

“LA FARCE DES THEOLOGASTRES”:
HUMANISM, HERESY, AND THE SORBONNE, 1523-1525

by Charles Garside, Jr.

INTRODUCTION

I

To Richard Bartholinus, Erasmus wrote from Antwerp a letter warm in praise of France. It was above all, he declared, the only country in all Christendom which was not infected with heresy.¹ The date was March 10, 1517. Slightly less than two years later, on February 14, 1519, the indefatigable publisher John Froben wrote Martin Luther to tell him that

We have sent six hundred copies [of your books] to France and Spain; they are sold at Paris, and are even read and approved by the doctors of the Sorbonne, as certain of our friends have assured us; for some of the most learned say that they have hitherto missed among those who treat Scripture the same freedom that you show.²

Four days later, Wolfgang Capito, one of Froben's readers, confirmed the exciting news from Basel.³ Luther was understandably delighted. On the seventeenth of May a young Swiss student studying in Paris at the time informed his master that Luther's works were being bought and read "with open arms."⁴ Late in 1520, Heinrich Glareanus, another Swiss, could write to Zwingli on November 1 saying: "no other books are bought with such eagerness . . . one shop has sold 1,400 copies."⁵ In June of that year, however, Leo X had set the fisherman's seal to the bull *Exsurge Domine* enumerating forty-one errors in Luther's works and ordering that "the books of Martin Luther which contain these errors are to be examined and burned."⁶ With the bull of excommunication which the Pope signed on January 3, 1521, the danger which Luther and his books posed to orthodoxy everywhere was made explicit; misunderstanding of any sort whatsoever was no longer possible or tolerable.

He has now been declared a heretic; and so also others, whatever their authority and rank, who have recked nought of their own salvation but publicly and in all men's eyes become followers of Martin's pernicious and heretical sect. . . .⁷

Rome had spoken. So, also, had the universities.

When the Leipzig debate was finally terminated on July 14, 1519, Luther and Eck had consented to a judgment on the proceedings by the Universities

of Erfurt and Paris.⁸ On December 29 Erfurt made known its decision: it would render no verdict.⁹ Such reluctance, however, had been shown neither by the University of Cologne nor that of Louvain, for on August 29, 1519, the former condemned eight Lutheran articles,¹⁰ while the whole faculty of the latter, without a single dissenting vote, condemned fifteen on November 9.¹¹ What, then, of Paris, *the University*, "the official, almost infallible, tribunal of the faith,"¹² whose judgment was incontestably more significant than that of any other, comparable very nearly in weight even to that of the pope? The Sacred Faculty of Theology had been strangely silent.¹³ As a matter of fact, one of the reasons why Luther's books were selling so well was "the unusually long time taken by the Sorbonne over their examination. Scholars were naturally curious to find out why its attention was being occupied for so long, and their eagerness was increased by the fear that the books might soon be banned."¹⁴ Finally, however, on April 15, 1521, the Sorbonne issued the *Determinatio Theologiae Facultatis Parisiensis super doctrina Lutherianae*: one hundred and four of his articles were officially condemned as heretical. "In ten days the verdict was known all over Paris."¹⁵ No effort was spared, moreover, to acquaint the learned of Europe with this long-awaited judgment, and the Sorbonne in fact met again on May 6 to deliberate on ways by which Luther's heresies might be "extirpated" in France.¹⁶

On June 13, 1521, King Francis I decreed that nothing "concerning sacred Scripture or the Christian religion" was to be printed, sold, or distributed until it had been inspected and approved by the Faculty of Theology.¹⁷ The following month, however, the Sorbonne reported to the Parlement of Paris that books were still being published (and what was yet more ominous, in the vernacular, translated from Latin into French) which were a "scandal and disgrace to the Catholic faith."¹⁸ On August 3, therefore, to the sound of the trumpet, the Parlement ordered "all booksellers, printers, and others" who owned books by Luther to deliver them up to the Court within eight days.¹⁹

No one of these measures proved effective. There seemed to be no significant slackening of interest in Luther in Paris or, for that matter, elsewhere in France; he continued to be read, and the whole country seemed to be succumbing with appalling rapidity to the "Lutheran contagion."²⁰ Accordingly on March 22, 1522, the royal decree of June 13, 1521, was renewed, and its execution entrusted to the Provost of Paris and his lieutenants. The same responsibility in the provinces was given over to the bishops.²¹ But a year later Lutheran ideas clearly were no less a menace. At Troyes, for example, on April 29, 1523, Bishop Guillaume Petit told his chapter that he held a commission from the King "to refute and exterminate a great number of errors, foreign to orthodox faith, which were being propagated everywhere in France, the errors of a certain Martin Luther of Saxony, a German."²² On the same day Francis I ordered the burning of

Luther's books.²³ Exactly two weeks passed. And then in Paris, on May 13, "certain books and treatises" from the library of Louis de Berquin were confiscated and handed over to the Sorbonne for examination.²⁴

II

Louis de Berquin was born at Passy, near Paris, around 1490.²⁵ He was seigneur of the fief called Noord Berquin in Flanders, and possessed rights as well to the seigneurie of Cormeilles, north of Paris. Of his formal education and early intellectual development almost nothing is known. He studied at Orléans, and there became an intimate friend of Nicholas Bérault, a teacher and editor whom Erasmus once described as "one of the pearls and stars of France."²⁶ Through Bérault, Berquin was at some time introduced to the distinguished scholar-printer Josse Bade who in 1512 dedicated to him in the most flattering terms the second volume of his edition of the works of Politian. Five years later Bérault followed suit, dedicating two works to Berquin,²⁷ and spoke of him thereafter in a letter to Erasmus not simply as an admirer of the great humanist, but also as a distinguished scholar in his own right.²⁸ He was unmarried, a man, apparently, of rare chastity and integrity, courageous and outspoken, who in addition to moving in humanist circles, held some position at the court, for he bore the titles of *Praefectus* and Royal Councillor, and became so close a friend to the king that the latter is said to have "loved" him.²⁹ Humanist and courtier, a contemporary observed that he was "ordinarily dressed in robes of velvet, satin, and damask . . . of noble birth, and a very learned man. . . ." ³⁰ Erasmus, who knew him only from his letters, described him after his death as

a layman and celibate, but of a life so pure that not even the slightest rumor of unchastity ever arose about him. Extraordinarily generous to his friends and to the poor, most observant of the constitutions and rites of the Church, the prescribed fasts, holy days, food, masses, sermons, and anything else which has been accepted as the fruit of piety. He was a total stranger to any kind of deceit, liberal and upright in character, who wished to do injury to no one.³¹

Berquin was early attracted to Luther. At first what the latter was essaying seemed to him, as to so many other humanists, somehow a realization of the vast design of Erasmus, whom Berquin especially revered. And so in 1520 he began to read Luther,³² and continued to do so after the *Determinatio* of 1521. For him "the cause of classical antiquity was still the cause of the Gospel."³³ He was by then well known and highly placed. The Sorbonne was suspicious of him,³⁴ and his situation was made the more dangerous after he had openly derided one of its most prominent and militantly conservative theologians, Guillaume Duchesne.³⁵ Indeed he seems, in a sense, almost to have been inviting attack, and perhaps only his friendship with the king was preventing it. But when at last in April of 1523 Francis himself ordered Luther's books burned, the Sorbonne evidently considered it safe to move, even against him. Hence the seizure of his books.

The confiscated library was divided into three categories: (1) books written by Berquin himself; (2) books translated by Berquin; and (3) books by Luther, Hutten, Melancthon, and others.³⁶ The third category was, of course, the most incriminating; the first two books censured and condemned by the commissioners appointed to examine them were by Luther. The simple fact that Berquin possessed them despite all the ecclesiastical and secular legislation of 1521 and 1522 clearly was enough to condemn him. But the king came to his aid.

From Saint-Germain-en-Laye on June 9, Francis wrote to the Faculty of Theology instructing them to inform him of the results of their investigation: if they discovered erroneous or heretical opinions they were to be sent to him; if none was found he did not want Berquin deprived of his "freedom to write the truth."³⁷ In what the Sorbonne properly interpreted as a gesture of intolerable defiance, Berquin himself presented the Faculty with the letter on June 15. The response was a scrutiny of the library even more exacting. The king grew impatient. When, by June 23, he had received no reply to his first letter he wrote a second in which his position was now summarily and unequivocally stated: any opinion or sentence in the Berquin case was to be made only after he himself had seen the relevant material; until then the procedure against Berquin was to cease.³⁸ The Faculty received the letter on June 26, presented, as before, by Berquin in person. They replied this time by thanking the king for his interest, and announcing that the investigation had in fact already been concluded. Their decision would shortly be sent to the Parlement.

It was read to the court on July 8 by the king's advocate, Pierre Lizet: Berquin was privy to the Lutheran heresy and should abjure himself of it in public. He should also be prevented from ever again writing or translating any work whatsoever dealing with religion. The Parlement interrogated Berquin on the first of August, and put him in prison the following day. It declared its decision on August 5: Berquin was to appear with his books before the Bishop of Paris. If the latter condemned him he was a doomed man.

For the third time the king intervened. On August 8 an archer of the King's Guard, a certain Captain Frederick, arrived in Paris with two royal letters: the king had decided to evoke the case to the Great Council, then sitting at Blois.³⁹ Stunned by this dramatic move, the Faculty remonstrated vigorously, but without success. To their dismay Berquin was released from prison. Later, at Blois, on October 2 he abjured himself as follows:

I, Louis, seigneur of Berquin, detest, abominate, and anathematize all kinds of heresies, and especially the heresies of Master Martin Luther and his adherents and followers from whom I have made some extracts and translations, but with the protestation always of wishing neither to uphold them or adhere to them in any way. And I desire and intend to follow and adhere to evangelical and apostolic doctrine and to that of the holy Church, and not to that of any others to the contrary, nor to translate the books of

the aforesaid Luther. Moreover I protest that I do not wish to associate with any Lutherans nor with any who are inimical to the faith, but only with those who are adherents of the doctrine of the holy Christian Church. . . . I implore you most humbly that it please you to release me from this trial, to acquit me of the charges which you have brought against me, and to return to me the books which are not by Luther or his followers.⁴⁰

He was pardoned later and retired thereafter to his estates. For the time being he had won that "freedom to write the truth" which his friend the king so earnestly had desired for him. On August 8 his books had been burned on the Place de Grève before Notre Dame.⁴¹ For the Faculty of Theology, however, that ritual conflagration was only a partial victory. It would triumph over humanism and heresy completely six years later, when in the very same place Berquin went to the stake on April 17, 1529.

III

Not long after these dangerous and near fatal months of 1523, probably some time during the following year, *The Farce of the Bad Theologians* was written.⁴² No major document, to be sure, it is one, nonetheless, which touches on so many currents of opinion in Paris in the third decade of the century that it merits serious attention.

Faith stands at the center of the play, sick to the point of death. The theologians of the Sorbonne are of no avail; they are helpless before her, precisely because they are the ones responsible for her desperate illness. Theology has almost killed her. She can be healed only by the text of Scripture. Furthermore, it must be the text alone, unobstructed by the glosses of scholastic commentators. And above all, it must be Scripture in its original languages for the learned, and for those without learning, in the vernacular. The necessity for, and indispensability of, Scripture thus understood for Faith witnesses to the arduous and unremitting labors of two great humanists, both of whom are praised for their efforts in this regard in the *Farce*, Erasmus and Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples.⁴³ Both had worked and were continuing to work mightily for the recovery of the Gospel; both had prepared themselves for the study of the Bible with years of absorption in classical literature; and for both the search for truth had come to its climax in the text of sacred Scripture.⁴⁴

But this recovery of the Gospel, hailed with such enthusiasm, allied with the fundamental means by which it was to be effected, namely the simultaneous recovery of the study of Greek and Hebrew, was a threat of incalculable proportions to conservative theologians everywhere in Europe, not least to the Sacred Faculty of Theology in Paris. Knowledge of Greek and Hebrew could breed nothing but heresy; to read Scripture with lenses ground by any save the Sorbonne would on the face of it undermine orthodoxy. Furthermore,

The change from the medieval interpretative gloss *on* a passage of Scripture to the new

grammatical analysis of the passage brought forth an entirely new question in theology. The rhetorical commentaries of the earlier period, generally concerned with delineating the intention of a phrase and never questioning any matter of textual integrity, gave way to the *disquisitiones philologicae* in which all instances of textual corruption were investigated, and the whole emphasis placed upon exact rendition. The older query, so to speak, of "What does God mean here?" became the far more arresting question, "What has God said here?" Allegory, mystic paraphrase, tropology, and the whole formal literature of interpretation were uncompromisingly attacked as doctrinal irrelevancies by syntax and lexicography. Grammar, not speculation, became the greatest heresy of the Christian world, and unhappily no fires could be kindled to consume the *rudimenta linguae* of Hebrew and Greek.⁴⁵

Whether all these implications of the new approach to the Bible were immediately and fully grasped by the theologians of Paris is beside the point; long before any specific censures were officially voted and published the Sorbonne was opposed to the whole work of Erasmus and Lefèvre, for it was profoundly and intuitively aware of how subversive both men were.

Both were at the same time laboring for the reform of the Church, and when Luther's books and pamphlets began to circulate after 1518 it was difficult initially, if not impossible, to distinguish between the reforming ideas of two such famous humanists and those of the young professor from Wittenberg. Humanism could not so quickly or so easily be separated from reform. There was "a confusion"⁴⁶ between the two which remained unresolved at least until in 1524-1525 the debate between Luther and Erasmus over free will made the essential differences patently and tragically clear. But for the Sorbonne, and for theological faculties elsewhere, Luther was an innovator: under that simple, sinister rubric he was no more dangerous at first than Erasmus or Lefèvre. All three, without discrimination, should be silenced and suppressed, together with those who, like Louis de Berquin, admired and read them.

In an early essay on humanism and reform in France, Henri Hauser divided the complex interrelationships between them into three periods, the first of which, lasting until 1534, was characterized by what he called "an intimate union of these two great forces against the resistance of the middle ages."⁴⁷ *The Farce of the Bad Theologians* is a modest, albeit illuminating expression, satiric, sometimes savage, and always serious, of one individual's reaction to that conflict.

NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION

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1. P. S. Allen, *Opus Epistolarum Des. Erasmi Roterodami*, No. 549, II, p. 548, l. 11: "Sola Gallia nec haereticis est infecta . . ."; hereafter cited as *Erasmi Epistolae*. The letter is cited by

Margaret Mann, *Erasmus et les débuts de la Réforme française, 1517-1536* (Paris, 1934), p. 23; hereafter cited as Mann, *Erasmus*. (All translations, unless otherwise noted, are mine.)

2. *Luther's Correspondence and other Contemporary Letters*, translated and edited by Preserved Smith (Philadelphia, 1913), I, pp. 161-162. The letter is the earliest surviving evidence of the penetration of Lutheranism into France. For an important comment see W. G. Moore, *La Réforme allemande et la littérature française. Recherches sur la notoriété de Luther en France* (Strasbourg, 1930), pp. 46-47; hereafter cited as Moore, *La Réforme allemande*.

3. Moore, *La Réforme allemande*, p. 48.

4. Peter Tschudi to Beatus Rhenanus, *Correspondance des réformateurs dans les pays de langue française*, edited by Aimé-Louis Herminjard, I (Paris, 1866), No. 22, pp. 47-48, cited by Moore, *La Réforme allemande*, p. 48.

5. Cited by Pierre Imbart de la Tour, *Les Origines de la Réforme*, III, *L'Évangélisme* (Paris, 1914), p. 170. Evidently Glareanus was a focus for Luther's earliest partisans among young students in Paris; *ibid.*, p. 431. The magnificent work of Imbart de la Tour continues to be indispensable for the period, especially, for this essay, pp. 157-272; hereafter cited as *Origines*, 3.

6. Roland H. Bainton, *Here I Stand. A Life of Martin Luther* (New York, 1950), p. 147. The bull is dated June 15, 1520. On some of these "errors" see the interesting evidence in Hans J. Hillerbrand, "Martin Luther and the Bull *Exsurge Domine*," *Theological Studies* 30, No. 1 (March, 1969), 108-112.

7. *Martin Luther*, edited by E. G. Rupp and Benjamin Drewery (New York, 1970), p. 64. Not until much later in the year, however, was the bull actually published. For the problems involved in its publication see Roland H. Bainton, "Luther's Life in Review III. Problems in Luther Biography," *Studies on the Reformation*, Collected Papers in Church History Series Two (Boston, 1963), pp. 93-96.

8. Ernest G. Schwiebert, *Luther and his Times. The Reformation from a new Perspective* (Saint Louis, 1950), p. 418; hereafter cited as Schwiebert, *Luther*. As a matter of fact, as early as the second day of his interview with Cajetan at Augsburg, Luther had suggested that his case be submitted to some universities, "even Paris." *Ibid.*, p. 360.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 426.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 429. The book from which the articles were excerpted was Froben's second edition (February, 1519) of Luther's collected works. The faculty found it "so full of errors that it not only deserved to be condemned, suppressed, and prohibited, but it should even be burned together with its supporters, while its author should be summoned to a public recantation." *Ibid.*, pp. 429-430.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 428. Cf. the judgment of Erasmus on these condemnations, made expressly for the Elector Frederick in November 1520: "Only two universities out of such a countless number have condemned Luther, and they have merely condemned him, not convicted him of error; nor are they in agreement." *Christian Humanism and the Reformation: Desiderius Erasmus. Selected Writings*, ed. and trans. John C. Olin (New York, 1965), p. 148.

12. *Origines*, 3, p. 206.

13. "Leuter" does not in fact appear in the *Proceedings* of the Faculty until August 14, 1520. See Richard M. Cameron, "The Charges of Lutheranism brought against Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples (1520-1529)," *Harvard Theological Review* 63, No. 1 (January, 1970), 120.

14. R. J. Knecht, "The Early Reformation in England and France: A Comparison," *History* 57, No. 189 (February, 1972), 5. See also Moore, *La Réforme allemande*, p. 51.

15. Schwiebert, *Luther*, p. 432. On the *Determinatio* see the assessment of Moore, *La Réforme allemande*, pp. 50-53; for a significantly different point of view, cf. *Origines*, 3, p. 205.

16. *Origines*, 3, p. 205.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 207. This decree had in fact been preceded by a royal mandate of March 18 ordering the Parlement to permit nothing to be published without the *imprimatur* of the University. *Ibid.*

18. *Ibid.*, p. 170.

19. *Ibid.*

20. *Ibid.*, p. 367.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 208.

22. *Ibid.*

23. *Ibid.*, p. 240.

24. Nathaniel Weiss, "Louis de Berquin, son premier procès et sa rétraction d'après quelques documents inédits (1523)," *Bulletin de la Société de l'histoire du protestantisme français*, 67 (1918), 167; hereafter cited as Weiss, *Berquin*.

25. There exists no full-scale study of Berquin known to me. He is, of course, celebrated by Jean Crespin in his *Histoire des Martyrs*, new edition with an introduction by Daniel Benoit (Toulouse, 1885) I, pp. 273-276. For a summary of his career consult the article *Berquin* in Eugène and Emil Haag, *La France protestante*, second edition under the direction of Henri Bordier, II (Paris, 1879), cols. 418-434; hereafter cited as Haag, *Berquin*. Weiss, *Berquin*, is indispensable for the first trial. For the second, as well as for his relationship with Erasmus, see especially Mann, *Erasme*, pp. 113-149, and the following letters in *Erasmi Epistolae*: (1) Erasmus to Berquin, No. 1599 (VI, pp. 150-151); (2) Berquin to Erasmus, No. 1692 (VI, pp. 314-317); (3) Gervase Wain to Erasmus, No. 2027 (VII, pp. 444-445); (4) Erasmus to Berquin, No. 2048 (VII, pp. 494-496); (5) Berquin to Erasmus, No. 2066 (VII, pp. 523-525); (6) Erasmus to Berquin, No. 2077 (VII, pp. 539-541); (7) Erasmus to Willibald Pirckheimer, No. 2158 (VIII, pp. 161-164); (8) Erasmus to Charles Utenhove, No. 2188 (VIII, pp. 209-216), a long and revealing account of Berquin's life and death. The last trial is studied closely by Romain Rolland, "Le dernier procès de Louis de Berquin," *Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire, Ecole française de Rome*, 12 (1892), 314-325. There are perceptive comments in *Origines*, 3, pp. 196-202; cf. Moore, *La Réforme allemande*, pp. 102-105, and 151-152. For more secondary literature, consult Alexandre Cioranesco, *Bibliographie de la littérature française du seizième siècle* (Paris, 1959), nos. 3714-3727.

26. Haag, *La France protestante*, second edition, the article *Bérauld*, II, col. 297. Cf. Mann, *Erasme*, pp. 113-114, and Weiss, *Berquin*, p. 165, n. 2.

27. These were editions of the *Convivia* of Francesco Filelfo and Lucian's *Muscae Encomium*. For the text of the dedication of the former see Weiss, *Berquin*, pp. 165-166. Cf. Mann, *Erasme*, p. 114.

12. ". . . Ludovico Deberquino, viro doctissimo ac tui nominis studiosissimo . . ." March 16, 1519; *Erasmi Epistolae*, No. 925, III, p. 505, ll. 13-14.

29. Haag, *Berquin*, p. 419.

30. Mann, *Erasme*, p. 114, citing the *Journal d'un Bourgeois de Paris*, an important contemporary source unfortunately unavailable to me.

31. Erasmus to Charles Utenhove, July 1, 1529. *Erasmi Epistolae*, No. 2188, VIII, p. 212, ll. 83-90.

32. *Origines*, 3, p. 196.

33. Mann, *Erasme*, p. 114.

34. Weiss, *Berquin*, p. 166: "Berquin thus became part of that small group of enlightened and liberal scholars who, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, labored for the revival of

secular as well as sacred studies and who, for this reason, were put under the surveillance of the 'Théologastres' of the Sorbonne as dangerous propagators of heresy." Cf. Mann, *Erasme*, p. 115.

35. Weiss, *Berquin*, p. 167; cf. *Erasmi Epistolae*, No. 2188, VIII, p. 212, ll. 97-98 where Erasmus refers to this "... conflictatiunculæ cum Guilhelmo Querno theologo."

36. For the contents of the library see, Haag, *Berquin*, col. 421; Weiss, *Berquin*, pp. 169-170; Mann, *Erasme*, p. 115; and Moore, *La Réforme allemande*, pp. 102-104. The works of Melancthon had been condemned *en bloc* in 1522; see Moore, *La Réforme allemande*, p. 60.

37. "... la liberté d'escripre vérité." The full text is in Weiss, *Berquin*, pp. 168-169.

38. The text is in Weiss, *Berquin*, pp. 172-173.

39. The text is in Weiss, *Berquin*, pp. 175-176. See pp. 176-177 for the king's attitude to Berquin's "heresy." Cf. *Origines*, 3, p. 199.

40. Weiss, *Berquin*, pp. 180-181. The problem of Berquin's "Lutheranism" is insoluble. Every one of his own books was destroyed; only his translations have survived. Mann, *Erasme*, p. 149, argues that his ideas derived more from Luther than Erasmus, but her evidence is by no means wholly persuasive, and Erasmus himself asserted that Berquin "abhorred" Luther. To the question, then, of whether he was or was not a Lutheran, the answer of Imbart de la Tour continues to be the only proper one: "Les éléments nous manquent pour en juger," *Origines*, 3, p. 200. But see also p. 201, n. 1.

41. Weiss, *Berquin*, p. 177. Four days later an enormous quantity of Luther's books gathered from stores everywhere in Paris was burned in the same place (*Ibid.*, pp. 177-178), an action recommended to the Parlement on July 8 by Pierre Lizet (Haag, *Berquin*, col. 422).

42. Both the authorship and date of composition of the *Farce* are disputed by the few who have studied it. It has been printed twice: (1) by Johann Wilhelm Baum in an appendix to his *Franz Lambert von Avignon* (Strassburg, 1840), pp. 185-222, unavailable to me, and (2) by Edouard Fournier in *Le Théâtre français avant la Renaissance, 1450-1550* (Paris, 1872), pp. 418-428; hereafter cited as Fournier. I have used the Burt Franklin reprint: Research and Source Works Series No. 70 (New York, 1965). I have not seen Emile Picot, "Les moralistes polémiques ou la controverse religieuse dans l'ancien théâtre français," *Bulletin de la Société de l'histoire du protestantisme français*, 36 (1887), 232-241.

All scholars are in agreement that Berquin's authorship cannot at present be definitely proved, but all agree as well that if he did not write the *Farce* himself, it was written by someone close to him who shared his ideas to such an intimate degree that he was, in effect, speaking for his friend. So, for instance, Weiss, *Berquin*, p. 182, writes of the *Farce* "qu'il [Berquin] a sûrement inspirée, s'il ne l'a pas écrit." Imbart de la Tour concurs: if not by Berquin, it is "tout au moins écrit sous son inspiration." *Origines*, 3, p. 198. Mann, *Erasme*, p. 116 is undecided: "... si, au moins, c'est lui l'auteur. . . ." Aimé-Louis Herminjard argued that it was written by a friend (Haag, *Berquin*, col. 421, n. 1) as does Quirinus Breen, *John Calvin: A Study in French Humanism*, second edition (Archon Books, 1968), p. 28: "It was written by a friend of de Berquin." Fournier makes no attribution at all.

On the question of dating there is considerably more agreement. Herminjard (Haag, *Berquin*, col. 421, n. 1) and Mann, *Erasme*, pp. 116-117, n. 2, argue respectively for (a) sometime in 1526 or (b) between 1526 and 1528, that is to say, between the second and third trials. Weiss (*Berquin*, p. 182, and p. 182, n. 1), Breen (*John Calvin*, p. 28), Fournier, p. 418, and Imbart de la Tour (*Origines*, 3, p. 198, n. 2) argue, to the contrary, for the earlier date which I have accepted, namely, some time after Berquin's first trial and imprisonment (1523-1525), and most likely in 1524. Cf. especially *Origines*, 3, p. 198, n. 2: "Elle a été composée après le premier emprisonnement de Berquin, et avant la mort du théologien Duchesne, probablement en 1524."

Gerard Dirk Jonker, *Le Protestantisme et le théâtre de langue française au XVI^e siècle*

(Groningen, 1939), pp. 56-59, discusses the Farce briefly, and opts for the early date. The authorship he attributes to a friend of Berquin.

43. On Erasmus, see especially Jean-Claude Margolin, *Douze Années de bibliographie érasmiennne, 1950-1961* (Paris, 1963), and *Quatorze années de bibliographie érasmiennne, 1936-1949* (Paris, 1969). For the years after 1961 consult the bibliography in, e.g., the *Archive for Reformation History*. For Lefèvre see the bibliography in Eugene F. Rice, Jr., *The Prefatory Epistles of Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples and Related Texts* (New York, 1972), p. xxiv, n. 37.

44. Mann, *Erasme*, p. 10.

45. George Newton Conklin, *Biblical Criticism and Heresy in Milton* (New York, 1949), pp. 1-2.

46. Mann, *Erasme*, p. 149.

47. Henri Hauser, *Études sur la Réforme française* (Paris, 1909), p. 11. Mann, *Erasme*, p. 2, subdivides this first period as follows: (1) From 1517-1523 interest and emphasis were focused primarily on exegesis, commentaries on, and translations of, the Bible. (2) From 1523-1530 Luther's influence markedly increased and matters of doctrine became more and more critical. (3) From 1530-1534 the works of the Swiss reformers circulated widely throughout France creating a "radical" party which emerged decisively with the "Affair of the Placards" in 1534.

THE FARCE OF THE BAD THEOLOGIANS¹

THEOLOGIAN²

By my faith! When I consider
 The poverty and misery
 Of these new theologians
 Who have neglected and put great Latin
 Behind them, and care nothing about it,
 By my faith! Great evils come from this.
 Everybody reads Greek now:
*Tithon, bison, taph, upsilon.*³
 Likewise Hebrew.
 I don't read either of them,
 But this I know well
 That anyone reading Greek
 Is suspected of heresy.⁴
 As for me, I don't understand a thing about it.
 I no longer know how to speak.
 I am the foundation of the Faith
 On earth and in Heaven,
 But no matter how hard I pray and cry out,
 I am held in little esteem.

FRIAR

I represent the exaltation
 Of human devotion,
 And I endure a great deal
 To keep up its domain.
 I know how to preach wool in May,
 Wheat in abundance in August,
 And at Christmas I take great care
 To preach black puddings and ham.

FAITH

Alas! How I am suffering!
 I am dying. Listen to me.

THEOLOGIAN

Friar, don't I hear Faith crying there?

FRIAR

Yes, she is sick.

THEOLOGIAN

Sick? That's straight to the point.

FAITH

Oh, my God! How weak I am!
 Help me, my true supporters.

THEOLOGIAN

My lady,
 How did you come to lose your health?

FAITH

From a colic
 Called sophistic passion
 Which robs me of comfort and rest.
 In debate my head has been
 At such odds with my heart⁵
 That Simony, the consumptive one,
 Has ruined my good reputation.
 To merit and to demerit,
 As well as a lunatic's way
 Of arguing, have so destroyed
 My body that I'm nothing but skin and bones.

FRIAR

What is your illness?

FAITH

The Sorbonnic.

THEOLOGIAN

You mean from the Sorbonne?

FAITH

Of course.

FRIAR

How?

FAITH

By a form of argumentation,
 Of casuistry, of opinions,

Of glosses, of conclusions.
I must find some medicine.

THEOLOGIAN

Where will you find it?

FAITH

Wherever reason rules.

THEOLOGIAN

Where is that? In Great Britain?

FAITH

No, no, not at all! Reason makes her home
In Germany.

FRIAR

She makes a god out of that rascal Luther
Who is tearing her apart.

THEOLOGIAN

Ha! Pestilence!
Don't say that word.

FAITH

Ask everywhere.
Let him who has taken away my health
Be burned as a heretic.
Let everyone apply himself to this.
Our master Bad Theologian,
And your companion brother Friar,
Since you call yourselves
The principles illuminated by faith,
This must be done by you.

FRIAR

I don't know any place
Where I can find medicine for you.

THEOLOGIAN

I'm certain of this:
I know of nothing to heal you.

FAITH

The text of sacred Scripture
Would cure me very well.

THEOLOGIAN

It is coarse,
And has no certitude.
Nevertheless, I never saw it.⁶

FAITH

That is a very frivolous statement!
That learned doctors,
Wrapped up in their caps and gowns,
Have never seen the text of sacred Scripture!
Alas! St. Paul, what will you say to this?
They are inspired by the Holy Spirit,
But they do not have sound learning,
Only a pile of Sorbonnic cases
Which are empty things.
There is no Roman Church
Triumphant or militant,
Neither ruled nor ruling,
There is no doctor so learned
From whom I might obtain good health.
There is only the text.

FRIAR

I don't know him⁷ at all.
Where does he come from? Tell me.

FAITH

He doesn't come from your pretended councils
Which turn the Gospels upside down
By determining through induction that Jewish ceremony
Is a pious thing.

FRIAR

You are quibbling.

FAITH

Brother Friar,
And our master Bad Theologian,
It is a grave presumption on your part

To call yourselves my foundation
 Without having a first-hand knowledge
 Of the text of sacred Scripture.
 Whom do you know?

THEOLOGIAN

Among the greater:
 Alexander of Hales,⁸
 Durandus,⁹ Albertus,¹⁰ Egidius,¹¹
 And Petrus Reginaldetus.¹²
 Bricot,¹³ Auget, and Tartaret,¹⁴
 Ricquart, Lombard,¹⁵ and Meffret,¹⁶
 Barlette,¹⁷ and de Voragine.¹⁸
 Gricq,¹⁹ Nider,²⁰ *Dormi secure*²¹
 And the *Sermones discipuli*,²²
 Together with the *Summa Angeli*,²³
 Occam,²⁴ and Almain,²⁵ and Holcot.²⁶

FRIAR

I know Master Jehan Lescot,²⁷
 Saint Thomas,²⁸ and *de Urbellis*.²⁹

FAITH

I want nothing of their *ergos*.
 The textual scholar John Gerson³⁰
 Would cure me better.
 For I must—it is my nature—
 Have the text of sacred Scripture
 Without *ergo*, without *quod*, without *ne*, without *quia*.

THEOLOGIAN

You will never have Master John Gerson
 For he is a bad papalist.³¹
 His teaching no longer agrees with
 The apostles of the Sorbonne.³²

FAITH

You are not looking for good things.
 All you want is fool's jargon.

SCRIPTURE

*begins, supported by a crutch, torn and bleeding about the face,
 speaking hoarsely; one must make a great effort to hear:*

Alas! The future, alas!
 Won't you give me relief?
 I am abusively stoned;
 I am so torn,
 Turned around, turned around again, and so scratched;
 Never have I seen such times.
 My dear daughter, Reason,
 Let us go, and in a comforting way
 Visit your aunt, living Faith.
 There we will spend our time.

REASON

The errors and arguments
 Of our master Bad Theologians
 Together with their companions the Friars,
 Opposing those who insist on the text,
 Have given you a lot of trouble
 Without taking reason with them.

SCRIPTURE

Their work is full of unreason
 Because of a pile of idiotic arguments.

REASON

It is obvious from their opinions
 That they have acted without me.

SCRIPTURE

Upon my soul!
 That has been a great fault with them,
 Having thus judaized
 Without at all confirming
 Their assertions with the arguments of reason.

REASON

Still they have the arguments
 Of Berquin's brother, Lizet.³³

SCRIPTURE

It is the nature of a lizet
 To damage the vine.³⁴
 The good man of Gentilly is unhappy,³⁵
 So much so that the only thing he ever fears

Among his vines are the lizets.
 And so one should not be surprised
 If this one wants to invade
 The vineyard of Lady Reason.³⁶

REASON

Jesus! What horrible evils
 Are hatched in a monk's cowl,
 By which our masters maintain
 That they are filled with the Holy Spirit.

SCRIPTURE

On snaring benefices:
 As soon as a brother Friar
 Becomes a master Bad Theologian,
 It is to his advantage, although against the rule of his order,
 And despite the fact that reason makes him feel remorse for it,
 To give away so many benefices
 That he will always be begging
 In the ears of his patrons.

REASON

Then the popes are at fault
 For dispensing the irritating rules.

SCRIPTURE

Have you seen the entangling action
 Which they have brought against
 The German translator?

REASON

Translator?

SCRIPTURE

Indeed!

REASON

The seigneur de Berquin.
 He was teaching them the Latin
 Of Erasmus which they do not understand.³⁷
 But they put him in prison,
 And by oblique means
 Presumed to call him a heretic

Without showing errors or reasons.
And this is great folly.

SCRIPTURE

Among them those are called the cocks
Who know well how to use their *ergos*³⁸
To trouble me more;
Above all the mightiest oak tree:³⁹
One hears him well, preaching from on high
That the text is worth nothing
And that the value lies in the gloss.

REASON

I am surprised that no one locks him up
When he says such things.

SCRIPTURE

Even worse:
If anyone cites me
As have Erasmus or Faber⁴⁰
Or Melanchthon, he will be cursed
In their emaciated Sorbonne
And censured for heresy.

REASON

If anyone writes in Hebrew
Or in Greek, ho! That's all they need,
As far as they are concerned,
To condemn him.

SCRIPTURE

You don't have to prove that
For it's a fact well known.
Anything not understood
By them is heretical.

REASON

But consider their method
And all their *queros* and *utrums*
Which are not worth two turds.

SCRIPTURE

And then their *pros* and their *contras*

As well as their Sorbonnic cases
Which have torn me up so badly.

REASON

Whoever wants to be well treated
Must participate in their actions.

SCRIPTURE

They use a rustic kind of talk.
They suppose men to be cattle,
Asses, goats, sheep, horses,
Or anything else, and furnish them
With rational souls.
And then they hold a great inquiry in order to find out
Whether one must compel such beasts
To obey the Christian Law.
Each has his own opinion,
And so they go, gambling among themselves
For the robe of God,⁴¹ complicating
The meaning of sacred Scripture with arguments
and counterarguments.

REASON

What makes me grumble even more
Is that they maintain formally
That only they have the right
To discuss the holy Faith⁴²
Which God established
Without concealing it from anyone.

SCRIPTURE

And even crazier absurdities:
They all claim that the Ethics
Of Aristotle are the foundation
On which one must embark on the study
Of sacred theology.

REASON

Here is the praise which suits them:
One should call them those who are far away from God
And not theologians.⁴³
Then their names would conform to the facts.

SCRIPTURE

Do you think that faith and its deeds
 Need to ask the following question:
 If God had known how to cause
 The essence of a woman or a beast
 To pass into a gourd or a rock?
 Would she then have known how to preach,
 And then be crucified,
 And afterwards ascend into Heaven?

REASON

Anyone who does not hold such a position
 Would be considered a blockhead.

SCRIPTURE

Totally irreverent⁴⁴
 To God.

REASON

Very obscene and very dirty.
 And then people make fun of it
 And make faces at them
 As at fools.

SCRIPTURE

Leave them there. Let's go.

THEOLOGIAN

My lady, what shall I do?
 Don't you want the Decretals⁴⁵
 To cure you?

FAITH

The Decretals?
 Alas! Great God! For what use?
 Don't all say with one accord that
 "Since the Decretals took wings⁴⁶
 And policemen carried trunks
 And monks rode on horseback
 Everything has gone wrong?"

FRIAR

What do you want? A sermon?

FAITH

A sermon! What for?
They are only made of whys and wherefores.

THEOLOGIAN

Do you want Justinian?
Lizet can cite it well.

FAITH

I have no need
Of Lizet or his followers
Who manage the mill without being millers.
He uses the style of others.
Let him accede to a council of Faith
And papal procedure,
For God has no good will towards him.
He doesn't know what such money is worth.

FRIAR

You have a very hot temper.
And do you have an appetite for
Hugo,⁴⁷ the so-called cardinal?
Tell us.

FAITH

He doesn't suit me at all.

THEOLOGIAN

Then whom do you want? de Lyra,⁴⁸
Or John of Torquemada;⁴⁹
Lucian,⁵⁰ or Ovid, or Vergil?

FAITH

I want the Gospel text,
Otherwise called sacred Scripture,
My principle and my guide.
It is also called
The Old and New Testament.

FRIAR

Ha! Women have carried it away
From the Sorbonne and translated it
To such an extent that if we had not

Found glosses in sufficient number
Each one of them would be as learned as we.

FAITH

Aha! Under the name of the prophet, wolves.
A trap only simpletons will fall for!

SCRIPTURE

May God above be blessed.
We have just arrived.
My lady, may the almighty God on high
Give you health and long life.

FAITH

You whom I have so long desired to see
Are most welcome.

REASON

My lady, I pray our sovereign Lord
To give you health and happiness.

FAITH

Ah! The princess of knowledge,
Reason: welcome to you.

THEOLOGIAN

My lady, where do these people come from?
Who are they, that they are so esteemed?

FAITH

I believe you know them well.

THEOLOGIAN

No, my lady, with all due respect.

FRIAR

Nor I.

SCRIPTURE

Be assured, however,
That we know you very well,
For you have caused us so much trouble
That I don't know how to describe it to anyone.

THEOLOGIAN

I have no intention of contradicting you
Because I certainly don't understand you.

FRIAR

Speak! Identify yourselves.

SCRIPTURE

There, next to you, is Reason,
And I, I am called by nature
The Text of sacred Scripture.
Now do you know us?

THEOLOGIAN

I would need a translator
To understand you and to know you.

FAITH

Don't you understand our master?
He is called by his nature
The Text of sacred Scripture.
And the other one is Reason.

THEOLOGIAN

I am certain
That I have never seen him at all.

SCRIPTURE

Ha! Our master Bad Theologian
And you, obstinate Friar!
How quickly you have lost
Reason to your emotions.
What, you have never seen me?

THEOLOGIAN

Good Sir, be careful what you say!
We are pillars of the faith.

REASON

Pillars supporting nothing, by God!
You are self-satisfied pillars!
Are you not simply buffoons
Who forbid us the Gospel?

Is this not a very subtle thing?
 Jesus Christ said: "I descended from Heaven
 Not to do my will,
 But the will of Him who sent me, the Father."⁵¹
 But these men do the opposite, saying:
 "They descended from Heaven, that is to say, from Christ,
 In order to do their own will."
 And I myself have heard them preach
 That the Church cannot err,
 And they say that they are the Church.
 And therefore, by an exquisite consequence
 They conclude: they cannot err.

FAITH

Here there is error without believing that one errs.
 If one council contradicts another,
 It surely follows
 That one of the two has erred.
 Now the Pragmatic Sanction⁵²
 Was decreed by them
 In the great Council
 Of Basel. Since then they have contradicted
 What was said at Basel
 To such a degree that the Pragmatic Sanction
 Has no validity.⁵³
 And another time it was decreed
 By a council as gospel truth
 That the council
 Was above papal power.⁵⁴
 Since then yet another council
 Has nullified this
 And decreed
 That the pope was above the council.⁵⁵
 By this it was formally concluded
 That such councils had erred.
 And what's more, if they had erred
 They are not at all, in this regard, the Church.
 Based on the conclusion stated above,
 Which they themselves wish to affirm,
 The Church cannot err.

REASON

Everything they do has a secular end.

THEOLOGIAN

I must use some subtle reasoning
To prove them all heretics.

REASON

Behold your fallacies and foolish arguments,
Bad Theologian!
Now they have no other means of defending me
Except through their *ergos*, *utrums*, *pros*, and *contras*.
Instead of citing St. Paul, they will formulate arguments.
A good doctor of good lineage
As wise as much by knowledge as by age
Will begin the text of his sermon
With what St. Paul has said.
Now a bad theologian
Will begin in stupidity
Saying: "I put the case."

SCRIPTURE

This is the ruination of the faith.

FAITH

Alas! I am grievously sick because of it!

SCRIPTURE

Indeed, they have made me very weak.
Anagogy! Tropology!
Then after that allegory!
I am torn in such pieces by them
That I no longer know
What side I must now take.

FRIAR

You sound quite well when we are done with you.
I ask you: if God knows
Categorically, as a fact,
How many fleas there are in Paris?

REASON

There you are with your *ergos*!
By God! And the greatest fault of all
Is that he who cries out the loudest
In a lunatic's argument—
I mean a Sorbonnic argument—

To slander the truth,
 Will be called worthy,
 Our master, and he permits this!

SCRIPTURE

We must have the Mercury
 From Germany to cut the matter short.

FAITH

Reason and you will go look for him.

THEOLOGIAN

My lady, to warn you,
 If you wish without fail to get well
 No one must lay a hand on you
 Save us.

SCRIPTURE

O worthy hand!
 How well supported Faith would be!

MERCURY FROM GERMANY

I haven't had anything new to do
 For a long time.
 There are some people under Heaven
 Who are unhappy with the present time.
 My lords the theologians
 Of Louvain,⁵⁶ and of Paris,⁵⁷ too,
 Have no regard for those Christians
 Who are awakening their minds.

SCRIPTURE

If Heaven's benevolence
 Will give us good fortune
 We will soon find the Mercury
 From Germany.

REASON

There he is, I believe.

SCRIPTURE

Blessed be the great King
 Of Heaven! God keep you, Master!

We have come to you
Because of a misadventure.

MERCURY

Ah! Text of sacred Scripture,
And you, Reason, embrace me!
And Lady Faith, how is she?
Is she well?

REASON

She is sick.

MERCURY

Who is looking after her?

SCRIPTURE

To tell the truth, it's the good brother Friar
And our master Bad Theologian.
When we arrived there
We found them both,
But they didn't recognize us.

MERCURY

You two are unknown to such people!
O honored Virgin!
How well our Faith is cared for
By men of such profound knowledge.

SCRIPTURE

Our mission is to find out
If you would like to come
To her assistance
Against them.

MERCURY

Yes, I will come if it is necessary,
And I will tell her of their error.
Let's go, without wasting any time.

REASON

I pray to God in Heaven
To help you, Lord Mercury.

MERCURY

Oh! Text of sacred Scripture!
 Why are you so torn up,
 Scratched, blackened, sick?
 Never have you been in such condition.

SCRIPTURE

I'm in such condition
 Because of a case of the Sorbonne.

MERCURY

Really.
 By my faith, they will make God believe
 That He is called Henry.⁵⁸

REASON

Most of the time I laugh at all of it.

MERCURY

Are you there sometimes?

REASON

In their cases? My faith! I just go away.
 They have nothing to do with Reason.

SCRIPTURE

They have an immense pile of jargon:
 Thomas says, Occam says.
 But to say: the text says,
 There is no mention of this.

MERCURY

I have a great desire
 To see them.

SCRIPTURE

We have returned.
 My lady, the great God on high
 Sends you good fortune.
 Here comes Lord Mercury from Germany
 Toward you.

FAITH

He is welcome.
I pray my God that he may come
For my quick and permanent relief.

MERCURY

My lady, God give you comfort.
How did you get sick?

THEOLOGIAN

Who are you? Tell me.

MERCURY

I am Berquin.

FRIAR

A Lutheran?

MERCURY

No, no, not at all! I am a Christian.
I am no Sorbonnist,
Nor Holcotist, nor Bricotist.
I always have Reason with me,
And I am never irrational
With anyone.

THEOLOGIAN

Erasmus and you,
And Faber, and Luther, in good faith,
Are only heretical little boys.⁵⁹

MERCURY

Know the truth for what it is! Put aside your
tortuous arguments,
And both of you speak rationally.
Do not use the technique
Of condemning opinions. If I have erred,
Then show me my error
So that I can correct it.
Don't think that you can juggle things around
Like Beda,⁶⁰ who declared
That he had condemned a book
Which he had never read.

Go and play your games somewhere else.
You are only fooling around!

THEOLOGIAN

I am not here to prove a point to you.
It is said, according to our law,
That we, the foundations of the faith,
Can say anything without reason.

MERCURY

That is a remarkable statement!
Jesus Christ gave reasons
For what He said, and would cite
The sayings of the ancient prophets.
And St. Paul rationally based what he said
On the words of Jesus. But this fool
Is above Jesus and St. Paul;
He will say anything without using reason.

FAITH

Mercury, let them babble on.
Listen to me.

MERCURY

I am willing.
My lady, in order to tell you the nature,
Cause, and cure of your illness,
The principal point must be made:
A remedy must be provided
For the text of sacred Scripture.
Come now, Reason, without delay
We must work to clear it up.
The glosses have so bloated it
That unless you do something about it
It will never be in its natural state.
So let this be your cure.

Here Reason washes Scripture; and meanwhile MERCURY says:

And now so that this Friar
And master Bad Theologian
Don't get in your way,
I know a speedy remedy.

Here MERCURY speaks to the Friar and the Theologian while Reason washes Scripture

Here, my Lords, is a compress
 Of the efficacy of the Mass.
 And here is some *diachylon*⁶¹
 Which is called the *speculum*,⁶²
 Otherwise known as the great mirror.
 Now look at yourselves, and you will see
 What hydras are procreated at the Sorbonne.
 Then afterwards
 You will receive another prescription
 Which I don't want to talk about now.

REASON

Here is Scripture, fresh and clear,
 To cure you, sovereign Faith.

MERCURY

Kiss it, so that its breath
 May inflame you, and create within you lively faith.
 For no matter what anyone does to the contrary,
 As long as you have the pure text
 You will always be in good health.
 And take care that you do not have a relapse.

FRIAR

I pray God that harm may befall you,
 Little boy, deceiver, and liar!

MERCURY

St. John! But you, brother preacher!

THEOLOGIAN

We will soon make mincemeat out of you.

MERCURY

I have no need to fear your false
 Imposture! Don't think
 You can use card tricks any longer,
 Stuck into your babbling and slander,
 Banished from my Lady Reason
 To hand me over to the Senate.⁶³
 By the great Senate⁶⁴ I have been judged

Better than you,
 And you have all been accounted beasts.
 The workman is recognized by the workmanship.
 In this you have observed
 The practice of the Jews
 When they took Jesus Christ to Pilate.
 And he,
 Asking them "why," they cried out:
 "If this man were not a criminal
 We would not have delivered him to you."⁶⁵
 You wanted to destroy my reputation,
 But you have helped me attain much more renown
 In spite of your damnable opposition.

THEOLOGIAN

If ever we wait on your table
 We'll give you vinegar to drink.

MERCURY

I have nothing to do with Verjus⁶⁶
 And still less with Lizet.
 A lizard of Gentilly is worthless.
 My Lady Faith,
 He has created all this disarray for us
 Because he has ruined your vineyard.
 He thought he was going to burn
 My books through his cunning!
 He's had a set-back,
 And they say that he's very angry about it.

SCRIPTURE

He irritated me very much.

MERCURY

He will be able to wound Suidas.⁶⁷
 The leech, he wants to be like
 The Meridian devil.⁶⁸
 But say, isn't he very obtuse
 And, if I may say so, out of his mind
 To want to make people believe
 That he knows Greek. By St. Martin!
 It's enough if he understands Latin.
 But no matter how people make light of it,⁶⁹
 Suidas took it on the jaw

One day when he was thinking about
 The book he was writing.
 And so they say that Lizet maligns Suidas
 Instead of reading him.
 And then these friars who preach
 Indulgences absolving from pain and sin
 Which you can get only with money;
 See what their action amounts to:
 If an indulgence wipes out sin,
 Contrition has not the slightest efficacy,
 Not one whit. Or if it has,
 The word doesn't mean a thing.
 By sin contrition destroys sin.
 But that is a why and a wherefore.
 They are excused by that.

FRIAR

Don't worry, we'll get you.

MERCURY

Ha! Don't threaten us!
 I don't fear your cunning,
 Nor your *contras* nor your *ergos*.
 Listen to me, my big bigots:
 If you don't understand the text
 I will, if you wish, for payment
 Be your translator.

FAITH *rising*

I pray God in Heaven
 To give joy and prosperity
 To those who have given me health.
 This will always be remembered.

SCRIPTURE

And as for me, I pray to the King of Glory
 To put in His holy sanctuary
 Erasmus, the great textual expert,
 And the great scholar Faber,
 And you, Mercury, my friend,
 Who endure so many insults
 From the bad theologians and the bigots
 Who are all full of slander.

REASON

We are boring the company.
 Let's take our leave.
 My lords,
 Our subject has not been theology itself,
 But only bad theology.
 We know very well
 That there are several worthy men,
 Theologians of good reputation,
 Who are blameless,
 And upset by a pile of rubbish
 Of conclusions and cases,
 Nolitons and volitions
 Which are not worth two onions.
 All that we have done
 Is condemn this wicked activity.
 And so take everything in good spirit.

THEOLOGIAN *and* FRIAR *together*

We are going away unhappy.

REASON

Let these bigots run!
 To realize my design,
 And so as not to bore you,
 Audience, farewell.

NOTES TO THE FARCE

1. "La Farce des Théologastres," Fournier, pp. 418-428.

Only one other English translation is known to me, that by Raymond Charles Clevenger III in his senior essay on Berquin submitted to the Scholars of the House Program in Yale University in 1959. I have consulted it with profit. I have also profited from the assistance of my colleague at Rice in the French Department, Professor Samuel M. Carrington, Jr., who has given me the benefit of his learning with uncommon generosity, and rescued me from many an error. Notwithstanding, for the translation printed here I commit only myself.

Edmond Huguet, *Dictionnaire de la langue française du seizième siècle* (Paris, 1925-1967) does not record the word "théologastre." Randle Cotgrave, *A Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues* (reproduced from the first edition, London, 1611, by the University of South Carolina Press, Columbia, 1950) translates: "a small or simple Diuine; a smatterer in Diuinitie." I have used the simpler and less awkward "bad theologian" found in Walther von Wartburg, *Französisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Basel, 1966), XIII, p. 304.

The explanatory notes to the text have been kept to a minimum.

2. There are VI PERSONNAGES: THEOLOGASTRES, FRATREZ, FOY, RAISON, LE TEXTE DE SAINCTE ESCRIPTURE, et LE MERCURE D'ALLEMAIGNE. More often than not the first person singular is used whenever they speak by both the "Théologastres" and the "Fratrez," as, for example, in the opening line "... quand *je* considère;" accordingly, they appear in the translation in the singular.

3. The first three words are meaningless, a “garbled Greek” (Fournier); the fourth is, of course, the genuine letter *u*.

4. The Sorbonne was implacable in its opposition to the study of Greek and Hebrew. See, for example, the *Histoire ecclésiastique des églises réformées au royaume de France*, new edition edited by G. Baum and Ed. Cunitz (Paris, 1883), I, p. 5. Noel Beda is reported by Henri Estienne to have declared before the king himself “that Hebrew and Greek were the source of many heresies.” *Ibid.*, p. 5, n.6. Cf. Schwiebert, *Luther*, p. 425, where Crotus Rubeanus reports to Luther that Eck had written directly to the Pope on October 31, 1519 citing “as an additional proof of the immediate peril of the Church, the new and daily increasing study of Latin and Greek.”

5. The allusion is to the many covert tensions as well as open conflicts between the papacy and the Church at large. The whole context of the *Farce* suggests that the author is referring here specifically to the struggle between the popes and the councils during the fifteenth century.

6. Robert Estienne recalled that a doctor of the Sorbonne “used daily to say, ‘I am amazed that these young people keep bringing up the New Testament to us. *I was more than fifty years old before I knew anything about the New Testament.*’” Italics in text. Quoted from J. G. Baum, *Origines Evangelii in Gallia restaurati* by Henry M. Baird, *History of the Rise of the Huguenots of France*, I (New York, 1879), p. 57.

7. The character entitled *Le Texte de Sainte Escripiture* who is called *Le Texte* in the *Farce*. In the translation he appears as *Scripture*.

8. Alexander of Hales, ca. 1185 - August 21, 1245, an English Franciscan theologian who studied and later taught at the University of Paris. It is possible that he heads the list which follows because it was he who first substituted lectures on Peter Lombard’s *Liber Sententiarum* for lectures on the Bible.

9. Durandus of Saint-Pourçain, ca. 1275 - September 10, 1334, an eminent Dominican theologian and Bishop of Meaux.

10. Albertus Magnus, ca. 1200 - November 15, 1280, a Dominican, the first German to become a master of theology in the University of Paris, accorded the title *Doctor Universalis*.

11. Giles of Rome (*Aegidius Romanus*), ca. 1243 - December 22, 1316, an Augustinian, the first of his order to become a master of theology at the University of Paris where he taught from 1285 - 1291.

12. A Franciscan doctor of theology. I have been unable to discover his nationality or his dates.

13. I have been unable to identify Bricot, Auget, or Ricquart.

14. Pierre Tartaret, a fifteenth-century French Scotist theologian and philosopher who studied at the University of Paris and was its Rector in 1490. He was also distinguished as a logician.

15. Peter Lombard, ca. 1095 - August 21/22, 1160, author of the enormously influential *Liber Sententiarum*. He was elected Bishop of Paris in 1159.

16. Meffrethus, an obscure fifteenth-century German ecclesiastic.

17. Fournier identifies him simply as a fifteenth-century Dominican famous for his bizarre sermons.

18. Jacob of Voragine, ca. 1230 - July 14, 1298, an Italian Dominican preacher, teacher, and Archbishop of Genoa for the last six years of his life who wrote the *Legenda Aurea*, a widely-read collection of lives of the saints.

19. I have been unable to identify Gricq.

20. Johann Nider, ca. 1380 - August 13, 1438, a German Dominican theologian who taught at the University of Vienna and later became Dean of the Faculty.

21. The title of an ecclesiastical manual (Fournier).
22. I have been unable to identify these.
23. The *Summa Theologica* of Thomas Aquinas, so-called from his title, *Doctor Angelicus*.
24. William of Ockham, ca. 1285 - April 10, 1347, the famous English Franciscan theologian and philosopher.
25. Jacques Almain, ca. 1480 - 1515, a noted conciliar theologian who taught at the University of Paris.
26. Robert Holcot, an English Dominican theologian who died in 1349, well-known as a commentator on the *Liber Sententiarum*.
27. I have been unable to supplement Fournier's identification: a Doctor known as Johannes Asculanus or *de Esculo*.
28. Thomas Aquinas, ca. 1225 - March 7, 1274, the famous Dominican philosopher and theologian.
29. I have been unable to identify this.
30. Jean Gerson, December 14, 1363 - July 12, 1429, theologian, reformer, ecclesiastical politician, and Chancellor of the University of Paris from 1395 until his death. He was called the *Doctor Christianissimus*.
31. Gerson headed the French delegation at the Council of Constance, and argued for the superiority of the Council over the pope.
32. The University of Paris was fundamentally papalist, and had been so ever since the Council of Pisa.
33. A particularly ironic juxtaposition, for Pierre Lizet, it will be recalled, was a notable opponent of Berquin. It was he, in fact, who read the Sorbonne's decision to the Parlement on July 8, 1523.
34. A play on words: in sixteenth-century French, *lizet* means a vine-grub.
35. I have been unable to supplement Fournier who simply states that Gentilly is near Paris. The lines are obscure.
36. The phrase "envahir/La vigne de dame Raison" may allude to the by then famous opening words of the bull *Exsurge Domine*, "Arise, O Lord, and judge thy cause. A wild boar has invaded the vineyard." R. H. Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* (New York, 1950), p. 147.
37. Berquin had begun to translate Erasmus as well as Luther.
38. A play on words: the text reads "ergotz," i.e., the spur of a cock.
39. The text reads: "Maxima Quercus," a reference to Guillaume Duchesne (*chêne*, oak tree), or in Latin, *De Quercu (quercus, oak)* the prominent Doctor of the Sorbonne whom Berquin had ridiculed.
40. Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples; in Latin, *Jacobus Faber Stapulensis*. The introduction of his name is, I suggest, more than a random allusion to one of the "new theologians," for in June of 1523, while the books of Berquin were being examined and condemned, the Sorbonne placed Lefèvre under its scrutiny as well. The king was greatly displeased, and finally intervened in the case on July 11, evoking it from the Parlement to the Great Council. He would do the same for Berquin on August 8. Cf. Weiss, *Berquin*, p. 175.
41. Fournier suggests an allusion to the Roman soldiers who gambled for Christ's robe at the foot of the cross.
42. Philip Melanchthon had replied to the *Determinatio* in October of 1521. "Who do the Paris doctors think they are," he asked, 'the embodiment of the Church of Christ?' The Sor-

bonne finally answered him in a formal response published in 1523 in which the Faculty maintained that:

1. The Scriptures are obscure.
2. The Scriptures cannot be used by themselves.
3. The Scriptures must be interpreted by Masters, and especially by the Masters of Paris.
4. The Fathers are obscure.
5. The Fathers cannot be interpreted by themselves.
6. The Fathers must be interpreted by Masters, and especially by the Masters of Paris.
7. The Sentences are obscure.
8. The Sentences cannot be used by themselves.
9. The Sentences must only be interpreted by Masters, and especially by the Masters of Paris.
10. Therefore, the University of Paris is the chief guide in matters of Scriptural interpretation, for its decrees against Luther and Melanchthon are clear and can be understood by everyone.

Schwiebert, *Luther*, pp. 435-436.

43. A play on words in Latin. The text reads: “Theolonginqui vocari/Debent, et non Theologi.”

44. The line following “Du tout irrevérentielle” reads “Adieu.” I have presumed the sense of “à Dieu.”

45. On December 10, 1520, together with the bull *Exsurge Domine* and a volume of the Canon Law, Luther had burned some papal decretals.

46. A play on words in French. The text reads: “Depuis que le decret print ales.” The two lines following probably allude to proverbs which I have been unable to identify.

47. Hugh of Saint-Cher, ca. 1200 - March 19, 1263, a French Dominican who was a student and later a teacher at the University of Paris. Famous as a Biblical exegete, he was the first of his order to become a cardinal.

48. Nicholas of Lyra, ca. 1270 - ca. 1349, a Franciscan who studied and taught at the University of Paris. He was famous as a Biblical scholar.

49. Juan de Torquemada, 1388 - September 26, 1468. A Spanish Dominican who had studied at Paris; he was elevated to the cardinalate in 1439. His *Summa de ecclesia* was an eloquent and influential defense of papal authority against the Councils.

50. Lucian is cited perhaps because in 1517 Bérault had dedicated to Berquin his edition of the poet's *Muscae Encomium*. Cf. Mann, *Erasmus*, p. 114: “Berquin had, it appears, a love for Lucianic and Erasmusian satire.”

51. John 6:38.

52. The Pragmatic Sanction of Bourges, July 7, 1438.

53. Fournier suggests an allusion to the Concordat of Bologna (August 18, 1516) between Pope Leo X and King Francis I which abrogated the Pragmatic Sanction of Bourges.

54. An allusion probably to the Decree *Sacrosancta*, promulgated by the Council of Constance on April 6, 1415.

55. A reference perhaps to the bull *Exsecrabilis* (January 18, 1460) of Pius II; certainly not the work of a council, however.

56. The University of Louvain had condemned 15 articles by Luther on November 9, 1519.

57. The *Determinatio* of the University of Paris on April 15, 1521.

58. The particular name is without significance; it could be any other.

59. “. . . garçons hérétiques.” The reference, I believe, is not casual. In its reply to Melanch-

thon's criticism of the *Determinatio* the Sorbonne referred to him as a "boy." He was then twenty-four years old. Schwiebert, *Luther*, p. 435.

60. Noel Beda, Syndic of the Sorbonne, and an implacable opponent of the "new theologians."

61. A medieval ointment.

62. Fournier identifies this "without doubt" as the *Speculum humanae salvationis*, a book of popular devotion which had a wide circulation in the Middle Ages. The lines immediately following suggest rather that it is a reference to Berquin's own work, the *Speculum theologastrorum*, one of the books discovered in his library, and condemned and burned by the Sorbonne. It must surely have had some particular significance for it is the only title specified by the King in his first letter written on behalf of Berquin. Cf. Weiss, *Berquin*, p. 168.

63. The Parlement of Paris.

64. The Great Council which witnessed Berquin's abjuration at Blois on October 2, 1523 and later pardoned him.

65. John 18:30.

66. A play on words comparable to that earlier made on the name of Lizet; not observed by Fournier. The line above reads, in the French, "Nous t'abruverons de vert jus (vinegar)." This line reads, "Je n'ay que faire de vert jus." In the second instance, however, the "vert jus" refers to André Verjus, one of the commissioners appointed by the Sorbonne to examine Berquin's books. Cf. Weiss, *Berquin*, pp. 167-168. The preceding line implies, then, that if ever the Faculty of Theology was provided with another opportunity to examine Berquin it would turn him over again to André Verjus.

67. A Greek lexicographer, of whom nothing is known.

68. The allusion is obscure.

69. The following six lines are obscure.