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Christian Humanism and the Reformation: Erasmus and Melanchthon

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A CLOSER EXAMINATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ERASMUS AND MELANCHTHON — contemporaries who were both Christian humanists and ecclesiastical reformers, though they never met each other face to face — illuminates several significant aspects of the complex interrelationship between Christian humanism and the Reformation.

“A Study in Causation” is the subtitle posed for this essay. The study focuses on the relationship between two men. One of them is a well-known humanist, the other a reformer known by name and little more.¹ Erasmus is the older of the two perhaps by 28 years, perhaps by 31, depending on which date one accepts as the year of his birth — 1469 or 1466. He made his fame as a Christian humanist, a satirist and a wit, a theologian, and a seeker after reform.² The other was

also a humanist, a theologian, and a reformer, known to subsequent ages as *praeceptor Germaniae*.³ When Melanchthon was 21 years old, he was compared favorably with Erasmus, the established scholar.⁴

¹ Robert Stupperich entitled one of his works *Der unbekannte Melanchthon* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1961). Michael Rogness, *Philip Melanchthon: Reformer Without Honor* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1969), says, p. v.: “Melanchthon’s works are not widely known; indeed, they are seldom read. We have learned of him largely through second-hand opinions, and he had the unhappy experience of being caricatured by friends and foes alike.”

² The literature on Erasmus is vast. The two best biographies are: Roland H. Bainton, *Erasmus of Christendom* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1969); J. Huzinga, *Erasmus of Rotterdam*, trans. F. Hopman (London: Phaidon Press, 1952). The standard edition of his writings will be used: *Desiderii Erasmi Roterodami Opera Omnia*, ed. J. Clericus, 10 vols. (Leyden, 1703—1706; reprint by Gregg Press, London, 1961—1962); cited as LB. His letters are cited from *Opus Epistolarum Des. Erasmi Roterodami*,

ed. P. S. Allen, H. M. Allen, and H. W. Garrod, 12 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1906 to 1958); cited as EE.

³ Karl Hartfelder, *Philipp Melanchthon als Praeceptor Germaniae*, reprint of the 1889 Berlin edition (Nieuwkoop: B. De Graf, 1964), pp. vii—viii, validates this title. In 1963 the Melanchthon Committee of the German Democratic Republic published a series of essays in *Philipp Melanchthon: Humanist, Reformator, Praeceptor Germaniae* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1963). The first essay of the volume was by Leo Stern and had the same title as the book, pp. 1—72.

Melanchthon’s works will be cited from the *Corpus Reformatorum, Philippi Melanchthonis opera, quae supersunt omnia*, ed. C. G. Bretschneider and H. E. Bindseil, 28 vols. (Halle, 1834 ff.); cited as CR. Also used was *Melanchthons Werke in Auswahl*, ed. Robert Stupperich, 6 vols. (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann Verlag, 1951 ff.). If translations are used, they will be noted.

⁴ Johannes Reuchlin wrote to Duke Frederick the Wise, Stuttgart, 25 July 1518: “Dan ich weis vnder den Tütschen kainen, der über Ine sey, vssgenommen Hern Erasmus Roterdamus, der ist ain hollender, Der selbig übertrifft vnns all Inn latyn.” Melanchthon’s *Briefwechsel*, ed.

Implied was the promise that he would soon surpass the prince of the humanists.

Melanchthon was not under the immediate influence of Erasmus. It is not correct to label him an "Erasmian."⁵ It would be folly to assert, however, that Melanchthon was not indebted to the humanist from Rotterdam. Few intellectuals, at least of Northern Europe, in the first half of the 16th century escaped his orbit. There were other factors, too, that influenced Melanchthon, a truism also for the others of his generation. Our study of causation, therefore, must allow for a plurality of causes. Indeed, Christian humanism and the Reformation do not stand in a simple cause/

Otto Clemen, *Supplementa Melanchthoniana*, VI, 1 (Frankfurt: Minerva G. M. B. H., 1968; reprint of Leipzig, 1926 edition), 38.

⁵ J. A. Faulkner, "An Eminent Reformer Though Erasmian," *The Review and Expositor*, XXVIII, 3 (July 1930), 335—48, has a laudatory appraisal of Melanchthon based largely on Ellinger and Richard. The title is inaccurate, because the author in no way shows Erasmian influences on Melanchthon.

Leo Stern in *Philipp Melanchthon* (see n. 3), p. 14, claims that Melanchthon brought Erasmianism to Wittenberg and calls him "unzweifelhaft der bestgeeignete Mann die Synthese zwischen Humanismus und Reformation zu vollziehen."

Stupperich, *Unbekannte Melanchthon*, pp. 12—13, has a more balanced approach than Stern. He says, however, that Melanchthon is less a scholar of Reuchlin's school than of Erasmus'.

Georg Ellinger, *Philipp Melanchthon: Ein Lebensbild* (Berlin: R. Gaertners Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1902), devotes his entire introduction to the question of the relationship between humanism and the Reformation in the life of Melanchthon, pp. 1—51.

I have not cited Wilhelm Maurer, "Melanchthons *Loci communes* von 1521 als wissenschaftliche Programmschrift," *Luther-Jahrbuch*, XXVII (1960), 1—50, because these materials are embodied and extended in *Der junge Melanchthon*.

effect relationship reminiscent of the behaviorists' stimulus/response formula. Cause becomes effect in the complex interrelationships between Christian humanism and the Reformation, and effect becomes cause. The interactions and complexities of these movements are highly involved. Erasmus, the Christian humanist, is also a reformer,⁶ although in time he becomes an opponent of Martin Luther.⁷ Melanchthon is a Christian humanist and a reformer; he is Martin Luther's companion and co-worker.⁸ But in the controversy

⁶ John C. Olin, *The Catholic Reformation: Savonarola to Ignatius Loyola, Reform in the Church, 1495—1540* (New York, Evanston, and London: Harper & Row, 1969), pp. 65—69 and references given there. Olin says, p. 65: "Erasmus was above all a reformer—a reformer of theology, a reformer of morals, a reformer of Christian society."

⁷ See the references in n. 64.

⁸ This is evident from almost any of Melanchthon's biographies. See especially Robert Stupperich, *Melanchthon* (Berlin: Walter De Gruyter & Co., 1960). It has been translated into English by Robert H. Fisher (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1965). Clyde L. Manschreck, *Melanchthon: The Quiet Reformer* (New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1958), has written a very useful account, particularly for the years between 1517 and 1540. The most comprehensive work is by Wilhelm Maurer, *Der junge Melanchthon zwischen Humanismus und Reformation*, 2 vols. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967 and 1969). The first volume, "Der Humanist," has 247 pages; the second, "Der Theologe," has 617 pages. The best bibliographical guide to recent studies on Melanchthon is Peter Fraenkel and Martin Greschat, *Zwanzig Jahre Melanchthonstudium: Sechs Literaturberichte (1945—1965)* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1967). Hans von Schubert, "Reformation und Humanismus," *Luther-Jahrbuch*, VIII (1926), 23—24; see pp. 1—26 for the entire essay. See also Wilhelm Maurer, *Melanchthon-Studien* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1964), pp. 20—38.

between Luther and Erasmus he manages to keep the friendship of both men without sacrificing his own convictions.⁹

Perhaps this tells us that we need to define our terms more precisely, at least to describe what we mean by them. The Christian humanists had a high regard for pagan letters and literature; they would not deny the importance of the study of classical letters, the *studia humanitatis*, for the upbringing of the well-rounded individual. Nor would they denigrate the need to return to the sources, *ad fontes*, both of the pagan past and of Christian antiquity. The study of the Sacred Scriptures was to them primary.¹⁰ Erasmus pleaded that the pope should wield "the sword of salvation, which is the word of God";¹¹ it is his chief duty, he said, "to sow the seed of the Word of God."¹² The Christian humanists also returned to the fathers of the church, to Origen, Jerome, Chrysostom, Augustine, to name only a few. Erasmus edited the

works of Jerome and others.¹³ Melanchthon turned to Hypolytus, Cyril, Chrysostom, and others.¹⁴ An extremely important element in Christian humanism was the emphasis on *pietas*, which made for a strong ethical orientation.

The roots of Christian humanism went deep. Not only the traditions of the church but also movements such as the *devotio moderna* and the revival of Augustinianism contributed to it. Rhenish mysticism was one of the factors in this movement, but so was also the establishment of new universities, such as the University of Wittenberg. No one would want to discount the importance of Gutenberg's invention for both Christian humanism and the Reformation. Independent scholars and those subsidized by merchants or princes played their part in promoting Christian humanism. The complexities of the origins of this movement (not exhausted here) alert us to the complexities of the relationships between humanism and the Reformation.

Allow me to illustrate these complexities by showing how Erasmus and Melanchthon went to two different schools of Biblical interpreters among the church fathers. Erasmus favored Origen of Alexandria (A.D. 186—255) and Jerome (d. 420).¹⁵ Melanchthon had a high regard

⁹ "Tous les historiens de Mélancthon reconnaissent en lui, à la fois un grand Réformateur et un grand Humaniste. Sa double amitié avec Erasme et avec Luther confirme ce jugement." Jean Boisset, *Mélancthon: Educateur de l'Allemagne* (Paris: Editions Seghers, 1967), p. 105.

¹⁰ See, e. g., Carl S. Meyer, "Erasmus on the Study of Scriptures," *CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY*, XL, 11 (December 1969), 734 to 746. Ernst-Wilhelm Kohls, *Die Theologie des Erasmus* (Basel: Friedrich Reinhardt Verlag, 1966), II, 136, n. 30, points to the necessity of further study on the influence of Erasmus on Bucer, Bugenhagen, Capito, Zwingli, and not least on Melanchthon.

¹¹ Erasmus, "Sileni Alcibiades," Olin, ed., *Catholic Reformation*, p. 83; Margaret Mann Phillips, *The 'Adages' of Erasmus: A Study with Translations* (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1966), p. 286.

¹² Olin, *Catholic Reformation*, p. 85; Phillips, *The 'Adages'*, p. 289.

¹³ Bainton, *Erasmus*, p. 131.

¹⁴ Maurer, *Junge Melanchthon*, II, 108—10.

¹⁵ See, for example, his reference to Origen in Jerome in "Sileni Alcibiades," Olin, *Catholic Reformation*, p. 83; Phillips, *The 'Adages'*, p. 287. Meyer, "Erasmus on the Study of Scriptures," pp. 742—43; LB, VIII, 425—39, "De vita, phrasi, docendi ratione et operibus Origenis"; LB, VIII, 439—84, "Commentarii Origenis adoniatii in Evangelium Matthae"; Huizinga, pp. 87—90.

for Cyril (d. 386) and John Chrysostom (d. 407).¹⁶

Origen was first and foremost an interpreter of the Scriptures. He produced the *Hexapla*, which presented various versions of the Scriptures in parallel columns. He wrote commentaries on *all* the books of the Bible, we are told. In his interpretation of the Bible he used not only the literal method, but he developed a Biblical typology that allowed him to postulate typical, spiritual, and mystical interpretations of the Scriptures. He used the hermeneutical methods of pagan philosophers, methods which they used to explain and interpret the text of Homer's poems.¹⁷ Jerome at the beginning of the fifth century also wrote commentaries of the Scriptures. His Latin Bible, the Vulgate, makes him one of the foremost moulders of the culture of the Middle Ages. He did not follow Origen in his theology, but he continued his method of interpreting the

Scriptures. Jerome thereby transmitted the method of allegorization,¹⁸ a method which Erasmus favored.¹⁹

Melanchthon was greatly indebted to Cyril of Jerusalem. Cyril did not write commentaries after the number of Origen. His addresses to catechumens, given during Lent, explained the Christian creed and the sacramental rites to new converts. It is not clear how closely he was connected with the school in Antioch, which became a center of Biblical scholarship and which did not favor Alexandrian allegorization.²⁰ The school at Antioch encouraged a literalistic kind of exegesis (Biblical interpretation), of which Theodore of Mopsuestia was the foremost proponent. He was a friend of John Chrysostom, perhaps the most famous pulpit orator of the ancient church. Chrysostom was known also for his commentaries on the New Testament in which he used the literal type of interpretation that was favored by the school of Antioch.²¹

This brief orientation may give an indi-

¹⁶ Maurer, *Junge Melanchthon*, I, 244; II, 52, 108—10, 160, 238, 277, 502. The last reference, *ibid.*, II, 502, is the most important. See, for example, the references given there, n. 127 and n. 128 (p. 596). Melanchthon valued Augustine very highly. See Peter Fraenkel, *Testimonia Patrum: The Function of the Patristic Argument in the Theology of Philip Melanchthon* (Geneva: Librairie E. Droz, 1961), pp. 299—303; Maurer, *Melanchthon-Studien*, pp. 67—102.

Adolf Sperl, *Melanchthon zwischen Humanismus und Reformation: Eine Untersuchung über den Wandel des Traditionsverständnisses bei Melanchthon und die damit zusammenhängenden Grundfragen seiner Theologie* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1959), pp. 85—88.

¹⁷ J. Daniélou, "Patristic Literature," J. Daniélou, A. H. Couratin, and John Kent, *The Pelican Guide to Modern Theology: Historical Theology* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1969), pp. 53—56. Daniélou is the author of *Origen* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1955).

¹⁸ Daniélou, *Pelican Guide*, pp. 116—18.

¹⁹ John W. Aldridge, *The Hermeneutic of Erasmus* (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1966), p. 91, remarks: "Jerome is one of Erasmus' greatest heroes, if not the greatest." He does not recognize the primacy of Origen in Erasmus' thinking. See also, for example, Bainton, *Erasmus*, pp. 143—47.

Much remains to be done on Erasmus' exegesis. Aldridge needs to be supplemented and at times corrected. See also n. 10 above.

²⁰ Daniélou, *Pelican Guide*, p. 94. More investigation is needed on Cyril's exegetical method and Melanchthon's debt to him. William Telfer, ed., *Cyril of Jerusalem and Nemesis of Eones*, Vol. IV of the *Library of Christian Classics* (London: SCM Press, 1955), does not discuss Cyril's exegesis.

²¹ Daniélou, *Pelican Guide*, pp. 104—7.

cation of two kinds of Biblical humanism in the early 16th century. Perhaps it illuminates somewhat the oversimplification of a statement that says that both Erasmus and Melanchthon went back to the patristic literature as one of the sources of Christian humanism.

There are oversimplifications, too, in the concept "the Reformation." If we differentiate between "reform" and "the Reformation," our task of describing what we mean is made easier. It seems, however, that it would be better to speak about "the reformations of the 16th century" or "the reform movements of the 16th century" than simply to speak about "the Reformation." Someone may wish to contend that it would be still simpler to speak only about the "reformers of the 16th century," although this plunges us into the oversimplification of the "great man" theory of history. Under the term "Reformation" we can include all the movements revolving around Luther, Calvin, Knox, Menno Simons, Contarini, John a Lasco, and a host of others. Broadly we define the term as the movements of the 16th century, particularly between 1517 and 1564, which sought reforms and alterations within the Christian church of western Europe in doctrine and practice.

The microcosm of the individual, however, permits us to make an analysis of the relationships between two movements in the life of that individual. These may serve as illustrations of generalizations about causations or interrelations, processes, and outcomes.

Erasmus had a powerful influence on various reformers of the 16th century, not least of all on Zwingli of Zürich and Bucer

of Strasbourg.²² They were not as intimately connected with Luther as was Melanchthon. We find Melanchthon a most apt subject for the investigation of the interrelationship between humanism and reform.

A Dutch authority has declared: "Melanchthon was meer Humanist dan theolog" (Melanchthon was a humanist rather than a theologian).²³ It might be more accurate to call him a humanist and a theologian.²⁴

Four men primarily shaped the life of the *praeceptor Germaniae*: Johann Reuchlin (1455—1522), Johannes Stöfler (1452—1531), Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam (1469—1536), and Martin Luther (1483—1546). Reuchlin came into his life during the most formative years, between the ages of 11 and 21. Melanchthon's father died when young Philip was 11 years of age (27 October 1508) and his granduncle, the great Reuchlin, became his guide. Reuchlin's reputation as a scholar, as a master of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, put him into the front ranks of the Northern humanists.²⁵ It was Reuchlin who gave Philip the name "Me-

²² Ernst-Wilhelm Kohls, *Die theologische Lebensaufgabe des Erasmus und die oberrheinische Reformation: Zur Durchdringung von Humanismus und Reformation* (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1969), pp. 30—36 for Zwingli, pp. 36—40 for Bucer.

²³ Cornelis Schaink, *Melanchthons Studie von het Grieksch in Verband met zijn Humanisme* (Amsterdam: A. H. Kruyt [1961]), p. 171.

²⁴ Maurer, *Junge Melanchthon*, in his two volumes has validated this observation.

²⁵ See Carl S. Meyer, "Erasmus and Johann Reuchlin," *Moreana*, XXIV (November 1969), 65—80, and the literature cited there.

lanchthon," a Greek rendition of his name "Schwarzerdt." "When one is transformed from a 'Schwarzerdt' into a 'Melanchthon,' his life is dedicated to humanism."²⁶ He was a scholar at the University of Heidelberg when this happened. There were other humanists at Heidelberg, for example, Jacob Wimpfeling, who introduced the young scholar to the upper Rhenish reform movement—Melanchthon wrote an elegy for Geiler von Kaysersberg.²⁷

Reuchlin's preeminent influence on Melanchthon continued during the six years he spent at Tübingen (between the ages of 15 and 21). During these years Melanchthon matured into an independent personality going deeply into debt to Reuchlin and others for his intellectual enrichment—the kind of debt that most teachers like to see students accumulate, even though students do not always recognize it. Reuchlin was Melanchthon's ideal of the *vita activa* of the public citizen and the *vita passiva* of the scholar. His thorough knowledge of the Greek language and Greek literature he owed to Reuchlin.²⁸ Melanchthon gave Greek the palm rather than Latin.²⁹ While at Tübingen, where he received his *magister artium* in 1514, he read widely—Gerson, William of Ockham, Ficino, Quintillian, Cicero, Plato, and others. And already during these years he demonstrated that he had "writer's itch," the ambition to be an au-

thor, at any rate the author of textbooks.³⁰ Early in life Melanchthon was a *praeceptor*. He was a tutor of Greek at the age of 17 and remained a schoolmaster all his life.

How much he owed to Reuchlin for this proclivity to teach and write is difficult to say. To Reuchlin Melanchthon owed the heritage of the love of the ancient languages. To him also he owed a strong leaning to Pythagorean philosophy and his readiness to follow the Platonism of the Florentine Academy. Marsilio Ficino was the guide he followed;³¹ Erasmus favored Pico della Mirandola.³² Again we see that

³⁰ Textbooks were in great demand in Germany especially for instruction in the humanities. Melanchthon was required to give instruction in dialectics and rhetoric; he published his *Rhetoric* in 1519 and his *Dialectic* in 1520. But even before this he published classical authors and reissued standard works. The first of these standard works was the *Dialogus mythologicus*, originally compiled in 1489 by Bartholomaeus Zehender (closely associated with the *devotio moderna*). Melanchthon took over as its editor in 1514. The book enjoyed 40 editions, beginning in 1514; it had already appeared in seven editions. Melanchthon re-edited a Latin grammar in 1516, which had originally been a product of the Aldine Press. He wrote a Greek translation of the medieval *Media vita*. A Greek grammar by Melanchthon was published by Anselm of Tübingen in 1518. In 1516 he produced a school edition of the comedies of Terence. Maurer, *Junge Melanchthon*, I, 43—50.

³¹ Lewis W. Spitz, "Reuchlin's Philosophy: Pythagoras and Cabala for Christ," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, XLVII, 1 (1956), 1 to 20, is the only satisfactory treatment of Reuchlin's philosophical concepts. He stated the opinion, p. 16, that "Luther and Melanchthon disparaged cabalistic nonsense, though Melanchthon found some good in it." Maurer, *Junge Melanchthon*, I, 49, 100—3.

³² Louis Bouyer, *Erasmus and His Times*, trans. Francis X. Murphy (Westminster, Md.: The Newman Press, 1959), has a chapter on

²⁶ Maurer, *Junge Melanchthon*, I, 21.

²⁷ Otto Clemen, *Melanchthons Briefwechsel*, in *Supplementa Melanchthonia*, VI, reprint of 1926 Leipzig edition (Frankfurt: Minerva G. M. B. A., 1968), pp. 2—3.

²⁸ Maurer, *Junge Melanchthon*, I, 29—34.

²⁹ See Schaink, *passim*. The *Grammatica Graeca Integra* is given in CR, XX, 5—191.

humanism itself was a complex movement. Melanchthon's Neo-Platonism was colored by a high regard for the ethical teachings of the Stagirite.³³ We must note, however, that Melanchthon did not follow Reuchlin's interest in the Cabala.

During the six years that Melanchthon was at Tübingen the conflict between Reuchlin and the theologians of Louvain raged. It produced not only the *Epistolae virorum clarorum*, to which Melanchthon wrote a preface and which contained a letter by Erasmus, but also the *Epistolae obscurorum virorum*, which Erasmus did not approve.³⁴

Reuchlin and Erasmus were not so closely related that this relationship of necessity would be determinative for the young Melanchthon. There were relatively few years of intimate correspondence between the two men (between 1515 and 1519), and the two met only once.³⁵

Melanchthon did not meet Erasmus face to face even once. However, Melanchthon's acquaintance with the writings of Erasmus before 1515 may be taken for granted. In 1515 Erasmus wrote a few highly laudatory sentences about the Tübingen scholar in an excursus to 1 Thessalonians 2 in his commentary on St. Paul's Letter to the Thessalonians. He here praised Archbishop Warham as a patron

Pico, pp. 86—94, but he does not assess his influence on Erasmus. Charles B. Schmitt, *Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola (1469—1533) and His Critique of Aristotle* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1967), does not touch on this point at all.

³³ Guido Kisch, *Melanchthons Rechts- und Soziallehre* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1967), p. 21.

³⁴ See Meyer, "Erasmus and Reuchlin," p. 74, n. 2, for the pertinent literature.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 65—80.

of learning and encouraged the German princes to go and do likewise. He pointed out how rich Germany was in talent and among others cited Melanchthon. He mentioned his knowledge of Greek and Latin, the clarity and elegance of his Latin style, his mastery of the rules of rhetoric, and his knowledge of literature.³⁶ Melanchthon returned the compliments in a Greek poem in which Erasmus was hailed as a ward of Athena, a friend of the gods, whose eloquence was renewed by nectar and ambrosia.³⁷

But an exchange of compliments tells us little about the relationship between Christian humanism and the Reformation. The recommendation of Erasmus to John Fisher, chancellor of the University of Cambridge and bishop of Rochester, that Melanchthon teach at Cambridge³⁸ is testimony already in 1516 that the young scholar was regarded as a Christian humanist. He was more than a grammarian; rather he was one who would fit into the company of John Fisher, Thomas More, and John Colet. During the years 1515 and 1516 Christian humanism was exerting an influence also at the University of Wittenberg because of the writings of Reuchlin and Erasmus.³⁹ The University

³⁶ Maurer, I, 179, 241, n. 17.

³⁷ Clemen, *Melanchthons Briefwechsel*, pp. 20—21 (20 Aug. 1516); EE, II, 319—20, ep. 454.

³⁸ Erasmus to Reuchlin, Calais, 27 Aug. [1516], EE, II, 331, ep. 457; Ludwig Geiger, *Johann Reuchlins Briefwechsel* (Reprint of 1875 Stuttgart edition; Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1962), p. 254, ep. CCXXIa.

³⁹ Kenneth Hagen, "An Addition to the Letters of John Lang," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, LX, 1 (1960), 27—32, notes that Lang's letter of 10 March 1516 documents "the

of Wittenberg, little as the University of Cambridge, did not have to await Melanchthon before it became a center of Christian humanism.

The year 1516 must be emphasized for its importance for the relationship between Christian humanism and the Reformation. In that year the *Novum instrumentum*, Erasmus' edition of the Greek New Testament with his translation in Latin, was published. A second edition was published in 1519. The introduction, the *Paraclesis*, not only promoted Biblical studies but also set forth the *philosophia Christi*, a way of life that embraced both piety and learning.⁴⁰ Luther and Melanchthon both knew this work. The importance of the publication of the *Novum instrumentum* cannot be overestimated for either Christian humanism or the Reformation.⁴¹

Among the writings of Erasmus known to Melanchthon were the *Adages* of which the Σειληνοῖ Ἀλκιβιάδου (*Sileni Alcibiadis*) clearly set forth a program of re-

success which Biblical and Patristic studies, as well as Greek and Latin studies in general, had enjoyed among the students." See p. 29.

E. G. Schwiebert, *Luther and His Times: The Reformation from a New Perspective* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), pp. 275 to 302. This chapter (9) is entitled, "Triumph of Biblical Humanism in the University of Wittenberg." Idem, "New Groups and Ideas at the University of Wittenberg," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, XLIX (1958), 60—79.

Robert H. Fife, *The Revolt of Martin Luther* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957), pp. 190—212; Maurer, *Junge Melanchthon*, II, 15—24.

⁴⁰ Meyer, "Erasmus on the Study of Scriptures," pp. 734—40, and references given there.

⁴¹ Bainton, *Erasmus*, p. 134: "Despite all of the defects the magnitude of his achievement is not to be deprecated."

form.⁴² In this sketch Erasmus decries the luxury, property, and wealth of the bishops and mourns the sad state of the church. He wrote:

They say that the Church is being honoured and adorned, not when piety is growing among the people, when vices are diminishing and good behaviour increasing, when sacred learning is in full bloom, not when the altars glitter with jewels and gold; nay, even when the altars themselves are neglected, and the accumulation of property, troops of servants, luxury, mules and horses, expensive erection of houses or rather palaces, and all the rest of the racket of life, make the priest not better than satraps.⁴³

The bishops should follow the ideals exemplified by Paul, Erasmus writes:

I wish the Popes to have the greatest riches — but let it be the pearl of the Gospel, the heavenly treasure. . . . I wish them to be fully armed, but with the arms of the Apostle: that is with the shield of faith, the breastplate of righteousness, the sword of salvation, which is the word of God.⁴⁴

Melanchthon recommended this work to his students.⁴⁵ How far it shaped his own thinking we cannot estimate. It is one of the links between Erasmus and Melanchthon, between Christian humanism and reform. Moreover, Erasmus' frequent return to the Scriptures in this piece — there are no less than 15 references on 18 pages —

⁴² Olin, *The Catholic Reformation*, pp. 71 to 89; Phillips, *The 'Adages'*, pp. 269—96.

⁴³ Olin, *The Catholic Reformation*, p. 79; Phillips, *The 'Adages'*, p. 281.

⁴⁴ Olin, *The Catholic Reformation*, p. 83; Phillips, *The 'Adages'*, p. 286.

⁴⁵ *De rhetorica libri tres* (Basel: John Frohen, 1519), p. 7. The copy in the library of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo., was used.

could not fail to impress the author of the oration on St. Paul's doctrine.⁴⁶

References to the *Sileni Alcibiadis* are found in Melanchthon's *Rhetoric*.⁴⁷ The *Rhetoric*, published in early 1519, was based on Quintillian, Cicero, Terence, and Erasmus.⁴⁸ Reuchlin had issued a *Rhetoric* in 1504, meant for preachers, who, on the basis of the Sacred Scriptures, should encourage their hearers to practice the virtues and meditate on divine matters.⁴⁹ Melanchthon put great store on the study of rhetoric. In his inaugural address as professor of Greek at the University of Wittenberg on 29 August 1518 he encouraged the study of history and poetry, the ancient languages, dialectics, and rhetoric. He coupled history and rhetoric into a nexus that included not only Xenophon and Herodotus but also the Old Testament prophets, and he followed Erasmus in recommending Hesiod.⁵⁰ Erasmus, too, rec-

ommended the study of history, although he did not value it nearly as highly as did Melanchthon. For instance, Erasmus did not find in history examples for the orator as did Melanchthon.⁵¹ Yet Melanchthon relied heavily on the Dutch humanist. However, when Melanchthon made rhetoric more important than dialectics, he showed himself to be independent of Erasmus and dependent on Aristotle.⁵² Insofar, then, as Melanchthon is a humanist, he shows dependence on and independence of Erasmus in his *Rhetoric* of 1519.

This is true, too, of Melanchthon insofar as he is a reformer. Melanchthon had been in Wittenberg less than a year when this work was published. In it he recommended the *Paraphrases* of St. Paul's Letter to the Romans by Erasmus.⁵³ He knew the Wittenberg theology and quoted the saying: "Legem non iustificare, gratiam iustificare."⁵⁴ He also cited the Augustinian phrase of the dead letter and the life-giving spirit, known from Karlstadt's tract and used by Erasmus.⁵⁵ Melanchthon used this distinction, which goes back to St. Paul, to define the Law not only as the corpus of ceremonial laws given to the Hebrew nation, but also as the civil and moral laws of this people.⁵⁶ In this he differed with

⁴⁶ "Paul and the Scholastics" in *Melanchthon: Selected Writings*, trans. Charles L. Hill, ed. E. E. Flack and L. J. Satre (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1962), pp. 29 to 56; St. A, I, 26—53. The oration was delivered on 25 Jan. 1520. Arno Schirmer, *Das Paulusverständnis Melanchthons, 1518—1522* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag G. M. B. H., 1967).

⁴⁷ *De rhetorica*, pp. 7, 40.

⁴⁸ Uwe Schnell, *Die homiletische Theorie Philipp Melanchthons* (Berlin and Hamburg: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1968), pp. 15—17. *Philipp Melanchthons Schriften zur Praktischen Theologie: Homiletische Schriften*, ed. Paul Drews and Ferdinand Cohrs, *Supplementa Melanchthonia*, V, 2 (Frankfurt: Minerva G. M. B. H., 1968), reprint of Leipzig 1929 edition.

⁴⁹ Ludwig Geiger, *Johann Reuchlin: Sein Leben und seine Werke* (Reprint of 1871 Leipzig edition; Nieuwkoop: B. de Graaf, 1964), pp. 158—59.

⁵⁰ St. A, III, 29—42.

⁵¹ Maurer, *Junge Melanchthon*, I, 173.

⁵² So *ibid.*, I, 184, 192—98; Hartfelder, pp. 183—87.

⁵³ *De rhetorica*, p. 30.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Kohls, *Die Theologie des Erasmus*, II, 116, n. 497; Schirmer, pp. 34—36.

⁵⁶ Wilhelm Maurer has shown that Melanchthon's understanding of Law is closer to Luther's than Erasmus'. This basic difference also accounts for the difference in Melanchthon's and Erasmus' ethical concepts. Wilhelm Maurer, "Lex spiritualis bei Melanchthon bis 1512," in Friedrich Hübner, Wilhelm Maurer, and Ernst

Erasmus, who reserved the term for the ceremonial laws of the Jews.⁵⁷ Melanchthon went farther than Erasmus in maintaining that there are no differences between natural law and social sanctions.⁵⁸

In the 1519 *Rhetoric* Melanchthon as a pedagog advocated the *loci*-method. The method goes back to Aristotle; Melanchthon based his judgment of Aristotle's method on Cicero, reinforced by the writings of Porphyry and Themistios (both fl. ca. 400). Among the humanists he praised Rudolf Agricola, Conrad Celtis, and Erasmus for their use of this method. Erasmus valued the *loci*-method not only for its pedagogical value but also because it has a formative effect on those who live in the world.⁵⁹ Melanchthon emphasized both of these objectives. His *loci*-method is grounded in dialectics; ethical conduct rises out of an understanding of ethics neatly ordered according to topics.⁶⁰ Again the humanist is also the reformer.

This is perhaps most evident in the short section which Melanchthon devoted to homiletics in the 1519 *Rhetoric*.⁶¹ Melanchthon did not follow the *Ars praedicandi* issued by Reuchlin in 1502, which was centered in the rules for the orators of antiquity. Melanchthon focused on the in-

Kinder, eds., *Gedenkschrift für D. Werner Elert: Beiträge zur historischen und systematischen Theologie* (Berlin: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1935), pp. 171—98; idem, *Melanchthon-Studien*, pp. 103—36.

⁵⁷ Maurer, *Junge Melanchthon*, I, 314—18.

⁵⁸ Kohls, *Die Theologie des Erasmus*, II, 37—38, n. 40.

⁵⁹ See *De rhetorica*, pp. 45—47, 59 ("honestum, utile, facile"), pp. 69—72.

⁶⁰ Sperrl, p. 36; see pp. 32—37.

⁶¹ *De rhetorica*, pp. 103—7; Schnell, p. 19; Maurer, *Junge Melanchthon*, I, 209—14.

terpretation of the text from Holy Writ; hermeneutics lent exegesis its value. In his applications Melanchthon used the *loci*-method also for the art of preaching. His insistence on Scripture was learned not only from Luther but also from the Greek church fathers. The Biblical humanist contributed an extremely significant methodology for the Reformation in this section of his *Rhetorica*.⁶²

There are many topics that need further investigation to document adequately the relationships between Christian humanism and the Reformation in the relationships between Erasmus and Melanchthon. Melanchthon's role in Luther's *Kleiner Galatertekommentar*,⁶³ his *Loci communes* of 1521 with its emphasis on Law and sin and grace, the Law-Gospel dichotomy of Lutheran theology, and its anthropology that spoke of man's unfree will,⁶⁴ the debate between Luther and Erasmus on this selfsame question,⁶⁵ the contacts (direct

⁶² Schnell, pp. 60—63.

⁶³ Ellinger, pp. 101—5; Maurer, *Junge Melanchthon*, II, 50—54, 64—67.

⁶⁴ St. A, II, 1; Wilhelm Pauck, *Melanchthon and Bucer*, Vol. XIX in the *Library of Christian Classics* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969).

⁶⁵ See Wilhelm Maurer, "Melanchthons Anteil am Streit zwischen Luther und Erasmus," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, XLIX, 1/2 (1958), 89—115. Erasmus attacked Melanchthon in a letter of 6 Sept. 1524 and again in the *Hyperaspistes*. Melanchthon did not strike back, and Erasmus resumed correspondence in 1528. Maurer believes that Melanchthon revised his conception of the freedom of the will. Rogness, p. 60, does not agree.

Harry J. McSorley, *Luther: Right or Wrong? An Ecumenical-Theological Study of Luther's Major Work, The Bondage of the Will* (New York: Newman Press; Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1969), does not say much about Melanchthon's role in this controversy. He does point out, p. 9, that Melanchthon rec-

and indirect) between Erasmus and Melanchthon at the 1530 Diet of Augsburg,⁶⁶ the mutual concerns of these men for ecumenism or the unity of the church,⁶⁷ are

ognized that "Erasmus had attacked the very center of Luther's thought." He concludes that later Melanchthon broke with Luther on this question. See pp. 363 f. and p. 10, n. 8.

⁶⁶ See, for example, Bainton, *Erasmus*, pp. 262—64.

⁶⁷ Margaret Mann Phillips, "Some Last Words of Erasmus," *Luther, Erasmus, and the Reformation: A Catholic-Protestant Reappraisal*, ed. John C. Olin, James D. Smart, and Robert E. McNally (New York: Fordham University Press, 1969), pp. 87—113.

Carl S. Meyer, "Melanchthon, Theologian of

some of the topics that ought to be investigated and presented.

Enough has been said, however, to show that Biblical humanism in its relation to the Reformation was extremely complex and extremely significant.

St. Louis, Mo.

Ecumenism," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, XVII, 2 (October 1966), 185—207; Jürgen Larsen, "Melanchthons oekumenische Bedeutung," *Philipp Melanchthon: Forschungsbeiträge zur vierhundertsten Wiederkehr seines Todestages dargeboten in Wittenberg 1960*, ed. Walter Elliger (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961), pp. 171—79.