will*, 2021
- MARKUS MATTHIAS, Der Briefwechsel zwischen Martin Luther und Erasmus von Rotterdam. Eine sprachlich-rhetorische Analyse (in: *Briefkultur der Reformationszeit*, ed. Johannes Schilling, 2023, 273–298)
- PATRICK BAHL, Bibelhermeneutik im Willensstreit. Auslegungsgeschichtliche Beobachtungen unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des exegetischen Schlagabtausches über Ez 18 (*Lutherjahrbuch* 92, 2025, 137–161)
- OLLI-PEKKA VAINIO, Bound Choice (in: Id., *Luther under Scrutiny. Knowledge, Will, and Metaphysics*, 2025, 69–97)
- OLLI-PEKKA VAINIO, Metatheological Ramifications of the Debate between Erasmus and Luther. Reflections on Systematic-Theological Positions (*Lutherjahrbuch* 92, 2025, 294–306)
- ROBERT KOLB, Luther’s Legacy on Predestination in the Context of On Bound Choice (*Lutheran Quarterly* 40, 2026, 27–50)

## 2. A chronology of the debate between Luther and Erasmus

The following list contains only a few (mostly Latin) quotations. The correspondences of Erasmus (Allen = *Opus epistolarum Desiderii Erasmi Roterodami*, ed. Percy S. Allen), Luther (WA.Br = *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, section 4: Briefwechsel) and Melanchthon (MBW = *Melanchthons Briefwechsel. Kritische und kommentierte Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Heinz Scheible) contain many more passages referring to the debate between Luther and Erasmus.

### Fourth and fifth centuries

Theologians in the Western Mediterranean, especially Augustine, establish voluntarism as a key theological concept.

### High and Late Middle Ages

Scholastic theologians develop a doctrine of justification that preserves the sovereignty of divine grace while acknowledging the importance of human participation in the process of salvation. This doctrine assigns a role to free will (*liberum arbitrium*) in the process.

### Fifteenth century

Renaissance humanism emerges, offering a view of humanity that blends elements of both optimism and pessimism about human nature. This perspective varies in its emphasis on human ability and acceptance of Christian doctrines regarding sin and grace.

### Summer 1516

Luther studies Erasmus' *Novum Instrumentum* (VD16 B 4196) and uses it for his lecture on the Epistle to the Romans, without criticizing its content.

### October 19, 1516: Luther to George Spalatin

“Quae me in Erasmo, homine eruditissimo, movent, haec sunt, [...] quod in apostolo interpretando iustitiam operum seu legis seu propriam (ita enim appellat apostolus [Rom. 10:3]) intelligit ceremoniales illas et figurales observantias, Deinde de peccato originali (quod utique admittit) non plane velit apostolum loqui cap. V ad Romanos. [...] Ego sane in hoc dissentire ab Erasmo non dubito, quod Augustino in scripturis interpretandis tantum posthabeo Hieronymum, quantum ipse Augustinum in omnibus Hieronymo posthabet. [...] Nequaquam igitur iustitia legis seu factorum tantum est in ceremoniis, sed rectius etiam in universi decalogi factis. [...] Officium itaque et amici et Christiani facias precor et Erasmus de iis certum face. Cuius auctoritatem sicut spero et cupio futuram celeberrimam, ita metuo, ne per eandem multi sibi accipiant patrocinium defendendae illius literalis, id est mortuae intelligentiae, qua plenus est Lyranus commentarius et ferme omnes post Augustinum” (WA.Br 1:70,4–37, no. 27). Spalatin forwards this criticism to Erasmus (Allen 2:417–49, no. 501), but does not receive a reply.

### March 1, 1517, Luther to John Lang

“Erasmum nostrum lego, et indies decrescit mihi animus erga eum; placet quidem, quod tam religiosos quam sacerdotes non minus constanter quam erudite arguit et damnat in-

veteratae huius et veterosae incitiae; sed timeo, ne Christum et gratiam Dei non satis promoveat, in qua multo est quam Stapulensis ignorantior: humana praevalent in eo plus quam divina. Quanquam invitus eum iudico, facio tamen, ut te praemoneam, ne omnia legas, imo accipias sine iudicio. Tempora enim sunt periculosa hodie, et video, quod non ideo quispiam sit christianus vere sapiens, quia Graecus sit et Hebraeus, quando et Beatus Hieronymus quinque linguis monoglosson Augustinum non adaequarit, licet Erasmo aliter sit longe visum. Sed aliud est iudicium eius, qui arbitrio hominis nonnihil tribuit, aliud eius, qui praeter gratiam nihil novit' (WA.Br 1:90,15–26, no. 35).

January 18, 1518, Luther to Spalatin

“Ego denique apud eos, id est omnes, qui bonas literas vel oderunt studio vel nesciunt ignavia, Erasmus summis laudibus semper effero atque tueor quod possum, omni industria cavens, ne evomam ea, in quibus dissentio, ne mea quoque voce suam invidiam in illum confirmet. Quanquam sint quam multa in Erasmo, quae mihi ad cognitionem Christi longe aliena videantur. Si tamen ut theologus, non ut grammaticus loqui debeo, alioquin nihil eruditius, nihil ingeniosius viderit vel ipse Hieronymus, tanto praedicatus ab Erasmo praeconio. Atque hoc meum de Erasmo iudicium si alteri faeceris notum, tum scias amicitiae iura te violasse” (WA.Br 1:133,17–26, no. 57).

March 5, 1518

Erasmus sends Luther's theses on indulgences to Thomas More (Allen 3:239,37, no. 785).

Summer 1518

In the preface the new edition of the *Enchiridion*, Erasmus subtly approves of Luther's criticism of indulgences (Allen 3:366,185–367,212, no. 858)

September 4, 1518

Through Wolfgang Capito, Erasmus comes into contact with Luther. Erasmus approves of Luther's theses on indulgences: “quam videlicet honorifice, quam candide tuam veniarum istam disputationem miratur” (WA.Br 1:197,2–198,3, no. 91).

October 17, 1518

Erasmus expresses his sympathy for Luther's criticism of indulgences to John Lang: “Eleutherium audio probari ab optimis quibusque; sed aiunt illum in suis scriptis sui dissimilem esse. Puto illae conclusiones placuerunt omnibus, exceptis paucis des purgatorio; quod isti nolunt sibi eripi” (Allen 3:409,12–15). He criticizes Prierias' “insulsissimam responsionem” (409,16). At the same time, however, he cautions against approaching the necessary renewal of the Papal Church too openly: “haud scio an expediat hoc vlcus aperte tangere” (410,19–20).

March 28, 1519

Luther praises Erasmus and wants to establish friendly relations with him (WA.Br 1:361–363, no. 163).

April 14, 1519

Erasmus expresses both sympathy and distance toward Luther in his letter to Frederick the Wise: “Lutherus mihi tam ignotus est quam cui ignotissimus, vt suspectus esse non queam, quasi faueam amico. Huius lucubrationes nec tueri meum est nec improbare, vt quas hactenus non legerim nisi carptim. Certe vitam hominis nemo qui nouit non probat; quae cum longissime absit ab omni suspitione auariciae atque ambitionis, et morum innocentia vel apud ethnicos fauorem inuenit. Quam non congruit mansuetudini theologicae, protinus ac ne perlecto quidem libro tam immaniter debacchari in nomen ac famam probi viri; idque apud imperitam plebeculam, quae prorsus caret iudicio! praesertim cum ille disputanda proposuerit, cum omnium iudicio sese submiserit, quorum oportuit et quorum non oportuit. Nemo monuit, nemo docuit, nemo reuicit. Tantum vociferantur haeticum, seditiosis clamoribus ad lapides prouocant. Dicas eos sitire sanguinem humanum, non salutem animarum. Quo inuisius est hereseos nomen auribus Christianis, hoc minus committendum est vt temere in quenquam impingatur. Non statim quiuus error haeresis est, neque protinus hereticum est quicquid huic aut illi displicet. Neque semper fidei negocium agunt qui praetexunt huiusmodi splendidos titulos. Imo plerique suum agunt negocium, vel questui suo consulentes vel tyrannidi. Quin praecipiti ledendi studio sepe criminantur in alio quod ipsi domi probant” (Allen 3:530,66–87, no. 939).

April 22, 1519

Erasmus speaks favorably of Luther to Melanchthon: “Martini Lutheri vitam apud nos nemo non probat, de doctrina variant sententiae. Ipse libros illius nondum legi. Quaedam admonuit recte, sed vtinam tam feliciter quam libere!” (Allen 3:540,33–35, no. 947).

May 30, 1519

Erasmus responds kindly to Luther’s letter of March 1519 (Allen 3:605–607, No. 980). Erasmus finds himself suspected of being a sympathizer of Luther. However, it seems he views Luther critically.

October 19, 1519

After being accused of sympathizing with Luther during his time in Leuven, Erasmus explains his relationship with Luther in a letter to Cardinal Albrecht of Mainz. The letter is intended for wider distribution and can therefore be considered a public statement: “Lutherus mihi tam ignotus est quam qui ignotissimus; cuius libros nondum vacauit legere, nisi quod carptim degustauit quaedam. Si bene scripsit, nihil mihi debetur laudis; sin secus, nihil est quod mihi imputetur. Illud video, vt quisque vir est optimus, ita illius scriptis minime offendi: non quod probent omnia, opinor, sed quod hoc animo illum legant quo nos legimus Cyprianum ac Hieronymum, imo etiam Petrum Lombardum, nimirum ad multa coniuentes. Libros Lutheri editos dolebam; et cum cepissent primum ostendi libelli nescio qui, pro viribus obstabam ne ederentur, praecipue ob hoc, quod vererer ne quid tumultus ex his oriretur. Scripserat ad me Lutherus epistolam bene Christianam, mea quidem sententia, et respondi, obiter admonens hominem ne quid seditiose, ne quid in Romanum Pontificem, ne quid arrogantius aut iracundius scriberet, sed doctrinam Euangelicam animo sincero cum omni mansuetudine praedicaret. Id feci ciuilitate, quo magis proficerem. Ad-

didi hie esse qui illi fauerent, quo magis ad horum iudicium sese accommodaret. Haec quidam stultissimi sic interpretati sunt quasi Luthero fauerem: cum istorum nemo hominem adhuc monuerit, ipse solus admonui. Ego Lutheri nec accusator sum nec patronus nec reus. De spiritu hominis non ausim iudicare; est enim difficillimum, praesertim in partem peiorem. Et tamen si illi fauerem vt viro bono, quod fatentur et hostes; si vt reo, quod iuratis etiam iudicibus permittunt leges; si vt oppresso, quod dictat humanitas – si vt oppresso ab his qui simulato praetextu deuotis animis tendunt aduersus bonas literas, quae tandem esset inuidia, modo ne causae me admiscerem? Postremo Christianum est, opinor, sic fauere Luthero vt, si innocens est, nolim eum improborum factionibus opprimi; sin errat, velim sanari, non perdi: hoc enim magis congruit cum exemplo Christi, qui iuxta Prophetiae testimonium linum fumigans non extinxit, neque baculum confractum comminuit” (Allen 4:100,38–101,68, no. 1033).

November 1519

In his letter accompanying a new edition of his *Colloquia*, Erasmus defends his correspondence with Luther, which became public knowledge through the publication of his letter from May 1519 (→ Allen 3, no. 980): “Non me pudet respondisse Luthero; qui prouocatus responderem et Turcae. Bonis illius faueo, non malis; imo Christo faueo, non illi. Et sic respondeo vt illum de multis admoneam. Admonui ciuilitate, quod ita plus profici sciam. Sic, opinor, illi fauent permulti, quemadmodum Cyprianus fauit Tertulliano, multi Lactantio, plures Origeni. Quod tamen citra fraudem Lutherii dictum velim. Ego illius nec accusator sum nec patronus nec iudex. Viderint ii quibus hanc prouintiam nominatim delegauit Rhomanus Pontifex. Quanquam quae tandem inuidia sit extra causam fauere primum viro bono (quod fatentur et hostes), deinde pectori quod, etiamsi iustis de causis exasperatum plus iusto incanduit, tamen alio vocatum possit esse egregium organum Christi, qui non extinxit linum fumigans, sed excitauit; longe dissimilis istis qui perdere malunt quam mederi, opprimere quam docere. Permittit legum seueritas etiam iuratis iudicibus vt faueant reo. Dictat humanitas vt faueatur oppresso. Haec loquor et a causa Lutherii alienissimus, et ab omni genere dissidii, vt si quis alius, auersus, Porro epistolam, quae parum bene intellecta et peius interpretata dedit occasionem huic suspicioni, et ipse Lutherius aeditam dolet; id quod proximis suis literis liquido testatur” (Allen 4:121,27–122,47, no. 1041).

1520

In numerous letters and conversations, Erasmus advocates that Luther’s case be heard before an arbitration tribunal and that a settlement be reached (Allen no. 1156, et al.). He considers it possible “rem sic esse componendam, ut et Pontifex auferret laudem clementiae et Lutherus obedientiae” (Allen 4:482,32–33, no. 1199). On November 5, 1520, Erasmus speaks with Elector Frederick the Wise in Cologne. He agreed in part with Luther: “cum esset interrogatus Coloniae a duci Fridrico cur damnaretur Lutherus quid peccasset respondit: Multum peccavit, qui tetigit ventres monachorum et coronam papae” (WA.TR 1:55,33–35, no. 131). However, he also criticizes Luther’s “immodica maledicentia et arrogantiae species” to the Elector (Spongia aduersus aspergines Hutteni: ASD 9/1:182,420–28). During this period, Erasmus is warned by the imperial advisor bishop Aloisius Marlianus, “ne me admiscerem Lutheri negoti” (Allen 4:459,10–11, no. 1195). Rather than the growing

criticism of his hesitancy to take sides against Luther, it is Erasmus' reading of *De captivitate Babylonica ecclesiae* that makes him increasingly critical of Luther (ASD 9/1:182,424; Allen 4:444,7, no. 1186; 494,25, no. 1203; 537,38, no. 1217). However, he does not yet actively participate in the campaign against Luther and his followers.

August 1, 1520

In his response to a letter from Luther that has since been lost, Erasmus once again addresses the disputes surrounding Luther and the accusation that Erasmus sympathized with him (WA.Br 2:155–59, no. 321). The distance Erasmus puts between himself and Luther in this letter is clearer than in his letter from May 1519. Erasmus advises Luther not to fuel the conflict and to keep Erasmus' name out of it.

September 9, 1520

In a letter to Gerhard Geldenhauer, Erasmus criticizes the excommunication bull and the campaign against Luther: “Male metuo misero Luthero: sic vndique feruet coniuratio, sic vndique irritantur in illum principes, ac praecipue Leo Pontifex. Vtinam Lutherus meum sequutus consilium ab odiosis illis ac seditiosis abstinisset! Plus erat fructus ac minus invidiae. Parum esset vnum hominem perire: si res haec illis succedet, nemo feret illorum insolentiam. Non conquiescant donec linguas ac bonas literas omnes subuerterint. Iam Capnionem rursus aggrediuntur, tantum odio Lutheri: qui me dissuadente nomen illius suo negocio admiscens, et illum degrauavit invidia, et sibi nihil omnino profuit. Disputauit Ecius; Hoochstratus promiserat nescio quos syllogismos, quibus omnes cedere cogentur. Disputabant atque etiam scribebant Louanienses. Expectabatur iudicium Academiae Parisiensis, et ecce res de repente in Bullam et in fenum exitura videtur. Excusa est Bulla formidabilis, sed quam Pontifex vetuit publicari. Vereor ne res in grauem tumultum exeat. Qui haec suadent Pontifici, dant illi mea sententia consilium, non dico quam pium, sed certe periculosum. Res e pessimis fontibus primum orta est, deinde pessimis rationibus hucusque prouecta. Ex odio bonarum literarum et stoliditate monachorum primum orta est haec tragoedia. Deinde magnis conuiciis, maliciosis conspirationibus huc vesaniae res progressa est. Quo tendant nulli dubium est, nimirum vt oppressis his literis quas illi nesciunt, impune regnent cum sua barbarie. Ego me huic tragoediae non misceo. Alioqui paratus est vel episcopatus, si velim in Lutherum scribere. Mihi dolet sic obrui doctrinam Euangelicam, nosque cogi tantum, non doceri; et doceri ea a quibus abhorrent et sacrae literae et sensus communis” (Allen 4:339,7–340,34, no. 1141).

September 13, 1520

In a letter to Pope Leo X, Erasmus evaluates Luther in a benevolent yet distant way: “Lutherum non noui, nec libros illius vnquam legi, nisi forte decem aut duodecim pagellas, easque carptim. Ex his quae tum degustavi, visus est mihi probe compositus ad mysticas literas veterum more explanandas, quando nostra haec aetas immodice indulgebat argutis magis quam necessariis quaestionibus. Bonis igitur illius faui, non malis, imo gloriae Christi in illo faui. Ferme primus omnium odoratus sum periculum esse ne res exiret in tumultum; a quo sic abhorruui semper vt nemo magis. Proinde minis etiam egi cum Ioanne Frobenio typographo, ne quid operum illius exeuderet. Scripsi tum crebro tum diligenter

amicis, admonerent hominem vt in scriptis meminisset Christianae mansuetudinis, seruiretque semper Ecclesiae tranquillitati” (Allen 4:345,13–24, no. 1143).

“Luthero ne tum quidem patrocinar cum vtcunque liberum esset fauere. Tantum impetendi modum improbabam, non Luthero consulens sed auctoritati theologorum. Videbam rem ex odio linguarum ac bonarum, vt vocant, literarum natam. Videbam acerbis odiis et seditiosis apud populum clamoribus rem geri, quibus nihil aliud efficiebant quam vt nobilitarent opera Lutheri, et vulgus hominum ad auiditatem legendi prouocarent. Si prius refellissent Lutherum et animis hominum exemissent, deinde libros exussissent, totum Lutherum citra tumultum orbis abolere poterant, siquidem id merebatur quod isti praedicant. Libera ac generosa ingenia doceri gaudent, cogi nolunt. Hoc consilium pro theologis aduersus Lutherum faciebat, nisi quidam perperam interpretarentur” (346,67–78).

November 17, 1520: Luther to Lazarus Spengler

“Erasmus und ich, will’s Gott, wollen wohl eins bleiben. Das ist wohl wahr, daß ich mit Philippo insgeheim zuweilen disputiere, wie nah oder weit Erasmus von dem Weg sei; das hat er auch und jedermann von mir zu tun ungefährlich und freundlichen Gewalt. Ich will niemand am ersten angreifen; mir ist genug, mich, so ich angegriffen werde, beschützen” (WA.Br 2:217,18–23, no. 353).

January 1521

In his *Assertio omnium articulorum M. Lutheri per bullam Leonis X. novissimam damnatorum* Luther claims that the question of free will is of primary importance. In defense of his article 36 (i.e., “Liberum arbitrium post peccatum res est de solo titulo, et dum facit, quod in se est, peccat mortaliter”, see WA 7:142–49) he states that this article is “omnium optimus et rerum nostrarum summa” (148,16). After having interpreted several Biblical statements on the question of free will, he concludes: “Male enim dixi, quod liberum arbitrium ante gratiam sit res de solo titulo, sed simpliciter debui dicere, ‘liberum arbitrium est figmentum in rebus seu titulus sine re’. Quia nulli est in manu sua quippiam cogitare mali aut boni, sed omnia (ut Viglephi articulus Constantiae damnatus recte docet) de necessitate absoluta eveniunt” (146,4–8).

May 8/26, 1521

The Edict of Worms accuses Luther of wrong teaching regarding liberum arbitrium: “Er bestetigt auch aus der heidnischen poeten gedicht, das kain freier will sei, der mainung, das alle ding in einer gewissen satzung steen” (DRTA.JR 2,647,1–3 [no. 93]).

May 10, 1521

In a lengthy letter, Erasmus attempts to convince Justus Jonas to distance himself from Luther and openly criticizes Luther (Allen 4:486–493, no. 1202).

May 24, 1521

Erasmus complains to William Warham about the imminent danger posed by Luther: “Ingentes turbas excitauit Lutherus; nec video finem, nisi Christus nostram temeritatem ita vertat, quemadmodum noctua solet Atheniensium stulta consilia bene fortunare. Vellem

Lutherus aut tacuisset quaedam aut aliter scripsisset. Nunc vereor ne sic vitemus hanc Scyllam vt incidamus in Charybdim multo perniciosiorem. Si istis qui ventris ae tyrannidis suae causa nihil non audent, res succedit, nihil superest nisi vt scribam epitaphium Christo nunquam reuicturo” (Allen 4:497,22–29, no. 1205).

May 27, 1521

In the dedication preface addressed to Beatus Rhenanus in the *Epistolae ad diversos*, Erasmus prepares his public change of position toward Luther: “At rursus horum temporum ratio fecit vt me eius consilii poeniteret. Iampridem magnis odiis flagrabant studia tuentium linguas ac bonas literas, et istorum qui sibi stultissime persuadent decedere suis commodis quicquid accrescit prouentui melioris literaturae. Mox Lutherana tragoedia in tantam exarsit contentionem, vt nec loqui tutum sit nec tacere. Rapiuntur in diuersum omnia, etiam quae optimo animo scribuntur: ne tempus quidem perpenditur quo scripsit aliquis, sed quod suo tempore recte scriberetur, transferunt in tempus incommodissimum” (Allen 4,499,42–50, no. 1206).

June 1521

In a letter to the theologians of Leuven, Erasmus distances himself from Luther and hints at the possibility of making a public statement: “Hactenus in illum non scripsi. Verum est. [...] Et tamen pro mea virili non deero, neque tranquillitati Ecclesiae Catholicae, neque veritati Euangelicae, neque dignitati Romani Pontificis, cum licebit. Et fortassis plus adferam momenti quam ii qui putant his tumultibus rem posse confici. Illud nobis videndum, ne sic oderimus Lutherum vt illius odio perdamus et ea quae sunt optima; et ita seruiamus dignitati nostrae vt non laedamus autoritatem Euangelicae veritatis, et ita faueamus hominum gloriae ne quid officiamus gloriae Christi” (Allen 4:539,138 and 539,146–540,153, no. 1217).

September 9, 1521, Luther to Spalatin

“Neque Capitonis neque Erasmi iudicium me tantillum mouet. Nihil alienum opinione sui apud me faciunt. Quin et hoc veritus sum, ne quando mihi cum alterutro negotium fieret, quando Erasmum a cognitione gratiae longinquum esse viderem, qui non ad crucem, sed ad pacem spectet in omnibus scriptis. Hinc omnia putat ciuili et beneuolentia quadam humanitatis tractanda gerendaque. Sed hanc non curat Behemoth neque hinc quicquam sese emendat” (WA.Br 2,387,2–7, no. 429).

October 1521

Erasmus leaves the Netherlands and moves to Basel.

April 1522

Erasmus mentions his plan to write against Luther and the accusations of Pelagianism against himself to Johannes Glapion, the emperor’s confessor: “Iam aggressus eram nonnihil libelli De finiendo negotio Lutherano; sed valetudo interrupit omnia studia. Interim oratione literisque permultos temperaui, mire Luthero addictos. Epistolis etiam aeditis declarau mihi nihil vnquam foederis fuisse cum vllo Lutherano, sed seditiosum negotium

mihi semper displicuisse. Iam hoc toti Germaniae sic notum est, vt nullus impendio Lutheranus mihi bene velit, quidam minitentur dentatos libellos, alii lacerent conuiciis, Pelagianum appellantes et palponem, non Euangelicae doctrinae praeconem. Me certe neque vita neque mors distrahat ab obedientia Ecclesiae et a synceritate fidei Christianae” (Allen 5:48,20–29, no. 1275).

May 28, 1522: Luther to an unknown recipient

“De praedestinatione sentire Mosellanum cum Erasmo antea novi; totus enim Erasmius est. Ego contra sentio Erasmus minus de praedestinatione scire vel scire sese ostentare, quam hactenus Sophistarum scholae sciverunt. Neque est, ut timeam, casurum me, nisi mutem sententiam. Non est Erasmus in hac re formidabilis, sicut neque in summa ferme tota rerum Christianarum. Potentior est veritas quam eloquentia, potior spiritum quam ingenium, maior fides quam eruditio. [...] Non provocabo Erasmus, sed neque provocatus semel atque iterum mox referiam. Tamen non videtur mihi consultum, ut vires eloquentiae suae in me instituat. Metuo enim non inveniet in Luthero Fabrum Stapulensem, neque possit gloriari, sicut de illo gloriatur: ‘Omnes gratulantur mihi, victum esse Gallum.’ Quod si se commiserit huius aleae, videbit Christum nec portas inferi nec potestates aeris formidantem. Et occurram balbutientissimus eloquentissimo Erasmo cum fiducia, nihili etiam habitae eius auctoritate, nomine et favore. Ego novi, quod sit in hoc homine, quandoquidem et Satanæ cogitationes noverimus, quamquam expecto, ut in dies magis revelet id, quod in me alit” (WA.Br 2:544,7–545,29, no. 499).

1522/23

In an exchange of letters with Pope Adrian VI, Erasmus discusses possible courses of action against Luther and the Protestant movement (Allen, nos. 1324, 1329, 1338, 1352). The Pope demands that Erasmus openly oppose Luther and come to Rome. Erasmus, on the other hand, proposes a combination of church reforms and efforts to reach an understanding.

February 1, 1523

In a letter to Marcus Laurinus, Erasmus discusses the question of free will in more detail, distancing himself from Luther. This passage reveals that Erasmus had previously shown little interest in the subject and could not fathom why it was so important to Luther. “Superest adhuc vnum crimen omnium maximum. In Paraphrasi, qua explico nonum caput Apostoli Pauli ad Romanos, tribuo minimum quiddam libero arbitrio, videlicet sequutus Originem et Hieronymum. Principio quum paraphrasis sit commentarii genus, quum profitear me in plerisque sequi probatos ac priscos interpretes, quid admissum est piaculi, si sequor alicubi Originem et Hieronymum, autores, vt arbitror, in sacris literis non aspernandos? Atque id factum est ante quam Lutherus prodidisset dogma suum, siue Vuicleuticum, Quicquid facimus siue boni siue mali, esse necessitatis absolutae. Nam mea Paraphrasis excusa est Louanii, anno millesimo quingentesimo decimoseptimo; et aliquot mensibus erat Antuerpiae scripta prius quam excuderetur. Atque interim quidam appellatur totus Erasmius, quod de libero arbitrio mecum sentiat et a Luthero dissentiat: sed tamen huic datur venia, quod iuuenis bonae spei breui sit aliter sensurus.

Hic rursus appello meum aequum iudicem, quum hoc scripserim ante proditum Lutheri dogma, quum idem sentiant omnes theologi tum veteres tum recentes, Origines, Hieronymus, Chrysostomus, Hilarius, Arnobius, Scotus, Thomas, cur ego, velut autor huius sententiae, vocor in ius? et quur qui dissentit a Luthero vocatur Erasmianus potius quam Hilarianus aut Hieronymianus? praesertim quum eam quaestionem non susceperim pertractandam in Paraphrasi, sed obiter transilierim, quemadmodum fecit ipse Paulus, qui non dignatur illic respondere percontatori improbo? Et tamen vide, lector, quanto minus illic tribuam libero arbitrio quam tribuant vel veteres vel recentiorum scholae. Suspisor enim haec esse verba quibus offenduntur ex capite nono. Quum enim proposuissem improbam quaestionem obiectam Deo, quae conatur illi impingere iniusticiam, 'Imo,' inquam, 'nonnihil est in voluntato conatuque [nostro] situm: licet hoc ita sit exiguum vt ad Dei gratuitam beneficentiam nihil esse videatur. Nemo damnatur nisi sua culpa: nemo seruatur nisi Dei beneficio. Eo dignatur quos vult, sed ita vt sit de quo gratias agas, non sit quod queraris'. Haec in Paraphrasi.

Videbam hinc Scyllae periculum illiciens ad fiduciam operum, quam ego pestem religionis maximam esse fateor. Illinc videbam Charybdim, malum etiam formidabilius, quo nunc non pauci tenentur, dicentes, 'Obsequemur animo nostro; siue torquemus nosipsos, siue indulgemus animo, tamen eueniet quod semel statuit Deus'. Itaque sermonem meum moderatus sum, vt minimum quiddam tribuerem libero arbitrio, ne fenestram aperirem tam capitali socordiae, vt abiecto omni conatu vitae melioris, quod suo animo collubitum fuerit quisque faceret. Et tamen haec scribebam, ignarus fuisse quenquam qui funditus tolleret omnem liberi arbitrii vim; quod dogma, etiamsi mihi constaret esse verum, nolim tamen nudis verbis in vulgus serere. Nunc quis nescit de fato disputatum inter philosophos ante Christum natum? et hinc ad nos venerunt quaestiones inexplicabiles, de praescientia, de praedestinatione Dei, de libero hominis arbitrio, de futuris contingentibus: in quibus arbitrator optimum esse non admodum anxie versari, quando abyssus est imperuestigabilis. Malim ea inculcare quae nos hortantur ad modis omnibus conandum optima: nihil tamen interim nobis arrogantes, etiamsi quid esse nostrum possit, sed totum iudicium deferentes Christo, cum bona fiducia de illius benignitate potissimum concepta." (Allen 5:225,926–226,979, no. 1342)

March 11, 1523

Through Spalatin, Erasmus writes to Frederick the Wise. The letter is preserved in Spalatin's translation. Erasmus expressed his concern that the church's violent actions against Luther were endangering the renewal of Christianity. He writes: "Ich forcht des Luthers nicht, sondern zwey ding bewegen mich. Wenn der Luther solt zu poden geen, so wurd wider keyn Gott noch keyn mensch mit den munchen kunnen auszkummenn. Folgend, so kan der Luther nicht vmbkummenn on das es vergee dann mit im ein grosser teyl der Evangelischenn lautterckeit" (Allen 5:251,30–34, no. 1348).

June 20, 1523, Luther to John Oecolampad

"Quid Erasmus in rerum spiritualium iudicio sentiat aut simulet, testantur erius libelli abunde tam primi quam novissimi. Ego etsi aculeos eius alicubi sentio, tamen, quia simulat, se non esse hostem palam, simulo et ego, me non intelligere suas astutias, quamquam

penitius intelligam, quam ipse credat. Ipse fecit, ad quod ordinatus fuit: linguas introduxit et a sacrilegis studiis avocavit. Forte et ipse cum Mose in campestribus Moab morietur, nam ad meliora studia (quod ad pietatem pertinet) non provehit. Vellemque mirum in modum abstinere ipsum a tractandis scripturis sanctis et paraphrasibus suis, quod non sit par istis officiis et lectores frustra occupat et moratur in scripturis discendis. Satis fecit, quod malum ostendit; bonum ostendere (ut video) et in terram promissionis ducere non potest” (WA.Br 3:96,14–25, no. 626). Erasmus soon knows about the content of Luther’s letter (Allen 5:329,52–58, no. 1384).

August 31, 1523

In a letter to Zwingli, Erasmus criticizes Luther’s doctrine of justification: “Lutherus proponit quaedam enigmata in spetiem absurda: ‘omnia opera sanctorum esse peccata, que indigent ignoscente Dei misericordia’; ‘liberum arbitrium esse nomen inane’; ‘sola fide iustificari hominem, opera nihil ad rem facere’. De his contedere, quomodo velit intelligi Lutherus, non video quem fructum adferat. Deinde video in plerisque illi addictis miram peruicaciam. Et in Lutheri scriptis quantum maledicentiae, sepe preter rem” (Allen 5:327,9–16, no. 1384).

September 1523

In his *Spongia*, Erasmus rejects Ulrich von Hutten’s *Expostulatio* and explains his position on Luther. Erasmus initially sympathized with Luther but has now turned against him. Erasmus confirms, “neutri factioni velle inuolui” (ASD 9/1:162, 953).

September 4, 1523

Erasmus promises King Henry VIII of England that he will publicly turn against Luther (Allen 5:330,11–12, no. 1385).

October 1, 1523

Luther writes to Konrad Pellikan, that Erasmus has launched literary attacks on Luther and his supporters, but Luther does not wish to respond with an open counterattack. The letter reveals Luther’s critical attitude toward Erasmus. He refers to Erasmus’ criticism of his high regard for assertions and uses this criticism against him: “Ego habeo, qui causam defendat, etiamsi totus mundus in me solum insaniat, id quod Erasmus in me vocat pervicaciam asserendi” (WA.Br 3:160,23–24, no. 661).

fall 1523

In his hymn *Now Rejoice, Dear Christians*, Luther uses formulations in his description of the sinner’s situation that also play a role in *De Servo Arbitrio*, such as “dem teuffel ich gefangen lag” (WA 35:423,6), “Es war kein gutts am leben meyn, / Die sund hat mich be-sessen” (423,11–12), and “Der frey will hasset Gotts gericht, / Er war zum gutt erstorben” (423,15–16).

November 21, 1523

Erasmus informs John Augustanus Faber that his planned treatise against Luther will address the question of free will (Allen 5:350,14–15, no. 1397).

February 13, 1524

Erasmus informs Pope Clement VII that he is working on his treatise with the title “De libero arbitrio adversus Lutherum” (Allen 5:399,53–55, no. 1418).

March 1524

In a new edition of his *Colloquia*, Erasmus adds a dialogue between a representative of the papal church and a Luther sympathizer. This dialogue shows that Luther’s followers affirm the church’s creed and that there is no fundamental disagreement between the papal church and Luther (ASD 1/3:361–374).

April 15, 1524, Luther to Erasmus

Luther praises Erasmus’ philological achievements but also criticizes his reluctance toward the Papal Church and rejection of the Reformation. He would like to avoid an open confrontation: “Hactenus stilum cohibui, utpene pungeres me, cohibebitur etiam, scripsi in literis ad amicos, quae tibi quoque lectae sunt, donec palam prodires” (WA.Br 3:270,38–40, no. 729). He wishes: “Satis morsum est, nunc providendum est, ne consumamur ab invicem” (271,65).

May 8, 1524, Erasmus to Luther

In his reply to Luther’s April 1524 letter, Erasmus openly criticizes Luther: “Tua quaedam legens valde pertimesco, ne qua arte deludat Satanas animum tuum” (WA.Br 3:285,5–6, no. 740), but he has not yet openly opposed him (“Nihil adhuc in te scripserim, facturus id magno principum applausu, nisi vidissem hoc absque iactura evangelii non futurum”, 285,14–16), because such criticism could benefit the Gospel (“Fortasse Erasmus scribens in te magis profuerit evangelio”, 285,24).

September 1524

Erasmus’ *De libero arbitrio* is simultaneously published in Basel and Antwerp. On September 6, Erasmus informs the English king of this: “exiit in lucem libellus De libero arbitrio” (Allen 5:541,4, no. 1493). The same day he also informs Melanchthon about the publication (MBW.T 2:167–176, no. 341).

September 1524

In his preface to Ecclesiastes in the partial edition of the Wittenberg Old Testament translation, Luther uses the book as evidence against free will: “Nu dis buch solt billich den titel haben, das es widder den freyen willen geschrieben were, Denn es alles dahyn zeucht, das aller menschen, rad, anschlege, vnd furnemen vmb sonst vnd vergeblich sind, vnd ymer anders hynaus gehet, denn wyr wöllen vnd dencken, auff das er vns lerne gelassen stehen, vnd Gott lassen alleyne alle ding, vber, widder, vnd on vnsern wissen vnd rad thun” (WA.DB 10/2:104,24–106,2). This may be a response to Erasmus’ *De libero arbitrio*.

September 30, 1524

Melanchthon informs Erasmus of his assessment of *De libero arbitrio* and Luther's expected reaction: this moderate work will receive an equally moderate response from Luther (Allen 5:555,42–61, no. 1500).

December 1525

Luther's *De servo arbitrio* is published in Wittenberg and reprinted several times in 1525 and 1526 in other places. In 1526 Justus Jonas publishes his German translation. The Latin text is reprinted in the Luther editions of the sixteenth century and both the Latin and the German text are reprinted in several single editions (1591: VD16 L 6672; 1602: VD17 15:727 288H; 1664: VD17 12:116 961K; 1707: VD18 14 080 206).

early 1526

Erasmus receives Luther's *De servo arbitrio* and responds with outrage in his letters to Luther's criticism (Allen 6:269,24–34, no. 1670; 364,8–9, no. 1723).

February 1526

The first part of Erasmus' *Hyperaspistes* is published.

April 11, 1526, Erasmus to Luther

In response to a lost letter from Luther defending *De servo arbitrio*, Erasmus regrets that Luther has discredited himself as a person and theologian with his book, which has confused the public debate (WA.Br 4:46–48, no. 992).

July to November, 1526

Luther lectures on Ecclesiastes (Qohelet). His lecture is printed in 1532 based on transcripts under the title *Annotationes in Ecclesiasten* (WA 20:1–203). For Luther, the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes demonstrates that the world and human life are completely controlled by God. However, with reference to his doctrine of the three estates and vocation he also asserts that human beings are responsible for acting in the roles God has assigned to them.

March 30, 1527:

Erasmus informs Thomas More that he is not currently working on another response to Luther and that Luther's position can be reduced to two points: namely, that the law serves only to reveal sin, and that human beings are entirely governed by sin. Erasmus also summarizes his view regarding liberum arbitrium: He takes a critical stance toward Scholasticism, Paul, and Augustine, and would prefer his connection between divine grace and human freedom to be understood in such a way that greater weight is given to human freedom.

“Sed amor in me tuus non fert quorundam insolentiam, gestientium quasi non habeam quod Lutero respondeam. Aliis grauioribus molestiis sum excercitatus vt ista leuicula facile contemnam. Si refert respondisse, iam in Diatriba et Hyperaspiste dissolutum est quicquid ab illo potest adduci. Tantum habet duas arces, per legem nihil effici nisi cognitionem vel

agnitionem potius peccati, et per Adae peccatum sic esse vitiatam humani generis massam vt nec Spiritus Sanctus in ea quicquam operetur nisi malum. Ab his deiectus concidet” (Allen 7:7,47–54, no. 1804).

“Iam mihi finge nec ocium deesse nec vires. Si tractauero materiam ex animo monachorum ac theologorum, qui nimium tribuunt hominum meritis ob quaestum hinc redeuntem, profecto loquar aduersus conscientiam meam, et sciens obscurabo gloriam Christi. Sin temperauero stilum vt aliquid tribuam libero arbitrio, gratiae plurimum, offendam vtranque partem: quod mihi venit vsu in Diatriba. Quod si sequar Paulum et Augustinum, perpusillum est quod relinquitur libero arbitrio. Hic enim duobus libris quos scripsit ad Valentinum iam senex, asseuerat quidem liberum arbitrium. Sed gratiam sic probat vt ego non perspiciam quid reliquum faciat libero arbitrio. Fatetur opera ante gratiam facta esse mortua, tribuit gratiae quod respiscimus, quod volumus benefacere, quod bene facimus, quod perseueramus. Fatetur hec omnia gratiam in nobis operari. Vbi igitur meri[ta ?] Hic constrictus Augustinus huc confugit, vt dicat Deum sua bona opera nobis imputare pro meritis et sua dona coronare in nobis. Nonne belle defensum est liberum arbitrium? Mihi non displiceret opinio que putat nos ex meris nature viribus absque peculiari [gra]tia posse de congruo, vt illi loquuntur, gratiam instituere, nisi refrageretur Paulus; quanquam ne scholastici quidem hanc recipiunt sententiam” (ibid. 8:75–95).

September 1527

The second part of Erasmus’ *Hyperaspistes* is published.

October, 1527

The publication of the second part of Erasmus’ polemical reply is reflected in some passages of the correspondence of Luther and Melanchthon. Here are two quotes that show how Erasmus was seen. On October 2 Melanchthon writes to Luther: “Legi bonam partem Erasmici voluminis recens editi de libero arbitrio. Longa et confusa disputatio est, quam non multi de vulgo intelligent, vt video. In eo vno est, vt sententias a te citatas callide interpretetur, ne dissentire credantur a iudicio rationis humanae. Ego, etiamsi velis respondere, nollem tamen te properare. Velim autem te, si quando videretur, non confutationem huius operis (nam istos ἀντιπάλους λόγους non facile intelligunt, nisi exercitatissimi in hoc ipso genere), sed tuae sententiam simplicem enarrationem instituere. Id non esset tibi difficile factu, et extra pugnam minus esset habitura acerbitatis oratio” (WA.Br 4,256,2–10, no. 1152).

On October 19 Luther writes to Justus Jonas (please note that Luther’s wife did understand Latin): “Gratulor tibi, optime Iona, de tua palinodia, qua nunc tandem Erasmum illum tuum suis pingis coloribus, viperam illam letalibus aculeis refertam recte cognoscis, quem ante multis nominibus praedicabas. Gaudeo te ex unius Hyperaspistae lectione tantum profecisse et tuum de illo mutasse iudicium. Cumque ego hanc epistolae tuae partem legere uxori, continuo illa inquit: Ist nicht der teur Manne [sc. Erasmus] zur Kröten worden? Sihe da! Gaudet et ipsa idem te nunc mecum sentire de Erasmo. Intelligis, mi Iona, recte quidem sensisse, qui praeceperunt neminem ante supremum diem laudandum” (WA.Br 4:268,1–269,9, no. 1160).

Fall 1527

Melanchthon's commentary on Colossians, published with Luther's approval, proposes a compromise solution to the question of free will, emphasizing *servum arbitrium* with regard to salvation, while granting *liberum arbitrium* with regard to responsibility in this world (Melanchthons Werke in Auswahl, vol. 4, <sup>2</sup>1980, 221–225).

July 24, 1529: Melanchthon to Joachim Camerarius

“Περὶ Ἐράσμου quod mones [...], ne quid ad illum amplius scribam, geram tibi morem. Et scis me antea non magnopere ambivisse eius amiciciam. Vide, quantum iudicii sit nostris inimicis: Illum amant qui multorum perniciosissimorum dogmatum semina in suis libris sparsit, quae quidem longe graviores tumultus aliquando excitatura erant, nisi Lutherus exortus esset ac studia hominum alio traxisset. Tota illa tragoedia περὶ δείπνου κυριακοῦ ab ipso orta est. Quam aequus ubique est Ario et illius factioni, quam nos hic constantissime improbavimus. Quae litera in illius libris est digna viro christiano de iustificatione, de iure magistratum? Horum locorum perfectam tractationem a magnis viris requiro. Sed tollant eum qui non norunt” (MBW.T 3:550,28–551,39, no. 807).

1533 (?)

In a 1527 print of Erasmus' New Testament, Luther adds marginal notes primarily commenting on the annotations. Several of these notes criticize Erasmus' theology and character, for example: “Ego non sum Candidus Lector, Nec tu candidus scriptor” (WA 60:204,28).

March 1534

In 1534, a correspondence between Amsdorf and Luther regarding Erasmus is published (WA.Br 7, no. 2093). Luther's letter (translation: LuthQ 37, 2023, 313–34), which is more than ten pages long, is a critical assessment of Erasmus as a person and a theologian. Erasmus answer Luther's criticism with his *Purgatio aduersus epistolam non sobriam Martini Lutheri* (VD16 E 3481).

May 12, 1536

Melanchthon acknowledges Erasmus' influence on his *Loci theologici*, but remains cautious (Allen 11:322–324, no. 3120; MBW.T 7:114–116, no. 1735). Melanchthon emphasizes his interest in preserving church doctrine and distancing himself from doctrinal disputes. However, between the lines, it becomes clear that Melanchthon does not agree with Erasmus on theological matters.

June 22, 1537

Melanchthon emphasizes to Veit Dietrich that he and Luther agree on predestination but approach it differently in their language. He adds that uneducated people overemphasize Luther's pointed statements: “Alioquin enim magnopere optarim eos articulos, de quibus quaedam videtur esse dissimilitudo, diserte et utiliter explicari. Scis me quaedam minus horride dicere, de praedestinatione, de assensu voluntatis, de necessitate obedientiae nostrae, de peccato mortali. De his omnibus scio re ipsa Lutherum sentire eadem, sed ineruditi quae eius φορτικώτερα dicta, cum non videant quo pertineant, nimium amant. Nec ego

cum illis pugnandum mihi esse duco. Fruantur suo iudicio. Mihi tamen concedant homini peripatetico et amanti mediocritatem minus stoice alicubi loqui” (MBW.T 7:464,10–18, no. 1914).

July 9, 1537, Luther to Capito

“De tomis meorum librorum disponendis ego frigidior sum et segnior, eo quod Saturnina fame percitus [driven by Saturnian hunger, Saturnus = Kronos] magis cuperem eos omnes devoratos. Nullum enim agnosco meum iustum librum, nisi forte de Servo arbitrio et Catechismum” (WA.Br 8:99,5–8, no. 3162).

1540/41

In his Genesis lecture on Gen. 26:9 (WA 43:457,32–463,17), Luther includes a pastoral digression on predestination and prescience, which emphasizes “non esse inquirendum de praedestinatione Dei absconditi”, but rather “ea acquiescendum esse, quae revelatur per vocationem per ministerium verbi” (463,11–13). Luther refers to his *De servo arbitrio* (458,35–36: “Sic igitur in libello de servo arbitrio et alibi docui”) for the distinction between Deus absconditus and revelatus, and he quotes “Quae supra nos, nihil ad nos” (458,40).

1546

*De servo arbitrio* is printed in vol. 2 of the Wittenberg edition of Luther’s Latin writings, reprinted in 1551 and 1562.

1557

*De servo arbitrio* is printed in vol. 3 of the Jena edition of Luther’s Latin writings, which is reprinted in 1567, 1582, and 1603.

1559

In the final version of his *Loci communes* Melancthon presents his mature doctrine of free will, stating “Nec miscenda est disputatio de determinatione divina quaestioni de libero arbitrio” (Melancthon’s Werke in Auswahl, vol. 2/1, <sup>2</sup> 1978, 263:25–26).

1577

The Formula of Concord substantiates Luther’s assertion of servum arbitrium with regard to “cooperatio voluntatis nostrae in hominis conversione” with a quotation from Luther’s *On the Supper of Christ* and notes: “Hoc negotium D. Lutherus in libro suo De servo arbitrio contra Erasmum egregie et solide explicuit, atque hanc sententiam piam et invictam esse demonstravit” (FC SD II:44; BSLK 889,26–30).

3. Erasmus of Rotterdam  
De libero arbitrio διατριβή sive collatio  
1524

OUTLINE

**Introduction** (LB 9:1215<sup>A</sup>–1221<sup>A</sup>; AS 4:2–37)

**1. Praefatio** (LB 9:1215<sup>A</sup>–1218<sup>C</sup>; AS 4:2–21)

the Diatribe was prompted by various statements made by the Wittenberg Reformers, particularly Luther's *Assertio omnium articulorum* of 1521 (AS 4:2–7)

Erasmus criticizes dogmatic assertions in general and, more specifically, those concerning the question of liberum arbitrium (AS 4:6–11)

the Bible is not always clear, even if the essentials, namely ethics, are undisputed (AS 4:10–13)

certain religious topics should not be discussed in public (AS 4:12–21)

**2. Prooemium** (LB 9:1218<sup>C</sup>–1221<sup>A</sup>; AS 4:20–37)

in addition to the Bible, church tradition is also important for discussing this question (AS 4:20–27)

the Bible requires spiritual interpretation (AS 4:26–35)

preview of the following discussion and preliminary definition of liberum arbitrium (AS 4:34–37) → *“liberum arbitrium hoc loco sentimus vim humanae voluntatis, quae se possit homo applicare ad ea, quae perducunt ad aeternam salutem aut ab iisdem avertere”* (36)

**First main section: Bible passages that prove liberum arbitrium** (LB 9:1221<sup>A</sup>–1230<sup>A</sup>; AS 4:36–91)

**1. Old Testament** (LB 9:1221<sup>A</sup>–1227<sup>A</sup>; AS 4:36–73)

Sirach 15:14–18 shows that human beings were created with free will (AS 4:36–41)

the weakening of free will through the fall and God's support through the law (AS 4:40–49) → second provisional definition of liberum arbitrium: *“voluntas, quae eligimus aut refugimus, hactenus depravata fuit, ut suis naturalibus praesidiis non posset sese revocare ad meliorem frugem, sed amissa libertate cogebatur servire peccato, cui se volens semel addixerat”* (40)

theological interpretations of the relationship between liberum arbitrium and grace throughout church history (AS 4:48–59) → third provisional definition of liberum arbitrium: Erasmus considers the opinion of those to be more probable who *“longissime fugiunt a Pelagio, plurimum tribuunt gratiae, libero arbitrio pene nihil nec tamen in totum tollunt: negant hominem posse velle bonum sine gratia peculiari, negant posse incipere, negant posse progredi, negant posse perficere sine principali perpetuoque gratiae divinae praesidio,”* because this view *“relinquat homini studium et conatum et tamen non relinquit, quod suis ascribat viribus”* (56)

more Old Testament texts that teach free will (AS 4:58–67)

the biblical imperatives and the biblical accounts of the wrathful God showing mercy imply free will (AS 4:66–73)

2. New Testament (LB 9:1227<sup>A</sup>–1230<sup>A</sup>; AS 4:72–91)

Jesus' admonitions imply free will (AS 4:72–79)

Paul's exhortations imply free will (AS 4:80–89)

there are many more biblical passages that contradict Luther's denial of free will (AS 4:88–91)

**Second main section: Bible passages that appear to contradict liberum arbitrium** (LB 9:1230<sup>A</sup>–1241<sup>D</sup>; AS 4:90–156)

1. Passages from the Old and New Testaments (LB 9:1230<sup>A</sup>–1235<sup>C</sup>; AS 4:90–121)

introduction (AS 4:90–93)

the account of Pharaoh's hardening (Ex. 9) and its inclusion in Romans 9 appear to contradict the doctrine of free will, but must be understood in light of the relationship between necessity and foreknowledge that makes human freedom possible (AS 4:92–107)

Genesis 25:23 – Jacob and Esau (AS 4:106–109)

Isaiah 45:9 – potter and clay (AS 4:108–115)

Isaiah 10:15 – craftsman and axe (AS 4:114–115)

there are many more texts in the Bible that show that divine omnipotence and human freedom are compatible (AS 4:114–121)

2. On the Bible passages in Luther's *Assertio omnium articulorum* of 1521 (LB 9:1235<sup>C</sup>–1237<sup>F</sup>; AS 4:120–137)

Genesis 6:3 (AS 4:120–123)

Genesis 8:21 (AS 4:122–125)

Isaiah 40:2 (AS 4:124–125)

Isaiah 40:6–8 (AS 4:124–129)

Jeremiah 10:23 (AS 4:128–131)

Proverbs 16:1 (AS 4:130–133)

Proverbs 21:1 (AS 4:132–135)

John 15:5 (AS 4:134–137)

3. Further passages from the Old and New Testaments (LB 9:1237<sup>F</sup>–1241<sup>D</sup>; AS 4:136–157)

John 3:27 (AS 4:136–139)

Matthew 10:20 (AS 4:138–141)

John 6:44 and John 14:6 (AS 4:140–141)

2Corinthians 3:5 (AS 4:140–145)

Philippians 2:13 and similar passages (AS 4:144–149)

Jesus' parables (AS 4:148–155)

conclusion (AS 4:154–157) → “Homo nihil non potest auxiliante dei gratia”

**Conclusion** (LB 9:1241<sup>D</sup>–1248<sup>D</sup>; AS 4:156–195)

to counter the overemphasis on both divine grace and free will, a middle path must be taken that unites grace and freedom and does not place God in the wrong (AS 4:156–177) → Erasmus advocates a “temperatura” (a balancing mixture of causes) in the bringing about of salvation: “*simul concurrant duae causae, gratia dei et hominis voluntas, sic tamen,*

*ut gratia sit causa principalis, voluntas secundaria, quae sine principali nihil possit, cum principalis sibi sufficiat*” (172) → regarding liberum arbitrium, the following applies: “*homo totam salutem suam divinae gratiae ferre debeat acceptam, cum perpusillum sit, quod hic agit liberum arbitrium, et hoc ipsum, quod agere potest, sit divinae gratiae, qui primum condidit liberum arbitrium, deinde liberavit etiam ac sanavit*” (172)

Luther and Karlstadt have pointed out the misunderstanding regarding liberum arbitrium, but they exaggerate in the opposite direction and are thus partly to blame for the escalation (AS 4:176–19)

concluding remark on Erasmus’ approach and claim (AS 4:190–195) → “CONTULI, penes alios esto iudicium”

4. Martin Luther  
De servo arbitrio  
1525

4.1. OUTLINE

**Preface** (LStA 3:177,1–180,15; WA 18:600,1–602,37; LW 33:15–19)

**First main section: Response to Erasmus' introduction** (LStA 3:180,16–234,39; WA 18:603,1–666,13; LW 33:19–110)

The right and necessity of assertio (LStA 3:180,17–183,22)

The clarity of Scripture – first discussion (LStA 3:183,23–186,23)

The essence of Christianity (forma Christianismi) (LStA 3:186,24–194,28)

The necessity of public debate about the essence of Christianity (LStA 3:194,29–196,17)

Erasmus' advocacy of compulsory confession to secure peace in the world is incompatible with Christian freedom (LStA 3:196,18–203,17)

The Reformation's teachings on justification and election and the paradox of mere necessity (LStA 3:203,18–210,11)

Concluding remarks on the first part of Erasmus' introduction (LStA 3:210,11–211,5)

The ecclesiastical tradition and liberum arbitrium (LStA 3:211,6–221,12)

The clarity of Scripture – second discussion (LStA 3:221,13–230,3)

Rejection of Erasmus' definition of liberum arbitrium (LStA 3:230,4–234,39)

**Second main section: Refutation of Erasmus' scriptural evidence for liberum arbitrium** (LStA 3:235,1–301,27; WA 18:666,13–733,21; LW 33:110–212)

**1. Old Testament texts that appear to speak in favor of liberum arbitrium** (LStA 3:235,1–256,39)

Sir. 15:14–18 (235,1–244,10)

Gen. 4:7 (244,11–33)

Deut. 30:15+19 (244,34–246,7)

Deut. 3:30 (246,8–247,2)

Hermeneutics of Imperatives (247,3–250,28)

Ezek. 18:23 and Ezek. 33:11 (250,29–254,30)

Deut. 30:11–14 (254,31–256,23)

Review of Erasmus' treatment of the Old Testament passages (LStA 3:256,24–39)

**2. New Testament texts that appear to speak in favor of liberum arbitrium** (LStA 3:256,40–267,18)

General characterization of Erasmus' treatment of the New Testament (256,40–257,3)

Matth. 23:37 (257,3–258,30)

Matth. 19:17 and comparable statements (258,31–260,5)

praecepta and meritum (260,6–264,30)

Luke 23:23 (264,31–265,18)

John 1:12 (265,19–266,21)

Rom. 2:4 (266,22–267,4)

Further passages from Paul (267,5–11)

Luther agrees with Wyclif's 'omnia necessitate fieri' (267,11–18)

**3. Biblical evidence for servum arbitrium, reinterpreted by Erasmus (LStA 3:267,18–301,27) against tropological mitigations (267,21–270,30)**

Ex. 4:21 – “Ego indurabo cor Pharaonis” (270,30–283,8)

Rom. 9:16 – Paul on the induratio Pharaonis (283,9–291,6)

concluding remarks on induratio Pharaonis (291,7–8)

Gen. 25:23 – Jacob and Esau (291,8–295,20)

Isa. 45:9 – Potter and clay (295,21–301,27)

**Third main section: Erasmus' arguments against Luther's remarks on Art. 36 in his 'Assertio omnium articulorum' of 1521 (LStA 3:301,28–326,2; WA 18:733,22–756,23; LW 33:212–246)**

Gen. 6:3 – Spirit/flesh (LStA 3:301,29–303,37)

Gen. 8:21 – malum cordis (LStA 3:303,38–304,26)

Isa. 40:2 – Grace or reckoning? (LStA 3:304,27–307,18)

Isa. 40:6 – Flesh/Spirit – totus homo (LStA 3:307,18–313,10)

Jer. 10:23 (LStA 3:313,11–314,21)

Prov. 16:1+4, Prov. 21:1 (LStA 3:314,22–316,13)

John 15:5 (LStA 3:316,14–322,10)

Further examples provided by Erasmus (LStA 3:322,11–324,21)

Conclusion (LStA 3:324,22–326,2)

**Fourth main section: Luther's attack on liberum arbitrium (LStA 3:326,3–351,13; WA 18:756,24–783,17; LW 33:246–288)**

Luther's approach (LStA 3:326,3–13)

**1. Paul (LStA 3:326,13–343,41)**

Rom. 1:18 (326,13–329,6)

Rom. 3:9 (329,7–28)

Rom. 3:10–12 (329,29–331,22)

Rom. 3:19 (331,23–332,7)

Rom. 3:20a (332,8–334,16)

Rom. 3,20b (334,17–335,21)

Rom. 3:21–25 (335,22–28)

Rom. 3:21a (335,28–336,14)

Rom. 3:22 (336,15–29)

Rom. 3:23a (336,30–38)

Rom. 3:23b (336,8–337,24)

Rom. 3:24 (337,25–339,32)

Rom. 4:3 (339,33–341,2)

Rom. 5:12 (341,2–13)

Review of the passages from Paul discussed so far (341,14–342,6)

Rom. 8:3–9 (342,7–343,16)

- Rom. 10:20 (343,17–41)
2. John (LStA 3:343,42–351,13)
- Introduction: John as the ‘liberi arbitrij uastator’ (343,42–344,2)
  - John 1:5–16 (344,2–346,10)
  - John 3:1–7 (346,11–31)
  - John 14:6 (346,31–347,43)
  - John 3:18 (348,1–20)
  - John 3:36 (348,20–33)
  - John 3:27+31, John 8:23 (348,34–349,19)
  - John 6:44 (349,20–350,6)
  - John 16:8–9 (350,7–15)
  - Summary remarks (350,15–351,13)

**Luther’s concluding remarks** (LStA 3:351,13–354,31; WA 18:783,17–786,20; LW 33:288–293)

**Admonition to Erasmus** (LStA 3:354,32–356,9; WA 18:786,21–787,14; LW 33:294–295)

#### 4.2. DETAILED STRUCTURE OF LUTHER'S DE SERVO ARBITRIO

##### **Preface**

(LStA 3:177,7–180,15; WA 18:600,1–602,37; LW 33:15–19)

Greeting (177,1–6)

Why Luther responds late (177,7–179,5)

Why Luther responds at all (179,6–180,1)

Thanks to Erasmus (180,1–8)

Prayer to God for Luther and Erasmus (180,8–10)

Admonition to Erasmus (180,10–15)

**First main section**  
**Response to Erasmus' introduction**  
(LStA 3:180,17–234,39; WA 18:603,1–666,13; LW 33:19–110)

**The right and necessity of assertiones** (LStA 3:180,17–183,22; WA 18:603,1–605,34)

What are 'assertiones'? (180,22–181,25)

praise for Erasmus' love of peace (180,22–23)

criticism of Erasmus' error regarding assertiones → first statement: being a Christian = delectari assertionibus (180,23–26)

definition of asserere: constanter adhaerere, affirmare, confiteri, tueri atque invictum perseverare (180,26–29)

subject of asserere: quae nobis traditae sunt divinitus in sacris literis (180,29–30)

no assertiones in cases of doubtful and unnecessary matters → that would be foolish and impious (180,30–181,6)

Christianus = assertor → taking sides in the conflict between the ancient philosophical schools (scepticism ↔ stoicism) (181,7–8)

scriptural argument with Paul → second statement: Tolle assertiones, et Christianismum tulisti (181,8–18)

foolish and appropriate asserere (181,18–20)

those who deny asserere, deny religion (181,20–25)

skepticism versus certainty (181,26–182,23)

an attempt to excuse Erasmus, with a word of caution (181,26–182,2)

distinction between arbitrari and loqui with regard to liberum arbitrium (182,2–6)

Erasmus combines skepticism regarding religious teachings with submission to the authority of the Church (182,6–12)

Christian faith allows for skepticism, but not in every aspect of it (182,12–17)

certainty is indispensable in matters of necessity (182,17–23)

submission to authority versus understanding of Scripture (182,24–183,3)

Erasmus' declaration of submission (182,24–25)

submittere both to Scripture and to the precepts of the church? (182,25–32)

third statement: no faith without certainty and understanding → Christianus anathema sit, si non certus sit et assequatur, id quod ei praescribitur, quomodo enim credet id quod non assequitur? (182,32–36)

assequi does not mean "sceptico more dubitare" or "perfecte nosse ac videre" (the latter would imply, on the one hand, "unum assecutus, omnia assecutus" and, on the other hand, "qui non assequitur, nullam partem creaturae unquam assequitur"), but "certo apprehendere", i.e. to firmly grasp the core truth of Christian faith in the Bible (182,36–183,3)

difference between dogmata christiana and opiniones hominum (183,4–22)

Erasmus equates the two and states: Quae supra nos, nihil ad nos (183,4–9)

Erasmus presents himself as a mediator (183,9–11)

Erasmus should drop the accusation of stubbornness and allow the Reformation to delight in assertiones (183,11–20)

fourth statement: Spiritus Sanctus non est scepticus, nec dubia aut opiniones in cordibus nostris scripsit, sed assertiones ipsa vita et omni experientia certiores et firmiores (183,20–22)

### **The clarity of Scripture – first discussion** (LStA 3:183,23–186,23; WA 18:606,1–609,14)

Erasmus' distinction between necessary and unnecessary dogmata christiana (183,23–184,4)

Luther's judgment on this distinction (184,4–8)

Luther's distinction between deus and scriptura dei → many things hidden with regard to God, nothing hidden in Scripture (184,8–14)

consequences of such a mistaken opinion among the scholastics → contempt of Scripture (184,14–19)

admitted: multa loca in scripturis obscura (184,19–21)

but: clarity of the basic teachings in Scripture → trinity and Christology (184,21–185,4)

the main points in Scripture (res) are evident, despite that the words (signa) are not always easy to understand (185,4–13)

the mysteries of God in Scripture are revealed and proclaimed (185,14–22)

the cause of concealment is the blindness of the heart (185,22–30)

in the scriptural evidence he provides, Erasmus confuses the inscrutable God and the proclamation of Scripture (185,31–37)

Erasmus' examples of inscrutable statements of scripture and teachings of the church (185,37–186,4)

the scholastic complication of dogmatic arguments contrasts with the simple statements of Scripture (186,4–13)

duplex claritas/obscuritas scripturae: externa (in uerbi ministerio posita) – interna (in cordis cognitione sita) (186,13–23)

### **The dispute over the essence of Christianity (forma Christianismi)** (LStA 3:186,24–194,28; WA 18:609,15–620,37)

general assessment of Erasmus' remarks (186,24–189,14)

Erasmus' statements are insufficient in content, even incorrect (186,24–187,26)

general assessment (186,24–29)

this program is atheistic and frivolous (186,29–187,3)

Erasmus suppresses the three crucial questions: about God's foreknowledge, about the relevance of human will for salvation, and about the freedom of human agency (187,3–8)

Erasmus proves to be ignorant of the essence of Christianity (187,8–26)

the positive statements in Erasmus' definition of the forma Christianismi are contradictory (187,27–188,13)

brief summary of Erasmus' forma Christianismi (187,27–30)

critical review of this summary (187,30–35)

the question of the capacity of the claimed powers remains open (187,35–188,4)

Erasmus' final answer is contradictory and causes confusion (188,4–13)

Erasmus' definition of the forma Christianismi fails to address the connection between knowledge and practice (188,14–189,14)

practical examples of the absurdity of Erasmus' proposal (188,14–31)

Erasmus states what needs to be done without exploring the forces required to do so → *summa temeritas* (188,32–36)

compared to the scholastics, Erasmus surpasses their absurdity (188,36–189,1)

Erasmus' self-confidence has confused him (189,1–5)

in worldly matters, this presumption might be tolerable, but in spiritual matters, deliberate ignorance about *posse*, *scire*, *facere* is intolerable (189,5–14)

the material debate: Luther's *summa rerum Christianarum* (189,15–191,18)

first part of Luther's *summa*: what human will can do (189,15–39)

Christians must know whether their will can achieve salvation (189,15–19)

who is ignorant about this is not a Christian (189,19–23)

the determination of human capabilities in relation to God shows us God and his capabilities (189,23–25)

those who do not know God's power do not know God himself, and those who do not know God cannot worship him (189,26–28)

the clear determination of God and man results in the *certissima distinctio* of both → it determines the right worship of God (189,28–32)

to denounce this knowledge as speculative is unacceptable (189,32–33)

Erasmus' *forma Christianismi* offers a correct insight: all good things are to be attributed to God – but Erasmus merely talks about this without considering the consequence: *uoluntatem nostram nihil agere* (189,33–39)

second part of Luther's *summa*: God's necessary foreknowledge (189,40–191,18)

the question that is to be considered (189,40–41)

Erasmus does not address the issue properly by examining its implications (189,41–190,15)

the scholastics have asked all the necessary questions regarding *liberum arbitrium* (190,15–21)

Christians must know: *Deus nihil praescit contingenter, sed omnia incommutabili et aeterna infallibilique voluntate et praevidet et proponit et facit* (190,22–24)

this lightning bolt strikes down *liberum arbitrium* (190,24–27)

actually, Erasmus' concept of God implies this insight (190,27–191,2)

consequence for human action: it is under the influence of the all-determining will of God (191,3–9)

the power of God's will in comparison to the will of man (191,9–13)

definition of '*contingenter fieri*' (191,13–18)

Consequential problems arising from the insights of Luther's *summa* (191,19–194,28)

the absurdity of the scholastic distinction between *necessitas consequentiae* and *necessitas consequentis* (191,19–192,20)

the testimony of ancient poets and everyday experience for *necessitas* (192,21–193,7)

- can Christians ignore what poets and the people know? (192,21–23)
- Virgil on the power of fate (192,23–30)
- the poets knew that no one is master of his own life (192,30–33)
- in proverbs, the people testify to their knowledge of the deity and its *praescientia* and *praedestinatio* (192,33–193,4)
- the supposedly wise have distorted this knowledge (193,4–7)

the necessity of all events is also the reason for the credibility of the promise of salvation (193,8–25)

Erasmus' opinion would extinguish Christianity altogether (193,26–194,4)

admonition to Erasmus (194,5–14)

criticism of the scholastics, with whom Erasmus must not confuse Luther (194,14–28)

**Public debate about the essence of Christianity is necessary and possible** (LStA 3:194,29–196,17; WA 18:620,38–623,27)

- Luther against Erasmus: the *sacra* must be *aperta* (194,29–195,8)
- Erasmus' example: avoid paradoxical speech about God's omnipresence (195,9–24)
- Luther's response: Christians have to learn appropriate speech about God's omnipresence (195,25–196,14)
- the problematic way in which the scholastics speak about God (196,14–17)

**Erasmus' advocacy of compulsory confession to secure peace in the world is incompatible with Christian freedom** (LStA 3:196,18–203,17; WA 18:623,28–630,18)

- instead of distinguishing between external order and the individual's conscience, Erasmus advocates the problematic papal practice of binding consciences through compulsory confession in order to promote morality (196,18–197,17)
- Erasmus' interest in external peace conflicts with Christian faith (197,18–198,2)
- while the disorder of the world challenges Christians, they focus on the life to come (198,3–19)
- the lack of external peace in the world is partly due to the Word of God, which clashes with the God of this world (198,20–36)
- because God is at work in the tumults of the world, Erasmus' attempt to secure external peace through moralism is futile (198,37–199,15)
- the lack of external peace is a lesser evil compared to eternal damnation → Christians would rather lose the world than God (199,16–200,9)
- Christian freedom (*libertas Christiana*) is incompatible with compulsory confession and human traditions (200,10–23)
- carnal abuse of freedom does not justify restrictions on Christian freedom (200,23–201,7)
- Erasmus' request to teach the truth with consideration for the situation conflicts with Christian freedom, which asserts: “*Veritas et doctrina semper, palam, constanter praedicanda, nunquam obliquando, caelandave est*” (201,8–202,11)

the alleged authority of church fathers and councils does not make human traditions binding on individuals' consciences → Christ is the sole authority (203,1–17)

### **The Reformation's teachings on justification and election and the paradox of mere necessity** (LStA 3:203,18–210,11; WA 18:630,19–638,11)

Erasmus argues against the “paradoxon” “*Quicquid fit a nobis, non libero arbitrio, sed mera necessitate fieri*”, claiming that it endangers religion and morality (203,18–204,2)

for Luther, this paradox is not a human invention, but divine word (as Paul, the Synoptics, and John attest) and therefore to be proclaimed (204,2–19)

Erasmus relativizes scripture and interferes with God's work (204,20–205,5)

Luther refutes Erasmus' religious and ethical objections (205,6–23)

there are two reasons why the Reformation doctrine of justification and election, which seems paradoxical to Erasmus, must be proclaimed → humiliation and faith (205,24–206,29)

Erasmus' criticism of the Reformation doctrine of justification and election is also psychologically misguided because it arouses curiosity (206,30–207,2)

the paradox of mere necessity is the flip side of the Reformation doctrine of justification and election → man does nothing for salvation, “*sed solus Deus operatur salutem in nobis*” (207,3–10)

God's inevitable work of salvation in human beings is not imposed from outside, but happens out of an inner necessity (207,10–208,7)

Luther's initial statement: “*Necessario uero dico, non coacte*” (207,10)

“*homo cum uacat spiritu Dei*”: living under sin (207,11–24)

“*mutata et blande assibilata per spiritum Dei uoluntas*”: living in the Spirit (207,25–33)

human beings “*sub deo huius seculi*” are inevitably dominated by the devil (207,33–40)

“*si fortior superveniat*,” human beings are inevitably determined by God's spirit and participate in “*regia libertas*” (207,40–208,2)

the human will as a riding animal (*iumentum*) either of God or of the Devil → “*Sic humana uoluntas in medio posita est, ceu iumentum, si insederit Deus, uult et uadit, quo uult Deus [...]. Si insederit Satan, uult et uadit, quo uult Satan, nec est in eius arbitrio, ad utrum sessorem currere aut eum quaerere, sed ipsi sessores certant ob ipsum obtinendum et possidendum.*” (208,2–7)

by relativizing the efficacy of *liberum arbitrium*, Erasmus himself asserts its ineffectiveness (208,8–34)

Luther, however, offers an interpretation that would allow for an appropriate use of the term *liberum arbitrium*, namely as *aptitudo passiva* (208,28–34)

but Luther rejects this interpretation and states, “*Nos omnia necessitate, nihil arbitrio libero facere, dum uis liberii arbitrii nihil est, neque facit, neque potest bonum, absente gratia*” (208,35–209,4)

*liberum arbitrium* is not a human possibility, but belongs to God alone → “*esse plane diuinum nomen*” (209,4–9)

Luther calls for a theological usage of language that attributes liberum arbitrium to God alone and no longer misleads people (209,9–210,3)

Luther suggests speaking of liberum arbitrium “non respectu superioris, sed tantum inferioris [...] rei” (210,4–11)

**Concluding remarks on the first part of Erasmus’ introduction** (LStA 3:210,11–211,5; WA 18:638,12–639,12)

the first part of Erasmus’ introduction (praefatio) deals with the controversial issue better than the subsequent explanations (prooemium and tractatio) and presents the alternative of verba Dei or hominum (210,11–18)

when Erasmus recommends proclaiming Christ crucified in the concluding passages of his praefatio, it reveals his moralistic misunderstanding of Christian faith, i.e., sine fide in operibus gloriari (210,18–211,5)

**The ecclesiastical tradition invoked by Erasmus in support of liberum arbitrium is invalid, whereas Luther can appeal to the tradition of the true Church to justify his rejection of it** (LStA 3:211,6–221,12; WA 18:639,13–652,22)

what follows is a discussion of the second part of Erasmus’ introduction (the prooemium), which prepares readers for the main body of the *Diatriba* (211,6)

Luther welcomes Erasmus’ statement that the Bible is the only basis for their debate (211,6–10)

however, Erasmus does not approve of Luther’s scriptural principle, accusing him of opposing the consensus of many centuries – in fact, Luther only has the support of Augustine, Wyclif and Valla, and he resorts to the iudicium conscientiae (211,10–212,32)

however, the saints, as witnesses of Christ, support Luther’s position against liberum arbitrium (212,33–213,16)

Luther calls on the supporters of liberum arbitrium to prove its truth by demonstrating spirit, holiness and miracles (213,17–214,27)

Augustine and Bernard of Clairvaux demonstrate that no saint believes in liberum arbitrium (214,27–215,7)

the supporters of liberum arbitrium cannot prove its effectiveness (215,8–29)

they cannot even explain the theoretical concept of liberum arbitrium (215,30–216,21)

given the questionable nature of liberum arbitrium, troubled consciences should not be tormented by this doctrine (216,21–35)

Erasmus’ reliance on ecclesiastical tradition fails to achieve the simplicity and purity of the Christian doctrine centered on Christ crucified (217,1–16)

Luther maintains his rejection of liberum arbitrium, highlighting again the inconsistency of ecclesiastical tradition’s statements on the subject (217,17–218,24)

Erasmus objects that the whole Church could not have been wrong about this issue until now (218,25–27)

Luther counters that the true Church is not identical with its representatives (218,27–219,19)

throughout history, from Adam to the present, the true Church has always been hidden (219,20–220,2)

despite their efforts to exercise free will, the pagans, who were superior to Christians in terms of education, achieved nothing with God (220,2–15)

the true Church is not identical with what is called the Church, instead it is hidden (220,16–24)

in order to judge who belongs to the true Church, one must follow both the canon caritatis and the canon fidei (220,25–221,1)

for the question of the authority of ecclesiastical tradition, this means “illi [sancti] potius sequendi fuerant, qui optima, id est, contra liberum arbitrium pro gratia, loquuti sunt, relictis illis, qui pro infirmitate carnis, carnem potius quam spiritum testificati sunt” (221,1–12)

### **The clarity of Scripture – second discussion** (LStA 3:221,13–230,3; WA 18:652,23–661,28)

In the face of ambiguous institutional authority, how can there be certainty? (221,13–222,9)

the problem is not only that ecclesiastical tradition is unreliable and the true church is hidden (see above), but also that, given Erasmus’ acknowledgment of Scripture as the basis for discussion, it must be conceded that Scripture can be interpreted in different ways → Erasmus recommends skepticism (221,13–23)

Luther replies: Erasmus supports the hermeneutics of enthusiasts and papists (namely, that Scripture must be interpreted by human subjectivity or the church’s authority) → thus, he replaces Scripture with *hominum somnia* (221,24–222,9)

Luther takes up the first discussion on the internal and external clarity of Scripture (222,10–31)

double judgment for testing the spirits (222,10)

the inner judgment as the self-certainty of the enlightened person of salvation → inner clarity of Scripture (222,10–16)

limitation of the scope of this judgment (222,16–18)

the external judgment and its function → external clarity of Scripture (222,18–25)

Christians profess Scripture as *lux spiritualis* (222,25–27)

Scholasticism’s opposing view (*Scripturas esse obscuras et ambiguas*) requires proving the *primum principium nostrum* (222,27–31)

scriptural proof in Deuteronomy 17:8–10 → God’s law has external clarity and is therefore binding (222,32–223,16)

numerous other Old and New Testament passages speak of the Word of God as light or substantiate preaching with biblical references, showing that the Word of God is clear and unambiguous (223,17–224,12)

Erasmus’ *forma Christianismi*, with its assertion of the obscurity of Scripture, contradicts the Church’s approach to the Bible, the use of the Bible for contemporary proclamation, Paul’s assertion that inspired Scripture is *utilis ad docendum*, and Christ’s promise that his word makes believers resilient (224,12–40)

Erasmus objects that he does not consider the whole of Scripture to be obscure, but only parts of it → Luther replies that Scripture as revelation is clear in its entirety (225,1–9)

the obscurity of the doctrine of *liberum arbitrium* proves that it is not scriptural, for all articles of faith are grounded in Scripture and defended from it (225,9–22)

the Bible reports many times that the truth of Scripture encounters the persistent resistance of those who are overcome by Scripture (225,23–226,9)

the condemnation of Jan Hus also shows that the truth of Scripture is proven, but encounters resistance (226,10–20)

also with regard to *liberum arbitrium* the truth of Scripture is evident, but is not accepted by many → the world is the *regnum Satanae*, in which the truth of Scripture is not openly disputed, but is in fact undermined (226,20–227,3)

the question arises as to why, despite the clarity of Scripture, so many theologians have defended *liberum arbitrium* for so long → the world and the Church were and are blinded and ignore the obvious (227,4–34)

Luther does not elaborate further here, but states “*Satis sit exordio praemisisse, Scripturas esse clarissimas*” → that many do not accept this is not due to intellectual incapacity, but to the deception by the devil (227,34–228,11)

Erasmus contradicts himself when he claims that Scripture is obscure on the one hand, and on the other hand refers to the affirmation of *liberum arbitrium* by ecclesiastical tradition, which argues on the basis of Scripture (228,12–229,14)

Luther, on the other hand, asserts that both of Erasmus’ contradictory assertions are false → with regard to *liberum arbitrium*, the Bible is clear and ecclesiastical tradition is in error → on the basis of the Bible and human experience, *liberum arbitrium* must be rejected (229,14–26)

remarks on how to proceed → Luther plans three parts: “*primum confutemus argumenta pro libero arbitrio adducta, deinde confutata nostra defendamus, tandem contra liberum arbitrium pro gratia Dei pugnemus*” (229,26–230,3)

### **Refutation of Erasmus’ definition of *liberum arbitrium*** (LStA 3,230,4–234,39; WA 18:661,29–666,13)

before Luther begins the three main sections, he turns to Erasmus’ definition of *liberum arbitrium* (230,4)

Erasmus’ definition of *liberum arbitrium* is incorrect and unclear (230,4–232,24)

Erasmus’ definition → “*liberum arbitrium hoc loco sentimus, vim humanae voluntatis, qua se possit homo applicare ad ea, quae perducunt ad aeternam salutem, aut ab ipsa auertere*” (230,4–7)

Erasmus’ definition is incorrect because the term and the reality do not coincide, since *liberum arbitrium* is primarily to be attributed to God → instead of ‘*liberum*’, one should speak of ‘*veribile*’ *arbitrium* (230,7–33)

there are clear and unclear parts in Erasmus’ definition (231,1–13)

*vis voluntatis humanae* (231,13–15)

*se applicare et auertere* → for Erasmus, *liberum arbitrium* is “*medium quiddam inter voluntatem et ipsam et actionem suam*” (231,15–24)

*quae ad aeternam salutem perducunt* → *verba et opera Dei* (231,24–232,3)

*salus aeterna* → *res incomprehensibilis* (232,4–24)

Erasmus’ definition is Pelagian in its application to humans (232,25–234,2)

filling Erasmus’ definition with the content guessed by Luther → *liberum arbitrium* can do anything, including obtaining salvation (232,25–35)

Erasmus' liberum arbitrium is a divine attribute (232,35–37)  
Erasmus is a Pelagian (232,37–233,4)  
Erasmus surpasses the Pelagians because he focuses on the vis eligendi, overlooks the vis discernendi, and deifies the semiliberum arbitrium (233,4–10)  
Erasmus also surpasses the philosophers by claiming that the liberum arbitrium moves itself (233,11–16)  
Erasmus surpasses himself in the elevation of liberum arbitrium → he contradicts his own admission that liberum arbitrium depends on divine grace (233,17–234,2)  
Erasmus' definition of liberum arbitrium contradicts tradition (234,2–38)  
Erasmus' definition of liberum arbitrium contradicts Augustine and scholasticism (234,2–15)  
although the scholastics assert liberum arbitrium, they also emphasize the necessity of divine grace (234,16–21)  
However, the scholastic definition of liberum arbitrium is self-contradictory, and the scholastics attribute vis discernendi to liberum arbitrium (234,21–38)  
transition to Erasmus' scriptural evidence (234,38–39)

**Second main section**  
**Refutation of Erasmus' scriptural evidence for liberum arbitrium**

(LStA 3:235,1–301,27; WA 18:666,13–733,21; LW 33:110–212)

**1. Texts from the Old Testament that appear to speak in favor of liberum arbitrium** (LStA 3:235,1–256,39; WA 18:666,13–688,26)

**Sirach 15:14–18** (LStA 3:235,1–244,10)

text of Sir. 15:14–18 (235,1–5)

as an apocryphal text, Sir. 15:14–18 is problematic → Erasmus' interpretation and program are also problematic (235,5–236,11)

Erasmus offers three new theories about liberum arbitrium that contradict his previous definition (236,12–237,15)

Erasmus accepts the inability of liberum arbitrium to do good → but: hanc rem non habet seriam (237,16–238,12)

attributing some bonum studium and bonus conatus is now no longer possible (238,13–25)

Erasmus dreams of a medium et purum velle (238,25–40)

the medium et purum velle is a figmentum (238,41–239,7)

Erasmus' *Diatribes* is as helpless as liberum arbitrium (239,7–14)

the 'harder' opinions rejected by Erasmus on the nullity of liberum arbitrium are already contained in the position he affirms (239,15–36)

Erasmus falls prey to an abusus loquendi (239,37–240,10)

Sir. 15:14–18 proves a liberum arbitrium that negates Erasmus' opinion (240,11–19)

Sir. 15:14–18 speaks of the situation of creation of humanity (240,20–30)

through the discussion of the praecepta, Sir. 15:14–18 then restricts human freedom (240,30–37)

with "si volueris" the discussion of liberum arbitrium begins → man stands in 'duo regna' (240,3–241,7)

in this respect, Sir. 15:14–18 proves servum arbitrium (241,7–17)

conditional statements about fulfilling the commandments does not prove the fact of fulfilling them (241,18–25)

on the objection that *ought* implies *can* (241,25–242,8)

through obligation, God allows us to experience our impotence (242,9–16)

this is the meaning of divine legislation (242,16–28)

Erasmus himself does not dare to conclude free will from the demand (242,29–243,9)

Erasmus would have to agree completely with the Pelagians (243,10–31)

summary of the understanding of Sir. 15:14–18 in the sense of cognitio impotentiae (243,32–36)

the first and all human beings find themselves in a similar situation (243,36–244,4)

the passage Sir. 15:14–18 does not support liberum arbitrium (244,5–10)

**Genesis 4:7** (LStA 3:244,11–33)

in Erasmus' understanding, Gen. 4:7 speaks in general terms of victory over evil (244,12–21)

Gen. 4:7 actually speaks of what ought to be done, not of a promise (244,21–33)

**Deuteronomy 30:15+19** (LStA 3:244,34–246,7)

the call to choose does not imply the ability to do so (244,34–245,5)

two paths? – no path! (245,5–14)

the law creates knowledge, not the overcoming of sin (245,15–23)

verba imperativa are not indicativa (245,24–246,7)

**Deuteronomy 3:30** (LStA 3:246,8–247,2)

it was not conatus that was proven, but rather a completely free will (246,8–14)

from the verba imperativa of the Bible, Erasmus concludes the capacity of man (246,14–21)

the exhortations are not in vain → they reveal incapacity (246,21–23)

Erasmus' conclusion amounts to an 'omnia posse' of liberum arbitrium (246,23–247,2)

**On the hermeneutics of imperatives** (LStA 3:247,3–250,28)

Erasmus' conclusions do not prove conatus, but rather full capacity, thus contradicting his thesis of incapacity as a whole (247,3–19)

the example of the bound hand aims at the elimination of presumed freedom (247,20–26)

the *Diatribes* feigns a free man, or at least one who is aware of his misery (247,26–28)

Scripture shows man as unfree, deluded by the illusion of freedom (247,28–32)

Satan knows that when man recognizes his misery and cries out to God, God will have mercy on him (247,32–39)

but Moses reveals man's misery to him (247,39–42).

this settles the *Diatribes*'s claims about the understanding of the imperative (247,43–248,5)

further examples of Erasmus' misinterpretation of Scripture (248,5–22)

the *Diatribes* does not distinguish between vox legis and vox Evangelii (248,23–249,9)

the call to conversion does not attribute ability to man, any more than the demand for love of God establishes liberum arbitrium (249,9–44)

the *Diatribes* turns Zechariah's convertimini into a conamini converti (250,1–13)

usus legalis et evangelicus of convertere (250,13–28)

**Ezekiel 18:23 and 33:11 – Nolo mortem peccatoris** (LStA 3:250,29–254,30)

Erasmus' interpretation of Ezekiel 18:23 would result in the full exercise of liberum arbitrium, not just the effort (250,29–251,19)

Ezekiel 18:23 brings up the vox Evangelica, i.e. the dulcissimum solatium miseris peccatoribus (251,20–252,6)

Erasmus, on the other hand, turns Ezekiel 18:23 into a proclamation of the law (252,7–13)

Ezekiel does not speak of peccatum, but of poena peccati (death) and its overcoming (252,13–19)

distinction between vox legis and verba promissionis (252,19–29)

all verba legis and all verba promissionis in Scripture contradict liberum arbitrium (252,30–253,3)

the question of why (cur) this affliction occurred belongs to the hidden will of God, which can only be revered, not investigated (253,3–11)

Erasmus' question: Is God not acting contradictorily when he both decrees and laments the death of the people? (253,12–13)

Luther's answer: Aliter de voluntate dei praedicata, revelata, et aliter de deo non predicato, non revelato disputandum est → Quae supra nos nihil ad nos! (253,13–17)

justification with 2 Thess. 2:4 (253,17–24)

we have nothing to do with the deus in maiestate et natura sua (253,24–28)

contrast between deus praedicatus on the one hand and deus absconditus in maiestate on the other, of whom it is said: liberum sese reservavit super omnia (253,28–34)

Erasmus does not distinguish between Deus praedicatus/absconditus and verbum Dei/Deus ipse (253,35–36)

the will and work of the hidden God and his will and work revealed in the Word must be distinguished (253,36–254,3)

we should and must adhere to the Word (254,3–6)

we must know that there is a hidden will of God, but nothing beyond that (254,6–9)

from the perspective of deus revelatus, the blame falls on us (254,9–13)

why God does not change the will of all cannot and must not be questioned (254,13–18)

the reference to the many dialogical addresses in Scripture proves at most the existence of complete freedom and it in no way proves dependence on grace and conatus (254,19–30)

### **Deuteronomy 30:11–14 (LStA 3:254,31–256,23)**

the text of Deut. 30:11–14 (254,31–35)

interpretation of the *Diatribes*: we are free to act (254,35–255,1)

Luther's conclusion: this liberum arbitrium makes Christ unnecessary (255,1–9)

this also goes far beyond the previous statements of the diatribe (255,9–16)

interpretation of Deut. 30:11–14: there is no mention here of the capacity for liberum arbitrium, but rather of local remoteness (255,17–256,1)

must I, Luther, tell you this? (256,1–10)

meaning of Deut. 30:11–14: Moses fulfilled his office as legislator → nulla ignorantiae excusatio (256,11–23)

**Review of Erasmus' treatment of the Old Testament passages:** Erasmus has produced nothing but a monstrum (LStA 3:256,24–39)

## **2. Texts from the New Testament that appear to speak in favor of liberum arbitrium** (LStA 3:256,40–267,18; WA 18:688,27–699,23)

**General characterization of Erasmus' treatment of the New Testament** (256,40–257,3)

**Matthew 23:37** (LStA 3:257,3–258,30)

the text and its interpretation by Erasmus (257,3–8)

Erasmus' interpretation effectively aims at complete free will (257,8–20)

turning away from the *secreta voluntas maiestatis* → turning toward the *deus incarnatus* (257,21–258,4)

Christus futurus proclaimed by prophets (258,4–9)

objection of reason against the distinction between *voluntas secreta maiestatis* and *deus incarnatus* (258,10–14)

this distinction is not Luther's invention, but an instruction from Scripture → whoever contradicts it engages in a futile struggle against God (258,14–30)

**Matthew 19:17 and comparable statements** (LStA 3:258,31–260,5)

the text and its interpretation by Erasmus (258,31–259,3)

comparable conditional clauses (*si*): Matthew 19:21 – Luke 9:24 – Matthew 16:24 – John 14:15 – John 15:7 (259,3–5)

the *si vis* does not imply ability (259,5–23)

what is commanded can only be done through grace, i.e., *aliena virtute* (259,24–260,5)

**praecepta and meritum** (LStA 3:260,6–264,30)

for Erasmus, the biblical discourse on good and evil works (*bona et mala opera*) and on reward (*merces*, e.g., in Matthew 5:12) excludes *necessitas* → Erasmus argues on the basis of *autoritas humana* (260,6–21)

character of the New Testament: *promissiones* and *exhortationes* (260,22–32)

the *Diatriba* sees only *praecepta quibus formentur homines ad bonos mores* in the entire Bible, but does not recognize the saving work of the Spirit (260,32–261,3)

promise and reward apply to the apostles, who *supra liberum arbitrium in gratia erant* (261,3–11)

*meritum* and *merces* are *promissio*, not evidence of one's own *liberum arbitrium* (261,12–22)

*necessitas coactionis* is excluded, not *immutabilitatis* (261,22–29)

exclusion of *dignitas* in *merces* (261,29–262,5)

another self-contradiction by Erasmus (262,6–10)

*meritum* counts only as *sequela* (262,10–18)

no doing good in order to acquire the kingdom → through grace we do good, even if there were neither heaven nor hell (262,19–23)  
 the kingdom deserves its owners, not the other way around (262,24–33)  
 meaning of *verba promittentia et minantia*: *sequela mercedis*, not *meriti dignitas* (262,34–39)  
 no good works to gain eternal life, but movement toward the promised consequence (262,39–263,2)  
 the presentation of the consequences in Scripture should move us inwardly: *per legem* and through *promissiones* → *nosse se placere deo*; possibility: *ut nihil aliud sequatur* (263,2–18)  
 meaning of *spes* and *expectatio* (263,19–22)  
 objection of ratio: Why words, if everything depends on the spirit? (263,23–28)  
 God does not want to give the inner without the outer → *cooperatores* (263,28–36)  
 ‘reward’ does not imply *meritum*, and therefore does not prove *liberum arbitrium* (263,37–264,4)  
 God alone works through his spirit, *meritum* and *praemium*; the external word convicts us of *impotentia* (264,4–8)  
 the *Diatribes* misunderstands the meaning of *verba imperativa* (264,9–16)  
 when are the fruits ours? – precisely what we have received is ours! (264,16–30)

**Luke 23:23** (LStA 3:264,31–265,18)

What is proven here is only ignorance of what is good.

**John 1:12** (LStA 3:265,19–266,21)

John speaks of ‘*novus homo*’ → faith in the Son of God is completely unattainable for *liberum arbitrium* and ratio → *liberum arbitrium* does nothing but resist grace

**Romans 2:4** (LStA 3:266,22–267,4)

Paul does not speak of human ability, but prepares through *cognitio impotentiae ad gratiam*

**Further passages from Paul** (LStA 3:267,5–11)

Erasmus’ other references to Paul also confuse *agi* with *agere*

**Luther agrees with Wyclif** (LStA 3:267,11–18)

Luther agrees with Wyclif’s ‘*omnia necessitate fieri*’, which Erasmus also represents with his *opinio probabilis*

**3. Biblical evidence for *servum arbitrium*, which is reinterpreted by Erasmus** (LStA 3:267,18–301,27; WA 18:699,24–733,21)

**against tropological mitigations** (LStA 3:267,18–270,30)

Luther’s approach (267,18–20)

Erasmus cites only a small number of weak passages against liberum arbitrium, such as Exodus 9, Maleachi 1, and Romans 9 (267,21–268,11)  
moreover, he evades the issue by claiming that Scripture does not speak literally, just as he previously argued only with conclusions of his own devising (268,12–269,10)  
tropological interpretation of Scripture is to be avoided like poison (269,11–270,5)  
contrary to the assertion of the *Diatribes*, Luther did not resort to tropological exegesis (270,6–21)  
Erasmus, however, has thus pushed the problem of liberum arbitrium into uncertainty, without being compelled to do so by the text itself (270,22–30)

**Exodus 4:21 – “ego indurabo cor Pharaonis” (LStA 3:270,30–283,8)**

Exodus 4:21 has a clear significatio naturalis (270,30–271,14).  
the necessity to understand this as a trope would have to be proven from the text itself (271,15–31)  
examples of misinterpretation of Exodus 4:21, Romans 9:18, and Isaiah 63:17 (271,32–272,6)  
Origen and Jerome are useless as exegetical advisors (272,6–12)  
An interpretation following in their footsteps turns the *ego indurabo* on its head: *Pharaoh idurat sese* (272,12–19)  
this reverses misericordia and ira (272,20–273,18)  
Erasmus’ interpretation of indurare et misereri renders statements about Pharaoh meaningless (273,19–30)  
the texts and Erasmus’ dreams are incompatible (273,30–274,5).  
trial adoption of Erasmus’ trope → the hopelessness of liberum arbitrium, incapable of good, would not be eliminated (274,6–27)  
Erasmus distinguishes between two groups of people → but in all of them, liberum arbitrium is equally incapable; moreover, he robs God of virtus eligendi → salvation would then be entirely a matter of human choice (274,28–275,5)  
such a merely instrumental God, who is merely an object of human choice, is made up by Aristotle and reason (275,6–11)  
this is where the futile attempt to excuse God ends up → because God is denied the will to reject and to have mercy, everything comes down to liberum arbitrium (275,11–31)  
reasons that move Erasmus to the trope → it would be absurd for the good God to harden Pharaoh’s heart (276,1–9)  
for whom does this absurditas exist? → for reason! → then all articles of faith would have to be rejected as absurd (276,9–19)  
moreover, even with tropological mitigation, the absurdity remains that the just and good God demands the impossible (276,20–27)  
reason would only be satisfied by apokatastasis (276,28–31)  
however, fides and spiritus believe precisely the incomprehensible to be good (276,31–277,2)

the seemingly reasonable attribution of guilt to *liberum arbitrium* does not resolve the difficulties → therefore, the following applies: *puro et simplici verbo Dei haereamus* (277,2–11)  
 the wickedness of what is well created → the creator's working in evil (277,12–26)  
 the judgment 'good' comes from God, not from us (277,26–35)  
 how does God work in us *mala*? (277,36–40)  
 reference to the *omnia in omnibus operari* and the *non nihil esse* of our *natura aversa* (277,40–278,10)  
 the omnipotent God works in evil (278,10–16)  
 thus he works *mala*, but not *male* (278,16–31)  
 inevitable consequence of the connection between *omnipotentia Dei* and *creatura aversa sibi relicta* → inevitable activity of God (278,31–33)  
*induratio* brings about the intensification of opposition → *irritatio impiorum et ipsorum induratio* (278,33–279,17)  
 God does not create new *mala* in us, he is not a poisoner → he seizes and drives us in our wickedness → *inquietus actor Deus in omnibus creaturis suis – arripit operando malam voluntatem* (278,18–34)  
 the curse of Shimei commanded by God in 2 Samuel 16:7–14 (279,34–280,8)  
 Pharaoh as the epitome of *impia et mala voluntas* (280,9–16)  
 who is moved by evil will but through the omnipotent actor → thus he becomes increasingly entangled in himself (280,16–26)  
 “Ego faciam, ut cor Pharaonis induretur” → this is the simple meaning of the words (280,27–281,2)  
 Cur Deus non cesset ab ipso motu omnipotentiae? → Hoc est optare, ut Deus propter impios desinat esse Deus (281,2–6)  
 Cur non simul mutat voluntates malas? → Pertinet ad secreta maiestatis! → adorare (281,6–8)  
 murmurings of flesh and blood → *electi tamen manebunt* (281,8–11)  
 as unanswerable as Adam's fall → *voluntas Dei regula omnium* (281,11–19)  
 after refuting the trope, Luther refers again to the absurdity of Erasmus' interpretation of *indurare* (281,20–282,5)  
 moreover, it is not just about Pharaoh's wickedness, but about the truth of the promises made to Israel → *ad confirmandam fidem et ad consolandos infirmos* (282,6–27)  
 connection between *operatio omnipotentiae generalis* and the reliability of the promise (282,28–283,8)

### **Romans 9:16 – Paul on *induratio Pharaonis*** (LStA 3:283,9–291,6)

futile escapism of the diatribe through recourse to scholastic distinctions (283,9–26)  
 what God foresees happens with necessity (283,26–284,14)  
*praescientia hominum – praescientia Dei* (284,15–19)  
 Erasmus must also admit the unity of God's knowledge and will (284,19–285,2)  
 but the eel wants to slip away again → Erasmus claims that Paul forbids the question (285,2–4)

Luther, on the other hand: Paul does not stifle the question, but deals with it thoroughly (285,4–23)

Paul states clearly: Si Deus praescit, necessario fit (285,24–36)

difficult and incompatible is the simul of praescientia die and libertas hominis (285,36–286,1)

the statement is clear → omnia solius Dei voluntate pendere (286,1–10)

this is the place to worship true majesty (286,13–25)

the correct relationship between scrutari and revereri → the attempt to balance God's praescientia and our freedom at the expense of God is called temere scrutari (286,13–25)

the deus vivus et verus is also decisive in knowledge and will according to the judgment of ratio naturalis → nothing happens without him (286,25–29)

unity of praescientia and omnipotentia → nos per nos ipsos non esse factos, nec vivere (286,29–34)

God's foreknowledge and omnipotence defeat our liberum arbitrium → omnipotentia actualis (286,34–287,9)

enormous scandal for the ratio naturalis (287,10–15)

Luther himself has been desperate about this → antequam scirem, quam salutaris illa desperatio (287,15–18)

futile attempts to evade the issue through scholastic distinctions (287,18–25)

it is precisely the affected reason that must admit the necessitas, etiamsi nulla esset scriptura (287,25–27)

based on the natural knowledge of God, all people must admit: nos non fieri nostra voluntate → it is written in all hearts: liberum arbitrium nihil esse (287,27–288,5)

Paul's image of the potter and clay (288,6–15)

futile excuses of the *Diatriba* (288,15–33)

necessario, non coacte (289,1–12)

Erasmus nevertheless asserts a posse mutare with regard to Judas (289,12–17)

defeated, he now seeks refuge in scholastic subtleties (289,17–290,2)

if only you had stayed away from the matter! (290,2–7)

rhetorical evasions cannot appease the conscience → hic vel liberum arbitrium extinguitur, vel in totum triumphabit (290,7–20)

even the scholastics felt the unbearable power of truth and invented the two necessitates → but through the necessitas consequentiae, everything is already conceded (290,21–291,6)

### **Conclusion on the induratio Pharaonis** (LStA 3,291,7–8)

#### **Genesis 25:23 and Romans 9:12 – Jacob and Esau** (LStA 3:291,8–295,20)

Erasmus claims that Gen. 25:23 has nothing to do with salus aeterna (291,8–13)

Paul's reference to Gen. 25:23 in Rom. 9:12 deals with eternal salvation → should Paul be rebuked with Jerome for his use of Scripture, when Scripture is the organ of the Holy Spirit? (291,13–28)

anathema on Paul's critics → Paul correctly interprets Gen. 25:23 in Rom. 9:12 (291,29–292,2)

the *Diatribes* evades the question of the gift of salvation, but it is about the actual mode of the work of salvation without liberum arbitrium (292,2–15)

moreover, the content also deals with eternal salvation (292,16–27)

Paul and all the apostles are faithful interpreters of Scripture (292,27–37)

Erasmus attempts to relativize the Malachi quotation in Rom. 9:13 and thus God's love and hatred as anthropomorphisms (292,38–41)

God's and man's love and hatred are certainly to be distinguished → God's amor and odium are eternal → Luther here comes close to the double decree (292,41–293,11)

the trope *effectus amoris, non amor* cannot correct Paul either (293,11–20)

Erasmus claims that Malachi speaks only of temporaria afflictio by the Edomites (293,21–25)

for Luther, this does not refute Paul's interpretation of Scripture (293,26–32)

Malachi does not speak only of temporaria afflictio → deus noster est omnium (293,33–294,16)

Erasmus' tropological interpretation: not nations, but individuals from nations → the text's message is clear: faith and unbelief solo amore et odio dei (294,17–295,20)

### **Potter and clay** (LStA 3:295,21–301,27)

Erasmus criticizes Paul (295,21–25)

Luther: Paul makes his own comparison here → in any case, the statement is directed against liberum arbitrium (295,25–296,7)

the *Diatribes* distorts Paul's statement (296,8–17)

Luther's counter-interpretation: no evasion to 2 Tim. 2:20–21, no separation of the similitudo from the res (196,17–297,2)

the passage from Timothy also clearly states: vasa non seipsa parent → no dissent from Rom. 9 (297,3–28)

Erasmus' argument from reason is identical to the hatred Paul speaks of → the potter is guilty → reason offers a God according to its own standards (297,29–298,26)

the postulate of reason demands reward and punishment for good deeds and misdeeds → consequence: no one could be saved (298,27–33)

reason would also have to reproach God for merciful salvation → but it only grumbles about undeserved damnation → thus showing its interest in itself (298,33–299,24)

by referring to further passages, the *Diatribes* produces a confusion of statements (299,25–300,6)

the scripture supplemented by Erasmus would be contradictory → it would attribute everything to liberum arbitrium (300,7–24)

the simplex sensus of the text untangles this game of reason (300,25–301,9)

against Erasmus' interest in the merita of man (301,10–27)

**Third main section**  
**Erasmus' arguments against Luther's remarks**  
**on article 36 in his 'Assertio omnium articulorum' of 1521**  
(LStA 3:301,28–326,2; WA 18:733,22–756,23; LW 33:212–246)

**Genesis 6:3 – Spirit/flesh** (LStA 3:301,29–303,37; WA 18:733,23–736,5)

with reference to Jerome, Erasmus relativizes the statement in Gen. 6:3 (301,30–302,8)  
Luther's first counterarguments (302,8–20)  
interpretation of the Hebrew text of Gen. 6:3 (302,20–31)  
clarification of the meaning of the text against Jerome (302,31–303,14)  
omnes homines caro: two meanings of caro → sinfulness and creatureliness (303,15–37)

**Genesis 8:21 – malum cordis** (LStA 3:303,38–304,26; WA 18:736,6–33)

text of Gen. 8:21 and the comparable text Gen. 6:5 (303,38–304,26)  
Erasmus' interpretation: proclivitas ad malum (304,2–3)  
Luther's interpretation: omnes nihil nisi malum fingi (303,4–20)  
spatium resipiscentiae? → God grants time (303,20–26)

**Isaiah 40:2 – Grace or reckoning?** (LStA 3:304,27–307,18; WA 18:736,34–739,22)

Erasmus again refers to Jerome (304,28–305,4)  
with all the evangelists against Jerome: the text announces forgiveness (305,4–31)  
Isaiah speaks of the end of the militia legalis populi (305,32–306,11)  
Israel received a double gift of salvation (306,1–28)  
the abundance of grace does not refer to human preparation for grace (306,29–307,3)  
Cornelius (Acts 10:2) did not perform good works without the Holy Spirit (307,3–18)

**Isaiah 40:6 – flesh/spirit, totus homo** (LStA 3:307,18–313,10; WA 18:739,23–745,19)

text of Isa. 40:6 (307,18–21)  
Erasmus again argues with Luther using Jerome (307,24–27)  
Luther's displeasure with Jerome's interpretation (307,24–27)  
critical examination of Jerome's interpretation (307,27–308,9)  
omnis caro = omnis populus = fenum (308,3–24)  
fenum = Graecorum sapientia et Iudaeorum iustitia → quod natum ex carne caro, as stated  
in John 3:6 (308,24–309,10)  
Erasmus stubbornly evades the meaning of Scripture (309,11–23)  
Erasmus shifts back and forth between meaning and letter in order to evade the message of  
Scripture (309,23–33)  
Erasmus' supposed victory cannot satisfy him, for the testimony of Scripture is clear: to-  
tum hominem esse carnem (309,34–310,17)  
Erasmus' counter-thesis: nec omnis affectus hominis est caro → right to moral existence  
(310,18–21)  
Luther's examination of the practice of this ancient morality → core interest: pro gloria  
sua haec omnia gesserunt → apud Deum nihil est inhonestius (310,22–311,11)  
Erasmus does not take into account the Hebrew phrasing (311,11–20)

impious = sine spiritu → no medium regnum of man (311,20–33)

Erasmus' division of man makes Christ the savior only of our sensuality and man the self-savior of his better parts → man is elevated above Satan to become deus deorum et dominus dominantium (311,34–312,21)

Luther never claimed that those born of the Spirit are only flesh (312,22–313,10)

### **Jeremiah 10:23** (LStA 3:313,11–314,21; WA 18:745,20–746,29)

text of Jer. 10:23 and Erasmus' interpretation (313,11–13)

Erasmus loses himself again in glosses (313,13–18)

The meaning of the passage (313,18–23)

tentative adoption of the reinterpretation → conclusion: humans are also subject to necessitas in temporalia (313,23–314,7)

the request for help proves our inability (314,8–21)

### **Proverbs 16:1+4, Proverbs 21:1** (LStA 3:314,22–316,13; WA 18:746,30–748,7)

Erasmus on Prov. 16:1 (314,22–28)

Luther's response: incerta nobis sunt omnia futura (314,29–315,6)

other references by Erasmus to Proverbs and their refutation (315,6–14)

Erasmus on Prov. 21,1 and Luther's rejection: what does 'deus inclinatus' mean? (315,20–26)

God's permission? → Luther's conclusion: hominem non esse sui iuris aut operis liberum electorem aut factorem (315,26–316,13)

### **John 15:5** (LStA 3:316,14–322,10; WA 18:748,8–753,11)

Erasmus attempts to soften John 15:5 by changing 'nihil' to 'modicum' (316,14–317,12)

Erasmus attempts to relativize 'nihil' and 'non' (317,13–23)

Luther demonstrates the heretical nature of such an interpretation (317,23–29)

Erasmus contradicts his own opinio → liberum arbitrium nihil bonis velle posse (318,1–7)

Luther: liberum arbitrium is captive and not in medio libero posita (318,7–21)

Erasmus tries in vain to relativize the unambiguous Scripture (318,21–319,5)

nihil corresponds to the devil's dominion over voluntas humana (319,6–18)

the context (vine) agrees with this (319,18–32)

examples from Erasmus to turn 'nihil' into 'modicum' (319,33–37)

Luther's response: liberum arbitrium multa agat, quae tamen sunt nihil coram Deo (319,37–320,7)

Erasmus gets tangled up when referring to 1 Cor. 3:7 – Luther: voluntas impia sit aliquid et non merum nihil (320,7–19)

equally incorrect reference to 1 Corinthians 13:2 (320,20–321,7)

Erasmus also confuses nature and grace with regard to John 3:27 (321,7–322,10)

### **Further examples provided by Erasmus** (LStA 3:322,11–324,21; WA 18:753,12–755,18)

navis and navita (322,11–14)

agricola (322,14–18)

cooperatio (322,18–323,3)

the nature of cooperation for creatura and nova creatura (323,3–19)

where Scripture speaks of God's auxilium, it excludes liberum arbitrium (323,20–324,21)

**Conclusion** (LStA 3:324,22–326,2; WA 18:755,19–756,23)

summary of Erasmus' arguments (324,22–29)

Erasmus' mediocritas does not help → ad extrema eundem est (324,29–325,7)

conciliatory address to Erasmus (325,8–326,2)

**Fourth main section**  
**Luther's attack on liberum arbitrium**  
(LStA 3:326,3–351,13; WA 18:756,24–783,17; LW 33:246–288)

**Luther's approach** (LStA 3:326,3–13; WA 18:756,24–757,10)

**1. Paul** (LStA 3:326,13–343,41; WA 18:757,10–776,3)

**Romans 1** (326,13–329,28)

main thrust of Rom. 1:18 (326,13–22)

objection: Paul speaks only of some people (326,23–26)

rebuttal: it concerns all people (326,26–327,11)

there is no middle ground between salus and ira (327,12–17)

God's justice only in the Gospel, not in man (327,17–26)

per sese ignorant iustitiam salutis → complete disorientation of sinners (327,26–33)

confirmation through experientia (327,34–328,6)

confirmation through 1 Cor. 1:23 (328,6–22)

illustration using Greek wisdom → optimum studium et opus in optimis gentium malum (328,22–37)

Paul's judgment on the Jews (328,37–329,6)

Rom. 3:9 as epilogue to Paul's argument from chapter 1 (329,7–28)

**Romans 3:10–12 – Paul argues from Scripture** (329,29–331,22)

Paul explicitly justifies the omnes here (329,29–330,9)

omnes in universum ignorant deum (330,10–16)

ignorantia et contemptus religionis et pietatis (330,16–39)

softening → potentia for good, not actus (330,40–43)

Luther: verba includunt et actum et potentiam (330,43–331,22)

**Romans 3:19–20 – universal failure to keep the law** (331,23–335,21)

every mouth is stopped, for totus mundus reus (331,23–332,7)

works of the law do not justify, without exception (332,8–28)

Paul disputes not only the ceremonial law (332,29–334,16)

Erasmus claims that Paul means the ceremonial law (332,29–30)

Luther shows that this claim is the main cause of the misunderstanding of Pauline theology (332,30–37)

Erasmus completely contradicts Paul's statement (332,37–333,9)

Paul does not speak of the law as obsolete in terms of salvation history → dialectic of curse and salvation (333,10–32)

perpetrators of the law: spiritu or carne (333,33–334,16)

Rom. 3:20, the achievement of the law and the voice of the gospel (334,17–335,21)

blind liberum arbitrium must be taught by the lex (334,17–21)

experientia: resistance to the gospel (334,21–28)

Paul answers the question of the *Diatriba* about the meaning of the law → cognitio peccati (334,28–37)  
the gospel as a different light (334,37–41)  
confirmation through Gal. 3:19 and Rom. 5:20 (334,42–335,21)

**Romans 3:21–25 – God’s righteousness, justification** (335,22–339,32)

the text of Rom. 3:21–25 (335,22–27)  
distinction between iustitia dei and iustitia legis → tollit iustitiam moralem (335,27–336,14)  
qui credunt in Christum: unbelief sins in all actions (336,15–29)  
omnes peccaverunt (336,29–38)  
all are without the glory of God (336,38–337,24)  
iustificari gratis per gratiam (337,25–338,5)  
the claimed renunciation of meritum de condigno is an illusion if conatus is made the basis of salvation (338,5–22)  
this hidden synergism is worse than open Pelagianism (338,32–38)  
Paul rejects both through his gratis (338,38–339,13)  
fathers who deviated from this were blind (339,14–32)

**Romans 4 – Abraham** (339,33–341,2)

iustitia fidei contra iustitia operum (339,33–340,17)  
no room for middle ground action (340,18–31)  
gratia ex praedestinatione (340,32–341,2)

**Romans 5 – Adam** (341,2–13)

unicum delictum fit nostrum nascendo (341,2–11)  
conclusion for liberum arbitrium (341,11–13)

**Review of the passages from Paul discussed so far** (341,14–342,6)

Paul speaks as clearly as possible (341,14–23)  
Luther is surprised by attempts to tone down Paul (341,24–342,6)

**Romans 8 – Flesh and Spirit** (342,7–343,16)

Introduction to the text and its implications → alternative flesh/spirit (342,7–27)  
against Origen’s tripartite division of the affections (342,27–343,9)  
supplemented by Rom. 1:17 – iustus ex fide (343,9–16)

**Romans 10:20 – gratiam venire gratis** (343,17–41)

**2. John** (LStA 3:343,42–351,13; WA 18:776,4–783,17)

**Introduction: John as the liberi arbitrii vastator** (343,42–344,2)

**John 1:5–16** (344,2–346,10)

passages from the text (344,2–5)  
comprehensive meaning of mundus (344,5–24)  
interpretation of John 1:12–13 (344,25–345,14)  
text (344,25–27)  
voluntas carnis (344,27–36)  
consequences for liberum arbitrium (344,36–345,14)  
interpretation of John 1:16 (345,15–346,10)  
aliena gratia – alieno merito (345,15–26)  
tutores liberi arbitrii = abnegatores Christi → consequence: false Christology of the metuendus iudex (345,26–346,10)

**Nicodemus: The embodiment of liberum arbitrium (346,11–31)**

**John 14:6 (346,31–347,43)**

no knowledge according to the capacity of liberum arbitrium (346,31–347,6)  
Christ denies everything else per contentionem (347,7–17)  
Christum esse necessarium (347,17–27)  
those who confess Christ reject liberum arbitrium (347,27–33)  
God would be unjust if he rejected people with vis bona (347,33–43)

**John 3:18 (348,1–33)**

liberum arbitrium belongs to totus homo (348,1–8)  
incredulitas est Deum negare (348,8–20)  
supplement by John 3:27 → Christ would only be the savior of sensual affections (348,20–33)

**John 3:27 – de terra, de coelo (348,34–349,19)**

**John 6:44 – raptus spiritus (349,20–350,6)**

**John 16:19 – Christ does not know liberum arbitrium (350,7–15)**

**Summary remarks (350,15–351,13)**

Scripture proclaims Christ to us through contradiction (per contentionem) (350,15–24).  
regnum Christi – regnum Satanae (350,24–36)  
References to Rom. 7:14–23, Gal. 5:16–18, and Rom. 8:7 as arguments against liberum arbitrium (350,37–351,13)

**Luther's concluding words** (LStA 3:351,13–354,31; WA 18:783,17–786,20; LW 33:288–293)

- personal confession of the salutary nature of servum arbitrium (351,13–30)
- extension of the hope of salvation to multi (351,30–352,3)
- the enduring offense of a condemning God (352,4–9)
- honoring the incomprehensible justice of God (352,9–19)
- incomparability of God and man (352,19–29)
- even reason must admit this – reference to the eschaton (352,29–35)
- reference to aids to understanding for faith (352,36–37)
- despair at God's existence and at the justice of the course of the world as it is – Aristotle (352,37–353,13)
- this iniquitas dei dissolves per lucem Evangelii (353,13–20)
- the lumen gloriae will illuminate the challenge to predestination (353,21–27)
- tria lumina tunc ostendet (353,27–354,11)
- summary of Luther's position in five points (354,12–31)
  - the reasons against liberum arbitrium are explained (354,12–14)
  - (1) God's praescientia and praedestinatio exclude any liberum arbitrium, ipsa ratione teste (354,14–18)
  - (2) the fact of the devil's dominion also shows that there is no liberum arbitrium without liberation through God's Spirit (354,18–21)
  - (3) likewise, the fact of original sin shows that there is no liberum arbitrium (354,21–24)
  - (4) the history of the Jews and Gentiles shows that justification comes only through grace (354,24–28).
  - (5) Luther's summa is: Christ is the redeemer of the whole human being (354,28–31)

**Admonition to Erasmus** (LStA 3:354,32–356,9; WA 18:786,21–787,14; LW 33:294–295)

request to Erasmus: Give way to those who teach better! (354,32–355,1)

comparison of persons: Erasmus' abundance of gifts – Luther, on the other hand, is only a Christian (355,1–4)

praise of Erasmus: he has grasped the *summa causae* and the *cardo rerum* (355,4–10)

old and new opponents were unable to do this (355,10–13)

but: Erasmus has carried out the task miserably (355,14–18)

Erasmus was not up to the task → may God make him overcome Luther in this matter as well (355,18–22)

Erasmus cannot hide behind tradition (355,22–27)

the retreat to comparison (*collatio*) reveals that Erasmus is not up to the task (356,1–2)

Luther's *assertio* and his demand for obedience (356,2–5)

prayer to God to enlighten Erasmus (356,5–10)