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Laurentius Valla (1407—1457): Renaissance Critic and Biblical Theologian

MARVIN W. ANDERSON

We must not condemn the language, grammar, dialectic and other arts of the Gentiles. Did not the apostles write in the Greek language? Rather it is their dogmas, religions and false opinions about virtuous works which make us the laughing stock of heaven.¹

When Laurentius Valla penned those words, he was writing the first scientific treatise on Latin grammar since John Duns Scotus. Leonardo Bruni died in the same year Valla's treatise appeared. The year 1444 marks the return of Renaissance scholars to a philological analysis of classical texts. This method, which Valla soon applied to Biblical study, revolutionized medieval Biblical scholarship in the century before Trent. Valla's purpose was to revitalize Catholic faith. Protestants and Catholics still owe their fresh awareness of Scripture to the labors of Valla.

I. TASK OF THE RENAISSANCE SCHOLAR

A. *Grammatician*

A glance at the self-awareness of their task by Renaissance scholars helps one understand the relation of Renaissance philology to Reformation theology. One cannot read *bonae litterae* as a fascination

¹ *Elegantiarum Latinae linguae libri sex. Prosatori Latini Del Quattrocento*, A Cura Di Eugenio Garin, Riccardo Riccardi, Editore (Milano: La Letteratura Italiana Storia E Testi, n. d.), XIII, 621—22.

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for rhetoric alone.² Nor can one dismiss this phrase of Erasmus as a covering for a wicked heart, as though rhetoric were a vehicle of fascist propaganda and somehow undemocratic. It was not only bad style against which the humanists railed, but inaccuracies of the text as well.

It is not by coincidence that the Renaissance authors speak of *studia humanitatis*, the humanities (sic), emphasize the human relevance of certain problems, and are inclined to praise the dignity and excellence of man. Nevertheless, we should resist this temptation as best we can. If we have understood the meaning of Renaissance humanism in its own historical setting, we can also see why it should involve a certain emphasis on man, and thus be 'humanistic' in the modern sense of the word. However, if we take this emphasis on man as a starting point, we shall never understand the phenomenon of Renaissance humanism as a whole.³

² August Buck points to the moral purpose in the revival of learning expressed by Pope Nicolas V: "de studiis humanitatis quantum ad grammaticum, rhetoricam, historicam, et poeticam spectat ad moralem," cited in August Buck, "Die Studia Humanitatis und ihre Methode," *Bibliothèque D'Humanisme et Renaissance*, XXI (1959), 276.

³ Paul Oskar Kristeller, "Studies on Renaissance Humanism during the Last Twenty Years," *Studies in the Renaissance*, IX (1962), 10. Cf. Roberto Weiss, "Italian Humanism in Western Europe: 1460—1520," *Italian Renaissance Studies*, ed. E. F. Jacob (London: Faber and Faber, 1960), pp. 69—93. An excellent bibliography may be found in the article by Eugenio Garin, "The Fifteenth Century in Italy," in Raymond Klibansky, *Philosophy in*

Renaissance scholars gained a new perspective of God, man, and the world. Man and the world were realities to the medieval peasant. The Burkhartian thesis that the Renaissance rediscovered these is misleading. Valla's return to origins rearranged the map of phenomena.

Philological exigence was not an accidental or formal aspect of Humanism but a constituent element. The need for discovering texts and restoring them to their authentic form by studying and collating the codices was accompanied by the need to discover the authentic meaning of poetry or the philosophic or religious truth they contained. Without philological research there was no Humanism, properly speaking, but merely a general attitude in favour of the defense of Classical culture, which can be found in all epochs and is therefore not characteristic of any particular one.⁴

One learns from a reading of the sources that philosophical defenses of symbolism and allegory were completely undermined by a philological penchant for the real

the Mid-Century (Firenze: La Nuova Italia Editrice, 1959) IV, 95—106. Paul Oskar Kristeller, "Changing Views of the Intellectual History of the Renaissance since Burkhart" in E. Tinslay Helton, *The Renaissance* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1961); "The Moral Thought of Renaissance Humanism," *Chapters in Western Civilization* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961); and "The European Diffusion of Italian Humanism," *Italia*, 1961. Also J. Romein, "Versuch einer neuen Interpretation des Humanismus," *Etudes Suisses d'histoire generale*, 1961, and Lewis W. Spitz, "Reflections on Early and Late Humanism" in *Jacob Burkhart and the Renaissance* (Lawrence: University of Kansas, 1960); *idem*, "Man on This Isthmus," in *Luther for an Ecumenical Age*, ed. Carl S. Meyer (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1967).

⁴ Nicola Abbagnano, "Italian Renaissance Humanism," *Journal of World History*, VII (1963), 276.

and literal. It is not surprising that traditional doctrines were in danger. The extent to which philology undergirded thought patterns of reform has not been adequately described. For Catholic reformers before 1546 much remains to be said. Professor Kristeller states the significance of a fresh look at Valla.

As long as we realize that Christian humanism represents only one strand within the broader picture of Renaissance humanism, we may very well choose to study it further, and there actually is much room for further research on the religious element in Renaissance humanism, and on its impact upon the theology of the period. We need more work on the religious ideas of the humanists, and also on their Biblical, patristic and historical scholarship as it affected the theology of the Reformation period, and finally on the humanist background of the sixteenth-century theologians.⁵

The "audacity of Valla" can be effectively seen only against the scenery of humanistic method and purpose.⁶ Theology was one academic discipline affected by philology; law was another.⁷ As Linton Stevens has shown for legal studies, the

⁵ Paul Oskar Kristeller, "Studies on Renaissance Humanism during the Last Twenty Years," p. 19. A subsequent paper will describe in detail the impact of Verona-Padua-Venice on Italian Catholic reformers.

⁶ J. H. Whitfield, *Petrarch and the Renaissance* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1943), pp. 116 to 143. "The Audacity of Valla," p. 123: "Valla's constant procedure is from the concrete to the abstract. It is one which has been formulated as philosophical questions arising from philological decisions."

⁷ Neal W. Gilbert, "The Influence of Humanism on Methodology in the Various Subjects of the University Curriculum," *Renaissance Concepts of Method* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), pp. 67—115.

practice of philological analysis led to formulation of "a new philosophical conception of the relationship of legal principles to the moral status of the individual in relation to society."⁸ If the purposes were not always moral, the method was singularly and effectively employed in all areas of study. Stevens might well have been describing the new Biblical and patristic study.

The *mos Italicus* ignored historical criticism in its interpretation of separate passages of the *corpus Juris*, which was considered as a code of existing law. The *mos Gallicus* attempted to clear away the incrustations of the glossators and to reinterpret the Roman law in the light of historical institutions with the aid of philological criticism.⁹

Obstacles in the path of returning to classical or Christian antiquity were formidable. Valla's brilliant treatise on the Latin language appeared in 1444.¹⁰ Not only did the lack of "scientific" grammars and lexical aids make it difficult to learn the classical languages, but the expense of acquiring a suitable library also prohibited widespread acquaintance with the new learning. To follow the way in which Arabic could be studied is one example. Though Christian Europe had been in contact with Arabic civilization for centuries, a knowledge of Arabic was difficult to gain at the opening of the 16th century.

⁸ Linton C. Stevens, "The Contribution of French Jurists to the Humanism of the Renaissance," *Studies in the Renaissance*, I (1954), 105. Cf. Stevens, "The Motivation for Hellenistic Studies in the French Renaissance," *Studies in Philology*, XLVII (1950), 113—25.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

¹⁰ *Elegantiarum latinae linguae libri sex.*

In some ways the acquisition of a knowledge of Arabic paralleled the difficulties in acquiring a knowledge of Greek in the early Renaissance. The early scholars of both languages were dependent on learning the language from some one who already knew it; many were self-taught; concerted efforts had to be made to produce dictionaries, vocabularies, and grammars; manuscripts had to be collected at great expense from far places; libraries established, and fonts of type founded.¹¹

It required courage to cultivate the friendship of heretics, infidels, and Jews. In fact the famous altercation of Reuchlin with Pfefferkorn exploded well into the 16th century. Traditional systems of exegesis would not do in any event. Daniel Bomberg in Venice was instrumental in publishing the first complete Hebrew text of the Old Testament with Aramaic Targums. The second edition appeared as late as 1525, becoming the pattern for all later Jewish and Christian editions.

Bomberg's fifteen printings of grammars and dictionaries, for both Hebrew and Talmudic Aramaic, were gladly accepted by Christian and Jewish students everywhere. Even as late as the 1520's a Reuchlin, while teaching at Tübingen, and Melanchthon at Wittenberg, would order Hebrew texts from Italy for the use of their pupils.¹²

The minutiae of philological analysis seemed harmless enough for cabalistic

¹¹ Karl H. Dannenfeldt, "The Renaissance Humanists and the Knowledge of Arabic," *Studies in the Renaissance*, II (1955), 116—17. Cf. Richard Walzer, "Arabic Transmission of Greek Thought to Medieval Europe," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, XXIX (1945), 160—83.

¹² Frank Rosenthal, "The Study of the Hebrew Bible in Sixteenth-Century Italy," *Studies in the Renaissance*, I (1954), 84.

study and Arabic theories of chess. It was quite different to question the Vulgate text of the Pauline epistles, checkmating successors of the poor fishermen of Galilee. What began as an innocuous activity of antiquarians became relevant all too quickly in the critical minds of Valla, Politian, et al. Baron places Burkhardt's *Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* in perspective. It described the *prototype* far more than the *origin* of the modern world.¹³

. . . the importance of the Quattrocento lay in a new type of thinking, in a fresh approach to intellectual problems, and not in the extent of the innovations that were immediately effected in the specific sciences and arts.¹⁴

The result for hermeneutics was in historical perspective with respect to time what optical perspective of Renaissance painting was to space.¹⁵

B. *Salutati*

In 1405 Coluccio Salutati defended such study by reference to patristic precedent. His self-awareness is helpful in establishing the reality of the Renaissance. Three examples of Quattrocento humanism in Italy should be sufficient to represent a radical departure from medieval exegesis. Coluccio Salutati and Angelo Poliziano Ambrogini at the opening and close of that century set off in bold relief the achievements of Laurentius Valla. Kristeller has shown the religious nature of Petrarch's dependence on Augustine. A rejection of

scholasticism was not meant to be a rejection of Christianity. One does disservice to many Renaissance humanists in Italy by prejudging and impugning their motives. For many of them, especially Petrarch, Salutati, and Valla, greater importance was attached to prescholastic theologians, that is, the church fathers and Augustine in particular.¹⁶ A reading of primary sources is still a healthy corrective for theologians and historians who implicitly or explicitly assume a wholesale denial of religious and/or ethical values during the Italian Renaissance.

Finally, the active interest which the humanists dedicated to the classical authors was also extended to the Church Fathers. Among the Greek texts which the humanists translated into Latin and thus made available to the educated reader in Western Europe, the works of the Eastern theologians, that is, Basil, John Chrysostom, Gregory of Nyssa, Cyril, and others, occupy a prominent place. Thus many of these works were translated for the first time, and some of them became very popular.¹⁷

The self-awareness which authenticates the existence of the Quattrocento Renaissance

¹⁶ Paul Oskar Kristeller, "Augustine and the Early Renaissance," *Studies in Renaissance Thought and Letters* (Rome: Edizioni Di Storia E Letteratura, 1956), p. 362.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 364. "Although the revival of letters in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, which has deserved the peculiar title of 'the' Renaissance, was more markedly independent of the Catholic tradition than those earlier revivals of learning which took place during the reigns of Charlemagne and St. Louis, yet the accusation of Paganism which it has received from many historians can hardly be substantiated." Nigel Abercrombie, *St. Augustine and French Classical Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1938), p. 3.

¹³ Hans Baron, "Toward a more positive Evaluation of the Fifteenth Century Renaissance," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, IV (1943), 24.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

¹⁵ Abbagnano, p. 277.

appears in several codices.¹⁸ Certain ideas incorporating this historical self-awareness are foundational. The scheme of interpretation was as significant as the fact, indeed that method which the humanists employed is the means whereby facts of the Quattrocento are to be interpreted. That is factual and historical only which is recognizable within their scheme of interpretation.¹⁹ When Salutati speaks of Biblical study, such statements are to be taken seriously. There is unfolded in his letters a program of the humanities which Augustine outlined as necessary for the interpretation of Scripture.²⁰

This understanding was inflamed by the study of sacred letters. Salutati's intellect could not dissent from the new awareness and possibility of uncovering a genuine Biblical theology.²¹ For him the doctrine

¹⁸ Herbert Weisinger, "Ideas of History During the Renaissance," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, VI (1945), 415.

¹⁹ William von Leyden, "Antiquity and Authority: A Paradox in Renaissance Theory of History," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, XIX, (1958), 477.

²⁰ Francesco Novati, *Epistolario Di Coluccio Salutati* (Rome: Forzani E. C. Tipografi Del Senato, 1905), IV, 131 f.; a defense of Greek and Latin patristic writers, including Augustine. N. b. 140 f., where Salutati requires the Greek fathers especially for the interpretation of Scripture. "Quis imquam Iohannem evangelistam aut Paulum apostolum theologia potuit adquare?" lines 26-27. Cf. Giuseppe Maria Sciacca, "Lino Coluccio Salutati," *Orientamenti Culturali, Letteratura Italiana, I Minori*, ed. Carlo Marzotati (Milano, 1961), 323-42.

²¹ Novati, p. 214, lines 21-22: "Quomodo quidem auferret intellectus meus vel a sacris dissentire litteris, vel in his, que fidelium universitas determinauerit hesitare?" Cf. Revilo P. Oliver, "Plato and Salutati," *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, 71 (1940), 323-42.

of Christ was to be recovered by grammatical analysis. One might then and only then proceed to theological synthesis. Salutati's attack on scholasticism is no mere defense of rhetoric and poetry. There was a purpose in his philological method, a raising of philosophical and theological questions based on philological decisions.²² Salutati found the work of Quintilian necessary for an understanding of rhetoric, and inductive grammar necessary for reading the Greek and Latin classics.²³ Salutati's pattern is the *De Doctrina Christiana* of Augustine.²⁴ This classical program of study contained a Christian purpose.²⁵

Salutati understood the allegorical appeal of Gregory's *Moralia in Iob*.²⁶ The relation of allegory to grammar was significant in the new interpretive framework. Salu-

²² "Non sum animo dubius quin velis atque consentias Christi doctrinam per sacras litteras intraturas a grammatica debere necessitate quodam incipere. Quomodo potest enim Scripture sacre noticiam sumere qui litteras ignorarit? quomodo potest scire litteras qui grammaticam omnino non novit? nonne vides quo perduxit ignoratio grammaticae religiosos et omnes qui defectu talis habitus laborarunt? non enim intellegunt que legunt, nec legenda possunt aliis preparare. potest sine litteris fidei sinceritas percipi, fateor, sed non divina Scriptura, non doctorum expositiones atque traditiones intelligi, quas vix capere valeant litterati, ed nedum simpliciter docti grammaticam, sed etiam qui dialecticis et rethoricis insudarunt." *Ibid.*, p. 215, lines 20 to 26, line 16.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 221-22.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 224.

²⁵ "Que quidem an observet divina pagina videamus? divina scriptura nonne sermo et locutio Dei est?" *Ibid.*, p. 235, lines 16-17.

²⁶ Gregory had said, "Multiplicatis sensibus ut non solum verba historiae per allego-riarum sensus excuteret, sed allego-riarum sensus protinus in exercitium moralitatis inclinaret." Cited from *ibid.*, p. 236, n. 1.

tati dismissed allegory.²⁷ His interpretation was not novel, but that practiced by the patristic fathers. Salutati introduced a program far-reaching in its consequences a century later. Gregory's occult multiplication of senses Salutati abhors. "Dimittam hoc igitur et de rebus atque sententiis ad verba simplicia transeamus."²⁸ What better self-awareness could one desire than this letter of Salutati, which rejects allegorical Biblical exegesis only to posit a historical-grammatical study?²⁹ The mystery of Scripture for Salutati was contained in and through the text, not beneath it. Spiritual understanding did not hide in a deeper level to be mined by allegory and symbolism, but rather lay on the surface. For Salutati, Scripture was pellucid. *Simplex Scripturae* meant a unity of the literal text with its spiritual understanding or moral application. Multiplication of senses not only obscured the text but also blocked one's true spiritual insight. Kristeller disagrees with the interpretation of Eugenio Garin. The recovery of such a framework was truly Christian.

²⁷ "Quid misteriosius, quidque magis poeticum quam liber et historia Iob, cuius occulta cum alii plures tum sanctissimus antistes Gregorius super omnes, multiplicatis sensibus, pertractavit?" Ibid., p. 236, lines 5-8. (Cf. Sciacca, p. 335-36, and comments on *De sensibus allegoricis fabularum Herculis*. . . . Here, as is well known, Salutati employed allegory. Cf. Berthold L. Ullman, *The Humanism of Coluccio Salutati* (Padova, Editrice Antenore, 1943), p. 88. N. b. 90-91. It seems that Salutati would accept allegory for the classics in an attempt to reconcile them to Christian literature. It does not seem that he was prepared, however, to allegorize Scripture, since it was not mythological as were the Homeric Epics.

²⁸ Novati, IV, 236.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 238, lines 19-25.

Others may reject the methods of scholastic theology, but try to combine humanistic learning with a simple faith based on the reading of Scripture and the church fathers. This was the position of some leading humanists such as Petrarch, Salutati, Erasmus, and More, and we might very well call them Christian humanists with Bush, or Christian scholars with Harbison.³⁰

One may speak then of a method in Biblical study common to humanism as a whole. There is not one humanistic method for Germany and the Northern Renaissance and another for Italy. The philological and aesthetical methods are really one.³¹ Melanchthon realized that a remedy for lack of order in the various studies lay "in a greater awareness of the end of purpose of each art."³²

The historical perspective appears in Leonardo Bruni's *Laudatio Florentinae urbis*. A swing from style in historical writing to veracity is noticeable.³³ Bruni's history marks the concern of the early Quattrocento for veracity. Style was a means to an end, and this led to Barocci's dilemma. Was he to give greater praise to Bruni's

³⁰ Kristeller, "Studies on Renaissance Humanism During the Last Twenty Years," p. 19.

³¹ Remigio Sabbadini, *Il Metodo Degli Umanisti*, (Firenze: Felice Le Monnier, 1920), 1. Ullman, *op. cit.*, pp. 95-114, "Coluccio As a Scholar."

³² Gilbert, pp. 72-73.

³³ Beatrice R. Reynolds, "Latin Historiography: A Survey 1400-1600," *Studies in the Renaissance*, II (1955), 8-9. Bruni died in 1444, the year of Valla's treatise on Latin Style. For Joan Mararit i Pau (1421-84), cardinal-bishop of Gerona, cf. Robert B. Tate, "Italian Humanism and Spanish Historiography of the Fifteenth Century," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, XXXIV (1951-52), 137-65.

elegant style or to his accuracy?³⁴ Bruni writes of the humanist method in *De Studiis et Litteris*.

Nam et litterae sine rerum scientia steriles sunt et inanes, et scientia rerum quamvis ingens, si splendore careat litterarum, ab-dita quaedam obscuraque videtur.³⁵

It was the same Bruni who sought to translate Greek theologians into Latin.³⁶ Until printing made possible the widespread circulation of critical texts and grammars, and until lexica and vocabularies were available in scientific editions, such translations were very necessary and useful. Gilbert's analysis of both method and purpose is lucid.

Yet there is a sense in which the histories are correct in regarding most Renaissance philosophers as slaves of the word, and that, curiously enough, to a greater degree than their medieval predecessors. For the Renaissance "philosopher" was a man who read his authorities in the original language and who permitted no deviations of doctrine that were not sanctioned by the original language of the author.³⁷

³⁴ B. L. Ullman, "Leonardo Bruni and Humanist Historiography," *Studies in the Italian Renaissance*, (Rome: Edizioni Di Storia E Letteratura, 1955), pp. 326—27, reprinted from *Medievalia et Humanistica*, IV (1946), 59 ff.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 327, cited from Hans Baron, *Leonardo Bruni Aretini humanistisch-philosophische Schriften* (Leipzig, 1928), unavailable to me. Citation found in Eugenio Garin, *Il pensiero pedagogico dello Umanesimo* (Firenze: Giuntine-Sansoni, 1958), p. 166; cf. pp. 53—70: "Coluccio Salutati E Lo Studio Dei Classici."

³⁶ "Si qua praeterea vel de Gregorio Nazanzeno vel de Iohanne Chrysostomo vel de magno Basilo, Graecis doctoribus, translata sunt, ea legas censeo; modo, qui traduxit, in Latinum converterit illa, non autem perverterit." Garin, p. 150.

³⁷ Gilbert, p. 36. Cf. p. 52, n. 23, for discussion of "humanist" Aristotelians in this same

C. Politian

A clear definition of the scope of humanistic research may be found in the work of Angelo Poliziano Ambrogini (1454—94).³⁸ Politian defined the humanities in the sense of παιδεία, that is to say, free from any element of φιλανθρωπία. Such a statement found in the writings of the "complete grammarian" expresses what Quattrocento humanists felt to be the purpose of scholarship. Expressing his views to Lucius Phosphorus, Politian defines *humanitas* as the simplicity contained in words and the work of interpretation of the text, classical or Christian.³⁹ One fault

sense. One agrees in the face of impressive evidence that Kristeller's dictum is authenticated by recent study. "I should like to suggest that the Italian humanists on the whole were neither good nor bad philosophers, but no philosophers at all." Kristeller, "Humanism and Scholasticism in the Italian Renaissance," *Studies in Renaissance Thought and Letters*, p. 561.

³⁸ Augustine Renaudet, *Érasme et L'Italie, Travaux D'Humanisme et Renaissance* (Geneva: Librairie E. Droz, 1954), XV, 244. "L'humanisme existait, en Occident, bien avant Pétrarque; mais les premiers humanistes n'étaient pas, ou n'étaient guère, des philologues; c'est l'union et la collaboration intime de l'humanisme et de la philologie qui, depuis la fin du XIV^e siècle, de Coluccio Salutati au Politien a déterminé l'apparition définitive de la renaissance italienne." Cf. Eugenio Garin, "Filologia e poesia in Agnolo Poliziano," *La Rassegna della Letteratura Italiana*, serie VII, 1954, 349—66; Bruno Maier, "Agnolo Poliziano," *Orientamenti Culturali, Letteratura Italiana, I Maggiori*, ed. Carlo Marzorati (Milano, 1956), pp. 245—305.

³⁹ Angelo Poliziano Ambrogini, *Operum Tomus Primus*, Apud Seb. Gryphium (Lugduni, 1539), p. 76. 'Angelus Politianus Lucio Phosphero pontifici Signino S. D.' Reference not listed by Garin nor any other secondary source known to me. Cf. Maier, p. 267, for this practical purpose of philology as παιδεία. Karl Hartfelder, *Philipp Melanchthon als Praeceptor Germaniae, Monumenta Germaniae Paedagogica* (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1889),

of medieval grammarians was to study grammar independently of the text. Politian moved toward "a religion of the word." He would distinguish between objective philology — the *grammaticus* and allegorical interpretation, or *philosophus*.⁴⁰

The ethical implications of this search for truth and veracity were recognized by Politian. His *Centuria miscellaneorum* was the first true model of the scholarly note or article. In this he was enforcing an ethical code of absolute personal integrity in scholarship.⁴¹ One would need to prove plagiarism for the humanists to accuse them correctly of lacking ethical insights. While some scholars of the Renaissance incorporated extracts from printed works without documentation, they did so not to conceal authorship so much as to reproduce accurate accounts. Such research was an attempt to avoid cases of equivalence between the scholar's views and those of his subject. At least Politian posited the nature of grammatical study in this way.⁴²

Politian's historicism is further revealed by the fact that he does not seek in his auctores the confirmation of his own be-

VII, 278. Cf. *infra*, Chapter V; Revilo P. Oliver, "Politian's Translation of the Enchiridion," *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, LXXXIX (1958), 200.

⁴⁰ Aldo Scaglioni, "The Humanist as Scholar and Politian's Conception of the Grammaticus," *Studies in the Renaissance*, VIII (1961), 67. Cp. the definition of the grammarian's task by Politian in his *Lamia* (1492), cited in Oliver, p. 204: "Grammaticorum enim sunt hae partes, ut omne scriptorum genus, poetas, historicos, oratores, philosophos, medicos, iureconsultas, excuriant atque enarrent." Cf. Garin, p. 355, n. 17, for citation from the *Lamia* on the task involved in purifying Aristotle.

⁴¹ Oliver, p. 206. Garin, pp. 353—54, refers to his attempts at constructing a *respublica litterarum*.

⁴² Scaglioni, *ad loc.*

liefs and tastes on those of his time. His painstaking efforts in establishing the true word of the auctor and interpreting its precise meaning are justified by the very assumption that such words and meanings are different from ours, and that the temptation to establish cases of equivalence of identification is natural, but to be avoided.⁴³

Politian read the Bible quite accurately in Hebrew.⁴⁴ Humanist philology may be represented as antiquarian logomachy.⁴⁵ Yet rightly understood, such effort was necessary to avoid cases of equivalence which were all too easily accomplished with the fourfold tool of medieval exegesis. The purpose was not philology, *sui generis*, but to lead one as quickly as possible to the text, be it classical or Christian, Plato or Paul.⁴⁶ One should keep in mind the bril-

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 51; see Garin, p. 361. Cf. Ida Maier, "Un Inédit De Politien: La Classification Des 'Arts'," *Bibliothèque D'Humanisme Et Renaissance*, XXII (1960), 338—55.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 55, n. 13.

⁴⁵ Robert A. Browning, *Grammarian's Funeral, Shortly After the Revival of Learning in Europe*:

"So, with the throttling hands of death at strife,
Ground he at grammar;
Still, thro' the rattle, parts of speech were rife:
While he could stammer
He settled *Hoti's* business — let it be! —
Properly based *Oun* —
Gave us the doctrine of the enclitic *De*,
Dead from the waist down."

⁴⁶ Scaglioni, pp. 67—68: "In this sense Politian appears to be the greatest exponent of mature humanism in its technical manifestations, the 'absolute philologist.' In fact the literary scholar, the philologist or *grammaticus*, is the true hero of Italian *Quattrocento* humanism, even more than the free creator, the poet." For a "minor" humanist and colleague of Politian at Florence, see Charles Trinkaus, "A Humanist's Image of Humanism: the Inaugural Orations of Bartolomeo della Fonte," *Studies in the Renaissance*, VII (1960), 90—147.

liant insight of Scaglioni, important for its explanation of Luther's, Melanchthon's, Calvin's, Beza's, and Zwingli's unwillingness to discard the humanistic "philosophy of philology."⁴⁷

Formal, normative study of grammatical structures abstractly considered was made impossible by the very absence of manuals before Valla codified Latin forms in a rigorous, though far from "normative," manner, in his *Elegantiae* (1444—no scholastic textbook to be sure). Even Valla felt no tenderness toward "rules." Guarina's *Regulae* and Gaza's Greek grammar were, quite typically, an abridgement and radical simplification of the grammar prevailing in the middle ages . . . in order to reduce that part of the student's work to a minimum, and to introduce him as soon as possible to the living heart of instruction: the familiarization with the auctors and their authentic texts. A lesson in grammar resulted in the critical reading, explication de texte, of any good author available.⁴⁸

One suspects that the building of inductive grammars was made possible by a constant reading of the text. Valla applied this method to critical study of the New Testament. With his notes on the Greek text of the New Testament one may speak of humanist philology supporting a revival of New Testament criticism. No longer were philological questions to arise from philo-

⁴⁷ J. Bohatec, "Calvin Et L'Humanisme," *Revue Historique*, 183 (1938), 207—41 and 185 (1939), 71—104. For Beza, Paul F. Geisendorf, *Theodore De Béze, Labor Et Fides* (Genève, 1949), and Charles Borgeaud, *Histoire de l'Université de Genève*, Vol. I, *L'Académie de Calvin* (Genève, 1900). Also Josef Bohatec, *Budé und Calvin* (Graz, Wien: Verlag Hermann Böhlhaus Nachf., Ges. M. B. H./, 1950).

⁴⁸ Scaglioni, p. 52.

sophical decisions alone. Melanchthon's comments on Biblical exegesis are similar in intent to Valla's hermeneutical revolution.⁴⁹ The best faith is a simple explanation, devoid of ingenuity and curiosity.⁵⁰

It is necessary at this point to caution oneself about Valla. In the same way that Baron strove for a positive evaluation of the 15th century, one can appreciate the vital service performed by the humanistic method for Biblical study. Valla did not destroy the tension between linguistic and theological interpretation of Scripture. When one asserts that Valla freed Biblical study by a hermeneutical revolution, one must also admit the religious purpose that motivated his method. Jerome Aleander was a fine humanistic scholar, but somehow never used his gifts positively to reform the church.⁵¹ Where others sought to prune foliage, Valla attacked the root. His contribution to Catholic reform was radical. Valla had nothing to do with a criticism that divorced theological purpose from linguistic investigation. His exegesis was philologically oriented, a religion of the Word. God was revealed in the New Testament all the same, not to be discovered at the end of a syllogism. A careful

⁴⁹ Giuseppe Saitta, *Il Pensiero italiano Nell'Umanesimo e nel Rinascimento*, Vol. I, *L'Umanesimo* (Bologna: Cesare Zuffi, 1949), p. 212. "Le annotazioni di lui alla *Volgata*, attribuita a S. Girolamo, costituiscono una vera rivoluzione nel campo della ermeneutica sacra."

⁵⁰ *Corpus Reformatorum*, XV, col. 499.

⁵¹ F. Gaeta, *Un nunzio pontificio a Venezia nel 500. Girolamo Aleandro*, (Venice-Rome: Istituto per la collaborazione culturale: 1960), p. 1. Cf. Luciano Barozzi, "Lorenzo Valla," printed with Remigio Sabbadini, *Studi sul Panormita e sul Valla*, R. Istituto di studi superiori . . . in Firenze Sezione di filosofia e filologia Pubblicazioni, No. 25 (Firenze, 1891).

reading of Valla's treatise on free will will soon discover why both Luther and Calvin were enthusiastic in their endorsement of Valla. His grammatical study was a necessary foundation for the new philosophical and scientific study.⁵² Valla's attempt to cleanse the church in the pure stream of the Greek New Testament followed the scholar-bishops of the fourth and fifth centuries who revived the church through Biblical study.

II. VALLA

A. *Grammatician*

Laurentius Valla was born in 1407. Son of a Piacenza lawyer, he served as secretary to King Alphonso of Naples. Later he passed into papal service under Nicholas V. Valla died in 1457, the object of invective then as now.⁵³ Manchini vindicates Valla as "an extremely acute critic, a courageous preacher of truth, a profound thinker, the object of savage attacks, an untiring worker, a highly moral writer, and one of the most notable and brilliant spirits of the quattrocento."⁵⁴ Valla learned Greek

at an early age, becoming professor at Pavia soon after 1430. While in service of Alphonso, Valla produced a brilliant treatise on the Latin language. His *De Elegentia* was the first such manual by a Western scholar since Duns Scotus.⁵⁵ These principles he applied to two documents: the Donation of Constantine, which was shown to be a spurious gift, and the notes on the Greek text of the New Testament.⁵⁶ One must not assume that Valla intended to show the New Testament to be spurious. Rather, he showed that the Latin translations of the New Testament hindered its clarity when compared to the Greek text.

Present conditions are such that every true friend of literature can scarcely restrain his tears. The Latin language is now in no better plight than the city of Rome

pp. 32—39. Saitta, Capitolo Quarto, "I Filologi," notes the positive contribution of Valla; see Vittorio Rossi, *Il Quattrocento* (Milano, Storia Letteraria D'Italia, 1949), Capitolo II, "Il Pensiero Critico," pp. 75—120. *N. b.* p. 85: "La cause della verita, della giustizia e di Dio il Valla intese difendere anche nell' opuscolo sulla donazione di Constantio."

⁵⁵ Louis Kukenheim, *Contributions A L'Histoire De La Grammaire Grecque, Latine Et Hébraïque A L'Epoque De La Renaissance* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1951), p. 136.

⁵⁶ Renaudet comments on the *De Falso Credita et Ementita Constantini Donazione Declamatio* of 1439. It was done at the suggestion of Alphonso to vindicate Dante's judgment against papal political power in his *De Monarchia*, Book III. Augustin Renaudet, *Humanisme et Renaissance*, *Travaux D'Humanisme Et Renaissance*, XXX (Genève, Librairie E. Droz, 1958), 101—102: "Valla's later application of his method to the Vulgate of St. Jerome, *Ad Novum Testamentum Adnotationes* (1444) constituted a revolution in Biblical hermeneutics." P. Albert Duhamel, "The Oxford Lectures of John Colet," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, XIV (1953), 503. Duhamel's 1444 should be corrected to 1449.

⁵² Saitta, p. 190.

⁵³ Giorgio Radetti, "La Religione Di Lorenzo Valla," *Medioevo E Rinascimento, Studi in Onore Di Bruno Nardi*, Pubblicazione Dell' istituto Di Filosofia Dell' Universita Di Roma, II (Firenze: G. C. Sansoni, 1956), 597—620. Radetti poses the inevitable question concerning Valla: What motivated his writings? Were these critiques of tradition, medieval legend, and papal political power, orthodox or heterodox, sincere or no? Cf. p. 597. The best biography is still by Girolamo Manchini, *Vita Di Lorenzo Valla* (Firenze, 1891). No complete study exists in English.

⁵⁴ Girolamo Manchini, *Vita Di Lorenzo Valla*, (Firenze: G. C. Sansoni, Editore, 1891), p. 1. Cf. Harold J. Grimm, "Lorenzo Valla's Christianity," *Church History*, XVIII (1949), 75—88. Renaudet links Valla to Erasmus via Colet; see Augustin Renaudet, *Erasme Et L'Italie*, Chapitre IV, "De John Colet A. Laurent Valla,"

after its capture by the Goths. For centuries the philosophers, jurists, and orators have been using a language which does not show any longer a trace of pure Latin and with which they can barely make themselves understood.⁵⁷

The "Babylonian Captivity" of the church was not to be compared with the "Barbarian Captivity" of its Sacred Scriptures. The year 1444 is a significant date in the history of Biblical scholarship. More ominous than the attack on political preoccupations of the papacy was this positive development of textual criticism, so necessary to recover the precise meaning of the Holy Scriptures.⁵⁸ In his *Apologia ad Eugenius IV*, Valla appealed to the pope to permit his linguistic skill to be used for reform. Since his notes were not published until 1505, one can date the hermeneutical revolution in that year, identifying it with Erasmus. How then does political servitude to Alphonso of Naples match Valla's purpose as stated in available documents?⁵⁹ It can be judged to be political only by impugning the motives of Valla. Since his

⁵⁷ *De Elegantia*, cited in Albert Hyma, *The Youth of Erasmus* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1930), p. 43.

⁵⁸ Renaudet, *Erasme Et L'Italie*, 39: ". . . il confrontait la version latine recue par l'Eglise avec l'original grec; il enseignait aux exégètes modernes l'art de retablir les passages mutilés, et de saisir, à l'aide de la philologie et de l'histoire, le sens exact des Écritures saintes."

⁵⁹ *Laurentii Valle Pro se et Contra Calumniatores, ad Eugenium iiii Pont. Max. Apologia in Laurentii Vallae Opera*, (Basileae: Apud Henricum Petrum, Mense Martio, Anne MCXL). N. b. p. 798: "Cur vero verba Dei contempsumus? qui ad Cain inquit: nonne si benefeceris, accipies: si autem male, peccatum statim in foribus aderit? Et ad Abraham: Noli timere Abraham, ego protector tuus, et merces tua magna nimis."

motives were consistent with humanism conceived as παιδεία, a rejection of the entire humanistic defense of *studia humanitatis* is necessary to invalidate Valla's contribution to New Testament study. His work undergirds the Evangelical Catholic Reformation.

This work, undertaken for the purpose of defending his humanism and not for political purposes, marked the beginning of that diligent reediting of the Scriptures which played an important part in the development of the Protestant and Catholic Reformation.⁶⁰

Valla's dedicatory letter in his *De Elegantia* cogently states his purpose. It and subsequent quotations will be cited as they appear in his printed works.

Taceo qua pronuntiandi maiestate & gratia, quanta memoria, quanta rerum copia, quanta doctrinarum omnium peritia eluceat: vel humanarum, Vt historicae, Vt oratoriae, Vt grammaticae, Vt philosophicae, Vt poeticae, etiam metricae: vel divinarum, vt theologiae, vt omnis iuris, vt eius quam Graeci μεταφυσικὴν vocant. . . . Nec ego minus veneror eius virtutes apud me, quàm datas à Deo Apostolicas claves, quum praesertim scientia sacrarum literarum clavis vocetur ab eodem Deo tributa: quae aperit et nemo claudit, claudit, et nemo aperit. Itaque vtraque manu claves gestat, sapientiae altera, altera potestatis.⁶¹

Two other works of Valla merit comment. His *De Voluptate* is sometimes represented

⁶⁰ Grimm, pp. 87—88. Notice Grimm's mention of the *Apology* with no citation from it.

⁶¹ *Laurentii Vallae de Latinae linguae elegantia*, op. cit., 4, to John Tortellius Aretinus.

(ED. NOTE. This text conforms with the text in Garin, *Laurentius Valla, Opera omnia* [Turin, 1962], pp. 1 f.)

as a vigorous plea for a Stoic revival. The irony of the position represented by Antonio Beccadelli is obvious to one who reads extensively in Valla's *Opera*. Valla is not to be identified with the Stoicism of Aretino, nor the Epicurianism of Beccadelli, but rather with the critical Christianity of Niccolo Niccoli.⁶² Subsequent philological works of Valla make such identification of his own views with Niccoli probable. A comparison of this dialog with the *Donation* and *Annotations* is instructive. The acrimony in his defense against Poggio in 1452 does not represent the content of Valla's reform. The significance of his *Disputationes dialecticae* was enormous.⁶³ There Valla defines "virtus" as "arete," the peace of God.⁶⁴ One should

⁶² Franco Gaeta, *Lorenzo Valla: Filologia E Storia Nell' Umanesimo Italiano* (Napoli: Nella Sed Dell' Istituto Italiano Per Gli Studi Storici in Napoli, 1955) p. 19. Cf. Hyma, p. 159, who wants to believe Poggio's maledictory statements about Valla so as to invalidate Valla's role in the Christian renaissance and thereby discredit Erasmus. "As for Valla's private life, this cannot have been known to his defender in the Netherlands." But see F. Montanari, "Lorenzo Valla," *Studium*, LVIII (1961) for a recent study of *De Voluptate*, and Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Eight Philosophers of the Italian Renaissance* (Stanford, 1964), who confirms this on p. 31.

⁶³ Printed by Badia at Paris in 1509 and influential for Peter Ramus, the logician so important for Puritan theological method.

⁶⁴ *Disputationes dialecticae* I, p. 10, cited in Gaeta, p. 88, n. 21. Cf. Rocco Montano, "Lorenzo Valla," *Orientamenti Culturali, Letteratura Italiana, I Minoir* (Milano: Carlo Marzorati, Editore, 1961), p. 571. "La polemica del Valla si pose tuttavia su un piano piú elevato e rappresento la rivendicazione dell' etica cristiana contro tendenze morali immanentistiche e stoiche che già nel medioevo si erano affacciate nel cristianesimo e ritornavano piú vive e pericolose col nuovo entusiasmo per il mondo classico e la virtù antica."

also read Valla's dialog on free will.⁶⁵ It is usually forgotten that Valla forbade the use of philosophy and reason as handmaidens of theology.⁶⁶ Both Luther and Calvin praised Valla for his unwillingness to reconcile human freedom to divine providence by rational means.⁶⁷ Valla stood on faith.

And if we entrust our life to friends, should we dare not intrust it to Christ who for our salvation took on both the life of the flesh and the death of the cross? We don't know the cause of this matter; of what consequence is it? We stand by faith, not by the probability of reason.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Maria Anfossi, *Opuscoli Filosofici Testi E Documenti Inediti O Rari*, Vol. VI, *Laurentii Vallae De Libero Arbitrio* (Firenze: Leo S. Olschki, 1934). Translation may be found in Ernst Cassirer, Paul Oskar Kristeller and John Herman Randall, Jr., *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), art. cit.

⁶⁶ Charles Trinkaus, "The Problem of Free Will in the Renaissance and the Reformation," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, X (1949), 59.

⁶⁷ Luther, W. A. IV, 183 (Scholae to Psalmus ciii [civ]). In April—May of 1532 Luther says of Valla: "Laurentius Valla ist der best Walh, den ich mein lebtag gesehn oder erfaren hab. De libero arbitrio bene disputat. Quaesivit simplicitatem in pietate et in literis simul. Erasmus eam tantum in literis quaerit, pietatem ridet." *Tischreden* I, 109, No. 259. Cf. Calvin, *Institutes*, III, 23, 6 *in fin.*

"When Calvin writes, quoting from Laurent Valla, 'But since (God) sees things to come for no other reason than that he has determined that they should come, it is folly to dispute and debate what his prescience is doing, when it is apparent that everything occurs by his ordinance and disposition,' he is not denying that distinction, but on the contrary maintaining the difference of nature between foreknowledge and predestination." Francois Wendel, *Calvin, the Origins and Development of His Religious Thought* (London: Collins, 1963), 272, n. 122.

⁶⁸ Trinkaus, pp. 59—60. Latin text in Anfossi, p. 50.

It is not surprising to read that Valla attacked Thomas Aquinas. His *Encomium Sancti Thomae Aquinatis* does not identify Valla with pagan philosophers but rather with patristic Biblical scholarship.⁶⁹ An open attack on scholasticism also occurs in his 1449 *Annotations*. He preferred Paul and the early Fathers to philosophical theology. Addressing the clergy of Santa Maria Sopra Minerva in Rome on March 7, 1457, Valla impugned Aquinas. Thomas signifies twin. There is in Thomism, Valla reminded his audience, a filial relationship of theology and philosophy. Valla left Rome in no doubt which was legitimate and which was not.⁷⁰ In *De Libero Arbitrio* Valla discarded the protection of philosophy.

For it seems to me that they have a poor opinion of our religion if they think it needs the protection of philosophy. The followers of the Apostles, truly columns in the temple of God, whose works have now been extant many centuries, used this protection least of all.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Cassirer et al, p. 148: "On the positive side Valla identified himself with Latin patristic thought. In this respect it might very plausibly be claimed that he belongs rather with the Christian Humanists or with the Pre-Reformers than with the nominally orthodox Catholic humanists who dallied with pagan philosophy." Introduction and translation by C. Trinkaus.

⁷⁰ Giorgio Radetti, *Classici Della Filosofia VI, Lorenzo Valla Scritti Filosofici E Religiosi* (Firenze: Sansoni, 1953), p. 469.

⁷¹ Cassirer et al, p. 155; see Anfossi p. 49, lines 783-87, and p. 50, lines 793-94: "Et si sapientibus viris etiam sine ratione propter auctoritatem fidem habemus, Christo, qui est Dei Virtus et Dei Sapientia non habebimus? Qui ait se omnes salvos velle et mortem nolle peccatoris, sed magis ut convertatur et vivat . . . fide stamus non probabilitate rationum." It is little wonder Bellermino accused Valla of being Luther's *alter ego*. Cf. *De Poenitentia*, I, 7: "Laurentius Valla . . . praecursor quidam lutheranae factionis videtur fuisse." Cited by Gaeta, p. 10, n. 3.

As one turns to Valla's *Elegantia* he finds a new spirit vivifying the liberal arts. Its initial paragraph recites Jerome's well-known struggle with his conscience. Was Cicero compatible with Christ? In Tertullian's phrase, "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?"⁷² Valla's answer was lucid and compelling. In theology the Greek writers preserve what the Latins have mutilated.⁷³ Missing from Valla's 1540 *Opera* is his treatise *De Professione religiosorum*, discussed in 1869 by J. Vallen, from *Urb. lat.* 595 in the Vatican library.⁷⁴ Contained in the handwritten copy is a treatise called *Oratio in principio Studii*.⁷⁵ The former is important for its reforming program,

⁷² Garin, *Prosatori Latini Del Quattrocenti*, p. 612.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 620. Cf. *Elegantia* V, cap. 30, for his definition of faith. "Quae [persuasio] (quantum ego quidem sentio) id significare videtur quod Christiani dicunt fidem. Et si originem graecam inquiramus, nescio commodius dicamus persuasio quam fides, praesertim re ipsa pro nobis faciente. Fides autem proprie latine dicitur probatio, ut facio fidem per instrumenta, per argumenta, per testes. Religio autem Christiana non probatione nititur, sed persuasione quae praestantior est quam probatio. Nam saepe probationibus non adducimur: ut malus servus, malus filius, mala filia, mala uxor, optimo consilio quod confutare non potest, non tamen acquiescit. Qui persuasus est, plane acquiescit, nec ulteriorem probationem desiderat. Non enim solum sibi probatum putat, sed sese comotum ad ea exequenda intellegit. Sed quia fides etiam pro (ut sic dicam) credulitate accipitur, quale est habeo tibi fidem, recte etiam nostra religio nominata est fides, sicut a Graecis nostris."

⁷⁴ M. J. Vahlen, "Laurentii Vallae Opuscula Tria" *Sitzungsberichte der philosophisch-historischen Classe der kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Wien*, Band LXI—LXII (1869), 9—15. A partial extract may be found in Garin, pp. 567—93. Italian translation in Radetti, pp. 379—427.

⁷⁵ Vahlen, p. 19. Treatise will be published in the forthcoming edition of Valla's *Opera*.

which clarifies Valla's position vis-a-vis the papacy. In the excerpt made available by Garin there is a statement about the simplicity of belief. The prophetic voice often comes from those not in holy orders. Their faith is nonetheless valid. "It would not seem to be that John the Baptist without the Episcopate, sacraments or religious orders (*sine professione*) was inferior to a bishop, priest or monk."⁷⁶ Manchini's assessment stands the test of the sources. Valla was important for his work, which infused a new purpose into the study of the arts, secular and sacred. His recent biographer can point to Valla's mature insights.

It is an arresting suggestion that the work of Lorenzo Valla represents a major contribution to Italian thought and a renewal of its culture during the period of the humanistic renaissance, especially as it opened a new horizon to the limited vision of the fifteenth century.⁷⁷

Laurentius Valla's treatise on the Latin language is a major departure from medieval secular scholarship. His notes on the Greek text of the New Testament, *sans doute*, created a new climate of opinion among theologians. Bellarmine was correct in his assessment of Valla. What is not always remembered is Valla's impact on Catholic reform. Richard Simon realized the significance of Valla's new hermeneutic for Biblical study.⁷⁸ His examples from Valla's *Notes* are as complete as any mod-

ern study, including those of Manchini and Gaeta.⁷⁹ There is no complete study of these important notes available.⁸⁰ They will repay careful analysis. After working through the logical distinctions of Aquinas' Pauline commentaries, one is struck by the clarity of Valla.⁸¹ Valla had bitter comments on Aquinas as a commentator.

Was Paul better understood by Thomas than by Basil, Gregory of Nazianzus, Chrysostom? (Why do I mention Greek writers?) or by Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine? May I die if this is not a lie. For why did Paul not remind him of all his mistakes, especially of his ignorance in Greek?⁸²

Nicolas, Cardinal Cusa, and the Greek Cardinal Bessarion endorsed Valla's comments.⁸³ Valla compared the *Vulgata* with citations from Scripture of Jerome, Cyprian, Clement of Alexandria, Ambrose, and

⁷⁹ Ibid., pp. 484—87. Gaeta gives examples only from Mark 4:4, Matt. 11:23 and 20:15. Yet he recognized them as the foundation of modern Biblical study. Op. cit., p. 100.

⁸⁰ Cf. references in G. Zippel, "Lorenzo Valla e le origini della storiografia umanistica," *Rinascimento*, VII (1956), 93—134. Also see S. Garofalo, "Gli umaniste italiani de secolo XV e la Bibbia," *Biblica*, XXVII (1946), 338—75. I am not convinced that Valla was antitrinitarian. Anna Morisi, "La filologia neotestamentaria di Lorenzo Valla," *Nuova rivista storica*, XLVIII, 35—49, was not available to me.

⁸¹ Cf. W. Schwarz, *Principles and Problems of Biblical Translation* (Cambridge: University Press, 1955), p. 133 et passim. Schwarz comments only on Valla's attitude toward learning, ignoring examples of linguistic insight. His study is misleading and inaccurate in several points in its haste to vindicate Luther.

⁸² Ibid., p. 134. Comment on 1 Cor. 9:13. Cf. J. Vahlen, "Lorenzo Valla über Thomas von Aquino," *Vierteljahrsschrift für Kultur und Literatur der Renaissance* (Berlin, 1886).

⁸³ Manchini, p. 238.

⁷⁶ Garin, op. cit., p. 590.

⁷⁷ Gaeta, pp. 7—8.

⁷⁸ Richard Simon, *Histoire Critique des principaux Commentateurs Du Nouveaue Testament* (Rotterdam: Reiner Leers, 1693) pp. 537—47, where Cajetan and Catharinus are contrasted. Part of Valla's notes on the gospels were included in *Critici Sacri*.

Augustine.⁸⁴ On April 8, 1546, the Council of Trent placed this work on the Index, indicating its own motives in the substitution of *et . . . et* for *partim . . . partim*.⁸⁵ No higher compliment could be paid the father of modern Biblical criticism.

B. New Testament Notes

Valla's mention of Chrysostom is interesting, indeed several such references occur in his notes to the Gospels.⁸⁶ Though meant as a positive clarification of the text and not a negative critique, Valla's grammatical comments opposed scholastic theology. An example is Matthew 7:22. From the *Vulgata* text a theologian could argue that early Christians merited God's favor by their actions. Therefore a good Christian could perform deeds acceptable to

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 239.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 243. Cf. Montano, pp. 570—81, for a discussion of the fate of the *Notes* before Erasmus published them in 1505. . . . "*Adnotationes*, la piu impegativa, anche sul piano religioso, delle opere filologiche de Valla." *Ibid.*, p. 580. Valla's work as a textual critic has been vindicated by G. Billanovich, "Petraarch and the textual tradition of Livy," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, XIV (1951), pp. 137—208. Alberti refers to additional studies of Valla as a critical classicist. Cf. G. B. Alberti, "Autografi greci di Laurentius Valla nel codice vaticane greco 122," *Italia Medioevale e Umanistica*, Padua, III (1960).

⁸⁶ *Laurentii Vallae, Viri Tam graecae quam latinae linguae doctissimi, in novum testamentum annotationes, apprime utiles* (Basileae, 1526); cf. John 1:1 et al. Erasmus' edition of 1505 was not available, but the preface printed in Allen checks with the same letter to Fisher in the 1526 edition. All Schwarz's references to the 1505 edition match exactly my 1526 copy. Since Valla's autograph has disappeared, one may accept the 1505 copy as definitive and the 1526 copy as valid. Cited as Valla, *Romans, Galatians*, etc.

God.⁸⁷ Valla eliminated that sense by reference to the Greek text. The *Vulgata* is in error and should read *vis* or *potestas* for *virtutes*. The Greek equivalent of *virtutes* is ἀρετή, while the text reads δυνάμεις.⁸⁸ At Matt. 4:10 Valla berated ignorance of grammar. Theology must obey the usage of spoken and especially written language. "Nobody understands him who does not observe the proper use of language."⁸⁹ When philology was applied to the doctrinal writings of St. Paul, the result was disastrous for commentators of a scholastic bent. Valla only purified the Latin text. It was for others to correct doctrine by means of that purer text.

Valla corrected the text of Rom. 1:17. "The just is living by faith" he changed to

⁸⁷ The Vulgate reads, "In nomine tuo virtutes multas fecimus"; the Greek, καὶ τῷ σῶν ὀνόματι δυνάμεις πολλὰς ἐποιήσαμεν. The context of verses 21 and 23 excludes merit.

⁸⁸ Valla, Matt. 7:22: "δυνάμεις. Virtus hic non pro honesto accipitur, quod dicitur ἀρετή, quod nomen nusquam in evangelio reperitur, sed pro potentia, sive pro operibus potentiae, ut apud Paulum: Virtus vero peccati mors, id est, vis ac potestas." Cyprian, for example, used this word to indicate what the perfect man who imitates the example of Christ can do in his *Jesus Christus Patientiae Exemplar*.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 17—18. The superiority of Greek is emphatically asserted. The reference is to Greek grammar.

"Nam consulto quidem et de industria velle ab illis dissentire, nisi vehemens cause coegerit, insania est: inscientem vero hoc facere inscitia: quanquam sint qui negent theologiam inservire praeceptis artis grammaticae. At ego dico, illam debere servare etiam cuius libet linguae usum, qua loquitur, nedum literatae. Nam quid Stultius, quam linguam, qua uteris, velle corrumpere, et committere ne ab his, apud quos loqueris, intelligaris? Nemo enim intelligat eum, qui proprietatem linguae non servat, quam nemo unquam fuit qui non servaret volens et prudens, sed per imprudentiam habens."

a future tense.⁹⁰ Where a medievalist might comment on works in Rom. 3:28, Valla has a terse comment on verse 30. He is laconic. Again a grammatical correction contented Valla.⁹¹ It is difficult at times to settle Valla's Latin text. Some of his variants are unique. The use of *meritum* for *debitum* in chapter 4 puzzles this writer, unless Valla has consciously changed the text. Usually he is careful not to change the *Vulgata* without first citing it. This is an interesting substitution.⁹² One suspects Valla was equally puzzled by lack of a standard Latin text.

That Valla is first a philologist and incidentally a theologian one can see from reading his notes on Romans. Where both Aquinas and Erasmus said much about original sin, Valla avoided it. His comments on chapter 5 are innocuous. Valla was orthodox at this point! Not surprising when one reads his *De Libero Arbitrio*.⁹³ It appears Valla used the critical notes only to purify the *Vulgata*, not to overthrow Catholic theology. His comment on Romans 7:25 is a primary example of such a purpose. Notice the reference to *plerique*

codices as authoritative and the lack of negative comment.

*Infelix ego homo, quis me liberabit de corpore mortis huius? gratia dei per Iesum Christum dominum nostrum } non est dei, sed deo, hoc est gratia sit deo, χάρις τῷ Θεῷ, quanquam plerique codices habeant, gratias ago deo, εὐχαριστῶ τῷ Θεῷ. Credo sic exponendum, gratia deo, quod ipse liberabit nos per Iesum Christum.*⁹⁴

In the *Vulgata* in Rom. 8:28 Valla notices errors and additions. The *Vulgata* reads: "Scimus autem quoniam diligentibus deum omnia cooperantur in bonum, his qui secundum propositum vocati sunt sancti."⁹⁵ Valla nowhere displays a better command of Greek. He removed the ambiguity by an appeal to grammar. How can all things work for good to lovers of God, those called to be holy? Valla answers that God works in all things for the benefit of the chosen (*advocati*). Grammar was the key to understanding God's purpose, where verbal errors had hidden it. Valla meant to read the verse, "Scimus autem, quoniam diligentibus deum omnia cooperatur in bonum, his qui secundum propositum isti sunt advocati mei."⁹⁶ *συνεργεῖ* is singular and

⁹⁰ "Justus autem ex fide [vivit] vivet legendum est, ζήσεται." Valla, *Romans*, p. 196.

⁹¹ Ibid. p. 198. "Quoniam unus deus qui iustificavit circumcisonem ex fide, et praeputium per fidem futuri temporis est iustificabit, non praeteriti iustificavit, δικαιώσει."

⁹² The *Vulgata* reads: "ei autem qui operatur merces non imputatur secundum gratiam sed secundum debitum." Wordsworth and White, *Pauline Epistles*, Rom. 4:4, p. 79. Valla's text is, "ei autem qui operantur, merces non imputatur secundum gratiam, sed secundum meritum." *Operantur* and *meritum* are variants not listed by Wordsworth and White. Valla, p. 199. *Operantur* may be a printing error. Perhaps Valla was attacking both congruous and con-dign merit.

⁹³ *Supra*, n. 67.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 202. Valla refers the struggle to the entire Christian life, and the victory to the future. The usual medieval "Catholic" interpretation was different. It read chapter 7 as a struggle with carnal desires before the grace of God (*gratia dei*) was sacramentally administered. When '*gratia deo*' was restored, the passage became eschatological for Valla (*liberabit*) not sacramental. "Semper peccamus, semper iustificandi?" Petri Lombardi, *Collectanea In Omnes D. Pauli Apostoli Epistolas: In Epistolas Ad Romanos*, Migne, P. L. CXCI, 1426—1427.

⁹⁵ Wordsworth and White, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

⁹⁶ "Scimus autem quoniam diligentibus deum omnia cooperantur in bonum, his qui secundum propositum vocati sunt. Ambigum est, an coop-

must have *spiritus* as a subject, not *omnia*. Several ambiguities arise if the correction is not made. The first objection would be an empirical one based on Paul's religious experience reported in Romans 7. Valla was not simply a grammarian, but as a translator must do, he acquired a psychological insight into the meaning of the text. The evidence of one verse is not conclusive, but when the entire volume is carefully read, Valla emerges as something other than a ribald pagan. In reading Valla on Galatians 2, one finds no comment on faith and works as in Aquinas. In chapter 3 there is no scholastic distinction of *fides informis et fides formata charitate*. Valla's orthodoxy here is impeccable.

eratur legendum sit, id est spiritus, an cooperantur. Est enim graece quidem numeri singularis, sed qui potest servire nomini numeri pluralis *secundum legem grammaticae graecae*, συνεργεῖ: certe illud sancti non legitur graece, nec vocati sunt: nunc *praeteritum verbi est, sed eo modo dictum quo dicimus, isti sunt advocati mei, τοῖς κατὰ πρόθεσιν κλητοῖς οὔσι. . .*" Valla, p. 203. The Greek text is: οἶδαμεν δε ὅτι τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν τὸν θεὸν πάντα συνεργεῖ εἰς ἀγαθόν, τοῖς κατὰ πρόθεσιν κλητοῖς οὔσιν (Italics are mine.) The Greek manuscripts used by Valla are not known. Notice his departure even from the Greek tense to explain the sense in the context of Pauline thought (*Modo dictum*). Albert Hyma attempts to discredit Valla as a restorer of the primitive apostolic church. This *argumentum ad hominem* does not rest on a reading of Valla but upon a confusing definition by Hyma. Hyma, p. 44, n. 8. Hyma's confusion is that no one can be a Christian who asserts free will. Hyma seems unaware of Valla's psychological determinism and the endorsement of it by both Luther and Calvin. Rice shows how misleading this is for an understanding of Colet and Erasmus. Eugene F. Rice, Jr., "John Colet and the Annihilation of the Natural," *Harvard Theological Review*, XLV (July 1952), 142, n. 3. Hyma's definition of Colet as "the true Christian humanist" is found in A. Hyma, "The Continental Origins of English Humanism," *Huntington Library Quarterly*, IV (1940—41), 16.

III. ROOTS OF REFORM

Radetti suggests that Valla's work finds continuity in its revival within the Counter-Reformation. Erasmus' amplification of Valla is a fundamental basis of the Protestant reform. It cannot be denied that this has made an impact on the religious world and thereby becomes a part of the modern ethical-political framework of Europe.⁹⁷ One must add that the impact on Catholic reform was as great. For in his *De Libero Arbitrio* Valla posed an essential problem, ". . . libertà umana di fronte alla onnipotente volontà divina."⁹⁸ Bade's letter to Erasmus in the preface to the 1505 edition of Valla's *Annotationes* is still the fairest verdict.

In very truth, most learned Erasmus, I cannot help but assent to your candid and thoughtful judgement of our Valla; for, as he has merited the blame of no justly thinking man, so he has deserved the greatest favor and gratitude of every studious man. For if, as in matters of Christian doctrine St. Augustine rightly deemed, the things that are somewhat obscure and hard to understand in one language are illustrated and made plain by comparison with the same in another language, why should odium attach to any man who points out those instances in which the Latin copies differ at times, and at times totally vary? Unless perchance we are indignant with him because he has relieved us from such a mighty task. But it is idle

⁹⁷ Radetti, p. 599. He shows that Valla is not totally unaware of divine omnipotence. Valla can say ". . . ita dum homines similes diis efficere vult, deos fecit similes hominibus." *Cod. Ottob. lat.* 2075, ff. 191v—195r.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 608. Cf. Delio Cantimori, *Eretici Italiani Del Cinquecento* (Firenze, 1939), pp. 36 ff., for a suggestion that the anti-trinitarianism of Servetus was taken from Valla's *Annotationes*. I am not prepared to concede the point to Cantimori.

to be angry; and I only hope that your hunt in the library of the monastery will be as gratifying as it is delightful to all students of the Holy Scriptures.⁹⁹

Our analysis of Valla through a study of the *Annotationes* has shown Bade's letter to be an accurate assessment. Valla's philological hermeneutic formed a 15th-century seedbed for the roots of Catholic reform.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ John Joseph Mangan, *Life, Character and Influence of Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam* (London: Burns, Oates and Washbourne, Ltd., 1928), I, 197—98. The text is in Allen, *Opus Epistolarum Erasmi, Tome I*, n. 183 (Paris, March 7, 1505): "Enimvero, Erasme disertissime, non possum candido tuo atque graui de Valla nostro iudicio non subscribere; vt enim nullius aequae censentis inuidiam, ita studiosorum omnium non infimam et gratiam et beneuolentiam meruit. Nam si, vt de doctrina Christiana recte sentit diuus Augustinus, in vna lingua subobscura et clause ex alterius collatione fiunt illustria et aperta, quae tandem inuidia si eos locos in quibus Latina exempla ab Graeco exemplari modo discrepant, modo etiam frigent, in medium afferat? nisi id illi forsitan inuidemus, quod tanto nos labare leuarit. Sed nolo stomachari; spero enim fore vt venatio tua omnibus diuinae lectionis studiosis, vt est gratissima, ita sit et iucundissima. Vale." Lines 1—11. Notice Mangan omits *ab Graeco*. *Ibid.*, p. 608.

¹⁰⁰ Valla's comments on 1 Cor. 2:13 are interesting. ["Non in doctis humanae sapientiae verbis, sed in doctrina Spiritus spiritualia comparantes] cur variavit interpres graecum vocabulum? Nam sic legitur graece: Non in doctis humanae sapientiae verbis (seu sermonibus) sed in doctis Spiritus Sancti Quasi in humana sapientia sint verba, in Spiritu autem Sancta doctrina: quod ita non est." Erasmus was the link between Valla and the Reformers. Cf. C. A. L. Jarrot, "Erasmus' *In Principio Erat Sermo: A Controversial Translation*," *Studies in Philology* LXI (1964), 35; Lorenzo Riber, *Boletín De La Real Academia Espanola*, XXXVIII (1958), 251—53; A. Renaudet, *Erasme Et L'Italie*, p. 2; and Marcel Bataillon, *Erasme Et L'Espagne*, p. 179—242.

Colet's return to a literal exegesis, imbibed from Ficino's Platonism, is another facet of the same struggle to understand St. Paul. Both Valla and Colet are essential to an understanding of Erasmus' *Novum Instrumentum*. When the eloquence of Erasmus joined the piety of Colet and the exegesis of Valla, the hermeneutical revolution was complete. From this vantage Catholic and Protestant alike claimed Erasmus. The search for reform centered in the meaning of the documents of revelation. Germane to doctrinal discussions of the Reformation are Catholic commentaries on the Pauline Corpus.¹⁰¹ Valla must be permitted a final word.

Do you dare to speak words in the presence of God's Word? He himself has made you, He knows you are prostrate. He has no need of your clamor. His Word is our life.¹⁰²

St. Paul, Minn.

¹⁰¹ Luther's comments on Valla have been observed, but his own exegesis merits a brief comment. Schwarz opposes Erasmus and Luther as exegetes. This may appear to make Luther an "inspirational exegete," as Schwarz attempts. Without mentioning Schwarz, Regin Prenter calls attention to the grammatical nature of Luther's work: "For it was precisely his Christological exegesis which compelled him to reject allegory and to emphasize grammatical interpretation." Regin Prenter, "The Living Word," *More About Luther, Martin Luther Lectures* (Decorah, Iowa: Luther College Press, 1958), II, 77. After 1518 Luther departs from the *Quadriga*. His remarks about Valla must be seen in this context.

¹⁰² Valla, *Opera*, p. 996. "Ecquae auderes coram Verbo Dei verba facere? Ipse te fecit, ipse te iacentem intelligit, nec tuam orationem desiderat, Verbum eius vita nostra est."