

CORNELIUS GRAPHEUS (1482-1558): A HUMANIST SCHOLAR OF THE NETHERLANDS WHO RECANTED

J. ALTON TEMPLIN

The geographical area referred to as The Netherlands in the 15th century was considerably larger than what we now know as the nation of The Netherlands. In the late Middle Ages and the Reformation period the Burgundian Netherlands, later inherited by the future Emperor Charles V, included both what we now know as The Netherlands and Belgium. In addition, certain areas along the Rhine River in West Germany, such as the town of Goch, and the northwestern corner of France, including the cities of Lille and Dunkirk in the French province of Flanders, were all part of this inheritance. The Netherlands of the 15th century also included the present nation of Luxembourg.

A further complication in this period concerned the 17 separate provinces, each of which had a different history and political tradition. Much of the area had been subject to the Burgundian authorities for centuries. This included the provinces of Holland, Zeeland, Flanders and Brabant. Other territory came under the authority of Charles V during his own life time, through war, negotiation or treaty. These were confined to the central and northeastern sections of the present nation of The Netherlands: Utrecht (1528), Overijssel (1528), Friesland (1524), Drenthe (1536), Gelderland (1543) and Groningen (1536). The authority which the Imperial forces could exercise concerning the religious inquisition differed depending on the area.

In the intervening 400-year history many of the provincial names have been preserved. Many modifications came, however, for several reasons, including the wars of independence, resulting in the boundary between Belgium and The Netherlands. Brabant, for example, was divided into three provinces: the province of Brabant (includes Brussels); the province of Antwerp (the province surrounds the city); and the province of North Brabant (in the southern portion of The Netherlands including such major towns as Breda on the west and 's Hertogenbosch on the east). The old province of Holland, the economic center of the Northern Netherlands, was divided between the provinces of North Holland (including both Amsterdam and Haarlem) and South Holland (including Rotterdam, Leiden and The Hague). There are now 11 provinces in The Netherlands and 9 in Belgium.

J. ALTON TEMPLIN is Professor of Historical Theology and Church History, The Iliff School of Theology.

One further complication should be noted. The line of the Truce of 1609, dividing the United Netherlands on the north from the Spanish Netherlands on the south (later Belgium), did not divide according to language or ancient tradition. The language of the north provinces was a form of Low German or *Plattdeutsch*, popularly referred to as "Deutsch," and still later "Dutch." This same language tradition, however, is preserved in the northern and western portions of Belgium where it is called "Flemish." A small area of northwestern France, including the city of Dunkirk, also preserves the Dutch/Flemish tradition. The southern and eastern portions of Belgium are part of the French language and tradition, where the language is called "Walloon." Fully half the towns and cities of Belgium have both a French/Walloon spelling of their name, and a Flemish/Dutch spelling. Some of the names look quite different such as Courtrai/Kortrijk. The only two cities involved in this particular study are Antwerp and Brussels, and for these the commonly accepted English spellings are used.

Despite the geographical, cultural and language differences, however, the whole area will be considered as The Netherlands as it was in the early 16th century. Because a large portion of the region came to the house of Hapsburg as a result of direct inheritance, the imperial authority could be more severe than it could in German areas where there were Electors, Dukes, Counts and free cities to exert an intermediate authority. Almost as soon as Luther's works were known they were published in The Netherlands, especially in Antwerp, which was the commercial capitol of the area before this status was assumed by Amsterdam. These writings were of interest for the scholars of the Northern Renaissance, and the Biblical Humanists, and they were widely read.

Fearing continued spread of this "heresy" the Emperor promulgated special edicts for his own home provinces. Charles was born in Gent, now Belgium, and Flemish/Dutch was his mother tongue. The only University in The Netherlands, in Louvain/Leuven, condemned Luther's writings and advocated on November 7, 1519, that they be burned.¹ Two months earlier on August 30, 1519, Cologne, the other University with major influence extending into The Netherlands, had decided the same.² Despite these developments Lutheran writings continued to spread and were printed, even translated, in several cities of the low countries. On March 20, 1521, Charles issued his first edict in The Netherlands against Luther's work.³ Luther appeared at the

¹Paul Fredericq, *Corpus Documentorum Inquisitionis* (hereafter *CDI*) (5 vols., Ghent: Universite, 1889-1906), IV, 14ff.

²*CDI*, IV, 12f.

³*CDI*, IV, 43ff.

Diet of Worms on April 17-18, 1521. Two weeks later on May 8 the ban of the Empire was prepared and on May 26 promulgated against him. In addition to this, however, another condemnation against Luther was issued.

This special edict for The Netherlands incorporating much of the same wording was dated also on May 8 and was published in both the Flemish/Dutch and the French/Walloon languages.⁴ "It becomes us," so the Emperor began, "and belongs to us to compel the enemies of our faith to the obedience of his divine majesty, by extending, as much as we can, the glory of the holy cross, and of our Saviour's sufferings, to the utmost corners of the earth, and to maintain the Christian religion pure and unspotted from all suspicion of heresy. . . . It seems to us that the person of the said Martin is not a human creature, but a Devil in the figure of a man, and cloaked with the habit of a monk, to enable him so much the better and more easily to bring the race of mankind to everlasting death and destruction.

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We do also mostly strictly order, upon the pains and penalties above-mentioned, that no person, of what state or condition, authority or dignity whatsoever, do buy or sell, keep, read, write, print, or maintain and defend any of the books, writings, or opinions of the said Luther, whether in Latin, Flemish, or other modern languages. . . . From thenceforth, on the forfeiture of life and estate, no bookseller, printer, or any other person whosoever, should presume to print, or cause to be printed, any book or writing in which mention was made of the Holy Scriptures, or any interpretation of it, though ever so little, without leave first obtained. . . ."

This edict set the situation for one of the early developments of a "reforming" nature in the southern Netherlands. Cornelius Grapheus,⁵ also known by his Latin name as "Scribonius," was secretary of the

⁴The Edict of Worms, dated May 8, 1521, was published shortly thereafter in Latin in the Netherlands at Louvain, and still later in Antwerp. The Latin text is printed in *CDI*, IV, 47-57. The special edict incorporating much of the wording from the Latin text but expanding certain sections with special reference to the Netherlands carries the same date. The second version was published in both the French/Walloon, and the Dutch/Flemish languages. The last of these is much longer and includes more detail. The two special documents for the Netherlands are published in parallel columns and parallel languages, in *CDI*, IV, 60-76.

⁵A biographical sketch of Grapheus appears in P. S. Allen, *Erasmii Epistolae* (hereafter Allen *Epistolae*, IV, 225, in relation to a letter Erasmus wrote to him. C. Ullmann, in *Reformers before the Reformation*, has some biographical material in so far as Grapheus was related to John Pupper of Goch. Cf. C. Ullmann, *Reformers before the Reformation*, trans. Robert Menzies (2 vols., Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1855), I, 397-416. Otto Clemen, who wrote the definitive study on John Pupper of Goch (see notes *infra*) included some information on Grapheus, summarized in his article in *Realencyklopaedia für protestantische Theologie und Kirche*, VII, 61f.

city of Antwerp. He had held that position since 1520, and was acquainted with humanist leaders as well as the various types of literature available at that time. On February 5, 1522, he was suddenly arrested and imprisoned in Brussels.⁶ His main crime was that almost one year earlier he had arranged for the first printing of a theological work entitled *de Libertate Christiana*, by John Pupper of Goch. Grapheus introduced the work with a glowing praise for the author and his significant theological ideas. It was evidently this preface which came under suspicion as much as the work which was well over a quarter of a century old. The relationship between the ideas of John Pupper and Cornelius Grapheus is interesting and sheds light on further developments in Brabant.

John Pupper had been born shortly after the year 1400, *ca.* 1420?, in the town of Goch, and was usually known as John of Goch rather than by his family name.⁷ The town of Goch was in the mid-15th-century a part of the Duchy of Gelres (Gelderland, most of which is now a part of The Netherlands). In 1473, however, the area around Goch became part of the Duchy of Cleves, and remains now in Westphalia, West Germany. We know little of the education of John Pupper, but he seems to have been trained in the schools of the Brethren of the Common Life, perhaps in Zwolle. Some advanced education is indicated, and his name appears on the matriculation records of Cologne for December 19, 1454.⁸ In 1459 he founded an Augustinian cloister, "the Tabor," in Mechlen/Malines a few miles north of Brussels. He became its prior and remained in this position to his death in 1475.⁹ It was here that he wrote all his theological works which were published for the first time in the decade of the 1520's. None caused as much controversy as the *Libertate Christiana* and especially the preface written by Grapheus.

Three major works of John Pupper are preserved,¹⁰ along with some fragments on other topics: 1) *de Libertate Christiana*; 2) *epistola apologetica adversus quendam praedicaterii ordinii declarans*; 3) *dialogus de quatuor erroribus circa legem evangelicam exortis*; and 4)

⁶CDI, IV, 88, as reprinted from the *Annales Antverpienses*.

⁷The most complete study of the life and work of John Pupper of Goch is by Otto Clemen, *Johann Pupper von Goch* (Leipzig: Duncker and Humblot, 1896). The same author summarized his work in the article "Goch" in *Realencyklopaedia für protestantische Theologie und Kirche*, VI, 740-743.

⁸Otto Clemen discovered this reference in the records of the University of Cologne. Cf. his *John Pupper von Goch*, p. 27.

⁹Some of the problems concerning this date are discussed by Clemen in his work on Goch, p. 39. One of the earliest references to the date of Goch's death is by Grapheus himself.

¹⁰These writings are discussed and analyzed by Clemen in his study on Goch, pp. 43-72.

fragments on monastic vows, grace and merits, faith and works, and on the perfection of evangelical religion. Only the main thrust of the *Libertate* need concern us here, for only this work is directly related to our analysis of developing religious ideas in the southern Netherlands.

There were to be six sections to this book on Liberty, but only three were completed, and a portion of the fourth.¹¹ The *first* section affirms the scriptures as the only sure source of the Christian faith. He distinguishes two "scriptures," the natural and the supernatural. The former includes human knowledge such as philosophy, while the latter, the canonical scriptures, lead to the highest truth and to faith. While four methods of interpretation are to be used, the literal is finally the most important. Philosophical knowledge is human, fallible, and divisive when one is Albertist, or Thomist, or Scotist. To return to Biblical scripture, the source of infallible truth, is to be freed from inadequate and divisive knowledge. He places more emphasis on works of the ancient fathers than on "modern" doctors.

The *second* section concerns the human will, and the origin of sin. John of Goch is quite Augustinian as he emphasizes a strong doctrine of original sin which not only removes original righteousness, but also causes a positive inclination toward evil. Man can only be restored through the grace of God; but grace works not through faith alone. It is faith working through love. True freedom from unworthiness and sin can come only from God.

The *third* portion of his writing is a condemnation of the merit system of the medieval church. He condemns merits of worthiness, of congruity and of condignity as being all or in part Pelagian. Co-operative grace is also rejected. The only merits of value are the merits of Christ. The fragments we have of the *fourth* section refer to vows. Rather than an outer law, a new Mosaic law such as a vow, the Christian should aspire to the inner law, the evangelical law. His teaching on this point is summarized: "The essential object of the Gospel law is to emancipate man from all bondage and constraint, and to exalt him to the full liberty of the children of God, and, therefore, all that it requires of him is, with genuine and holy affection, to love God and his neighbor, as it is by this one thing, embracing every other, that he is delivered from coercion, and conducted to the glory of the children of God."¹² Such are some of the major ideas of the late medieval theologian of The Netherlands, John of Goch.

¹¹The complete *Libertate* of Goch has been printed in the original Latin in *Bibliotheca Reformatoria Neerlandica* (hereafter *BRN*), VI, 33-225. Clemen discusses this major work in *John Pupper of Goch*, pp. 43-50.

¹²This summary appears in C. Ullmann *Reformers before the Reformation*, I, 81.

Cornelius Grapheus, the Secretary of the City of Antwerp after 1520, was a humanist scholar. With such interests it was not unusual that he should be knowledgeable about literature of the period, including theological tracts. He tells us in an autobiographical letter: "On my own I learned poetry, music, and the art of drawing or painting. I acquired some taste of Greek and Latin as far as time and fortune will permit."¹³

He was born in Aalst, Flanders, in 1482.¹⁴ We know nothing of his early life, but to enhance his learning of language and literature he traveled widely in Italy.¹⁵ He was a close friend of Erasmus, and several letters between them have been preserved. Other humanist scholars who were his friends as well were Willibald Pirckheimer, the Painter Albrecht Dürer, and Gerhard Geldenhauer, private secretary to Philip of Burgundy, the bishop of Utrecht until his death in 1524.¹⁶ Although Grapheus became Secretary of Antwerp only in 1520, he lived there some years earlier. Indeed, he was a spokesman for the city when he organized the celebration honoring Charles when he was elected emperor in 1519.

The next year when the newly-elected Emperor came from Spain to The Netherlands on his way to assume authority in the Empire, Grapheus wrote a long poem (338 lines) for the occasion.¹⁷ He extolled the virtues of the new hero of learning who would bring eternal peace to the whole world, and who would introduce the golden age. The pope would again be a true Christian leader and would not have aspirations toward world domination. The pope would be a shepherd of people. The Emperor, on the other hand, would be the glorious king of all lands. That portion of the poem comparing the pope and the emperor is translated.

[concerning the Pope]

"To you, great priest [*Antistes magnus*],
 You will follow in the steps of Peter of your own accord;
 He will discreetly restore one sword to you;
 Your oath required you to be content to assist in the holy
 services of the Gods [*Deorum*],
 To exercise the office of pastor and of father piously,

¹³This statement is included in his autobiographical letter written to Johann Carondelet, the Chancellor of Brabant, on November 18, 1522. The letter is printed in *BRN*, VI, 256-263.

¹⁴Otto Clemen has included a biography of Grapheus in his work, *John Pupper von Goch*, pp. 269-275.

¹⁵This biographical material appears in his autobiographical letter of November 18, 1522, as noted above, written to the Chancellor of Brabant.

¹⁶Cf. biographical section of Clemen's work on Goch.

¹⁷The poem was published in *CDI*, IV, 152-156.

To protect from treachery of wolves,
 To scatter the seeds of the divine word everywhere,
 To teach the uninstructed, to make firm the wavering ones,
 To chastise the evil ones, to extend Christ to all.
 The offices of priest are most glorious;
 These are the arms and the sword which tames rebellious spirits.
 [and concerning the Emperor]
 To you, however, (never doubt) is due another sword,
 And other authorities;
 You should be the greatest one of all.
 At one time the hero of Tirynta [*i.e.*, Hercules] carried
 the world on his shoulders;
 Hercules was great, but you are greater, you are braver;
 You do not have such shoulders as he, nor such a strong back;
 You have no help from Atlas;
 But you convince by means of your own virtue,
 Or as in one hand you bring together all peoples of the world;
 And you will be called 'Great Lord of the whole world.'¹⁸

Such was the humanist-literary style of the Secretary of Antwerp. We do not know what led Grapheus the next year to this particular theological work of John of Goch, but it is suggested that his friend, Nicholas Van 's Hertogenbosch [also known as Nicholas Buscodensis], teacher of the Latin School in Antwerp, sent him a copy.¹⁹ The preface to the edition is dated March 29, 1521.²⁰ The next year he was arrested for suspicion of the heresy of "Lutheranism." Not only did the title of this work sound strangely similar to one of Luther's recent writings,²¹ but Grapheus evidently had spoken favorably of some of the ideas of Luther circulating in the active mercantile city of Antwerp at the time. Indeed, he may even have been a promoter or salesman of recent publications of Luther. Albrecht Dürer, who was in

¹⁸The section of this poem which is translated here appears in *CDI*, VI. 153f.

¹⁹Nicholas Van 's Hertogenbosch (1478-1550), also known as Nicolas Buscodensis, was a humanist scholar and school master in Antwerp. He was in regular correspondence with Erasmus. As early as 1521 he was suspected of the "Lutheran" heresy, and was familiar with Luther's writings. He was imprisoned, then released in May 1522. Later the same year he stayed a short time at Basel where Erasmus had arrived one year previously. He served the cause of the Reformation in Denmark and Bremen, Germany, until the Augsburg Interim in 1548. This Nicholas will enter our study in a later section.

²⁰The date of the preface is published in Otto Cleman, *John Pupper of Goch*, p. 260, as *Antverpiae anno a Christiano natali MDXXI quarto calendas Apriles* (in Antwerp, the years since the birth of Christianity, 1521, 4 before the calends of April).

²¹Luther's recent work was entitled also *de libertate Christiana*. It was printed in Germany in November 1520, and the Latin text was printed four times within a year in the Netherlands: Antwerp, 1520, 1520, 1521 and Zwolle, 1521 (according to C. Ch. G. Visser, *Luther's Geschriften in de Nederlande tot 1546* pp. 51f.). Perhaps the identical titles of Luther's work and the earlier tract caused extra concern for the inquisitors, although the content and major emphasis of the two are quite different.

Antwerp in June 1521, tells us²² that Grapheus gave him a copy of Luther's *Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, quite illegal according to the edict of the Emperor issued one month earlier. What other works of Luther he may have had we can only surmise. Grapheus remained in prison in Brussels from February 5, 1522 to his trial two and a half months later, on April 23.²³

One year previous Grapheus had edited another work of Goch, and had written the preface as well. The work was the *Epistola Apologetica*, with the preface dated August 23, 1520.²⁴ This did not become the subject of the inquisitors, however, for the organization of the repression was only beginning to be developed.

The preface to *Liberate* includes several ideas of Grapheus which are related not only to later developments in the Reformation but also to the common criticisms of the Biblical Humanists. Indeed, the distinctions between these two developments were not clearly drawn in Antwerp (or anywhere else) at this time. The writer of this preface undoubtedly thought that he was giving a true interpretation of the situation which any thinking Christian could not deny; he meant to enlighten his readers, rather than to become a heretic. He began the preface by affirming that Jesus Christ purchased our freedom when he took away sin and made it possible for us to be adopted as sons. Alas, we have sunk back into slavery more than the Egyptians, into superstition more than the Pharisees. "We have regressed from Christ to Moses and from Moses to Pharaaoh." From the promises of the Saviour we have begun to trust in "human fables" [*fabulis hominum*]. "For the Gospel we have substituted decrees [of the Pope]; for Christ, a certain Aristotle; for piety, ceremonies; for truth, deception and division; fearing all things we do nothing because of faith or love." This problem has plagued the church for 800 years so that almost all the church's activity today is less adequate and worthy than in ages many hundreds of years ago.

Once all were people of God, a chosen generation, a royal priesthood (I Peter 2:9). Now, rather than being heirs of Christ we are "sons of the earthly Adam, or of St. Francis, others of St. Dominic, others of Augustine or Bernard." In place of the simple gospel we now

²²This is quoted from the collection of Durer's letters, and reprinted in *CDI*, IV, 77. The *Babylonian Captivity* had been published in Antwerp in 1521, and in Leiden the same year. The latter carries a camouflage statement to delude the censors—"printed in Wittenberg." Undoubtedly Grapheus' copy was the version as printed in Antwerp. The next year, 1522, a Dutch/Flemish translation appeared, but it is not known where it was printed, nor who translated it.

²³*CDI*, IV, 105.

²⁴Otto Clemen discusses in *Epistola Apologetica* and the preface by Grapheus, in his *John Pupper of Goch*, pp. 50-54.

are confronted with "jest, sophistry, conclusions and distinctions." In place of Jesus Christ, our heavenly foundation, we have set up an earthly head, an "idol" [*idolum quasi*]. Once the services of the church were performed freely, but now "there is nothing that cannot be purchased with money." "All things, no matter how holy, are objects for sale," and even a burial place for a Christian is not available without a fee. Once Christians could choose their own pastors, but now "ambitious men, with tyrannical power, by gifts and menaces . . . intrude into the spiritual office Ignorant hirelings, men living with concubines or profligates are generally chosen."

Unworthy priests who are ignorant of the gospel, or who are more enamored with the schoolmen than with Jesus Christ cannot teach the true faith. Furthermore, the hierarchy is demanding that only the learned and those trained in scholastic methodologies should be allowed to interpret scriptures. Others will not know logic nor anything about theology so we are told. In contrast to this, Grapheus pleads for the Scriptures, and adequate theological works, in the vulgar tongue for all to be able to read. "I very much wish, in so far as the philosophy of Christ is common to all, that it were carefully translated into the vulgar tongues by erudite and good interpreters. Then every professor of the Christian religion, at least those who can read, can buy a book and, prompted by the spirit, might be led to a knowledge of evangelical philosophy."

In this way the people again can be conducted along the "royal road directly to Christ." "This, I well know, will be opposed by those gluttonous monks (I always except the good ones) who with pleasure pervert the word of God to their own gain. I shall not, however, be restrained by them, for there is need that the truth should at some time be set in its rightful place." The truth of Christ is being restored, so he suggested, and Paul is being brought back to life. Among those involved in this new development "I introduce you to John of Goch, a man of singular erudition and second to none in his own time. He is a zealous defender of Christian liberty, a diligent interpreter of evangelical law. Turn to him day and night, especially when you have leisure from reading the sacred literature and the epistles of Paul, for the latter should be your major study. Farewell in Christ Jesus." Then follows the date: "In the years from Christ's birth 1521, 4 before the calends of April."²⁵

²⁵The preface to *Liberate* in the original Latin is printed in *BRN*, VI, 33ff; and in Otto Clemen, *John Pupper of Goch*, pp. 255-260. An English translation of large portions of the preface is included by Ullman, *Reformers before the Reformation*, I, 138-141. The latter has been modified as seemed necessary when compared with the Latin.

Grapheus recanted on April 23, 1522,²⁶ in Brussels, after examination by the inquisitors Frans van der Hulst and Nicolaus van Egmont. Many suggestions or statements by the prisoner were excerpted from his writings by the authorities and formed into propositions which he was then asked to deny. We note, however, that these statements are much more specific, and contain many more seemingly "reformed" ideas than can be documented in his extant writings. Since he swore to the articles, we are assured that they were representative not only of his extant writings, but other statements which he may have discussed. The document is in three parts.

In the *first* part the suspected heretic made the statement which was demanded. "I, Cornelius Grapheus, anathematize all heresy and precepts being promulgated by brother Martin Luther as taught in his books and sermons Especially I reject certain articles among those written in a certain preface to a certain book entitled *de Libertate Christiana*, edited from John Pupper of Goch. . . which [preface] I wrote with my own hand." He affirmed that he believed whatever the Holy Roman Church confessed. Then he tells us of the process against him. "I was interrogated and examined by the Commissioners of the Emperor's Majesty designated for this purpose, about the contents in the previously-mentioned preface, including those which follow."

The *second* portion of the trial document includes 18 propositions drawn from his work. These are translated as an appendix to this section, and are only summarized here.²⁷ (1) He was critical of the Church because of its increasing emphasis on laws and requirements. Examples of this legalism which he cites are: confessions once per year, monastic vows, fasting, food laws, canonical hours, rosaries, frequent prayers, and worship limited to churches or certain supposedly more holy places. He calls these restrictions superstition or a returning to Jewish ceremonialism.

(2) He criticized the power and presumption of the pope, indicating correctly that the term "supreme pontiff" was assumed first in the time of Boniface III (A.D. 607). All successors have arrogated to themselves the privilege of making laws, as though by divine decree, and have required certain practices which, if the believers did not follow through, would condemn them as guilty of mortal sin. He doubted

²⁶The recantation is printed in Fredericq, *CDI*, IV, 105. It is a copy from Gerdes, *Scrinium Antiquarium* (1764).

²⁷These 18 propositions are printed in *CDI*, IV, 105f. They contain basic theological concerns of the period, and for this reason are translated in full, and appear as Appendix I of this article.

the superiority of Peter among the apostles, and suggested that the office of the papacy is merely idolatry.

(3) He denied the strict separation between priest and laity, and by implication, questioned the validity of ordination as a sacrament confirming this separation. Indeed, all lay *men* [*sic*, he explicitly denied the privilege to women and children] are priests and are able to consecrate the “venerable” sacrament of the communion if they were given permission. This assumption certainly implies a Sacramentist *i.e.*, non sacramental) understanding of the eucharist. Likewise, since lay *men* [*sic*] were originally allowed to teach and interpret the scriptures in public, the present practice of limiting this to masters, bachelors or licentiates, *i.e.* those within the ecclesiastical hierarchy, reflects a limitation or a “slavery” which he cannot accept.

(4) He gave precedence to the Bible, especially the writings of Paul, in opposition to the practice of giving prime authority to “subtleties” of the scholastics.

(5) He denied merit of our own works, denied the meritorious nature of confession and stated that indulgences have no benefits.

(6) He condemned certain financial arrangements in which priests expected extra money for performing the rites of the church such as administration of sacraments, conducting funerals and preaching.

(7) The writings of Luther were commended to be read because they were biblical and rejected scholastic ideas. The pope’s condemnation of Luther and his teachings was unjust because it was based neither on scripture nor reason.

(8) The work of John of Goch should be read as the most important of the theologians of the recent past, especially is this more valuable than works of the scholastics.

The *third* section of the trial document is an expansion of the 18 articles, giving the Roman Catholic explanation as to why the propositions were in error. We suspect that these summaries, as well as the 18 propositions, were written by the authorities, and not by Grapheus himself, despite what he says at the conclusion of this third part. “These above statements I, Cornelius Grapheus, freely and wilfully have written; and in the form as written, I am content and prepared to revoke and deny as has been required of me. Witnessed by my own hand, 23 April, 1522.”²⁸

²⁸The longer explanation to each of the 18 propositions gives the official Roman Catholic position on each point. For our purposes it has not seemed necessary to translate them in the text of this study.

At the conclusion of the hasty trial his sentence was pronounced in six parts. 1) His goods were confiscated (although he reiterated that he had little); 2) he was deprived of his office and forever forbidden to assume another; 3) he must make another recantation in the City of Antwerp; 4) he would be brought back to Brussels to be confined in prison for two months; 5) thereafter he would be confined within the city walls of Brussels perpetually; and 6) he must wear a mark of scandal on his clothing.²⁹ A few days later (April 29, 1522)³⁰ he repeated his recantation in the market place in Brussels, and there publicly burned his preface to John of Coch's book. Shortly after his trial in Brussels he was taken to Antwerp where on May 6 of the same year in Our Lady's Church he confessed once again.³¹ On the same day Luther's books were burned in Antwerp while the Emperor was visiting in the city.³²

He was then returned to prison in Brussels where we know nothing about him for several months. His wife and small children remained in Antwerp with no means of supporting themselves. This poverty of his family became a growing concern for the imprisoned. Finally, later that same year, so he tells us³³ his wife wrote a plea to the Chancellor of Brabant to ask that her husband at least be imprisoned in his home area of Antwerp rather than in Brussels where all people were strangers to him. We have a long autobiographical letter which Grapheus wrote (November 18, 1522) to the same Chancellor of Brabant, John Carondelet (who was at the same time Bishop of Palermo).³⁴ Grapheus reviewed the case of his writing the preface "long before the Emperor's placard came out."³⁵ He admitted that he may have written "rashly" but it "was only for the exercise of my mind

²⁹The punishment is explained by the prisoner in his long autobiographical letter to Carondelet. The sentence itself is printed in *CDI*, IV, 147.

³⁰Clemen thinks this public recantation was separate, and a few days later than the trial and recantation noted above.

³¹From the *Annales Antverpienses*, as printed in *CDI*, IV, 122. The facts are substantiated also by a report of J. C. Diercxsens, *Antverpia Christo nascens et crescens*, as printed in 1747-63, and reprinted in *CDI*, IV, 122f.

³²From the *Chronycke van Antwerp*, as printed in *CDI*, IV, 121. The visit of Charles on the same day was reported in *Die excellente cronike van Vlaenderen*, as reprinted in *CDI*, IV, 121. This was actually the second burning of books, for the first such conflagration was held on July 13, 1521 (Cf. *CDI*, IV, 17).

³³This information about his wife is a part of the autobiographical letter written to John Carondelet, Chancellor of Brabant, on November 18, 1522, *CDI*, 145-151.

³⁴*CDI*, IV, 145-151 includes the long autobiographical letter which Grapheus dated November 18, 1522, from his prison in Brussels. The English version of Caspar Brandt's, *The History of the Reformation... in and about the Low Countries*, contains translations of parts of the letter. Although the letter was originally written in Latin, *CDI* includes only a Flemish/Dutch translation.

³⁵Depending on which of the Emperor's edicts is meant, this can be either true or merely rationalization. The first edict from the Emperor was dated March 20, 1521, nine days before the date of the preface. The revised and translated Edict of Worms was dated May 8, one and one half months later than the date of the preface.

without design of giving the least offense." He was a scholar and should have been allowed to pursue his studies. "Whatever evil has been committed by me is the result of an active mind, but not a malicious one. If the human mind, exposed in any respect to error, purely from a desire of exercise, without any ill intention, without perverseness or obstinacy, but with submission to the correction of better judgments; I say, if a mind so disposed should be the occasion of our ruin, how much better were it that we should be brute beasts, or inanimate creatures, than men."

He then compared his situation to that of Ovid. If that "sweetest of poets" should suffer banishment for his work, it would have been better if Ovid had never been created with such a mind, but had been rather a recluse or a man-hater. About himself, Grapheus said, "In case an understanding neither obstinate nor perverse, but always disposed to amend itself upon even the least admonition, has involved me in these troubles, which overwhelm me on all sides, how much more advantageous had it been to me, to have been deprived of my senses, or to have been a fool, a buffoon, a comedian, or a parasite and flatter, or any such despicable creature, . . ." Grapheus gives a clear justification for the case for good letters against bigotry in religious thought: "Certainly then, a good genius, especially such as is tractable, and ready to listen to good advice, ought not to be immediately oppressed but handled gently; not terrified by force and severity, but allured with rewards and promises, and helped forward by all possible means, even though it should chance to have done amiss through ignorance or imprudence, which is the common effect of human frailty."

He then relates his reaction to the trial. "I acknowledged my indiscretion, and testified my sorrow; and was ready to retract my errors, to detest my obstinacy, and to ask pardon of my rashness; when suddenly I was thrust into a dungeon like a heretic." He complained that he did not really have a fair trial either by the laws of the state, or of the church (Matthew 18:15-18) where he should have been admonished privately, then by a few accusers, and only then by the whole body. Next he was placed on the scaffold where he was ordered to retract all the articles drawn from his works and to burn the preface he had written. Following this the six sections of his sentence were promulgated as noted above.

He was appalled at the methods of the inquisitors, not according to either church or state laws. Indeed even Jews who leave Judaism, or heathens who give up heathenism are welcomed as Christians. Why should his situation be less than theirs, because even in the New Testament there is rejoicing over the one sinner who repents rather than

the 99 who are upright? He was unjustly treated for he received "a certain mark of unbearable scandal, unworthy of a Christian man with a pious name from an upright family, and not from the dregs [*heffe*] of the people."

The prisoner then turns in his letter to more pressing present problems. His goods are confiscated so that his wife, still in Antwerp, has no means of supporting herself and her children. She had petitioned several times that Grapheus at least be allowed to be imprisoned in Antwerp where he at least had friends. His wife had petitioned about this matter, but Frans van der Hulst, the inquisitor, had not bothered to answer the request. "That gentleman has delayed giving it [answer], to my great prejudice, even to this very day, after using several evasions. . . ."

There was common concern in The Netherlands about the degree to which the inquisitors were forcing decisions and promulgating opinions contrary to the ancient rights of the separate political entities of The Netherlands. Was not the inquisitor really assuming prerogatives over which the political authorities should have control? Grapheus then appealed to the greater concern, he hoped, of the Chancellor of Brabant. "Certainly it cannot be thought, that the Council in which you preside, should ever have required his advice, if that same Council, according to its wonted discretion, had not known before-hand, what power he had in these matters. Perhaps he defers giving his advice, that he may weigh the matter more maturely. He has fed us poor wretches now almost these three months with doubtful hopes. . . . We most humbly beseech and conjure you, for Christ's sake. . . . that by your means, that most illustrious and most gracious princess, the regent, together with the Council, may vouchsafe to require Master van der Hulst at last, without further delay or subterfuge, to communicate his opinion."

Grapheus did not fail to remind the Chancellor of his previous loyalty to the Emperor. "Nor will you, I hope, think this to be an unreasonable request, when you consider how great my inclination and desires have been to serve the emperor to the best of my power; for which purpose I send you some little tracts which I have published just before my imprisonment, in honor of his majesty, such as a welcome from Spain" *i.e.* when Charles had returned in 1520. Indeed, the prisoner stated that he planned to write even more tracts concerning the Emperor, but his imprisonment had made that impossible. "The spirit of scholarship does not come when forced or constrained; it enjoys itself in freedom and joyous leisure."

As far as we can determine, this letter to the Chancellor of Bra-

bant did not have any immediate effects. Indeed, very soon thereafter Grapheus expressed himself again, this time in Latin poetry to one of his Humanist friends.³⁶ This poem of 180 lines was directed to Gerhard Geldenhauer of Nijmegen (or Noviomagus), Secretary to the Bishop of Utrecht.³⁷ The prisoner told about the bad conditions in the prison, bad health situations, darkness, dampness. Evidently the administrators of the prison did not lack for methods of agitating and tormenting their charges. "In every respect we are made the objects of blame, we are made objects of disgrace, ridicule, a spectacle, rejection, we are talked about, joked about, victims of insensitivity, of desecration, horrible hissing and what else? What, alas, should be done next? Should we despair? Oh, no, we will not despair; for if we forsake the world, the best of all is that Christ will in no way forsake us. Look! Christ is present; the walls tremble, the columns of the prison shake and twist, and a glorious light reveals the bending of the arches. In the midst of the light stands Christ approaching the melancholy ones; and on the right human illnesses are soothed by the heavenly; sadness of the soul is cured by divine salve [*unguine*] and the weak are lifted up sound. . . . Such is the honey and sweetness of the presence of Christ. . . . If Christ is with us, all fear is empty, and it is not able to touch one who is turned toward Christ with a spirit of courage."³⁸ Whatever response Grapheus received from his friend at the Bishop's headquarters is unknown.

How long the imprisonment lasted is also unknown. On November 5, 1523, however, Nicholas of 's Hertogenbosch wrote from Antwerp to Erasmus in Basle, simply stating that "Scribonius has been restored (*restitutus est*) but he has suffered a horrible indignity."³⁹ The experience was evidently so shattering to Grapheus that he ceased being a creative or aggressive scholar. Hereafter he became very cautious about what he wrote.⁴⁰ In later years he did edit and publish various tracts, but none having anything to do with the church or with the-

³⁶This long poem, entitled "Querimonia" (Complaints), is printed in *CDI*, IV, 152-156.

³⁷Gerhard Geldenhauer (or Gerhardus Noviomagus after his birthplace of Nijmegen) (1482-1542), a humanist and friend of Grapheus, was secretary of the lenient bishop of Utrecht, Philip of Burgundy, until the latter died in 1524. Thereafter, Gerhard went to Germany where he became an avowed Protestant and lived in Strasbourg, Augsburg and Marburg to his death in 1542. We shall include more information on him in later sections of this study.

³⁸The section of the poem which is here translated touches most closely some of the theological questions raised in the trial and imprisonment of Grapheus. This portion appears in *CDI*, IV, 153f.

³⁹Erasmus to Pieter Barbirius, secretary of Pope Adrian VI, April 17, 1523. Printed in Allen, *Epistolae*, #1358. The letter is reprinted in *CDI*, IV, 183.

⁴⁰Letter written by Grapheus to Albrecht Dürer, February 23, 1524. noted in Allen, *Epistolae*, IV, 225.

ology except a book condemning Anabaptists. The close association with Erasmus continued to the end of the latter's life, however. In the spring of 1536 when Erasmus was nearing death he wrote his will: "Let 50 golden florins and 46 Rhenish be given to Cornelius Grapheus, whom I suspect to be in need. He is a man worthy of a better fate."⁴¹

Grapheus lived with his family in Antwerp the remainder of his life. In 1540 he was restored to his position as secretary of the city.⁴² He died there on December 19, 1558, as we are told, in the good graces of the Roman Catholic Church.

APPENDIX I

The 18 propositions which Grapheus was asked to renounce and condemn were printed in the Latin by Gerdes in *Scrinium Antiquarium* (Groningen, 1756), Section VI, Part I. They are translated here in their entirety.⁴³

1. Christians have been reduced to slavery through [practices such as] fasting as presently observed in the Church, and through other rites of ecclesiastics such as the teaching concerning confession once per year, and the vows of the religious. No observances such as fasting, distinctions among foods, confession once per year, nor other institutions of the church which are not explicitly contained in the scriptures, nor vows of the religious, are obligatory for Christian men upon pain of mortal sin.

2. We have been reduced from liberty to miserable slavery, for the last 800 years and more, namely from the time of Boniface III [607] who first assumed for himself the name 'supreme pontiff' from Phokas [602-610] the emperor. Because of the usurpation of this name his followers and successors have assumed for themselves the authority to make laws.

3. No pope has power to impose any law on men, especially not Christian men, which obligates them under some penalty of mortal sin. It is doubtful whether Peter, the apostle, possessed any authority superior to any of the other apostles, at least this [proof] does not exist in scripture.

4. The supreme pontiff is set up as an idol for us.

5. The laity are priests, just as those who are called consecrated

⁴¹Erasmus wrote to a close friend, Conrad Goclenius, the details of how to carry out the wishes of his will, in the London edition of Erasmus' letters. Reported by C. Ullmann, *Reformers before the Reformation*, I, 415.

⁴²Otto Clemen, writing in *Realencyklopaedia für protestantische Theologie und Kirche*, VII, 61f.

⁴³These 18 propositions are translated from the Latin original as printed in *CDI*, IV, 105f.

priests; also all laity (excepting of course women and children) have the right to consecrate the venerable sacrament, although they would sin if they have not been given permission to consecrate.

6. The mode of prayer, which ecclesiastics observe in reading the canonical hours, in singing and other rites as rosaries, frequent prayers, and similar things, is superstitious and Jewish ceremonialism.

7. It is slavery that we are commanded to convene in church for prayer on certain days and hours, for of old worship in all places was within the teachings [of the early church].

8. It is not legal to accept money for administration of the sacraments, conducting burials and preaching the word of God.

9. Preachers of the divine word are to be censured who so often in their speaking introduce the opinions of the scholastic doctors.

10. Just as of old all, with the same discrimination excepting women and children, were allowed to teach and to interpret the sacred literature in public legally; so now it is legal [for all] and not only our own masters, bachelors or licentiates or those appointed by the church for this purpose.

11. The gospel is born anew, and Paul raised to life, because of the writings of Luther and others who adhere to his doctrines and whoever in their own works make known evangelical freedom.

12. None of our own works are meritorious, and we should in no way place confidence in them.

13. When Paul wrote to the Galatians: "If you be circumcised, Christ will be nothing to you," he meant that if you put confidence in your own works, Christ will be nothing to you.

14. The books of Martin Luther and his followers ought to be read because they teach Christ to us, [and] they exclude and reject all subtleties of the scholastic doctors.

15. The book of John of Goch, entitled *de libertate Christiana*, should be read before all the rest of the scholastic doctors, sacred as they may be.

16. The condemnation by the supreme pontiff of Luther, his person and his doctrines was unjust and iniquitous. The same may be said for the edict of the emperor because the doctrines of Luther ought to be regarded as sound especially those herein mentioned, and ought not be condemned except by means of thorough and reasonable analysis.

17. Sacramental confession is not according to divine law, but is a human institution.

18. Indulgences are not efficacious.

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