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# History of the Study of Theology

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PART II  
THE MODERN AGE

CHAPTER I

THE REVIVAL OF LEARNING

1. *There was a preliminary revival of classical scholarship in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, which tended to the corruption of life and manners in the direction of heathenism, and to the undermining of Christian life and education.*

We have seen that the university of Paris grew out of the cathedral school, and that the other early universities of Northern Europe for the most part grew out of the migration of students and masters from Paris and Bologna, or the daughters of these universities. The inevitable result of the growth of the universities was the decline of the older cathedral schools; for the best teachers and the most energetic scholars resorted to the universities by preference.

The establishment of the mendicant orders, the location of their chief seats at the universities, and their active, energetic life, replacing the older contemplative life of the Benedictines, drew the most vigorous of the young men to the new orders. The Benedictines declined in influence as the Franciscans, Dominicans, Augustinians and other friars increased in reputation. And so the monastic schools lost their importance, as

the mendicant orders established their schools in connection with the universities. Accordingly the universities became the great seats of theological as well as of philosophical and grammatical education; and the cathedral and monastic schools were either discontinued, or reduced to small importance as mere grammar schools, or schools of piety, from which the best students went to the universities. The study of theology was practically given over to the mendicant orders, and especially to the Dominicans and the Franciscans, whose contests agitated the universities and the Church until the Reformation.

The study of theology at the universities was chiefly a study of the *Sentences* of the Lombard, elaborated by the great scholastics, Thomas, Bonaventura, Duns Scotus and Occam, with their numerous disciples. The dogmas of Christianity were elaborated by the Aristotelian logic, and in accordance with the Aristotelian categories, into the most refined and hair-splitting definitions and speculations. The dogmas of Christianity became abstract dogmas, of little practical interest or importance, mere intellectual balloons, or castles in the air. The inevitable result was a barren and dead orthodoxy. The study of the Bible had been thrust into the background. It had become a preliminary study, leading up to the dogmatic system. The allegorical sense gave the dogmatic theologian whatever he wanted for his purpose.

The great teachers of Paris, especially Gerson and Clémanges, recognised and strove to overcome these evils. The latter says:

‘I am astonished that the theologians of our time read so carelessly the pages of the divine Testaments, enfeebling their spirits by the research for sterile subtilities, and, to use the term of the Apostle, “doting about questionings and disputes of words,”<sup>1</sup> that which is proper for sophists, but not for theologians. The Apostle indicates here the procedure of those men who leave the

<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. vi. 4.

vigorous and fertile tree of the Holy Scriptures, and seek their nourishment in doctrine in desert and sterile places. It is there that they anguish, in other terms, that they suffer of fasting, die of hunger, because they find no fruit; or if they encounter it, that fruit is like the apples of Sodom, which are beautiful and bright in appearance, but which at the touch resolve themselves into dust and smoke. Yes, at first sophisms appear beautiful, ingenious, penetrating, keen; but, if you tear away the envelope of words to get at the fruit, it is nothing but smoke, because all is empty within.<sup>1</sup>

The most practical study of theology at the universities was that of canon law; for this study involved the practice of law in the law-courts, and gave those skilled in it the highest places in Church and State.

Paris was the great school of Theology, Bologna the great school of Law, so recognised by the pope and the bishops for centuries. The Scholastic Theology and the Canon Law played into the hands of the pope and the curia.

There gradually arose, as we have seen, various movements for reform, chiefly on the practical side of the religious life or of religious institution, and through the revival of mystic theology; but all of these movements failed for the time, though not without some good results. So far as theological education is concerned, they accomplished nothing of importance. The reforming movements did not go deep enough; and they did not propose any thorough-going principle of reform, or find for it a sufficiently authoritative basis.

In the meanwhile divine Providence was preparing the way for the great Reformation in an extraordinary way and an unexpected manner, such as is usual with God, by the revival of classical scholarship and a return to Greek and Roman antiquity. This was brought about

<sup>1</sup> Clémanges, *De studio theologico*; vide D'Achery, *Spicilegium*, i. 476; Feret, *La Faculté de théologie de Paris*, iv. 19.

in several ways, all of which conspired to the common end.

It is generally recognised at present that the revival of classical scholarship was led by two great literary men: *Petrarch* (1304-1374) and *Boccaccio* (1313-1375). These were especially interested in the literature of Rome and Greece. *Petrarch* has been called the 'first modern man.'<sup>1</sup> 'In a new age he was the first to recognise the supreme importance of the old classical literature'; he 'prepared the soil of Italy for the reception of Greek culture,' but he regarded 'the study of the classics as the handmaid of Christianity.'<sup>2</sup> *Boccaccio* was 'the first of modern men to study [classical] Greek in Italy, and indeed in Europe.'<sup>3</sup> He learned his Greek from the pupils of the Calabrian monk Barlaam. Florence became the centre of a classical scholarship, which did not at first connect itself with the universities, but organised itself in associations or academies entirely apart from universities or organised schools. The new learning was at first acquired by private study, from private teachers, as in ancient times. The students of classical antiquity were known as *Humanists*. This classical revival at the beginning had nothing to do with theology; its tendency was rather away from theology. Indeed for a long time it was demoralising to Christian theology, and really a revival of heathenism.

In the latter part of the fifteenth century there arose at Florence a reformer who 'represents a religious reaction against the pagan tendencies of some of the Humanists,' and who wrote a tract 'describing all learning as dangerous unless limited to a chosen few.'<sup>4</sup> *Savonarola* (1452-1498) was a mystic of a different type from those of Paris. He was a preacher of repentance, and exposed from the pulpit the abuses existing among clergy and laity. He says of himself: 'I preach the regeneration of the Church, taking the Scriptures as my sole guide.' He complains:

<sup>1</sup> Renan, *Averroès*, p. 328 (ed. 1882).

<sup>2</sup> Sandys, ii. pp. 4 seq.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 88.

'In the mansions of the great prelates there is no concern save for poetry and the oratorical art.' 'The theologians of our time . . . do not know a shred of the Bible; yea, they do not even know the names of its books.'<sup>1</sup> Savonarola claimed the gift of prophecy, and predicted ruin for the impenitent. Even his enemies saw in him a resemblance to John the Baptist. In his denunciations he spared neither Rome nor the papacy. When his own city, which had protected him, was threatened with the interdict, he prepared an appeal from the pope to an œcumenical council. His enemies, by challenging him to an ordeal of fire, succeeded in destroying his influence with the people; and they tortured him into a retraction. But like Jerome of Prague, he overcame his physical weakness and faced death with unflinching courage. At his deposition, when the officiating prelate declared: 'Separo te ab ecclesia militante et triumphante,' Savonarola cried: 'Militante, non triumphante: hoc enim tuum non est.' The Meditations, which he wrote in the intervals of torture, were translated and circulated in Germany, Spain, France, and England, as well as Italy. Luther published them with warm commendation.

2. *The Council of Florence (1439), in the interest of the reunion of the Eastern Churches with the Western, brought a large number of Orientals to Italy, and resulted in a revived interest in the study of Theology, especially of Comparative or Irenic Theology.*

The Council held at Ferrara in 1438, and removed to Florence in 1439, brought a large number of Greeks and Orientals to Italy in the interest of the reunion of the East and the West. Among them came a considerable number of learned men, who established themselves permanently in Italy. These scholars brought with them the Greek language and Greek literature. Students of theology learned to know the Greek Bible and the Greek Fathers; students of philosophy read Plato and Aristotle in the original. The Latin Church became once more acquainted with the Greek and Oriental Churches.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Vide Schaff, vol. v. part ii. pp. 688 seq.

<sup>2</sup> Vide Briggs, *Theological Symbolics*, pp. 142, 154.

Of these Eastern scholars the chief were:

(1) *Bessarion* (c. 1395-1472), archbishop of Nicæa, who for his services in behalf of reunion was made cardinal, and so spent his last years in Italy. He surrounded himself with numbers of Greek scholars, and became a great patron of classical learning.

(2) Another of these learned Greeks was *Theodore of Gaza* (1400-1475), the first professor of Greek at Ferrara, who also taught philosophy in Rome. He wrote a Greek grammar, which was used as a text-book in Paris, Cambridge and Germany. Among his pupils was the great German Humanist, Rudolphus Agricola.

(3) *Argyropulos* of Constantinople (1416-1486) taught first at Padua, then at Florence, and finally in Rome, where he became the instructor of the famous German, Reuchlin, concerning whom he exclaimed: 'Lo! Greece through our exile has flown across the Alps.'<sup>1</sup> He became noted for his translations of Aristotle.

(4) *Gemistos Plethon* of Constantinople (c. 1356-1450) was one of the champions of the Greek Church at the Council of Florence. He taught the Platonic philosophy in Florence, and renewed the struggle between Plato and Aristotle.

The Greeks in Italy were divided between these two philosophers, and a great controversy arose as to their relative merits. The result was an increasing attention to Plato among the Humanists, and an increasing desire to get rid of the dominant Aristotelian Scholasticism.

The study of the classics carried with it the study of Christian antiquity and the rise of historic investigation.

The most important scholar in this regard was *Laurentius Valla* (1407-1457).

*Valla* became the father of historical criticism. He was trained in Humanistic studies, and, while professor of rhetoric at the university of Pavia, wrote *Quæstiones dialecticæ* and *De elegantissimè latini sermonis*, works characterised by Wagenmann as 'Humanism's open declaration of war' against the logic and the Latin of the Schools.<sup>2</sup> The treatise on Latin passed through fifty-nine editions in the years 1471-1536. 'In his treatise on Dialectic he denounces the mediæval Aristotelians, Avicenna

<sup>1</sup> Vide Sandys, ii. p. 64.

<sup>2</sup> Wagenmann, 'Laurentius Valla,' in Herzog's *Real-Encyclopædie für protestantische Theologie und Kirche*.

and Averroës, and attacks the philosophers of his time for their belief in the infallibility of Aristotle.<sup>1</sup> The philosophers, theologians and jurists all rose up in arms, and Valla left Pavia. Some years later he entered the service of the Humanist, Alfonso, king of Aragon and Sicily (c. 1435). During this period of his life he investigated the sources of Canon Law, and proved that the so-called *Donation of Constantine* was a pseudonymous work of much later date. He also produced a *Collatio Novi Testamenti*, first published by Erasmus (1505), who praises the 'remarkable sagacity' with which Valla has 'examined the whole New Testament,' and considers him 'unrivalled both in the sharpness of his intelligence and the tenacity of his memory.'<sup>2</sup> About the year 1445 Valla opened a school of Greek and Latin literature in Naples, and attracted a multitude of students. Two or three years later Pope Nicholas v. made him *scriptor apostolicus*. In 1450 he became also professor of rhetoric in Rome, and under Calixtus III. (1455) papal secretary. In addition to numerous translations from the Greek, his works include the famous *Elegantia* and *Declamatio*, and several influential treatises on Ethics. Luther declares that 'the like of (Valla) neither Italy nor the whole Church produced in many centuries.'<sup>3</sup> 'Laurencius Valla ist der best wahl, den ich mein lebtage gesehn oder erfahren hab. De libero arbitrio bene disputat.'<sup>4</sup> Erasmus wrote: 'Where is the man whose heart is so narrowed by jealousy as not to have the highest praise for Valla, a man who with so much energy, zeal and labour refuted the stupidities of the Barbarians, saved half-buried letters from extinction, restored Italy to her ancient splendour of eloquence, and forced even the learned to express themselves henceforth with more circumspection?' To strike at Valla is to wound 'all men of letters.' He is 'eloquent above all others,' and 'has been rightly called "The Marrow of Persuasion."<sup>5</sup>

3. *The capture of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453 drove large numbers of learned Greeks into exile in Italy, and other parts of the West, where they greatly increased the knowledge of Greek literature, both classical and theological.*

Students of classical antiquity resorted to Italy from

<sup>1</sup> Sandys, ii. p. 67.

<sup>3</sup> Benrath, 'Valla,' in *New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia*.

<sup>4</sup> Preger, *Tischreden Luthers*, 237.

<sup>2</sup> Erasmus, *Epp.* 21, 182.

<sup>5</sup> Erasmus, *Epp.* 26, 27.

all over Europe to acquire the new learning, and they carried it back with them to their native lands. Thus Humanism spread rapidly as a new intellectual force throughout the West.

Erasmus expressed the conviction of many when he said:

'Latin erudition, however ample, is crippled and imperfect without Greek. We have in Latin at best some small streams and turbid pools, while they have the clearest springs and rivers flowing with gold. I see it is the merest madness to touch with the little finger that principal part of theology which treats of the divine mysteries, without being furnished with the apparatus of Greek.' 'They have neither sense nor shame who presume to write upon the Sacred Books, or indeed upon any of the books of the ancients, without being tolerably furnished in both literatures.'<sup>1</sup>

Among the exiles from Constantinople came also learned men from among the Jews and the Oriental Churches, who introduced the study of Oriental languages, especially Hebrew. The Hebrew Bible, the Talmud and the Jewish commentators began to be studied by Christian scholars.

4. *The spread of the new learning was greatly aided by the invention of printing at Mainz in 1440.*

Printing was introduced into Italy by two of the workmen of Fust the inventor, who set up a press at Subiaco in 1465, and then at Rome in 1467. The great printing press of Italy, however, was the *Aldine* at Venice, established in 1494, and sustained by the 'New Academy' of Hellenists which was founded in 1500 by Aldus Manutius. This society proposed to print each month an edition of at least 1000 copies of some good author.

'By the year 1500 about 5000 books had been produced in Italy, of which about 300 belong to Florence and Bologna, more than 600 to Milan, more than 900 to Rome, and 2835 to Venice.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Erasmus, *Epp.* 143, 182.

<sup>2</sup> Sandys, ii. p. 97.

Erasmus testifies to the liberality of the Italians, and especially of Aldus, in matters of literature; saying:

'When I, a Hollander, was publishing in Italy my work on Proverbs, all the learned who were within reach, came forward to supply me with the authors, not yet printed, that they thought likely to be of use to me. Aldus had nothing in his treasures which he did not place at my service. . . . I was assisted by some whom I knew neither personally nor by name.'<sup>1</sup>

5. *Humanism found an early entrance into the Netherlands by attaching itself to the mystic tendency of the Brethren of the Common Life.*

Gerhard Groote (1340-1384) and Florentius Radewyns (1350-1400) founded the Brotherhood of the Common Life, which established schools for moral and religious education in the Netherlands and in Northern Germany. The instruction given was based upon the study of the Latin language. This led to a revival of the study of the Latin classics in these schools.

Nicolaus Cusanus and John Wessel were trained in them, and both added Greek and Hebrew to their Latin, and gathered ancient manuscripts.

Nicolaus of Cusa (1401-1464) was trained in Law, Mathematics and Astronomy, as well as Theology and Philosophy. He belonged to the Mystics who sought the reformation of the Church, and wrote *De concordantia catholica*. Like Gerson he subordinated the pope to the œcumenical council. In his work, *De docta ignorantia*, he criticised the scholastic method.

John Wessel (1420-1489) was noted for breadth of interest and a spirit of inquiry, that won for him the name *magister contradictionum*. Rudolphus Agricola and John Reuchlin studied with him before going to Italy to enlarge their knowledge of Greek.

6. *Erasmus summed up in himself all that was best in Humanism, and by his editions of the Greek Testament and of the Fathers gave a basis of authority, Biblical and Patristic, for the reformation of the Church.*

<sup>1</sup> Erasmus, *Adagia*; vide Nichols, *Epistles of Erasmus*, i. pp. 437 seq.

The most distinguished of the pupils of the Brethren of the Common Life was *Erasmus of Rotterdam* (1466-1536). He received his primary education among the Brethren at Deventer and Bois-le-Duc, and in 1487 entered the Augustinian monastery near Gouda, where he remained a close student for ten years. The bishop of Cambrai then sent him to Paris, where he studied and taught in the university. He devoted special attention to Greek, and wrote:

'My Greek studies are almost too much for my courage; while I have not the means of purchasing books, or the help of a teacher.' Again he says: 'I have been applying my whole mind to the study of Greek; and as soon as I receive any money, I shall first buy Greek authors, and afterwards some clothes.' He complains of 'a great penury of books; leisure none; health infirm; yet declares: 'My whole soul is bent on acquiring the most perfect learning, and hence I have a supreme disregard for learning of a trivial kind.'

'I am determined that it is better to learn late than to be without the knowledge which it is of the utmost importance to possess.' 'I began to look at Hebrew, but frightened by the strangeness of the idiom, and in consideration of my age and of the insufficiency of the human mind to master a multitude of subjects, I gave it up.'

In his enthusiasm he declares:

'If there is any fresh Greek to be bought, I had rather pawn my coat than not get it; especially if it is something Christian, as the Psalms in Greek or the Gospels.'<sup>1</sup>

Erasmus travelled about from university to university in France, England, Italy, the Netherlands and Switzerland, in the interests of higher scholarship; and became the greatest scholar of his age. He paid several visits to England, and the English Humanists, Colet and Sir Thomas More, became his devoted friends. Both the great universities 'sought to have' him, and he 'spent several months at Cambridge teaching Greek and

<sup>1</sup> Erasmus, *Epp.* 112, 113, 139, 143, 156, 180.

Divinity.'<sup>1</sup> The latter part of his life was passed chiefly in Basel, and most of his works appeared from the famous press of Froben. Erasmus sought and obtained release from his monastic vows, and came into conflict with the monks in the interests of learning. He ardently espoused the cause of classic scholarship and of the study of the Fathers, as over against mediæval scholarship and the ignorance of the religious orders of his time. His editions of the Greek Testament, and of many of the Fathers, laid a basis for sound scholarship. He says himself :

'Many are induced to study the Sacred Writings, who would otherwise never have read them, as they themselves admit; and a great many have begun to study Greek; indeed, that is going on everywhere.'<sup>2</sup>

He regarded himself as called to do 'the humblest part of the work' to be done for theology, and says :

'I wanted to construct a road for other persons of higher aims, so that they might be less impeded by pools and stumbling blocks in carrying home those fair and glorious treasures.'<sup>3</sup>

The works of Erasmus include editions or translations of many of the greatest authors of the Christian and classical world. Of his original works the best known are his famous satire *Moriae encomium*, the *Colloquies*, letters, treatises on education, and on the Greek and Latin languages, the *Enchiridion militis christiani* and its companion *Institutio principis christiani*, and *Ecclesiastes*, which emphasises the prophetic function of the Christian ministry.

There are countless testimonies from his cotemporaries to the unique place held by Erasmus. Reuchlin writes from Germany : 'You alone bring us back some image of the ancient eloquence; the rest of us are a mob.' More writes from England concerning his *Utopia* : 'I want to know whether Tunstall approves, and Busleiden, and your Chancellor . . . but your vote alone will

<sup>1</sup> Erasmus, *Ep.* 290.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 400.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 522.

be abundantly sufficient for my judgment. We two are to my mind a multitude, as I think I could live happily with you in any solitude.' Henry of Glarus cries : 'It was a great thing to have learned morality from Socrates . . . but I have received much more from you. Besides innumerable other benefits, the chief is this : that you have taught me to know Christ, and not to know Him only, but to imitate, to reverence and to love Him.'<sup>1</sup> Watson writes : 'You are celebrated everywhere in Italy, especially among the learned of the highest note. . . . Your fame is spread throughout all the Christian world. . . . Wherever you are, you so live as to seem present everywhere in Christendom, and will continue to live by the immortality of your fame and the noble monuments you will leave behind you. By your correction of the New Testament accompanied by your notes, you have thrown a marvellous light on Christ, and deserved well of all His zealous followers.'<sup>2</sup> But Erasmus says : 'For myself I think nothing settled, unless I have the approval of Christ, on whose single vote all our felicity depends.'<sup>3</sup> 'Huc discuntur disciplinae, huc philosophia, huc eloquentia, ut Christum intelligamus, ut Christi gloriam celebremus. Hic est totius eruditionis et eloquentiæ scopus.'<sup>4</sup>

Erasmus worked for a reform of the Church, especially on the side of learning and morals; and he, like most of the Humanists, finally opposed Luther and the other Reformers, in the interests of learning and the unity of the Church. His dread of a conflict in the Church may be gathered from the fervour of his appeal against national strife for those 'who glory in the name of Christ, of a Master who taught and exhibited nothing but gentleness, who are members of one body, and are one flesh, quickened by the same Spirit, fed by the same sacraments, attached to the same Head, called to the same immortality, hoping for that highest communion, that as Christ and the Father are one, so we may be one with Him.'<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Vide Nichols, *Epistles of Erasmus*, ii. pp. 276, 386, 426 seq.

<sup>2</sup> Vide Nichols, *ibid.*, ii. pp. 334 seq. <sup>3</sup> Erasmus, *Ep.* 184.

<sup>4</sup> Erasmus, *Ciceronianus*; vide Woodward, *Desiderius Erasmus concerning the Aim and Method of Education*, p. 59.

<sup>5</sup> Erasmus, *Ep.* 281.

7. *The Humanists of France were more of the Italian type. Their chief theologian Clémanges combined mystic with humanistic studies.*

The earliest French Humanist was *Jean de Montreuil* (1354-1418), who had, however, no position as a teacher.

*Nicolas de Clémanges* (c. 1367-1437), his friend, was the first great Humanist of France. He was educated in the university of Paris, at the college of Navarre, by Pierre D'Ailly and Gerson; and taught rhetoric there. In 1393 he became rector of the university, and, four years later, papal secretary under Benedict XIII. But in 1408 he retired to a Cistercian cloister, and gave himself to Biblical study, which he felt had been neglected. In his work *De studio theologico* he exalts the parish priest above the student, yet recommends the study of theology and especially of the Scriptures. He felt the influence of the Italian Humanists. In 1425 he returned to Paris to teach rhetoric and theology in the college of Navarre. Clémanges was influential in the calling of the Council of Constance, but disappointed and displeased with its final action as to the papacy. Like his masters, D'Ailly and Gerson, he was opposed to the sophistry of the time. These three great mystics were sound in their mysticism, and emphasised direct communion with God and the Christian life. Like Erasmus they worked for reform as middle men, and accomplished more than is recognised. All three have been neglected by both Protestants and Catholics—by the latter because, in the three reforming councils which they dominated, they exalted the authority of the œcumenical council above that of the pope. Among the writings of Clémanges may be mentioned the tracts, *De ruina ecclesiæ*, *De corrupto ecclesiæ statu*, *De fructu rerum adversarum*, and his letters to D'Ailly, Gerson and others.

The first scholar officially appointed to teach classical Greek in Paris was *Gregorio Tifernas* († 1466). He was followed in 1476

by *Hermonymus*, the 'somewhat incompetent' instructor of Reuchlin, Erasmus and Budæus. *Alexander* was introduced there by Erasmus (1508), and became rector of the university in 1512, librarian of the Vatican in 1517, and finally a cardinal.

The greatest French Humanist was *Budæus* (1467-1540), who won from Italy the supremacy in classical scholarship. Calvin calls him: 'primum rei literariæ decus et columen.' His influence secured the establishment of the Corporation of the Royal Readers (1530), which developed into the *Collège de France*. Sandys regards this foundation as 'perhaps his most important, certainly his most permanent, service to the cause of scholarship.'<sup>1</sup>

*Faber Stapulensis*, Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples († 1536), Humanist, philosopher, and theologian, was influential as a teacher in Paris. He is praised by Sir Thomas More 'as the restorer of true Dialectic and true Philosophy, especially that founded upon Aristotle,' and by Erasmus for his work on the New Testament.<sup>2</sup> He published *Psalterium quintuplex* (1509), French versions of the New Testament (1523), and the Psalter (1525), and finally one of the entire Bible (1530), which served as a basis for the better known version of Olevitan (1535). Stapulensis also produced commentaries on the Scriptures and on Aristotle, and Latin translations of the Fathers and the Mystics. In the preface to his commentary on St. Paul's Epistles, he maintained the authority of the Scriptures and urged a reform of the Church.

8. *Humanism made its way into Germany and German universities. The earliest representatives were Æneas Sylvius and Regiomontanus. The chief German Humanist, however, was Reuchlin, who laid the foundation for the study of the Old Testament in Hebrew.*

1. *Æneas Sylvius de Piccolomini* (1405-1464) 'represented Italian Humanism in Vienna (1442-1455),' and won 'the gratitude of Germany for the teaching and the example which had led that land to admire the studies of Humanism.'<sup>3</sup> As Pope Pius II. (1458) he collected many valuable manuscripts and encouraged all the arts.

2. *Regiomontanus* (1436-1476), archbishop of Ratisbon,

<sup>1</sup> Sandys, ii. pp. 172 seq.

<sup>2</sup> Vide Nichols, *Epistles of Erasmus*, ii. pp. 224-327.

<sup>3</sup> Vide Sandys, ii. p. 251.

was a friend of Bessarion, and taught and translated both Greek and Latin works.

We may quote the summary statement of Sandys as to the different classes of Humanists in Germany :

'The Humanists of Germany may be divided into three successive schools distinguished from one another in their relation to the Church. (1) The *Earlier* or *Scholastic* Humanists, who were loyal supporters of the Church, while they were eager for a revival of classical learning, and a new system of education. They are represented by the three great teachers of North Germany, Rudolphus Agricola, Rudolf von Langen, and Alexander Hegius; also by Wimpfeling, the restorer of education in South Germany; by Trithemius, one of the founders of the Rhenish Society of Literature; and by Eck, the famous opponent of Luther. They worked for the Revival of Learning in all branches of knowledge, while they hoped that the new learning would remain subservient to the old theology. (2) The *Intermediate* or *Rational* Humanists, who took a rational view of Christianity and its creed, while they protested against the old scholasticism, and against the external abuses of the Church. "They either did not support Luther, or soon deserted him, being conscious that his movement would lead to the destruction of all true culture." Their leaders were Reuchlin and Erasmus, and Conrad Muth, the Canon of Gotha. "Their party and its true work of culture were shipwrecked by the tempest of the Reformation." (3) The *Later* or *Protestant* Humanists, who were ready to "protest" against everything—young men of great talent, but of less learning, whose love of liberty sometimes lapsed into licence. Their leading spirit was Ulrich von Hutten. In course of time, some of them became Rational Humanists; others, supporters of Luther. "While Erasmus, Reuchlin and Muth viewed Luther's propaganda with distrust," these younger Humanists "flocked to the new standard of protest and revolt, and so doing brought culture into disgrace and shipwrecked the Revival of Learning in Germany." "The revolt of Luther caused the Church to reject Humanism, and was the deathblow of the Erasmian Reformation."'<sup>1</sup>

This last statement, however, is rather extreme and unfair to the Reformers, who counted on their side one

<sup>1</sup> Sandys, ii. pp. 258 *seq.*, citing Pearson, *The Ethic of Free Thought*, pp. 166 *seq.*

of the greatest of the Humanists, Melancthon, the 'Preceptor of Germany,' Camerarius, John Sturm, and many others.

3. *Rudolphus Agricola* (1444-1485) was trained at Deventer, Erfurt, Louvain, Cologne, Pavia, and Ferrara; and taught at Heidelberg. He learned Greek of Theodorus Gaza, and in his last years studied Hebrew. He is said to have been to Germany what Petrarch was to Italy, and was called by his cotemporaries 'a second Virgil.'<sup>1</sup>

4. *Hegius* (1433-1498) 'made the school of Deventer the great educational centre of North Germany.'<sup>2</sup> In his time 'the number of scholars rivalled those of a university, amounting, it is said, at one time to 2200.'<sup>3</sup> Erasmus writes of Agricola as 'the preceptor of my schoolmaster, Alexander Hegius, himself no degenerate disciple of such a master.'<sup>4</sup>

5. *Jacob Wimpfeling* (1450-1528) studied at Schlettstadt, Freiburg, Erfurt, and finally at Heidelberg, where he afterwards (1498) became a professor and lectured on Jerome. At Strasburg and other cities he founded societies of literature. Through these as well as through his text-books and treatises on education he became widely influential in promoting liberal learning and improved methods of instruction. His numerous writings include works on theology, and he laboured for the Church as well as for the school. Erasmus calls him 'the chief man of letters in his country, and the high priest of every Humanity.'<sup>5</sup>

6. *Johannes Trithemius* (1462-1516), abbot of Sponheim, transformed his monastery into a centre of learning and gathered a great library there. He was a student of Hebrew and Greek, and of the natural sciences; but

<sup>1</sup> Vide Pearson, *The Ethic of Free Thought*, p. 173.

<sup>2</sup> Sandys, ii. p. 255.

<sup>3</sup> Nichols, *Epist. Erasm.*, i. p. 17.

<sup>4</sup> Erasmus, *Ep.* 22.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 298.

exalted theology above them all, and urged theologians to study the Scriptures.

7. *Reuchlin* (1455-1522) was trained in law, philosophy, and 'the three languages,' and studied at Schlettstadt, Freiburg, Paris, Basel, Orléans, Poitiers, Florence, and Rome. Greek he learned of native Greeks; Hebrew of John Wessel and Jewish Rabbis. He published a Greek grammar, and a Latin lexicon that passed through many editions. He laid the foundation for Hebrew scholarship among Christians by publishing the first Hebrew grammar and lexicon, combined in the work *De rudimentis hebraicis* (1506).<sup>1</sup> Twelve years later he brought out a treatise *De accentibus et orthographia lingue hebraicæ*. He also studied Rabbinical literature, and wrote on the cabala. There was a stiff battle in Germany between the Humanists and the Obscurantists about Reuchlin and the study of the Hebrew language and the Jewish Talmud. Erasmus wrote to Raphael, the cardinal of St. George :

'I do most earnestly beseech and adjure you for the sake of good letters . . . that that distinguished man, Doctor John Reuchlin, may enjoy your protection and goodwill. . . . He is one to whom all Germany is indebted, having been the first to arouse in that country a love of Greek and Hebrew literature.'<sup>2</sup>

To Reuchlin Erasmus wrote :

'When I read your apology, composed with so much spirit and eloquence, and such an exuberance of learning, I seemed to myself to be listening not to a culprit making his defence, but to a conqueror celebrating his triumph.'<sup>3</sup>

Fisher, bishop of Rochester, says of Reuchlin :

'He appears to me to hold the palm over all living authors, whose works I have read, in the treatment of abstruse questions of Theology and of Philosophy.'<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Vide Briggs, *Study of Holy Scripture*, pp. 140 seq.

<sup>2</sup> Erasmus, *Ep.* 319.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 294.

<sup>4</sup> Vide Nichols, *Epistles of Erasmus*, ii. p. 292.

8. *Mutianus*, Conrad Muth of Erfurt (c. 1471-1526), a schoolmate of Erasmus at Deventer, was the chief of the group of Humanists which produced the *Epistolæ obscurorum virorum*, a series of satires which threw their opponents into confusion and contempt. The first volume was mainly composed by Johann Jäger (*Crotus Rubeanus*), the second by *Ulrich von Hutten* (1488-1523), 'the stormy petrel' of the German Reformation.<sup>1</sup> Cologne was the chief seat of the opponents of Humanism, Erfurt of its friends.

9. *Johann von Staupitz* († 1524), the first dean of the theological faculty at Wittenberg, became vicar-general of the German Augustinians, and the teacher of Luther and his counsellor in the early stages of his reform. He was a man without stain and above reproach, a saint in the estimation of Protestant and Catholic alike, an apostle of love and good works. He ranks with Erasmus and Sir Thomas More among those irenic spirits that sought a reform of the Church from within.<sup>2</sup> Luther was strongly influenced by his practical mysticism and calls him his 'reverend father in Christ,' 'per quem primum cœpit Evangelii lux de tenebris splendescere in cordibus nostris.'<sup>3</sup> His chief mystic works are *Von der Nachfolgung des willigen Sterbens Christi*, *Von der Liebe Gottes*, and *Von dem heiligen rechten christlichen Glauben*.

9. *Humanism in England was represented chiefly by Linaere, Sir Thomas More, and Colet.*

Sandys says that 'Modern English scholarship begins with Linaere and his two friends, William Grocyn and William Latimer.'<sup>4</sup> These introduced the humanistic classic study into the British universities.

<sup>1</sup> Lindsay, *History of the Reformation in Germany*, p. 75.

<sup>2</sup> Vide Briggs, *Church Unity*, p. 420.

<sup>3</sup> Vide Schaff, vol. vi. p. 119, n. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Sandys, ii. p. 228.

1. *Thomas Linacre* (c. 1460-1524) was a nephew and pupil of William Selling, the first English Humanist to study Greek. Linacre studied at Oxford, and became Fellow of All Souls (1484). A year or two later he went to Italy, studied with Humanists in Rome, Florence, and Venice, and graduated in medicine at Padua (1492). Returning to England he gave lectures on Aristotle's *Meteorologica*, which were attended by Sir Thomas More, either at Oxford or London. In 1509 he was appointed physician to King Henry VIII., and nine years later he founded the College of Physicians. In addition to his scientific treatises and translations he wrote *De emendata structura latini sermonis*, which was reprinted on the continent with a letter of recommendation by Melancthon.

2. *John Colet* (c. 1467-1519) studied at Oxford, and then for three years in Italy, where he learned the rudiments of Greek. Returning to Oxford he introduced there the study of Plato, and gave lectures on the New Testament 'like one inspired.'<sup>1</sup> Among his hearers were all the doctors of Oxford.<sup>2</sup> At this time Erasmus visited Oxford, and became his intimate friend. In 1504 Colet was made dean of St. Paul's, London, where he introduced expository preaching, and founded a great school. According to Erasmus, Colet united 'the highest learning with admirable piety,' and 'exerted a great and general influence.' England had not 'another more pious, or one who more truly knew Christ.' When he died, Erasmus exclaimed: 'What a man England has lost, and I—what a friend!'<sup>3</sup> Colet's tract, *A Right Fruitful Admonition concerning the Order of a Good Christian Man's Life*, was first published in 1534, and afterwards incorporated in a book of *Daily Devotions*.

<sup>1</sup> Vide Plummer, *English Church History, 1509-1575*, p. 29.

<sup>2</sup> Vide Erasmus, *Epp.* 108, 290.

<sup>3</sup> Vide Schaff, v., part ii. p. 652.

3. *Thomas More* (1478-1535) studied at Oxford, and then went to London for the study and practice of law. He became the most able and learned jurist of his time; but was also interested in theology, and lectured in London on Augustine's *City of God*. In 1529 More succeeded Wolsey as Lord Chancellor. Five years later he was sent to the Tower, and in 1535 was beheaded. Erasmus writes of yielding to the influence of

'Thomas More, whose eloquence is such that he could persuade even an enemy to do whatever he pleased, while my own affection for the man is so great, that if he bade me dance a hornpipe, I should do at once just as he bade me. . . . I do not think, unless the vehemence of my love leads me astray, that Nature ever formed a mind more present, ready, sharp-sighted, and subtle, or, in a word, more absolutely furnished with every kind of faculty than his. Add to this a power of expression equal to his intellect, a singular cheerfulness of character and an abundance of wit, but only of the candid sort; and you miss nothing that should be found in a perfect advocate.'<sup>1</sup>

More maintained the rights of the crown of England over against papal encroachment, and the rights of the pope as the supreme head of the Church over against the royal ecclesiastical supremacy. He died a martyr to the great cause of the separation of the jurisdictions of Church and State. More's great work is his *Utopia*, in which he embodies his ideas of reform. Among his writings are controversial tracts against Luther and Tyndale.

4. *John Fisher*, bishop of Rochester († 1535), was trained at the university of Cambridge, and served there as master, vice-chancellor, professor of divinity and chancellor. He took part in the establishment of Christ's College and St. John's, and was president of Queens' College for a time. Erasmus calls him 'that great chieftain of literature and piety.'<sup>2</sup> Fisher admired Reuchlin and Erasmus, but wrote against Luther and

<sup>1</sup> Erasmus, *Ep.* 191.

<sup>2</sup> Vide Erasmus, *Ep.* 446.

Ecclampadius. As an opponent of the royal supremacy he shared the fate of More.

The English Humanists, like the Continental, desired a peaceable reform by education, not a revolution. They were in general accord with Erasmus, who wrote of them :

'I have found in England . . . so much learning and culture, and that of no common kind, but recondite, exact and ancient, Latin and Greek, that I now hardly want to go to Italy, except to see it. When I listen to my friend Colet, I can fancy I am listening to Plato himself. Who can fail to admire Grocyn, with all his encyclopædic erudition? Can anything be more acute, more profound, more refined, than the judgment of Linacre? Has nature ever moulded anything gentler, pleasanter or happier, than the mind of Thomas More?'<sup>1</sup>

These men wished a reform through a study of the original Scriptures and the Fathers.

Among the Humanists of England who sought to promote theological education were also :

5. *Cardinal Wolsey* († 1530), founder of Christ Church (College), Oxford; 6. *Warham*, archbishop of Canterbury († 1532), whom Erasmus praised as 'the patron of all the learned';<sup>2</sup> and 7. *Richard Fox*, of Winchester († 1528), founder of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, and of the first Greek lectureship in an English university.<sup>3</sup> Sir Thomas More saw no reason to prefer the universities of Paris and Louvain to those of Oxford and Cambridge.<sup>4</sup> Erasmus wrote in 1516: 'About thirty years ago nothing was taught at Cambridge but Alexander, the *Parva Logicalia*, as they are called, those old "dictates" of Aristotle, and questions from Scotus. In process of time Good Letters were introduced; the study of Mathematics was added, and a new or at least a renovated Aristotle. Then came some acquaintance with Greek, and with many authors, whose very names were unknown to the best scholars of a former time. Now I ask, what has been the result to the University? It has become so flourishing, that it may vie with the first schools of the age, and possesses men, compared with whom those old teachers appear mere shadows of theologians.'<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Vide Sandys*, ii. p. 229.

<sup>2</sup> Erasmus, *Ep.* 242.

<sup>3</sup> *Vide Briggs*, *Theological Symbolics*, pp. 159 seq.

<sup>4</sup> *Vide Nichols*, *Epistles of Erasmus*, ii. p. 224.

<sup>5</sup> Erasmus, *Ep.* 441.

10. *The Humanists gradually succeeded in transforming the greater part of the universities and schools of Europe early in the sixteenth century. The study of the Greek and Latin classics, of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures, and of the Greek and Latin Fathers, was gradually introduced, and the Scholastic Theology was pushed into the background.*

This transformation took place in Italy and Spain, no less than in Germany and England; and was permanent in its results. The Humanist reformation was interrupted, and the Humanists were divided into hostile camps, by the outbreak of the revolutionary Reformation, led by Luther and Zwingli. This was a reformation of religion, which pushed the reformation of scholarship into the background. Its immediate effects were disastrous to scholarship, especially in Northern Europe. Insurrections and civil wars spread rapidly over Europe, and continued to work mischief for more than a century. But there was a permanent gain to theological scholarship in spite of all. The Holy Scriptures were studied in the original languages by all the great scholars of the time, and Biblical texts were published by Protestants, Catholics and Jews.

In Spain the *Complutensian Polyglot* was published by Cardinal Ximenes (1514-1517). In Italy the *Octaplum Psalterium* was issued at Genoa by Bishop Justinianus in 1516, the Aldine text of the Septuagint at Venice in 1518. Erasmus published his Greek Testament at Basel in five editions (1516-1535). From the second edition (1519) Luther made his translation. Stephens published three editions in Paris (1546-1550), and one in Geneva (1551). The Hebrew Bible was printed at Soncino, Lombardy, in 1488, and at Naples in 1491-1493. Another edition was printed at Brescia in 1494, which Luther used in making his version. The same text appeared in Bomberg's Rabbinical Bible (1516-1517), edited by Felix Pratensis. A second Rabbinical Bible was published by Bomberg in 1524-1525, carefully revised after the Massora by Jacob ben Chayim.<sup>1</sup> The Mishna

<sup>1</sup> *Vide Briggs*, *Study of Holy Scripture*, pp. 186 seq., 206 seq.

was published at Naples in 1492, the Babylonian Talmud at Venice by Bomberg (in twelve volumes folio, 1520), the Jerusalem Talmud at Venice by Bornberg (1522-1523). The Christian Fathers were also published in original editions, as well as the heathen classics in Greek and Latin, by the great presses at Venice, Basel, Paris, Geneva and elsewhere.

The whole world, Jew and Christian, Catholic and Protestant, had Hebrew and Christian antiquity opened to them as never before.