
A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

THE

CHURCHMAN

A Monthly Magazine

CONDUCTED BY CLERGYMEN AND LAYMEN

OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

VOL. XII.

LONDON
ELLIOT STOCK, 62, PATERNOSTER ROW
1885

Art. VI.—ERASMUS.

THE life of Erasmus is, for many reasons, very interesting. He greatly contributed to prepare the way for the Reformation. He was the most learned man of his time in Europe, and has been justly called the envy of his own age, the wonder of all succeeding ages. He was gifted with mental faculties of the highest order, which had been greatly improved by diligent application. His industry was so great that, notwithstanding the want of books, his great poverty, the want of masters who were qualified to instruct him, and an infirm constitution which hindered him greatly in the attainment of his object, he rose to a proud pre-eminence above the common herd of his fellow-creatures, and secured for himself a high place in the Temple of Fame. To himself he owed almost all his knowledge of the Greek and Latin languages. In the latter all his works were written. His memory was so retentive that, at the age of thirteen, he knew the whole of Horace and Terence by heart. He was the "observed of all observers." He held constant correspondence with princes, nobles, and others, who endeavoured to induce him to make their country the land of his adoption, and to take up his abode permanently among them. Learned men flocked to him from all parts of Europe. We are told that Albert, Archbishop of Maintz, was greatly afflicted because he was not likely to see him before his death. As many pilgrimages were made to Erasmus during his lifetime as to the shrines of any of those canonized saints whom the Church of Rome has embalmed with her praises, and has taught her followers to regard with superstitious reverence.

This illustrious man was born in Rotterdam on October 28th, 1467. He was sent, when he was four years of age, to a school kept by a certain Peter Winkel; and afterwards, when he was nine, to a very good school at Deventer. Sintheim, who was his chief instructor at it, foretold that he would rise to the highest pinnacle of letters. At the age of thirteen he lost his parents. His guardians, appointed by his father, used all the means in their power, which were only too successful, to induce him to become a monk, in order that they might deprive him of his little patrimony. He has described those means, and the misery which he endured in the monastery of Stein, which he had been induced to enter, in letters to Servatius, the Prior of the monastery, and to Grunnius, a scribe at the Papal Court. He writes to the latter, describing himself under the assumed name of Florentius:

"They suborned various persons, of different sexes and conditions of life, monks, half monks, male and female cousins, young men and old

men, the known and the unknown, to carry on the plot to its conclusion. With how many battering-rams was the mind of that boy shaken! One brought before him the lovely image of monastic tranquillity, exhibiting that kind of life in the best possible point of view; and another, in a very tragic manner, exaggerated the dangers of the world—as if monks lived out of it, as they paint themselves, in a very strong ship, while everyone else is tossed on the waves, certain to perish, unless they throw out to him a pole or a rope. Another terrified him by fabulous tales. A traveller, wearied, sat down on the back of a dragon, thinking that it was the trunk of a tree. The dragon, being roused, angrily turned its head and devoured him. So the world devours its votaries. They carried on their designs with as much care, zeal, and vigilance as if their object had been to take an opulent city."

Afterwards, writing to Servatius, he says: "I never liked the monastic life, and I liked it less after I had tried it; but I was ensnared in the way I have mentioned. Whenever the thought has occurred to me of returning to your fraternity, it has called back to me the jealousy of many, the contempt of all; converse, how cold, how trifling, how lacking in Christian wisdom! feastings more fit for the laity! the mode of life, as a whole, one which, if you subtract its ceremonies from it, has nothing left that seems to me worth having."

At length, after five years' misery, Henry de Bergis, Bishop of Cambray, obtained permission for him to leave the monastery, that he might accompany him to Rome. The Bishop abandoned his design, but Erasmus remained with him five years, engaged in the prosecution of his studies, and afterwards went to the famous Montaigu College at Paris. Lord Mountjoy, one of the pupils whom he was obliged to take that he might add to his scanty means, brought him to England in his train in 1498. He immediately went to the University of Oxford, that he might learn Greek from that little band of men who were engaged in the study of it in that University. We have seen, in an article on Dean Colet [CHURCHMAN, vol. x., p. 418], that here he became acquainted with him, and through his influence was led to come forward and do battle with the champions of scholasticism. This was the first of several visits to this country.

We in England ought to feel the greatest interest in him, because he preferred our country to any other, and because he laboured successfully for the advancement of polite learning in England during the many years which he passed among us. Writing to an English friend, Robert Fisher, he speaks in the highest terms not only of the fertility of the soil and the salubrity of the climate, but also of the learning and refinement of the inhabitants. Writing to a friend going to England, he says that he infinitely prefers our country to his own. He thus continues: "It is something to have seen Britain, cele-

brated as the home of men who are conversant with every branch of learning. You will find also that intercourse with so many remarkable for their erudition will tend greatly to the refinement of your manners and the enlargement of your knowledge." In a letter to Henry VIII., he says: "When I consider how many years I have lived in Britain, how many excellent and sincere friends I owe to it, I have as hearty a love and esteem for it as if I had drawn my first breath in it." Other extracts from his works might be given to the same effect. He met with the greatest encouragement in England. The number of dedications of his works made to Englishmen afford us convincing evidence that he found more patrons in our own than in any other country. Most of his earliest and best works owed their origin to the suggestions and advice of many of the greatest men in England, the names of some of whom fill a large space in our national annals.

After his departure from England, in 1500, he spent several years in Paris, Orleans, and the Low Countries. Often during those years he gave way to despondency. It had now become the settled purpose of his life to separate himself as much as possible from secular, and to apply himself to Scripture studies. All his pursuits were considered by him as important only so far as they were subservient to the attainment of that end. But constant ill-fortune had hitherto attended his efforts. Those years had been passed in a constant struggle with poverty. He had been obliged to engage in literary work, which, as he says, had ceased to be pleasant to him, that he might procure the means of subsistence, and of prosecuting his studies. He had laboured for three years at Greek, because he considered that without it he could not be successful in the study of Holy Scripture. But he persevered in his self-allotted task. This poor student had worked on amid failing health and amid the greatest difficulties, animated by the desire of doing good in his day and generation by preparing himself to devote his powers to the propagation of Christian truth throughout the continent of Europe.

The first edition of that remarkable work, the "Adages, or Proverbial Sayings of the Ancients," was published in the early part of this period. It was much enlarged in subsequent editions. We stand amazed at that ardour in the pursuit of learning which led him, when many classical works existed only in manuscript, and were scattered in various parts of Europe, to persevere till he had collected at first 3,200 proverbs, and afterwards more than 4,000, searching for them with that care which was necessary, as well in the works of the greater as the more obscure classical writers. We learn from this work that the sayings, "Use is a second nature,"

"One swallow does not make a summer," "Let the cobbler stick to his last," "To have one foot in the grave," and many more, were used in the streets of Athens and Rome in the days of those mighty monarchs who have moulded the taste and genius of mankind in every succeeding age of the world's history.

But the most interesting part of the work contains those digressions in which he animadverts in the strongest terms on the vices, follies, and crimes of popes, monarchs, statesmen, monks, and people in the age in which he lived. Thus in the proverb "Sileni Alcibiadis," he first shows that just as the unprepossessing images of Silenus, seen in ancient Greece, to which Alcibiades compared Socrates, disclosed the features of a god, so many things which appear to be mean are really worthy of the greatest admiration; and then he proceeds to show that appearances are deceitful as to many objects and classes of men which appear beautiful. Then he attacks the sins and follies of the Church dignitaries of his day:

"If you look, for instance, at the mitres of some of our bishops, glittering with gold and gems, their jewelled pastoral staff, and all their mystic panoply, you would expect to find them more than men; but, if you open the Silenus, you will find within only a soldier, a trader, or a tyrant. Take, again, the case of those whom you meet everywhere. If you look at their shaggy beard, their pale face, their cowl, their bent heads, their girdle, their sour looks, you would say that they are remarkable for their piety; but if you look inside the Silenus, you will find only rogues, impostors, debauchees, robbers, and tyrants. . . ."

A similar mistake is made as to names. "We call," he says, "priests, bishops, and popes the Church, although they are only the ministers of the Church; for the Church is the whole Christian people."

"And of the Church we say that she appears in honour and splendour, not when piety is increased and vice is diminished, when good morals are prevalent and true doctrine flourishes, but when the altars are embellished with gold and jewels—or rather when, religion being totally neglected, the prelates rival temporal lords in lands, domestics, in luxury, in mules, in horses, in houses, or rather in palaces, in everything that makes a show or a noise. This is thought so just a manner of speaking, that even in Papal bulls, these encomiums may be found: 'Forasmuch as Cardinal A., by his sumptuous equipage, and numerous train of horses and domestics, does singular honour to the Church of Christ, we think it right to add to his preferments another bishopric.'"

He afterwards proceeds to speak against the wealth and temporal power of the popes. He says that, while he wishes that priests should reign, he considers that earthly dominion is unworthy of the heavenly calling. "Why," he says, "do you estimate the successor of St. Peter by that wealth which

Peter himself boasts that he does not possess? Why do you wish the vicars of Christ to be entangled with the riches which Christ Himself has called thorns?"

Next to the "Adages" came the "Enchiridion, the Christian Soldier's Dagger," "which," he says to the person to whom he dedicated it, "you should not lay down even at your meals, or during your sleeping hours." We shall see hereafter how this work aided the progress of the Reformation. He aims in it a heavier blow than before at the whole ecclesiastical system. An examination of it will serve to show us that he never swerved from opinions expressed on points of doctrine at the beginning of his memorable career. He did not hold those which Luther and his associates considered to be the fundamental doctrines of Christianity. He does not think with Luther that man is averse from good and inclined only to evil, and that he has not the power or the inclination to walk in the path of holy obedience; for he says that "the soul, mindful of its heavenly birth, with the greatest energy mounts upwards, and strives with its earthly incumbrance." We see, also, that he holds the meritoriousness of good works; for he says, "these will all be added to the sum of your merits if they shall find you in the way of Christ;" and that he could not hold that doctrine of justification by faith in Christ's righteousness which Luther calls the article of a standing or falling Church.

Erasmus was at length enabled, by the kind assistance of his friends in this country—especially William Warham, Archbishop of Canterbury, to whom he became greatly attached[1]—by the sale of translations of Lucian and of Greek authors, as well as by taking pupils, to carry into effect his design of paying a visit to Italy, that he might be instructed in Greek by the emigrants who, after the fall of Constantinople, were unfolding its beauties to the view of the inhabitants of that country. This visit was not, indeed, directly serviceable to him in regard to the enlargement of his knowledge of the Greek language; but it led to the composition of that remarkable satire, the "Praise of Folly," which, by its lively and stinging exhibition of the absurdities and vices of many of the ecclesiastics of the Church of Rome which he witnessed in Italy, may be considered, as we shall see hereafter, as having directly aided the cause of the Reformation. This work is one of the most remarkable satires which the world has ever seen. It was written in a week in More's house in Bucklersbury, London,

[1] He gives this character of him in the account of his visit to Canterbury: "He is courtesy itself. He has so much learning, so much simplicity of character, so much piety, that nothing is wanting to make him a perfect Bishop."

soon after his arrival in England from Italy, in June, 1510, when he was ill, and could not apply himself to his studies. As he never lost any time, he meditated the work while riding across the country on horseback. Folly, personified, pronounces her own panegyric, and shows by various humorous examples that mankind are indebted to her for the happiness which they enjoy.

"Can anything [writes Erasmus] exceed the folly of those who, after the daily recitation of the well-known seven verses of the sacred Psalms, hope to rise to the summit of human felicity? Several of these fooleries which are so absurd that I am almost ashamed to refer to them, yet are practised and admired not only by the common people, but also by professors of religion. Similar to this is the folly which leads every country to claim its particular guardian saint, and to assign certain offices, certain modes of worship, to every one of them, so that one gives relief to the toothache, another assists in childbirth, another restores stolen property, another aids in shipwreck, another guards the flock. But it would be tedious to go through the offices of all of them. Some there are who have prayers addressed to them on all occasions, especially the Virgin Mary, to whom the common people attribute more power than they do to her Son. Now, from these saints, what, I say, do men ask, excepting those things which relate to folly? . . . Among the numerous trophies with which, as tokens of gratitude, you see the walls, the brazen gates, and the roof of certain churches covered, have you ever seen any from one who has been cured of folly? They are such as these: one is grateful because, after a shipwreck, he has swum safely to land; another, because, after having been hanged on a gibbet, by the favour of some saint who was friendly to thieves, he has fallen, and has been able to follow his old trade of stealing; another, because he has escaped from prison; another, because his waggon was overturned, and yet none of his horses were lamed. But why do I launch out into so wide a sea of superstitions?

> No, had I e'en a hundred tongues,
> A hundred mouths, and iron lungs,
> All Folly's forms I could not show,
> Nor go through all her names below."[1]

During this visit to England, he was engaged at Cambridge, as we learn from his letters, on an edition of the New Testament in Greek, accompanied by a Latin translation designed to correct the errors of the Vulgate. We find, also, that he was working hard at a correction of the text of St. Jerome. He owed all his advantages here to the celebrated Fisher, President of Queen's College, afterwards Bishop of Rochester, who was beheaded for denying the King's supremacy. He always spoke of him with gratitude. Fisher made him Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity, and Professor of Greek. After having left Cambridge at the end of 1513, he proceeded to Basle, that he might superintend the printing of these two

[1] Altered from Virgil, "Æneid," Book VI., lines 625-627.

works at the printing-press of John Amerbach and Froben. He had been preparing himself for many years for his work on the New Testament. In comparison with that work, every occupation, however in the judgment of the world important, or however exalted, appeared to him to sink into utter insignificance. The "new learning" was considered by him as important only so far as it was subservient to the attainment of an improved knowledge of Holy Scripture, Christian antiquity, and the lives of the Fathers. At length, on March 1st, 1516, the New Testament was published at Basle. We are quite willing to admit that the Greek text, having been brought out at a time when the study of Greek had only commenced in Europe, will not stand the test of modern criticism. Still, we may affirm that his notes contain many exact philological remarks; and that though he has been surpassed by many men inferior to him in ability and industry who lived when critical knowledge was very generally cultivated, yet he must have the merit given to him of having been the pioneer in that work of criticism which has shed a bright light on many parts of the records of heavenly truth.

We gather from his "Paraclesis," or "Exhortation to the Study of Christian Philosophy," which was prefixed to the New Testament, that his object in publishing it was to bring before the world an accurate record of the life and teaching of Christ. He thus concludes the treatise:

"Let us, then, all thirst for this knowledge; let us embrace these books; let us, since all reading should end in practice, be transformed into the spirit of what we read. If any pretend to show us the footprints of Christ, how devoutly we fall down and adore them! Why do we not rather worship His living and breathing image in these books? If any offer to show us Christ's robe, to what part of the world are we not ready to run to kiss it? But if the whole of His wardrobe were exhibited, you would find nothing which represents Christ more clearly and truly than the writings of the Evangelists. From love to Christ, we adorn with jewels and gold His image of wood and stone. Why do we not rather decorate with gold and jewels, or even with more valuable ornaments, those books which bring Christ before us so much more vividly than any image? That, indeed, if it bear any resemblance to Him, only expresses His bodily likeness; these exhibit to us the living image of His most holy mind, and bring back to us Christ Himself, speaking, healing, dying, rising again. In a word, they set Christ so plainly before us, that we could not see Him better if we were to see Him with our bodily eyes."

He has also given expression to his feelings on this subject in his "Ratio Veræ Theologiæ."

"Since the great object of the teaching of Christ is to bring us to lead a holy life, we should examine carefully the sacred volume, that we may find in His example a rule for our guidance in all the circumstances of our lives; especially the Gospels, from which a knowledge of our duties

is mainly derived. We should observe that Christ acted in a different manner towards different people. . . . We should understand, also, what reasons He gave to His followers for their treatment of their relations and friends; of the deserving, and those who rejected the grace of the Gospel: of persecutors; of the weak, erring, or incorrigible brother; and of many other classes of persons with whom they are likely any day to have intercourse."

He thought that mis-translations, or errors of any kind, were like clouds which obscured the brightness of the Sun of Righteousness. He wished that they should be removed, in order that all who opened the sacred volume for light, holiness, blessing, and comfort, might rejoice in his life-giving and invigorating beams.

We find that this New Testament stirred up more opposition against Erasmus than any work which he had written. The schoolmen opposed it because they held the absolute inspiration of every letter of the Latin Vulgate; and because they absurdly fancied that Erasmus was correcting the Holy Ghost when he published an amended translation of the New Testament from the Greek original. These divines exerted every effort to suppress what they could not confute, judging that, if this work were generally read, their own credit would be greatly endangered. Writing to his friend Boville, at Cambridge, he mentions a report which had reached him that "'a decree had been issued at one of the colleges, that no one should bring that book within its bounds on horses, in ships, in waggons, or by means of porters.' . . . 'O heaven! O earth!' they say, 'Erasmus is correcting the Gospels.' Whereas, we might more justly say of themselves, 'O the sacrilegious wretches, they have corrupted the Gospels!' Are they afraid that the young men should be called from studies which they ought to unlearn? Why do they not look into the matter more carefully? Nearly thirty years ago nothing was learnt at Cambridge but those antiquated lessons from Aristotle and the questions of Scotus. In the progress of time, useful studies were introduced; mathematics, a new, or rather a renewed Aristotle, and a knowledge of the Greek language. Many other authors were added. What, I ask, is consequently the condition of your University? It has become so flourishing that it may vie with the best University of the age. . . . Are they displeased because they will now read more carefully the Gospels and the writings of the Apostles?" He adds, "These men ought to be called back to the fountain-head."

But this work was, as he informs us, more praised than censured. The learned of all countries in Europe united in extolling it. Colet wrote to him a letter expressing unbounded admiration of the work, and Archbishop Warham informed

him that he had shown it to some of his brother-bishops and to professors of theology, and that with one voice they declared that the work amply repaid him for the trouble which he had bestowed upon it. The first edition had so rapid a sale that he was soon busy in revising it and preparing a second edition. It was published about three years after the first, and was dedicated, like it, to Pope Leo, who was now induced to issue a brief, stamping authority upon it. The two together consisted of 3,300 folio copies. He endeavoured also to correct the errors, some of them typographical, which his enemies alleged as their pretext for assailing him. These errors may be excused on account of the haste with which the work was completed. Only five or six months were occupied in the printing and editing of it. When it was so well received by the wise and learned through Europe, he felt that he could laugh to scorn his monkish and scholastic calumniators. These men exerted every effort to prevent the Bible from being given to the people. But Erasmus, in that noble passage, quoted in the article on Dean Colet, in which he expressed a wish that the husbandman should sing the verses while following the plough, the weaver while throwing his shuttle, and that the traveller should beguile with them the tedium of his journey, has pronounced a distinct condemnation on the views of these divines, which he has rendered still more emphatic by publishing at the same time the works of Jerome, who endeavoured to give the Bible to the people in their own language. The wishes of Erasmus have now been fully gratified. Other men have opened the sacred Scriptures to the view of multitudes from whom they were locked up in a barbarous, obscure, and inaccurate version in an unknown tongue. But, while acknowledging the debt of gratitude which we owe to them, let us never forget to express our obligations to him who, amid difficulties occasioned by an imperfect knowledge of the art of deciphering manuscripts, the want of experience on the part of the printers in the use of the Greek type, the want of money, and other causes which might well have daunted the most determined courage, prepared the way for that Reformation of the Church which they conducted to a successful issue, not only by publishing the works of Jerome and of the other Latin fathers, thus unfolding to the world the doctrines of the ancient Church, but also by being the first to give an improved version of the Greek original of the New Testament and a better translation into Latin. He thus rescued from the Church of Rome many passages which, in the Vulgate, favoured her dogmas, and afforded a guide to those who soon enabled all orders of the community to "read in their own tongues the wonderful works of God."

We now come to the connection of Erasmus with that great religious revolution, the Reformation, which shook to its foundation the usurped dominion of the Roman Pontiff. His first impulse was to support Luther. At a memorable meeting at Cologne in 1520, he encouraged the Elector of Saxony to protect him from the Pope. He even wrote to the heads of the Church, deploring its abuses, recommending certain reforms, declaring that on many points he agreed with him, and exhorting them to refute him by fair argument. Luther at first thought that Erasmus must be altogether on his side. But he soon found on an examination of his New Testament that there was a fundamental difference between them. We have seen the nature of that difference in the "Enchiridion." When he came to the annotations on chapter v. of the Epistle to the Romans, he finds Erasmus denying that doctrine of original sin, which he held to be the fundamental doctrine of Christianity. He found also that he could not accept, as we have seen in the "Enchiridion," the doctrine of justification by faith in the righteousness of Christ. We need not, therefore, be surprised to find him writing that every day, as he reads, he loses his liking for Erasmus. "I love to see him," he says, "reprove with so much earnestness the priests and monks for their ignorance; but I fear that he does small service to the doctrine of Jesus Christ. He has more at heart what depends on man than what depends on God. The judgment of a man who attributes *anything* to the human will is one thing; the judgment of him who recognises nothing but grace is another thing. Nevertheless, I keep this opinion to myself, lest I should strengthen the cause of his opponents. I trust that the Lord will give him understanding in His own good time."

These two great men were, not only on points of doctrine, but also in regard to the mode of reforming the Church, antagonistic to each other. Luther was always ready to bare his bosom to the strife, and to rush into the heat and sorest part of the battle. He never hesitated nor faltered in his onward career. Erasmus, on the contrary, could not oppose all the dogmas of Romanism. He did not recognise that in this war there could be no neutrality. He joined Luther in condemning the luxury of the hierarchy and clergy of the Roman Catholic Church; he opposed auricular confession, the trust in the Virgin, the invocation of the saints, the worship of relics, and other doctrines of the Church of Rome; but he could not accept, as we have seen, the distinguishing doctrine of the Reformation, asserting that faith in Christ meant to aim at virtue only; to imitate those graces which shone forth in His all-perfect character, and proclaimed the indwelling of the Godhead. Thence it was that he often commended Luther

and exhorted his opponents to refute him by fair argument; and that he urged the reformer to be moderate, and recommended him to adopt a less uncompromising tone in his opposition to the dominant Church. He laboured by every means to promote the peace of Christendom.

The schemes of Erasmus were not at all calculated to accomplish the object designed by them. He hoped that the human race, refined by polite learning and enlightened by the diffusion of Scriptural knowledge, would shake off the superstitions of the middle ages, would adopt a religion drawn directly from the Bible, and would pursue their onward career of moral and spiritual improvement. Herein Luther would, to a certain extent, agree with him. These two eminent men exerted a vigorous, a sustained, a persevering effort to disperse the darkness then brooding over the nations. But Luther was not so deficient in common sense as to suppose, like Erasmus, that mild exhortations would induce the rulers of the Church to reform abuses from which they derived benefit; that they would willingly resign the pomp and luxury with which they were surrounded, the gay cavalcade, the table piled with costly viands, the jewelled mitre, and the gorgeous robe; that anything short of a terrible convulsion would tear up the towers or dismantle the bulwarks of that structure of ecclesiastical power which had been continually growing up, and had been consolidated by the addition of fresh materials and strong buttresses through successive generations. Mild measures had been employed for ages, and all of them had failed of the wished-for success. The Mendicants had attempted to reform the Church; but by their covetousness, their arrogance, and their disputes they had increased the evil which they were established to remedy. The poets had attempted in vain to arrest the progress of that moral leprosy which was infecting all orders of human society. Council after Council had laboured for the same object. The moral pollution of Christendom had, notwithstanding those efforts, become continually greater, until at length men stood aghast at the revolting features which it exhibited. Erasmus, however, was not satisfied that a reform could not be effected in the manner above referred to. He persevered in his exhortations and remonstrances. When, however, he found that all this well-meant advice proved of no avail, then he thought that it would be better to wait till some future time, when the reformation could be effected without those civil and religious convulsions which might, as he feared, shatter the Church into fragments, and might even be the means of dissolving society into its original elements. But that day could never arrive. A desperate disease required a strong remedy. A change so

great as the one now before us could not be accomplished without terrible convulsions. If we wait till we can prevent evil from mingling with the good, we shall have to abandon many of those enterprises which have for their object the amelioration of society. The elements of strife in the bosom of the Church were labouring for a vent, and would accomplish it ere long. As well might the men of those days have saved Europe from that outburst, as they could have prevented that stream of lava from issuing from the summit of the mountain, which changes the gardens of roses at its foot into a bleak and desolate waste, possessing scarcely one spot of verdure. If the Reformation had been postponed according to the wishes of Erasmus, the consequence would have been that the common herd of the people, unrestrained by that piety which it promoted even among the poorest and vilest, would have rushed forth with uncontrollable violence, and would have spread ruin and desolation around them. We owe a debt of gratitude to those who laboured to prevent this catastrophe; who, instead of shrinking from the dangers and difficulties which they were sure to encounter, endeavoured to contend with and to destroy those evils which followed in the train of the Reformation, when she went forth on her errand of mercy to the nations of the earth.

We have seen some of the points of difference between Erasmus and Luther. He differed also from him in another respect: he had not his moral courage. Though a thousand hostile forces thronged the path he was pursuing, Luther was still prepared to march forward. Erasmus, however, trembled and drew back when he surveyed the whole length and breadth of the danger to which he would have been exposed if he had made common cause with him. He had a religious horror of war. He would rather surrender some portion of the truth than disturb the peace of Christendom. In a letter to his friend Pace, the Dean of St. Paul's, when speaking of Luther, he says, "If he had written everything in the most unexceptionable manner, I had no inclination to die for the truth. Every man has not the courage requisite to make a martyr; and I am afraid, if I were put to the trial, I should imitate St. Peter." We must not, indeed, suppose that Erasmus acted against his conscience in this unwillingness to come forward and lead the assault on the confederated legions of Rome. On the contrary, he felt that this was a work to which, on account of his age, his infirm constitution, and his peculiar temperament, he was altogether unequal. For another reason he was disqualified from being a leader in the work. He greatly disliked all the modern languages, and would not take the trouble to gain a sufficient knowledge of them to enable

him to hold a conversation in them. But the Reformation was to be an emancipation wrought among people not of Latin, but of Teutonic descent, through the medium of the vernacular language. He was unwilling, too, to separate from his friends Warham, More, Mountjoy, Fisher, and others, whose names were hallowed by a thousand tender recollections. We cannot, indeed, suppose that the probable loss of his pensions and the fear of coming to want would have had the effect of preventing him from openly placing himself under the banner of the Reformers; but still I am afraid that the prospect of losing the favour of Henry VIII., Charles V., and the Popes might have had a considerable influence in determining his conduct, for he often showed a childish vanity when he spoke of the numerous letters which he had received from them, and of the many gifts which they had conferred upon him. Perhaps he would have shown more decision if he had been free from the prejudices of education. He had very confused notions about the authority of the Roman Catholic Church as an arbiter of controversies. He talks about implicit submission to her judgment. Luther was under the influence of the same prejudices. "Who was I, at that time," he said—"a poor, wretched, despicable friar, more like a dead body than a man—who was I to oppose the majesty of the Pope, in whose presence not only kings, but, if I may so speak, heaven and earth trembled?" Since then a man in the prime of life, of an iron constitution, of great personal courage, and an indomitable will, found it very difficult to cast off his superstitious reverence for the Pope—a man, too, who had not the same connection as Erasmus with the latter, the bigoted sovereigns of Europe, and the dignitaries of the Church of Rome—we can easily imagine that he would find great difficulty in making a change, if we remember that he had come to an age when men cannot, without a strong effort, divest themselves of cherished prejudices and prepossessions; that disease incapacitated him for that effort, or for vigorous action of any description; and that he had arrived at a time of life when a mind, the whole force of which had been given in youth and manhood to the investigation of truth, longed ardently for repose, and was unwilling to give itself to the solution of perplexing and difficult questions. He could not at first decide for either party, for he thought that both had some errors. Causes of his alienation from the Reformers will be mentioned in the next paper. We could have wished that the case had been otherwise, not only on account of his peace of mind, but on account of the vast influence which, if he had been decided, he might have exercised on the progress of the Reformation. But, while we condemn him for his failings, let

us never forget the debt of gratitude which we owe to him; that he spent a long and laborious life in opposing barbarous ignorance, blind superstition, and many of the errors of the Church of Rome; and let us admit that he deserves to be called the most illustrious of the Reformers before the Reformation.

ARTHUR R. PENNINGTON.

(*To be continued.*)

Correspondence.

ECCLESIASTICAL DILAPIDATIONS.

To the Editor of "THE CHURCHMAN."

SIR,—The article on Dilapidations in your last issue calls for some comment, as it misrepresents, or misapprehends, the reasons why a large majority of the beneficed clergy regard the Act of 1871 with strong and increasing dislike, not to use even a stronger word.

Whether it is of any use for them to complain of anything, however oppressive, which from time to time is added to the burthen of their cares and responsibilities, is a question which perhaps most of them would now answer in the negative. They have no real voice in making or modifying those laws which bind them; and the stream of public feeling has, of late years, been decidedly against giving them a voice, or even listening to their expressions of opinion at all. But lest the "Hon. Sec. of the Association of Diocesan Surveyors" should plead hereafter that the voice of protest is silent, I may be permitted to point out why the sufferers under that Act continue to regard it as unjust and oppressive; and why they are determined to leave no stone unturned to procure its repeal.

From the earliest times it has been customary for the holders of glebe to be responsible for its repair; and it is simply calumnious to say they now shrink from that responsibility. The Archdeacon used to be empowered to see that the glebes were repaired; but abuses no doubt crept in, bribes were offered and accepted, and instead of the dilapidations being repaired, Archdeacons grew rich. Some years before the Act of 1871, the Archbishop of York tried to pass a new Dilapidation Act; and, when modified, it finally became the Act of 1871. Had justice been done, a short and stringent Act should have compelled Archdeacons, under penalty, to do their duty, which does not consist in delivering Charges echoing the Bishop's opinions, but in maintaining in efficiency the fabrics and glebes of the Church. That Act gave Bishops the power of appointing Diocesan Inspectors; and they appointed architects, of some standing perhaps as architects, but whose qualification for dilapidation surveys was not by any means apparent. Residing, for the most part, far from their work, living probably in London, they cannot be aware of the local value of labour, the cost of materials, etc.; and their assessments, as no one can wonder, are often far wide of the mark, made perhaps on a scale of prices which obtain elsewhere. Numerous cases may be cited when the assessments have been as much as 30 or 35 per cent. above local prices. But no redress is possible, and no available appeal. The appoint-