

Week 7:**Erasmus, Julius Excluded from Heaven (1514)**

After a reign of ten years, Pope Julius II died on February 21, 1513; he was seventy years old, and Leo X, a humanist and a Medici succeeded him. Less than a year later the anonymous satire Julius Excluded from Heaven was published. There is no conclusive evidence that the brilliant Dutch humanist Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536) wrote it. He several times implied that he didn't-though without saying so explicitly. There were of course very good reasons for not avowing the publication, not least the possibility of retribution from ex-friends or -allies of Julius. The pamphlet was enormously popular and many times reprinted; but Erasmus had little to gain and much to lose from claiming it. Though he never actually did so, modern scholarship, basing itself on internal evidence, some cautious phrases in the later correspondence, and the lack of a credible alternative author, has had little hesitation in assigning the piece to Erasmus. Actually, the relation of the satire to Julius II is more problematic than its relation to Erasmus. That Julius was one of the most secular-minded of many secular-minded Renaissance popes is not open to question; and Erasmus, who found that a fault, might have aggravated it, had he chosen, by emphasizing the pope's huge building programs in Rome, his patronage of Michelangelo, Bramante, and Raphael, his lavish purchases of antique sculptures and manuscripts for the Vatican collections. But these charges would not have blackened the dead pope's reputation as much as other abusive accusations that the satirist could pick up from the gutter or invent out of whole cloth. Pederasty, simony [the selling of church offices for money], nepotism, and subornation to murder are only a few of these invented charges; in addition, Erasmus unfailingly interprets all of Julius's behavior in the worst possible light. There is a wholly different side to the picture of Julius given by Erasmus, according to which he was a deft diplomat, a financier of genius, and one of the ablest administrators ever to occupy the chair of Peter. Julius Excluded, then, is not a portrait of a real pope but an extravagant caricature rising out of a theme dear to Erasmus's heart, a contrast between the spiritual and the worldly life. It is also a comic masterpiece.

Julius Excluded from Heaven: A Dialogue

Speakers: Julius, his Genius, Peter

JULIUS: What the devil is this? The doors don't open? Somebody must have changed the lock or broken it.

GENIUS: It seems more likely that you didn't bring the proper key; for this door doesn't open to the same key as a secret money-chest. Why didn't you bring both the keys you have? This is the key of power, not of wisdom.

JULIUS: I didn't have any other key but this; I don't see why we need a different one when we've got this.

GENIUS: I don't either; but the fact is, we're still on the outside.

JULIUS: Now I'm really getting mad; I'll knock the doors down. Ho! Ho!

Somebody come and open this door right away! What's the hangup? nobody

home? What's the matter with the doorman? He's asleep, I guess, or else drunk.
GENIUS: This fellow judges everyone else by himself.

PETER: A good thing our gates are of adamant, otherwise this one, whoever he is, would have kicked them in. He must be a giant of some sort, a general of the armies, a stormer of cities. But oh my God, what a sewer-stench is this! I certainly won't open the gates right away, but take a seat up here by a grated window where I can look out and keep an eye on the scene. Who are you and what do you want?

JULIUS: Open the door, will you? at least, if you can. And if you were really doing your job, it should have been open long ago, and decorated with all the heraldry of heaven.

PETER: Pretty lordly. But first tell me who you are.

JULIUS: As if you couldn't see for yourself.

PETER: See? What I see is new to me, like nothing I ever saw before, and I might say monstrous.

JULIUS: But if you're not stone-blind, you're bound to recognize this key, even if you aren't familiar with the golden oak tree. You can certainly see my triple crown, as well as my cloak all gleaming with gold and gems.

PETER: That silver key of yours I do recognize, though there's only one of them, and it's very different from those that were given to me long ago by the one true shepherd of the church, that is, Christ. But that glorious crown of yours, how could I possibly recognize it? No tyrant ruling over barbarian peoples ever ventured to wear one like it, much less anyone who came here asking for admission. Your cloak doesn't impress me either; for I always used to consider gold and jewels as trash to be despised. But what does this amount to really? In all this stuff-the key, the crown, the cloak-I recognize marks of that rascally cheat and impostor who shared a name with me but not a faith, that scoundrel Simon whom I once flung down with the aid of Christ.

JULIUS: Enough of these jokes, and watch yourself; for I, if you don't know, am Julius of Liguria, and I don't doubt you recognize these two letters P. M., unless you've forgotten how to read.

PETER: I expect they stand for "Pestiferous Maximus."

GENIUS: Ha ha ha! This porter is as good as a wizard; he's got the needle's touch.

JULIUS: What it means is "Pontifex Maximus."

PETER: If you were triply great, greater even than Hermes Trismegistus, you still wouldn't get in here unless you were supremely good, that is, holy.

JULIUS: Well, if it comes down to comparative holiness, you've got some nerve to keep me waiting outside here when for all these centuries you've only been called "holy," whereas nobody ever called me anything but "most holy." I have six thousand bulls to prove it.

GENIUS: That's what he said, bulls!

JULIUS: -in which I am not only named "Lord most holy," but addressed as "your holiness," so that whatever I chose to do.

GENIUS: -Even when he was drunk.

JULIUS: -people used to say that the holiness of the most holy lord Julius had

done it.

PETER: Then you'd better ask those flatterers of yours to let you into heaven, because they're the ones who made you so holy. They provided the holiness, now let them provide the bliss. By the way, though I know you don't think it matters, do you actually imagine you were a holy man?

JULIUS: You really vex me. If I were only allowed to go on living, I wouldn't envy you your holiness or your bliss, either one.

PETER: The proper expression of a pious mind! But apart from that, when I look you over from head to foot, I see many a sign of impiety and none of holiness. What's the meaning of these many comrades of yours? They're certainly not a papal retinue. You have almost twenty thousand men at your back, and in this entire crowd I can't find one single individual who has so much as the face of a Christian. I see a horrifying mob of ruffians, reeking of nothing but brothels, booze shops, and gunpowder. They look to me like plain highway robbers or spooks stolen out of hell and now intent on stirring up wars in heaven. As for yourself, the more I look at you, the fewer traces do I see of any apostolic character. What sort of unnatural arrangement is it, that while you wear the robes of a priest of God, under them you are dressed in the bloody armor of a warrior? Besides that, what a savage pair of eyes, what baleful features, what a menacing brow, what a disdainful and arrogant expression! I'm ashamed to say, and even to see, that there's no part of your body not marked with traces of outrageous and abominable lust; in addition, you belch and stink like a man just come from a drunken debauch and fresh from a fit of vomiting. Judging from the appearance of your whole body, you seem to me, not worn out by age or disease, but broken down and shrivelled up by drunken excesses.

GENIUS: How vividly he portrays the man in his own colors!

PETER: I see you threatening me with your lofty expression; but my feelings won't be suppressed. I suspect you may be that most pestilent pagan of all, Julius the Roman, returned from hell to make mock of our system. Certainly everything about you agrees well with him.

JULIUS: Ma di si!

PETER: What did he say?

GENIUS: He's angry. At that expression, every one of the cardinals used to take flight, otherwise they'd feel the stick of his holiness on their backs, especially if he hadn't had his supper.

PETER: You seem to me to have some understanding of the man; tell me, who are you?

GENIUS: I am the particular Genius of Julius.

PETER: His bad Genius, no doubt.

GENIUS: Whatever I may be, I'm Julius's man.

JULIUS: Why don't you stop all this nonsense and open the doors? Perhaps you'd rather I broke them down. Why do we need all this palaver? You see the sort of troops I have at my command.

PETER: I do indeed see some highly practiced thieves. But you must be aware that these doors can only be opened in other ways.

JULIUS: Enough words, I say. If you don't hurry up and open the gates, I'll

unleash my thunderbolt of excommunication with which I used to terrify great kings on earth and their kingdoms too. You see, I've , already got a bull prepared for the occasion.

PETER: Just tell me, please, what you mean by all this bombast about bulls, bolts of thunder, and maledictions. I never heard from Christ a single one of these words.

JULIUS: You'll feel their full force, if you don't watch out.

PETER: Perhaps you used to terrify people with that bluster, but it counts for nothing here. Here we deal only in the truth. This is a fortress to be captured with good deeds, not ugly words. But let me ask you, since you threaten men with the thunder of excommunication; what's your legal authority for that?

JULIUS: Very well: I take it you are now out of office and have no more standing than any other unbeneficed priest; indeed, you're not even a complete priest, since you lack the power to consecrate.

PETER: Doubtless because I happen to be dead.

JULIUS: Obviously.

PETER: But for the same reason, you have no more standing with me than any other dead man.

JULIUS: But as long as the cardinals are arguing over the election of a new pope, it counts as my administration.

GENIUS: He's still dreaming dreams about being alive!

JULIUS: But now, open the door, I tell you.

PETER: And I won't do a thing, I tell you, unless you give me a full account of your merits.

JULIUS: What merits?

PETER: Let me explain the idea. Did you distinguish yourself in theology?

JULIUS: Not at all. I had no time for it, being continually engaged in warfare. Besides, there are plenty of priests to do that sort of work.

PETER: Then by the holiness of your life you gained many souls for Christ?

GENIUS: Many more for hell, I'd say.

PETER: You performed miracles?

JULIUS: You're talking old-fashioned nonsense.

PETER: You prayed earnestly and constantly?

JULIUS: This is pure foolishness.

PETER: You subdued the lusts of the flesh with fasts and long vigils?

GENIUS: Enough of this, please; with this line of questioning, you're just wasting your time.

PETER: I never heard of any other gifts that an outstanding pope was supposed to possess. If he has some more apostolic talents, let him tell me about them himself.

JULIUS: Though it's a disgraceful thing for Julius who never lowered his crest before anyone else to yield to Peter-who was, to say nothing worse, a lowly fisherman and almost a beggar-still, just to let you know what sort of prince you're slighting in this way, now hear this. In the first place, I am from Liguria, not a Jew like you; but I'm afraid that like you I was once a boatman.

GENIUS: It's nothing to be ashamed of, for there's still this difference, that Peter

fished for a living, while Julius plied the oar on a barge for minimum wages.

JULIUS: Then, as it happened that I was the nephew of Pope Sixtus the great.

GENIUS: Great in vices, he means.

JULIUS: -on his sister's side, his special favor combined with my industry first gave me access to ecclesiastical office; and so I gradually rose to the dignity of a cardinal's cap. Having undergone many reverses of fortune, and been tossed to and fro by various accidents-having suffered, among other diseases, from epilepsy and the pox they call French -I found myself quite overwhelmed; I was exiled, rejected, despised, despaired of, and almost given over as lost. Yet I never doubted that some day I would attain the papacy. That showed real strength of character, compared with you, who were terrified at the question of a serving girl, and gave up your faith on the spot. She weakened your courage, but I got new courage from a woman, a soothsayer and prophetess of sorts, who when she saw me overwhelmed with misfortunes secretly whispered in my ear, "Bear up, Julius! Don't be ashamed of anything you have to do or put up with-some day you will attain the triple crown. You will be king of kings and ruler of all rulers." And in fact neither her prophecy nor my own instincts deceived me. Beyond all expectations I achieved my goal, partly with the help of the French who sheltered me in my hour of need, partly by the marvelous power of money in large quantities, which I increased by taking usurious rates of interest. And finally my own ready wit helped me.

PETER: What's this ready wit you're talking about?

JULIUS: -to coin money from the bare promise of ecclesiastical offices, making skillful use of brokers in the process, since the sums I demanded couldn't have been paid in cash by a man as rich as Crassus. But it's useless to describe the schemes to you, since not even all my bankers understood them. Anyhow, that's how I made my way. Now as for how I bore myself in the pontificate, I'll venture to say that none of the early popes (who seem to me to have been popes in name only), nor even of the later ones, deserve so well of the church and of Christ himself as I do.

GENIUS: Only listen to the bragging of the beast!

PETER: I'm waiting to hear how you got away with it all.

JULIUS: I discovered a great many new offices (that's what they're called) which in themselves brought goodly sums into the papal treasury. Then I found a brand-new way by which bishoprics could be bought without any taint of simony. For my predecessors had made a law that any man appointed bishop should lay down his previous office. I interpreted it this way; "You are ordered to lay down your previous office; but if you don't have one you can't lay it down, therefore you must buy it." By this means each individual bishopric brought in its six or seven thousand ducats over and above those that are traditionally extorted for bulls. Also the new money that I spread all over Italy brought in a very healthy sum. And I never let up on accumulating money, understanding as I did that without it nothing is managed properly, whether sacred or profane. Now, to come to my major achievements, I conquered Bologna, which had long been ruled by the Bentivogli, and restored it to the control of Rome. The previously undefeated Venetians I crushed with my army. For a long time I harrassed the duke of

Ferrara, and nearly caught him in a trap. I cleverly escaped from a schismatic council set up against me by convoking a fraudulent counter-council, and so, as they say, drove out one nail with another. Finally, I expelled from Italy the French, who at that time were the terrors of the whole world, and I would have driven out the Spanish too (for I had that project under way), if the fates had not suddenly removed me from the earth. And I ask you to admire my undaunted spirit throughout these trials. When the French looked like winners, I was already looking around for a good hiding place; when my position seemed almost desperate, I grew a long white beard as a disguise. But then the golden messenger of victory alighted unexpectedly on me at Ravenna, where a good many thousand Frenchmen were killed; and that was the resurrection of Julius. In fact, for three days I was believed to be at death's door; I thought so myself; and yet here again, against everyone's hopes and even my own expectations, I lived anew. In fact my power and my political shrewdness are so great to this day that there's none of the Christian kings whom I haven't brought to blows, breaking up the treaties by which they had painfully made peace with one another, ripping them to pieces, and trampling them underfoot. Indeed, I was so successful in abolishing the treaty of Cambrai, made between me, the king of France, the emperor Maximilian, and several other rulers, that nobody ever mentions it any more. Over and above all this, I raised several different armies, celebrated many grandiose triumphs, put on splendid shows, built numerous impressive structures, and then at my death left at least five million ducats, which I would have increased even further if that Jewish physician who saved my life on one occasion had been able to stretch it out a little longer. And I really wish now that some magician could be found to restore my earthly existence, so that I could put the finishing touches on the really marvelous projects that I had under way. Still, on my deathbed I tried to ensure that none of the wars I had stirred up throughout the world should be settled; I ordered that moneys set aside for those wars should not be diverted elsewhere; and that was my last wish as I breathed out my dying breath. Now do you hesitate to open the gates for a pontiff who has deserved so well of Christ and the church? And I expect you to be all the more impressed because all this was achieved by my individual constancy of mind alone. I had none of those helpers and favoring circumstances that others have enjoyed; I had no ancestors, for I didn't even know my own father (which indeed I say proudly); I had no personal attractions, since most people shuddered at my face as at an ogre; I had no education, since with me it never took; I had no physical strength, for reasons mentioned above; I was not possessed of youthful energy, for I did all these things as an old man; popularity played no part, for there was nobody who didn't hate me; and I got no credit for clerqency because I punished savagely those whom other rulers commonly let off scot-free.

PETER: What's this all about?

GENIUS: He talks very tough, but there's something soft in it.

JULIUS: Thus, with everything against me—fortune, age, strength, briefly, without help from gods or men, by the unaided power of my spirit and my money, I accomplished in a few years so much, that my successors will be busy for at least a decade deciding what to do next. I've said all this about myself with the

utmost truth and also, for that matter, with the utmost honesty. If one of those preachers who orate before me in Rome had been here to cover my account with his decorations, you'd have thought a god was being described, not a man.

PETER: Unconquerable warrior, since all these things you talk about are new to me and unheard-of, I beg your pardon for my amazement or inexperience; I hope it won't be too tiresome for you to answer a few clumsy questions about the details. Who, for example, are these little curly-headed striplings?

JULIUS: I brought them up for my diversion.

PETER: Who are these smoke-blackened and mutilated fellows?

JULIUS: They are soldiers and warriors who in behalf of me and the church bravely encountered death in battle. Some died in the siege of Bologna, many in the war against the Venetians, others still at Ravenna. They are all to be admitted to heaven by the terms of our contract, in which I promised, by promulgating some mighty bulls, to send anyone straight to heaven who died fighting for Julius, whatever his previous life had been like.

PETER: As far as I can see, these people must have been the very lot who before your coming were most hateful to me because they were always trying to break in by force, using leaden bulls to force their way.

JULIUS: Then, as I understand it, you didn't let any of them in?

PETER: Not a single one of that crowd did I admit. That's what Christ told me; he didn't say to admit those who came here lugging heavy leaden bulls, but only those who had clothed the naked, fed the hungry, given drink to the thirsty, visited the prisoners, aided the pilgrims. If he wanted me to keep out those who prophesied in his name, cast out devils, and did wonderful works, I do you suppose he would want people let in who just walk up with a bull in the name of Julius?

JULIUS: If I had only known!

PETER: I understand; if some demon out of hell had told you about it, you would have declared war on me.

JULIUS: I would have excommunicated you first.

PETER: But go on, why do you go about wearing armor?

JULIUS: As if you didn't know the holy pope wields two swords; you wouldn't want me to go into battle unarmed, would you?

PETER: When I held your position, I followed that rule in the word of God which says to use no sword save that of the spirit.

JULIUS: That would surprise Malchus, whose ear you cut off-without a sword, no doubt.

PETER: I recall the event, and it's true; but at that time I was fighting for my master, Christ, not for myself; for the life of the Lord, not for loot or worldly booty; and I fought, not as pope, but as one to whom the keys had only been promised, not delivered, nor had I yet received the holy spirit. All the same, I was ordered to put up my sword as a clear warning that warfare of that sort was unbecoming to priests and even to Christians in general. But more of this elsewhere. Why are you so careful about calling yourself a Ligurian as if it mattered what part of the earth the vicar of Christ came from?

JULIUS: But I consider it an act of the highest piety to shed renown on my

people; that's why I have this title inscribed on all my coins, statues, structures, and arches.

PETER: So a man can recognize his fatherland who doesn't know his father? At first I thought you had in mind that heavenly Jerusalem, the home of all true believers and of its unique prince in whose name those believers are eager to be sanctified and exalted. But why do you describe yourself as "nephew to Sixtus on his sister's side"? I'm surprised that this man Sixtus never showed up here, though he was pope and related to such a leader as yourself. Do tell me, if you will, what kind of man he was: was he a priest?

JULIUS: A might soldier he was, and a man of exemplary religion too; he was a Franciscan.

PETER: Indeed, I once knew a man named Francis,⁶ a layman distinguished among his fellows for virtue as well as his scorn for wealth, pleasure, and ambition. Does that poor man now have command of military commanders like this?

JULIUS: As far as I can see, you don't want anyone to better himself; even Benedict was a poor man once, but now his followers are so rich that even I am envious of them.

PETER: Fine! but let's go back a ways: you are the nephew of Sixtus.

JULIUS: Glad to confirm it; I'd like to stop the mouths of those who say I'm his son. That's slanderous.

PETER: Slanderous indeed-unless perhaps it's true.

JULIUS: It's an insult to papal dignity, which must always be protected. PETER: But I think popes should protect their own dignity by not doing anything offensive to the moral law. Speaking of papal dignity, let me ask you, is that the common and accepted way of achieving the papacy that you were describing just now?

JULIUS: For some centuries now, that's been the way of it, unless my successor is created by some other procedure. For as soon as I achieved the papacy myself, I issued a formidable bull that no one else should seek the office by the means I had used; and I renewed that bull shortly before my death. How it will be observed is up to other people.

PETER: I don't see how anyone could describe a bad state of affairs any better. But this puzzles me, how anybody can be found to undertake the job, since so much hard work attaches to the office and so many difficulties must be overcome to acquire it. When I was pope, hardly anyone could be persuaded to accept the office of a presbyter or a deacon.

JULIUS: No wonder; for in those days the reward of bishops was nothing but hard work, sleepless nights, constant study, and very often death: now, it's a kingdom, with the privileges of a tyrant. And who, if he has a chance of a kingdom, won't grab at it?

PETER: Well, tell me now about Bologna. Had it departed from the faith that it had to be brought back to Rome?

JULIUS: Absurd! that wasn't the question at all.

PETER: Perhaps the Bentivogli were poor administrators and destroying the prosperity of the city.

JULIUS: Not a bit of it; the town was flourishing as never before, they had

enlarged it and adorned it with many new buildings. That only made me more eager for it.

PETER: I understand; they had taken possession of it illegally.

JULIUS: No, again; the city was theirs by treaty.

PETER: Perhaps the citizens hated their ruler?

JULIUS: On the contrary; they clung to him tooth and nail, whereas they almost all loathed me.

PETER: What was the reason for it then?

JULIUS: Because, as the ruler arranged things, out of the immense sums that he collected from the citizens, only a few paltry thousands ever reached my treasury. Besides, its capture helped on some other plans that I had in mind. And so, with the French doing the work (mostly out of fear of my thunderbolt), I drove out the Bentivogli and put bishops and cardinals in charge of the town, so that all the money collected there, down to the last penny, came into the hands of the church of Rome. Besides, in the old days, all the titles and dignities of imperial rule seemed to belong to him. Now you see everywhere statues of me; my titles are inscribed everywhere, my trophies are admired; nothing to be seen but stone and bronze images of Julius. Finally, if you had seen the royal procession in which I entered Bologna, you would surely despise all the triumphs celebrated by the Octavii and Scipios; you would understand that there were good reasons why I fought so hard for Bologna; and you would see that at the same time the church was fighting and triumphing alongside me.

PETER: So when you were the monarch, as I understand it, that condition had come about for which Christ ordered us to pray: "Thy kingdom come." Now tell me what the Venetians did wrong.

JULIUS: First of all, they ran after Greek fashions, and they treated me almost as a joke, putting all sorts of obstacles in my way.

PETER: Were they right or wrong?

JULIUS: What does that matter? It's sacrilege even to mumble about the pope of Rome, except in the way of praise. Then they bestowed their priesthoods as they saw fit; they wouldn't allow lawsuits to be transferred to Rome; and they wouldn't allow the selling of dispensations. Do I have to go on? They inflicted unbearable damage on the authority of Rome, and took command of a significant part of your patrimony.

PETER: My patrimony? What patrimony are you talking about to me, who left all my possessions behind to follow, unclad, a barefoot Christ?

JULIUS: I say that various cities are the property of the Roman church, and it has pleased the most holy fathers to call by that name these their own special possessions.

PETER: Thus you use my shame to cover your own greed. And so this is what you call unbearable damage?

JULIUS: Why not?

PETER: Were their manners corrupted? Was piety growing cold?

JULIUS: Forget it! you're talking about trifles. We were being deprived of thousands upon thousands of ducats, enough to furnish out a legion of soldiers.

PETER: A terrible loss for a usurer, I'm sure. And now about the duke of Ferrara,

what was the matter with him?

JULIUS: What did he do, that most ungrateful of men? Alexander the vicar of Christ did this miserable rogue the honor of bestowing on him, as a wife, his second daughter, and with her he gave an enormous dowry, more than a man so base of birth could have expected. I Yet, indifferent to such humane treatment, he made nothing but trouble for me, accusing me of simony, pederasty, and mental instability. And besides, he held back some taxes, not the major ones, I concede, but still important enough not to be overlooked by a diligent shepherd.

GENIUS: Or a skinflint.

JULIUS: Besides, which is more to the point, Ferrara helped along the main project I had in mind to join this territory to my own because of its strategic location. At first I wanted to bestow the city on my kinsman, a man of energy who would have ventured anything in behalf of the dignity of the church. In fact, he recently killed the cardinal of Pavia with his own hands, in my behalf. As for my daughter's husband, he isn't the political sort.

PETER: What's this I hear? Do popes have wives and children nowadays?

JULIUS: Proper wives they don't have; but what's so strange about their having children, since they're men and not eunuchs?

PETER: But what sort of events led to the calling of that schismatic council?

JULIUS: It's a long story, but I'll cut it short. For a long time some people have been discontented with the Roman church. They complained of the shameful money-grubbing, of monstrous and abominable lusts, of poisonings, sacrilege, murders, public sales of simoniacal positions, pollution of every description. They called me a simonist, a drunkard, a low villain swollen with earthly lusts, and on every count the man least worthy of occupying the position that in fact I occupied; they called me the greatest of all perils to the Christian community. And in this troubled state of affairs they thought help was to be sought from a general council of the church. They added that I had sworn when I was created pope to call a general council within two years, asserting that I was created pope only on that condition.

PETER: Were they right about that?

JULIUS: Absolutely. But when it suited my convenience to do so, I absolved myself of my own oath. When a king wants to break his solemn oath, who has any doubt that he can do it? Keep your piety for another occasion, as the first Julius, my other self, used to say. But only note the audacity of these men, the schemes they devised. Nine cardinals made a separation, notified me of a council to be called, and invited me to attend, even to preside. When I declined, they announced the council to the whole world in the name of the emperor Maximilian (under the pretext that years ago councils used to be called by Roman emperors) and likewise Louis of France, the twelfth of that name. What they proposed-I shudder to say it-was to rip up the seamless garment of Christ, which even those who crucified the Savior left untorn.

PETER: But were you the sort of man they said?

JULIUS: What has that got to do with it? I was pope. Suppose I was a worse rascal than the Cercopes, stupider than a wooden statue or the log from which it was made, more foul than the swamp of Lerna; whoever holds this key of power

must be revered as the vicar of Christ and revered as the holiest of men.

PETER: Even if he's openly evil?

JULIUS: As open as you like. It's just unthinkable that God's vicar on earth, who represents God himself before men, should be rebuked by any puny mortal or disturbed by any sort of popular outcry.

PETER: But common sense is outraged if we must feel warmly toward one whom we see to be evil, or speak well of one about whom we think ill. JULIUS: Let every man think as he will, as long as he speaks well or at least holds his tongue. The pope of Rome cannot be censured by anyone, not by a general council.

PETER: This one thing I know, that Christ's vicar on earth should be as much like him as possible, and lead his life in such a way that nobody can blame any part of it, or justifiably speak evil of him. Things go badly with popes when, instead of earning men's commendations by good deeds, they extort praises with threats. Such popes cannot be praised without lying; indeed, they can't expect anything more than the sullen silence of those who hate them. Tell me now truly, is there no way at all to correct a criminal, infectious pope?

JULIUS: Absurd. Who is going to remove the highest authority of all?

PETER: That's exactly why he should be removed, because he's the highest figure; for the higher he is, the more pernicious his influence may be. If secular laws allow for a king who rules his land badly to be not only deposed but executed, why should the church be so helpless that it must put up with a pope who ruins everything, instead of expelling him as a public nuisance? JULIUS: If the pope is to be corrected, it ought to be by a council; but against the will of the pope a council can't be called; otherwise it would be a mere convention, not a proper council. Even if it were called, it couldn't issue any decrees if the pope objected. And finally, my last defense is absolute power, of which the pope possesses more, all by himself, than an entire council. In short, the pope can't be removed from office for any crime whatever.

PETER: Not for homicide?

JULIUS: Not for parricide.

PETER: Not for fornication?

JULIUS: Ridiculous! not even for incest.

PETER: Not for the sin of simony?

JULIUS: Not for six hundred such sins.

PETER: Not for poisoning someone?

JULIUS: Not even for sacrilege.

PETER: Not for blasphemy?

JULIUS: No, I say.

PETER: Not for all these crimes poured together in a single sewer of a man?

JULIUS: Add if you like the names of six hundred other vices, each one worse than any of these, and still the pope cannot be removed from his throne for any such reasons.

PETER: This is a new doctrine about the dignity of the pope that I've picked up here; he alone, it seems, is entitled to be the worst of men. I've also learned about a new misery for the church, that she alone is unable to rid herself of such a monster, but is forced to adore a pope with a character that nobody would

endure in a stable-boy.

JULIUS: Some say there is a single reason for which a pope can be removed.

PETER: What kind of good deed is that, please tell me-since he can't be removed for evil deeds, such as those I've mentioned.

JULIUS: For the crime of heresy; but only if he's been publicly convicted of it. In reality, this is just a flimsy thread of an exception, that doesn't limit papal authority by a single scintilla. The pope can always repeal the law, if it bothers him in the least. And then who would dare to accuse the pope himself, entrenched as he is behind so many lines of defense? Besides, if he were hard pressed by a council, it would be easy to save face with a recantation if a flat denial didn't dispose of the matter. Finally, there are a thousand different deceptions and evasions by which he could get away, unless he were a plain wooden stock instead of a man.

PETER: But tell me on your papal authority, who thought up such splendid laws as these?

JULIUS: Who else but the wellspring of all laws, the Roman pope? And by the same token, it's his privilege to abrogate the law, interpret it, expand it, or shrink it, just as suits his convenience.

PETER: A happy pope he must be if he can propound a law by which he can get around Christ and even a council. Though as a matter of fact, against a pope of the sort you've just described-an open criminal, a drunkard, a murderer, a simoniac, a poisoner, a perjurer, a skinflint, a man befouled in every part of his life with the most atrocious and disgusting lusts, and completely shameless about it all-I wouldn't propose a general council but a public uprising: the people should arm themselves with stones and expel such an infectious plague forever from their midst. -Tell me now, what reason you have as pope of Rome to avoid a general council?

JULIUS: You might as well ask monarchs why they hate senates and assemblies of the nobility. Because a gathering of so many excellent men casts a shadow over the royal dignity. Those who are learned gain assurance from their reading; those who answer only to a clear conscience speak their minds more freely than I like; those who have been granted dignities make use of their new authority. Among them some are always to be found who envy my glory, and approach every issue with an eye to diminishing the wealth and authority of the pope. In short, nobody sits in such assemblies who doesn't think himself entitled to put forth, under the authority of the council, something prejudicial to the pope-whom otherwise he wouldn't dare assail. Thus hardly any council concludes its work without the pope's suffering some diminution of his authority; he departs less supreme than he came. You yourself can provide an example of this, if you recall the incident; for although in those days only trifles were being discussed, not empires and kingdoms as now, nonetheless James ventured to add something to your decision. The case was that you had freed converted gentiles entirely from the Mosaic law, but James made an exception for fornication, idolatry, and crimes of blood, as if correcting your judgment. Some people, if they were judging this matter today, would think the supreme authority of the church should be granted to James instead of Peter.

PETER: You think, then, that the only thing to be considered is the royal authority of the papacy rather than the welfare of the entire Christian community?

JULIUS: Every man must look to his own interests; I mind my own affairs.

PETER: But if Christ had felt this way, there would be no church for you to boast of ruling; and I still don't think it right that one who claims to be Christ's vicar on earth should follow a path different from Christ's. But tell me now, what tricks did you use to get rid of that schismatic council, as you call it?

JULIUS: I can tell you if you can follow the story. First of all I got to the emperor Maximilian (as they call him); he was the easiest to manipulate, and though he had solemnly proclaimed the council, by methods that I'd rather not describe, I got him to withdraw. Then I persuaded various cardinals in the same way that they ought to withdraw their support for the council as publicly as they had proclaimed it.

PETER: Was that legal?

JULIUS: What isn't legal if the pope with his full authority approves it? PETER: What! Then if he chooses to say so an oath is not an oath, since he can dissolve it whenever he wants, with regard to anyone?

JULIUS: Well, to speak frankly, this particular maneuver was a little shady, but I couldn't come up with a better one at the moment. Then when I saw that some people hostile to me were determined to have a council, and had drawn up the call so that, far from being excluded, I was humbly invited and asked to preside, see what a trick I made use of, taking a hint from my predecessors. I called a council of my own, declaring that the place and time set for the other were quite unsuitable. I called my council to meet on very short notice at Rome, where I knew nobody would come except a friend of Julius, or at least someone compliant to his wishes-it was a lesson I had taught many times over. And just to make things sure, I created a number of new cardinals with views favorable to my designs.

GENIUS: Criminal views, that is.

JULIUS: If I hadn't authorized the council, it would not have been one; yet it didn't really suit my purposes to assemble a great crowd of bishops and abbots, among whom there might conceivably be some honorable and pious men; so I decreed that in the name of economy, each district should send only one delegate, or at most two. Then when I still didn't feel quite safe enough, since there were so many districts that only a few from each would make a great number, when they were already on the way, I issued an order forbidding them to continue and putting off the council till a later date; for this I gave some trifling reason that lay to hand. Then, when I had excluded practically everybody, I called my council at Rome, anticipating the date I had set, and with nobody there except those I wanted. And even if a few were present who might disagree with me, I knew there was nobody who would dare to challenge Julius directly because I had the upper hand in both troops and weapons. And in this way I was able to bring enormous disrepute on that French council, sending out letters everywhere in which I talked about our sacrosanct council, but denounced theirs as a conventicle of Satan, a gathering of diabolic agents, a conspiracy of schismatics-and repeating these epithets over and over.

PETER: The cardinals and princes who instigated that council must have been very great rascals.

JULIUS: About their morals I never asked. The head of their group was cardinal d' Amboise of Rouen, who out of some quirk of conscience was always trying to reform the church; and so he did in a number of places. Death removed him from the arena, to my enormous gratification. His successor was cardinal Santa Croce, a Spaniard, a man of blameless life, but elderly, set in his ways, and a theologian; it's a breed of men particularly dangerous to the popes of Rome.

PETER: And did this theologian have no arguments to justify his behavior?

JULIUS: Plenty. He said the times had never been more disturbed, nor the church more afflicted with more intolerable diseases; and he called for a general council to heal them. He and his colleagues reminded me that when I was received into the papacy, I solemnly swore to call a council within two years; and the oath was so phrased that not even the college of cardinals could absolve me of it. Though I had often been reminded of it by my fellow cardinals, queried and prodded by princes, they said I would listen to anything rather than this, so that now it was apparent that during Julius's lifetime there would never be a council. They cited the examples of previous councils, and quoted various papal decrees, purporting to show that in refusing to call a council I was betraying the law itself; and with the connivance of the other princes, they declared it was the duty of the Roman emperor (who used to have sole responsibility in the matter) and the French king now to convoke a council.

PETER: No doubt they addressed you in vitriolic language?

JULIUS: No, the rascals were too smart for that; I'd have preferred some abuse. Painful though the matter was, they treated it with the utmost discretion and not only refrained from bad language but were careful to use all my titles of honor, begging and praying me by all things holy and good to behave as was worthy of me, and as I had promised, by calling a council and presiding over it, taking part with them in the work of curing the ailments of the church. I can't tell you how much hostility this gentle temper of theirs raised against me, especially since they grounded all their suggestions on holy scriptures- i for apparently they had some men of learning in their camp. And meanwhile they fasted and prayed and maintained a marvelously frugal existence, to oppress me with the opinion of their holiness.

PETER: And you, on the other hand, on what grounds did you propose your council?

JULIUS: On the most magnificent grounds of all: I explained that it was my intention to reform first the head of the church, that is, myself; then all the princes of the Christian world; and finally the general population.

PETER: It sounds like a fine comedy; but what was the conclusion? I want to hear what those theologians in the assembly of Satan determined.

JULIUS: Horrible, abominable things; my mind shrinks from remembering them.

PETER: Good lord! Was it as bad as that?

JULIUS: Downright impiety, sacrilege, worse than heresy; if I hadn't opposed them tooth and nail, with every bit of my strength and craft, all the dignity of the Christian church would have gone to rack and rum.

PETER: You make me even more eager to hear what it was.

JULIUS: Oh, I shudder to pronounce it. This is what the scoundrels were up to, that the church should be stripped of all her wealth and all her splendor, returned to her primitive squalor and wretched frugality. That cardinals, who now outdo princes in the pomp of their equipage, should be reduced to poverty; that bishops should live more moderately, without retainers, and without so many horses in their stables. They proposed that cardinals should not accumulate extra positions, as for example bishops, abbots, and priests. Lest anybody hold more than one bishopric, they proposed that those who by one dodge or another, as they say, have accumulated livings by the hundred, should be deprived of some of them, and forced to content themselves with the income intended for a single frugal priest. They said that nobody should be created pope or bishop or priest as a result of money changing hands, or because of worldly favor or base flattery, but only because of the purity of his life-which if he compromised, it would be cause for removal. That a Roman pope convicted of flagrant crimes might be deposed; that bishops guilty of whoredom and drunkenness should be dismissed; that criminal priests should not only be deprived but mutilated on some part of their body; along with many other notions of the sort which it would weary me to recite but all tending to one point, loading me down with religious duties and stripping me of my wealth and power.

PETER: What was decreed in the other direction by the sacrosanct council at Rome?

JULIUS: Now you seem to have forgotten what I told you, that I wanted nothing out of my council except to drive out one nail with another. After the first session had been devoted to a number of solemn ceremonies handed down from antiquity and generally acceptable, though they had nothing to do with the matter to hand, two masses were said, one to the holy cross and the other to the holy ghost, .as if everything was to be done in his name; and then there was a long oration full of my praises. At the next session I turned the worst threats of my thunderbolt against those cardinals, declaring that whatever they had said or would say in the future was worse than impiety, more vicious than sacrilege, viler than heresy. In the third session I threatened France with the same thunderbolt, transferring the trade fairs out of Lyons and making an exception for certain parts of France, which I named, in order to alienate the affections of the people from their king, and stir up seditions among them. And to give extra authority to all these deeds, I issued a bull which I addressed to all the princes, especially those who seemed inclined to favor me.

PETER: And that was all you accomplished?

JULIUS: I got what I wanted. I won out, at least if my decrees hold up. In public ceremonies I deprived of their offices the three cardinals who remained obstinate, conferring their posts on others in such a way that they could not easily be restored. Their persons I consigned to Satan, though if they'd fallen in my hands I'd have been glad to consign them to the flames.

PETER: But if what you say is right, the decrees of that schismatic assembly seem to me a good deal more holy than those of your sacrosanct council. I don't see that you produced anything but tyrannical threats, curses, and cruelty

combined with cunning. If Satan inspired that other assembly, he seems closer to Christ than the spirit, for whom I don't even have a name, who presided over your council.

JULIUS: Watch your step now; for in all my bulls I cursed thoroughly anyone who in any way favored that assembly.

PETER: Wretch, in whom I seem to see old Julius born again! But what was the outcome of this business?

JULIUS: I left it in the state I described; how it will come out is up to the future.

PETER: SO the schism survives?

JULIUS: It survives, and grows every day more dangerous.

PETER: And you as the vicar of Christ preferred a schism before a genuine council?

JULIUS: Three hundred schisms rather than find myself forced into submission and a reformation of my entire life.

PETER: SO you're as guilty as that?

JULIUS: What's that to you?

PETER: I understand; you couldn't face the draining of that pestilential swamp. But which of the two groups do you think will win out?

JULIUS: As I said, it's in the hands of fortune, though we have more money. France is exhausted by her many long drawn-out wars; the English have mountains of gold still untouched. This I can confidently predict: if the French win (which God forbid), all the names will be turned around. My sacrosanct council will be an assembly of Satan; I will be, not a pope, but the idol of a pope; they will have acted on the impulse of the holy ghost, and everything we did will bear the mark of the devil. But I feel confident that the money I left behind will keep that from happening.

PETER: But what inspired this hatred of the French and their king, on whom your predecessors bestowed the title of the Most Christian King? Especially since you admit you lived under their protection for a long time, and after they helped raise you to this more than imperial throne, you received from them Bologna and other cities-and since, finally, with their help you dominated the previously unbeaten Venetians? How did you wipe out the memory of such recent assistance, and break such firm bonds?

JULIUS: It would take a long story to explain the whole thing; but to put it briefly, the change wasn't an abrupt one; what I had been maturing in my mind for a long time I gradually began to put into effect. At first, things standing as they did, I had to dissimulate, then I came out openly. I never really liked the French, I tell you this from my heart, nor does any Italian actually like the barbarians-any more, for God's sake, than a wolf is fond of lambs. But I'm not just an Italian, I'm from Genoa; I treated them like friends as long as I needed their help, in the way one always takes advantage of barbarians. In the process, I put up with a good deal, I concealed my feelings, I did plenty of pretending. I endured a lot; I achieved a lot. But then when things had reached the stage where I wanted them, I had only to act the role of the real Julius and drive that barbarian trash out of Italy.

PETER: What kind of animals are those you call barbarians?

JULIUS: They are men.

PETER: Men, then, but not Christians?

JULIUS: Yes, Christians too, but what does that matter?

PETER: Christians, then, but without laws or letters, leading a rude, uncultured life?

JULIUS: In some respects they're quite civilized; and besides, which is the thing we principally envy them, they are very rich.

PETER: Why then this name of barbarian? What's that you're grumbling?

GENIUS: Let me speak for him. The Italians when they were overwhelmed and completely submerged under a flood of really barbaric nations, as if from an overflowing sewer, picked up this mannerism from classical literature of calling everyone born outside Italy a barbarian; this epithet is more scornful, as they use it, than if they called someone a parricide or accused him of robbing a church.

PETER: So it seems. But since Christ died for all men, and showed no respect of persons; and since you claim to be Christ's vicar on earth; why don't you accept all men in the same spirit, seeing that Christ himself did not discriminate?

JULIUS: I would be delighted to accept everyone-Indians, Africans, Ethiopians, Greeks-as long as they can count money and pay taxes. But we were right to cut them all off, and especially the Greeks, because they are too stubborn in refusing to recognize the authority of the Roman pope.

PETER: So the court of Rome is to be, as it were, the treasure chest of the whole world?

JULIUS: Is it such a great matter if we collect all their carnal wealth, seeing we spread our spiritual gifts far and wide?

PETER: What spiritual gifts are you talking about? Up to now I've heard only about worldly things. No doubt you attract men to Christ by preaching his holy word?

JULIUS: There are people who preach it, and I don't prevent them, as long as they don't in any way question my authority.

PETER: What then?

JULIUS: What then? Why are kings given whatever they demand except that individuals attribute to them whatever they have as if it were their gift even though in reality the monarchs have contributed nothing at all? In the same way, everything that's holy is imputed to us popes, even if we've done nothing but snore our life away. But we do more: we give extensive indulgences for very small sums of money; in more serious cases we provide dispensations for less than the maximum price; and wherever we go, we bless everyone, and for free.

PETER: I don't understand a word of this. But let's go back to our former subject: why does your most holy majesty hate the barbarians so much that you'll move heaven and earth to drive them out of Italy?

JULIUS: I'll tell you: there's a superstitious streak runs through the whole lot of these barbarians, especially the French; for I don't get along badly with the Spanish, whether you consider their language or their manners; though in fact I had to drive them out too in order to be free to act in my own independent way.

PETER: Apart from Christ, do they have any other gods?

JULIUS: No, the trouble is they worship Christ himself too precisely. You wouldn't believe how seriously these foolish people take certain obsolete, antiquated

phrases.

PETER: Magic formulas?

JULIUS: You're joking. No, words like "simony," "blasphemy," "sodomy," "poisoning," "fortune-telling."

PETER: Fine words, indeed!

JULIUS: Just as you abominate them, so do they.

PETER: Never mind the names; the things themselves are found in your part of the world, aren't they? or are they perhaps common to all Christians?

JULIUS: I daresay the barbarians have vices of their own, but different from ours; they denounce ours and indulge their own, while we in turn flatter our own and despise theirs. We consider poverty a horrible crime to be avoided by any possible means; they seem to think it's barely Christian to enjoy your own money, even if it was innocently acquired. We hardly dare to speak of drunkenness (though in this particular I might not differ with them very sharply if on other matters we saw eye to eye); but the Germans consider it a minor and rather jolly error, not a crime. They hate usury; we consider money-lenders, of all men, most useful to the church of Christ. They view pederasty as such a disgraceful act that if someone even mentions it, you would think the atmosphere and the sun itself had been polluted; we look at it otherwise. Likewise with simony, a word long since completely antiquated and dropped from the common vocabulary; they still fear the very shadow of it and cling furiously to the outmoded laws made against it-not so with us. And there are many other matters of this sort in which we don't agree with the barbarians. Since we're so different in our manners of life, they have to be kept away from the mysteries of our business, which they will respect more if they don't understand them. For if once they knew all the inner workings of my court, they would spread the story abroad and noise about all the vices they would be quick to uncover. Already they write bitter and malignant letters to their people at home; they cry abroad that this is not the seat of Christ but the cesspool of Satan; they argue over me, asking whether, since I got the papacy as I did and live as I do, I should be considered a pope at all. In this way they threaten my reputation for holiness as well as my papal authority among the common folk, who formerly knew nothing about me, except that I was Christ's vicar and wielded power next to that of God himself. And from these events rise intolerable difficulties for the church of Christ: we sell fewer dispensations and get less for them; our revenues from bishoprics and priesthoods diminish; if we demand anything from the people, it's given only grudgingly; our revenues are off, our business ventures are losing money; people even care less and less about the terrible menace of my thunderbolt. If things once reach the point where they say I'm a scoundrel of a pope who does nothing and only pretends to wield a make-believe thunderbolt, then outright hunger will be staring me in the face. Now if they were at a safe distance (for barbarians aren't very smart), they would worship more zealously, and I could rule over them as I choose by written directives.

PETER: Things can't be going well with you if the apostolic authority depends only on their ignorance of your sly tricks and your way of life. In my day we wanted people to know all about us, whatever we did, even in our cells; we

thought we would become many by becoming well known. But explain this to me, are the princes of the world so religious nowadays, and so respectful of priests, that at the beck of a single one--especially such a one as yourself--they will all at once plunge into war? For in my time we considered princes our most bitter enemies.

JULIUS: As far as the character of their life is concerned, they are not much like believing Christians. They openly despise us and consider us buffoons, except for a few of the weaker ones who may be a bit afraid of that terrible thunderbolt of excommunication--and even they are more upset by the publicity about it than by the thing itself. There are some princes who hope to share in our wealth or are afraid of it, and for those reasons they may defer to our authority; we've persuaded them, in addition, that some horrible misfortune awaits those who meddle in our priestly business. Almost all of them, having been thoroughly indoctrinated, feel respect for the rituals, especially as we observe them; for ceremonies are given to people as fairy stories are told to children. Meanwhile, the show goes on. Even if they are rascals, we bestow splendid titles on them, calling them "catholic," "your most serene highness," "most illustrious majesty," and "most worshipful monarch"; we also call them all our "beloved sons." Meanwhile in their letters they refer to us as "most holy father," and sometimes abase themselves so far as to kiss our feet; and when some really trivial question comes up, they go through the form of submitting to our authority, which gives them a great name for piety among the masses. We send them consecrated roses, crowns, swords; they in turn send us horses, soldiers, money, and sometimes boys; thus a pair of mules scratch each other, turn and turn about.

PETER: If that's the sort of men they are, I understand even less how you can incite such powerful kings to terrible wars and to the breaking of all their treaties.

JULIUS: If you can follow what I tell you, you'll pick up some better than apostolic wisdom.

PETER: I'll do the best I can.

JULIUS: The first thing I undertook to do was to acquaint myself with all the peoples and especially their princes--to know their minds, manners, emotions, their wealth and their ambitions, as well as who got along with whom, and who was at odds with whom. All this information was to be used for my own advantage. Then I found it easy to stir up the French against the Venetians because there was an ancient, ingrained hostility between the two parties. I knew the French were eager to expand their power, and the Venetians were occupying some of their towns, so I made the French cause my own. Then the Emperor, though otherwise no great friend of the French, saw he had no other hope of getting back from the Venetians what they held of his (and they held a number of fine cities); so he too made an alliance with the French for the time being. Then when I saw that the French were growing in power more than suited me (for the alliance had succeeded better than I wanted it to), I began to stir up the king of Spain against them. He was not all that strict about keeping his promises, I and he had a great interest in holding down the power of the French because he did not want to be barricaded out of his possessions at Naples. Then I pretended to

take the Venetians back into favor, though I really didn't like or trust them, so that, playing on their grief over loss of the recent battle, I could rouse them against the French. Next I took the Emperor, whom I'd recently joined with the French, and detached him from them. A major argument with him was money, which always works wonders with a man who needs it; I also sent letters and envoys to renew his ancient hatred of the French, which was always on the point of flaring up, even when he had no real chance to get at them. I knew the English at this time really hated the French, who were in close alliance with the Scots. They were a nation, as I well knew, of exceptional ferocity, eager for war and especially avid for loot rather than given to superstition as well, because far removed from Rome. Finally, they were enjoying at the moment a new liberty, resulting from the recent death of an old and very severe king. Exuberant and almost riotous at their sudden release, they could easily be directed into any insane venture lying to hand—which was my dearest wish. My chances were improved by the temper of the new king, a young man little more than a boy, newly come to power, sharp, bold, and, like most young men, restless, even belligerent; he was naturally ambitious, and had been trained up to great deeds. From earliest youth he was said to have been planning an attack on the French; besides which, his marriage made him a kinsman of the king of Spain whom at that very moment I was inciting to war. All these circumstances I turned to the advantage of the church, and by a great number of artfully composed letters managed to embroil all the princes in the most furious wars conceivable. I did my best not to leave anyone out, trying to involve the king of Hungary, the king of Portugal, and the duke of Burgundy, who is the equal of many monarchs. But since they had no particular interest in the war, I couldn't get them in. I knew that in any case, with those I already had involved, there would be no peace for anyone else. The combatants, though they really fought for their own interests, accepted distinguished awards and titles from me, as if the more death and destruction they visited on Christian folk, the more they might seem to be defending devotedly the church of God. And so that you may appreciate the full extent of my luck or skill, I will tell you that though the king of Spain was warring at the time on the Turks, and had enjoyed hitherto enormous success and taken lots of loot, I got him to abandon that enterprise and turn all his forces against the French. The Emperor too was bound to France by many treaties and even more by the enormous assistance he had received from them in regaining his possessions and cities in Italy. And he had major problems in Italy, because Padua had deserted to Venice—as well as in Burgundy, where the Gelderlanders had proved dangerous enemies of his grandson, then duke of Burgundy, in a war he himself had provoked. And yet I arranged that he should neglect his own affairs in order to do my business. Then, there is no people among whom papal authority counts for less than the English (that will be clear to anyone who looks over the life of Thomas archbishop of Canterbury and the ancient constitutions of the kingdom); yet that nation, though otherwise most impatient of impositions, almost allowed itself to be skinned alive by me. It's practically a miracle the way I got the priests, who used to skim off for themselves whatever they could, to bring in taxes to the king, without ever thinking of the precedent they were setting for

future royal exactions-though indeed the king himself never noticed the example he was setting for action against his own and his successors' interests whenever the pope in Rome might become impatient with England. In fact, the young king went at the matter with more energy than I wanted or advised, even though I thought he was erring in the right direction. But it would be a long story to explain in detail how artfully I stirred up these various princes to make war on their fellow Christians, when no previous pope had ever even been able to rouse them against the Turks.

PETER: But it may be that the flames of war that you fanned will spread out of control across the entire world.

JULIUS: Let them spread, as long as the Roman church retains its dignities and prerogatives. Actually, I've tried to let the whole weight of the war fall on the barbarians rather than the Italians; let them fight it out as long as they want, we'll stand by, and perhaps applaud their idiocy.

PETER: And is this the proper attitude of a pastor, a most holy father, a vicar of Christ?

JULIUS: Why did they stir up the schism?

PETER: But some evils must simply be endured if the remedy is Worse. Besides, if you had permitted a council, there would have been no occasion for a schism.

JULIUS: Don't be silly! I'd sooner have six hundred wars than one Council. What if they had removed me from the papacy as a simoniac and a buyer of the papal office, not a true pope at all? What if they learned the whole truth about my life, and made it public information?

PETER: Even if you were a true pope, you would have done better to resign the office than to protect your dignity by spreading such evils across the face of the Christian world. It's even Worse when the office has been bestowed on an unworthy person, or not even bestowed but bought and snatched away by force. And it occurs to me that God in his wisdom may have created you as a plague for the French in retribution for their having raised you up to be a plague for the church.

JULIUS: By my triple crown, and by my heroic triumphs, I swear if you stir my anger, you, even you, will feel the wrath of Julius.

PETER: Oh, madman! So far I have heard nothing but the words of a warlord, not a churchman but a worldling, not a mere worldling but a pagan, and a scoundrel lower than any pagan! You boast of having dissolved treaties, stirred up wars, and encouraged the slaughter of men. That is the power of Satan, not a pope. Anyone who becomes the vicar of Christ should try to follow as closely as possible the example provided by Christ. In him the ultimate power coincided with ultimate goodness; his wisdom was supreme, but of the utmost simplicity. In you I see an image of power joined with the ultimate in malice and the ultimate in stupidity. If the devil, that prince of darkness, wanted to send to earth a vicar of hell, whom would he choose but someone like you? In what way did you ever act like an apostolic person?

JULIUS: What could be more apostolic than strengthening the church of Christ?

PETER: But if the church is the flock of Christian believers held together by the spirit of Christ, then you seem to me to have subverted the church by inciting the

entire world to bloody wars, while you yourself remained wicked, noisome, and unpunished.

JULIUS: I think the church consists of the holy buildings, the priests, and especially the court at Rome, myself most of all, who am the head of the church.

PETER: But Christ made us servants and himself the head, unless you think a second head is needed. But in what way has the church been strengthened?

JULIUS: Now you're getting to the core of the matter, so I'll tell you. That hungry, impoverished church of yours is now adorned with a thousand impressive ornaments.

PETER: Such as? An earnest faith?

JULIUS: More of your jokes.

PETER: Holy doctrine?

JULIUS: Don't play dumb.

PETER: Contempt for the things of this world?

JULIUS: Let me tell you: real ornaments are what I mean. Those things you've mentioned are just words.

PETER: What do you mean then?

JULIUS: Regal palaces, spirited horses and fine mules, crowds of servants, well-trained troops, assiduous retainers.

GENIUS: -high-class whores and oily pimps.

JULIUS: -plenty of gold, purple, and so much money in taxes that there's not a king in the world who wouldn't appear base and poor if his wealth and state were compared with those of the Roman pontiff. Nobody is so ambitious that he wouldn't confess himself outdone, nobody so extravagant that he wouldn't condemn his own frugality, nobody so wealthy, not even a usurer, that he wouldn't envy my riches. These are what I call ornaments; I've protected what I inherited and added to them.

PETER: But tell me who first of all befouled and burdened with these ornaments of yours the church that Christ wanted to be supremely pure and unencumbered?

JULIUS: What does that matter? The main thing is that I've got them, I possess them, I enjoy them. Some people do say that a certain Constantine transferred all the riches of his empire to pope Sylvester, armor, horses, chariots, helmets, belts, cloaks, guardsmen, swords, gold crowns (of the very finest gold), armies, machines of war, cities, entire kingdoms.

PETER: Are there any proper records of this magnificent donation?

JULIUS: None, except one codicil mixed in with some old decrees.

PETER: Maybe it's a fable.

JULIUS: I've often suspected as much. What sane man, after all, would bestow such a magnificent gift even on his own father? But still, it's a very pleasant thing to believe, and when anyone has tried to question it, I've been able to silence him completely with a timely threat or two.

PETER: And still I hear nothing from you but worldly concerns.

JULIUS: Evidently you are dreaming on about the old church in which you, with a couple of hungry bishops, acted out the role of a meager pope afflicted with poverty, labor, danger, and a thousand other troubles. The new age has changed all that for the better. Nowadays the high pontiff of Rome is another creature

altogether; you were a pope in name only. What if you could now see all the holy churches decorated with the wealth of kingdoms, the thousands of priests everywhere, many of them with splendid incomes, all the bishops equal in wealth and military power to so many kings, all the splendid episcopal palaces? If we were at Rome now, you couldn't fail to admire all the cardinals in their purple robes, attended by legions of servants, followed by riders on imperial horses and mules glittering with linen caparisons studded with gold and gems, shod with gold and silver shoes, like so many blazing suns. Then you might see the pope himself born aloft on the shoulders of his guards, seated on his golden throne, and blessing as he passes all the adoring faithful. If you then heard the crash of the cannon, the applause of the people and their acclamations, if you could see the splendor of the massed torches, and the highest princes barely allowed to kiss the holy feet, if you saw the supreme pontiff of Rome placing a golden crown on the head of the Roman emperor who is king of all kings (that is, if written words carry any weight, though in reality he carries nothing but the shadow of a great name)-well, I say, if you heard and saw all this, what would you think?

PETER: That I had seen the worst tyranny in the world, the enemy of Christ, and the church's bane.

JULIUS: You would think very differently if you had seen just one of my triumphs, either the one that I celebrated at Bologna, or that which I held at Rome after subduing the Venetians, or that in which, fleeing from Bologna, I returned to Rome; or the latest one, celebrating the defeat of the French, after almost all hope was gone, at Ravenna. If you could see the long lines of steeds and stallions, the files of armed soldiers, the gaudy uniforms of the commanders, the choirs of specially chosen boys, the gleaming insignia, the wagon-loads of booty, the splendor of the bishops, the magnificence of the cardinals, the trophies, the piles of prize-money, the cheers of the people and the soldiers echoing up to the heavens, if you could hear the roars and thunders of applause, the blast of horns, the thunder of trumpets, the roar of cannon, and then if you could see me carried aloft like a very god, scattering coins among the people, the center and creator of all this splendor, then you would say the Scipios, Aemilii, and Augusti were shoddy, parsimonious fellows compared to me.

PETER: Oh, enough of your triumphs, you braggart soldier! You surpass in hatefulness even those pagans-you who, while claiming to be the most holy father in Christ, have caused thousands of Christian soldiers to be killed for your own personal advantage, who have created only new legions of the dead, and who never by words or deeds brought one single soul to Christ! By the bowels of the Father! Oh you worthy vicar of that Christ who sacrificed himself for the good of all mankind! You, to preserve your own accursed skin, have driven to their deaths entire populations!

JULIUS: That's what you say because you are envious of my glory, when you see how puny your career as a bishop was, when compared with me. PETER: Have you the audacity, you scoundrel, to compare your glory with mine-though in fact my glory is the glory of Christ, not my own? First, if you concede that Christ was the best and true prince of the church, then it was he who gave me the keys of the kingdom, he told me to care for his flock, he approved of my faith by

granting me his authority. What made you pope was money in the first place, then flattery, and finally fraud-if in fact you should bear the title of pope at all. I gained thousands of souls for Christ; you drew just as many to death and hell. I first taught pagan Rome the lesson of Christ; you made yourself master of a kind of pseudo-Christian paganism. I with the mere shadow of my body healed the sick, exorcised the diabolically afflicted, recalled the dead to life, and wherever I went left my blessing on everything. What does that have in common with your triumphs? By a single word I could give over to Satan anyone I chose; and what I could do Saphira and her husband found out. Yet what power I had I exercised for the good of all; you were not only useless to everyone, but you used what power you had (and where didn't you have it?) to harm people throughout the world.

JULIUS: I'm surprised that when you list your achievements you don't include poverty, wakeful nights, heavy labor, criminal courts, prisons, chains, abuse, stripes, and last of all the cross.

PETER: You're right, and I'm glad you reminded me; for I've more reason to be proud of those sufferings than of miracles. It was in the name of these things that Christ told us to rejoice and be exceeding glad; in the name of these he called us blessed. So Paul, my former fellow-apostle, when he prides himself on his achievements, has nothing to say of cities captured by armed force, or legions cut to pieces with cold steel, princes incited to war, or celebrations worthy of an autocrat; nothing but shipwrecks, chains, lashings, dangers, acts of betrayal. There is the really apostolic triumph, that is the glory of the Christian leader. Let him boast of those whom he saved from sin, not of how many thousands of ducats he piled up. Then when we celebrate our perpetual triumph with Christ, even evildoers will join in our praise; but nobody will fail to curse you, except perhaps someone just like you or your flatterer.

JULIUS: What you say is unheard-of; I never heard the like.

PETER: I believe it; for when did you ever take time to read the gospels or to study the epistles of Paul and myself-busy as you were with so many delegations, treaties, schemes, expeditions, and celebrations? Even the other arts call for a spirit empty of sordid concerns; but the discipline of Christ requires a heart completely purged of any sort of earthly interest. For a teacher like the one we revere does not come down from heaven to give men any sort of facile or vulgar philosophy. Being a Christian is no lazy or comfortable profession. All the pleasures must be avoided like poison, riches trodden underfoot like dirt, and life itself treated as valueless; this is the profession of a Christian man. This sort of life, because it seems unbearable to those who do not act in the spirit of Christ, is easily reduced to a few idle words and empty ceremonies; and thus to a fraudulent head of Christ men add a fraudulent body.

JULIUS: What's left of me that's any good at all if you take away my money, strip me of my power, deprive me of my usury, forbid my pleasures, and even destroy my life?

PETER: You might as well say Christ was wretched when he, who had been at the peak of all things, was made a mockery before men. In poverty and painful labor, in fasts and deprivation he passed his entire life, and then died the most

shameful of deaths.

JULIUS: He may find people to praise his example, but not to follow it, not in these days anyway.

PETER: But to praise him is really to imitate him. Though Christ doesn't deprive his followers of all good things, in place of false goods he provides them with true and eternal goods. But he does not enrich anyone who has not first renounced and rejected all the good things of this world. As he himself was altogether heavenly, so he wanted his body, that is, the church, to be exactly like him, pure from the contagions of mundane life. Otherwise, how could anyone be united with him if he were still contaminated with the filth of earthly existence? But when the church has got rid of all the pleasures of this world, and, what is more, of all secret hankerings after them, then Christ will reveal his true riches, exchanging heavenly joys for earthly ones (too often plentifully mixed with bitter flavors) and in place of lost riches substituting riches of another, far better, sort.

JULIUS: What are those, may I ask?

PETER: You shouldn't think the gift of prophecy, the gift of wisdom, and the gift of miracles are like any form of vulgar riches; you shouldn't suppose Christ himself is some common commodity that you can possess entirely and in him possess everything; and you shouldn't think that we here live a meager life. The more anyone is afflicted in the world below, the more delight does he feel in Christ; the poorer he is in the world, the richer in Christ; the more lowly in the world, the more exalted and honorable in Christ; the less he lives in the world, the more he lives in Christ. As he wished his entire body to be of the utmost purity, so he placed special importance on his ministers, that is, the bishops; and among these, the loftier anyone's position, the more closely he should resemble Christ in being completely free of and unencumbered by any worldly considerations. Now here, on the other hand, I see one who wants to be thought close to, and almost on a par with, Christ, yet who is immersed in all the dirty business he can find, in accumulating money, displays of wealth, possessions of every sort, wars, treaties, and private vices I won't even try to describe. And though you are utterly alien to Christ, you abuse the titles of Christ to serve your own pride. Hiding behind him who despised the rule of the world, you act the tyrant; and though really the enemy of Christ, usurp for yourself the honor due to him. While blessing others, you are accursed yourself; you open to others the gates of heaven, yet cannot get yourself admitted; as you consecrate, you are execrated; you excommunicate when you yourself are out of all communion with the sacred. What after all is the difference between you and the leader of the Turks, except that you pretend to use the name of Christ? You have the same sort of mind, you lead the same sordid lives; you are a worse misfortune for the church even than he.

JULIUS: I wanted to see the church adorned with every sort of good thing. But they say Aristotle distinguished three sorts of good: goods of fortune, goods of the body, and goods of the mind. I didn't want to change his order, so I began with goods of fortune, and I might have worked up to goods of the mind if untimely death hadn't called me away.'

PETER: Untimely you call it, and you seventy years old! In any case, how could

you expect to mingle fire with water?

JULIUS: But if we have to do without earthly shows, the common people won't respect us at all; as it is, they hate us almost as much as they fear us. Then the whole Christian community will go to rack and ruin when it can't defend itself against its enemies.

PETER: But if ordinary Christians recognized in you the real gifts of Christ, that is, a holy life, a sacred teaching, ardent charity, prophetic wisdom, and genuine virtue, they would look up to you as one purified from the impulses of the world; and the Christian community would expand even further if its leaders won respect from the unbelievers for the purity of their life, their contempt for pleasure, wealth, conquest, and death. As things stand, Christianity has shrunk within narrow bounds indeed, and if you look closely, even within those bounds you will find many merely nominal Christians. Let me ask you, didn't you ever consider, when you became supreme pastor of the church, how this church was born, how it grew, what sort of men gave it strength? Was this accomplished by wars, by chests full of treasure, by cavalry raids? No: by patience under suffering, by the blood of martyrs and our own, by enduring prisons and whips. You say the church has grown when all its ministers are burdened with earthly goods; you say it's been adorned when it's weighed down with worldly possessions and pleasures; you say it's being defended when the entire world is ripped apart by ferocious wars for the private gain of the priests; you say it's in flourishing estate when it's drunk on the pleasures of this world; you call it quiet when, because nobody complains about your riches, you are free to cultivate your vices; and you grant glorious titles to princes who recognize you as their teacher in the art of perpetrating shameless robberies and atrocious murders under the name of "the defense of Christ."

JULIUS: Such things as this I never heard before.

PETER: What did your preachers tell you, then?

JULIUS: I never heard anything from them but fulsome praise. They exercised their fanciest rhetoric in thundering out my glories, they compared me to Jove wielding his thunderbolt, they practically deified me, they called me the savior of the world, and a great many other things of that sort.

PETER: I'm not surprised there was nobody to give you good advice, for you yourself were the salt that had lost its savor. For that is the special function of the apostles and those that follow them, to teach others the lesson of Christ, and in the purest form possible.

JULIUS: You're not going to open the gates, then?

PETER: To anyone, rather than a contagious disease like you. As far as you're concerned, we're all excommunicated anyway. But would you care for a word of practical advice? You have here a gang of muscle-men; you have a pile of money; you're a good builder. Go make yourself a new private paradise; but make it good and strong to keep the demons of hell from dragging you out of it.

JULIUS: I'll act in accordance with my own dignity. I'll take a couple of months to build up my forces; then we'll besiege you here and if you don't surrender, drive you out. For I don't doubt to receive shortly, from the wars I started, fresh recruits of sixty thousand souls or more.

PETER: Oh, you hateful disease! Oh, the poor church! But tell me, Genius, for I'd rather talk with you than with this hideous monster!

GENIUS: What's your problem?

PETER: Are all the other bishops on earth like this one?

GENIUS: A good number are of this general type; but this one is, as you might say, outstanding.

PETER: Are you the one who stirred him up to such atrocious crimes?

GENIUS: I did hardly anything; he was so eager in his vices that even with woings I could hardly have followed him.

PETER: Well, I'm not surprised that we get so few candidates for admission, when monsters like this are in charge of governing the church. But perhaps the common people may be curable—or so I conjecture from the fact that because of the mere empty title of pope, they gave honor to such a filthy piece of garbage as this.

GENIUS: You've hit the nail on the head. But my master is getting under way, and has been shaking his stick at me. So farewell!

Source: Desiderius Erasmus, The Praise of Folly and Other Writings, trans. Robert M. Adams (New York and London: Norton Critical Edition:, 1989), pp. 142-73.

QUESTIONS:

1. Why would a Catholic reformer use a comic satire to criticize the papacy?
2. What is the effect of crafting the satire as a conversation between Julius II and Saint Peter at the gates of heaven?
3. What might sixteenth-century readers have thought of this?

II. Michel de Montaigne "Of Cannibals" (1580s)

*Between 1562 and 1598, France fell into a long and bloody civil war. Fought for both political and religious reasons, the Wars of Religion weakened France politically and left many French nobles searching for political stability. One such group of Frenchmen, called the politiques, argued in favor of religious toleration and submission to a strong monarch as the best remedy for France's political ailments. One of the most influential politiques was Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592), a French nobleman, jurist, and government official whose greatest legacy was his writing. His most famous work, *Essays*, remains one of the most innovative and influential works in European literature. In one of his best-known essays, "Of Cannibals," Montaigne used the peoples of the Americas to make a stinging critique of the troubles of his own age in France.*

I had with me for a long time a man that had lived ten or twelve years in that other world which has been discovered in our century, in the place where Villegaignon landed, which he called Antarctic France.! This discovery of so vast a country seems worthy of consideration. I do not know if I can be Sure that in the future there may not be another such discovery made, so many greater men than we having been deceived in this. I am afraid Our eyes are bigger than Our

bellies and that we have more curiosity than capacity. We grasp at all, but catch nothing but wind. . . . This man that I had was a plain ignorant fellow, which is a condition fit to bear true witness; for your sharp sort of men are much more curious in their observations and notice a great deal more, but they gloss them; and to give the greater weight to their interpretation and make it convincing, they cannot forbear to alter the story a little. . . . We should have a man either of irreproachable veracity, or so simple that he has not wherewithal to contrive and to give a color of truth to false tales, and who has not espoused any cause. Mine was such a one; and, besides that, he has divers times brought me several seamen and merchants whom he had known on that voyage. I do, therefore, content myself with his information without inquiring what the cosmographers say about it. . . .

I find that there is nothing barbarous and savage in this nation according to what I have been told, except that everyone gives the title of barbarism to everything that is not according to his usage; as, indeed, we have no other criterion of truth and reason than the example and pattern of the opinions and customs of the country wherein we live. There is always the perfect religion, there the perfect government, there the perfect and accomplished usage in all things. They are savages in the same way that we say fruits are wild, which nature produces of herself and by her ordinary course; whereas, in truth, we ought rather to call those wild whose natures we have changed by our artifice and diverted from the common order. In the former, the genuine, most useful, and natural virtues and properties are vigorous and active, which we have degenerated in the latter, and we have only adapted them to the pleasure of our corrupted palate. And yet, for all this, the flavor and delicacy found in various uncultivated fruits of those countries are excellent to our taste, worthy rivals of ours. . . . These nations then seem to me to be barbarous so far as having received very little fashioning from the human mind and as being still very close to their original simplicity. The laws of Nature govern them still, very little vitiated by ours. . . . [I]t is a nation wherein there is no manner of traffic, no knowledge of letters, no science of numbers, no name of magistrate or of political superiority; no use of servitude, riches or poverty; no contracts, no successions, no dividing of properties, no employments, except those of leisure; no respect of kindred, except for the common bond; no clothing, no agriculture, no metal, no use of wheat or wine. The very words that signify lying, treachery, dissimulation, avarice, envy, detraction, and pardon were never heard of.

. . . They have wars with the nations that live farther inland beyond their mountains, to which they go quite naked and without other arms than their bows and wooden swords pointed at one end like the points of our spears. The obstinacy of their battles is wonderful; they never end without slaughter and bloodshed; for as to running away and fear, they know not what it is. Everyone for a trophy brings home the head of an enemy he has killed and fixes it over the door of his house. After having a long time treated their prisoners well and with all the luxuries they can think of, he to whom the prisoner belongs forms a great

assembly of his acquaintances. He ties a rope to one of the arms of the prisoner, by the end of which he holds him some paces away for fear of being struck, and gives to the friend he loves best the other arm to hold in the same manner; and they two, in the presence of all the assembly, dispatch him with their swords. After that they roast him and eat him among them and send some pieces to their absent friends. They do not do this, as some think, for nourishment, as the Scythians anciently did, but as a representation of an extreme revenge. And its proof is that having observed that the Portuguese, who were in league with their enemies, inflicted another sort of death on them when they captured them, which was to bury them up to the waist, shoot the rest of the body full of arrows, and then hang them; they thought that these people from the other world (as men who had sown the knowledge of a great vices among their neighbors and were much greater masters in all kind of wickedness than they) did not exercise this sort of revenge without reason, and that it must needs be more painful than theirs, and they began to leave their old way and to follow this. I am not sorry that we should take notice of the barbarous horror of such acts, but I am sorry that, seeing so clearly into their faults, we should be so blind to our own. I conceive there is more barbarity in eating a man alive than in eating him dead, in tearing by tortures and the rack a body that is still full of feeling, in roasting him by degrees, causing him to be bitten and torn by dogs and swine (as we have not only read, but lately seen, not among inveterate enemies, but among neighbors and fellow-citizens, and what is worse, under color of piety and religion), than in roasting and eating him after he is dead. . . . We may, then, well call these people barbarians in respect to the rules of reason, but not in respect to ourselves, who, in all sorts of barbarity, exceed them. Their warfare is in every way noble and generous and has as much excuse and beauty as this human malady is capable of; it has with them no other foundation than the sole jealousy of valor. Their disputes are not for the conquests of new lands, for they still enjoy that natural abundance that supplies them without labor and trouble with all things necessary in such abundance that they have no need to enlarge their borders. And they are still in that happy stage of desiring only as much as their natural necessities demand; all beyond that is superfluous to them.

QUESTIONS:

1. How does Montaigne establish his humility? What does he say are the characteristics of a barbarian?
2. How do Montaigne's claims about the source of his knowledge compare to Las Casas's claims of knowledge about the Amerindians?
3. According to Montaigne, how do Europeans act more savagely than Amerindians? What marks Amerindians as virtuous and Europeans as unvirtuous?
4. Do the real indigenous peoples of the Americas matter to Montaigne? What are the implications of this?

Source: Michel de Montaigne, Montaigne: Selected Essays, ed. Blanchard Bates (New York: Modern Library [Random House], 1949), 74, 77-79, 82-84.

3. Christopher Columbus: The Letters of Columbus to Ferdinand and Isabel

Historians debate whether Christopher Columbus (1451-1506) was or was not the first European to reach the Americas. What is beyond dispute, however, is that his voyages sparked an unprecedented period of European exploration and expansion. In his letter to Ferdinand and Isabel included here, Columbus painted a picture of the New World calculated to please his royal patrons.

SIR: Since I know that you will be pleased at the great victory with which Our Lord has crowned my voyage, I write this to you, from which you will learn how in thirty-three days I passed from the Canary Islands to the Indies, with the fleet which the most illustrious King and Queen, our Sovereigns, gave to me. There I found very many islands, filled with innumerable people, and I have taken possession of them all for their Highnesses, done by proclamation and with the royal standard unfurled, and no opposition was offered to me. To the first island which I found I gave the name "San Salvador," in remembrance of the Divine Majesty, Who had marvellously bestowed all this; the Indians call it "Guanahani." To the second, I gave the name the island of "Santa Maria de Concepcion," to the third, "Fernandina," to the fourth, "Isabella," to the fifth island, "Juana," and so each received from me a new name. . . . Espanola is a marvel. The sierras and the mountains, the plains, the champaigns, are so lovely and so rich for planting and sowing, for breeding cattle of every kind, for building towns and villages. The harbours of the sea here are such as cannot be believed to exist unless they have been seen, and so with the rivers, many and great, and of good water, the majority of which contain gold. In the trees, fruits and plants, there is a great difference from those of Juana. In this island, there are many spices and great mines of gold and of other metals. The people of this island and of all the other islands which I have found and of which I have information, all go naked, men and women, as their mothers bore them, although some of the women cover a single place with the leaf of a plant or with a net of cotton which they make for the purpose. They have no iron or steel or weapons, nor are they fitted to use them. This is not because they are not well built and of handsome stature, but because they are very marvellously timorous. They have no other arms than spears made of canes, cut in seeding time, to the ends of which they fix a small sharpened stick. Of these they do not dare to make use, for many times it has happened that I have sent ashore two or three men to some town to have speech with them, and countless people have come out to them, and as soon as they have seen my men approaching, they have fled, a father not even waiting for his son. This is not because ill has been done to anyone of them; on the contrary, at every place where I have been and have been able to have speech with them, I have given to them of that which I had, such as cloth and many other things, receiving nothing in exchange. But so they are, incurably timid. It is true that, after they have been reassured and have lost this fear, they are so guileless and so generous with all that they possess, that no one would believe it who has not seen it. They refuse nothing that they possess, if it be asked of them; on the contrary, they invite anyone to share it and display as much love as if they would

give their hearts. They are content with whatever trifle of whatever kind that may be given to them, whether it be of value or valueless. I forbade that they should be given things so worthless as fragments of broken crockery, scraps of broken glass and lace tips, although when they were able to get them, they fancied that they possessed the best jewel in the world. So it was found that for a thong a sailor received gold to the weight of two and a half Castellanos, and others received much more for other things which were worth less. As for new blancas, for thcm they would give everything which they had, although it might be two or three castellanos' [gold coins] weight of gold or an arroba or two of spun cotton. They took even the pieces of the broken hoops of the wine barrels and, like savages, gave what they had, so that it seemed to me to be wrong and I forbade it. I gave them a thousand handsome good things, which I had brought, in order that they might conceive affection for us and, more than that, might become Christians and be inclined to the love and service of Your Highnesses and of the whole Castilian nation, and strive to collect and give us of the things which they have in abundance and which are necessary to us. They do not hold any creed nor are they idolaters; but they all believe that power and good are in the heavens and were very finnly convinced that I, with these ships and men, came from the heavens, and in this belief they everywhere received me after they had mastered their fear. This belief is not the result of ignorance, for they are, on the contrary, of a very acute intelligence and they are men who navigate all those seas, so that it is amazing how good an account they give of everything. It is because they have never seen people clothed or ships of such a kind. As soon as I arrived in the Indies, in the first island which I found, I took some of the natives by force, in order that they might leam and might give me infonnation of whatever there is in these parts. And so it was that they soon understood us, and we them, either by speech or signs, and they have been very serviceable. At present, those I bring with me are still of the opinion that I come from Heaven, for all the intercourse which they have had with me. They were the first to announce this wherever I went, and the others went running from house to house, and to the neighbouring towns, with loud cries of, "Come! Come! See the men from Heaven!" So all came, men and women alike, when their minds were set at rest concerning us, not one, small or great, remaining behind, and they all brought something to eat and drink, which they gave with extraordinary affection. . . . In all these islands, I saw no great diversity in the appearance of the people or in their manners and language. On the contrary, they all understand one another, which is a very curious thing, on account of which I hope that their Highnesses will detennine upon their conversion to our holy faith, towards which they are very inclined. I have already said how I went one hundred and seven leagues in a straight line from west to east along the seashore of the island of Juana, and as a result of this voyage I can say that this island is larger than England and Scotland together, for, beyond these one hundred and seven leagues, there remain to the westward two provinces to which I have not gone. One of these provinces they call "Avan," and there people are born with tails. These provinces cannot have a length of less than fifty or sixty leagues, as 1 could understand from those Indians whom I have and who know all the islands. The other island, Espanola,

has a circumference greater than all Spain from Collioure by the seacoast to Fuenterrabia in Vizcaya, for I voyaged along one side for one hundred and eighty-eight great leagues in a straight line from west to east. It is a land to be desired and, when seen, never to be left. I have taken possession of all for their Highnesses, and all are more richly endowed than I know how or am able to say, and I hold all for their Highnesses, so that they may dispose of them as they do of the kingdoms of Castile and as absolutely. But especially, in this Espanola, in the situation most convenient and in the best position for the mines of gold and for all trade as well with the mainland here as with that there, belonging to the Grand Khan, where will be great trade and profit, I have taken possession of a large town, to which I gave the name "Villa de Navidad," and in it I have made fortifications and a fort, which will now by this time be entirely completed. In it I have left enough men for such a purpose with arms and artillery and provisions for more than a year, and a fusta, and one, a master of all seacraft, to build others, and I have established great friendship with the king of that land, so much so, that he was proud to call me "brother" and to treat me as such. . . . In conclusion, to speak only of what has been accomplished on this voyage, which was so hasty, their Highnesses can see that I will give them as much gold as they may need, if their Highnesses will render me very slight assistance; presently, I will give them spices and cotton, as much as their Highnesses shall command; and mastic, as much as they shall order to be shipped and which, up to now, has been found only in Greece, in the island of Chios, and the Seignory sells it for what it pleases; and aloe, as much as they shall order to be shipped; and slaves, as many as they shall order, and who will be from the idolaters. I believe also that I have found rhubarb and cinnamon, and I shall find a thousand other things of value, which the people whom I have left there will have discovered, for I have not delayed at any point, so far as the wind allowed me to sail, except in the town of Navidad, in order to leave it secured and well established, and in truth I should have done much more if the ships had served me as reason demanded. . . . This is an account of the facts, thus abridged. Done in the caravel, off the Canary Islands, on the fifteenth day of February, in the year one thousand four hundred and ninety-three.

Question:

1. How could Columbus reconcile his views of the native peoples with his stated intention of taking their gold and enslaving them?

Source: The Journal of Christopher Columbus, translation by Cecil Jane (London: Anthony Blond, 1968) pp. 191, 194, 196-198, 200-201.

4. Bartholomé de Las Casas: Native Americans

When Bartholomé de Las Casas (1474-1566) was twenty-eight years old, he made his first trip to the Americas. By 1514, he had committed himself to pressuring the Spanish government to improve the treatment of the natives, to abolish slavery and forced labor, and to devote more resources to the spread of Catholicism in the New World. He would spend his entire life working towards

these goals.

God has created all these numberless people to be quite the simplest, without malice or duplicity, most obedient, most faithful to their natural Lords, and to the Christians, whom they serve; the most humble, most patient, most peaceful, and calm, without strife nor tumults; not wrangling, nor querulous, as free from uproar, hate and desire of revenge, as any in the world. They are likewise the most delicate people, weak and of feeble constitution, and less than any other can they bear fatigue, and they very easily die of whatsoever infirmity; so much so, that not even the sons of our Princes and of nobles, brought up in royal and gentle life, are more delicate than they; although there are among them such as are of the peasant class. They are also a very poor people, who of worldly goods possess little, nor wish to possess: and they are therefore neither proud, nor ambitious, nor avaricious. . . . They are likewise of a clean, unspoiled, and vivacious intellect, very capable, and receptive to every good doctrine; most prompt to accept our Holy Catholic Faith, to be endowed with virtuous customs; and they have as little difficulty with such things as any people created by God in the world. Once they have begun to learn of matters pertaining to faith, they are so importunate to know them, and in frequenting the sacraments and divine service of the Church, that to tell the truth, the clergy have need to be endowed of God with the gift of preeminent patience to bear with them: and finally, I have heard many lay Spaniards frequently say many years ago, (unable to deny the goodness of those they saw) certainly these people were the most blessed of the earth, had they only knowledge of God.

THE SINS OF THE SPANISH INVASION

Militant friars like Las Casas and many of his fellow Dominicans pictured the Spanish conquistadors and settlers as vicious and cruel exploiters. These tales were based in reality, but they were also aimed at convincing a European audience that the excesses of the conquest had to be curbed and the powers of the crown and the clergy expanded in the New World. Along with the images of the indigenous peoples as innocents reminiscent of the Garden of Eden, they created a powerful picture of European excesses. According to many friars, these abuses undermined the chances for salvation of all Christians who tolerated such sins against humanity.

The Christians, with their horses and swords and lances, began to slaughter and practise strange cruelty among them. They penetrated into the country and spared neither children nor the aged, nor pregnant women, nor those in child labour, all of whom they ran through the body and lacerated, as though they were assaulting so many lambs herded in their sheepfold. They made bets as to who would slit a man in two, or cut off his head at one blow: or they opened up his bowels. They tore the babes from their mothers' breast by the feet, and dashed their heads against the rocks. Others they seized by the shoulders and threw into the rivers, laughing and joking, and when they fell into the water they exclaimed: "boil body of so and so!" They spitted the bodies of other babes, together with

their mothers and all who were before them, on their swords. They made a gallows just high enough for the feet to nearly touch the ground, and by thirteens, in honour and reverence of our Redeemer and the twelve Apostles, they put wood underneath and, with fire, they burned the Indians alive. . . . And because all the people who could flee, hid among the mountains and climbed the crags to escape from men so deprived of humanity, so wicked, such wild beasts, extenninators and capital enemies of all the human race, the Spaniards taught and trained the fiercest boar-hounds to tear an Indian to pieces as soon as they saw him, so that they more willingly attacked and ate one, than if he had been a boar. These hounds made great havoc and slaughter.

Question:

1. What are the similarities between Columbus's view of the natives and that of Las Casas? What explains the dramatic difference in how they sought to treat the natives?

Source: Bartholomew De Las Casas: His Life, His Apostolate, and His Writings, translation by Francis Augustus McNutt (New York, 1909), pp. 314-315.

5. Sepulveda and de Las Casas, Debate on Native Americans

Juan Gines de Sepulveda, Democrates Secundus (1544)

The public debate over the status of the Amerindians reached its peak in 1550. when Charles V king of Spain and Holy Roman Emperor, ordered two of the leading contestants, Juan Gines de Sepulveda and Bartolome de Las Casas, to debate the issue at the University of Valladolid before a panel of lawyers and theologians. Sepulveda (1490-1573). a scholar and theologian born into the Spanish aristocracy, argued that the Spanish, as a superior people, had the right to enslave the inferior indians. The selection from Sepulveda's work Democrates Secundus or the Treatise on the Just Causes of War against the Indians demonstrates how Sepulveda defined the Spanish and Amerindian civilizations to make his case.

It is established then, in accordance with the authority of the most eminent thinkers, that the dominion of prudent, good, and humane men over those of contrary disposition is just and natural. Nothing else justified the legitimate empire of the Romans over other peoples. according to the testimony of St. Thomas Aquinas in his work on the role of the Prince. St. Thomas here followed St. Augustine "... God gave the Romans their empire so that with the good legislation that they instituted and the virtue in which they excelled, they might change the customs and suppress and correct the vices of many barbarian peoples. . . . [Therefore] you can easily understand. . . if you see familiar with the character and moral code of the two peoples. that it is with perfect right that the Spaniards exercise their dominion over those barbarians of the New World and its adjacent islands. For in prudence, talent, and every kind of virtue and human sentiment they are as inferior to the Spaniards as children are to adults, or women to men, or the cruel and inhumane to the very gentle. or the excessively intemperate to the continent and moderate.

... And who is ignorant of the Spaniards' other virtues: courage, humanity, justice, and religion? I refer simply to the princes and to those whose aid and skill they utilize to govern the state, to those, in short, who have received a liberal education. . . . As for the Christian religion, I have witnessed many clear proofs of the firm roots it has in the hearts of Spaniards, even those dedicated to the military. . . . What shall I say of the Spanish soldiers' gentleness and humanitarian sentiments? Their only and greatest solicitude and care in the battles, after the winning of the victory, is to save the greatest possible number of vanquished and free them from the cruelty of their allies.

Now compare these qualities of prudence, skill, magnanimity, moderation, humanity, and religion with those of those little men [of America] in whom one can scarcely find any remnants of humanity. They not only lack culture but do not even use or know about writing or preserve records of their history save for some obscure memory of certain deeds contained in painting. They lack written laws and their institutions and customs are barbaric. And as for their virtues, if you wish to be informed of their moderation and mildness, what can be expected of men committed to all kinds of passion and nefarious lewdness and of whom not a few are given to the eating of human flesh. Do not believe that their life before the coming of the Spaniards was one of Saturnine peace, of the kind that poets sang about. On the contrary, they made war with each other almost continuously, and with such fury that they considered a victory to be empty if they could not satisfy their prodigious hunger with the flesh of their enemies. This form of cruelty is especially prodigious among these people, remote as they are from the invincible ferocity of the Scythians, who also ate human bodies. But in other respects they are so cowardly and timid that they can scarcely offer any resistance to the hostile presence of our side, and many times thousands and thousands of them have been dispersed and have fled like women, on being defeated by a small Spanish force scarcely amounting to one hundred. So as not to detain you longer in this matter, consider the nature of those people in one single instance and example, that of the Mexicans, who are regarded as the most prudent and courageous. Their king was Montezuma, whose empire extended the length and breadth of those regions and who inhabited the city of Mexico. . . . Informed of the arrival of Cortes and of his victories and his intention to go to Mexico under pretext of a conference, Montezuma sought all possible means to divert him from his plan. Failing in this, terrorized and filled with fear, he received him in the city with about three hundred Spaniards. Cortes for his part, after taking possession of the city, held the people's cowardliness, ineptitude, and rudeness in such contempt that he not only compelled the king and his principal subjects, through terror, to receive the yoke and rule of the king of Spain, but also imprisoned King Montezuma himself. . . . Could there be a better or clearer testimony of the superiority that some men have over others in talent, skill, strength of spirit, and virtue? Is it not proof that they are slaves by nature? For the fact that some of them appear to have a talent for certain manual tasks is not argument for their greater human prudence. We see that certain insects,

such as the bees and the spiders, produce works that no human skill can imitate. . . . I have made reference to the customs and character of the barbarians. What shall I say now of the impious religion and wicked sacrifices of such people, who, in venerating the devil as if he were God, believed that the best sacrifice that they could placate him with was to offer him human hearts? . . . Opening up the human breasts they pulled out the hearts and offered them on their heinous altars. And believing that they had made a ritual sacrifice with which to placate their gods, they themselves ate the flesh of the victims. These are crimes that are considered by the philosophers to be among the most ferocious and abominable perversions, exceeding all human iniquity. And as for the fact that some nations, according to report, completely lack religion and knowledge of God, what else is this than to deny the existence of God and to live like beasts? In my judgment this crime is the most serious, infamous, and unnatural. . . . How can we doubt that these people—so uncivilized, so barbaric, contaminated with so many impieties and obscenities—have been justly conquered by such an excellent, pious, and just king, as Ferdinand was and as the Emperor Charles is now, and by a nation excellent in every kind of virtue, with the best law and best benefit for the barbarians? Prior to the arrival of the Christians they had the nature, customs, religion, and practice of evil sacrifice as we have explained. Now, on receiving with our rule our writing, laws, and morality, imbued with the Christian religion, having shown themselves to be docile to the missionaries that we have sent them, as many have done, they are as different from their primitive condition as civilized people are from barbarians, or as those with sight from the blind, as the inhuman from the meek, as the pious from the impious, or to put it in a single phrase, in effect, as men from beasts.

QUESTIONS

1. What are the basic premises of Sepulveda's argument that superior peoples may enslave inferior peoples? What does he mean by calling the Amerindians "slaves by nature"?
2. What does Sepulveda identify as the virtues of the Spaniards and the deficiencies of the Amerindians? What proof does he offer for his assertions?
3. For Sepulveda, what characteristics or practices identify an advanced people?

Bartolome de Las Casas In Defense of the Indians (1551)

Opposing Sepulveda in the debate at the University of Valladolid was Bartolome de Las Casas (1474-1566). Born to a family of small merchants, Las Casas spent thirteen years in the Spanish colony of Hispaniola. In 1514, however, he renounced all his property rights in America and returned to Spain, where he eventually took religious orders and passionately lobbied the Spanish government to provide greater protections to the Amerindians. The selection that follows is part of Las Casas's response to Sepulveda at the Valladolid debate, in which Las Casas, working within a European framework of thought, challenges both Sepulveda's knowledge of the Amerindians and his philosophical principals.

[T]he distinction the Philosopher [Aristotle] makes between the two... kinds of

barbarian is evident. For those he deals with in the first book of the Politics. . . are barbarians without qualification, in the proper and strict sense of the word, that is, dull witted and lacking in the reasoning powers necessary for self-government. They are without laws, without king, etc. For this reason they are by nature unfitted for rule. However, he admits, and proves, that the barbarians he deals with in the third book of the same work have a lawful, just, and natural government. Even though they lack the art and use of writing, they are not wanting in the capacity and skill to rule and govern themselves, both publicly and privately. Thus they have kingdoms, communities, and cities that they govern wisely according to their laws and customs. . . . This is made clear by the Philosopher and Augustine.

Now if we shall have shown that among our Indians of the western and southern shores) (granting that we call them barbarians and that they are barbarians) there are important kingdoms, large numbers of people who live settled lives in a society, great cities, kings, judges and laws, persons who engage in commerce, buying, selling, lending, and the other contracts of the law of nations, will it not stand proved that the Reverend Doctor Sepulveda has spoken wrongly and viciously against peoples like these, either out of malice or ignorance of Aristotle's teaching, and, therefore, has falsely and perhaps irreparably slandered them before the entire world? From the fact that the Indians are barbarians it does not necessarily follow that they are incapable of government and have to be ruled by others, except to be taught about the Catholic faith and to be admitted to the holy sacraments. They are not ignorant, inhuman, or bestial. Rather, long before they had heard the word Spaniard they had properly organized states, wisely ordered by excellent laws, religion, and custom. They cultivated friendship and, bound together in common fellowship, lived in populous cities in which they wisely administered the affairs of both peace and war justly and equitably, truly governed by laws that at very many points surpass ours, and could have won the admiration of the sages of Athens. . . .

I would like to hear Sepulveda, in his cleverness, answer this question: Does he think that the war of the Romans against the Spanish was justified in order to free them from barbarism? And this question also: Did the Spanish wage an unjust war when they vigorously defended themselves against them? Next, I call the Spaniards who plunder that unhappy people torturers. Do you think that the Romans, once they had subjugated the wild and barbaric peoples of Spain, could with secure right divide all of you among themselves, handing over so many head of both males and females as allotments to individuals? And do you then conclude that the Romans could have stripped your rulers of their authority and consigned all of you, after you had been deprived of your liberty, to wretched labors, especially in searching for gold and silver lodes and mining and refining the metals? And if the Romans finally did that, as is evident from Diodorus, [would you not judge] that you also have the right to defend your freedom, indeed your very life, by war?

Sepulveda, would you have permitted Saint James to evangelize your own people of Cordoba in that way? For God's sake and man's faith in him, is this the way to impose the yoke of Christ on Christian men? Is this the way to remove wild barbarism from the minds of barbarians? Is it not, rather, to act like thieves, cut-throats, and cruel plunderers and to drive the gentlest of people headlong into despair? The Indian race is not that barbaric, nor are they dull witted or stupid, but they are easy to teach and very talented in learning all the liberal arts, and very ready to accept, honor, and observe the Christian religion and correct their sins (as experience has taught) once priests have introduced them to the sacred mysteries and taught them the word of God. They have been endowed with excellent conduct, and before the coming of the Spaniards, as we have said, they had political states that were well founded on beneficial laws. Furthermore, they are so skilled in every mechanical art that with every right they should be set ahead of all the nations of the known world on this score, so very beautiful in their skill and artistry are the things this people produces in the grace of its architecture, its painting, and its needlework. But Sepulveda despises these mechanical arts, as if these things do not reflect inventiveness, ingenuity, industry, and right reason. For a mechanical art is an operative habit of the intellect that is usually defined as "the right way to make things, directing the acts of the reason, through which the artisan proceeds in orderly fashion, easily, and unerringly in the very act of reason." So these men are not stupid, Reverend Doctor. Their skillfully fashioned works of superior refinement awaken the admiration of all nations, because works proclaim a man's talent. . . . In the liberal arts that they have been taught up to now, such as grammar and logic, they are remarkably adept. With every kind of music they charm the ears of their audience with wonderful sweetness. They write skillfully and quite elegantly, so that most often we are at a loss to know whether the characters are handwritten or printed. . . . I have seen [this] with my eyes, felt with my hands, and heard with my own ears while living a great many years among those peoples. Now if Sepulveda had wanted, as a serious man should, to know the full truth before he sat down to write with his mind corrupted by the lies of tyrants, he should have consulted the honest religious who have lived among those peoples for many years and know their endowments of character and industry, as well as the progress they have made in religion and morality. . . .

As to the terrible crime of human sacrifice, which you exaggerate, see what [Bishop] Giovio adds. . . . "The rulers of the Mexicans have a right to sacrifice living men to their gods, provided they have been condemned for a crime." . . .

From this it is clear that the basis for Sepulveda's teaching that these people are uncivilized and ignorant is worse than false. Yet even if we were to grant that this race has no keenness of mind or artistic ability, certainly they are not, in consequence, obliged to submit themselves to those who are more intelligent and to adopt their ways, so that, if they refuse, they may be subdued by having war waged against them and be enslaved, as happens today. For men are obliged by the natural law to do many things they cannot be forced to do against

their will. We are bound by the natural law to embrace virtue and imitate the uprightness of good men. No one, however, is punished for being bad unless he is guilty of rebellion. Where the Catholic faith has been preached in a Christian manner and as it ought to be, all men are bound by the natural law to accept it, yet no one is forced to accept the faith of Christ. No one is punished because he is sunk in vice, unless he is rebellious or harms the property and persons of others. . . . Therefore, not even a truly wise man may force an ignorant barbarian to submit to him, especially by yidding his liberty, without doing him an injustice. This the poor Indians suffer, with extreme injustice, against all the laws of God and of men and against the law of nature itself.

QUESTIONS

1. What is the basic premise of Las Casas's argument? How does Las Casas directly attack Sepulveda's basic premise?
2. What does Las Casas assert are the positive qualities held by the Amerindians? What claims does he make about his sources of evidence? 3. For Las Casas, what marks a civilized people, and how do his criteria compare with Sepulveda's?
3. Why does Las Casas raise the example of Rome's conquest of Spain under Caesar Augustus?

Source: Bartolomé de Las Casas, In Defense of the Indians, ed. and trans. Stafford Poole (De Kalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1974),41-46.