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THE FABLES OF ERASMUS ALBERUS

by

Ross Vander Meulen

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
(Germanic Languages and Literatures)
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I

INTRODUCTION

Biographical Background

The first scholarly attempt to trace the life of Erasmus Alberus was that of Goedeke.[1] While wrong in some important details, this brief account nevertheless provided the background and bibliography for later studies. Wilhelm Braune, in his 1892 edition of Alberus' fables, includes in his excellent introduction a very brief biographical sketch.[2] A detailed biography by Franz Schnorr von Carolsfeld appeared the following year.[3] A second major study of Alberus' life, that of Emil Körner, was published in 1910.[4]

Erasmus Alber, or Alberus in the Latinized form he apparently preferred, was born shortly before 1500 in Bruchenbrücken, a village in the Wetterau located near the confluence of the Wetter and Nidda rivers.[5] Like his more famous namesake from Rotterdam, he was the illegitimate son of a priest. His father, Dietrich Alber, defied his vows openly by living with his female servant. Perhaps to remove him from this delicate situation, young Erasmus was sent to Staden. In 1505 or shortly thereafter he was sent to a schoolmaster in Nidda. In Ein gut Buch von der Ehe Alberus gives the following gruesome account

of his life with this schoolmaster:

> Ich war acht iar alt, da vberkame ich eyn schulmeyster zu Nidd, wann der voll weins, ia voll teuffel war, da zoge er mich schlaffend vom stro sack daruff ich schlieffe, vnd name mich bei den füssen, vnd zoge mich vmbher vff vnd ab, als were ich eyn pflug, das mir das haupt vff der erden hernach geschlept, viel püffe leiden must. Darnach finge er eyn ander spill mit mir an, da nam er eyn stannge, vnd zwang mich, das ich hinauffklimmen must, darnach lies er die stang aus der hand ghen, vnnd mit mir zu boden fallen, das solt gute ingenia machen. Zu letzt name er mich vnd sties mich in eyn sack, vnd hienge mich zum fenster hinaus, wann ich dann schri da hört mich eyn priester freilich eyn frommer man der rieffe meinem tollen schulmeyster zu, vnd sprach du nar, was treibstu mit dem kinde. . . . So fein wart ich aber vnderwisen, dz ich, da ich xiiij iar alt war, nit ein nomen kunt declinirn.[6]

This suggests that he remained in Nidda until he was fourteen. Perhaps in 1512 he went to Weilburg to continue his education. But he apparently did not learn much there either,[7] and after a year or two he went on to the University of Mainz.

Little is known about his stay in Mainz. But it is there, Körner assumes (p. 8), that Alberus made up for the great deficiency in his education. Accordingly, his stay there cannot have been short, and may have been as long as five years. Mainz was at that time an important center for humanism, and in Fable 40 Alberus reflects favorably on the humanists he came to know there, including Ulrich von Hutten. But it was also the center for the dispensation of indulgences in Germany. The sale of indulgences under Archbishop Albert of Mainz had, in fact, prompted Luther to publish his Ninety-five Theses, a copy of which Luther sent

to the Archbishop the very day he posted the Theses in Wittenberg.[8]

Soon thereafter, probably in 1518, Alberus left Mainz in order to study in Wittenberg.[9] Like many other students, he was no doubt attracted by the progressive, defiant reputation Wittenberg had gained through Luther's Theses. There were, moreover, other voices of protest in Wittenberg besides Luther's. Andreas von Carlstadt, who, as Preserved Smith so aptly puts it, "longed to out-Luther Luther" (p. 59), was considerably more reckless than Luther in his criticism of the Church. As a result he soon attracted a following of young radical students. Even more radical than Carlstadt were the so-called Zwickau prophets, some of whom went to Wittenberg after being expelled from Zwickau for plotting to assassinate their more moderate opponents.[10] Tension mounted in Wittenberg as the number of radicals increased. By 1521 there was open violence in the streets. There were riots in October after Gabriel Zwilling, an Augustinian Monk, preached against the Mass. On December 3 two priests were stoned for attempting to celebrate the Mass, and on the following day students destroyed an altar in the Franciscan convent. The arrest of these students precipitated an even worse riot. Luther was so disturbed by all this that he left the Wartburg, where he had been in hiding, in order to review the situation in Wittenberg. He urged his followers there to exercise restraint and left behind the manuscript of Eyn

trew Vormanung zu allen Christen, in which he condemns the use of violence.

At first Alberus was apparently attracted by the radical ideas he heard in Wittenberg. We know that for a time he was greatly influenced by the ideas of Carlstadt, through whom he secured a position in the church choir. In particular, he was taken by Carlstadt's idea that since there is only one God, there should be but one part in church music. Soon, however, Alberus turned away from Carlstadt. In Widder die Carlstader, written shortly before his death in 1553, he reflects on his days in Wittenberg: "Ich liess die Carlstadische schwermerey vnd lügen faren, da mir nun die warheit aus D. Martini Büchern so helle ins hertz leuchtet."[11] Thus began the friendship between Alberus and Luther, a friendship which was of immense importance to Alberus and to his work.

When Alberus left Wittenberg is not certain. We know that he taught briefly in Büdingen, and that he left there in the second half of 1522 to teach in Ursel, where he was married later that same year. His first work on Aesop's fables was begun in Büdingen and continued in Ursel. The Novvm Dictionarii Genus, a rhyming dictionary of German inspired by his efforts to put the fables into German verse, was also begun in Büdingen, though it was not published until 1540. But one work from this period was of immediate importance, the Iudicium Erasmi Alberi de Spongia Erasmi Roterodami, which appeared late in 1523. This attack

on the Dutch humanist consists of a letter from Alberus to Theodor Sartorius, a pseudonym for Dietrich von Nassau, together with a letter by Desiderius Erasmus and one by Luther.[12] Alberus' letter was written in response to the Dutch humanist's assertion in his dispute with Ulrich von Hutten that Luther's writings do not merit serious attention because his cause is so hopeless. The letter was apparently published without Alberus' knowledge by his friend Philipp Stumpf von Eberbach, to whom it was passed on by Nassau. But whether Alberus approved of its publication or not, Desiderius Erasmus was deeply offended. For a time he regarded the name Erasmus Alberus as a pseudonym for Hermann Busch, whom he attacked savagely in a letter to Melanchthon written in September of the following year. But in December, again in a letter to Melanchthon, he identifies Alberus as the real author and says of him: "That Alberus of yours, critic of Erasmus, is, I take it, the school teacher in the town Eisenach."[13]

Sometime late in 1524 Alberus left Ursel for Eisenach, as the quotation from Desiderius Erasmus indicates. Perhaps, as Körner suggests, Alberus' uncompromising support of Luther and his attack on Erasmus made things too difficult for him in Ursel, where the reform movement had not been well received. In Eisenach he expected to find an atmosphere more suited to his enthusiasm for Luther's reforms, but in this he was bitterly disappointed: "Da ich aber dar kam, fand ich eitel Schwermerey vnd ging mir

gleich dem, der dem regen gedenckt zu entlauffen vnd fällt in eyn tieffes wasser."[14] Here it was the anti-intellectual thrust of the radical Protestants that repulsed him. Of these reformers Alberus writes: "keyner nit verstundt das abc im Evangelio." And of his superintendent, Jacob Strauss, he says: ". . . wie viel gab der Teufel Jacob Straussen zu schaffen, zu welchem sich der Witzel hielt; der kunt ia nit zufrieden sein mit der wittenberger schul, er wolt ymmer reformiren, vnd die alte beltz new machen."[15]

In April 1525, after a stay of less than five months in Eisenach, Alberus returned to Ursel. His official position was once again that of schoolmaster, but he also exercised decisive influence on the reform movement. He strove persistently to unite and solidify it, to introduce the same order in Ursel that Luther was attempting to bring to the movement as a whole. That Alberus was successful in this can be seen in the fact that the efforts of the revolting peasants to enlist support in Ursel were fruitless.

In 1527 Alberus gave up his post in Ursel in order to seek a full-time position as pastor of a church. He was not immediately successful in finding such a position, and he spent the winter of 1527-28 as the guest of a friend, Konrad von Hattstein, a knight of some substance. Through him Alberus became known to Landgrave Philip of Hesse, who was a firm supporter of the reform movement. The immediate consequence of this was that Alberus was appointed Pastor of Sprendlingen, a town south of Frankfurt. It is possible

that Philip was impressed by what he heard about Alberus' work in Ursel, for Sprendlingen, a town still sympathetic to Roman Catholicism, required a pastor who could exercise tact and moderation. Alberus indicates in his letter to the Sprendlingen Church, dated December 14, 1528, that he understood the situation:

> Genedige Herrn, Es hat main g. herr vnnd furst der Landgrafe mich ghen Sprendlingen gesendet, das Euangelium der herligkeit Gottis zuuerkundigen. . . . So will ich mich . . . mit gottis hülfe auch halten, wie es einem fridsamen gehorsamen vntersassen wol ansteht, wo nit, so will ich strafe beide von E. g. vnnd m. g. hern vnnd fürsten gewarten. So vil aber das predig ampt betrifft, will ich nit anders dann ein trewer diener Christi vnd haushalter vber gottis geheimniss erfunden werden. . . . Was zu vfrür, vngehorsam dienet vnnd andern newen jrtumben vom Sacrament vnnd taufe, damit itzt leider vil feiner stede vmbgeben, soll fern von meinen predigten sein, Ich hoffe aber vnnd versehen mich, got werde sein gnade diesem volck geben, das es nit on frucht Gottis wort horen werde.[16]

Alberus remained in Sprendlingen from 1528 until 1539. It was his responsibility to introduce the reform movement there. Once again he met with resistance not only from Roman Catholics, as one might expect, but also from the radical reformers, as he tells us in Widder die lere der Carlstader:

> So böse buben waren die schwermer, das sie mir, als ich Pastor zu Sprendlingen war, für meine wonung lieffen, vnd spotteten mein, mit meinem Luther, weil ich nicht mit jhnen rasen vnd toben, die heilige Sacrament schenden, vnd gute ordenung verachten wolt.[17]

In addition to his work in the church and, once again, in the Protestant School, Alberus published several of his more noteworthy works during his years in Sprendlingen.

In 1534 the first edition of his fables appeared, which will be discussed in detail below. Eyn gut buch von der Ehe, a translation and adaptation of Francesco Barbaro's De re uxoria, appeared in 1536. That same year he published the first edition of his Praecepta morum, an enlarged edition of which appeared the following year. This work was meant as a manual for the instruction of youth and is a collection of maxims from the Bible and numerous classical authors as well as passages from Reuchlin and Luther. The work was dedicated to Martin Luther's son Hans, who was then ten years old.

During these years in Sprendlingen Alberus traveled widely, and Körner argues that many of the detailed geographic descriptions in his fables are the fruit of these travels (pp. 30-32). We know that he visited Luther during the latter's stay at Coburg Castle in 1530, a visit which was of considerable importance for Alberus' fables, as we shall see later. He also made numerous trips to Marburg. His friends there included, among others, Eobanus Hessus. He no doubt made frequent trips to Frankfurt on the Main, which is only a short distance from Sprendlingen and which is mentioned frequently in the fables. Among his friends there were Christian Egenolff and Peter Braubach, both of whom Alberus had known since his student days in Mainz. They were both publishers, and the 1550 edition of Alberus' fables was printed by Braubach.

Toward the middle of 1537 Alberus took a leave of

absence in Sprendlingen in order to serve as Pastor in Küstrin. His wife had died early that year, and if Körner's conjecture is right, he may also have lost his children in the preceding years.[18] Under these circumstances, it is reasonable to assume that he wished a change of scenery. There was, moreover, mounting pressure from Mainz, where the Archbishop was disturbed by Alberus' Protestant vigor. On his way to Küstrin he stayed for three days in Wittenberg as Luther's guest.

Alberus remained in Küstrin for only one year. Once again, he took advantage of every opportunity to travel in the surrounding regions, as is apparent from his detailed geographical descriptions of this area in the second edition of the fables. The digression in Fable 19 suggests that he went up the Oder River as far as Breslau. During this year in Küstrin Alberus published the second edition of the Praecepta morum, which was again dedicated to Luther's son. To this edition Alberus appended his Rudimenta grammatices, an elementary manual on Latin grammar meant, like the Praecepta, for the instruction of youth.

By July of 1538 Alberus had left Küstrin to return to Sprendlingen. But the difficulties that had prompted him to leave Sprendlingen the year before had not disappeared in his absence. Indeed, there is evidence that his relationship with the members of his own church had become strained. "Offt, wan ich habe predigen wollen auf den Feiertagen," he complains, "haben die leute fuchs und

hasen iagen."[19] The situation did not improve, and Alberus finally left Sprendlingen permanently after approximately one more year.

Little is known about his whereabouts immediately after leaving Sprendlingen. He may, as Körner states, have taught briefly in Butzbach.[20] In any case, he was in Marburg in May of 1540. In December of that year he was again Luther's guest in Wittenberg. Luther's efforts to find a position for Alberus were not immediately successful. On December 11 Luther wrote to Elizabeth of Brandenburg on Alberus' behalf, describing him as a "gelert frumer feiner man."[21] Nothing apparently came of this. The following year, however, Alberus was called to Brandenburg by Joachim II.

A number of Alberus' more noteworthy works were published during these last two years. In February 1539, before leaving Sprendlingen, he published Das Ehbüchlin. As Alberus himself tells us, the first part is his free adaptation of a dialogue by Desiderius Erasmus.[22] The second part is an abridged version of Alberus' own Eyn gut buch von der Ehe, published originally in 1536. Two polemics appeared early in this same year. The first is directed against Georg Witzel, who after initially supporting Luther had returned to the Roman Catholic Church. The title is Das der Glaub an Jesum Christum alleyn gerecht vnd selig mach, widder Jorg Witzeln Mammelucken vnd Ischariothen. The second polemic, Vom Vnderscheid der Euangelischen vnd Papistischen Messz, für die einfeltigen,

is directed against Protestant fanatics as well as Roman Catholics. The essential difference between the two Masses, Alberus asserts, is that in the Protestant Mass all communicants partake of the Sacrament. The elimination of clerical vestments, religious images and choral music is not essential, he argues. Another work published during this period was the Novvum Dictionarii Genvs, a German rhyming dictionary begun some eighteen years earlier in Büdingen. Like the Praecepta morum, the dictionary was meant for the instruction of youth and was dedicated to the two sons of Philip of Hesse. The last work to be mentioned here is Von der Schlangen Verfürung, vnd Gnade Christi vnsers Heilands, Ein Gesprech zwischen Gott, Adam, Eva, Abel, Cain. This work was printed in Berlin in 1541 but it must have been completed before Alberus moved to Brandenburg, for the preface is dated January 1, 1541, barely three weeks after Luther's letter to Elizabeth of Brandenburg recommending Alberus. This preface is addressed to Hedwig, second wife of Joachim II of Brandenburg, and indicates that Alberus was already known to the family. It is certainly likely that it influenced Joachim's decision to offer Alberus a position in Neustadt-Brandenburg. The work itself was an immediate success, going through six editions in the next eighteen years, and was the inspiration for Hans Sachs' comedy Die vngleichen kinder Eva wie sie Gott der Herr anredet.[23]

Despite this propitious initiation, the situation

Alberus found in Brandenburg was far from ideal. Protestantism had become acceptable there only a short time before. In 1534, months before his death, Joachim I, brother of Archbishop Albert of Mainz, had decreed that his lands and ancestors would remain ever loyal to the Roman Church. Indeed, Körner speculates (p. 61), only consideration for his wife Elizabeth, who was more sympathetic to Protestantism, had prevented him from undertaking a vigorous persecution of the Protestants. His successor, Joachim II, seems to have been more favorably disposed to the reform movement, but his wife Hedwig was a devout Catholic. By this time, however, support for Luther had become strong among the nobility and in the towns. The choice of Alberus for Pastor of Neustadt-Brandenburg may have been a compromise, for, as we have already seen, he had spoken out repeatedly and sharply against the radical Protestants. In any event, he had trouble right from the start. The appearance of his pamphlet Newe zeittung von Rom in 1541 enraged the Roman Catholics. The most offensive piece in the pamphlet, Ein new Te Deum laudamus, . . . Verdeutscht durch Bepstlicher Heiligkeit guten Freund, Erasmum Alberum, was his translation and adaptation of a parody on the Ambrosian Hymn to Paul III. Körner argues that his open defiance was deliberate: "Er wusste, was er tat. Einen vernichtenden Schlag wollte er den Papisten beibringen, durch deren heimliches Treiben er sich überall behindert sah" (pp. 63-64). If this was Alberus' intention, he was

to be sorely disappointed. His support, rather than that of the Catholics, was undermined. Various charges were brought against him, among others that he had tried to start a rebellion during the Elector's absence. When he complained the following year about the excessive taxes being levied on members of the clergy, he was dismissed. Luther's bitterness and rage over this treatment of his loyal disciple is recorded in one of the Tischreden:

> Ich wolt, das ich vnd alle meine kinder gestorben weren! Denn es wirt noch wunderlich in der welt zugehn. Wer da leben soll, der wirt sehen, das es imer erger wirt. Drumb nimbt vnser Herrgott die seinen itzunder hinweg vnd beweiset, das Johannes saget: Ventilabrum suum in manus accipiet. Itzt samlet er sein korn ein in den schöffell, in das scheuerlein, abr mitt den spreuen wird er gar wunderbarlich vmbgehen: Comburet eos igni inextinguibili, sagt der Text. So that er mitt Rom auch. . . . Also wirt er mitt Deutschland auch thun, wirt die fromen also hin nemen vnd darnach mitt Deutschem land ein ende machen; denn es hatt die straff jhe wol vordienet, vnd ist noch keines auffhörens. Der marggraff hat itzt dem Albero vrlaub geben, darumb das er zu im in das leger hat geschriben vnd gebeten, man wölle die arme prediger nicht mit schatzungen zu sehr vberlegen, denn sie mussen von iren solde vierlei schatzung geben, dauon sie sich erhalten sollen. Itzt mus er ein auffrurer heissen! Darzu haben im seine burger, die von Brandenburg, ein bar schu an sein haus gehenckt vnd dazu geschrieben: Surge et ambula! Solt Gott in solchem contemptu verbi divini et ministrorum nicht mitt feusten drein schlagen?[24]

There was, it seems, one other reason for Alberus' dismissal. In a letter of recommendation dated January 15, 1543, Melanchthon wrote that Alberus was dismissed for criticizing Archbishop Albert of Mainz,[25] who even after the death of his brother Joachim I continued to enjoy

considerable influence in Brandenburg. Thus the archbishop who at the outset of the Reformation had been at the center of the indulgence controversy and whose influence Alberus had felt during his years in Sprendlingen continued to exercise decisive control over Alberus' life.

Once again Alberus found refuge with Luther in Wittenberg. During his stay in Brandenburg he had married a second time, but his wife apparently did not accompany him to Wittenberg. He did, however, take with him the manuscript of Der Barfuser Münche Eulenspiegel vnd Alcoran. It was inspired by a visitation to a Franciscan monastery undertaken by Alberus in the name of the Elector Joachim II. During his inspection of the monastery library Alberus found no Bible, but instead, in his words, "Bücher, darin solche erschreckliche Gotteslesterungen stehen, dergleichen vnser keyner nie zuuor gehört, hatten auch nicht gedacht, das niemand solch toll vnsinnig vnd leichfertig ding erdencken, noch glauben soll." Among these books he found Bartholomew of Pisa's Liber Conformitatum, in which the similarities between Saint Francis and Christ are enumerated. Alberus' work is not a satire, as some have claimed; it is rather a translation of selected passages from the original to which Alberus added nothing but brief marginal notes.[26] It was printed in Wittenberg in 1542. Luther wrote the preface, in which he characterized the work as follows:

> Denn das soltu wissen / das ich D. Martinus Luther / der ich itzt noch lebe vnd dis schreibe / auch einer des hauffens gewest bin / Der solchs

> hat mussen gleuben vnd anbeten. . . . Das Buch ist bey den Barfusern fur das Euangelium gehalten / vnd haben der Christenheit furgeblewet Franciscum an Christi stat.

This work enjoyed great popularity in Germany and in other Protestant areas of Europe. A Latin edition appeared in the same year and in 1550 an English translation was published in London.

Alberus remained in Wittenberg for more than a year. In August 1543 under Luther's direction he received the Doctorate of Theology. Later that same year he accepted a one-year appointment as Pastor in Staden, where he had spent his boyhood. Before his year in Staden was up, he was offered the position of superintendent and pastor in Babenhausen, a town about ten miles south of Hanau, and he was delighted to accept. But on October 29, 1544, after he had already given notice in Staden and had sent his family to Langen, where they were to wait until he could arrange matters in Babenhausen, the position there was suddenly canceled.

Bitterly disappointed, Alberus suspected once again the influence of Archbishop Albert of Mainz. The church in Babenhausen, like that in nearby Sprendlingen, where Alberus had also had problems because of his outspoken criticism of the Archbishop, was still attached to the Archdiocese of Mainz. But Graf Philip IV of Hanau-Lichtenberg, the earldom in which Babenhausen was located, was sympathetic to the Protestant movement. After some

hesitation, he instructed his magistrate in Babenhausen to seek one or two men who were adherents of "der rechten evangelischen Lehre" (Körner, p. 76). Alberus was suggested, and, when he made a very favorable impression on Philip, he was offered the position. But, Körner argues, Philip was not a man of strong character. Under pressure from Mainz, he canceled the appointment.

Having no means of support and no reserves to fall back on, Alberus felt compelled to fight the cancellation and force Babenhausen to honor the contract it had offered him. Finally, after protracted negotiations, the offer was renewed, but with several stipulations, among which were that Alberus refrain from mentioning Archbishop Albert in his sermons and that he seek prior approval before submitting anything for publication. Furthermore, he was to be pastor, not superintendent.

Such stipulations can hardly have been calculated to inspire dedication in the new pastor. And yet, for a time at least, Alberus entered into his new responsibilities with energy and enthusiasm. In July 1545, however, barely half a year after taking the post, he was once again released. As on the previous occasions, he sought refuge with Luther in Wittenberg, and after the latter's death in February 1546 with Melanchthon. Körner speculates that Luther's last days were made easier by the presence of Alberus, who was, in so many ways, like him. In Ein Predigt vom Ehestand Alberus tells of one of the last meals

they had together, during which Luther said: "Viel meinen, ich sey allzu hefftig vnd geschwind gegen dem Bapstumb. Dagegen klage ich, das ich leider viel zu gelind bin. Ich wolt aber, das ich eitel donnerschlege widder das Bapstumb reden könnte und ein iglich wort ein donneraxt were."[27] Even in these last days of bitterness and disillusionment, Luther shows the uncompromising zeal and obstinacy which had served as an inspiration to his faithful pupil.

In April 1546 Alberus was offered a position in Rothenburg on the Tauber, the imperial city in which Protestantism had enjoyed strong support from the beginning. But here too, where he had every right to be optimistic, he was to be disappointed. Upon his arrival he became ill and remained near death for five weeks. The city, which had lost two other pastors to sickness in the preceding three months, feared that another death might make it impossible to find a fourth pastor willing to come there. Alberus was therefore offered very liberal separation terms, and when it was possible for him to move, he journeyed to Nuremberg, where he continued his convalescence.

By August of 1546 he was once again Melanchthon's guest in Wittenberg. In a letter dated August 6, he indicated that he still did not feel well enough to seek a new position.[28] By that autumn war had broken out between the imperial forces of Charles V and the Schmalkaldic League. On November 6, in anticipation of the occupation of

Wittenberg by the imperial forces, the University was dissolved. Alberus fled to Brandenburg, preceded by his wife, and found refuge with her family. Early in 1547 he accepted the invitation of George von Minckwitz, a knight whom he had come to know during this stay in Brandenburg, and moved his household to the latter's residence in Leipzig, where he remained until the second half of 1548.

These first two years after Luther's death were trying times for Protestantism. In the Schmalkaldic War, which has already been mentioned as resulting in the dissolution of the University of Wittenberg, the two most powerful Protestant princes, John Frederick of Saxony and Philip of Hesse, were defeated by the imperial forces of Charles V. John Frederick was forced to surrender his electoral title as well as much of his land to Duke Maurice of Saxony, who, though a Lutheran, fought with Charles against the Protestants. With the defeat of the Schmalkaldic League, virtually all of southern and most of northern Germany had to yield to Charles' authority. Yet it was not altogether a victory for Catholicism, for some of Charles' allies, notably Maurice, were Protestants.

In an effort to bring about a workable religious compromise until a general council could be convened, Charles appointed a committee consisting of one Protestant, John Agricola, and two Roman Catholics, Julius von Pflug and Michael Helding, to prepare a document setting forth principles acceptable to both sides. This document, known

as the Augsburg Interim, was proclaimed an imperial law in May 1548. It made some concessions to Protestantism, but the overall tone was decidedly Roman Catholic. While granting clerical marriages with papal dispensation, communion in both kinds, and the need for church reform, it reaffirmed the authority of the pope, the seven sacraments, transubstantiation, and the veneration of saints. Understandably, it met with resistance on both sides. Elector Maurice, who was now faced with the task of ruling an actively Protestant Saxony, was forced to make further concessions. With the help of Melanchthon, he issued a second document known as the Leipzig Interim. Though essentially Lutheran, it granted seven sacraments and the use of Latin in services.[29]

Much of Alberus' literary activity during the years following Luther's death was polemic in nature. In an essay written in 1546 and titled Ob die Stände des Reichs einem tyrannischen Kayser widerstehen mögen, he defended the right of the Protestants to oppose the Emperor in the War of Schmalkalden. This essay was never printed and the manuscript copy has been lost, but the content is apparent from other works as well as from the title.[30] A second work, consisting actually of three separate pieces sewn together in the form of a dialogue, bears the title Ein Dialogus, oder Gespräch etlicher Personen vom Interim. Item, vom krieg des Antychrists zu Rom, Bapst Pauli des dritten, mit hülff Keiser Caroli des Fünfften, wider Hertzog Johann Friderichen Churfürsten zu Sachssen etc. . . .

Item, Von den Zeychen des Jüngsten tags. Goedeke (p. 445) attributes this work to Alberus, although it appeared anonymously in 1548. But Carolsfeld (pp. 85-87) raises some doubts as to whether Alberus is really the author of all three parts, and Körner (pp. 104-105) concludes that although they were all written by Alberus they cannot have been combined and published in this form by him.

That Alberus wrote a dialogue opposing the Interim there can be no doubt. In a letter to Hartmann Beyer dated August 24, 1550, he indicated that he had written such a dialogue. He made the same claim two years later in Vom Basilisken zu Magdeburg, which was addressed to Caspar Aquila:

> Ich weys nicht, ob ir oder ich zum ersten widder das Interim geschrieben habe. Dann so bald das Interim . . . zu Augsburg ausginge, damit der Teuffel die Augsburgische Confession vmbstossen wolt, schriebe ich ein Dialogum widder den selben Grewel, der ward von vielen abgeschrieben, weill ihn niemand trücken wolt, dann sie sagten, er were zu scharff, so man doch den Teuffel nicht scharff gnug angreiffen kan.[31]

Thus if this is the dialogue which appeared as the first part of the work named above, it was printed without Alberus' knowledge.

Alberus left Leipzig in the second half of 1548 and moved to Magdeburg, which had become the most important asylum for those who had opposed the Interim.[32] Whether he held any position there is not clear. Certainly, however, he continued to write against the Interim and against Maurice, who was commissioned by the emperor to exercise

the imperial ban on Magdeburg. Maurice complained repeatedly about the lampoons directed against him from Magdeburg, and Matthias Flacius Illyricus noted that if the theologians sympathetic to the Interim had their way, he and Alberus would be among the first to be hanged from the walls after the city capitulated.[33]

Three pieces from this period survived in handwritten form. The first, contra Colacem, was directed against John Bugenhagen, whom Alberus castigated for deserting the legitimate elector John Frederick in favor of the usurper Maurice. The other two are Vermanung an die Christliche Kirche in Sachsenland and Ob man den Papisten auch in Mitteldingen weichen solle. A number of secular and religious songs of the period also reflect this polemic spirit, for example Ein lied vnd vermanung an die landsknechte, dass sie der armen christenheit vnd ihrem lieben vaterlande beistehen vnd die vorrether vnd vorherer desselben strafen wollen, and Ein new lied von der belegerung der werden stadt Megdeburg. But not everything Alberus wrote in Magdeburg was controversial. In the very brief Der Holdseligen Blummen der Treifeltigkeyt bedeutung, he found in the pansy a natural symbol for the trinity, demonstrating that God is present in the beauties of nature. Finally, the second edition of his fables appeared in 1550, while he was still in Magdeburg.

When Magdeburg was compelled to yield to the imperial terms late in 1551, Alberus alone was banished from the

city on the explicit order of Elector Maurice. To find refuge once again with Melanchthon was no longer possible. The friendship between the two men had cooled considerably during Alberus' three years in Magdeburg. In 1549 Melanchthon had expressed his strong disapproval of the personal attacks in Alberus' writings.[34] Alberus, for his part, was no doubt dismayed at the conciliatory attitude Melanchthon had shown toward certain terms of the Interim. In a letter written in April 1548, Melanchthon indicated that he would not openly oppose the Interim, and, worse still, remarked that in former times he had shown an "unseemly servitude to Luther."[35] This letter, addressed to Christopher von Carlowitz, one of Maurice's counselors, was copied and circulated throughout Germany. It must have pained and angered Alberus, and there is no evidence that he was ever again on close terms with Melanchthon.

A return to Brandenburg was likewise impossible. To show how unwelcome Alberus was there, Joachim II had confiscated the property Alberus had duly inherited from his wife's parents. In any case, Alberus was looking for a refuge where he could continue to publish, and for this reason he decided on Hamburg, one of several cities in the north where the Interim was openly defied. On his way he made visits in Stendal, Salzwedel and Lüneburg before arriving in Hamburg in December 1551. The following year he journeyed to Lübeck, where he became embroiled in a bitter struggle among the Protestants there, until he was

finally forced to leave the city. In October 1552 he was offered a position in New Brandenburg which he was pleased to accept. Once again, however, he found himself victimized by the enmity between the city council and Duke John Albert, who had appointed Alberus. On May 5, 1553, before his difficulties with the city council had been settled, he died.

During these last eighteen months of his life, Alberus continued to wage a war of words against his religious enemies, particularly the Protestant groups which had not followed Luther's teachings. Three works catalogue the names of those who had opposed Luther. One of these, De grote Woldadt, so vnse Here Godt, dorch den truwen vnde düren Propheten Doct. Martinum Luther der Werldt ertoget, has survived only in a Low German version, although the original edition was in High German. The other two are Widder die verfluchte lere der Carlstader (containing the essay Von der Kinder Tauff, wider den Irrtumb vnd falsche Lehre der Schwermer, also published separately) and Vom Wintervogel Halcyon. In the latter Alberus likens the Christian Church to this bird, which survives and triumphs in a dangerous and hostile world.

In the letter to Hartmann Beyer dated August 24, 1550, already mentioned above in connection with his dialogue against the Interim, Alberus indicated that he intended to publish together all of his songs, of which there were forty. Unfortunately, he was never able to do this, and only twenty-one of these songs have survived.

The Source for Alberus' Fables

Of the three efforts to identify the source for Alberus' fables, the first and most important was that of Braune in his 1892 edition of the fables (xxix-lvi). The source is, Braune shows, a collection of fables published first by Martin Dorpius in Löwen no later than 1514. It will be referred to hereafter as the Dorpius collection. The complete title is Fabularum quae hoc libro continentur interpretes atque autores sunt hi. Guilielmus Goudanus. Hadrianus Barlandus. Erasmus Roterodamus. Aulus Gellius. Angelus Politianus. Petrus Crinitus. Joannes Anntonius Campanus. Plinius Secundus Novocomensis. Nicolaus Gerbellius Phorcensis. Aesopi vita ex Max. Planude excerpta et aucta. Braune was able to locate ten extant editions printed before 1520. The source for 43 of Alberus' 49 fables is to be found among the 140 fables of this collection. The editions published after 1520 contain 233 additional fables for a total of 373. One of these later editions was used by Burkart Waldis as a source for his collection.

There is no certainty about the source of the remaining fables in Alberus' collection. Braune concludes that they may have been transmitted to Alberus orally, and mentions Luther in particular. Arthur Ludwig Stiefel argues that there was a written source for at least four of the remaining ones.[36] On the basis of similarities in phraseology

as well as in individual details, Stiefel concludes that the source for Fable 11 is in Ottomar Luscinius' Ioci ac Sales, published in 1524. Using similar evidence, he traces Fable 21 to a fable supposedly published by Luther in 1528; Fable 47 to Von Schimpff vnnd Ernst, an adaptation of Johannes Pauli's work which appeared anonymously in 1545; and Fable 49 to the Fabulae Aesopicae of Joachim Camerarius, first published in 1538. Stiefel's argument on the last fable is enhanced by the fact that Alberus based his biography of Aesop on the Vita Aesopi in the Camerarius collection, as was also pointed out by Braune.

Stiefel's contribution was clearly not known to Hans Volz, who returned to Braune's suggestion that some of the remaining fables may have been transmitted orally.[37] Volz argues that Philip Melanchthon on two known occasions, in 1536 and in 1538, told a fable strikingly similar to Alberus' Fable 48, "Von eim Bawern, Schlangen vnd Fuchs." It is more than likely, Volz concludes, that Alberus heard the fable from Melanchthon during his brief stay in Wittenberg in 1537.

The Editions of Alberus' Fables

The first edition of Alberus' fables was printed in Hagenau in 1534 and bore the title Etliche fabel Esopi. It consists of seventeen fables, fifteen of which are based on the Dorpius collection, and is dedicated to Johannes Chun, a friend from Alberus' time in Ursel. A new edition of

these seventeen fables appeared in Augsburg in 1539. With the exception of a few minor changes in the orthography, the fables are reprinted as they were in 1534, but each is accompanied by a woodcut.

A revised and enlarged edition of the fables was published in 1550 by Peter Braubach in Frankfurt. The title in this edition is Das buch von der Tugent vnd Weisheit. It contains, in addition to the seventeen fables of the first edition, some of which have been substantially revised, thirty fables appearing here for the first time and two that had been published separately earlier. One of these, "Von einem Wolff, vnd einem gemalten Haupt," had appeared without the concluding moral in Alberus' Eyn gut buch von der Ehe in 1536. The other, "Von einem armen Edelman," had been published alone in 1537 to honor the city Ursel, to which it is dedicated. Also new to the 1550 edition is the biography of Aesop supposedly based on the Vita Aesopi of the Camerarius collection. Like that of 1539, the 1550 edition contains woodcuts, one bearing the monogram of Lucas Cranach. The art historian Konrad Lange concluded, however, that the woodcuts are far too crude to be those of Cranach, and that his name was probably used because of his great popularity among Protestants.[38] Before the end of the century the collection went through five more editions, three of them with another set of woodcuts intended originally for a different collection of fables.

NOTES

[1] Karl Goedeke, Grundriss zur Geschichte der deutschen Dichtung, II (Dresden, 1886), 437-447--hereafter cited as "Goedeke."

[2] Die Fabeln des Erasmus Alberus, ed. Wilhelm Braune (Halle, 1892), iii-viii. This edition of Alberus' fables has been used throughout the present analysis. It offers the text of the 1550 edition with complete critical apparatus for the 1534 edition. It will be cited hereafter as "Braune."

[3] Franz Schnorr von Carolsfeld, Erasmus Alberus (Dresden, 1893)--hereafter cited as "Carolsfeld."

[4] Emil Körner, Erasmus Alber (Leipzig, 1910)--hereafter cited as "Körner."

[5] Körner, p. 3. Modern accounts which erroneously give the place of birth as Sprendlingen apparently all rely on Goedeke. Braune correctly cites Alberus' own pronouncement from the first edition of his fables: "Ich bin ein grober Wedderawer dem die Zung nit wol geschliffen ist." Körner offers further evidence and traces the family name to Friedberg, where Alberus' father was born.

[6] As quoted in Carolsfeld, p. 4.

[7] Körner, p. 6, writes the following about the school in Weilburg: "Wenig genug gab es hier zu lernen. Ausser Lesen und Schreiben ward noch der Glaube, das Vater Unser, einige Psalmen und Mönchslatein gelehrt. Erhard Schnepff, der 1526 dahin berufen ward, bezeichnet den Zustand als 'kläglich'."

[8] Preserved Smith, The Life and Letters of Martin Luther (New York, 1911), p. 42. This work will be cited hereafter as "Smith."

[9] Körner, p. 9, refers to Alberus' Widder das Lesterbuch des Hochfliehenden Osiandri, where Alberus indicates that he was with Luther in Wittenberg in 1518. Alberus' name does not appear in the enrollment list until 1520, but Körner argues that these lists were not always accurate.

[10] Leopold von Ranke, Deutsche Geschichte im Zeitalter der Reformation, ed. Willy Andreas (Wiesbaden, 1957), pp. 234-235.

[11] As quoted in Körner, p. 11.

[12] Körner discusses the letter by Alberus and the Dutch humanist's reaction to it in some detail, pp. 20-23. The letter by the latter was addressed to John Faber. Luther's letter, Körner speculates, was probably addressed to Konrad Pellikanus. Körner offers no explanation as to why these two letters were published along with that of Alberus'.

[13] As quoted in Carolsfeld, p. 14: "Alberus ille censor Erasmi isthic agit ludi literarii magistrum in oppido Smach [Eisenach] opinor."

[14] Körner offers this quotation without indicating the source, p. 23.

[15] As quoted in Körner, p. 24.

[16] Carolsfeld gives the complete text of this letter, pp. 161-162.

[17] As quoted in Carolsfeld, p. 19.

[18] Körner, p. 40. The evidence is certainly not conclusive. Körner notes: "Als er nach Sprendlingen zog, redete er von sich und 'den seinen'. Darnach hat er Kinder gehabt. Nichts deutet darauf hin, dass er sie 1537 noch hatte."

[19] As quoted in Körner, p. 46.

[20] Körner, p. 55. The only evidence Körner offers is Alberus' praise of Butzbach in his description of the Wetterau.

[21] As quoted in Carolsfeld, p. 40.

[22] Körner, p. 47: "Alber liess sich nicht so weit fortreissen, dass er dem Feinde die Anerkennung versagte, die er ihm zollen konnte. So enthält die kleinere erste Hälfte . . . 'einen Dialog des hochgelerten Mannes mit Namen E r a s m u s R o t t e r d a m, welchen ich verdeutscht habe, sonder den Eheleuten zu gut unterweiln

etwas auffgelassen, unterweiln etwas dazu gesetzt . . . .'"

[23] Goedeke, pp. 444-445, lists six editions between 1541 and 1558. Carolsfeld discusses Hans Sachs' dependency on Alberus, pp. 45-46.

[24] Martin Luther, Tischreden, Weimar ed., V (1919), 201.

[25] Carolsfeld, p. 53: "Melanchthon, der in zwei am 4. Dezember 1542 geschriebenen Briefen als Grund der Vertreibung angiebt, dass Alberus die masslose Ausplünderung der Steuerzahler und die Untersättlichkeit des Hofes getadelt habe, sagt in einem Schreiben vom 15. Januar 1543, worin er seinen Schüler [i.e., Alberus] für eine Anstellung in Nordhausen empfiehlt, er sei aus der Mark 'wegen einer von ihm gegen den Mainzer Bischof gethanen Äusserung' entlassen worden."

[26] Carolsfeld, p. 55, asserts that only those who are not familiar with the original could call Alberus' work a satire.

[27] As quoted in Körner, p. 89.

[28] Carolsfeld offers the complete text of this letter, pp. 197-198.

[29] This account of the War of Schmalkalden and the Interim is based on Harold J. Grimm, The Reformation Era (New York, 1965), pp. 254-259. This work will be cited hereafter as "Grimm." Also consulted was Clyde Leonard Manschreck, Melanchthon, the Quiet Reformer (New York, 1958), pp. 280-281.

[30] This essay is not included in Goedeke's bibliography, but is discussed in Körner, pp. 98-99, and Carolsfeld, pp. 83-84.

[31] Carolsfeld gives the complete text of the letter to Hartmann Beyer, pp. 204-206, and quotes the passage from Vom Basilisken zu Magdeburg, pp. 85-86.

[32] Grimm, pp. 257-258: "Popular resistance to the Interim was centered principally in those areas of northern Germany not touched by the Schmalkaldic War. Magdeburg, which had successfully defended itself against the imperial troops, became the most important asylum for the exiles."

[33] Carolsfeld, pp. 99-100, and Körner, p. 129.

[34] Körner, p. 118, cites a letter from Melanchton to Georg von Anhalt, in which Melanchthon expresses his disapproval of Alberus' work.

[35] James William Richard, Philip Melanchthon (New York, 1907), pp. 329-332.

[36] Arthur Ludwig Stiefel, "Zu den Quellen der Erasmus Alberschen Fabeln," Euphorion, IX (1902), 609-621.

[37] Hans Volz, "Ein Quellenbeitrag zu den Fabeln des Erasmus Alber," Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie, LXXVII (1958), 59-63.

[38] In response to Goedeke's assertion that the woodcuts are by Cranach, Lange wrote to Braune (xiv): "Das Monogramm L. C. mit dem Drachen S. 46 ist allerdings dasjenige Cranachs. Aber das bezieht sich doch wol nur auf den Vers S. 47 [Fable 13, line 12] 'Als hetts Laux Maler selbst gemacht'. Dass die Holzschnitte von oder nach Cranach wären, daran ist nicht zu denken. Sie sind ganz roh und können überhaupt auf keinen bedeutenden Meister zurückgeführt werden. L. Cranach wird offenbar nur als Typus, seiner Popularität in lutherischen Kreisen wegen, genannt. Sonst kommt eine Signatur auf keinem Holzschnitte vor."

II

RENAISSANCE LITERARY CRITICISM AND THE THEORY OF THE FABLE IN SIXTEENTH-CENTURY GERMANY

The purpose of the present chapter is to present the critical milieu in which the fable collections of Erasmus Alberus, Luther and Burkart Waldis were written. To this end two kinds of criticism will be considered. First, it will be useful to examine critical attitudes toward literature in general, for it is only in the context of such attitudes that we can understand the sixteenth-century conception of the fable. And secondly, we shall consider critical assessments of the fable in particular.

Renaissance Literary Criticism in Italy

Any attempt to characterize general critical attitudes toward literature must begin in Italy, for it is here that Renaissance criticism emerges first. The earliest such Italian efforts were defenses of imaginative literature which strained to justify it in terms of its value to the devout Christian. These efforts are not, in this respect, radically different from those made a century earlier. Indeed, one is struck by the gradualness of the transition from medieval to Renaissance criticism. Boccaccio, for example, in his Life of Dante, asserts that poetry is

theology, and likens it to Scripture:

> Since many who do not understand such matters think that poetry is nothing else than a mere fabulous narrative, I have decided to exceed my promise and show that it is theology. . . . But because some foolish men rise up against the poets, saying that they have composed disgusting and wicked fables that have no harmony with truth, and that in some other way than by fables they should show their ability and give their teaching to men, I wish to go somewhat farther with the present discussion. Let men of this sort, then, consider the visions of Daniel, those of Isaiah, those of Ezekiel, and others in the Old Testament. . . . Let them consider also the visions of the evangelists in the New Testament, . . . and, if any poetic story is found so far from truth and from the verisimilar as these in many places appear on the surface, it may be conceded that the poets alone have written fables because they were unable to give delight or benefit.[1]

As Wimsatt and Brooks state, this defense of poetry was also common in the Middle Ages.[2] But Spingarn points out that Boccaccio, along with Petrarch, gave this defense a new dimension by arguing that theology itself is a form of poetry.[3] The argument likening poetry to Scripture is meant to appeal strongly to the Christian who subordinates all else to his faith, and as we shall see later, it becomes a potent defense of the fable for the sixteenth-century German fabulist.

But in its work on Aristotle's Poetics the Renaissance was charting waters wholly unknown to the Middle Ages. While Horace's Ars poetica was apparently well-known throughout the Middle Ages, Aristotle's Poetics was not rediscovered until the sixteenth century. Indeed, this work seems to have had relatively little influence on

classical Rome, for as Spingarn says, "there is no apparent reference to the Poetics in Horace, Cicero, or Quintilian" (p. 16). A Latin translation by Giorgio Valla appeared in Venice in 1498. This work had, according to Spingarn, "considerable influence on the dramatic literature, but scarcely any immediate influence on literary criticism" (p. 17). It was, Spingarn notes further, inferior from a scholarly point of view. The Greek text of the Poetics appeared in 1508, and the first critical edition in 1548.

But Aristotle did not supplant Horace among the sixteenth-century Italian theorists. Weinberg writes:

> Horace's work represented, in addition to the specific recommendations of the text itself, a general way of thinking about poetry which was highly acceptable to the Renaissance mind and which continued to dominate critical thinking in spite of the emergence of such new points of view as that contained in Aristotle's Poetics.[4]

The decisive passage in Horace is that in which he discusses the poet's purpose:

> Aut prodesse volunt aut delectare poetae,
> aut simul et iucunda et idonea dicere vitae.
> (333-334)
>
> The poet's aim is either to profit or to please,
> or to blend in one the delightful and the useful.[5]

Spingarn cites the first of these two lines as the starting point of every discussion of the function of poetry in the Renaissance. He explains: "This line suggests that the function of poetry may be to please, or to instruct, or both to please and instruct; and every one of the writers of the Renaissance takes one or other of these three positions"

(p. 47). Even a cursory survey of Italian criticism in the first half of the sixteenth century reveals how much importance was attached to "usefulness" or "instruction" as well as "delight." Giangiorgio Trissino, in his Poetica, which appeared in 1529, wrote:

> It is a splendid thing to benefit humanity, and is thought the more noble not merely as the benefit extends to a larger number of persons, but also as the pleasure of those benefited is greater, as in the instance of the physician who is thought more skillful when he not merely restores many to health but also does it without pain and with pleasant medicines. Now the greatest benefit that can be rendered to human beings is to teach them to live well. . . . Since the greater part of men are of such nature that they unwillingly lend their ears to instruction and listen with delight to stories and pleasant things, I judge those ancient poets should be greatly praised who considering delight and general usefulness have mingled with fables and stories of battle the most excellent instructions on human life, and in that way have made them pleasing to the people, whereas if these teachings had been unadorned they would perhaps have pleased little. . . . the poets are those who mingle with delight precepts designed to make the lives of men perfect. . . . (Gilbert, p. 213)

It is worth noting that in his very choice of analogy Trissino makes it clear that the pleasure is there to serve the benefit. The doctor comes to benefit the patient, not to bring him pleasure; the pleasure becomes a means by which he gets the job done. The representation of poetry as sweet or pleasant medicine is a recurrent argument in Renaissance criticism.

A good example of the extent to which Horace's doctrine dominated even among those who had read Aristotle is to be found in Giraldi Cinthio's On the Composition of Romances

(1549). In discussing Aristotle's definition of tragedy, Cinthio writes:

> But the poet in his fictions imitates illustrious actions, presenting them not as they are but as they ought to be, and suitably accompanying things that have vice in them with the horrible and miserable (for the heroic poet does this as much as the tragic one when the material demands it), purges our minds from like passions and arouses them to virtue, as is seen in the definition that Aristotle gives of tragedy. . . . (Gilbert, p. 271)

Here Cinthio argues that Aristotle's catharsis is a kind of moral purging. He has replaced Aristotle's "pity and fear" with "vice," and he concludes that the catharsis of "like passions" arouses the mind to "virtue." Such an explanation of Aristotle's term is clearly an effort to reconcile him with Horace.

Even in the second half of the sixteenth century, the authority of Horace continued to dominate, but not unchallenged. Lodovico Castelvetro, in The Poetics of Aristotle Translated and Annotated (1571), states:

> Those who hold that poetry was invented chiefly for the sake of giving benefit, or to give benefit and delight together, should beware of opposing the authority of Aristotle, who here and elsewhere does not seem to assign any other end than delight; if indeed he consents to some profit, he grants it incidentally, as in the purgation of terror and compassion by means of tragedy. (Gilbert, p. 353)

But as late as 1594, Torquato Tasso, in his Discourses on the Heroic Poem, could assert:

> I say that a heroic poem is an imitation of illustrious actions, grand and perfect, composed in narrative form in the loftiest verse, having as its end to profit by delighting, that is, delight is the cause why no one fails to obtain benefit,

> because delight induces him to read the more gladly. But to profit through delight is perhaps the end of all poetry, for tragedy profits by delighting, and so does comedy. . . . (Gilbert, p. 470)

The defense of literature which has been sketched thus far is clearly designed to appeal to those who do not appreciate imaginative literature for its aesthetic value and therefore must be convinced of its moral and didactic value. Spingarn (pp. 3-4) argues that this defense was directed against the basic mistrust of literature inherited from the Middle Ages. But Saintsbury disagrees, asserting that there never was any such persistent distrust of literature in the Middle Ages, and arguing instead that these defenses were aimed at "severer and more obscurantist partisans of Catholicism, who were disposed to dislike men of letters as Reformers," and, even more, at "the Puritan and Philistine variety of Protestantism itself, which so soon turned against its literary leaders and allies."[6] Perhaps there is some truth in both views. In any case, a defense directed against either would necessarily condemn the immoral and the obscene vigorously. And, as Spingarn says, "this puristic notion of art is everywhere emphasized in Renaissance criticism" (p. 38). The examples he offers are Muzio and Maggi (pp. 49-50). The latter, adapting the familiar argument that represents poetry as medicine, likens the poet who treats of obscene matters with the physician who gives his patients poison. The need to condemn obscenity, as we shall see later, was felt just as

strongly by the sixteenth-century German fabulists.

Literary Criticism in Sixteenth-Century Germany

As Max Staege points out in Die Geschichte der deutschen Fabeltheorie, there is no discussion of the fable in the various poetics to come out of Germany in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.[7] Indeed, Staege adds, the word fable itself rarely occurs, and when it does it is generally in the sense of "invented story," as for example in Joachim Vadian's De Poetica et Carminis ratione (Vienna, 1518). The only exception cited by Staege is the statement in Christophorus Mylaeus' De scribenda universitatis rerum historia (Basel, 1511) that the essential feature of the fables of Aesop is that they attribute human speech and action to animals and inanimate objects.

Staege explains the absence of a detailed treatment of the fable by pointing out that there is no such treatment in Aristotle or Horace either, and the sixteenth-century theorists borrowed primarily from these two sources. One might add that most of the poetics mentioned by Staege appeared late in the fifteenth or early in the sixteenth century, several decades before the fable achieved its greatest popularity. He mentions the Margarita poetica of Albrecht von Eyb (1476), the Ars versificandi of Conrad Celtis (1486), the Ars versificandi of Heinrich Bebel (1506), the works by Vadian and Mylaeus mentioned above (1518 and 1511), Ulrich von Hutten's De arte versificandi

(1518), the Horace Commentary of Jodocus Willichius (1539), Georg Fabricius' De re poetica (1589), and Jacob Pontanus' Poeticarum Institutionum libri III (1594). But we must note that all but the last two appeared before the most popular fable collections of the century--those of Alberus and Waldis.

In any case, these German poetics were not intended to be deep and searching examinations of the nature of poetry and the separate genres. They were, instead, designed to provide instruction in prosody--and a fairly elementary instruction at that. Borinski describes them as follows:

> Die ersten jetzt noch vorliegenden Spuren, die die Poetik in Deutschland hinterlässt, sind eine erstaunliche Menge von Lehrbüchern der lateinischen Prosodik und Metrik. Das ist kein Zufall; die Kenntniss der antiken Metrik war gleich Null. . . . Wie eingewurzelt gerade in Deutschland die accentuirende, reimende 'Poesie der Mönche' gewesen sein muss, beweisen die Capitel de Scansione und die niemals fehlende Warnung vor leoninischem Reim.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Im Gegensatz gegen die freiere, den allgemein interessirenden Fragen sich zuwendende Poetik des Auslands ist die schulmässige Behandlung dieser Bücher für die spätere deutsche Poetik zum grossen Theil massgebend gewesen.[8]

Yet even if these works neglect the fable, as Staege asserts, and even if they do not deal in depth with the more important questions of the nature and purpose of literature, as those appearing in Italy did, they nevertheless do occasionally indulge in brief discussions which reflect attitudes toward literature consistent with those found in Italy. Above all, we find poetry defended in Germany, too, in terms of its instructional value. Without due consider-

ation of this defense as it was espoused in Germany, it is not possible to understand the seriousness with which the sixteenth-century German, and the Protestant in particular, approached the aesopic fable. The works mentioned above by Conrad Celtis and Jodocus Willichius will serve as examples.

Celtis' Ars versificandi appeared in 1486 and is addressed to Duke Frederick of Saxony. Most of it is devoted to the kind of instruction in prosody described above by Borinski, but at the beginning of the section entitled "De compositione materiali carminum," Celtis makes this statement on the poet's function:

> It is the duty of the poet to represent through the formal and graceful coherence of prose as well as poetry the mores, deeds, exploits, regions, peoples, areas of the world, rivers, courses of the constellations, and, through the use of images, the nature of things and the moods of the mind and spirit. . . .[9]

Here the emphasis is on poetry as a kind of learning experience. And where can one find such poetry at its best? In the literature of classical Greece and Rome, of course, as Celtis explains in the section "Quare et qui poetae a nobilibus legi debeant":

> Not without reason, renowned Duke Frederick, did it happen that the founders of the Greek and Roman Empires eagerly read so much from the poets and from their poetry. The writers of this literature were given the very highest honors. In the end they rewarded the poets, in the same manner as the conquerors, with the finest horses.[10]

The idealized picture of classical antiquity offered here is certainly typical of the Renaissance. Those in high

office honored the poets so greatly (and there is surely a message for Duke Frederick in this) because their eloquence served the state, and because they inspired men to pursue virtue and shun vice:

> It was assuredly the highest, indeed, an almost divine matter in the administration of their republic, that they strove to combine with wisdom the ultimate eloquence by means of which Rome and the world were ruled. This explains the public performances of the comedies and tragedies. Through these free inventions and through lofty persuasion, poets inflamed the minds of the spectators with the desire for virtue, and furthermore, they deterred the natural disposition of young men from evil . . . .[11]

Celtis thus sees the poet as imparting two kinds of instruction: first, he increases our knowledge of the world in general; and secondly, he provides us with moral instruction.

In 1539, more than fifty years after the appearance of Celtis' work, the Commentaria in Artem poeticam Horatii of Jodocus Willichius appeared. The subject is, as the title indicates, the Ars poetica of Horace, but in spirit this work is like the various poetics which preceded it. It approaches the problem in detail rather than in general, and its purpose seems to be to provide instruction, to teach the reader to reject bad literature and accept good. Willichius works his way through the Horace work by choosing a line or phrase as a critical precept and then commenting on it. There are 35 such precepts derived from the 476 lines of the poem. He skips over some passages altogether, and dwells at length on others. The decisive passage from

Horace quoted above is, of course, discussed at considerable length.

He begins this discussion by making it clear that he regards both delight and instruction as necessary to poetry:

> This concerns the purpose and the use of poets. For there were those who only wished to be delighted by stories, and there were those who liked philosophy. But he is best who has been able to experience both elements at the same time.[12]

Where delight alone prevails, the subject matter of literature becomes sensual pleasure. This, Willichius argues, led to the downfall of the Milesians, who have given their very name to the lewd story:

> For this reason they formerly warned everyone against the dangers of studying the poets. For stories to their liking were devised for sensual pleasure only. These stories were called Milesian, from Miletus in Ionia, and at the same time lewd. Afterward, for the same reasons, poets were called sensual, Milesian, and licentious. For the Milesians were spoken of very badly because of their extravagance and excesses. From these characteristics came the saying that the once stout-hearted Milesians degenerated to such an extent and because of their sensualism became so effeminate, since they were delighted with immoral stories, that they were led astray by these stories and blindly idled away their time. Then, when the stories contained neither truth nor even the semblance of truth, they deservedly were given this name from their licentiousness.[13]

Having dealt with what happens when instruction is lacking, Willichius now turns to its proper use:

> Truth is required in narrative poems and so is usefulness. . . . Again, there are those which at first appearance do not seem to give instruction on life in this way, such as those about the expedition of the Argonauts. But beneath the surface they make no small contribution to our awareness of historical events and the characters of people. Then they make contributions to our knowledge of geography.[14]

We note once again, as in Celtis, the use of literature as a means of learning, of acquiring knowledge. But certain themes which were allowed in Homer are not allowed the Christian:

> Finally, there are not a few which are destructive and ruinous, as for instance those about the Elysian fields, about lewd deeds, about the adulterous affairs of the gods, and about other things of this kind which, though they were perhaps allowed in Homer, are nevertheless not allowed us, since we are devoted to the name of Christianity. For poetry was invented to sing of what is virtuous and useful; but if it embraces what is foolish, foul and evil, what is more unwholesome for mankind? On this basis it should rather be banished to Hell, it being unworthy of righteous ears and eyes.[15]

Willichius returns to the terms used by Horace, "prodesse" and "delectare." But, significantly enough, he replaces the "aut" of the original with "et":

> How much more beautiful is that picture which is not composed merely of the frivolity and shallowness of things, but rather nourishes the spirit as well. Thus that poem is more pleasing which delights and also instructs.[16]

Finally, he praises the digression as especially suited for instruction:

> The ancients, moreover, strove to delight with merely this one idea, namely, that the minds of the readers or listeners would be captivated by the diversity of material, through digressions on delightful subjects. For some these were regal banquets, conversations of the gods or other heroes; for others there were biographical, geographical, historical, and other digressions.[17]

There are, in conclusion, two works mentioned in the secondary literature which, though somewhat obscure, do reflect clearly the sixteenth-century German conception of

the purpose of literature. The first of these is Augustinus Olmucensis' Dialogus in Defensionem Poetices (Venice, 1493). Saintsbury, in his discussion of this work, quotes Olmucensis' definition of poetry as "a metrical structure of true or feigned narration, composed in suitable rhythm or feet, and adjusted to utility and pleasure." (The emphasis is Saintsbury's, p. 28.) The second of these works is Jacob Locher's Oratio de studio humanarum disciplinarum et laude poetarum extemporalis habitu in publica auditorio studii Friburgensis (1496), which Lempicki describes as follows: "In begeisterten Worten preist er den hohen Wert der Dichtkunst und ihren veredelnden Einfluss auf die Gemüter der Jugend."[18] Locher was also the first to publish an edition of Horace in Germany.

In sum, it is clear that in Germany as in Italy critics took the duty of the poet to instruct very seriously, that this instruction, for Celtis and Willichius at least, goes beyond imparting moral lessons--though it of course includes this, too--and reaches for a kind of universal education. The poet not only praises virtue and censures vice; he also describes the peoples, customs, and geography of other countries and other parts of the world, and even the stars and constellations in the heavens above. In short, anything fit to be taught or learned is the proper subject of poetry. And Willichius observes that it is the function of the digression to provide just such instruction. Furthermore, the delight the reader experiences depends on the

presence of this instruction.

One senses in all this the exuberant thirst for knowledge which characterized the Renaissance. The emphasis on geography reflects the new awareness of the world in which they lived, and how that world was expanding during their lifetime. It is important to remember that in the fifty years before the appearance of Celtis' Ars versificandi the entire west coast of Africa had been discovered, and in the fifty-three years between the publication of this work and that of Willichius the first exploratory expeditions to the New World and to the Far East took place, including those of Columbus, Vespucci, Cartier and Cabot on the one hand, and those of Vasco de Gama, Albreu, Alvares and Magellan on the other. Is it any wonder then that Willichius and Celtis call upon the poet to incorporate this new knowledge, indeed, this new experience, into his work? And it would be a mistake to see in this notion of the poet as educator something artificial. The universal man of the Renaissance wants his poetry to be universal too. There can be for him no separation of the aesthetic experience of art from the intellectual experience.

The Theory of the Fable in Sixteenth-Century Germany

The principal sources for theoretical statements about the fable are, not surprisingly, the prefaces to individual fable collections. Erasmus Alberus and Luther both prefaced their collections with a defense of the fable, and we can

learn a great deal about their conception of the fable from these defenses. We shall examine these prefaces in some detail below. Before doing this, however, it will prove useful to examine two works by Philipp Melanchthon in which the fable is discussed at length.

The first of these, De utilitate fabularum, appeared in 1526. It is in the form of an oration, and begins with a truly Ciceronian exordium expressing Melanchthon's hope that his very modest talent will do justice to his subject. For, he asserts, no literary genre is more useful than the fable, and he indicates how he will demonstrate this:

> I shall see to it, unless hope fails me, that you realize that no other type of literature has been discovered that is more useful than the fable. To prove this, first we shall reveal why we think our ancestors wrote fables. They saw that mortals were born in a common condition, weak in both body and mind. They saw that nature decreed this condition, I think, to increase the parents' responsibility in guarding and educating their offspring.[19]

The body of the newborn infant, he continues, is so weak that we scarcely know it is alive unless it cries. In this state of complete dependency nature has provided a form of nourishment uniquely suited to the weak infant: mother's milk. But as the body grows stronger it can take on solid foods, until finally the child becomes strong enough to feed himself. And so it is with the mind, too. It must be nourished carefully, like the body, and the fable is an excellent means to accomplish this, for it presents truth in a way that is enticing and agreeable to the young mind:

> And as those who want children to love them lure them with sugar and the like, so the truth must be rendered agreeable by certain enticements and thus insinuate its way into young minds. And so our wisest men invented fables to arouse the sluggish and dormant minds of children with wonder. For what seems more strange to us than a wolf conversing in a human way with a horse, or a lion with a small fox, or an oak with a gourd? Silently we wonder to ourselves what the feelings and speeches of the beasts were. This wonder engenders a certain desire to understand the thing more thoroughly, and invites us to learn why it was written. The mind is gradually aroused, becomes alert to the study of human affairs, and begins to recognize the difference between good and evil.[20]

The fable has, furthermore, the power to make boys more gentle and humane:

> Perhaps also the writers of fables wanted to make boys more gentle by means of pleasant arguments. For a boy has at this age a certain bitterness and wildness, like a green apple, and unless this is mellowed by humane training, he becomes some kind of savage, indeed, a wild beast.[21]

As evidence for his argument Melanchthon now offers a number of fables from classical literature, first, the one about the war between the frogs and the mice, which he attributes to Homer:

> Poets admire the wisdom of learned Homer so much that they raised him above the common lot of mortals and feel that his mind was divinely inspired. And for the boys whom he taught in Greece, Homer wrote the war of the frogs and the mice, so that while the delightful fable captivated their minds it also taught them how much better it is to conceal injury than to avenge it, that the results of war and rioting are uncertain, and that often the more powerful are overcome by the weaker and evil falls too often upon the head of the instigator.[22]

But fables can also be useful in the instruction of adults. He offers as examples of this the fable of the stomach and

the other parts of the body, which Agrippa allegedly told in order to restore order among the Roman populace; and the fable of the shepherds and wolves, which Demosthenes told the Athenians in order to persuade them not to turn him and the other orators over the the enemy, the Macedonians, as a condition of peace. The fable is, moreover, used frequently in sacred writings, showing that the Divine Spirit Himself considers it the most effective way of molding men's minds. Finally, Melanchthon concludes, the fable satisfies the dictum of Horace better than any other literary form:

> What genre so joins great pleasure and usefulness? Horace said it right: whoever mixed the useful with the sweet would get his vote. What genre expresses the customs, the desires and the traits of men better than the fable? And it does this so much more charmingly than any other literary form, and so much more quickly.[23]

We cannot dismiss this oration as a sincere but nonetheless wholly theoretical academic exercise. A year earlier, in his directives for the school in Eisleben, Melanchthon had recommended the fable for classroom use. And in 1528 he included it in his curriculum for the Protestant schools:

> Der ander hauffe, sind die kinder, so lesen künden, vnd sollen nu die Grammatica lernen. Mit den selben, sol es also gehalten werden.
>
> Die erste stunde nach mittag teglich, sollen die kinder ynn der musica geübt werden, alle, klein vnd gros.
>
> Darnach sol der schulmeister dem andern hauffen auflegen die fabulas Esopi erstlich.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Morgens, sollen die kinder den Esopum widder exponiren.

> Dabey sol der Preceptor etliche nomina vnd verba decliniren, nach gelegenheit der kinder, viel odder wenig, leichte odder schwere, vnd fragen auch die kinder regel vnd vrsach solcher declination.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Wenn nu die kinder Esopum auff diese weise gelernet, sol man yhnen Terentium fürgeben . . . .
> Nach dem Terentio, sol der schulmeister den kindern etliche fabulas Plauti, die rein sind, für geben . . . .[24]

He shows here that he regarded the fable as a practical and necessary link in the education of the Christian.

In 1550, the same year in which the second edition of Erasmus Alberus' fables appeared, Melanchthon wrote the preface for the fable collection by Joachim Camerarius, the title of which is Fabellae Aesopicae quaedam notiores, et in scholis usitatae. This is a later edition of the same collection used by Alberus for his biography of Aesop. In his preface Melanchthon notes that the animals in fables represent human traits. The wolf, he observes, represents tyranny, the sheep modesty, and the fox craftiness. Aside from this, there is nothing in the preface which Melanchthon had not said earlier, though he does discuss the occurrence of fable-like motifs in the Bible in greater detail:

> In the judgment of wise men of all ages, the fable has enjoyed great honor because of its image of life. Indeed, God has revealed many great things by means of it. What is closer to the fable than what is written in Genesis, where a raven was sent out into the flood and did not return, while a dove did return, bearing an olive branch in its beak. What can be considered more charming than this picture?[25]

The dove, he continues, is like David, John, Paul, Augustine,

and Constantine. The raven, on the other hand, represents those who deserted--men like Arius, Servetus and Mustela. He concludes with a discussion of the episode where Samson slays the lion and bees swarm in its carcass, which he interprets as follows:

> From the dead lion is born a swarm of bees. This means that from the death of Christ is born the Church, which offers sweet food to restore man's life. Many such images found in fables and sacred writings are similar. God himself wanted to set forth these things in many different forms to kindle our zeal and to give us clear warning about the most important things in life.[26]

Luther's fables date from his confinement to Coburg Castle in 1530. On April 24, in a letter to Melanchthon, he mentions his work on the fables for the first time: "We have finally arrived at our Sinai, dearest Philip, but we shall make a Zion of this Sinai and build here three tabernacles: one for the Psalter, one for the Prophets, and one for Aesop."[27] The original manuscript of the fables has been preserved, but that of the preface has not. The fables, together with the preface, first appeared in print in Georg Rörer's edition of Luther's works, Jena, 1557.

Luther begins his discussion of Aesop's fables by placing them second only to the Bible in instructing men how to conduct themselves in this life:

> Dis Buch von den Fabeln oder Merlin / ist ein hochberuembt Buch gewesen / bey den allergelertesten auff Erden / sonderlich vnter den Heiden. Wiewol auch noch jtzund die Warheit zu sagen / von eusserlichem Leben in der Welt / zu reden / wuesste ich ausser der heiligen Schrifft / nicht viel Buecher / die diesem vberlegen sein solten / so man Nutz / Kunst vnd Weisheit / vnd nicht

> hochbedechtig Geschrey wolt ansehen / Denn man darin vnter schlechten Worten / vnd einfeltigen Fabeln / die allerfeineste Lere / Warnung vnd Vnterricht findet (wer sie zu brauchen weis) wie man sich im Haushalten / in vnd gegen der Okerkeit vnd Vnterthanen schicken sol / auff das man klueglich vnd friedlich / vnter den boesen Leuten in der falschen argen Welt / leben muege. (Steinberg edition, p. 83)

The last of this is a typical expression of Luther's pessimism toward things of this world. And he has extended the notion of instruction which we found in Melanchthon: fables not only instruct us about an evil world; they also help us cope with it.

But, Luther argues, Aesop is a tradition, not an actual historical person. His explanation is lengthy but crucial:

> Das mans aber dem Esopo zuschreibet / ist meins achtens / ein Geticht / vnd vieleicht nie kein Mensch auff Erden / Esopus geheissen / Sondern / ich halte / es sey etwa / durch viel weiser Leute zuthun / mit der zeit Stueck nach Stueck zuhauffen bracht / . . . .
>
> Vnd Quintilianus / der grosse scharffe Meister vber Buecher zu vrteilen / helts auch dafuer / das nicht Esopus / sondern der allergelertesten einer in griechischer Sprach / als Hesiodus / oder desgleichen / dieses Buchs Meister sey / Denn es duenckt jn / wie auch billich / vnmueglich sein das solcher Tolpel / wie man Esopum malet / vnd beschreibet / solte solch Witz vnd Kunst vermuegen / die in diesem Buch vnd Fabeln funden wird . . . .
>
> Doch moegen die / so den Esopum zum Meister ertichtet haben / vnd sein leben dermassen gestellet / vieleicht Vrsach gnug gehabt haben / nemlich / das sie als die weisen Leute / solch Buch vmb gemeines Nutzes willen / gerne hetten jederman gemein gemacht (Denn wir sehen / das die jungen Kindern / vnd jungen Leute / mit Fabeln vnd Merlin leichtlich bewegt) vnd also mit lust vnd liebe zur Kunst vnd Weisheit gefuert wuerden / welche lust vnd liebe deste groesser wird / wenn ein Esopus / oder

> dergleichen Larua oder Fastnachtputz fuergestellet wird / der solche Kunst ausrede oder fuerbringe / das sie deste mehr drauffmerken / vnd gleich mit lachen annemen vnd behalten. Nicht allein aber die Kinder / sondern auch die grossen Fuersten vnd Herrn / kan man nicht bas betriegen / zur Warheit / vnd zu jrem nutz / denn das man jnen lasse die Narren die Warheit sagen / dieselbigen koennen sie leiden vnd hoeren / sonst woellen oder koennen sie / von keinem Weisen die Warheit leiden / Ja alle Welt hasset die Warheit / wenn sie einen trifft.

Klaus Doderer, in his article "Über das 'betriegen zur Warheit': Die Fabelbearbeitungen Martin Luthers," assumes that the fools Luther speaks of in the last sentence are the characters in the fables: "Nicht allein Kindern, sondern auch den Fürsten und Herren solle man nach des Reformators Meinung die Narren, das wären also die Fabelfiguren, die Wahrheit sagen lassen."[28] But this fails to take into account the context in which Luther says this. For as we have just seen, he is not talking here about the fools <u>in</u> the fables, but rather the fool who <u>tells</u> the fables. He is saying that we will listen to the story of a fool where we will not listen to that of a wise man, and this is why it was necessary to invent a fool, Aesop, as narrator of the collection. It is in this sense that we are to understand "betriegen zur Warheit," for what on the surface appears to be nonsense--animals conversing and acting like human beings--is in reality truth represented allegorically.

But Aesop, after all, only feigned folly. And in the end, it was the fact that he was telling the truth that cost him his life. One senses in this once again Luther's

bitter pessimism:

> Wie denn der Tichter des Esopi anzeigt das auch Esopus / vmb der Warheit willen ertoedtet sey / vnd jn nicht geholffen hat / das er in Fabeln weise / als ein Narr / dazu ein ertichter Esopus / solche Warheit die Thier hat reden lassen / Denn die Warheit ist das unleidlichste ding auff Erden.

Willi Steinberg (xiv-xv) shows clearly that the collection of fables which Luther had before him, the one which he refers to in his preface, was Heinrich Stainhowel's. This collection consisted of a German prose translation together with the Latin original, and was printed between 1476 and 1480 in Ulm. But Stainhöwel mixed in a few of the earthier facetiae of Poggio, something which Luther felt called upon to condemn strongly:

> Darueber so schendliche vnzuechtige Bubenstueck darein gemischt / das kein zuechtig / from Mensch leiden / zuuor kein jung Mensch / one schaden lesen oder hoeren kan / Gerad / als hetten sie ein Buch in das gemein Frawen haus / oder sonst vnter lose Buben gemacht / Denn sie nicht den Nutz vnd Kunst in den Fabeln gesucht / sondern allein ein Kurtzweil vnd Gelechter daraus gemacht / Gerade als hetten die Hochweisen Leute jren trewen grossen vleis dahin gericht / das solche leichtfertige Leute solten ein Geschwetz vnd Narrenwerck aus jrer Weisheit machen / Es sind Sew vnd bleiben Sew / fuer die man ja nicht solt Berlen werffen.

Luther thus condemns this collection for two reasons: it corrupts, and it does an injustice to the fable collection itself. It is because this collection is so unsuited for reading in a Christian household that Luther has decided to replace it with his own:

> Darumb so bitten wir alle frome Hertzen / woellen denselbigen Deudschen schendlichen Esopum ausrotten / vnd diesen an sein stat gebrauchen / Man kan dennoch wol froelich sein / vnd solcher Fabel eine des Abends

> vber Tisch mit Kindern vnd Gesind nuetzlich vnd luestiglich handeln. . . .
>
> Vnd das ich ein Exempel gebe der Fabeln wol zu gebrauchen / Wenn ein Hausvater vber Tisch wil Kurtzweil haben / die nuetzlich ist / kan er sein Weib / Kind / Gesind fragen / Was bedeut diese oder diese Fabel? vnd beide sie vnd sich darin ueben.

So convinced is Luther of the instructional value of these fables that he recommends them for reading regularly, and in the family, like the Bible. The very fact that Luther took the time to work on them while he was in the midst of translating the Old Testament shows the importance he attached to them.

The first edition of the fables of Erasmus Alberus appeared in 1534, just four years after Luther's confinement to Coburg Castle. In his preface Alberus dedicates this early edition to his friend Johannes Chun, and from this dedication we learn that he began his work on the fables while teaching school in Ursel. This would place his first work on the fables between 1525 and 1527, during the very period when Melanchthon, in addition to writing his De utilitate fabularum, was issuing directives on the use of the fable in the schools. In view of the friendship between Melanchthon and Alberus, we must regard this as more than mere coincidence.

Alberus continues his preface with his brief defense of the fable:

> Ich achte es aber nit von nöten sein viel zu schreiben von dem nutz vnd brauch der fabeln, sintemal ein yeglicher zimlichs verstands weiss, dass man auss den

> fabulis Moralia lernet, vnd wie die gleichnissen vnd parabole einen grossen verstandt vnd liecht geben, also das kein besser weiss zu leren ist, dann durch parabolas, vnd Christus vnser herr selbst lust gehabt durch gleichnissen sein Euangelium zu leren, also sind die Fabulae den gleichnissen nit ser vnehnlich on dass die parabole ernsthafftiger sind, die fabulae aber leren gute sitten vnd tugende schimpffs weiss vnd lachends munds. (Braune, ix)

We note once again the analogy with Scripture, with Christ's parables in particular. But the one significant difference between parables and fables, he asserts, is that the former are "ernsthafftiger," while the latter "leren gute sitten vnd tugende schimpffs weiss vnd lachends munds." This is really a restatement of the precept from Horace: fables are both delightful and instructive. This contrasts with Luther's formulation, where there was no mention of delight or pleasure, but only of "betriegen," deception. In Luther the fabulist thus accomplishes his task by deceiving us, while in Alberus he does it by delighting us.

In the preface to the 1550 edition, Alberus repeats the analogy with Scripture, but he combines it with a new one:

> Das ich aber den Fabeln die Gleichnissen gleich mache, ist die vrsach, das die Fabeln nichts anderes sind, dann liebliche Gleichnissen, vnd eben dasselb aussrichten, das die Gleichnissen thun.
>
> Vnd solche weise zu leren, wirdt auch darumb so ser gelobt, weil dadurch bey dem albern Volck viel mehr aussgerichtet wirdt, dann durch strenge gebott. Dann wie die ärtzte, bittere tränck oder Specerey mit zucker oder honig dem krancken eingeben, auff das er kein abschewens dafür habe, also muss man des menschen verderbten natur vnd vnuerstand mit den holdseligen Fabeln, Bildern, vnd Gleichnissen helfen. (Braune, p. 2)

This is a somewhat different version of the defense of literature as medicine. For here the fable is not medicine itself, or even sweet medicine, but rather what we add to the medicine to make it sweet. There is, furthermore, a touch of Luther's pessimism in expressions like "den kranken," and "des menschen verderbten natur vnd vnuerstand."

Alberus continues:

> Vnd gleich wie man den Kindern, so würm im leib haben, das bitter würmmeel mit honig eingibt, also muss man vns arme groben, halssstarrige Leut, mit fabeln vnd bildern betriegen vnd fangen, dann sie gehn süss ein wie zucker, vnnd sind gut zubehalten. Sie sind wie ein liecht an eim dunckeln ort, Darumb sich auch heilige Leut vnd Propheten nit schemen, in jrer lere Gleichnissen vnnd bilder zubrauchen, ja vnser lieber Herr Christus (der die ewige weissheit Gottes ist) hat selbst sein heiliges Euangelium durch Gleichnissen gelert.

Here again the fable is likened to the sweetener of moral medicine and compared to Christ's parables. But in addition Alberus uses Luther's word, "betriegen." This suggests that Alberus has had an opportunity to read Luther's preface, even though it was not printed until seven years later, or at least that they have shared thoughts on the nature of the fable. And there is every reason to believe that this was the case. Alberus tells us late in life that he visited Luther during the latter's confinement at Coburg Castle: "In Coburg habe ich einen gantzen Tag mit dem Manne Gottes zugebracht, derselb tag ist mir in meinem leben der fröhlichste und lustigste gewest."[29] The letter quoted above from Luther to Melanchthon shows that Luther arrived at Coburg with the intention of devoting some time to Aesop's

fables. It is therefore more than likely that Luther and Alberus discussed the fable, probably at some length. They were both, at this very time, intensely interested in it, and for the same reasons. They may also have discussed it during any of Alberus' subsequent visits to Luther's home in Wittenberg. In addition to brief stays in 1537 and 1540, Alberus was Luther's guest for more than a year after being dismissed from his position in Brandenburg in 1542 and for more than half a year before Luther's death in February 1546. This would explain why Luther's word "betriegen," and the accompanying pessimistic view of the nature of man, are to be found in the 1550 edition of Alberus' fables but not in that of 1534. It is possible that Melanchthon, too, took part in some of these discussions, or that Alberus discussed the fable with him later. Alberus was, it should be remembered, Melanchthon's guest from February to April 1546 and again from August to November of that year.

It is certainly striking that these three leaders in the Protestant movement began working on the fable at about the same time and found in it a perfect vehicle for reforming and improving mankind. Even more striking is the seriousness of purpose they bring to their defenses of this genre. Every argument offered during the Renaissance in the defense of poetry they use to defend the fable. Where Boccaccio argued that poetry is like Scripture, they argue that the fable is like Scripture; where Willichius argues

that poetry should comply with Horace's dictum, Melanchthon argues that the fable does just this; where Trissino likens poetry to sweet medicine, Alberus likens the fable to the sweetness in sweet medicine; and where Celtis calls for geographical descriptions and Willichius for instructive digressions, Alberus, as we shall see later, includes both in his fables. These defenses indicate that in their minds the fable could play a very significant role in the reform and education of devout Christians. Nothing was more important to them than this.

NOTES

[1] Literary Criticism: Plato to Dryden, ed. Allan H. Gilbert, trans. Gilbert et al. (New York, 1940), pp. 208-210. This work will be cited hereafter as "Gilbert."

[2] William K. Wimsatt and Cleanth Brooks, Literary Criticism, a Short History (New York, 1957), p. 165.

[3] Joel Elias Spingarn, A History of Literary Criticism in the Renaissance, 3rd ed. (New York, 1912), p. 8. This work will be cited hereafter as "Spingarn."

[4] Bernard Weinberg, A History of Literary Criticism in the Italian Renaissance (Chicago, 1961), I, 71.

[5] Edward Henry Blakeney, trans., in Gilbert, p. 139.

[6] George Saintsbury, A History of Criticism, II, 5th impression (London, 1934), 8-9. This work will be cited hereafter as "Saintsbury."

[7] Max Staege, Die Geschichte der deutschen Fabeltheorie (Bern, 1929), pp. 12-13.

[8] Karl Borinski, Die Poetik der Renaissance und die Anfänge der litterarischen Kritik in Deutschland (Berlin, 1886), pp. 15-19.

[9] Since there are no page numbers in Celtis' work, passages will be identified according to the section in which they appear. The Latin text reads as follows: "Officium poetae est figurato atque decoro orationis et carminis contextu mores, actus, res gestas, loca, gentes, terrarum situs, flumina, siderum cursus, rerumque naturas translatis signis mentium animarumque affectus effingere . . . ."

[10] "Non sine causa Friderice dux inclite factum est ut graeci romanique imperii auctores tanta opera poetis eorumque carminibus studuerint. Huiusque disciplinae scriptores summis honoribus prosecuti fuerint, equis tandem premiis poetas perinde ac victores decoraverint."

[11] "Summa profecto res illa erat et paene divina in administranda eorum republica ut sapientiae summan eloquentiam

qua urbs et orbis regebatur coniungere studuerint: hinc publica illa comoediarum tragoediarumque spectacula. Quibus sublimi persuasione remotisque invencionibus poetae spectantium animos ad virtutes inflammabant et pubescentem iam indolem a viciis deterrebant, ut quid patriae, quid amicis, parentibus, hospitibusque deberent, vivis exemplis acciperent."

12 "Aut prodesse.) Est de scopo et usu poetarum. Fuerunt enim ex numero horum, qui fabulis tantum delectari voluerunt, fuerunt quibus philosophia arrisit. Sed is optimus erit qui utrumque simul usurparet."

13 "Hanc ob causam diligenter olim animadverterunt poetarum discrimna ex quorumlibet studio. Nam quibus fabulae tantum cordi erant ad solam voluptatem inventae, et a Mileto Ioniae Milesiae, et hodie licentiosae dictae sunt. Postea ab iisdem poetae erant voluptuarii, Milesii et licentiosi. Nam Milesii propter luxum et delitias pessime audiebant, a quibus natum est proverbum, olim fortes Milesii, adeo degenerarunt et effeminati propter voluptatem facti sunt, qui fabulis oblectabantur inutilibus, ut his fallerent, et temere tempus extraherent. Deinde cum neque verum neque verisimile continebant, merito a licentia nomen sortitae sunt."

14 "Verum in poeticis fabulis et utilitas requiritur. . . . Rursus sunt quae prima fronte vitae non ita prodesse videntur, qualia essent de navigatione Argonautarum. Sed in recessu non parum ad rerum et morum cognitionem faciunt. Deinde ad Geographica quoque."

15 "Sunt postremo non pauca pernitiosa et damnosa, velut de campis Elysiis, de turpibus facinoribus [,] de adulteriis deorum, de aliis id genus quae ut Homero forsitan licita erant, ita nobis illicita, qui Christiano nomini addicti sumus. Nam carmen inventum est, ut honesta et utilia canat, alioqui si stulta, turpia et mala complecteretur, quid hominibus isto erit pestilentius? potius ea ratione ad inferos idipsum deportandum esset, tanquam piis auribus et oculis indignum."

16 "Quem ad modum haec pictura gratior est, quae non levitate et tenuitate rerum tantum constat, sed etiam pascit animum. Ita est poema iucundius, quod delectat et prodest."

17 "Veteres autem eo tantum consilio delectare contendebant, ut animos lectorum seu auditorum varietate rerum detinerent, per excursum rerum delectabilium, qualia illis erant regalia

convivia, colloquia deorum, aut aliorum heroum, his prosopographiae, topographiae, chronographiae et alia."

[18] Sigmund von Lempicki, Geschichte der deutschen Literaturwissenschaft bis zum Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts (Göttingen, 1920), p. 68.

[19] Melanchthonis Opera, in Corpus Reformatorum, ed. Bretschneider and Bindseil (Halle/Saale, 1834-1860), XI, 116: "Efficiam autem, ni spes me fallat, ut intelligatis, non aliud genus literarum utilius esse repertum, quam fabulas. Quod ut verisimile fiat, primum causas aperiemus, cur a maioribus confictas esse iudicemus. Videbant illi communi mortales conditione, non corporibus modo, sed animis etiam imbecillibus nasci, eamque legem, opinor, ita sanxit natura, ut educandae tuendaeque sobolis curam in parentibus augeret."

[20] Ibid., 117: "Et perinde atque qui se infantibus amari volunt, sacharo aut similibus rebus invitant, ita lenociniis quibusdam commendanda veritas est, et rudibus animis insinuanda. Excogitarunt itaque prudentissimi homines fabellas, quae primum admiratione excitarent, ceu veternum quendam dormientes puerorum animos. Quid enim magis novum nobis videtur, quam lupum cum equo, leonem cum vulpecula, quercum cum cucurbita hominum more colloqui? taciti apud nos miramur, qui sensus, qui sermo bestiarum fuerit: paritque haec admiratio voluptatem quandam propius cognoscendae rei, iuvatque discere, quam ob causam haec conficta sint. Ibi paulatim animus excitatus, erigit se in contemplationem rerum humanarum, et agnoscere virtutum vitiorumque discrimina incipit."

[21] Ibid., 118: "Fortasse hoc etiam agebant fabularum autores, ut amoenis argumentis ingenia puerorum mitiora redderent. Inest enim in ea aetate, sicut in recentibus pomis, acerbum quiddam et ferum, quod nisi humaniore institutione corrigatur, in barbariem quandam et beluinam saevitiam abit."

[22] Ibid., 118: "Homeri Poetae prudentiam tantopere mirantur eruditi, ut supra communem mortalium sortem vehant, planeque sentiant, divina quadam vi mentem illius percitam fuisse. At is pueris, quos in Graecia passim docebat, bellum ranarum et murium scripsit, ut simul teneros animos lepidissima fabula delectaret, simul doceret quantum praestaret dissimulare quam ulcisci iniuriam, quam sint incerti turbarum ac bellorum omnium exitus, nec raro accidere, ut ab inferioribus potentiores vincantur, saepe malum omne in autoris caput vergere."

[23] Ibid., 120: "Quod est enim dicendi genus, in quo perinde cum summa utilitate summa gratia coniuncta est? Vere nimirum dixit Horatius: Omne tulisse eum punctum, qui miscuit utile dulci. Quae enim oratio, mores, studia, ingenia hominum propius expressit quam apologi? idque tanta cum gratia, ut nullis epodis incantari citius hominum mentes possint, quam cupiant apologi."

[24] Corpus Reformatorum, XXVI, 92.

[25] Corpus Reformatorum, VII, 562: "Ideo semper omnium aetatum, omnium hominum, sapientum et populi iudiciis, magnus honos fuit fabulis, id est, imaginibus illis vitae. Imo et deus multas res maximas talibus picturis significavit. Quid similius est apologo, quam quod scribitur in Genesi, corvum in diluvio ex arca emissum, non reversum esse, columbam reversam esse, rostro gestantem ramum olivae? Quid venustius hac pictura cogitari potest?"

[26] Ibid., 562: "Ex leone mortuo nascitur examen apum, id est, ex Christo mortuo nascitur Ecclesia et cibus dulcissimus restituens vitam hominibus. Tales sunt multae imagines apologorum similes in doctrina coelesti. Voluit enim et deus ipse res easdem magna varietate proponere, ut studia accenderet, et commonefactiones haberemus de rebus maximis illustres."

[27] Martin Luthers Fabeln, ed. Willi Steinberg (Halle/Salle, 1961), xi. This work will be cited hereafter as "Steinberg edition." The Latin passage in question reads as follows: "Pervenimus tandem in nostrum Sinai, charissime Philippe, sed faciemus Sion ex ista Sinai aedificabimusque ibi tria tabernacula, Psalterio unum, Prophetis unum et Aesopo unum."

[28] Klaus Doderer, "Über das 'betriegen zur Warheit': Die Fabelbearbeitungen Martin Luthers," Wirkendes Wort, XIV (1964), 381.

[29] As quoted by Emil Körner, Erasmus Alber (Leipzig, 1910), p. 30.

III

ASPECTS OF NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE

Erasmus Alberus' fables have been singled out in the secondary literature as unusual because of several features not generally associated with the fable. There is, it is said, a narrative breadth in them which one does not expect of fables. Furthermore, Alberus uses the fable as a vehicle for satire, usually directed against the Roman Catholic Church. And finally, a number of his fables include lengthy digressions, often on the location where the action of the fable allegedly took place.

His fables have generally been praised highly because of these features. In his 1892 edition of Alberus' fables, Wihelm Braune was understandably enthusiastic. Discussing Alberus use of his source materials, Braune wrote:

> Er benutzt den knappen Bericht als Grundlage zu voller und farbenreicher Ausführung, indem er Nebenumstände erfindet, dramatisch belebten und durch charakteristische Wendungen gewürzten Dialog einführt, lebhafte Handlung herstellt, die Fabeln keck in seine Heimat und in die Verhaltnisse seiner Zeit versetzt, kurz epische Anschaulichkeit erzielt statt des dürren Gerippes des Quellen-berichts. Die Darstellung ist fast überall gewandt und fliessend, sie übertrifft in ihrer gemütlichen Laune und anmutigen Frische entschieden die entsprechenden Fabeldichtungen sowol des Burkard Waldis als des Hans Sachs. (lvi-lvii)

Braune mentions the fables where digressions are conspicuous and devotes the last five pages of his introduction to a description of the areas of Germany which figure prominently

in the fables--the Wetterau, the Taunus region and the Dreieich. He lists fourteen fables that are satirical in nature or contain elements of satire (viii), and at another point in the introduction he discusses two devoted wholly to satire (lxi-lxii). Braune felt fully justified in concluding that Alberus' fables "Dichtungen geworden sind, die in der poetischen Litteratur des 16. Jahrhunderts eine hervoragende Stelle verdienen" (lxvii).

In his introduction to C. H. Kleukens' Das Buch der Fabeln, Otto Crusius shares Braune's enthusiasm for Alberus' fables:

> Besonders bei Alberus tritt die Fabel, wie vielfach in Luthers Streitschriften, in den Dienst der politischen und religiösen Bewegung. . . . Die traulichen Bilder deutscher Landschaft, mit denen er die äsopischen Gestalten zu umgeben pflegt, sollen freilich nach dem Urteil gelehrter Männer dem "Wesen der Fabel" widersprechen--aber gerade die altertümlichsten Stücke der Äsopea kennen Ähnliches, wie die Fuchsversammlung am Mäander bei Milet oder den Esel von Kymae. Der ganze Stil zeigt unverkennbar verwandte Züge mit dem des Reineke, in seiner epischbreiten Haltung wie in seiner polemischen Tendenz.[1]

Wolfgang Stammler, in Von der Mystik zum Barock, compares Alberus' fables with Luther's to show how the former's collection represented "eine Wandlung in der Fabeldichtung." Luther's fables "sind getreu dem Original vorgenommen, die dürre Handlung is nicht belebt, nur die moral ist, oft recht derb, aus Eigenem ausgestattet und mit Sprichwörtern verdeutlicht." Alberus' fables, on the other hand, he describes as follows:

> [Sie] tragen . . . ein weit anderes Gesicht. . . . Den antiken Stoff belebt er neu, indem er den

> epischen Teil stark ausdehnt. . . . Den traditionellen Dialog stattet er mit Wendungen aus, die den jeweiligen Redner characterisieren, aus eigener Phantasie fügt er bezeichnende Einlagen ein. . . . Er versetzt die Fabelhandlung in bekannte Gegenden. . . . Nur in zwei Fabeln (von 49) geht dies Besserungsstreben zur scharfen Theologischen und konfessionellen Satire über. Alberus kam es eben nicht auf zeitliche, sondern auf dauernde Reinigung an.[2]

There are, of course, more than two satirical fables. Stammler apparently skipped over some of the longer digressions, and thereby missed some of the sharpest satire. It is worth noting that Stammler devotes more space to Alberus than to any other fabulist of the century.

Günther Müller, in Deutsche Dichtung von der Renaissance bis zum Ausgang des Barock, compares Alberus' fables with those of Burkart Waldis, which he praises for their "wohllautende Versdiktion." But, he adds, "an plastischer Vergegenwärtigung übertrifft ihn Alberus."[3] Richard Ligacz, on the other hand, lumps Alberus and Waldis together, but finds in them both the same general characteristics attributed by others to Alberus alone:

> Alberus und Waldis schufen unter dem Namen "Aesopus" eine spezielle Art protestantischer Fabeldichtung. Fesselnd und plastisch, mit der episch geschwätzigen Breite des Altertums einer Augustana und der genrehaften Ausmalung Bebels, in freier Gestaltung und Umarbeitung stehen sie nur noch teilweise mit der Quelle in Verbindung. Aesops Einfluss sehen wir da allein im Thema und im Auffassen des Grundgedankens.[4]

Yet despite the general praise which Alberus' fables have enjoyed there has not been a detailed analysis of the techniques he employed to achieve the narrative breadth

which has been attributed to his work. The purpose of this chapter is to undertake such an analysis. Comparisons with the collection of Burkart Waldis, who used the same source for 41 of his fables, should show how unusual these narrative techniques of Alberus are.

The Narrator and the Digression

In even a casual reading of Alberus' fables one is struck by the persistent presence of the narrator. All but six of the fables have significant intrusions, where the narrator refers to himself or addresses the reader in the second person. Many of these intrusions occur in the morals, and this is not surprising, since the moral itself is a kind of intrusion. But in 26 fables there are intrusions in the fable proper. These vary in length from brief statements identifying the narrator as the teller of the story (Fable 7, "Ich will euch von eim Löwen sagen") to digressions running nearly 200 lines (Fable 25). Most of these digressions are at the beginning, before the story itself is presented. But in Fable 37 the narrator begins his story and then digresses, while in Fable 25 he starts with a digression, and then, after beginning the story itself, he embarks on yet another digression. The subject matter of these digressions varies considerably. They describe the region in which the action of the fable allegedly took place; they praise Protestantism and satirize the Catholic Church and enemies of humanism; they

reveal facts about the narrator; they weigh critically some detail of the story, or offer a second story.

The order in which the fables are presented is different from that of the source, and there is a clear effort to group close together or even successively fables whose digressions have something in common. Thus 9, 11 and 14 contain a second story or event, but among men rather than animals. In 12, 13 and 16 the narrator intrudes to discuss whether a particular detail in his story is true or not. Fables 19, 20, 23 and 25 offer the longest digressions in the entire collection. Fables 19, 20 and 25 involve lengthy, rambling descriptions of the region, and the narrator admonishes himself in each of these three for not proceeding more directly to the action of the fable, which is finally told relatively briefly. In Fables 24 and 25 the narrator reveals facts about himself. The digressions in Fables 30, 37 and 39 are satires on corrupt and lecherous practices among monks and priests. We might note in passing that Fables 33 and 40, while they do not contain digressions, are devoted wholly to satire, and thus belong here too. Such satire is to be found throughout the collection, but is most explicit in this group of fables. In Fables 42, 44 and 48 the narrator intrudes to praise the cities Ursel, Nuremberg and Marburg, respectively.

In the collection as a whole the character of the narrator emerges gradually, until he becomes most conspicuous in Fables 19, 20, 24 and 25. One might even say that the

subject of the narration in these fables is the narrator himself rather than the story being told. Fable 25 has the longest digression and occupies the exact middle of the collection, there being 24 which precede and 24 which follow. From this point on the narrator becomes less conspicuous, until in 49 as in 1 there is no reference by the narrator to himself.

Having gained an initial view of the role of the narrator in the collection, we can now examine the individual fables. It is important to bear in mind that the digressions will be discussed in this section only insofar as they reflect the narrator. Other aspects, such as the nature of the geographical descriptions and the various uses of satire, will be discussed elsewhere. Quotations will be from the 1550 edition unless otherwise specified, and the fables will be discussed in the order in which they appear in that edition.

Fables 6 and 7 contain the first two intrusions by the narrator. Here he merely identifies himself as the story teller:

> Vnd was ein Wolff da hab gethan,
> Will ich jetzt kürzlich zeigen an.
> (6, 7-8)

> Ich will euch von eim Löwen sagen,
> Der nam jhm für ein Wildt zuiagen.
> (7, 1-2)

There is certainly nothing very extraordinary about these. Similar intrusions can be found in Waldis, though there is none in Luther. Fable 9, too, involves a single occurrence

of the pronoun ich, but in this case it introduces a digression, and a digression, by its very nature, makes the presence of the narrator conspicuous. The digression tells how farm boys of the region kill young ravens because the old raven steals their food. The end of the digression serves as an introduction to the story itself:

> Die vrsach möcht wol haben grundt,
> Dieweil es jederman ist kundt,
> Wie das der Rab so räubisch sey,
> Das kan man mercken auch dabey,
> Dieweil Esopus hat gedicht
> Ein Fabel, da er also spricht.
> (23-28)

We expect another story involving thievery on the part of the raven. But the story which follows tells how the raven himself is victimized by a thief--the fox. And when we reconsider the episode in the digression, we see that there, too, it is the raven who has really been victimized, for she has lost her young (the narrator calls it mörderey) while we have only the word of the farm boys that the raven steals from them. The story therefore does indeed illustrate the episode of the digression, but not at all in the sense stated by the narrator. And the final irony is that the message the fable conveys has nothing to do with thievery, but is rather a lesson on the consequences of yielding to flattery.

One other aspect of this fable deserves special mention. We see here for the first time that the narrator distinguishes carefully between events which have actually taken place and fables, which are invented. Of the slaying

of the young ravens he says: "man sagt, es sey gewisslich war." The story of the raven and fox, on the other hand, he labels clearly as a fable; furthermore, he calls the fox's preposterous flattery a fable:

> Das jhm der käss fiel auss dem schnabel,
> Das macht der Fuchss mit seiner Fabel.
> (67-68)

This distinction is made consistently throughout the collection, as we shall see later.

The next group of fables consists of those where the narrator appears as a kind of investigator doing his best to get certain details of his story straight. The first, Fable 12, involves his uncertainty as to where the episode occurred:

> Man sagt von einer alten Geyss,
> Wiewol man eigentlich nit weyss,
> In welchem land es sey geschehn,
> So hab ichs selbst auch nicht gesehn,
> Im schweitzerlandt ists freilich nicht
> Geschehen, das ist aussgericht,
> Weil man da selbst kein Wolff nicht leidt,
> Ich halt, es soll von Fuld nicht weit
> Geschehen sein im Nassewer landt,
> Daselbst ist mir ein Stadt bekant,
> Die hat jhrn namen von der Geyss,
> Wie ich dasselbig noch wol weyss,
> Wann man von Fuld gen Eisenach
> Will gehn, vnd kompt schier biss gen Fach,
> So ligt die Stadt zur rechten handt,
> Mit namen Geyssen wirdt genant,
> Nicht fern von dannen, halt ich frey,
> Das diss geschicht geschehen sey.
> (1-18)

The logic here is absurd enough in its own right. The narrator admits that he did not witness the event, but concludes it must have occurred near Geyssen (modern Geisa) because that city takes its name from goats and

the fable is, after all, about a goat. But the entire explanation becomes ridiculous when we recall that it is a fable, a fiction that never happened anywhere. And the narrator has already shown in Fable 9 that he distinguishes between invented stories--fables--and events which have actually occurred.

In Fable 13 the effect is similar, but this time the discussion concerns what animal is involved. And here he compounds the absurdity by concluding that one cannot really know and that it does not really matter anyway:

> In eines Malers werckstadt kam
> Ein Wolff gegangen, der war zam,
> Vnd wie ein mensch, mit seinem mund
> Gewehnt war, das er reden kund.
> Man sagt, es sey ein Fuchss gewesen,
> So hab ich von eim Wolff gelesen.
> Es habs nun gleich ein Wolff gethan,
> Oder ein Fuchss, da ligt nicht an.
> (1-8)

In the Phaedrus collection the animal involved is actually a fox, and the object he sees is a tragic mask (personam tragicam). The wolf, being the more savage and brutal of the two, is more in keeping with the absurdity of the situation, for it is more difficult to imagine him as tame. This is particularly striking here, since in the preceding two fables, as well as in Fable 6, the wolf appears as treacherous, evil, given to violence. And the narrator's reminder that the wolf could talk underlines the absurdity still further. We accept talking animals in fables without question, but when reminded that a given animal could talk like men, we are in effect being reminded of the

artificiality, the absurdity of the whole affair. There is, moreover, a deliberate contrast between the wolf who could talk and the image of a man that could not. Here the contrast is reinforced by parallel construction, for compared to lines 4 and 5 above, the narrator describes how the wolf looks at the head as follows:

> Wie er hatt acht auff seinen Mundt,
> Vnd merckt, das er nicht reden kundt.
> (21-22)

We might add Fable 14 to this group, since the narrator is careful to begin by indicating his source of information. Then he directs a surprising and humorous imperative at the listener:

> Die Vogelsberger sagen frey,
> Das diss bey jhn geschehen sey,
> Dauon ich jetzundt schreiben will,
> Drumb hört mir zu, vnd schweiget still.
> (1-4)

There are, as was pointed out earlier, two stories here. The narrator claims they are related because they both happened to the same farmer. Actually they are thematically related, for they both deal with ingratitude, as the marginal note to line one makes clear: "Contra ingratitudinem." The first is the ingratitude of the farmer toward his wife, who is about to bear a child. The second story treats the ingratitude of the snake toward the farmer, who has saved the snake's life.

The final fable in this group is 16, the title of which is "Von der Berge geburt." In the first line the narrator assures us that the incident to be described

here happened recently: "Es ist nicht lang das diss geschah." This contrasts with the first line of the next fable: "Es ist geschehn für langer zeit." In Fable 16, 96 of the 112 lines are devoted to describing the great multitude of men who gathered in fear to watch the monstrous event. In the last third of this description the narrator lists the various regions and countries represented. After naming virtually all of the regions of Germany and countries of Europe--a total of 48 geographical areas which actually exist--he concludes:

> Man sagt das auch darkommen sey,
> Ein grosse schar auss Barbarey,
> Das sie ehr wolten legen ein,
> Da will ich nun nicht wider sein.
> (87-90)

The addition of this patently fictious name to the list is absurd enough in itself. And the effect is once again heightened because the narrator gives the impression that he weighs the evidence before accepting it. Yet beneath the absurdity the comment makes sense, for the characters described in the first half of the fable are indeed barbarous. As a conclusion to the catalogue of countries the passage is an anticlimax, and as such anticipates the anticlimax of the fable itself, for after all the rumbling and shaking is over (and the narrator intrudes once more: "mein red ein jeder eben merck,") a mouse appears.

The next group of fables to be considered consists of those with the longest digressions, where the narrator dominates and the story becomes secondary. This group

includes 19, 20, 23, 24 and 25. In each of these fables less than one-third of the total length is devoted to the story itself, and in Fable 19 it is scarcely more than one-tenth. On either side of this group and in the middle of it (i.e., Fables 18, 21 and 26) are fables without digressions, where the story itself is primary and the narrator is not conspicuous. Fable 21 provides an especially sharp contrast to those to be discussed here, for it is by far the longest in the collection (512 lines). But the length is the result of fully developing the story; there are no digressions and the narrator never intrudes into the narration or refers to himself in the first person.

Fable 19 begins with an involved description of the region in which the fable supposedly takes place. There is a detailed description of the course of the Oder, Neisse, and Warte rivers in the vicinity of Frankfurt on the Oder. The description concludes as follows:

> Wann nun die Ader fast fünff meil
> Von Franckfurdt hat vagiert mit eil,
> Sie und Wart, sich bei Custrein
> Einander heissen willkom sein,
> Es fleusst die Wart durch Polerlandt,
> Zu Custrin macht sie sich bekandt,
> Beid wasser also Fischreich sind,
> Das man kaum ihres gleichen find.
> (19-26)

This is the first mention of fish, and the reader anticipates that the fable proper is now about to begin. But it does not. Instead, we have what amounts to a digression within a digression:

Darumb ich mich hernach noch mehr
Dauon zu schreiben nicht beschwer,
Dann ich zuuor wolt loben gern,
Das newe Schloss des frommen Herrn.
(27-30)

There follows a description of the castle, of how it could withstand the attack of even three hundred thousand Turks. The narrator concludes:

Dauon wer noch wol mehr zu schreiben,
Doch will ichs hiebey lassen bleiben,
Vnd kürtzlich auch das zeigen an,
Was ich zuuor verheissen han.
Nemlich wie Gottes milte handt,
Hat meines gnedigen Herren landt,
Versorgt mit Fischen mancher art,
Beid in der Ader vnd der Wart.
(45-52)

Now comes a catalogue of the various kinds of fish to be found in the two rivers. The last to be named is the bream; this reminds the narrator of the fable about the wolf and the bream, and he cannot resist telling it. The fable runs forty lines (75-114) and does not deal with a bream at all, but rather with a sow which the wolf pretends is a bream because he has vowed never to eat another sow. After telling the fable the narrator reminds himself to get back on the subject, which is, to his mind, the catalogue of fish:

Auff das ich ad propositum
Von dem vermeynten Bresum kum,
Den Rap setz ich dem Bressum noch,
Den pflegt man auch zunennen Roch.
Das Barben meulchin, Ghesen, Zert,
Sind nicht geringer ehren werdt.
(115-120)

This continues for thirty-six more lines (121-156). He finally comes to the crab, and the fable which he has intended to tell all along is now narrated in just twenty

lines:

> Noch hab ich nicht der Krebs gedacht,
> Darumb die Fabel wirdt gemacht,
> So will ich, was geschehen sey
> Zu Franckfurdt oder nah dabey,
> Auffs aller kürtzest zeigen an,
> Was da ein alt Krebs hab getan.
> Der alt Krebs zu dem jungen sprach,
> Nun hörstus Krebslin, thu gemach,
> Der gang will dir nicht wol anstehn,
> Halt still, du must mir anders gehn,
> Du solt mir stracks wegs gehn für dich,
> Du wirst sonst baldt erzürnen mich,
> Dein tolles gehn das macht mich kranck,
> Du must mir lern ein andern gangk.
> Das Krebslin gab sein antwort fein,
> Es sprach, das dünckt mich schwerlich sein,
> Doch geh mir für, so will ich gern
> Ein solches genglin von dir lern,
> Wann du den gang nicht zeigest mir,
> So kan ich schwerlich folgen dir.
> (157-176)

The irony in the moral to the fable is unmistakable:

> Es steht nicht fein, wann einer will
> Ein andern vnderweisen vill,
> Vnd trifft selbs nicht den rechten wegk,
> Vnd ligt biss vber die ohrn im dreck.
> (177-180)

How can we read this without applying it to the fable? The narrator, like the crab, creeps along slowly through the mire in his digression. The mire itself becomes a unifying element in the fable: the crab is in mud, the sow is in mud, and the castle described in the digression is surrounded by swamp. The narrator concludes by quoting Cato:

> Es steht dem Lerer vbel an,
> Wann er sich selbst nicht leren kan,
> Vnd vnder des er strafft vnd lert,
> Ist er wol selber straffens wert.
> (185-188)

The teller of fables, as we saw in Chapter II, is a teacher.

The narrator is thus talking about himself here. He is a story teller and yet he rambles aimlessly, devoting the greatest part of his effort to matters which have nothing whatever to do with his story. But the final irony is that there is a kind of unity in the fable, for the moral is illustrated not in the twenty-line fable, but in the narrator's manner of presentation. We have thus been taken in, deceived, to use Luther's term. The narrator only feigns disorganization.

There are, moreover, other unifying elements in this apparently disorganized tale. The occurrence of mud in all three parts has already been mentioned. In addition, there is a peculiar symmetry to the construction. If we break the fable down into the separate subjects treated, we find the following number of lines devoted to each:

1. City of Pressla (Breslau)	12 (1-12)
2. Rivers Oder, Warte, Neisse	18 (13-30)
3. The Castle	18 (131-48)
4. Catalogue of Fish	26 (49-74)
5. First Fable	40 (76-114)
6. Continuation of list of Fish	42 (115-156)
7. Second Fable	20 (157-176)
8. Moral	12 (177-188)

There is a pyramidal shape to the fable as a whole, and the separate parts increase in length according to a regular pattern. Where a given part is longer than the one which preceded it, it is longer by 50 per cent.

Thus 18 is 50 per cent more than 12, 26 is within one line of 50 per cent more than 18, and 40 is within one line of 50 per cent more than 26. The last two are off by one line (they should be 27 and 39, respectively) because, using couplets, Alberus was working with even numbers.

Finally, teaching is a recurrent activity in the fable, and the words "lehr" and "lehren" occur in the digression, both fables, and the moral. In the description of the city Breslau Johann Hess and Maioban are praised for teaching God's word, and the narrator says of Corvinus, who was a teacher:

> Von herrn Laurentz Corvini lehr,
> Dieselb Stadt hat gross lob vnd ehr.
> (11-12)

In the first fable, when the sow asserts that she is a pig and not a bream, the wolf replies:

> Da sprach der Wolff, Ja wol ein Schwein,
> Ler du mich was ein Bresum sey.
> (94-95)

The passages quoted earlier illustrate clearly the importance of teaching in the second fable and the moral. From the narrator, finally, we learn about the fish in the two rivers and how not to tell a story.

Fable 20 begins as an extension of Fable 19:

> Nun will ich weiter zeigen an,
> Was etlich Hasen han gethan,
> Drumb hört mir zu vnd schweiget still.
> (1-3)

The "weiter" of the first line ties the two fables clearly together, the continuity between the two residing in the

person of the narrator. His admonition of the reader is absurd and amusing. The same line appears in Fable 14. He continues with a description of the region as one journeys from Frankfurt on the Main to Darmstadt. He takes great pain at one point to describe a distance exactly:

> Man geht ein stundt, vnd nicht viel mehr,
> Vnd darff nicht eilen all zu sehr.
> (13-14)

Yet at another point, in describing the great leap which a stag of the region once made, his inexactness is overwhelming:

> Auff hundert meil wegs, oder drey
> Hört man, das sölchs geschehen sey.
> (73-74)

There is always humor in the alternative "one or three," and it occurs elsewhere in the collection. But here, the situation is compounded by ambiguity. Does the narrator mean one hundred or three hundred, or does he mean one hundred or three? Either of these is absurd, the latter for its obvious inexactness, the former for both inexactness and its gross exaggeration. We know that Alberus' "meil" is the German mile, seven and one-half kilometers or approximately five miles.[5] One hundred such units from Darmstadt would be far outside of Germany in every direction but to the northeast; three hundred such units from there would lie completely outside of Europe in every direction but to the east. Yet once again, the narrator is only pretending to be so simple. His exaggeration as to how far the story is known mocks the exaggerated

account of the leap itself. And this sets the tone for the entire fable; if in Fable 19 the unifying theme is teaching, proper and improper, here it is the belief in nonsense. There are two attacks on the Catholic Church; both deal with the belief in the miraculous, which the narrator portrays as nonsense. The first occurs early in the digression:

> . . . man kompt zu einr Capell,
> Zur rechten handt ein alte Cell,
> Noch heutigs tags steht nah dabey,
> Ein Bruder auff der betteley
> Darinnen sass, für etlich jarn,
> Da noch die leut vnsinnig warn,
> Vnd häuffig han dahin gewalt,
> Als noch des Bapstes narrnwerck galt,
> Wer da das Glöcklin mit dem maul,
> Wol ziehen kundt, vnd war nicht faul,
> Der hielts dafür, das jm der Zan,
> So jhm zuuor hat weh gethan,
> Solt heylen, Sölch toll fantasey,
> Wie sonst viel ander lepperey
> Der Teuffel hat gerichtet an.
> (15-29)

The second is at the very end of the digression:

> Es ligt ein Dorff nicht fern dauon,
> Daselbst hat man bissher gesagt,
> Wie Maria die reine Magt,
> Ein wallfart hab gerichtet an,
> Die solches sagen, liegen dran,
> . . . . . .
> Dahin hat man die Leut geweist,
> Als würd Maria da gepreisst,
> Mit toller lehr vnd fantasey,
> Treib man sie zur Abgötterey.
> (104-108; 115-119)

Here as elsewhere, Alberus rejects the miracles of Roman Catholicism but not the miraculous as such. These miracles, he argues, are the inventions of "der Teuffel in der Helln" (line 109), and they detract from the miracles of Christ.

In Der Barfuser Münche Eulenspiegel vnd Alcoran, printed in 1542 in Wittenberg, Alberus represents the veneration of saints as a form of idolatry. The position is really the same here, and he makes this explicit with the word "Abgötterey" in the last line.

It is interesting to note that the account of the stag's leap and how far and wide it is known is exactly midway between these two attacks on the Catholic Church. There is thus a symmetry in the construction, as there was in Fable 19. Also as in Fable 19, the narrator reminds himself near the end of the digression to get on with the story:

> Nun ist es zeit, das ich doch kum
> Zuletzt auch ad Propositum,
> So wollen wirs nun greiffen an.
> (101-103)

But he digresses once again, with his attack on the pilgrimage to the Virgin Mary.

Like the digression, the story proper deals with the dangers of misplaced belief. It is the one about the rabbits and frogs, where the rabbits, in fear, flee aimlessly and are brought back to their senses only when they see the frogs are afraid of even them. The narrator explains why the rabbits were terrified:

> Ein grosses krachen hörten sie
> Im waldt, zuuor gehöret nie.
> Dauon sie liessen sich vertreiben,
> Vnd wolten da nicht lenger bleiben,
> Vnd meinten gantz, sie musten dran,
> Die gantz Drey Eych wurd vntergahn.
> (123-128)

Fable 23 also treats misguided belief, the belief in heathen and pagan gods. The entire digression is devoted to listing such gods and condemning belief in them, and then, ironically, the narrator tells us a story about one himself:

> Derselben einer auff ein zeit
> Kam in ein Dorff, vom Waldt nicht weit,
> Vnd kert zu einem Bawern ein,
> Im Winter sols geschehen sein.
> (102-105)

The story is simple enough: the god cannot understand why the farmer blows on his hands to warm them, but on his porridge to cool it. In the conclusion we hear the moral, which the narrator later makes explicit, from the mouth of the false god:

> Da sprach der Götz, mit solchen knaben
> Wolt ich nicht gern zu schaffen haben,
> So jetzundt warm, vnd darnach baldt
> Auss eim mundt blasen warm vnd kalt,
> Ich mag nicht lenger bey dir sein,
> Ade du falsches Bawerlein.
> (142-147)

The irony of having the forest god reject the farmer and call him false is intensified by the use of the word "Götz." Elsewhere in the fable the narrator refers to him as "der Waldtgott."

In Fable 24 there is a peculiar shift in the point of view. The narrator speaks here not as the teller of a story; instead, he tells us about his childhood in the Vogelsberg region, expressing his appreciation to the people for the kindness they showed him. The fable lacks the humor and irony that characterize many of the others,

and the digression is barely half the length of any other in this group. One senses a lack of enthusiasm in the narration.

Earlier commentaries simply assume that the narrator of the entire collection is Alberus himself, and they lean heavily on this fable for biographical detail. It is certainly true that the facts revealed here are consistent with what we know about Alberus' life. But as we have clearly seen in the fables discussed so far, the primary function of the narrator's intrusions is to serve the interests of the narration, not to reveal facts about himself. Wayne Booth, in The Rhetoric of Fiction, offers a striking analogy to clarify this problem, to explain "the intricate relationship of the so-called real author with his various official versions of himself." For, Booth asserts,

> Just as one's personal letters imply different versions of oneself, depending on the differing relationships with each correspondent and the purpose of each letter, so the writer sets himself out with a different air depending on the needs of particular works.
>
> These differences are most evident when the second self is given an overt, speaking role in the story.[6]

Robert Durling, in The Figure of the Poet in Renaissance Epic, also distinguishes carefully "between the actual author, who exists outside the work, and the figure of the narrator, which exists within the work." But, Durling asserts: "From the point of view of the author, the figure of the narrator is a role in which the author

casts himself; it is a dramatic projection of some kind."[7] Thus while it is necessary for us to distinguish carefully between the two, for the author the narrator is a projection of himself, a projection which takes its shape according to the internal demands of the work.

The projection in Fable 24 is clearly different from that in the other fables, and we must assume that this is because the fable itself serves a different purpose. The elaborate geographical descriptions Alberus uses are instructive in and of themselves, aside from the role they play in the narration. Perhaps Alberus felt his own personal experiences would enhance the description in this fable and make his praise for the Vogelsberg region more convincing. But they make the fable less satisfying artistically, for they destroy the unity of the fable as a whole; this unity, as well as the humor and irony of the fables, results from the narrator's assuming the role of a naive story teller.

Fable 25, as was indicated earlier, occupies the middle position of the collection. It also has the longest digression in the entire collection and is the last fable in the group where the narrator is most conspicuous. Furthermore, we find here a mixture of the narrator as a presumably naive story teller with the kind of biographical detail found in Fable 24 (57-60 and 111-117). It is clearly meant to serve as a kind of grand climax to this group.

The digression begins with the narrator announcing his

intention to praise the Feldberg, highest mountain in the Taunus region. After listing the mountains known from the classical world, he concludes:

> Dieselbigen, vnd ander mehr,
> Welche lang zu erzelen wer,
> Dauon viel die Poeten schreiben,
> Lass ich in ihren wirden bleiben.
> Ich acht, der Berg in vnserm landt,
> Sey ihn gewest gar vnbekandt,
> Sie hetten sonst sein auch gedacht,
> Vnd gute Verss von ihm gemacht.
> Darumb von mir ein wenig marck.
> (17-25)

He proceeds to describe the "Polgraben," a palisaded ditch which is visible from the mountain, the forest around the mountain, the animals which inhabit it, and the berries which grow there, especially the blueberries, of which he says:

> Ich hab ihr selber viel da gessen,
> Drumb kundt ich ihrer nicht vergessen,
> Weil ich der Frucht hab offt genossen,
> Hat mich dis schreiben nicht verdrossen.
> (57-60)

There is an absurd disparity in these two explanations of the narrator's attitude toward his work. On the one hand there is the grand design of celebrating the German mountain because the ancient classical poets failed to do so; on the other hand he tells us the blueberries he has eaten there keep the job from becoming too vexing.

There are numerous such contrasts in this fable, and they constitute the unifying element. The narrator begins what he says will be a description of the mountain with a detailed view of the ditch which lies beneath it, as was

mentioned before. There is a ludicrous contrast in his account of the two uses of birds, which follows immediately after the lines just quoted:

> Da hört man der Vögel gesang,
> Dabey wirdt eim die zeit nicht lang,
> In sölchen kleinen Vögelein,
> Hat vns der gütig Vatter fein
> Die liebe Musica beschert,
> Auff das dem vnlust werd gewehrt.
> Noch einen lust hat man daneben,
> Das vns die Vögel braten geben.
> (61-68)

The narrator describes the forest as too small for bears, but he takes great pains to impress on us the expanse of the plateau on top of the mountain:

> Vnd auff dem Feldtberg hoch dort oben,
> Wann man nicht höher kommen kan,
> Da steht ein grosser weiter plan,
> Der hat ein solchen breiten raum,
> (Wann ichs nicht wist, so glaubt ichs kaum)
> Ein grosse Stadt kundt droben stahn,
> Als Franckfurdt, ist kein zweiuel an.
> (76-82)

And he contrasts the temperature on top with that down below:

> Vnd wanns hieunden ist so heiss,
> Also, dass einer schier nicht weiss,
> Wo er sich doch für hitz erhalt,
> So ists dort oben also kalt,
> Als wer es vmb Sanct Thomas tag,
> Da einr ein beltz wol leiden mag.
> (85-90)

The long discussion of the Altkönig mountain, which is really a digression within the digression, contrasts Roman and German control of the mountain and their respective names for it. And the <u>alt</u> in this name, reflected by various forms of <u>alt</u> in lines 122, 125, 126, 127 and 128,

is juxtaposed by neu in line 135. Finally, the story itself is a carefully developed contrast, as we shall see below.

As in Fables 19 and 20, the narrator finally reminds himself to get on with his tale:

> Es ist nun zeit, das ich auch kum
> Zuletzt auff mein Propositum.
> (159-160)

But he digresses once again, giving a list of villages in the vicinity. Buried among these is the village where the story allegedly took place, as we find out later. But here he gets bogged down in a description of the aristocratic authority of the region:

> Man geht von Falckenstein, zur rechten handt
> So kompt man ins Epsteiner landt,
> Da ligt ein Dorff, heist Ruprechtshan,
> Jhenseit des Bergs light bass fortan
> Elhaul, vnd Gossbach nah dabey,
> In der Epsteiner termeney,
> Ein Graff von Epstein hat weiland
> Gantz ingehabt dasselbig Land,
> Jtzundt mein Herr von Königstein
> Dasselb inn hat, doch nicht allein,
> Dann auch mein Herr von Hessenlandt.
> Ein grosser Fürst, gar weit bekant,
> Am Epster ländtlin hat ein theil,
> Gott geb jhn beiden glück vnd heil.
> (161-174)

He finally begins his story, but after eight lines he lapses once again into a digression, this time on the kermis celebration, near the end of which we have yet another contrast:

> Man geb den leuten guten Wein,
> Beim bösen möcht ich selbst nicht sein.
> (191-192)

He admonishes himself for this latest intrusion and returns

to the story:

> Noch kum ich ex Proposito,
> Vnd bleib zu lang im Parergo,
> Wolan, ich will nun zeigen an,
> Was doch der zart Ochss hab gethan.
> (195-198)

The fable itself is a development of the contrast identified in the title: "Von eim alten Ziegochssen, vnd eim jungen Mestochssen." The high points are contained in two contrasting speeches, one by the steer and one by the ox, in which each compares himself with the other. The steer speaks first:

> O armut, elendt, jamer, not,
> Wie sawer wirdt doch dir dein brot,
> Wie wirstu doch geplagt so hart,
> Vnd ich werd fein gehalten zart,
> Du armer Ochss, wie bistu doch
> So hart beschweret mit dem Joch,
> So bin ich frey, vnd guter ding,
> Geyl, vnd guts muths, vnd frölich spring,
> Drumb niemandt selger ist dann ich,
> Der guten tag gebrauch ich mich,
> Vnd hab allzeit ein guten mut,
> Ich edel, zartes, junges blut,
> Wie fein, wie glat, wie hübsch bin ich,
> Drumb soltestu billch schemen dich,
> Das du so rauch bist, vnd veracht,
> Bist hesslich, scheusslich, vnd verschmacht,
> Bey mir ist eitel fröligkeit,
> Hie ist Gott vnd die säligkeit,
> Ich bin ein feines junges Thier,
> Hab besser tag, dann deiner vier.
> (209-228)

He begins by contrasting their lot in life. While the ox is "geplagt so hart," he, the steer, is "fein gehalten zart," and where the ox is "hart beschwert," he is "frey." But he soon goes on to differences of appearance which imply, he assumes, character differences. He describes himself with the adjectives edel, zart, jung, fein, glat,

hübsch; the ox, on the other hand, should be ashamed because he is rauch, veracht, hesslich, scheusslich, verschmacht. The ox, however, has his say later. With typical humor the narrator describes the young steer as he stands:

> Gebunden an der Metzger banck,
> Solt sterben, vnd war noch nicht kranck.
> (247-248)

The ox addresses him:

> . . . Du stoltzes öchsslin mein,
> Wo bleibet nun das brangen dein?
> Was will nun aber werden drauss?
> Du meyntst, es wer mit mir gar auss,
> So sihstu nun das widderspil,
> Vnd anders mit dir werden wil,
> Du must fort, vnd die haut dargeben,
> So arbeit ich, vnd bleib beim leben,
> Wer hat den andern nun vexiert,
> Wie schwind wirstu examiniert,
> Vnd wirdt dir dein stoltziern vergolten,
> Wer hat den andern nun gescholten?
> Ade, ade, du ferst dauon,
> Der müssgang gibt kein andern lon.
> (251-264)

Fable 25 is the last in which the narrator plays such a prominent role. There are intrusions by him in eleven of the last 24 fables (29, 30, 31, 33, 37, 39, 42, 43, 44, 47, 48), but in none of them is he so conspicuous as in the fables discussed so far. Indeed, one might argue that the humor connected with the narrator in the later fables depends on what we already know about him. Thus in Fable 30 he concludes the digression with the following statement about his purpose:

> Was etwan da geschehen sey,
> Das will ich kürtzlich zeigen an,
> Drumb ich diss angefangen han.
> (52-54)

In Fable 31 there is an interesting progression at the beginning, where the narrator intrudes three times at intervals of five lines. There is also an intensification of the feeling expressed. The bird he wishes to praise is the nightingale:

> Drumb ich das Vöglin loben will.
> . . . . . .
> Es kan den halss so meisterlich
> Verdrehen, das es wundert mich.
> . . . . . .
> . . . es singt tag und nacht so fein,
> welchs mich warlich sehr wunder nimpt.
> (5, 9-10, 14-15)

In Fable 37, after a satiric attack on a priest in a village he wishes to describe, he says:

> Ich lass den Pfaffen farn, vnd kum
> Wider zur Noss bey Rumpelum.
> (19-20)

The digression in Fable 39 is likewise an attack on the Roman Catholic Church and concludes as follows:

> Was hilffts aber, das ich viel sag?
> Satan der Fürst in dieser Welt
> Der thut doch was ihm wol gefellt.
> (66-68)

There is irony in these fables but it is always focused on the subject matter rather than on the narrator himself. It will therefore be discussed in Chapter IV.

Several of these fables have lengthy digressions, and in these, too, there is a thematic connection between the digression and the story. Thus Fable 30 deals with actions out of keeping with one's station in life. In the one case this is observed in drunken monks, in the other

in the donkey who tries to caress his master like the pet dog. Fable 37 treats the misuse of power, first in the priest who demands payment from parents who have a sick infant, and then in the lion who, as king, calls the other animals to him and devours them. Sickness is also a link, for the lion alleges that he is sick. In Fable 39 the monks play instead of doing their work (the word spiel occurs twice), the objects of play being wine and women, and the three maids slay the rooster so that he will not wake them to their morning chores. In Fable 42 the narrator praises the city Ursel and then David Wolgemut, who wins the hand of the Emperor's daughter in a competition there. In Fable 48 there does not seem to be any such unifying element. Instead there is the stark contrast between the warm praise of Marburg on the one hand, and the pessimistic view of mankind on the other. Indeed, everything in this fable seems turned around; the fox, of all animals, is the ultimate victim of ingratitude after a most peculiar chain of events.

We may now draw our conclusions about the narrator on the basis of the fables discussed above. Most persistent in the collection as a whole is the disparity between the subject matter and the manner of presentation. As was observed in the discussion of Fable 9, the narrator gives the impression that he distinguishes carefully between fables, which are fictitious, and episodes in the real world. In Fable 14, which, like Fable 9, consists of an

episode among men in the digression followed by the fable itself, the narrator says of the episode:

> Es soll für war geschehen sein,
> Drumb ichs nicht vor ein Fabell sag.
> Sie leben beyd auff diesen tag.
> (8-10)

And in Fable 33, "Vom Babstesel," the narrator first tells the story about the ass who runs away from his master, disguises himself in a lion skin, and becomes pope. At this point the narrator intrudes:

> Nun lieber sih, ein solche macht
> Des Löwen haut zuwegen bracht,
> Diss ist kein Fabel, sonder war.
> (73-75)

Here the narrator means, of course, that the story contains allegorical truth. He goes on to assert that Martin Luther has freed man from the tyranny of the ass. In Fable 37 the narrator assures us once again that the event described in the digression is true: "Es ist fürwar so, wie ich sag" (14). But the verity of the fable itself he leaves open to question: "Es hat wol können müglich sein" (24).

Yet despite these assurances that he distinguishes between fiction and fact, the fables themselves are told as if they actually had occurred. Frequently he begins his story with "es ist geschehen," or "es hat sich begeben" (5, 17, 43, etc.) or similar expressions which imply that the events actually happened. He recounts detail like a historian, and, as was shown in Fables 12, 13, 14 and 16, does his best to get his facts straight, to establish what

actually happened, where, and to whom.

In The Nature of Narrative, Scholes and Kellogg describe a kind of "eye-witness narrative" which, in its treatment of factual detail, bears a striking resemblance to Alberus' fables. After exploring the "distinction between the real and fictional in the autobiographical form of eye-witness narrative," where the focus is inward, Scholes and Kellogg continue:

> The eye-witness narrative in which the focus is outward rather than inward also has its factual and fictional polarity. This kind of eye-witness has been a favorite device for satirists and utopists from Lucian to Swift and on to Butler. The more fantastic the story, the more the empirical aura which surrounds the eye-witness becomes desirable.[8]

The narrator in Alberus' fables is, of course, not an eye-witness. He is, or rather pretends to be, what Scholes and Kellogg call a histor, an investigator who "examines the past with an eye toward separating out actuality from myth" (p. 242). But in Alberus' fables, too, there is a kind of "factual and fictional polarity," as Scholes and Kellogg so appropriately call it, an "empirical aura" in a patently fictitious collection of stories. The narrator goes about telling his fables with an eye for facts, flooding them with detail, clarifying as well as he can when there is uncertainty. He thus emerges not as an inventor of tales, but rather as an investigator and recorder of events. But he comes to absurd conclusions in his investigations--or comes to no conclusion at all. And there is the constant reminder that the stories are,

after all, fictions. By playing on this disparity, he amuses us, delights us while instructing us.

The narrator's apparent lack of narrative control serves a similar purpose. He digresses from the announced tale, and even digresses from his digressions; he admonishes himself to get back to the story only to digress again. And yet beneath the surface of this rambling, disorganized narration there is regularly a unity of theme and construction. He has, while playing the fool, fooled us. He thus fulfills Luther's conception of Aesop, a narrator who feigns folly to achieve his objective, "betriegen zur warheit."

It is reasonable to assume, as has been shown in Chapter II, that Alberus was familiar with Luther's conception of Aesop. But it is not necessary to make this assumption, for Alberus reveals his own conception of Aesop in his introductory essay, "Vom Esopo, wie er gelebt vnd sich gehalten hat." Braune states that this essay is a very abbreviated and freely adapted version of the vita as it appeared in the Camerarius collection. Alberus, he continues, "will es glaubhaft machen, dass der Aesop der vita der Verfasser der lehrreichen Fabeln gewesen sei, die unter seinem Namen gehen. Aus diesem Motiv erklärt sich ganz einfach die Art seiner Bearbeitung des Lebens Aesops" (xliv). An examination of Alberus' portrayal of Aesop will help clarify the role of the narrator in his fables.

Alberus begins his biographical sketch by telling us

that although Aesop was a wise man, he was a slave, and in appearance was "vberauss hesslich, vnd gantz schwartz, das er auch deshalben Esopus, das ist, schwartz, oder ein scheusslicher Mor, genent wird." And Alberus concludes from this: "Also hat sich in solcher hesslichen wonung solcher feiner schatz, vnd treflicher verstandt gehalten, dabey vns Gott leret, das man nicht nach dem eusserlichen schein vrtheiln soll." This becomes the message for the entire biography. Aesop is never what he seems to be. His actions and explanations seem simple, naive, those of a fool. But beneath the surface there is always cunning and wit. And while he himself appears to be the fool, he is actually making a fool of those who feel superior to him. This is revealed to us in a series of episodes. The first of these is a trip to market. The slaves must all carry burdens, and the master allows Aesop to pick out the one he wishes to carry. Here is how Aesop makes the selection:

> Da versucht er alle bürden, wie schwer ein jegliche wer, vnd fert zu, vnd nimpt die aller schwerest bürd, nemlich ein korb voll essens vnd trinckens, welchen sunst jrer zwen zu tragen verordnet waren, da lachten sie sein all, vnd hielten jn für ein gecken.

But when they stop to eat, Aesop's load becomes lighter, and by evening, when they are all tired, he has the lightest load to bear. And the others now understand: "Da merckten sie, das Esopus nit genarrt het." At the market place in the city Samus, Aesop is placed between

two slaves who are attractive and one of whom is "ein Grammaticus." When they claim they can do anything Aesop laughs; and when asked by Xanthus, who later buys him, what he can do, he replies: "gar nichts kan ich. . . . Diese zwei können alles, vnd haben mir nichts gelassen." Only now do Xanthus and his students understand that Aesop's simplicity is feigned: "Da merckten die Studenten, das Esopus vorhin deshalben gelacht hett, vnd der Magister liess ihm den schwank wolgefallen." When Xanthus brings Aesop home he is afraid that the slave's hideous appearance will repulse his wife, and so he commands Aesop: "Kanstu dem Weib nicht ein guten bossen für halten, damit du sie zu frieden stellest?" Aesop answers: "drey böser ding sind auff erden, Wasser, Weib, Fewer." Xanthus' wife, of course, becomes angry, but Aesop tells her: "mein liebe fraw, ich hab euch nicht gemeinet, sonder von bösen weibern lautet der spruch, darumb zörnet nit, sonder haltet euch also, das jr vnder fromme Weiber gerechnet werdet." And now she too understands: "Da wart das Weib wider zu frieden, vnd merckt das Esopus nicht vnuerstendig sein muste."

There are other episodes. In one, Aesop, "mit seiner behendigkeit," as we are told, tricks Xanthus' estranged wife into returning. In another, he serves nothing but tongue at a lavish banquet for scholars. In a third, he extricates Xanthus from a hopeless wager in which he had boasted he could drink up the sea. But the ingredients are always the same. Aesop, while appearing to be a fool,

shows in the end that he is wise. But those around him do not see his wisdom until the event is concluded. He is, in short, a kind of Till Eulenspiegel who can tell stories. And this is the character of the narrator that confronts us in Alberus' fables. He plays the fool in order to fool us, make us smile in our superiority over him. As Luther said, we will listen to a fool speak the truth where we will not listen to a wise man. The narrator who feigns folly thus catches us off guard, makes us less suspicious, breaks down the natural resistance we have for his ethical message. But Alberus' narrator serves an additional purpose. The structural and thematic unity and the humor of the fables are functions of this narrator. His presence thus serves an aesthetic purpose.

The fool was, of course, a familiar figure to the sixteenth-century German reader, and in one of the most celebrated satires of the period, Desiderius Erasmus' Moriae Encomium, Folly herself is the narrator. In a letter to Martin Dorpius written in May 1515, Desiderius defended his satire at length and offered arguments which could as easily have been used later in defense of Alberus' fables:

> The wise heads of old who preferred to present the salutary precepts of life in humorous and seemingly puerile fables had insight into a good principle, namely, that a truth of itself somewhat harsh, if presented in an entertaining fashion, more easily finds its way to men's hearts. Yes, this is the honey which in Lucretius the doctors smeared on the inside of the cup of absinthe for the treatment of children. . . . Perhaps it is not proper to put Christ in such a category. Yet if we can use certain comparisons between the

> divine and the human, did not His parables have something in common with the fables of the ancients? . . . So it seems to me justifiable to use a little deceit, as it were, on these pleasure-loving souls and give them their medicine disguised as pleasure. . . . Finally, it is helpful to have the narration spoken by some kind of ridiculous character with cracks and jokes, so that the good humor of the situation simply rules out any offense.[9]

Alberus' narrator links his fable collection to the flourishing sixteenth-century tradition of fool literature which goes back to Sebastian Brant's Narrenschiff and includes several works by Thomas Murner, notably Von dem grossen Lutherischen Narren. But the similarity to the Moriae Encomium is especially striking, for Alberus, like Desiderius Erasmus before him, exploits the didactic possibilities of using a fool as narrator.

There is nothing comparable to this narrator in the fables of Luther, Waldis, the Dorpius collection, or the 1534 edition of Alberus' own fables. Luther and Dorpius adhere to the classical conception of the fable, telling the story as clearly and briefly as possible, characterizing rather than spelling everything out in detail. Both Waldis and the 1534 edition of Alberus lack the clearly developed figure of the narrator, although each has occasional isolated instances of a first-person teller (Fables 3, 6, 7, 8, and 13 in Alberus' 1534 edition, corresponding to 6, 7, 14, 22, and 17 of the 1550 edition). The decisive passages cited above from Fables 9, 14 and 16 are absent from the earlier edition, as are the entire

Fables 12, 13, 19, 20, 23, 24, and 25, in which the character of the narrator is significantly developed. Finally, the brief essay on Aesop's life is also absent from the 1534 edition. The entire conception of the narrator is thus a product of Alberus' maturity and represents the most significant difference between the two editions of his fables.

Alberus' Development of his Source

All of the critical appraisals of Alberus' fables quoted at the beginning of this chapter note that there is a narrative breadth in his fables not generally associated with the fable as a literary form. Yet none of these appraisals examine his fables in any detail to show how he achieved this narrative breadth. The purpose of the present discussion is to examine a number of his fables to show what techniques he used to develop the simple fable of his source. Since Waldis' fables are also generally regarded as more fully developed than either the Dorpius collection, which he also used as a source, or Luther's fables, a comparison with Alberus' fables should prove most instructive. Passages cited from Alberus are from the 1550 edition unless stated otherwise.

Fable 6 is the first in which there is significant development of the brief presentation of the source, where the story is told as follows:

> A wolf, drinking at the source of a spring, saw a lamb drinking at some distance below. He ran over and rebuked the lamb, saying that he had disturbed the spring. The lamb quivered anxiously, pleaded that he spare one who is innocent. Since he had been drinking far below, he could not have disturbed the wolf's drink, even if he had wanted to. The wolf in reply thundered: "You accomplish nothing with your sacrilege, you are always against me. Your father, your mother, your entire loathed kind opposes me intentionally. You will pay the penalty to me today."[10]

Alberus expands this by having the wolf make three separate accusations and having the lamb answer after each. Direct discourse is used throughout instead of only at the end. The wolf begins each charge with two questions. As in the source, the accusations become more and more absurd: first, the lamb has muddied the wolf's drinking water; second, the lamb as an individual is against the wolf; and third, all sheep are against him. But in Alberus' fable the effect is heightened through the forms of address. In the first accusation the Wolf calls the lamb "bösewicht," in the second "feyger bösewicht," and in the third he begins:

> Da sprach der Wolff, Ist das nicht fein,
> Das der also gerecht will sein?
> Der grosse bösswicht nimpt sich an,
> Er hab mir nie kein leydt gethan.
> (47-50)

The irony here is absurd but grim, and the lamb is overwhelmed by the wolf's rhetoric. To the first accusation he replies in kind, with a lengthy defense beginning with two counterquestions; to the second he replies with one brief question; and to the third he replies with the desperate, ominous condition:

. . . hab ich solchs gethan
So sterb ich jetzt von stunden an.
(61-62)

In the 1534 edition the second and third replies of the lamb are absent, and the wolf speaks only twice. While the wolf's accusation here is longer than that of the source, the basic structure of the fable as a whole is similar. Waldis' fable (I, 2) adheres even more closely to the account in the source, although he, too, uses direct discourse throughout.[11] And where Alberus uses "bösewicht" and "bosser knab" in the two accusations made by the wolf even in the early version, Waldis uses the less ironic "böses Thier," and uses it but once, in the second and final accusation.

Fable 7 tells how the lion and various other animals agree to hunt together. They catch a stag, and the source gives the following account of the Lion's speech when they meet to divide it up:

> "One share is mine," he said, "because I am most deserving. Another share is also mine because I am strongest. Furthermore, because I perspired more in catching the stag, I claim a third share. Finally, if you yield the fourth share, it is an act of friendship." When his partners heard this, they dispersed, empty-handed and silent, not daring to mumble anything in opposition to the lion.[12]

In the 1534 edition Alberus adheres closely to the account of the source, though he does expand the conclusion somewhat. In the 1550 edition, however, the narrator (who identifies himself in both editions as the story teller at the beginning: "Ich will euch von eim Löwen sagen")

juxtaposes what the other animals think in silence to what the lion says. Thus after the lion claims the first part, the narrator tells us: "Es sagt jhm keins kein wort dargegen." And after he claims the second part the narrator notes:

> Sie dachten, das der henger walt,
> Der Teuffel solchs für billich halt,
> Sie stunden da, vnd warn verzagt.
> (23-25)

After the third, the narrator once again reflects their thoughts, but then indulges in a reflection of his own:

> Sie dachten, hat es die gestalt,
> Das dein der lehdig Teuffel walt,
> Sie dorfften sich mit jhn nicht zancken,
> On was sie thaten mit gedancken,
> Gedancken aber, wie der windt,
> In allen landen zollfrey sind.
> Sie stunden da, vnd warn verzagt.
> (29-35)

And after the lion claims the fourth and final part, the narrator concludes:

> Sie dachten das ist warlich fein,
> Wir können jhm nicht tragen drein,
> Die gut gesellen schwiegen still,
> Vnd dorfften jhm nicht sagen viel.
> Sie musten da verspottet ston,
> Doch brachten sie die haut dauon,
> Sie danckten Gott vnd warn noch fro,
> Das sie kamen von jhm also.
> (43-50)

By dividing his time equally between the roaring of the lion ("da brammst er herfür") and the silence of the other animals, the narrator, besides enhancing the humor of the situation, adds a second moral: in some cases it is clearly better to be silent. Waldis (I, 5) offers the speech of the lion without any significant changes. Instead, he develops

the beginning of the fable, adding a speech by the lion there, too.

Fable 8, "Von einer Stadtmauss vnd Feldtmauss," demonstrates clearly the developmental technique Alberus used in expanding the source, where the fable begins as follows:

> A town mouse enjoyed walking in the country. A country mouse saw him, invited him to come to dinner, and tended to the preparations. The country mouse brought out all that he had put away for winter, exhausted all his supplies just to meet the elegant standards of his honored guest.[13]

Alberus treats this as follows in the 1534 edition:

> Es war ein mal ein stätisch Mauss,
> die gieng spatziern ins feldt hinauss,
> Nit fern von Franckfurt an dem Mein,
> da kam zu ihr ein feldmaus klein
> Vnnd sprach, du liebe statmaus zart
> wie komstu her inn vnser art,
> Ich sag dir bei der trewen min,
> du wirst noch heut mein gestlin sein.
> Da ging sie hin, vnd hatt kein rhu
> biss das sie richt ein malzeit zu,
> Was sie hatt auff den Winter kalt
> gesamlet, thet herfür so baldt.
> Also wardt ler der speisenkast,
> das sie thet gütlich solchem gast.
> (1-14)

Waldis' account begins:

> Es begab sich, das ein Stadtmauss
> Spatzieren gieng ins Feldt hinauss
> Nahe bey eim Dorff; hört, was geschah:
> Ein Feldtmauss sie daselb ersah,
> Hiess sie willkommen, sprach zu jr:
> "Ich bit dich, wöllest gehn mit mir,
> Vnd essen, was Gott hat beschert,
> Vnd was gekochet hat mein Wiert."
> Die Stadtmauss liess bereden sich.
> Sie zohen hin gar heimelich
> Ins Bawren hauss zun selben stunden,
> Vnd assen, was sie allda funden.

Die Dorffmauss sucht heruor all das,
Was hie und da verborgen was,
Vnd keinen fleiss liess vnderwegen,
Das sie eim solchen gast möcht pflegen.
(I, 9)

As in the previous fables, both follow the account in general but do not adhere to it in every detail. Where the source begins with a general reflection on the town mouse, both Alberus and Waldis begin with a particular event. Indeed, the very formulation by Waldis here is suspiciously close to that of Alberus, which appeared fourteen years earlier. Both introduce dialogue where there is none in the source. Waldis adds that they enter the farmer's house "gar heimelich," a humorously fitting description for mice, and both emphasize the pains taken by the country mouse, as does the source, though somewhat more briefly.

After the town mouse has expressed his displeasure at the meagerness of the meal, he invites the country mouse to come with him and enjoy a genuine banquet. The source describes this meal very briefly: "They began the banquet, which the town mouse had prepared splendidly."[14] In the 1534 edition Alberus adds nothing, but in the 1550 version, he describes the meal in more detail and adds dialogue:

Die Stadtmauss bracht her brodt vnd weck,
Darnach bringt sie auch Käss vnd Speck,
Gut Eierkuchen, vnd viel mehr,
Sie lebten wol, vnd zechten sehr.
Die Stadtmauss zu der Feldtmauss sprach,
Hab ich nicht allhie gut gemach?
Ja warlich, sagt die Ackermauss
Die sach gefellt mir vberauss.
(27-34

The detail and dialogue heighten the effect here, for they

intensify the illusion of sumptuous splendor and leisure enjoyed by the town mouse. Waldis' description is less specific and he has the town mouse warn the country mouse:

> Da warn die Grichte manigfalt:
> Gewürtzt, Gallrad, warm vnd kalt,
> Von allerley Speiss vnd Getranck.
> Die Stadtmauss sprach: "iss, machs nit lang!
> Wir haben hie nicht lang der weil:
> Vns möcht der Kelner vbereil."
> (31-36)

Waldis' addition is less satisfying, for it takes the edge off what happens next: "While eating, they heard the sound of a key in the door. They trembled with fear and fled away hastily. The country mouse, not used to this and not knowing the place, barely saved himself."[15] Alberus treats this as follows:

> Sie hatt das wort kaum ausgeredt,
> Der Haussknecht vor der kammer steht,
> Die Meuss baldt hörten das gerüssel,
> Das macht der Haussknect mit dem schlüssel.
> Es wardt den armen Meusen bang,
> Sie kundten sich nicht seumen lang,
> Die arm Feldtmauss wisst nicht wohen,
> Sie dacht, es wirdt mir vbel gehn,
> Wer ich inn meinem armut blieben,
> Ich wurd jetzt nicht vmbher getrieben,
> Des orths war sie gantz vnbekant,
> Jedoch zuletzt ein meussloch fand.
> (35-46

The detail makes more explicit the contrast in mood between this passage and the preceding one from Alberus. This contrast involves not only the situation but also the country mouse's awareness of the situation, as is shown in the contrasting lines:

Die sach gefellt mir vberauss
. . . . . .
Wer ich in meinem armut blieben.
(34, 43)

Also, that he finally hides in a mouse hole is a nice touch, for there he is in his own element again. In Waldis he hides under a bench.

In the conclusion of the source there is, for the first time, direct discourse, but only from the country mouse:

> As the servant left, the town mouse came back to the table and called the country mouse, who with difficulty finally crept out when he had recovered from his fear. He asked the town mouse, who invited him to drink, whether this danger was frequent. The latter replied that it happened every day; one just had to ignore it. Then the country mouse said: "Every day! By heaven, this food tastes more like poison than honey. I much prefer my poverty with safety to this abundance with such fear."[16]

Alberus, in the 1550 edition, expands this brief conclusion until it constitutes 68 of the 114 lines of his fable. Most of his account is taken up with the town mouse's efforts to cheer up the terrified country mouse. First he tries to convince him that there is no more danger:

. . . Sey nur getrost
Es hat kein noth, wir sind erlost
Auss dieser angst, Sey vnuerzagt.
(55-57)

Next he argues that the country mouse brings on his own depression:

Warumb wiltu dann trawrig sein?
Du machst dir selbst ein eygen pein,
So lass nun farn dein trawrigkeit.
(69-71)

Finally, he tries to get the country mouse to forget the

harrowing experience by singing songs. But as a refrain to the town mouse's singing, the narrator tells us three times:

> Noch wolt der gast nicht frölich sein.
> (80, 86, 96)

The country mouse speaks at the end, and here Alberus once again returns to the account in the source:

> Die Feldtmauss sprach, Ist dem also?
> Bey dir würd ich wol nimmer fro,
> Die gute tag sind so gethan,
> Das ich wer lieber fern dauon,
> Die köstlich speiss, als michs ansicht,
> Die ist mit Honig zugericht,
> Vnd inwendig doch voller Galln,
> Sölch gute tag mir nicht gefalln,
> Mit frieden ist mir lieber zwar
> Mein armut, dann bey dieser fahr
> Dein gute tag in solchem pracht,
> Du liebe Mauss zu guter nacht.
> (103-114)

The expression "gute tag," used three times here, with the final occurrence contrasted to the final "gute nacht," is a leitmotif of the fable. In the beginning, the town mouse used the comparative form:

> Ja gleub mir frey, was ich dir sag,
> Wir Stadtmeuss haben besser tag.
> (21-22)

And in the moral, the narrator uses the superlative:

> Darumb ich inn der warheit sag,
> Schlecht leut haben die besten tag.
> (123-124)

The 1534 edition follows the source more closely, but it, too, has direct discourse. The same can be said of Waldis' fable.

In Fable 10, "Von dem Bauch, vnd den Gliedern," Alberus once again expands considerably on the account in the source,

which describes the disagreement between the stomach and the limbs as follows:

> The feet and hands once accused the stomach because all their profits were being squandered by his idleness. They decreed that he either work or ask for no nourishment. He begged again and again, but the hands denied him nourishment.[17]

Out of this brief statement Alberus creates a debate which runs 64 lines. The opening argument of the limbs is summarized by the narrator, but the stomach's rebuttal is direct discourse. He begins his defense with a question:

> Was hab ich euch zu leydt gethan,
> Das jhr ein solchs wolt fahen an?
> (21-22)

He argues that their relationship is not one of servant to master, as they had complained, but rather one of mutual cooperation, for:

> hab ich von ewerm schweyss gezert,
> Da gegen hab ich euch ernert.
> (29-30)

He urges them to return to their tasks, and warns them mildly:

> Hebt nun nicht an ein newe weiss,
> Es wirdt euch anderst selbst gerewen,
> Das sag ich euch bey meinen trewen,
> Ihr lieben freundt, das ist mein rath,
> Das jhr euch hüt vor solcher that.
> (34-38)

To this entreaty one of the parts of the body, whose name, we are told, is Nasenschweyss, replies as follows:

> Sih bruder Bauch, da soltu stahn,
> Vnd hören, was ich zu dir sag,
> Dann ich jetzt gar nichts nach dir frag,
> Wir achten nichts auff deinen bracht,
> Du hast des dings zuuiel gemacht,
> Sey du nun knecht, so binn ich herr,

Kein zins gib ich dir nimmermehr.
Desgleichen thun mein brüder auch,
Wir sind jetzt herrn, sey du der gauch.
(42-50)

The stomach makes one more plea, concluding this time with a more explicit warning:

Werdt jhr mich lassen hungers sterben,
So werdt jhr warlich auch verderben,
Das sey euch Brüdern zugesagt.
(61-63)

The contrast in tone between the stomach's plea and the declaration by Nasenschweyss, spokesman for the other parts of the body, whose very name makes their argument implausible, underlines the point of the story. The conclusion expands the source by telling how individual organs failed and how they saw their error in the end:

Da wurden sie zuletzt gewar,
Das vntrew schlegt sein eygen herrn.
(82-83)

The 1534 edition does not differ significantly from that of 1550. The basic structure of concentrating the argument on two speeches by the stomach and one by Nasenschweyss was already present in 1534, and the speeches were changed but little for the 1550 edition. Waldis (I, 40) does not concentrate the argument in this way. He devotes most of the fable to the formulation of the complaint by the other parts of the body, and the stomach replies in just three lines. Waldis' fable, excluding the moral, is but 32 lines long, while Alberus' is 86 lines in both editions.

In Fable 12, "Von einer Geyss, vnd einem Wolff," the story is expanded once again through the use of dialogue,

and Alberus thereby achieves an effect not realized in the source. The wolf of the source imitates the mother goat's voice in order to try to fool the kid: "The wolf, . . . after the departure of the mother goat, beat upon the door and in a voice like the mother goat's demanded that it be opened."[18] Alberus' wolf, in addition to this, uses the same expressions she had used, and even says them in the same order. The mother tells her kid before leaving:

> Ich hab die haussthür wol verwart,
> . . . . . .
> Du aller liebstes Böckelein,
> . . . . . .
> Ich will gehn bey den Weidenpfadt,
> Vnd will mein bäuchlein essen sat,
> Das ich dir bring den Memm voll milch,
> Das ich das thu, ist recht vnd billch.
> (26-34)

And the wolf says:

> Ist auch die Thür noch wol verwart?
> . . . . . .
> Du aller liebstes Böcklin fein,
> Ich kom jetzt von dem Weidenpfadt,
> Vnd hab gemacht mein bäuchlin sat,
> Den memm voll milch hab ich dir bracht,
> Vnd jmmerdar an dich gedacht,
> Vnd ist auch billch, das ich das thu,
> Dann mir nichts lieber ist dann du,
> Ich wölt kein grösser freud erleben,
> Dann das ich dir den memm solt geben.
> (50-60)

The wolf thus emerges not only as treacherous, but also as cunning. The narrator, in fact, says of the wolf, "wie er viel schalckheit weyss," and the mother goat describes him as "aller schalckheit voll," an expression used elsewhere in the collection for the fox (Fable 37, line 89). But the wolf, while pretending to be the mother goat, refers to

himself merely as bŏs (l. 51), indicating that he is eager to hide his cunning. This, in fact, is the only significant difference between his speech and the mother goat's.

Waldis' version of this fable (I, 24) is substantially shorter (32 lines compared to 80 in Alberus), and while he, too, makes use of dialogue, it is much briefer. The mother goat's words to her kid consist merely of a warning and lack the tender affection of Alberus' version. There is no echo of her words in those of the wolf.

The source for Fable 18, even without the introductory digression on Aesop, is by far the longest chosen by Alberus from the Dorpius collection. Here the source, too, offers more dialogue than elsewhere; and where there is generally a single event there is a sequence of events here. The story tells how the bird Cassita has her nest in a field which is about to be harvested. As she leaves one morning early to gather food for her nestlings, she tells them to relate to her what they see and hear when she returns. They hear the landowner tell his son to go and ask friends to come and help with the harvest on the following day. The nestlings tell Cassita when she returns, and she assures them there is nothing to fear. The following day Cassita leaves again early. The landowner's friends fail to show up, and he tells the son to go this time to their relatives and neighbors and ask them to come and help on the following day. The nestlings again tell Cassita when she returns, and she again assures them there is no reason

to be frightened. On the following morning Cassita once again leaves early. The relatives and neighbors fail to appear. The landowner finally tells his son to bring two sickles on the next morning and they will harvest the grain themselves. When Cassita hears this, she moves her nest.

Again Alberus follows the source, leaving nothing out, but adding detail where he wishes to make things more explicit. He expands greatly the dialogue as it is presented in the source and adds two scenes of his own. The first of these is obtained by adding one day to the story: the landowner sends his son to ask friends on the first day, relatives by marriage on the second, and his own brother on the third. The other scene invented by Alberus is an exchange between this brother and the landowner's son.

In Alberus' version of the fable the landowner is thus disappointed three times instead of twice. As in Fable 6, Alberus uses this three-part construction to show a development. In this instance it is the landowner's increasing uncertainty as to whether he will receive any help in harvesting his crop. On the first day he is confident that his friends will help him, and he expresses this as a statement of fact:

> Derhalben soltu gehn mit eil,
> Zu Schlarn von Kleinendentelum,
> Vnd bitt jhn das er morgen kum,
> Zum Faulen Fritzen geh mir auch,
> Der ist zu mal ein guter gauch,
> Er wird mich freilich jetzt nicht lassen.
> (58-63)

On the second day, it is merely his opinion that his

relatives by marriage will help:

> Die Schwöger wölln wir sprechen an,
> Im Schlauraffthal sitzt Klöppelsklas,
> Meyn nicht, das mich derselbig las,
> Heyntz Sawermilch, vnd Blintzelmauss,
> Ich halt nicht, das sie bleiben auss,
> . . . . . .
> Schlaudrant, vnd Schnörrer, bitt sie ser,
> Das sie wölln kommen zu vns her,
> Halt nicht, das sichs jhr einr beschwer.
> (140-144; 148-150)

And on the third day, he is downright skeptical:

> Mein Bruder will ich dannoch auch
> Ansprechen lassen, vnd probiern,
> Ob er sich auch wöll exhibiern,
> Gleich wie die andern han gethan.
> (192-195)

The irony of the situation--that the bird Cassita knows from the beginning what the land owner must learn from painful experience--is heightened in Alberus' fable by the names of the friends and relatives by marriage, as can be seen in the first two passages quoted above. This irony reaches a peak midway through the landowner's directions to his son concerning the relatives by marriage:

> Ich wolt, das Niemand auch herkem,
> Der wer mir warlich angenem,
> . . . . . .
> Doch falln mir zu noch ander zwen,
> Die werden freilich bey vns stehn,
> Als Eilnitser, vnd Beydeinweil,
> Wann die wern vber sieben meil,
> Sie kemen her vnd hülffen mir.
> (151-152; 155-159)

Other absurd names of this kind include Schlemmer, Sauffdichsat, Stehlangsamauff and Schlaffsanft. There are seventeen such names in all--three friends and fourteen relatives. In contrast to this the son's name is Michael,

the name of the archangel who in Daniel x.13 is described as the obedient helper of God. This becomes a secondary moral in the fable, for the son carries out his father's wishes without question, and the nestlings obey Cassita in like manner. That this is indeed part of the message Alberus makes clear in the moral:

> . . . hierauss ein feine ler,
> Den Kindern auch zu geben wer,
> Wie nützlich ding Gehorsam sey,
> So lass ichs nun hie bleiben bey.
> (279-282)

There is a parallel fable in Waldis' collection (II, 4), but since he did not use the same source, a detailed comparison is not possible. His source, however, cannot have been significantly different, for his fable is very similar to Alberus' source, except that it has no introductory digression and the bird is not given the name Cassita but is simply called a "Wachtel." Although his dialogue is somewhat more developed than Alberus' source, the basic structure is the same; the landowner is disappointed twice, and there are no absurd names characterizing the friends and relatives, as there are in Alberus. Waldis' fable runs 82 lines without the moral, Alberus' 274 lines, and his Latin source about 400 words.

The source for Fable 39, "Von eim alten Weib, vnd jhren Mägden," treats the maids involved collectively. In fact, the exact number is not even given, the account simply stating "ancillas complures." How they slew the rooster is likewise stated as briefly as possible: "The maids, who

were finally distraught by the irksomeness of their daily work, slew the rooster."[19] In Alberus' fable there are three maids and they are given characteristic names--Leiss, Langsam and Lent. Furthermore, there is a progression in their complaint about the rooster. The first wishes that he were not there, the second that he had never been born, and the third that he were dead:

> Die eine sprach, Ach das er wer
> Fern weg in Kalenkutten landt,
> Das wir jhn hetten nie erkandt.
> Die ander sprach mit grossem zorn,
> Ich wolt er wer noch nie geporn.
> Die Lent wardt auch zu zorn bewegt,
> Vnd sich im bett ein wenig regt,
> Sie war so faul, das sie kaum kundt
> Zureden auffthun jhren mundt,
> Sie flucht, das dich der kolkropff an,
> Ich wölt, du schnöder, böser Han,
> Das dich der Fuchss gefressen hett.
> (92-103)

Aside from the sentiments expressed, there is an increasing intensity in the way each speaks. The first merely "sprach," and uses the conditional. The second "sprach mit grossem zorn" and expresses her wish with "wolt." But the effect of the whole takes a humorous, even ridiculous turn in the narrator's description of Lent's laziness. This effect is intensified by the "flucht" and by Lent's apostrophe to the rooster as something evil. And in contrast to Lent's "flucht," the narrator continues:

> Sie segneten das liebe bett,
> Solln wir von dir geschieden sein,
> Das ist vns doch ein schwere pein.
> (104-106)

This mixture of the mundane and ordinary with mock sublimity

is sustained in the next passage, where the deed is planned and carried out. First, the narrator describes the appearance of the three:

> Die ein kam vnd war vngegürt,
> Die ander war nicht zu geschnürt,
> Vnd gieng nicht, wie sichs dann gepürt,
> Das har war jhr auch gar verworn,
> Vnd hatt den lincken schuch verlorn,
> Sie sucht hieuorn, sie sucht dorthinden,
> Der schuch wolt sich doch niergendt finden.
> Zuletzt kam auch die gute Lent,
> Die hatt den rock gar vmbgewendt,
> Vnd hatt die har nicht auff gemacht,
> Vnd gieng gleich wie ein Fassenacht.
> (110-120)

Next, the plot is revealed:

> Die armen Mägd warn sehr verdrossen,
> Drumb haben sie mit ein beschlossen,
> Den Han zubringen vmb sein leben,
> Der Lenten wardt befehl gegeben,
> Die sach also zu richten auss,
> So baldt die Fraw gieng auss dem hauss.
> Sie hatt gar baldt verwilligt drein,
> Vnd wolt des Hanen Richter sein.
> (121-128)

And finally, the plan is carried out:

> Da nam die Lent brodt inn die handt,
> Vnd lockt dem Han inns hauss hinein,
> Vnd vnter solchem guten schein
> Wolt sie den Han vmbs leben bringen.
> . . . . . .
> Also frass an dem falschen brodt,
> Der arme Han den gäen todt.
> (130-133; 141-142)

Waldis' fable (I, 76) is brief, but he does include short bits of dialogue. The total length of his fable is 28 lines, while Alberus' runs 118 lines even without the introductory digression.

The source account of Fable 44 is very brief:

> A dog once replied to a thief who was offering him bread to keep him silent: "I know your tricks. You offer me bread so that I won't bark. But I despise your gift. Certainly if I took the bread you would steal everything from this house."[20]

Here the source, too, offers direct discourse. In Alberus' fable the dog and the thief enter into a debate. The thief begins by urging the dog to take the piece of meat. The dog, after refusing, gives the thief some advice which might have come from the town pastor:

> Du bist ein jung gerader Man,
> Der sich mit arbeit nehren kan,
> Du solt dich in ein standt begeben,
> Darinn du mögest ehrlich leben,
> Wo dir nun mein rath wol gefellt,
> So lass ich dich vnangebellt,
> Ich rath aber, folg meiner lar,
> Wo nicht, so sag ich dir fürwar,
> Das du dich must alln augenblick,
> Besorgen für des Henckers strick.
> (27-36)

The thief rejects the good advice, blaming all on his incurable disobedience, and continues:

> Wanns nun dahin kompt, das der Rhein
> Wirdt on fisch vnd on wasser sein,
> Vnd wans geschehn wirdt, das der Strauss
> Sein eigen Eyr brüt selber auss,
> Vnd wann ein Ross von einer Lauss
> Geboren wirdt, oder ein Mauss
> Ein Elephanten wirdt gebern,
> Als dann werd ich mich auch bekern.
> (47-54)

As in Fable 18, we are confronted by an irony peculiar to the fable as a literary form. While the dog, in addition to loyalty, shows wisdom and perception in his advice, the man, a thief, babbles nonsense, predicating the acceptance of the advice on preposterous conditions. And now the dog

answers in kind:

> Wanns nun dahin kompt, das im Rhein
> Kein wasser, sonder eitel wein
> Wirdt fliessen, vnd das Sächsisch Bier
> Verwandelt wirdt in Maluasier,
> Vnd wanns dahin kompt, das die dieb
> Beweisen brüderliche lieb,
> Vnd wann kein Hencker mehr wirdt sein,
> Als dann will ich dich lassen ein.
> (61-68)

The thief tries to force his way in, but when the dog barks he is caught. And here again Alberus uses characteristic names. The loyal servant who catches the thief is called Hanshaltdichrecht, and the executioner Scherjhmdenbart hangs him after offering the following legal opinion:

> Ein Mörder in dem Rechten hat
> Verdient, das man jhn mit dem Rat
> Richt, Ist er aber gnaden werdt,
> So richt man jhn nur mit dem Schwerdt.
> Zum andern soll ein Dieb gedencken,
> Vnd sich an Galgen lassen hencken,
> So nimpt ein jeder seinen lohn.
> (115-121)

Finally, the village near Nuremberg where all this happens is called Galgenhof. Waldis' version of this fable (I, 19) follows the source. It is 12 lines long, while Alberus' is 128 lines long.

We may now draw some conclusions about the kind of development to be found in Alberus' fables. The source offers the fables in classic brevity and clarity. There is virtually no detail, and indirect discourse is used extensively. Direct discourse usually occurs only at the high point of the fable, is brief, and, except in Fable 18, involves but one speaker. Alberus expands this presentation

by adding dialogue and detail. Even in his shortest fables (4, 17, 35) he makes such additions. In his more fully developed fables, these additions do not simply lengthen the fable; they enter in some way into its total structure. Thus in Fable 6 there is a progression, the wolf's charges becoming more absurd, the lamb's defenses more anxious. Similar progressions can be found in Fables 18 and 39. In Fable 7 there is the contrast of the roaring lion and the silent thoughts of the other animals. Fable 8 contains numerous contrasts between the two mice. These contrasts are highlighted by the tone evident in the speech of the two mice and by the leitmotif "gute tage," as well as by the refrain offered by the narrator to the singing of the town mouse. In Fable 25, too, a contrast is developed in the dialogue of the young steer and the old ox. In Fables 10, 44, and 47 the brief account of the source is expanded into a debate, and each speaker is once again characterized by the tone he uses.

Waldis also adds detail and dialogue, but rarely as much as Alberus, and he does not offer the kind of structural unity that one finds in Alberus. Of the 400 fables by Waldis, the comparison undertaken above has considered only a fraction; those discussed are typical of the collection as a whole, however. In Book IV, written some time after the first three, there are a number of longer fables, particularly toward the end of the book (90, 94, 95, 99, and 100). But it is a difference of degree rather than

one of kind. There is more dialogue in these fables, and individual speeches are longer. The most striking thing about this last book, however, is that only 22 of its 100 fables deal with animals. The rest treat actions among men.

While a few of Alberus' fables are developed more fully in the 1550 edition than in that of 1534, the earlier edition shows clearly that he was already then expanding the simple fable of the source. Fables 6, 7 and 8 were developed further for the 1550 edition, but they had already been expanded significantly in the 1534 edition. Fables 10 and 21, which is the longest in the collection, passed from the 1534 edition to that of 1550 almost unchanged. Unlike the conception of the narrator, the narrative breadth so characteristic of his fables is thus clearly evident in the early edition.

Character Types

One other aspect of Alberus' fables that deserves special if brief mention is the use of characterizing names for human beings. In Fable 4 the peasant who kills the goose that lays golden eggs is called Dölpelhanss. The same kind of folly is apparent in the peasant who cuts down all the trees in the forest, described in Fable 43 as follows:

> Ein Bawer auss der Schelmenzunft,
> Der hiess mit namen Vnuernunft.
> (11-12)

This device also can be used for praise. The hero of Fable

42, who wins the hand of the emperor's daughter, is named David Wolgemut. In Fables 18 and 44, as was observed in the preceding section, the use of such names heightens the irony of the situation. In two fables, characterizing names are used for things other than human beings. In Fable 10 one of the parts of the body is called Nasenschweyss, and Fable 47 has donkeys named Schneckenart and Gehgemach. For satiric purposes Alberus turns the situation around by giving human names to animals. Thus in Fable 33 the donkey who disguises himself in the lion's skin is called Bapstesel, and in Fable 49 the cat, which, characteristically enough, is innocent looking but stealthy, dangerous and evil, is called Murnar, a combination of Thomas Murner's name with the word Narr. These characterizing names offer a nice complement to the animals themselves, who, as is customary in fables, represent various human traits.

NOTES

[1] C. H. Kleukens, Das Buch der Fabeln (Leipzig, 1920), xxix.

[2] Wolfgang Stammler, Von der Mystik zum Barock, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart, 1950), pp. 223-224.

[3] Günther Müller, Deutsche Dichtung von der Renaissance bis zum Ausgang des Barock (Leipzig, 1927), p. 151.

[4] Richard Ligacz, "Aesops Einfluss auf die deutsche Literatur des 16. Jahrhunderts," Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie, LXXV (1956), 359.

[5] In Fable 39, he describes the village Petterweil as being "von Frankenfurdt zwo kleiner meil." This village is approximately twelve kilometers from the nearest edge of modern Frankfurt. The city is, of course, substantially larger today than it was in the sixteenth century, and is therefore closer to Petterweil now than it was then. In like manner, Fable 42 describes the distance between Gutzbach and Giessen as "nicht mehr dann zwo klein meil." The distance between them today is about sixteen kilometers.

[6] Wayne Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago, 1961), p. 71.

[7] Robert Durling, The Figure of the Poet in Renaissance Epic (Cambridge, 1965), pp. 1-2.

[8] Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg, The Nature of Narrative (Oxford, 1966), p. 258.

[9] Christian Humanism and the Reformation: Selected Writings of Desiderius Erasmus, ed. and trans. John C. Olin (New York, 1965), pp. 60-64. The Latin text is in Opus epistolarum Des. Erasmi Roterodami, ed. P. S. Allen, H. M. Allen and H. W. Garrod (Oxford, 1906-1958), II, 93-96.

[10] The complete Latin text of the fables used by Alberus is in Braune's edition, xliv-lvi. The Latin source for Fable 6 reads as follows: "Lupus ad caput fontis bibens, videt agnum procul infra bibentem. Accurrit, agnum increpitat, quod turbarit fontem. Trepidare agnus,

supplicare, ut parcat innocenti. Se quando longe infra biberit, potum lupi ne potuisse quidem turbare, nedum voluisse. Lupus contra intonat, nihil agis sacrilega, semper obes. Pater, mater, omne tuum invisum genus, sedulo mihi adversatur. Tu mihi dabis hodie poenas."

[11] Burkart Waldis, Esopus, ed. Heinrich Kurz (Leipzig, 1862). Here as elsewhere, Waldis' fables are identified according to the book and fable number.

[12] "Una inquiens pars mea est, quia sum dignissimus. Altera item mea est, quia viribus praestantissimus. Porro quia in capiundo cervo plus sudaverim, vendico tertiam. Quartam denique partem ni concesseritis, actum est de amicitia. Socii hoc audito, discedunt vacui et taciti, non ausi mutire contra leonem."

[13] "Libitum est urbano muri deambulare rus. Vidit hunc mus rusticus, invitat, apparatur, itur coenatum. Depromit rusticus quicquid posuerat in hyemem, exhaurit omne penu, ut tanti hospitis expleat lauticiam."

[14] "Ineunt convivium, quod urbanus splendide compararat."

[15] "Inter epulandum, auditur in sera murmur clavis, trepidare illi et fugitare fugitando. Rusticus et insuetus et loci ignarus aegre se tueri."

[16] "Discedente famulo redit urbanus ad mensam, vocat rusticum, ille vix tandem metu deposito prorepit. Invitantem ad pocula urbanum percunctatur num hoc periculum crebrum sit? Respondet ille quotidianum esse, oportere contemni. Tum rusticus. Quotidianum inquit? Me hercule istae dapes plus fellis quam mellis sapiunt. Equidem malo cum securitate meam inopiam, quam cum tali anxietate istam copiam."

[17] "Pes et manus ventrem olim incusarunt, quod ab ocioso eo lucra ipsorum vorarentur. Jubent aut laboret, aut ali ne petat. Supplicat ille semel, et iterum, negant tamen manus alimentum."

[18] "Lupus . . . post matris discessum pulsat fores, voce caprisat, jubens recludi."

[19] "Ancillae quotidiani tandem negotii commotae taedio, gallum obtruncant."

[20] "Furi aliquando panem (ut sileat) porrigenti, respondit canis. Insidias tuas novi, panem das quo desinam latrare. Sed ego tuum munus odi, quippe si ego tulero panem, tu ex his tectis cuncta asportabis."

IV

ALBERUS' USE OF THE FABLE

The Fable as Instruction

The critical statements on the fable offered by the early Protestants and discussed at length in Chapter II all defend it in terms of its didactic function. This is, of course, the traditional conception of the fable. M. E. Smith, in an effort to arrive at a general definition of the fable, defines it as "a short tale, obviously false, devised to impress by the symbolic representation of human types, lessons of expediency and morality."[1] The emphasis is on brevity, and Smith repeats: "The fable is relatively short, aiming to present but one principle of conduct and that, a simple one." This definition certainly fits the Dorpius collection: the fables there are brief and the principles of conduct simple and direct. The same can be said of Luther's fables. In Alberus' fables, on the other hand, this brevity has been abandoned in favor of a rambling, more fully developed narrative. This expanded narrative opens up new possibilities for the didactic content of the fable.

In Alberus' fables, too, there is usually a simple principle of conduct or moral, but it is sometimes given an extra dimension through the manner of narration. This

is generally the case in those fables in which the narrator plays a conspicuous role. For example, in Fable 16, "Von der Berge geburt," the moral is to avoid gullibility, and yet the narrator himself is seemingly gullible (lines 87-90). Similarly, in Fable 19 the moral is to teach by example and not by precept; but the narrator, in telling his story, is unable to follow his own good advice. These fables, along with the others in this group, have been discussed in detail in Chapter III. In each of them the narrator's presence lends a special poignancy and humor to the moral. In like manner, Alberus' development of the simple fable can be seen at least in part as an effort to make the moral more palatable. The interest generated in the story for its own sake disguises and thereby enhances the didactic effect.

Contrary to Smith's definition, however, some of Alberus' fables contain a second principle of conduct inherent in the story. Thus Fable 7, "Von eim Lewen, vnd etlichen andern Thieren," is directed against those who misuse their power, as the marginal note to line one makes clear: "Contra magnates, qui abutuntur potentia sua." The moral is that to avoid this kind of capricious tyranny one should keep to one's own kind. But in addition the fable shows that, having once become involved in such a situation, one does well to endure in silence. Fable 11, "Von einem Löwen, Wolff vnd Esel," bears the same Latin note at line one, and after the concluding moral the reader is referred

back to the moral of Fable 7. There are thus already the same two lessons as in Fable 7. But in addition the story satirizes the dispensation of indulgences. Here as elsewhere in Alberus' fables, satire is a second level of understanding in addition to the more general principle of conduct presented in the fable, which in this case is the abuse of power. In Fable 12, "Von einer Geyss, vnd einem Wolff," we are reminded not once but twice, again in the form of Latin marginal notes, that the moral is obedience to parental authority. This message is, moreover, repeated in the concluding moral. The story shows in addition that one should not judge hastily from appearances alone. Although the wolf effectively imitates the speech of the mother goat and asks to be let in, the baby goat exercises judicious caution:

> Da gieng das jung Böcklein herfür,
> Vnd trat gemach biss an die thür,
> Gedacht, obs auch dein mutter sey?
> Wers nur nicht eitel büberey,
> Es redt schier wie mein Mütterlein,
> Wie kan sie so baldt kommen sein?
> Da sah es durch den riss hinauss,
> Vnd siht den Wolff stehn für dem hauss,
> Vnd spricht, du kömpst mir nicht hierein,
> Du bist doch nicht mein mütterlein,
> Drumb will ich dich nicht lassen ein,
> Du redst wol, wie die mutter mein,
> Vnd möchst doch wol ein mörder sein.
> (61-73)

The lesson is clearly that one should not obey blindly, but should rather ascertain first the validity of the authority demanding obedience. It is worth noting that in the next fable, "Von einem Wolff, vnd einem gemalten Haupt," the

moral is also to avoid judging from external appearances.

In Fable 18, "Von Vöglin Cassita," the moral is that if we want a job done we should do it ourselves. The names of the relatives who the farmer hopes vainly will help him with his harvest underline this moral--Eilnitser, Beydeinweil, Sauffdichsat, Stehlangsamauff, and others. But in addition to this the story presents the virtue of obedience, in the farmer's son as well as in Cassita's nestlings. The concluding moral mentions both of these lessons.

Fable 29, "Von eim Wolff vnd Kranch," presents the vice of ingratitude, as the marginal note to line one makes clear: "Contra ingratitudinem." This is also discussed in the concluding moral. But in the story, the crane's motives for removing the bone from the throat of the wolf become an important part of the didactic content. He yields to the wolf's flattery and promises of recognition and wealth. What must be considered a good deed is thus done for the wrong reasons, from vanity and greed, and not from any Christian charity for the distress of the wolf. This aspect of the fable is also indicated in the concluding moral:

> Dann du noch nicht der erste bist,
> Dem vndanck für seine wolthat
> Die böse Welt erzeiget hat,
> Vmb jhres dancks willn heb nichts an,
> Dein guts vmb Gotts willn werd gethan.
> (112-116)

In Fable 39, "Von eim alten Weib, vnd jhren Mägden," the moral is that in trying to avoid one unpleasant situation we often are caught up in another that is even worse. But

in addition to this the fable presents the evil effects of idleness and laziness. This aspect of the story is reflected in the names of the three girls, Leise, Langsam and Lent.

There are several lessons to be learned from Fable 21, "Von dem Löwen vnd Esel." In fact, this fable, the longest in the collection, is a kind of repository for the moral lessons that appear most frequently in the collection as a whole. First there is the ingratitude of the fox and others who had been treated well by the old lion but were envious of his power. Next there is the open defiance of the legally constituted authority, the right of the young lion to succession. There is the unprincipled cunning of the fox, in his sophistic oratory as well as in the ingeniousness with which he makes each defeat of the ass in the contest with the lion appear like an actual victory. There is the gullibility of the other animals, who follow the fox so willingly (except, ironically, for a sheep and a lamb, and also an old dog), and who are so ready to believe that the cross on the back of the ass is a sign from God. Finally there is the incredible sequence of coincidences enabling the fox to make the ass look like the winner of the contest. The concluding moral reminds the reader of each of these lessons:

> Diss ist die vrsach, warumb gern
> Die groben Esel werden hern,
> Das glück ist gross, die kunst ist klein,
> Das glück thuts aber nicht allein,
> Der Neidhart, hass, vnd eigen will,

Die thun beim Esel mechtig vill,
List, vntrew, vnd behendigkeit,
Ehrgeit, Geitz, vnd vndanckbarkeit,
Die stehn fast all dem Esel bey,
Auff das der Löw nicht König sey,
Die Esel han gemeinlich glück,
Dieweil sie tragen auff dem rück
Ein Creutz, das ist, durch falschen schein
Die Welt will ja verfüret sein,
Wie es dann bey vns auch geschicht.
(483-497)

The concluding moral is a firmly established formal element in the tradition of the fable. Such explanations of the meaning of each fable are to be found in all the sixteenth-century collections discussed above--in Luther's, Steinhöwel's, Waldis' and in the Dorpius collection. In his discussion of the fable, B. E. Perry asserts that "throughout the ages" this kind of concluding moral has usually been added, "even when the story itself does not invite one and the moral so given is plainly perfunctory or far-fetched."[2] Perry traces the development of this moral or "epimythium" to a misunderstanding as to the function of the earlier "promythium." The latter, Perry states, is "not a 'moral' nor an explanation . . . , but an index to the fable's substance. It is obviously addressed to a writer or speaker who is looking through a list of headings in search for an illustration suited to his need, and who is not expected to read the complete text of each fable in order to find out whether or not it is something that he can use." The epimythium, on the other hand, was intended "not to index the fable, but to <u>explain</u> its meaning . . . , even when that meaning, as often, was already summed up by

the words of the last speaker" (p. 35).

In Alberus' fables, too, the moral is often contained in the words of the last speaker. In eighteen of his fables (1, 3, 4, 8, 9, 12, 13, 14, 15, 20, 22, 27, 28, 32, 37, 39, 41, and 47), the last speaker is the intended or actual victim in the story. His speech constitutes a recognition of the situation and of how he was or almost was misled, victimized or fooled. Thus in Fable 28, "Vom Adler, vnd einer Krően," after taking the advice of the crow and dropping the snail on a rock, the eagle sees the crow snatch up the meat and fly away quickly. The eagle says philosophically:

> . . . Mit sőlchem rhat
> Die Kroh jhr selbst geraten hat,
> Doch nun wolan, es schadet nicht,
> Wer weyss, wanns wider not geschicht?
> (33-36)

This speech by the eagle is Alberus' own invention. The source merely indicates the eagle's reaction: "The outmaneuvered eagle was chagrined." ("dolet elusa aquila.") Alberus' version once again adds a second lesson. The eagle, even though he has been fooled, shows a stoic composure and sense of humor that the reader cannot help but admire.

Among these eighteen fables there are five in which the last speaker is victimized because of his own vice. The last speech then becomes a recognition of guilt, a kind of confession. In Fable 3, "Von eym Hundt, vnd schatten," the dog sees in the end that his greed has cost him the

piece of meat:

> Warumb bleib ich nicht beim gewissen?
> Mir war zu wol, vnd hatt zuuiel,
> Also gehts zu, wann einer will
> Zu geitzig sein, so fehrt das glück
> Dahin, vnd kert sich gar zurück,
> Das stück fleisch war dir vngesundt,
> So fast nun auch du loser Hundt.
> (22-28)

Similarly, in Fable 4, "Von einem Bawern, vnd einer Ganss," the farmer recognizes that his greed has driven him to kill the goose that laid golden eggs. In Fable 9, "Von einem Raben vnd Fuchss," the raven sees in the end that he has lost the piece of cheese because he yielded to the fox's flattery. Almost half of Fable 27, "von eim alten Löwen," consists of the speech of the feeble old lion, who, while he is being beaten by the other animals, realizes that he is suffering now because he ruled unwisely when he was strong. Finally, in Fable 39, "Von eim alten Weib, vnd jhren Mägden," the girls see in the end that the very success of their sinister plot to kill the rooster has only made their lot worse.

In addition to this group of eighteen fables, there is another group in which the substance of the moral is given by the last speaker. But in this group the last speaker speaks about or to the victim of the story, or there is no real victim. There are twelve fables in this group (18, 19, 23, 24, 25, 26, 31, 35, 38, 40, 45, and 49). Fable 26, "Von einem reisigen Pferdt, vnd Esel," is a good example of one in which the last speaker addresses the victim. The donkey,

after having been spurned contemptuously earlier by the arrogant stallion, sees him late in life pulling a common cart and says:

> . . . Sih lieb gesell,
> Wo her, Wo her? Was sol das sein?
> Das schickt sich warlich eben fein,
> Auff solchen pracht vnd vbermut,
> Du sihst jha nun was hoffart thut,
> Wo ist nun dein voriger Adell?
> Der köstlich zaum, der gülden Saddel?
> Also du liebes Freundtlin mein,
> Bin ich wider gerochen fein,
> Du hast mich vorhin vbergeben,
> Vnd führst nun selbst ein armes leben,
> Nun sih, wie fein das glück sich wendt,
> Dann hoffart hat kein ander endt.
> (54-66)

Fable 31, "Von einer Nachtgall, vnd Pfawen," will serve as an example of a fable in which there is no victim. To the Peacock's complaint that he has a harsh voice while the homely nightingale can sing so beautifully, God replies:

> Du klagst vber dein böss geschrey,
> Mein gaben die sind mancherley,
> Die Nachtgall vberauss wol singt,
> Der Hirtz die gab hat, das er springt,
> Das wildt Schwein hat ein scharpffen zan,
> Der Has leufft wol, vnd so fortan,
> Also ein sonderliche gab
> Ich dir im anfang geben hab,
> Das du geziert mit feddern bist
> So herrlich, als kein Vogel ist,
> Vnd machst damit ein schönes rat,
> Die gnad dir Gott gegeben hat,
> Vnd füllst die augen, Die Nachtgall
> Erfüllst die ohrn mit jhrem schall,
> Ich theil nicht auss also mein gaben,
> Das einr allein sie all muss haben.
> (45-60)

These twelve fables, together with the eighteen fables discussed earlier, make a total of thirty fables in which the moral is "summed up by the words of the last speaker,"

as Perry puts it. Furthermore, in eight of the remaining nineteen fables (10, 17, 29, 33, 36, 42, 46, and 48), the narrator intrudes at the end of his story to state the lesson clearly before giving the concluding moral. Thus in Fable 10, "Von dem Bauch, vnd den Gliedern," he says of the other parts of the body:

> Da sie nun litten sölche not,
> Vnd wolten helffen, wars zu spot,
> Der Bauch war schon verkamet gar,
> Da wurden sie zuletzt gewar,
> Das vntrew schlegt sein eygen herrn,
> Die Glieder woltens nicht empern,
> Verderben bringen sie dauon,
> Dann zwitracht gibt kein andern lohn.
> (79-86)

This brings the number of fables in which the moral is stated explicitly at the end of the story to thirty-eight. It need hardly be added that in the remaining eleven fables, the moral is clear--even obvious--from the story itself.

In this situation the concluding moral does indeed become superfluous, "perfunctory or far-fetched," as Perry states. But rarely in Alberus' fables does the concluding moral only repeat what has already been made so clear in the story. Instead, the concluding moral is used to add to or develop in some way the lesson or principle of conduct. Thus the concluding moral, like the story itself, is expanded in order to augment the didactic content. So varied are the ways in which Alberus accomplishes this expansion that they merit individual consideration. We can begin by recalling that a number of fables contain a second lesson inherent in the story. In some of these the concluding

moral serves to draw particular attention to this second lesson in addition to stating the more obvious and primary one. This is the case in Fables 11, 18, 27, 29, 34, 43, and 44. Fable 21 contains several lessons and each is mentioned in the portion of the concluding moral quoted earlier in this chapter.

In a few cases the concluding moral also serves to give the lesson a new twist, to offer a view of the situation not brought out in the story. In Fable 13, "Von einem Wolff, vnd einem gemalten Haupt," the lesson--that we should not judge from appearances--is stated clearly at the end of the story by the wolf:

> . . . das ist warlich fein,
> Du stehst allda nur zu eim schein,
> Pfey dich an, du heyloser tropff,
> Du bist ein grober Esels kopff,
> . . . . . .
> Ich bin fürwar auch selber grob,
> Das ich dir gab ein solches lob,
> Vnd vrtheilt dich nur nach dem schein,
> Vnd bin also betrogen fein.
> (23-26; 39-42)

But in the concluding moral, the lesson is based on the disparity presented by the painted head:

> Wann du ein schöne person bist,
> Vnd keine tugendt inn dir ist,
> So hat dich dein gestalt verstelt,
> Das niemandt etwas von dir helt.
> (45-48)

Alberus applies the lesson to the nobility, asserting that their state should be reflected in their character. He concludes by addressing the ladies:

> Den Jungfrawen seis auch gesagt,
> Ist eine nun ein schöne magt,

So seh sie zu, das sie sich halt
Also, auff das jhr fein gestalt,
Durch feine, züchtige geberd,
Vnd erbarkeit viel schöner werd,
Das merck du schönes Jungfrawlein,
Lass dirs mit ernst gesaget sein.
(125-132)

Fables 36, 43 and 47 also present a new twist in the concluding moral. But in Fable 36, "Von einem Löwen, Bern, vnd Fuchss," there is a different kind of new twist. The lion invites each of the other animals into his castle and asks each how he likes it. The bear replies that the stench is unbearable, and the lion slays him. Next the lion asks the wolf, who answers:

. . . Auff meine trew
Sag ich, es ist ein schön gebew,
Vnd reucht darzu so mechtig wol,
Das billch ein Löw hie wohnen sol,
Das sag ich auff das sterben mein,
Da geht ein süsses lüfftlin rein
Vom grünen waldt, O Gott wie gut,
Das einem sanfft im hertzen thut.
(81-88)

But his absurd exaggeration does not save him. The lion replies:

. . . O feyger bösewicht,
Wie kan der Wolff so weidlich liegen,
Das sich dauon die balcken biegen,
Drumb ich dich warlich straffen muss,
Wolan, ich leg dir auff die buss,
Da nam er jhn beim halss behendt,
Vnd halff jhm zu seins lebens endt.
(90-96)

Next it is the fox's turn:

Dem armen Fuchss war draussen leid,
Doch fandt er baldt ein feinen ranck,
Wie er sich gegen dem gestanck
Wolt halten, vnd traffs dannoch eben,
Also, das er erhielt sein leben,
Dann als er wardt berüfft hinein,

Vnd sagen solt die meinung sein,
Da hielt er zu die nass, vnd sagt,
Ich werd vom schnopffen wol geplagt
Nun lenger, dann vierzehen tag,
Es ist warlich ein hesslich plag,
Die macht, das ich nichts riechen kan,
Ich wolt euch sonst gern zeigen an,
Mein meinung, wann der schendtlich schnopff,
Nicht so verwüst hett meinen kopff,
Dem Fuchss halff also seine list,
Das er beim leben blieben ist.
(98-114)

The humor of the narration, even in describing the slaying of the wolf, makes the narrator's last words appear to be the moral of the story. The principle of conduct, it would seem, is presented by the fox, who shows that in some situations discretion is indeed the better part of valor. But in the concluding moral, the honesty of the bear, not the cunning of the fox, is singled out as exemplary:

Der Leut findt man jetzunder vill,
Die listig sind, vnd schweigen still,
Vnd nehmen sich des schnopffens an,
Wie dieses Füchsslin hat gethan,
Als ob der weg der sicherst sey,
Das man sich heng an kein parthey,
. . . . . .
Das sind die Weisen in der welt,
Kein fromer aber von jhn helt.
Der Ber wirdt für gerecht erkent,
Der hat weiss, weiss, schwartz, schwartz, genent,
Ein frommer man die warheit soll
Verleugnen nimmer, ob er woll
Darumb muss wagen leib vnd leben,
So wirdts jhm Gott doch wider geben,
Jhm wirdt gewiss nach dieser welt
Sein leben wider zugestelt,
Es ist ja Christ auch so gestorben,
Vnd doch darüber nicht verdorben.
(115-134)

In the next fable, "Von einem Löwen vnd Fuchss, vnd andern Thiern," the situation is similar, except that in this case the lion pretends that he is on his death bed and pleads

with the other animals to come and pay their last respects. As they enter one at a time, he devours them. But the fox, noting that there are many footprints entering the castle but none leaving it, refuses. In this case the concluding moral expresses approval of the fox's cunning because, far from being deceitful itself, it serves to expose the deceit of the lion.

The last passage quoted from Fable 36 illustrates yet another way in which Alberus uses the concluding moral to develop or modify the lesson from the fable. W. Wienert, in his discussion of the fable of classical antiquity, asserts that the fable usually presents a bit of worldly wisdom rather than a moral truth.[3] This is certainly not true of Alberus' fables. Even where the lesson presented appears to involve such worldly wisdom, as in Fable 36, the concluding moral examines this "wisdom" in the light of Christian doctrine. Approximately half of the concluding morals include references to Christian teachings or cite Biblical parallels to the story offered. Thus in Fable 10, "Von dem Bauch, vnd den Gliedern," which presents the folly of rebellion, the concluding moral offers the example of the Virgin Mary:

> Die mutter Gotts achts nicht gering,
> Als sie mit Christo schwanger ging,
> Dem Keyser, als ein vnderthan,
> (Zu eim exempel jederman)
> Den zinss zubringen vber feldt,
> Dauon S. Lucas hat gemeldt.
> (93-98)

It continues by citing one example of David, who remained

loyal to the tyrannical Saul; and as an example of the consequences of rebellion, it offers Satan, who was expelled from Heaven for his disloyalty.

In a number of fables Alberus uses the concluding moral to apply the lesson presented in the story to the contemporary religious situation. In Fable 16, "Von der Berge geburt," the lesson is to avoid gullibility. The concluding moral argues that the gullible are easy prey for the Protestant fanatics and alludes to the Anabaptists in particular:

> Es sind schon jetzundt vor der thür,
> Viel newer lerer in der Welt,
> Die man für Ketzer billich helt,
> Drumb niemand leichtlich glauben solt,
> Was gleisst, das ist nicht alles goldt,
> Die heilige Tauff vnd Sacrament,
> Die werden leyder jetzt geschendt,
> Vnd wer die wol verachten kan,
> Der wirdt gesetzt gleich oben an,
> Die wöllen wir jetzt lassen farn,
> Gott wirdt jhr thorheyt offenbarn,
> Vnd hat es schon zum theil gethan,
> Wie man an Schwermern mercken kan,
> Wann sie die leut han wol verfurt,
> So find sich dann die Meuss gepurt.
> (120-134)

The concluding moral to Fable 23 is also directed against the Protestant fanatics, and in Fable 21, he leaves it to the reader's imagination how the several lessons presented might apply to these fanatics:

> Ich wils aber hiemit beschliessen,
> Es möcht die Schwörmer sonst verdriessen,
> Wann ich jhr tugent weiter rhürt,
> Darumb zu schweigen mir gepürt,
> Die Welt hat lust zur Schwermerey,
> Wolan, hie soll es bleiben bey.

The lesson in Fable 46, "Von einem alten vnd jungen Frosch,"

is to shun arrogant ambition and be satisfied with one's station in life. In the concluding moral, Alberus applies this lesson to Jan van Leyden, the leader of a particularly militant Anabaptist sect in Münster. A tailor by trade, Leyden proclaimed himself king and, when the city was taken on June 25, 1535, he was tortured to death and hung up in the tower of Lambert Church there.

> Vnd wann etwa ein Handtwercksman
> Will König sein, wie Jhan von Leyden,
> So muss man jhm ein Reich bescheiden,
> Also, das man den Thürnen gleich
> Jhn henck, so hat er auch sein reich,
> Wie man jetzund zu Münster sicht.
> (94-99)

Fable 33, "Vom Bapstesel," has essentially the same lesson. The fable is, of course, directed against the papacy. But there is no mention of Catholicism at all in the concluding moral; instead, the attack is once again on the Anabaptists of Münster and Thomas Müntzer, leader of the Peasants' Revolt in Saxony and Thuringia:

> Zu unsern zeiten haben sich
> Vnterstanden mutwilliglich,
> Der Müntzer vnd die Münsterer
> Gleich wie jhr Vater Lucifer,
> Das gantz landt vnter sich zubringen,
> Vnd wolt jhn doch auch nicht gelingen,
> Dann sie brachten zuletzt dauon,
> Gleich wie jhr vorfarn, bösen lohn.
> (167-174)

In only one concluding moral, that to Fable 30, "Von eim Müller, vnd Esel," is there an attack on the Catholic Church:

> Ein Priester bleib bey seinem ampt,
> Vnd sey nicht also vnuerschampt,
> Das er sich Weltlichs schwerdts nem an,
> Gleich wie der Bapst dann hat gethan,
> Solchs treibt der Teuffel inn der Hell,

Das man thut wie dieser Esell,
Sie werden jhrn verdienten lohn,
On Zweiuel bringen auch dauon.
(129-136)

Thus of six fables in which the contemporary religious scene is treated in the concluding moral, the Catholic Church comes under attack only once, while the radical Protestant sects, and the Anabaptists in particular, are attacked repeatedly.

One final aspect of Alberus' use of the concluding moral is worth mentioning. In twelve of the fables (11, 17, 25, 28, 31, 38, 39, 40, 41, 46, 47, and 48), the concluding moral is followed by a note referring the reader to other concluding morals that apply in the case under discussion. Fables 40, 41 and 48 offer such references instead of a concluding moral. In the other cases they are offered in addition to a concluding moral. These references are occasionally used to suggest a second moral (11 and 25), but usually they merely reinforce or repeat the moral already given. In this way the fables treating two themes in particular, ingratitude and being satisfied with one's lot, are cross-referenced. These notes are in prose, and are therefore external to the fables in which they appear.

The Lutheran Ethic and Alberus' Fables

The discussion of the use of the fable for purposes of moral instruction presented so far has approached the problem from the standpoint of how this instruction manifests

itself in individual fables. Accordingly, it was observed that some fables have a second lesson, that the concluding moral was used by Alberus to indicate this second lesson, or to test a general principle of conduct against Christian doctrine, or to apply this principle to the contemporary scene, or to consider the lesson involved from a different point of view. Our procedure has been to examine individual fables and then to group them together according to similarities in the way they present their instruction.

But the collection can also be considered as a whole. In this approach, it is not the lesson presented by individual fables that matters, but rather the ethic that emerges from the collection in its entirety. The following table identifies the themes presented by Alberus and indicates their frequency as well as the fables in which they occur.

The seven deadly sins:

Pride--2, 8, 25, 26, 27, 33, 34, 40, 46.

Covetousness--none

Lust--1, 16, 39.

Anger--22

Gluttony--1, 30, 38, 39.

Envy--21, 45.

Sloth--18, 25, 32, 38, 39.

Ingratitude--14, 15, 21, 29, 48.

Judging from appearances--12, 13, 35, 42, 49.

Deceit:

Dishonesty--23, 36.

Flattery--9, 29, 36.

Gullibility--16, 21, 37.

False friends--27, 28, 37, 41, 44.

Imposture--33, 40.

Greed, wealth and poverty--3, 4, 8, 38, 42, 43.

Authority and order in society:

Authority and its abuse--5, 7, 11, 27, 36, 37, 43.

Accepting one's lot or station in life--17, 30, 31, 33, 39, 46, 47.

Rebellion and dissension--2, 10, 21, 34, 45.

Obedience and loyalty--12, 18, 34, 44.

Miscellaneous:

Unfounded fear--20

Ignorance--1, 40.

Violent evil--6.

Teaching by example--19.

Preferring the certain over the uncertain--24.

That Alberus used the fable to instruct in virtue and not merely to offer bits of worldly wisdom is certainly clear from this table. There is, of course, nothing uniquely Lutheran about any of these themes. Virtually all are part of a common Christian heritage, and some are universal. But it is striking that a number of these themes are treated repeatedly and at length, while others are never mentioned,

or are touched on but once. Among the seven deadly sins, for example, covetousness is nowhere treated directly and explicitly, and anger is dealt with only once. Pride, on the other hand, is treated repeatedly and is always of primary importance to the fables in which it occurs. The very frequency with which Alberus uses the word hoffart is striking. Pride is viewed both in terms of its destructiveness to the individual (Fables 8, 25, 26, and 46) and in terms of the consequences for society (Fables 2, 27, 33, and 34).

Judging from the explicitness of presentation as well as the frequency, sloth is second, though a somewhat distant second, to pride. It is of central importance in Fables 18, 25, 32, and 39, and it is mentioned explicitly though briefly in the concluding moral to Fable 38. This emphasis on the vice of idleness and the virtue of hard work is certainly part of what has come to be known as the Protestant ethic. While this is often thought of as a distinctly Calvinistic doctrine, one can also find it in Luther. In support of his argument to do away with the begging orders, Luther wrote in An den christlichen Adel deutscher Nation:

> Das aber etlich meynen, es wurden mit der weysze die armen nit wol vorsorgt, und nit szo grosse steynen heuszer unnd kloster gepawet, auch nit szo reychlich, das glaub ich fast wol, Ists doch auch nit not: wer arm wil sein, solt nit reich sein, wil er aber reich sein, so greiff er mit der hand an den pflug, und suchs yhm selbs ausz der erden. Es ist gnug, das zimlich die armen vorsorgt sein, da bey sie nit hungers sterben noch erfrieren, Es

> fugt sich nit, das einer aufs andern erbeit mussig gehe, reich sey und wol lebe bey einis andern ubel leben, wie itzt der vorkeret miszprauch gehet. Dann sanct Paul sagt "wer nit erbeytet, szol auch nit essenn". Es ist niemand vonn der andernn gutter zulebenn vonn got vorordnet, denn allein denn predigenden und regierendenn priestern, wie sanct Paulus i. Corint. ix. umb yhrer geystlichenn erbeyt, wie auch Christus sagt zu den Aposteln "Ein yglicher wircker ist wirdig seynis lonhs". (Weimar edition, VI, 451)

But the most pressing and persistent theme in Luther's pronouncements on social problems was his uncompromising support for authority and order. This was particularly the case during the early years of the Reformation, when he himself was accused of defying legitimate authority. In An den christlichen Adel deutscher Nation, he asserts that the church must bow to secular authority in secular matters, that even the pope stands under this obligation. He cites what were to become his two favorite Biblical passages in support of this position, Romans xiii.1 and I Peter ii.13: "Also sagt sanct Pauel allen Christen 'Ein ygliche seele (ich halt des Bapsts auch) sol unterthan sein der ubirkeit, den sie tregt nit umbsonst das schwert, sie dienet got damit, zur straff der bosen, und zu lob den frumen', auch sanct Petrus 'Seyt unterthan allen menschlichen ordnungen umb gottis willen, der es szo haben wil'" (p. 409). Two years later, in 1522, he dealt with this problem in greater detail in Eine treue Vermahnung zu allen Christen, written, it should be remembered, during the general unrest and student riots in Wittenberg. Here Luther asserts that even wicked and unjust authority must be tolerated, that

rebellion is never justified:

> Zum andern, obs gleych muglich were, das eyn auffruhr wurde, und got sie [i.e. wicked rulers] szo gnediglich wolt straffen, szo ist doch die weysze keyn nutz, brengt auch nymer mehr die besserung, die man da mit sucht. Denn auffruhr hat keyn vornunfft und gehet gemeynicklich mehr ubir die unschuldigen denn ubir die schuldigen. Darumb ist auch keyn auffruhr recht, wie rechte sach er ymer haben mag. Und folget alletzeyt mehr schadens den besserung dar ausz.

He again cites the passages from Romans xiii and I Peter ii, and continues:

> Darumb hab acht auff die ubirkeyt, so lange die nit tzu greyfft und befilhet, szo haldt du stille mit hand, mund unnd hertz und nym dich nichts an, kanstu aber die ubirkeyt bewegen, das sie angreyffe und befelhe, szo magistu es thun, will sie nicht, szo soltu auch nit wollen, feristu aber fort, szo bistu schon ungerecht unnd vill erger den das ander teyll. Ich halt und wills alletzeyt halten mit dem teyl, das auffruhr leydet, wie unrechte sach es ymmer habe, und wydder seyn dem teyll, das auffruhr macht, wie rechte sach es ymmer habe, darumb das auffruhr nit kan on unschuldig blutt odder schaden ergehen. (Weimar edition, VIII, 680)

In Von weltlicher Oberkeit, written in 1523, Luther begins with the passage from Romans xiii, and develops at length his conviction that in secular matters secular authority is absolute. But secular authorities must recognize that their power is limited to these matters, that in questions of the soul they have no jurisdiction:

> Wenn nu deyn furst oder welltlicher herr dyr gepeut, mit dem Bapst zu hallten, sonst oder so zu glewben, oder gepeutt dyr bücher von dyr zu thun, solltu also sagen: 'Es gepürtt Lucifer nicht, neben Gott zu sitzen. Lieber herr, ich bynn euch schuldig zu gehorchen mit leyb unnd gutt, gepietet myr nach ewr gewalt mass auff erden, so will ich folgen. Heysst yhr aber mich glewben unnd bücher von myr thun, so will ich nicht gehorchen. Denn da seyt yhr eyn tyrann unnd greyfft zu hoch,

> gepietet, da yhr widder recht noch macht habt.' Nympt er dyr drüber deyn gutt unnd strafft solchen ungehorsam, selig bistu unnd danck Gott, das du wirdig bist umb gotlichs worts willen zu leyden, lass yhn nur toben den narren, Er wirtt seynen richter wol finden. Denn ich sage dyr, wo du yhn nicht widdersprichst und gibst yhm raum, das er dyr den glawben odder die bücher nympt, so hastu warlich Gott verleucket. (Weimar edition, XI, 267)

The tracts Luther wrote in 1525 in response to the Peasants' Revolt are no more than an application of the doctrine on authority that he had already worked out. In the first, Ermahnung zum Frieden auf die zwölf Artikel der Bauerschaft in Schwaben, he censures the secular and especially the ecclesiastical princes for the arbitrary tyranny they had exercised in the past. Without defending the rebellion, he charges that it represents the wrath of God, and that the princes alone are responsible for it. He implores them to listen to the complaints of the peasants and to witness their plight, to heed God's word and repent. But in addressing the peasants he charges that they have taken the name of God in vain. He quotes extensively from Scripture, referring twice to the passage from Romans xiii, and argues that the peasants are violating the "divine and natural law" of order honored even by "heathens and Turks." After discussing the first three articles individually, he concludes by addressing both the princes and the peasants:

> Weyl nu lieben herrn, auff beyden seytten nichts Christlichs ist, auch keyne Christlich sache zwischen euch schwebt, sondern beyde herrn vnd bawrschafft, vmb heydenisch odder welltlich recht vnd vnrecht vnd vmb zeytlich gut zu thun habt, Dazu auff beyden seytten widder gott handelt vnd vnter seynem zorn stehet, wie yhr gehort habt, So

> lasst euch vmb Gottes willen sagen vnd ratten, vnd greyfft die sachen an, wie solche sachen anzugreyffen sind, Das ist mit recht, vnd nicht mit gewallt noch mit streyt, Auff das yhr nicht eyn vnendlich blut vergiessen anrichtet ynn deutschen landen, Denn weyl yhr beydes teyls vnrecht seyt, vnd dazu euch selbs dazu noch rechen vnd schützen wollet, werdet yhr euch zu beyden seytten verderben, vnd wird Gott eynen buben mit dem andern steüppen. (Weimar edition, XVIII, 329)

Wider die räuberischen und mörderischen Rotten der Bauern, written only weeks later, expresses Luther's rage at the peasants' campaign of violence and bloodshed. In the twelve articles they had pledged their willingness to listen to reasonable counsel. But, he charges, instead of honoring this pledge, they embarked on a campaign of murder and destruction, blasphemously claiming they act in God's name. Luther commands that they be struck down with the sword they had raised; anyone who perishes fighting with the princes against them, he asserts, is a true martyr in the eyes of God.

It is important to remember that Alberus had first-hand experience with social unrest during his student days in Wittenberg, that he witnessed and may even have taken part in the student riots there in 1521. But if he was ever sympathetic to the cult of radicalism and rebellion taught and practiced there, he certainly underwent a change of heart when he abandoned Karlstadt and the other radicals and turned to Luther. It is thus understandable that he lent an attentive ear to the succession of tracts Luther devoted to the problem of authority and order over the next

several years.

It is nevertheless striking that nearly half of his fables deal directly and explicitly with this problem. Six of them (5, 7, 11, 27, 36, and 37) deal with abusive, tyrannical and unjust rulers; yet in keeping with Luther's position, none of these fables represent rebellion as justified. The lesson in all except Fable 5 is at least in part for the unjust ruler, that he mend his ways. The governed, however, must learn to suffer injustice in silence if they wish to escape with their skin, as in Fable 7. In the concluding moral to Fable 11, "Von einem Löwen, Wolff vnd Esel," the narrator notes that the ass has been treated most unjustly by his superiors, the lion and the wolf; but, he remarks, that is the way of the world, and he warns the reader:

> Doch soltu nicht darumb verachten
> Die böse herrschaft, sonder trachten,
> Das du dich haltst, wie sich gepürt,
> Vnd ob dein Herr ein leben fürt,
> Das bübisch ist, so hüt du dich,
> Es ist mit dem zuuiel, das sich
> Dein herr also versündigt sehr,
> Bitt du Gott, das er sich beker,
> Vnd richt bey leib kein auffruhr an,
> Darauss nichts gutes folgen kan.
> (243-252)

Fable 10, "Von dem Bauch vnd den Gliedern," presents authority as part of the natural order, and in the concluding moral Alberus alludes to the passages from Paul's letter to the Romans and I Peter cited so often by Luther. In Fable 43, "Von dem Waldt, vnd einem Bawren," Alberus strains to draw a lesson about authority from the way the forest was

destroyed:

> Daher der Waldt ist also sehr
> Zerhawen, das er nimmermehr
> Sich kan erholn, das ist doch schandt,
> Das man kein ordnung hellt im Landt,
> Doch, wer der Waldt nur eines Herrn,
> Man wurd die Bawern anders lern.
> Weil aber viel Herrn haben dran,
> So braucht sein mutwilln jederman.
> (41-48)

For Alberus the stability of the social order depends not only on the acceptance of authority but also on the willingness of individuals to accept their station within this social order. The hoffart that Alberus condemns so regularly is in at least a few cases what we would call ambition, the desire to rise above one's station. The word is used in Fable 46 three times, twice referring to the mouse who had ambitions of being as large as a cow, and once in the concluding moral, where the narrator tells of Jan van Leyden, the tailor who proclaimed himself king in Münster. The word also occurs in Fable 33, "Vom Bapstesel," where the ass imagines the lion's skin will free him of his burdens and make a ruler of him. It is in the context of accepting one's station that Alberus, like Luther, condemns the pope for exercising secular power (Fable 30).

Fable 47, "Von den Eseln, vnd reisigen Pferden," serves as a kind of grand climax to this group, and there is a note after the concluding moral referring to other fables that treat the same theme. Here it is not an individual who refuses to accept his station in life, but the entire species of donkeys. One wise old donkey, however, sees their error,

and tries to reason with them:

> All ewer klagens ist verlorn,
> Wir sind in solchen stand geborn,
> Vnd solln also werden beschwert,
> Der liebe Gott hats vns beschert,
> Gott hat den Thieren alle sampt
> Eim jeglichen ein eigen ampt
> Befohln, vnd auff gelegt, als Er
> Im anfang Himel, Erden, Mer,
> Vnd alle ding nach seinem rhat,
> Geschaffen, vnd verordnet hat.
> (17-26)

He continues by telling the purpose that each animal serves in this divine plan, and concludes that the donkey's lot is certainly not the worst. But one young donkey refuses to accept the donkey's burden as part of the natural order, and counters with an argument based on the notion of equality:

> Ja lieber alter, du weist vill,
> Ein anders ich dir sagen will,
> Es dunckt mich nicht, das solchs sey recht,
> Das einr Herr ist, der ander Knecht,
> Das einr ist arm, der ander reich,
> Gott hett vns auch wol alle gleich
> Gemacht, da er am machen war,
> Wir Esel werden jmmerdar
> Für andern Thiern hart beschwert,
> Das reysig Pferdt sich besser nert,
> Vnd trabt einher mit grossem pracht,
> Gott hett vns wol all gleich gemacht,
> Wie wirdts freilich dem Hengst so schwer,
> Wann er so prechtig trabt daher,
> Gott hat die sach nicht recht bedacht,
> Er hets sonst nicht also gemacht.
> (77-92)

Soon thereafter, however, the splendid stallions of which he speaks are all pressed into service in the war against the Turks. The donkeys then see that the old one was right, and hold a grand dance celebrating their acceptance of their station. In unison they sing what the narrator calls the song of the donkeys:

Wir Esel sind so mechtig fro,
Das wir nicht dörffen ziehen auss,
Vnd haben gut gemach zuhauss,
Kein Esel nimmermehr nichts klag,
Wir Esel han die beste tag,
Des singen wir vnd dantzen sehr,
Seck tragen, das ist vns ein ehr.
(137-143)

The concluding moral discusses the three estates--clergy, peasantry, and secular authority--at length, and argues that they were instituted by God after the fall of man.

Among the other themes listed above, none is so conspicuous as that of authority and order. That deceit should be dealt with so frequently is, of course, interesting, but it is not really an unusual use of the fable, and it is certainly not uniquely Protestant. The treatment of wealth and poverty is noteworthy. While this theme occurs far less frequently than that of authority and order, there is the same consistency in the presentation. Wealth is regularly viewed with some suspicion; a life of poverty and simplicity, on the other hand, is virtuous and happy if it is accepted. Thus in Fable 8, the country mouse concludes by telling the town mouse:

Mit frieden ist mir lieber zwar
Mein armut, dann bey dieser fahr
Dein gute tag in solchem pracht.
(111-113)

And in Fable 42, "Von einem armen Edelman," where the poor nobleman David Wolgemut wins the hand of the emperor's daughter despite his poverty, the narrator says in the concluding moral:

Dann tugent vbertrifft den pracht,
Drumb wirdt David zum Herrn gemacht.
So lern man auch auff solche weiss
Mit tugent zu erlangen preiss,
Es soll kein armer sein verzagt,
Gott hat den armen nichts versagt,
Gott darff ein armen betteler
Erheben zu der höchsten ehr.
(233-240)

The word pract occurs frequently in Alberus' fables and is generally viewed as the vestment of hoffart. In addition to the two examples just cited, this is true in Fables 26, 27, and 33. Alberus also uses the words geitz or geitzig in four of the six fables in this group (3, 4, 8, and 38).

These four themes (authority and order, sloth, wealth and poverty, pride) have been dealt with here one at a time, as if they were separate and discrete. In some fables, to be sure, only one of them figures prominently. But frequently there is a continuity about them that cannot be made clear from any table or list. Poverty, hard work, humility, and accepting one's station go together. Thus in Fables 26 and 47 the donkeys find happiness in their simple life of eating thistles and carrying sacks. They accept their station and renounce any claim to the splendor associated with the stallion's life. The donkeys of Fables 21, 30 and 33, on the other hand, are lazy, reject the hard work that is their lot and thereby threaten the ordered stability of society. To Alberus laziness and pride or ambition go hand in hand. The donkey who wants to improve his lot is actually merely trying to avoid hard work. This is also the case of the rebellious parts of the body in Fable 10, "Von dem

Bauch, vnd den Gliedern," and this makes the name of their spokesman, Nasenschweyss, all the more absurd. The humble and virtuous, like the old donkey in Fable 47, work hard not because they wish to prosper or improve their lot, but because it is so ordained in the natural order of things. They are thus bearing testimony to the glory of God.

This conception of work, of one's life task, is precisely what Max Weber found in Luther's use of the word Beruf. Weber explains:

> Nun ist unverkennbar, dass schon in dem deutschen W o r t e "Beruf" ebenso wie in vielleicht noch deutlicher Weise in dem englischen "calling", eine religiöse Vorstellung: -- die einer von Gott gestellten A u f g a b e -- wenigstens m i t klingt und, je nachdrücklicher wir auf das Wort im konkreten Fall den Ton legen, desto fühlbarer wird. Und verfolgen wir nun das Wort geschichtlich und durch die Kultursprachen hindurch, so zeigt sich zunächst, dass die vorwiegend katholischen Völker für das, was wir "Beruf" (im Sinne von Lebensstellung, umgrenztes Arbeitsgebiet) nennen, einen Ausdruck ähnlicher Färbung ebenso wenig kennen wie das klassische Altertum, während es bei a l l e n vorwiegend protestantischen Völkern existiert. . . .
>
> Und wie die Wortbedeutung so ist auch -- das dürfte im ganzen ja bekannt sein -- der G e d a n k e neu und ein Produkt der Reformation. . . . Unbedingt neu war jedenfalls zunächst eins: die Schätzung der Pflichterfüllung innerhalb der weltlichen Berufe als des höchsten Inhaltes, den die sittliche Selbstbetätigung überhaupt annehmen könne. . . .
>
> Bei Luther entwickelt dieser Gedanke sich im Laufe des ersten Jahrzehntes seiner reformatorischen Tätigkeit. Anfangs gehört ihm, durchaus im Sinne der vorwiegenden mittelalterlichen Tradition, wie sie z. B. Thomas Aquino repräsentiert, die weltliche Arbeit, obwohl von Gott gewollt, zum Kreatürlichen, sie ist die unentbehrliche Naturgrundlage des Glaubenslebens, sittlich an sich indifferent wie Essen und Trinken. Aber mit der klareren Durchführung des "sola-fide"-Gedankens in seinen Konsequenzen und mit dem dadurch gegebenen, mit

> steigender Schärfe betonten Gegensatz gegen die "vom Teufel diktierten" katholischen "evangelischen Ratschläge" des Mönchtums steigt die Bedeutung des Berufs. Die mönchische Lebensführung ist nun nicht nur zur Rechtfertigung vor Gott selbstverständlich gänzlich wertlos, sondern sie gilt ihm auch als Produkt egoistischer, den Weltpflichten sich entziehender Liebloskeit. Im Kontrast dazu erscheint die weltliche Berufsarbeit als äusserer Ausdruck der Nächstenliebe und dies wird in allerdings höchst weltfremder Art . . . durch den Hinweis darauf begründet, dass die Arbeitsteilung jeden einzelnen zwinge, für a n d e r e zu arbeiten. Indessen diese, wie man sieht, wesentlich scholastische Begründung verschwindet bald wieder und es bleibt, mit steigendem Nachdruck betont, der Hinweis darauf, dass die Erfüllung der innerweltlichen Pflichten unter allen Umständen der einzige Weg sei, Gott wohlzugefallen, dass sie und nur sie Gottes Wille sei und dass deshalb jeder erlaubte Beruf vor Gott schlechterdings gleich viel gelte.[4]

For Weber, Luther's position is a decisive change in Christian social thought, a change that made the development of capitalism in our sense possible. Of course, this development was in no way intended or anticipated by Luther. In fact, Weber argues, Luther would surely have denounced capitalism in our sense. Nevertheless, his notion of Beruf brought a new sanctity to one's work in this world.

Alberus' fables present this notion clearly, explicitly and repeatedly. The virtuous animals in his fables accept their tasks willingly, even gladly. Those who shun work, on the other hand, invariably become involved in evil deeds. This is true not only of the animals, but also of the girls in Fable 39, the thief in Fable 44, and especially of the monks in Fables 30, 39 and 48.

The Fable as Satire

Satire is a conspicuous element in thirteen, or about one-fourth, of Alberus' fables. In three cases this satire is inherent in the story (Fables 11, 33 and 40). In others it is included as part of a digression or it is introduced in the concluding moral.

The critical assessments of Alberus' fables quoted at the beginning of Chapter III view this satire favorably. But none of them discuss it in any detail, and all but Braune imply that it is without exception directed at the Roman Catholic Church. While it is true that Catholicism is attacked frequently, it is by no means Alberus' only target, as the following table indicates. The numbers refer to individual fables.

Against Roman Catholicism

- Indulgences--11.
- Pilgrimages--16.
- Saints, miracles and relics--20, 23, 37, 40.
- The papacy--23, 30, 33.
- Idleness, gluttony and wantonness among monks--30, 39, 48.

Against radical Protestantism--16, 20, 21, 23, 33, 46.

Others.

- Desiderius Erasmus--23.
- Anti-humanist forces--40.
- Thomas Murner--49.

The table makes it clear that Alberus enjoyed striking out at more than one enemy at a time. Thus in Fable 23, "Vom Waldtgott vnd eim Bawern," he likens the veneration of saints to the worship of heathen gods in ancient times, calls the pope a "false prophet," and in the concluding moral attacks the sincerity and conviction of the radical Protestants. In his discussion of the saints, Alberus notes that the role of Plutus, god of wealth, has been taken over by "S. Erasmum" (line 77). This is apparently an ironic reference to Desiderius Erasmus, who died in 1536, leaving, according to his biographer Beatus Rhenanus, substantial sums "for helping the ill and aged, for aiding virgins who lacked marriage dowries, and for assisting students."[5] Again in Fable 33, "Vom Bapstesel," Alberus finds more than one target for his satire. The story ridicules the papacy, but the concluding moral makes no further mention of the pope or of the Roman Catholic Church. Instead, there is a general condemnation of pride as a deadly sin; the examples given include Thomas Müntzer and the Anabaptists of Münster. Here as elsewhere, the satiric content is a specific instance of the more general moral presented in the fable.

Fable 16, "Von der Berge geburt," also satirizes both Catholicism and radical Protestantism. But while Protestantism is satirized explicitly, the satire on Catholicism is only implied, in Alberus' choice of a place name. We are told in the beginning that the mountain in question is located near Grimmenthal. This was the destination of one

of the pilgrimages condemned by Luther in An den christlichen Adel deutscher Nation.[6] Alberus' lengthy description of the great procession of fools who have come from all parts of Germany and Europe to witness the birth thus ridicules this pilgrimage in particular, and perhaps pilgrimages in general.

The fables dealing with monastic life support Weber's thesis like textbook examples. The secluded life of the monk is presented as unproductive and unholy. The digression at the beginning of Fable 39, "Von eim alten Weib, vnd jhren Mägden," describes the life in a monastery near Frankfurt as slothful and debauched:

> Die Mönch haben ein gute sach,
> Es sind jhr nicht viel vber acht,
> Die müssen sauffen tag vnd nacht,
> Vnd thut ein jeder was er will,
> Sind guter ding, und treiben spill.
> (8-12)

This irony continues in the account of the games played by each of the eight monks and reaches a high point in the description of the initiation of a new monk:

> Wann sie ein Mönch verloren haben,
> So nemen sie ein Bawersknaben,
> Wann jhm nur ist der kopff beschorn,
> So ist er schon ein Mönch geborn,
> Doch muss man vor den armen lappen
> Verstelln mit einer narren kappen,
> So ist der gut Narr als dann fro,
> Das er der Pflugs kömpt ab also.
> Der new Mönch muss dann auch gedencken,
> Vnd sich mit einem sack behencken,
> (Den Sack nennt man bey vns ein Hur)
> Als dann darff er mit gehn zu Chur,
> Da muss ein jeder offentlich
> Ein Hürlein treiben neben sich.
> Wie köndt doch on solch schönes wesen
> Die arme Christenheit genesen?
> (25-40)

Irony is also the main ingredient in the description of the monks in Fable 30:

> Die Mönch, der ich jetzt hab gedacht,
> Die sauffen daran tag vnd nacht,
> Damit sie lösen sich von sünden,
> Vnd was sie nicht verdäwen künden,
> Das müssen baldt widergeben,
> Verdien damit das ewig leben.
> (37-42)

This kind of irony is particularly well suited to the narrator, whose character, it should be remembered, is fully developed in earlier fables. His feigned naivete consistently lends a humor to the narration, and in these two fables it heightens the satiric effect.

Only in Fables 33 and 40 is the satire sustained throughout the story. Wolfgang Stammler no doubt had these two in mind when he remarked that Alberus engaged in sharp religious satire in only two of the forty-nine fables. Wilhelm Braune concluded that the very extension of the satire in these two fables makes them not really typical of the collection as a whole. Certainly the satire is on a grander scale here than it is elsewhere. Fable 33, "Vom Bapstesel," is not directed against any particular pope; none is named or even alluded to. It is rather the papacy, and through it the entire Church, that is under attack. The ass, who by merely assuming the appearance of a lion is able to rise to the office of pope, mocks the institution that promoted him. Pride, Alberus implies, is inherent in the office, which attracts ambitious and prideful men because of the enormous power, particularly the secular

power, they may enjoy there. And so it is also with this ass:

> Er satzt auch Keiser ab vnd ein,
> Das möcht ein stoltzer Esel sein,
> Die Keyser musten sein sein knecht.
> (59-61)

While Fable 33 is a satire on the Roman Catholic Church, Fable 34, "Vom streit der Vogel, vnd vier füssigen Thier," is an allegory on the disintegration of the empire. Alberus has thus once again brought together two fables related thematically. In this case they are the two fables dealing with the two great institutions of the Middle Ages, the Roman Catholic Church and the Holy Roman Empire, both of which must have seemed permanent in 1500 and yet were to be shaken to their very foundations before the middle of the century. In Fable 34 there is nothing to suggest an allegorical level in the beginning; but toward the middle it becomes clear that the birds represent Germany and the four-legged animals the empire. Their king, the lion, is deceived about the squabble between the sparrow and the mouse:

> Der Köng war noch ein junger Man,
> Vnd hatt das landt nicht lang regiert,
> Der Wolff jhn vbel informiert,
> Vnd hatt sein herrn so sehr vergifft,
> Das er von stunden an ein schrifft,
> Vnderschrieben mit eigner handt,
> Dem Adeler schickt ins Deudsche landt,
> Der inhalt war, Sih Adeler
> Ich will deins Landts werden ein Her,
> Vnd vmb die höchste Oberkeit
> Mit dir zu kempffen bin bereit,
> Drumb denck, vnd wer dich weidelich,
> Mit heeres krafft zu dir kum ich.
> (108-120)

The young lion clearly represents Charles V, who became emperor in 1519. This becomes even more apparent in the next passage, where, in discussing this declaration of war by the young king, the narrator laments the death of the old king, a clear reference to Maximilian I:

> Ach hett gelebt der alte Her,
> Diss nicht geschrieben worden wer,
> Vnd hett der Wolff mit seim gedicht
> Vorm alten König nichts aussgericht.
> (123-126)

In the end the birds are successful in repelling the invading forces, though a few of their number, notably the bat, desert. Because of their disloyalty, these deserters can no longer bear daylight and must therefore fly at night. It is interesting to note that, consistent with his view on authority, Alberus regards the struggle as Germany's effort to protect itself from invasion and not as a rebellion against the empire. This is also in keeping with his position in the essay Ob die Stände des Reichs einen tyrannischen Kayser widerstehen mögen, written in 1546 during the War of Schmalkalden.

Fable 40 is the story of a frog, a huckster who travels from town to town peddling superstition and fake medicine. In Frankfurt his audience includes a fox who feigns awe at his supposed learning and asks him to tell of his education. Most of the fable consists of his rambling account of his life in various German universities. This account, which is characterized by sloppy German and Latin names scrambled almost beyond recognition, is a free adaptation of the

Epistolae obscurorum virorum II, 9, as Alberus acknowledges in a footnote. The frog tells how he began his studies at Cologne, where he felt right at home. He journeyed to Mainz, but was unable to cope with the humanism he encountered there; among those he found particularly offensive was Ulrich von Hutten. At Trier he was once again in his own element:

> Zu Trier war ich nicht vngern,
> Dieweil da rast der heilig Matern,
> Vnd war da vnser Frawen har,
> Jhr hembd, vnd milch, vnd beltz fürwar,
> Vnd Christus rock, Sanct Peters stab,
> Darzu ein stück vom heilgen Grab,
> Sanct Judas kuss, vnd Malcus ohr,
> Das zeigt man als im höhern Chor,
> Persönlich sah ichs allesampt,
> Ich wer sonst ewiglich verdampt.
> (171-180)

But at Marburg he was distressed by "grex, Hebrex vnd Pöterey," as he calls them, and in Frankfurt on the Oder he was dismissed by Jodocus Willichius as "ein rechter Pfefferkorn." Willichius, it is worth noting, was the author of the commentary on Horace's Ars poetica discussed at length in Chapter II. After telling of his experiences at Rostock, Prague, Leipzig, Tübingen, Vienna, Freiburg, and Heidelberg, the frog concludes with his return to Cologne, where he was saddened to hear of the death of his good friend Pfefferkorn. The fable ends with the frog being laughed out of town by the fox and others.

In contrast to the attacks on Catholicism, which are against the Church as an institution, its doctrine and traditions, the attacks on radical Protestantism are less

objective and more personal. The only Catholic even alluded to is Thomas Murner, the "Murnar" in Fable 49. And despite Alberus' use of this name, which is not original with him, there is a certain grudging admission of Murner's ability, for he appears as the beautiful and graceful but dangerous cat. Although the papacy is attacked in three fables, Alberus mentions no popes by name. In his treatment of the radical Protestants, on the other hand, he names Jan van Leyden, Thomas Müntzer, and in the 1534 edition even Ulrich Zwingli. Moreover, unlike the treatment of Murner, who is attacked personally rather than as a Roman Catholic, these three are connected explicitly with Protestant fanaticism. Even more important, however, it is not the doctrine of this fanaticism that is under attack; indeed, there is the clear implication that the fanatics, though ambitious and dangerous, are fools, and are therefore incapable of working out any theological doctrine of their own. In Fable 16 they are portrayed as heretics who lead the gullible astray, and Fable 21 goes further by implying that they do this deliberately. Fable 23 attacks them for their lack of sincerity and conviction, and Fables 33 and 46 for their ambition and pride. Only in Fable 20 does Alberus touch on what might be considered a doctrinal matter, when he censures the fanatics for destroying religious art. There is a special urgency about these attacks on Protestant fanaticism. Alberus appears to be suggesting that the Reformation had as much or more to fear from some who

supposedly espoused it than from the Roman Catholic Church, which forthrightly opposed it.

It is certainly significant that in the 1534 edition Alberus attacked Ulrich Zwingli as a fanatic in Fables 16 and 21, but that in the 1550 edition he dropped Zwingli's name from both passages. It should be remembered that the 1534 edition appeared only a few years after the bitter dispute between Luther and Zwingli over the meaning of the Lord's Supper. But on other matters the two agreed. Like Luther and Melanchthon, Zwingli was a Biblical scholar thoroughly acquainted with the writings of the humanists, especially Erasmus of Rotterdam, and with classical literature. Moreover, under Zwingli's direction, the city of Zurich persecuted the Anabaptists vigorously. Alberus could not approve of Zwingli's conception of the sacraments, but by 1550 it was no longer possible to dismiss him as another fanatic. Accordingly, the two references to him were simply omitted.

Geographical Descriptions in Alberus' Fables

No discussion of Alberus' fables would be complete without some mention of the geographical descriptions included in some of them. More than half of the fables name a specific locality where the action allegedly took place. Fable 28 is set in Greece, Fable 33 in Cuma. Germany is the scene in 26 fables. These descriptions vary greatly in length. Many merely name the place, sometimes with a brief

comment by the narrator. But some are longer, and in a number of cases, these descriptions take up almost the entire fable, the story itself being added very briefly at the end (19, 20, 24, 25, and 42). These digressions have already been discussed insofar as they reflect on the character of the narrator. In addition it is important to note that these descriptions are all accurate in every detail. Braune (lxvii-lxxii) was able to locate every village, mountain and castle mentioned by Alberus, even though the names in some cases had changed. Emil Körner, who spent more than thirty years of his life gathering materials for his biography of Alberus, wrote: "Noch heute treffen seine Angaben zu über Wege und Grenzmarken bis auf Ruinen und Wegkreuze des historischen Gebietes. Genau beschreibt er die Strasse von Frankfurt nach Darmstadt (Fabel 20)."[7] The lengthy descriptions are all of areas Alberus knew well from personal experience. The great majority are places in the Taunus, Vogelsberg, Wetterau and Dreieich regions, all located in a circle around Frankfurt on the Main. This is the area where Alberus grew up and spent most of his life. The most noteworthy exception is the detailed description of the courses of the Oder and Neisse Rivers in Fable 19. This description no doubt dates from Alberus' stay in Küstrin, 1537-1538. In at least one case, a geographical name is given whose meaning comments humorously on the action of the fable. The thief in Fable 44 is caught and hung in Galgenhof, a village near Nürnberg. The same

effect may be intended in Fable 16, "Von der Berge geburt." The mountain about to give birth is said to be near Grimmenthal. For the most part, however, the purpose of these descriptions is to inform the reader about the geography of Germany. In this respect they are in keeping with Celtis' contention that literature should contain such descriptions. They must have been popular with the German reading public, for beginning with the 1565 edition, the title was expanded to include mention of them: Das Buch von der Tugent vnd Weissheit, . . . sampt etzlicher Ort Deutsches Landes lustiger Beschreibung, jederman nützlich zulesen.

NOTES

[1] M. E. Smith, "The Fable and Kindred Forms," JEGP, XIV (1915), 529.

[2] B. E. Perry, "Fable," Studium Generale, XII (1959), 19.

[3] W. Wienert, Die Typen der griechisch-römischen Fabel (Helsinki, 1925), p. 86.

[4] Max Weber, "Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus," Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie (Tübingen, 1922), I, 63-71. Weber's thesis has enjoyed considerable support, but it has not gone unchallenged. Protestantism and Capitalism, ed. Robert W. Green (Boston, 1959), presents a collection of critical appraisals of Weber's thesis and includes contributions by Kemper Fullerton, Ernst Troeltsch, H. M. Robertson, Amintore Fanfani, Albert Hyma, and Ephraim Fischoff. Much of the criticism is directed against what Weber says about Calvinism. Yet to a lesser degree, his discussion of Beruf comes under attack also. Robertson, one of Weber's most persistent critics, concedes "it is true that the Vulgate versions do not express the modern conception of the 'calling.'" But, Robertson adds, "it is also true that the early Protestant conceptions of the 'calling' were different from those of the present day and nearer those of the Vulgate" (p. 68). Kemper Fullerton, on the other hand, lends his full support to Weber's thesis. Ephraim Fischoff, in the most cautious assessment in this collection, concludes: "Surely Weber, one of the foremost historians of jurisprudence and economics in his generation, needed no reminder that the origins of capitalism are complex and diverse, and are due to changes in economic process as well as in spiritual outlook. By and large most of his critics have simply not perceived the direction of his interest, the moderation of his purpose and the caution of his procedure. . . . Weber's thesis must be construed not according to the usual interpretation, as an effort to trace the causative influence of the Protestant ethic upon the emergence of capitalism, but as an exposition of the rich congruency of such diverse aspects of culture as religion and economics. The essay should be considered as a stimulating project of hermeneutics, a demonstration of interesting correlations between diverse cultural factors" (pp. 112-114).

[5] Christian Humanism and the Reformation: Selected Writings of Erasmus, ed. John C. Olin (New York, 1965), p. 52. It is possible that the reference is not to Desiderius Erasmus at all, but rather to Saint Erasmus, Bishop of Formiae, who was martyred in the first years of the fourth century. But there is nothing in the veneration of this saint that would even remotely suggest an analogy with Plutus. Butler's Lives of the Saints, ed. Herbert Thurston and Donald Attwater (New York, 1956), II, 453, says that Saint Erasmus was "formerly widely venerated as the patron of sailors and as one of the Fourteen Holy Helpers."

[6] Weimar edition, VI, 447: "Das die wilden Capellen und feltkirchen wurden zu poden vorstoret, als da sein, da die newen walfarten hyn gahen, Welsznacht, Sternberg, Trier, das Grymtal und itzt Regenspurg, unnd der antzal viel mehr. O wie schwer, elend rechenschafft werden die Bischoff mussen geben, die solchs teuffels gespenst zulassen und geniesz davon empfangen!"

[7] Emil Körner, Erasmus Alber (Leipzig, 1910), p. 31.

V

CONCLUSION

That the fables of Erasmus Alberus reflect sixteenth-century attitudes, especially Protestant attitudes, is not surprising. But the extent to which these fables adhere to Lutheran doctrine in every respect is certainly striking. Even without the various critical defenses of the fable discussed in detail in Chapter II, it would be possible, on the basis of the choice of morals in Alberus' fables alone, to demonstrate convincingly that he took the obligation of the fable writer to be a teacher, to offer moral instruction in particular, very seriously. The emphasis in his fables is never on what Wienert called "Lebensklugheiten," what Schirokauer referred to as "Alltagsverstand" and "Weltklugheit."[1] Instead, Alberus uses the fable as a vehicle for teaching Christian doctrine, or perhaps more accurately, Protestant doctrine. Other fable writers of the period merely used the name Aesop as a title for their collections. Both Steinhöwel and Waldis, for example, gave their collections the simple title Esopus. Alberus, on the other hand, chose a title that more clearly reflects the purpose of his collection, Das buch von der Tugent vnd Weissheit, and it is hardly by chance that "Tugent" comes first. Yet this is not the only kind of instruction to be found in Alberus' fables. The satire is aimed at what Alberus

considered fallacious theological doctrine as well as at immorality. Finally, the detailed and accurate geographical descriptions present the kind of instruction prescribed by Conrad Celtis in his Ars versificandi.

The role played by the conspicuous narrator in Alberus' fables certainly seems to have been suggested by Luther's conception of Aesop as a story teller who deceives us and feigns folly in order to make us more receptive to the truth. But in addition to enhancing the didactic effect, Alberus' narrator serves an aesthetic purpose. Much of the humor and poignancy in the fables emanates from this narrator, and he lends an element of unity to some fables which, in terms of their subject matter, are anything but unified. This is perhaps best illustrated in Fables 19 and 20. Furthermore, he lends a kind of continuity to the collection as a whole.

There is also some continuity in the order in which the fables are told. Braune notes that Alberus adhered without exception to the order of his source in the 1534 edition, but that in the 1550 edition he rearranged the order to such an extent that the position of every fable except the first was changed. Braune presents his evidence without comment, merely concluding "dass die Reihenfolge in A [the 1550 edition] ganz frei ist" (xxxiii). There are clear indications that through this rearrangement Alberus was trying to achieve some kind of development or continuity in the collection as a whole. The character of

the narrator is developed gradually until he becomes most conspicuous in Fables 19, 20, 24, and 25. In Chapters III and IV it has been noted repeatedly that fables related thematically or structurally are often grouped together. It is perhaps sufficient here to refer again to the table in Chapter IV identifying the themes presented by Alberus. This table shows how frequently the same theme is presented in fables close together or even in successive fables (e.g., pride in 25, 26 and 27; sloth in 38 and 39; ingratitude in 14 and 15).

The continuity that emerges from all this is, of course, not without gaps. But there is good reason to believe that Alberus had not yet completed to his satisfaction the work of revising the collection when it was printed. In a letter to his friend Beyer dated August 24, 1550, Alberus wrote that he had already asked Brubach, his printer, to return the fables for revision numerous times; he entreats Beyer to approach Brubach on his behalf, and indicates that he would like to revise the fables if they have not already been printed.[2] The fables were, of course, published that same year in Frankfurt on the Main. Alberus, it should be remembered, was at that time in Magdeburg, deeply embroiled in the pamphlet campaign against the Interim and Elector Maurice of Saxony. It was in this same letter to Beyer that Alberus expressed his intention to prepare for publication all of his songs. We know he never found time to realize this plan, and it is highly probable that he

was never able to revise the fables either. Considering the distance between Frankfurt and Magdeburg, as well as Alberus' preoccupation at this time with other matters, it is questionable whether there was sufficient time for him to receive the fables, revise them and return them for publication before the end of the year. Braune notes (xxiv) that the 1550 printing is unusually accurate and contains very few typographical errors. The printers's job was thus not done hastily. All this suggests strongly that the intended revision did not take place. In fact, as Alberus himself conjectures in his letter, the fables may already have been in print when he wrote Beyer. If Alberus did not have the opportunity to revise the fables to his satisfaction, it is not surprising that the two features which most distinguish the 1550 edition from that of 1534--the conspicuous narrator and the continuity in the collection as a whole--have not been worked out in every detail.

It has been noted repeatedly in critical assessments of Alberus' fables that they present a narrative breadth not usually associated with the fable. At times it seems that the stories are developed and expanded for the pure joy of the narration. Alberus certainly must have taken considerable delight in telling a story, for his most fully developed fables are characterized by careful use of detail and dialog, by a discernible structural unity. Moreover, his delight in such narrative breadth is clearly reflected in his warm praise of the Reineke story, about which

he says: "Aber vnder allen hab ich nie kein feiner noch meisterlicher Gedicht gelesen, als das Buch von Reiniken, welchs ich nicht geringer achte, dann alle Comedien der Alten. Desselben buchs meister ist ein Sachs gewest, ein hoch verstendiger weiser man, ein ehr aller Sachssen, der hat wol verstanden was Aula vnd Welt heisst" (Braune, p. 4).

And yet, in the end, Alberus always expands the moral content along with the story. There are often secondary lessons to be learned from his fables in addition to the main one, and if the reader should miss them in the story itself, they are made explicit in the concluding moral. Alberus' defense of the fable in the 1534 edition indicates that he thought of the narration as serving an end rather than as an end in itself. Fables, he argues, "leren gute sitten vnd tugende schimpffs weiss vnd lachends munds." Thus in the terms used by Horace, the fable does not merely profit and delight; rather, it profits by delighting.

The fables of Burkhart Waldis share in some of the narrative breadth so typical of Alberus' fables. In fact, Heinrich Kurz, in his edition of Waldis' fables, suggests that Waldis may have influenced Alberus.[3] It is true that the 1550 edition of Alberus' fables appeared two years after Waldis' Esopus. However, narrative breadth was already clearly evident in the 1534 edition of Alberus' fables. The longest and most fully developed story in the collection, Fable 21 in the 1550 edition, came from the 1534 edition almost unchanged. If one compares the beginning of the 1534

version of Alberus' "Von einer Stadtmauss vnd Feldtmauss," Fable 8 in the 1550 edition, with the same fable by Waldis, one is struck by the similarity. Alberus begins:

> Es war ein mal ein städtisch Mauss,
> Die gieng spatziern ins feldt hinauss,
> Nit fern von Franckfurt an dem Mein.

Waldis begins:

> Es begab sich, das ein Stadtmauss
> Spatzieren gieng ins Feldt hinauss
> Nahe bey eim Dorf . . . .
> (I, 9)

This similarity is particularly striking when one considers the common source, which begins with a general comment rather than a particular incident: "A town mouse enjoyed walking in the country." This suggests strongly that Waldis had a copy of Alberus' 1534 edition at his disposal and that, at least in this case, he was influenced by Alberus' version.

The tone as well as the subject matter of Alberus' fables make it clear that he was not interested in converting Catholics or radical Protestants. His audience consisted of the followers of Luther, and he hoped to confirm them in their faith. Many of the fables could be understood easily by children. But others were surely intended for adults. This is certainly true of much of the satire, especially that directed against Pfefferkorn and the anti-humanist forces in Fable 40, and that against Thomas Murner in Fable 49.

Near the end of his discussion of the use of the fable, Luther offers it as an excellent form of instruction for the

entire family. He writes: "Vnd das ich ein Exempel gebe der Fabeln wol zu gebrauchen / Wenn ein Hausvater vber Tisch wil Kurtzweil haben / die nuetzlich ist / kan er sein Weib / Kind / Gesind fragen / Was bedeut diese oder diese Fabel? vnd beide sie vnd sich darin ueben."[4] The fables of Erasmus Alberus seem ideally suited for this kind of reading in the family circle. There is something in them for all age groups, and, in keeping with his own and Luther's proscription, he scrupulously avoids the kind of indelicate detail found in Stainhöwel and even in Burkart Waldis. Furthermore, Alberus' fables, with their numerous secondary lessons, lend themselves well to the kind of family discussion suggested here by Luther.

As was noted in Chapter II, Alberus visited Luther during the latter's stay at Coburg Castle in 1530. During this visit, it was argued, they in all likelihood discussed the fable, probably at some length. It is curious that Luther, despite his intense interest in the fable at that time, never carried out his intention of replacing Stainhöwel's collection with one more suited for the devout Christian. His "collection" amounts to but thirteen fables, and these remained in crude manuscript form until after his death. Perhaps he recognized in Alberus a man who shared his conception of the fable as well as his religious conviction and zeal, a man to whom he could entrust the task of producing the Lutheran collection of Aesop's fables. There is certainly no other sixteenth-century collection

which so deserves this designation.

NOTES

[1] Arno Schirokauer, "Die Stellung Äsops in der Literatur des Mittelalters," Festschrift für Wolfgang Stammler (Berlin, 1953), p. 180.

[2] The complete text of the letter is contained in Franz Schnorr von Carolsfeld, Erasmus Alberus (Dresden, 1893), pp. 204-205. The passage in question reads as follows: "Peto a te, Brubachium ores, vt mihi tandem toties petenti mittat fabulas si non sunt excuse, vt recognitas a me recipiat."

[3] Burkhart Waldis, Esopus, ed. Heinrich Kurz (Leipzig, 1862), xlii.

[4] Martin Luthers Fabeln, ed. Willi Steinberg (Halle, 1961), p. 86.

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