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Hutten's Letters to Erasmus and Reuchlin, 1520/1

When Luther became the leading voice among those who demanded church reform, many humanists supported his cause. Ulrich von Hutten¹ was one of his most fervent champions, although his aims were political as well as religious. Erasmus, by contrast, was cautious in his support. He feared a schism and wanted to keep humanistic studies out of the dispute.² In spite of his efforts, humanism became associated with the Reformation in the eyes of many observers. Indeed, Catholic theologians tended to see humanists, and Erasmus in particular, as the inspirational sources of the Reformation.

Hutten, who realized that it was in the interest of the reformers to maintain a common front with humanists, wrote to Erasmus in 1520, pleading with him to speak up on Luther's behalf or at any rate to keep any misgivings to himself. He hinted that the humanities, too, would benefit from this policy. A few months later, in February 1521, Hutten wrote a similar letter to Reuchlin, reproaching him for criticizing the reformers openly. The excerpts from his letters to Erasmus are translations from the Latin text in Allen, Epp. 1135 and 1161. Both letters remained unpublished during Erasmus's lifetime; Erasmus's response is not extant. The Latin text of Hutten's letter to Reuchlin is in Böcking, *Supplementum*, II: 803–4.

1. Epistle 1135 to Erasmus

I ask you to keep quiet and restrain your pen, for we need you safe. Listen to what I say to you, trusting in our friendship. While the