

Letter 4: 26 February 1517, Antwerp, Desiderius Erasmus to Capito

Printed in Allen II, pp. 487-492, #541 and CWE 4, Ep. 541.

[*Summary*]: Erasmus replies to Capito's letter [Ep. 2] expressing his delight in what he sees as the beginning of a new golden age. He expresses the hope that the new learning will lead to a general peace among Christian rulers. And it is in this atmosphere that scholarship in the humanities will flourish. Even among the theologians some, who were previously opposed to the humanities, have now begun to use Greek, Latin and Hebrew to interpret holy writ properly. At the same time, Erasmus also expresses concern that studying antiquity will revive paganism and that the study of Hebrew will reintroduce religious legalism, which will obscure the pure and simple teaching of Christ more than scholasticism did. He praises Capito extravagantly as a man with an "uncommon knowledge of the three languages" and proclaims him as his intellectual heir, to whom he will "hand on the torch."