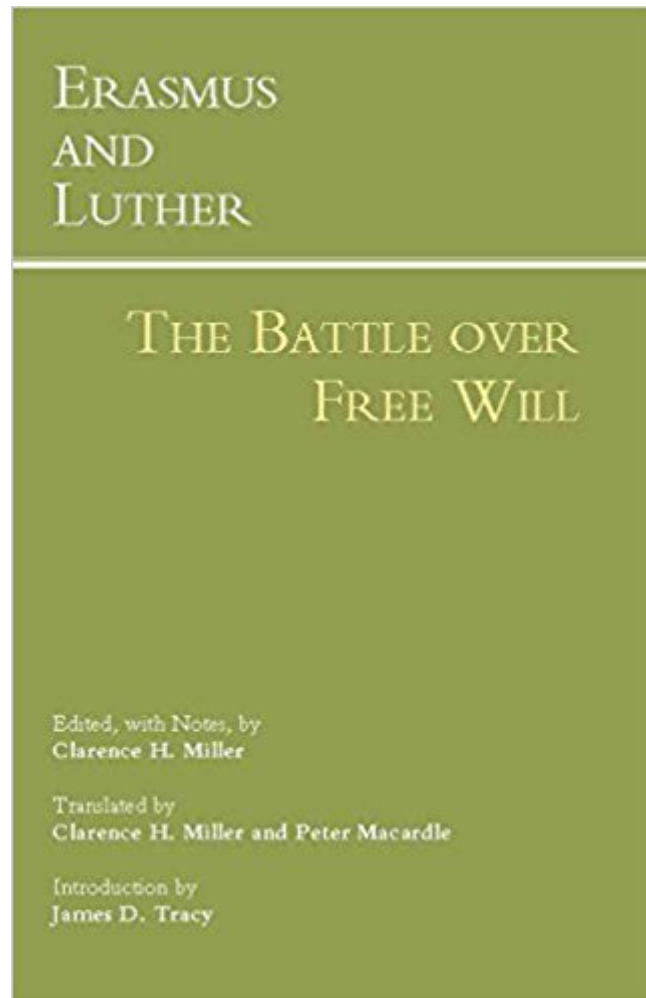




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Erasmus And Luther: The Battle Over Free Will (Hackett Classics)



Synopsis

This compilation of writings from Erasmus and Luther's great debate--over free will and grace, and their respective efficacy for salvation--offers a fuller representation of the disputants' main arguments than has ever been available in a single volume in English. Included are key, corresponding selections from not only Erasmus' conciliatory *A Discussion or Discourse concerning Free Will* and Luther's forceful and fully argued rebuttal, but--with the battle now joined--from Erasmus' own forceful and fully argued rebuttal of Luther. Students of Reformation theology, Christian humanism, and sixteenth-century rhetoric will find here the key to a wider appreciation of one of early modern Christianity's most illuminating and disputed controversies.

Book Information

Series: Hackett Classics

Paperback: 416 pages

Publisher: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. (March 15, 2012)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 160384547X

ISBN-13: 978-1603845472

Product Dimensions: 0.8 x 5 x 8.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 14.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (6 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #732,720 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #58 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Philosophy > Modern Renaissance](#) #297 in [Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Theology > Anthropology](#) #336 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Philosophy > Free Will & Determinism](#)

Customer Reviews

I'm very pleased to have come across this collection of treatises back and forth between Desiderius Erasmus and Martin Luther. Erasmus is a Catholic and one of the most influential humanists of his day. Luther is, of course, the "father" of the Reformation. Included in this book are substantial excerpts from Erasmus's *"A Discussion or Discourse concerning Free Will"* (1524), Luther's reply in *"The Enslaved Will"* (1525), and Erasmus's counter-replies in *"The Shield-Bearer Defending A Discussion"* Parts 1 (1526) and 2 (1527). Although these texts do not appear in their entirety, there is more than enough to give you a very thorough sampling of the respective parties' viewpoints on free will and grace. The excerpts fill 346 pages, 95 of which are devoted to Luther and the rest to

Erasmus. Essentially, Erasmus lays out the case for free will, noting its long tradition of acceptance among learned commentators of the Catholic Church, but devoting most of his attention to the Scriptural evidence and logical reasons for believing in free will, and to (valid) questions concerning how Luther acquired the confidence to oppose such a long tradition of respected commentators by rejecting free will. Luther's rebuttal in "The Enslaved Will" tries to make a case for "absolute necessity" (that everything man does, good or evil, is wholly determined by God--and that free will is a fiction that has no basis in Scripture); however, this is certainly not Luther at his finest. With no disrespect to Luther's intentions, he is clearly outmatched by Erasmus as a writer. Erasmus brilliantly maintains a tone of humble supplication, as one who is asking Luther to teach him and help him resolve his doubts about whether free will or absolute necessity is correct.

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