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“New wine in old wineskins”?

Some remarks concerning “Luther and Humanism”

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1 Introduction

Interpretations and analysis of intellectual history often construct some kind of causality which limit the understanding of the complex situation in which sources of intellectual innovation have been produced. So it has happened to the question about Luther's relation to Humanists of his time. While the young Luther was able to suck some nectar from the blossoms of the Erfurt Humanists the ripe reformer rejected Humanistic anthropology because of its consequences for the doctrines of grace and justification.

In older research the question about a relation between Luther and Humanism mainly focused on Luther's controversy with Erasmus on the bondage of the will. With that the wider dimension of Luther's relation to other Humanists and their ideas did not come into the fore.

Another problem occurred: the historical question of a relation in the meaning of reception or rejection of a certain intellectual movement and its ideas was linked closely to the question of truth and confessional identity. If Luther can be interpreted as one who has misunderstood a Humanist or a least a group of Humanists which stayed within the old faith, then his reformation theology is in danger of failing. Confessional interpretation of Luther's theology thus turned it the other way round: the Humanists, above all Erasmus, stayed within the old faith because their theology was corrupted by Humanistic elements – especially their use of philosophical epistemology and Aristotelian categories - which Luther was able to reveal and to overcome.

Looking more closely at nearly 500 years of discussion reveals a quite unbelievable insight: the dispute between Luther and Humanists – and later about Luther and the Humanists – lacks hermeneutic reflection starting with the reflection of method. What are we going to look for if we ask for the relation between Luther and the Humanistic movement? Beside the important question what Humanism - or as I put it Humanistic movement - means we have to ask for the leading interest: For what reason do we look for Luther's reception of Humanistic ideas, technique or method? What do we want to explain: the birthmarks of a reformer? Luther's way to interpret Scripture in a different way? Luther's success in the struggle for a right understanding of the sacraments and with it of the jurisdictional power of the papacy?

In the light of these, and other questions, Luther became the starting point of the inquiries and simultaneously the measurement for the right or illegitimate outcome of Erasmus' reform attempts and critique of the contemporary church. Humanists were not treated as intellectuals in their own right but mainly in relation to later developments in the context of confessionalization. This development of research within the discipline of church history reveals a certain amount of ignorance for a great portion of research has been done without being related to the question of religion and its confessional outcome. Even though the dialogue has been intensified it still lacks influence on the theological interpretation.

In today's presentation I will start at this point and seek for a common understanding of Humanism. In the next chapter I will relate the results of current research to the understanding of Luther asking where we find aspects of common interests between Luther and the Humanists and where the areas are in which they will depart. The third chapter illustrates this with a quick glimpse to one field of common interest: the question of education and pedagogy within its anthropological setting. The presentation ends with a conclusion and some theses which looks forward further research. A discussion of these theses as well as of my interpretation afterwards would be highly appreciated.

2 What is Humanism?

Cornelis Augustijn, in his most recent publication, summarizes the current discussion on Humanism as follows: While the older research as represented by Paul Joachimsen and Lewis Spitz greatly concentrated on Humanism as an intellectual movement coming mainly from literature and philology which found its roots in a turn to the antiques sources and the deep desire for their rebirth. Modern research, however, put more stress on the fact that this Humanism was rooted deeply within a certain Christian setting as “Christian Humanism” or “Biblical Humanism”. This development is in fact just a part of the bigger movement which is not clearly distinguished from the Italian Renaissance and its branches north of the Alps. In a first phase we will find a few Italian Humanists with a certain interest in religious and ecclesiastical questions. In a second period which runs into the 16th century this circle was widening into groups of a non-Italian background. They accentuate the philological, and with it, the historical approach to questions of ecclesiastical reform and exegesis of Scriptures. They reach back into ancient Christianity with a strong interest in the Church Fathers and their development of the Church in its early centuries as much as in their scriptural interpretations. These attempts were partially accompanied by an anti-Scholastic affection and/or a critique of contemporary church and piety. Looking at the development in the early 16th century, one finds a strong power within the Church as much as society coming from these circles.

Speaking of circles, I have to distinguish two major streams of understanding Humanism: While a group of researchers did understand Humanism, as sketched out most recently by Cornelis Augustijn, as a movement which was constituted by the exchange of letters, some literary production in loose contact to each other, which contained difference as religiously and politically separated people united just in their interest in antiquity would have. Another group shared the most stimulating analysis of Humanism by Eugeno Garin and understood Humanism as a phenomenon of practical philosophy, i.e. a less programmatic

network dealing with questions of reform in Church and State, political ideas, practical development of culture, society and common sense.

From my point of view, I still struggle with the term “Humanism”, for I am not sure whether these Humanists shared a common conviction or idea which is related to some kind of ideology as suggested with the suffix “-ism”. Even though we will find some programmatic writings on Humanist method and certain knowledge of those who belong to the circles, we have no institutionalized idea which is presented in a known number of representatives. There is no formal process of entering or departing the group of Humanists. It is more or less an informal way of being co-opted as a friend. Even societies (sodalitates), regular groups meeting occasionally, do not represent the full picture of the Humanist movement.

For this reason I prefer to speak about the Humanist movement, or even better, about Humanists who share a common interest in biblical studies and antique literature. They are in some cases related by the exchange of letters – addressing each others as friends – or even in regular groups institutionalized by internal as much as external power and authority.

What we can say already is that the Humanist movement started in Italy sometimes in the 15th century. Between 1430 and 1510 a larger number of Humanists concentrated on the Humanist method used for the solution of problems within church, piety and theology. With that the uniting issues end. A great variety of people and subjects arose which we cannot unite in another way than by labeling them as Humanists. Around 1500 the movement stepped into the North, and between 1510 and 1540 we find a growing number of Bible Humanists working in Germany. We have some major figures (Johannes Reuchlin, Faber Stapulensis, Erasmus of Rotterdam) forming the core of a widening group of attracted, sometimes associated Humanists particularly related to the Wittenberg and, later on, to the Zurich movements of the Reformation. To belong to one of these circles, groups or networks one needed a certain kind of education, that of knowledge of the languages and with it a growing knowledge about ancient literature. The Hu-

manists shared common ideas of a reform of church and piety, a certain opposition to the traditional Scholastic Theology and its methods, a desire for a national unification with a powerful emperor and a united nation of people of the German language (National Humanism), and, finally, a characteristic pedagogical reform attempt.

How did the Humanistic movement touch ground north of the Alps? First of all the Italian academics were hired by German universities and Latin schools. Students on the other way around traveled to Italy and brought back their academic and intellectual souvenirs. Fairly soon universities like Vienna, Freiburg/Brsg., and Basel became centers of Humanist thought and education. Schools like the Schlettstadt Latin School, Pforzheim, and Heidelberg became important in educating even younger people in the *studia humaniora* and the Humanist methods.

The network was established mainly by letters. But also visits and times of studies with one or the other major figure of the Humanists brought people into the circles. Courts (Marguerita of Navarra's, Henry VIII of England's) became extremely important as places where Humanist intellectuals got stipends or sponsorships through the noble elite. Next to secular courts, ecclesiastical courts of bishops and duke-bishops became attractive to Humanists as well. Attached to the universities societies (sodalitates) mushroomed in the Empire attracting people to gather to improve their languages and knowledge of ancient literature. Since 1508 trilingual colleges have been established as an addition to language classes of the arts faculty (Alcala 1508, Louvain 1517, Paris 1530). Finally, we should mention the development of book printing. Books became affordable to a wider circle of academics and thus Humanist treatises, handbooks, grammar books and dictionaries were spread out over the region to share insights, results of research or just editions of texts.

With special attention to what recent research called the "Bible Humanist", let us briefly sum up their main common interests. Even though the circle of European Humanists had no clear limits and a great variety of ideas, methods, personalities

and characters, we are able to outline some major ideas by focusing on three different characters, that of Johannes Reuchlin, Faber Stapulensis, and Erasmus of Rotterdam:

1. They share a certain orientation toward the Italian Humanist movement of the second half of the 15th century represented by Pico, Marsilio Ficino, and Lorenzo Valla. While Reuchlin visited Italy fairly early, Faber studied at the age of 30 the *prisca* theology in parallel to Jewish sources and ancient wisdom. Erasmus finally came as a ripe and matured personality to Aldo Manutius who introduced him to the circles of Italian Humanists.
2. They share a common critique about Scholastic theology with regard to Scholastic method of interpretation. To put it in a much abbreviated way one may say that they introduced a new way of theology outside the traditional patterns of Scholastic theology.
3. They focus on biblical studies while using their historical methods to interpret Scripture as or like they would an ancient document. Still Scripture remains the center of their theology as much as of their piety. Biblical studies became their way to seek God by reading Scripture (alone) while neglecting the visible church and its way to salvation.
4. They share a certain type of piety concentrating on the revelation of God in the humanity of Jesus. He shows even in the cross the way to God, his love and mercy. Still, their reflections focus on the θεϊός ανήρ – the God Man / Godly human – Jesus and, with that, of a traditional religious pattern of pagan Hellenistic thought.
5. They share strong criticism of Rome and the Curia complaining about the performance of bishops, cardinals and popes, denouncing them as worldly, misbehaving creatures not worthy to represent the Church and with it the word and salvation of God. This Humanist critique became

somewhat the leading voice of intellectual criticism in the beginning of the 16th century.

These common interests or motifs may lead into some programmatic thoughts which would be able to unite the Humanistic movement – at least north of the Alps. A closer look into history and the writings of the just mentioned Humanists disappoints. There are no common programmatic performances. Nevertheless we might again collect some common ideas which can be found in the writings of each. They are:

1. Studies of Scripture lead to a certain critique of ecclesiastical performance and piety. Biblical studies provoked the call for reform which was oriented backwards toward the ancient time of the early Church. Thus they critiqued not only contemporary ecclesiastical practices but the legitimizing word of theology and its exegetical foundation as well.
2. While effectively using the printing press, Humanists popularized their findings and, with it, biblical studies and theological enterprises.
3. Their view back to the early Church led biblical Humanists to intensify the study of Church fathers. A growing number of editions of their writings appeared and discussion about the future of theology, Church, and piety without a thorough argument from the past was just impossible. Connected to some prominent publishing houses (book printing offices) biblical Humanists brought several editions into public: Augustin in 1506 (Amerbach). Jerome in 1516 (Froben), Chrysotom in 1517 (Froben), Cyprian in 1520 (Froben), Tertullian in 1521 (Froben). With that, traditional authorities of the *doctores ecclesiae* (mainly of the 12th and 13th centuries) and liturgy shifted downwards replaced by the older tradition of the early Church and the undoubted authorities of thoroughly edited Church fathers and their writings.

4. While introducing the Humanist method and the *studia humaniora* biblical Humanists got engaged in the reform of pedagogy, education, schooling and universities. It may be acceptable that a teacher of Greek was accepted at the faculty of medicine, for most of their books were written originally in Greek, but in theology and philosophy the introduction of historical criticism and new methods of dialectical thinking shifted the whole educational process into a new, and for Scholastic theologians, strange dimension.
5. With the reform of theological studies biblical Humanist engagement led toward a critique of the Church which was oriented to the ideal of a pure Church like the early Church of the first centuries. Still the biblical Humanist trusted the one, apostolic, and catholic Church to be the institution wanted by God, founded by Christ, and established by Peter and the apostles to distribute the sacraments and guarantee salvation. Biblical Humanists were intensively reluctant to endorse a theory which gives up the unity of the Church or even worse which would provoke the founding of a new church.

Research on this field has been done for quite some time but we still lack serious information about people and their biographies, editions of texts, tracts, letters and books they had written and released, thus we still lack better knowledge of what we might call a Humanist network. Thus the following information cannot satisfy with a survey of the results. A lot of questions remain open for the future.

3 Luther and Humanism: the status quo of research

With the publications of Helmar Junghans, research about Humanism and the development of Martin Luther in his early years reached a new dimension. In his 1985 publication "Der junge Luther und die Humanisten" he presented a broad variety of material which he had collected in nearly thirty years of intensive research. As the title documents Junghans does not deal with the phenomenon of "Humanism" in total but in its historical setting of 'Humanists and their ideas or of

circles' as they met in Erfurt in the beginning of the 16th century as Luther faced them during his studies.

Right in the center of the Erfurt developments, Nikolaus Marschalk has to be seen as he, since 1500, accentuated his Humanistic teaching in an anti-Scholastic direction. His demand for a reform of the studies of liberal arts were closely linked to his focus on studies in Greek and Hebrew which relate his ideas of reform to theology. Still, this was not the only way Humanists came out. Another stream of Humanist, still related to the traditional scholastic teaching, was represented by two professors of the arts-faculty: Jodocus Trutfetter and Bartholomaeus of Usingen, who also taught Luther. The thorough interpretation of Junghans shows the difficulties to distinguish certain ways of Humanist thought as they probably have influenced Luther and his contemporaries.

Junghans shows in the following that the Erfurt Humanist development reached its climax with Mutianus Rufus after 1511 when Luther already has moved to Wittenberg. Even though this tiny little city was not free of Humanist ideas it still was not able to compete with the major stream of Humanist thinking and reform in Erfurt at that time. This result leads to the question how Luther's relation to individual Humanists had been documented. Junghans spreads out an incredible amount of detailed information which finally documented the highly complex and diverse intellectual landscape in which Luther developed his thought. Men like Johannes Braun, Johannes Lang, Crotus Rubeanus and Wiegand Gueldennapf without doubt were in close contact to Luther and with that influenced his thinking. But in the end Junghans shows that we cannot go any step further than an "eventually", "it might be", "it could have happened". We might conclude Junghans' research in the thesis that Luther was not a representative of Humanist thinking in Erfurt and Wittenberg, but his was certainly not its antipode as the later conflict with Erasmus and its reception within Luther-research suggests.

While Junghans' book certainly represents a highlight of research focusing on the historical material as it represents the biographical relation between Luther and

Humanists, he and others focused within the last twenty years on the theological material of intellectual history. It was Peter Walter, the Roman Catholic professor of systematic theology in Freiburg, who started anew the question as to what Humanist thought, motif, idea or intellectual development can be related to Luther's theology. His study reveals Erasmus' interpretation of Scriptures guided by the spirit of rhetoric. He takes his starting point within a common understanding of *studia humanitatis* which lead Erasmus to his understanding of Scripture grounded in a thorough analysis of his grammar and rhetoric.

This interpretation matches with the earlier work of Manfred Hofmann – professor emeritus for church history at Emory University in Atlanta – published in 1972. His first book on Erasmus opened up a way to understand Erasmus from his reception of classical rhetoric and the *studia humaniora*. His second book, published in 1994 – continues with this interpretation and allows the differences between Luther and Erasmus to be seen even though a lot of parallels can be shown: While Luther focuses on the theological question with his orientation toward Scripture as the center (e.g. his rejection of Pauline authorship of the letter to the Hebrews) Erasmus accentuates a more formal approach. He argues against Pauline authorship on the basis of his rhetoric and grammar analysis which show differences between Paul and the author of the letter to the Hebrews as one can read in modern exegetical writings until today. There are those thorough interpretations from Hoffmann and Walter which characterizes the difficulties of an interpretation of Erasmus placed between the Scylla of the Wittenberg Reformation and the Charybdis of a reform within the old faith. Even though the reform attempts of both show a lot in common there still remains a gap of deep contradiction in their theological grounding.

Before looking to the differences, let us briefly sketch the motifs and thoughts in common between Erasmus and Luther. As we have previously said Luther certainly was not the representative of Erfurt or Wittenberg Humanism. Even though his theology has at least one major root within the reinvention of classical rhetoric – an idea Luther shares certainly with Erasmus. It was again Helmar Junghans -

partially widening and relating the findings of Birgit Stolt - who in a series of articles showed the close connection of Luther's theological development and his knowledge and use of classical rhetoric. In a rough conclusion he writes: Martin Luther used the structure of rhetoric to illustrate the relation between God and man. It needs more research to show this approach for the whole of Luther's theology especially his new formulations of the doctrines of grace, justification, Christology and ecclesiology. It is for Junghans without doubt, that Luther developed his theological interpretation of Scripture in a deep rooted relation to ancient rhetoric.

Following this line one is tempted to ask with H. Liebing of whether Erasmus' interpretation of Scripture was an element of what finally, in all denominations, caused either a certain concentration or a further development beyond the Humanist approach to a merely confessional hermeneutic of biblical interpretation.

Even though this relates, if not links, Luther to Erasmus, there are evident differences between these two major figures of intellectual development in the early 16th century which get even clearer in a sketch of the development of Erasmus' relation to Luther over the years as described in a remarkable article by Heinz Holoczek. He looks from Erasmus to Luther and shows a fourfold development. During a first phase Erasmus seemed to be willing to support the Saxon protection of Luther even though he was critical toward Luther's approach to a theologically grounded reform of church and theology. Starting around 1521/22, Erasmus shrinks more and more back for he did not share Luther's rejection of the number of sacraments and the identification of papacy with Antichrist. Erasmus acknowledged the fact that Luther's critique touched the fundamentals of the occidental church by spoiling its unity. The conflict culminated in the debate about anthropology and the freedom or bondage of the will in the mid twenties. The later years show a fourth phase of alternating polemic and controversy. This sketch shows impressively that it was certainly not the question of the will that brought conflict and departure between Luther and Erasmus.

The roots of this conflict lay much deeper and in earlier times. I would like to explain that in a field of common interest and departure between Erasmus and Luther. In continuing we have to bear in mind that this is just a particular view which does not cover – even not as an example – the diversity of Humanist pedagogy and with it the plurality of reception and rejection of Humanist thinking in Reformation theology.

4 Theological reform of pedagogy and education

In the third decade of the sixteenth century we observe a decline in the number of pupils at school and students in universities. Even though we do not know too much about the situation in Wittenberg, it seems to be quite similar to other cities and universities in Germany. After some Humanist writings had given a fresh impetus to the late medieval system of schools and universities, the entire educational system broke down. The socio-economic crisis in the beginning of the sixteenth century may provide one reason for this collapse. Another reason can be the appearance of certain radical reformers who taught more or less an anti-educational and anti-intellectual interpretation of the gospel. The Reformation, however, started with strong criticism of Scholastic theology and its educational system. But some of the Radical Reformers denied totally the necessity of academic training and even the ground level of primary education. It was thus Erasmus who took the latest developments polemically into the phrase: Wherever reformation theology spreads out, serious education declines.

In this situation Luther wrote to the ruling authorities in the cities to ask for support for the Reformation and school reform. He chose these recipients for his tract because he had found the most acceptance in the early years of the reformation there. Most of the city magistrates had founded schools since the Middle Ages, others had established universities.

Luther starts with three theological arguments for a renewed and stronger commitment to youth education: first, to fight Satan, who strives to destroy God's creation and the renewal of the gospel; second, to retain God's mercy, which the

Germans received as the successors of the Jews, the Greeks, and the Romans; and third, to understand and obey the commandments and the order of creation. In spite of Luther's subsequent emphasis on the responsibilities of secular authorities, these scriptural references should not be ignored. Educating the young is not merely a matter of common sense but also a theological imperative.

As teachers and spiritual advisors, theologians have a duty to identify magisterial neglect and to suggest improvements in educational provision. Luther then merges this joint ecclesiastical—secular responsibility with medieval reform concepts, while distancing himself from a purely secularized overhaul of the system. This duality characterizes the whole of the Wittenberg program.

Because families and parents for different reasons are almost all unable to educate their children properly, Luther asks the government to take over this role. The welfare of a society depends not only on economic power, military strength and the prosperity of its members. Education of the youth is the most important investment for public welfare and is therefore one of the main duties of the government. Even though Luther distinguishes sharply between the two kingdoms of God—the heavenly kingdom and the kingdom of the world—this is no excuse for the weakness of the ruling authorities. Indeed it is part of the created order from the beginning of the world that human beings take responsibility in organizing their daily life. Luther does not separate the responsibility for education from pious and ecclesiastical obedience but puts them together in a specific relation: On the one hand he stresses the governmental responsibilities, on the other he puts them into the greater context of God's merciful work. Education is not the work of the teacher alone but his work in obedience to God's commandment. The teacher has the responsibility to provide a proper lesson, but the individual success of his pupil's piety depends on God's mercy and grace. Although Luther does not mention his doctrine of justification it can easily be found as the basis of his arguments.

In contrast to his predecessors, Luther concentrated not only on education for clergy and ecclesiastical jobs but also on the secular goals of education. In the same way he argues against a focus on the job relevant aspects of education only. Education has its goal in a broad range of knowledge that helps both ecclesiastical and secular interests. Thus he argues for a proper knowledge of the languages: Latin, Greek and Hebrew. And this emphasis has several reasons: first: these languages are a gift of God which should not be underestimated; second: these languages help to defend the pious from the devil's work; third, God revealed his wisdom in these languages; fourth, the spirit is contained in these languages. To understand and follow the spirit's advice one needs the proper knowledge of these languages. God's revelation is open only for those who know how to read the Bible in its original form and understand its grammar.

As soon as people forget the original voice of the prophecy and the gospel they lost orientation, knowledge, truth and faith. Even the Church fathers - who were almost an example of true piety and faith - misunderstood the gospel when they tried to translate and interpret it on the basis of translations and Latin versions of the original. They needed other authorities to find a solution to the different interpretations and misleading advice. Thus Luther sharply criticizes the role of Latin interpretations and traditional teaching of the pious which replaced the original evangelical truth.

The knowledge of revelation and the truth of God are necessary not only to those who teach and preach in the church but also to those who govern and administer secular aspects. In Luther's understanding there is no hierarchy between ecclesiastical and secular authorities. Luther argues for trained elite to work and rule both kingdoms of God. Thus he can call for the proper education of girls—a modern aspect in a program otherwise formulated with mostly traditional terms.

Luther carries out a demarcation from three sides:

a) the traditional school of Scholastic influence had been rejected for many reasons, whereas the crucial theological argument, scholasticism's rejection of the

gospel, is not mentioned. Obviously the Wittenberg theologian is of the opinion that he had explained this argument sufficiently in earlier texts and therefore could do without it here. Yet it is always behind his discourse. Confusing interpretation of the Book/Sacred Scripture is the devil's main work through which he wants to lure people away from God.

Luther criticizes in more detail the ineffective, pompous and often ridiculous educational system, which he himself had experienced with dismal results. The ecclesiastical schools for him were "ass's places and devil's schools" because they did not conform to the God-given educational order. Jesus' sentence of condemnation from Mt. 18:6f is intended for those, the child eaters and spoilers. However, they continued to oppose linguistic education and did not realize that the decline of classical education was basically their fault. Luther strongly criticizes traditional educational methods and the collection of useless and minimally helpful books (i.e. to help interpret Scripture).

Even if this critique is the most prevalent, the main point of Luther's argument goes against b) the Radical Reformers' contemporary hostility towards education and utilitarian approach. In regard to some spiritualist interpreters, Luther sees most of all the danger coming from their arbitrary exegesis of the Scripture through illegitimate norms. He does not tire of proving by different examples that an exceptional spiritually founded interpretation always ends in error and heresy or rather in its practical consequence leads to sheer lawlessness or anarchy. In this context even the old ecclesiastical authorities, normally valued by Luther, serve as a negative example of a clerical but nevertheless confusing interpretation of the Scripture.

The utilitarian hostility towards education coming from the merchant classes is for Luther a characteristic example of a simple life orientation directed "towards the stomach." Luther especially attacks the loss of an educational ideal in matters concerning life and in the negation of progress of knowledge. In this context Lu-

ther may also remind the sovereigns to make use of their authoritarian caring order.

Even if Luther does not explicitly discuss it, in his text he finally differentiates his plans from c) the educational program advocated by some of the Humanist writers. Even though we should not speak of the Humanistic educational program we could describe several of the theologians and pedagogues in the last decades of the fifteenth and in the early sixteenth century as “Humanists”. They all focused their interests on the sources—“*ad fontes*”—and tried to re-establish the *artes liberales* based on the classical sources of wisdom as *studia humanitatis*. An essential difference between Luther’s ideas and this Humanist reform approach is always noticeable in the definition of the goals of education. Education and training (i.e. most of all the knowledge of classic languages and texts) for Luther was not an end in itself (e.g. for the development of an autonomous personality only responsible to itself), but was instead the fulfilment of God’s created order transferred through parents or the authorities. Yet, this does not prevent Luther from still adopting significant and useful approaches. These approaches include the demand to study languages and the extension of the scholastic “*trivium*” with poetics and music, accompanied by didactic advice for playful learning on the one hand, as well as the method of imitation (*imitatio*) on the other hand. Finally as we have seen previously Luther uses classical rhetoric to illustrate and clarify his standpoint.

In the first part of his program for an evangelical reform of schools and universities, Luther formulates three theological arguments; first, the battle against Satan; second, the grace of God who gave the evangelical truth to the Germans but not forever; third, the obedience to God’s commandment and the order of his creation which calls people to educate the youth. Although Luther asks secular authorities to fulfil this demand we must not lose sight of its theological foundation. Education of the youth, school, university, training of administration and economy are not a matter of natural reason alone but also a matter of theological reflection. As a professor of Theology (sacred scripture!) and as a pastor Luther

points out the endangering of family and society when the government fails its educational duties. But he is not only a prophet of decline he also shows a solution and orientation to the word of God.

Luther's political ethics in the context of his doctrine of the two kingdoms are the background of a mostly traditional interpretation of the relation between secular and ecclesiastical authority. He sees them mostly intertwined. The secular authority fulfils God's will in obedience to his greater plan of establishing his kingdom of mercy. Training and education are parts of this demand. For Luther, the theological foundation of this argumentation is that schools and universities are in the first place "secular matters". They have both a secular and an ecclesiastical function and serve institutions in both dimensions by teaching pupils and educating them to be loyal citizens of their communities and faithful believers of the church. In dogmatic terms: Luther distinguishes between education and the Gospel. Even though he takes the educational duties from ecclesiastical institutions he does not lose the intertwined relation between pedagogy and theology. He turns pedagogy into a tool, and understands it in a specific function to social purposes. This separates Luther and his successors clearly from other contemporary reform attempts.

Even though Luther failed to mention religious education in the latter, the 1528 visitations of Saxony and his own catechetical writings suggest that it formed an implicit part of the program. Special Bible-lessons can thus be found in nearly all school ordinances, none of which distinguish, in the 'modern' way, between worldly 'state' education and ecclesiastical instruction. Indeed, on the contrary, almost all assume a close relationship between teaching priorities and church doctrine. Many ordinances prescribe short prayer services at the beginning and the end of each day, with sermons, liturgical training, and choral exercises as further integral parts of the curriculum.

In the later years of the Reformation, particularly in the wake of the dispute between the spiritualists and evangelicals, a need for 'Protestant' interpretation re-

emerged, but in the early phase—the setting for our text—such turbulence remains below the surface. At first, therefore, the new principle must have appeared as a welcome alternative to the frequent, and seemingly arbitrary, doctrinal interferences coming from Rome.

Combined with the emphasis on the ‘priesthood of all believers’, the approach demanded the active promotion of ‘critical’ public reasoning and thus an energetic educational offensive. For Luther and his fellow reformers, the primary task lay in the establishment of a system of schools and universities to make as many people as possible familiar with the Bible in order to enable them to interpret its meaning and to restructure their lives. Everything else was of secondary importance.

Church history, to return to one of the crucial theological arguments in the letter to the ‘mayors and aldermen’, unfolded as a process of precipitating decline until the second coming of Christ. Improved education was seen as a tool in the apocalyptic battle between God and Satan. The study of the past would alert people to God’s omniscience and help them to understand the Scriptures and the fate of the world. Thus, it held an important place in school and university education, even though profane, and especially classical, historians were to be studied in strict subordination to the overall authority of the Bible.

5 Erasmus’ pedagogy as presented in his *Enchiridion milites christiani*

Erasmus was seen, for a long time less as a theologian than as a pedagogue and writer on educational reform. The theological grounding, at least its anthropological background, of his writings was explored recently by **Rudolf Padberg**

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To illustrate this thesis let us briefly look into one of the programmatic writings of Erasmus regarding Christian education. In 1501 while living as a refugee of the plague at the Burgundian court of Tournehem where he was invited by his friend James Batt Erasmus was asked by Katharina of Osseghem, the first wife of Karl V. Poppenreuther, to write some kind of admonition for her husband who be-

haved more and more in an unchristian manner. In this Erasmus develops in his catechesis, which is covered by several metaphors, puns and quotations from classical writers – pagan as well as Christian – and his his understanding of a Christian education grounded in his Humanist anthropology “an abbreviated curriculum vitae which is oriented toward Christian virtue as expression of a devoted life to Christ.” Thus his booklet mainly has a practical approach toward a daily life expression of Christian faith.

The *Enchiridion* plays in its title with words using a pun which exists in theology since Augustine. The African Church Father of the Latin tongue called his first catechism an *Enchiridion*. This term is related back to military vocabulary of the ancient times: *Enchiridion* labels a dagger the soldier uses if he has lost his other weapons for defense. It has a short blade with a split ending like a snakes tongue to catch the blade of an enemy’s sword and crush or destroy it. Augustine used this word to describe the very essentials of Christian faith. The true believer, in case he looses his faith under certain circumstances may use the material presented in the *Enchiridion* as his last weapon to fight Satan and his affliction. Thus “*Enchiridion*” quickly became the term of an abbreviated handbook or catechism containing the most relevant essence of Christian faith. While using this term in the title for his book Erasmus obviously wants to provoke a certain expectation, that of getting a thorough knowledge of the essence of Christian faith and its practical performance.

But a first reading disappoints: The book has no clear order of the argument and even the table of contents does not help to get into its structures.

Erasmus starts with a short *captatio benevolentiae* in which he describes the sense of the book: “ut tibi compendiarium quondam vivendi rationem paecriberem, qua instructus posses ad mentem Christo dignam pervenire.” Those who expect a rational (handbook) on Christian living will get quite a number of rules and advisories. Erasmus starts with an admonition to be on guard all the life long. This vigilance in life is directed toward a thorough analysis of what the

world can offer and what the Christian really gets. Thus world is the negative foil on which Erasmus develops positively his understanding of evangelical virtues. His description of that is related toward Ephesians 6 characterizing the weapons of a Christian knight. This chapter combines ancient traditions of the classical heritage with Pauline ethics. The next chapter focuses on self cognition and the twofold erudition. It is followed by chapters describing the inner and outer human being in two paragraphs of which the later is expressively dedicated to the grounding of this understanding in Scripture, the diverse passions of mankind, and the threefold distinction of biblical anthropology. After all of that Erasmus gives 22 canons to oppose ignorance and stupidity introduced by some more general rules of being a true Christian. The final chapters deal with the fight against adultery, avaritia, false ambition and eagerness, arrogance, vainness, hate and thread.

The exaggeration of quoting literary associations, creating metaphors and puns, combined with an extensive use of classical knowledge and rhetoric art made it if not “the most boring book in the history of piety” as Heiko Oberman once put it but to a challenge for the modern reader. To note some judgments of recent research: Oberman argued that the book tries to change the world into a monastery, and Gustav Adolf Benrath sees the *Enchiridion* mainly in the light of a late medieval qualification of spirituality and morality. Erasmus enforces the fight against immorality and sin. Just Ernst Wilhelm Kohls sees two lines of a theology in Erasmus’ *Enchiridion*: On the one hand the turn of God toward man and on the other the way back of man toward God. These lines cross in Christ.

If these interpretations are correct not only the form but also the content of the *Enchiridion* gave good reason to print the first two minor editions within larger collections of other writings.

Nevertheless the later development made the printing of the *Enchiridion* quite a success. Between 1515 and 1517 six editions came out as monographs and in 1518 Erasmus most preferred publisher Froben in Basel published another edi-

tion with an additional preface in which Erasmus took a place aside to Luther to literally protect him against his enemies. In the following years more than 30 editions were released accompanied by translations into English, German, Dutch, French and Spanish. Thus we have to ask what made contemporaries of Erasmus interested in the book. What influenced Hieronymus Emser to an enthusiastic commentary and what inflamed the bishop of Basel toward Erasmus? While the English translations were mainly produced by evangelical readers of Erasmus, the German and Dutch translations came from different camps. Overlooking the history of print, one finds that especially in territories which were oriented toward Luther's reformation the book had no success, and after the confessional borders had been fixed, Erasmus was banned as being in the company of Luther and thus put on the *index librorum prohibitorum* ...and Ignatius negatively said that he felt the spirit of God dying within his soul and the fire of piety was quenched.

On the other hand, many contemporaries of Erasmus felt provoked and irritated, others understood and were encouraged by his attempt to deny the outer form of religion, rite and cult, ecclesiastical demand and law. Especially his critique of the *ordo clericorum* found a diverse echo. While Eustachius van Zicham OP, Professor at Louvain, saw in Erasmus' book the loss of the religious core, Paul de Rovere, chaplain at St. Peter in Louvain read the book as the long expected release from useless tradition and a helpful orientation toward the essence of Christianity. It was the fifth rule Erasmus noted in his *Enchiridion* that provoked these reactions: "Climb up/mount from the visible up to the invisible" in order to give advice for a proper life as a Christian.

This passage is without doubt one of the crucial arguments in Erasmus *Enchiridion*: The Humanist theologian distinguishes between two realms: the visible and the invisible. While the visible world contains just a temporary shadow the invisible world has the true life of God and contains his court with the angels and so on. The visible world is just a very bad copy of the invisible world to which the true Christian should mount. Erasmus uses quite a lot of pairs to describe this

opposition: flesh and spirit, letter and spirit, temporary and eternal, and so on. He uses the language of the Bible to express the tension and contradiction of the two worlds. While the spiritual knowledge and to wisdom of God guarantees eternal life the worldly intellect and reason leads into death and opposition to God. Even though this thought had been explained mainly in Scripture Erasmus was deeply convinced that some of the pagan writers of classical antiquity know about these hidden secrets and may thus be quoted as witnesses for the truth of the argument.

In the following Erasmus turns this argument in a practical manner: If God is spirit, man has to become spirit as well. This can be expressed in love, peace, patience, mildness, *miser cordia*, humble behavior, faith and modesty – more or less a collection of Christianized classical virtues. Following this advice, the true Christian becomes a copy of Christ. Man is on a pilgrimage surrounded by the visible world even though his way leads into the invisible world of heaven.

Certainly this argument is related to the monastic tradition of *contemptus mundi*, which Erasmus knew very well since his training in Hertogensbosh and Deventer. But he shrinks back for the final consequence. Erasmus does not want to deny the outer world completely. Religion and its visible being in Church can be understood as a true sign of piety. With all its rites, traditions, laws, and cults the church may enforce the faith of weak believers such as children, women, and the afflicted. Nevertheless, Erasmus looks forward to a perfect way to God. With that he implicitly criticizes the *via perfectior* of monastic rules as much as the way to salvation in the Church. Outer signs and respect of worldly, visible rules and rites have no importance while walking on the way to perfection as guided by Erasmus orientation to Christ and his virtues: Blessed be those who hear the word of God inwardly. Happy are those who find the Lord directing his word to them inwardly, their souls will be rescued.

It sounds like Luther's later approach to evangelical freedom when Erasmus rejects outer regulations and claims his individualistic and direct approach to God.

As later on Luther did, Erasmus defends the true freedom against the Pharisaic protected freedom of the church. It is not the ripe form of the opposition of law and gospel even though Erasmus uses Augustine's distinction of spirit and letter in a sense which at least can be opened to Luther's understanding. Again Erasmus polemically argues about veneration of Saints, justice by works and with it against Judaism and law oriented piety.

Jacques Etienne once labeled Erasmus *Enchiridion* as "la religion du pur esprit" and we might extend this judgment as a proper description of Erasmus' work and writings in total. Is it the spiritual exercise which separates Erasmus and Luther? Not to argue with Etienne but a closer look shows that the differences lay even deeper. It is a certain kind of Humanistic anthropology that makes the difference. Erasmus is deeply convinced that man had been created in the image and likeness of God. This term relate him closely to the Italian Humanist movement and its development of an anthropology which combines biblical and ancient sources. Original Sin corrupted this image of God in man deeply but was not able to destroy the good creation. Thus still a tiny little bit of original image of God remains within mankind which can be developed. This development has to be worked out voluntarily. It is the will directed and some times overwhelmed, by the affections which guides, directs, and empowers human action and mind. Thus, to follow the advise for a proper living, to develop virtues and to work out human potentials of piety, faith, obedience and loyalty to the will of God is a question of directing and educating the human will by improving the spiritual powers and neglecting worldly, visible temptations or the affliction of the flesh. "Tu modo victoriae votum toto pectore concipe. ... Tu modo cura, ut sis in corpore, et omnia peteris in capite. In teipso quidem minis es imbecillis, in illo nihil non vales." It is the picture of Christ whose victory over the devil, sin and death had been proven by his resurrection. This picture and the covered message of his final overcoming of the power of Satan, World and Flesh will empower the faithful to follow his advise to fight sin, the world and visible temptations. "Pro te pugnabit et liberat libertatem suam tibi pro merito imputabit.. Victoriā omnem illi feras acceptam oportet, qui primus et solus a peccato immunis peccati tyrannidem oppressit, verum ea tibi non sine

tua continget industria.” It needs human activity to reach the goal of eternal salvation.

Interestingly Erasmus neither mentions anywhere a notion of grace or justification by faith, Christ, or the Spirit, nor does he attack or accept the Scholastic doctrine of grace as expressed by some 14th century *via moderna* theologians: qui facere quod in se est deus non denegat gratiam. Even though Erasmus does not hold back his critique against Scholastic theology, he develops on the basis of his synthesis of ancient literature and biblical teachings an anthropology which can easily be related to Late Medieval Scholasticism more easily than to Luther’s groundbreaking critique of theology and epistemology in his early writings.

Within this context pedagogy becomes a theory of practical piety by developing the will of man toward the affections of pure love of God and obedience against his law. The Christian pedagogue is the one who leads his pupils to Christ, shows the way to salvation, and gives guidance by a serious orientation toward Christ’s life and death on the Cross.

While this can be formally related to Luther we can see clearly now that his pedagogical attempt has a completely different setting. Luther’s pedagogy develops skills to read Scripture and to learn from it about the Law and the Gospel. Christian pedagogy is directed toward the self cognition of man as a sinner. It destroys trust in his own capacities and power. Instead it focuses on the love of God as revealed in the Cross. This revelation contains two messages: the first, that man cannot work out his salvation by his own power – even not by supporting Christ’s merits and deeds for human kind. The second message is that because of this impossible status, man cannot fulfill the law. Man is eternally condemned to be a sinner. That is the revelation of Scripture according to the Law. After that comes the revelation of Scripture according to the Gospel: God feels merciful about man. And for that reason he accepts the life, suffering and death of his son as everlasting sacrifice to atone him with his creation. And for that Christ offers the imputation of righteousness to all who believe in him.

From this point of view there is no reconciliation between Erasmus and Luther, neither in their understanding of the will nor in their anthropological convictions.

6 Conclusion

End of dialogue? I think not. One has to see the differences clearly before starting a dialogue. Erasmus and Luther as the most prominent examples of the Humanist and the Reformation movements are distinguished in their understanding of biblical anthropology, and with that, in its ethical consequences. Nevertheless they share some important ideas in common:

1. the historical (i.e. to a certain extent the Humanist method relating back to original sources, languages and a pure message coming from the past).
2. the use of ancient techniques, especially in rhetoric and epistemology, as presented in pagan writings but also as used in Christian texts of the Fathers.
3. the concentration on Scripture as the main source of their reform attempts in theology, church, piety and society.
4. the view back to the early church and its exceptional writers as represented in the books, sermons and pamphlets of the Church Fathers.
5. the criticism directed against contemporary piety, church and its theological legitimating, especially coming from scholastic theology.
6. the call for a reform of church and society, both in head and membership, oriented toward a reestablishment of the early, Christian church.

Because of this we can find quite a great number of striking similarities which relate Erasmus and Luther, which relate Humanist and Reformation movement. But looking more closely at their individual theological settings we have to consider a strict separation. No wonder that conflict occurs. I do share the interpretation of Manfred Hofmann, Peter Walter and others that the conflict arose in a phase

where both writers and their disciples were not able to understand each other because of the use of rhetoric as much as because of their concentration on polemical and controversial issues instead of their common goals in the reform. Modern interpretation may work out the similarities and parallels of both attempts. Whether this leads to a future reconciliation depends on the question whether both traditions continue to exist and have a future within the modern discussion about the future of Christianity. This is no longer a subject of my presentation. Thank you for your patience.