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MICHAEL MASSING

FATAL DISCORD

Erasmus, Luther, and the Fight for the Western Mind

A dual biography and fascinating intellectual history, *Fatal Discord* examines two key figures of European history—Erasmus of Rotterdam and Martin Luther—whose bitter rivalry gave rise to two enduring, fundamental, and often colliding traditions of philosophical and religious thought.

Erasmus was the leading figure of the Northern Renaissance. At a time when Leonardo, Michelangelo, and Raphael were revolutionizing Western art and culture, Erasmus was preparing a new design for living for a continent rebelling against the hierarchical constraints of the Roman Church. Today, however, he is largely forgotten, due mainly to one man: Martin Luther. As a young friar in remote Wittenberg, Luther was initially a great admirer of Erasmus and his diagnosis of what ailed the Catholic Church, but while Erasmus sought to reform that institution from within, Luther favored a more radical transformation. Eventually, the differences between them flared into an intense rivalry, with each trying to win over Europe to his vision.

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