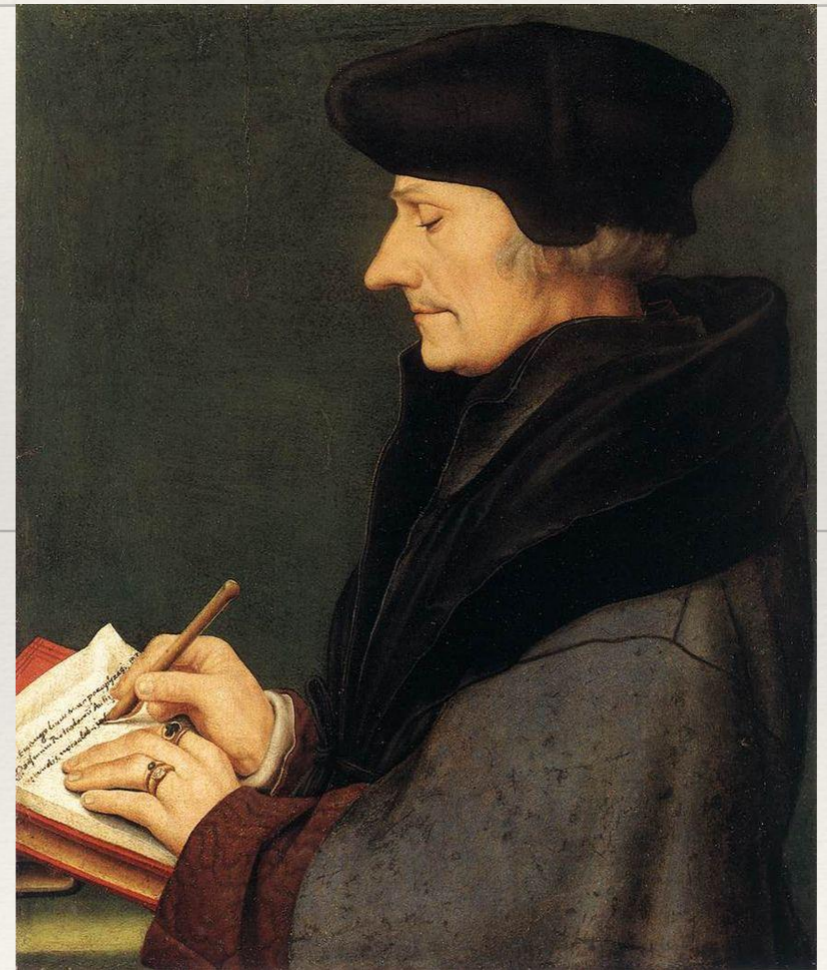


Invisible College of Pacifismology

The Quest for Peace - Erasmus' Light and Shade

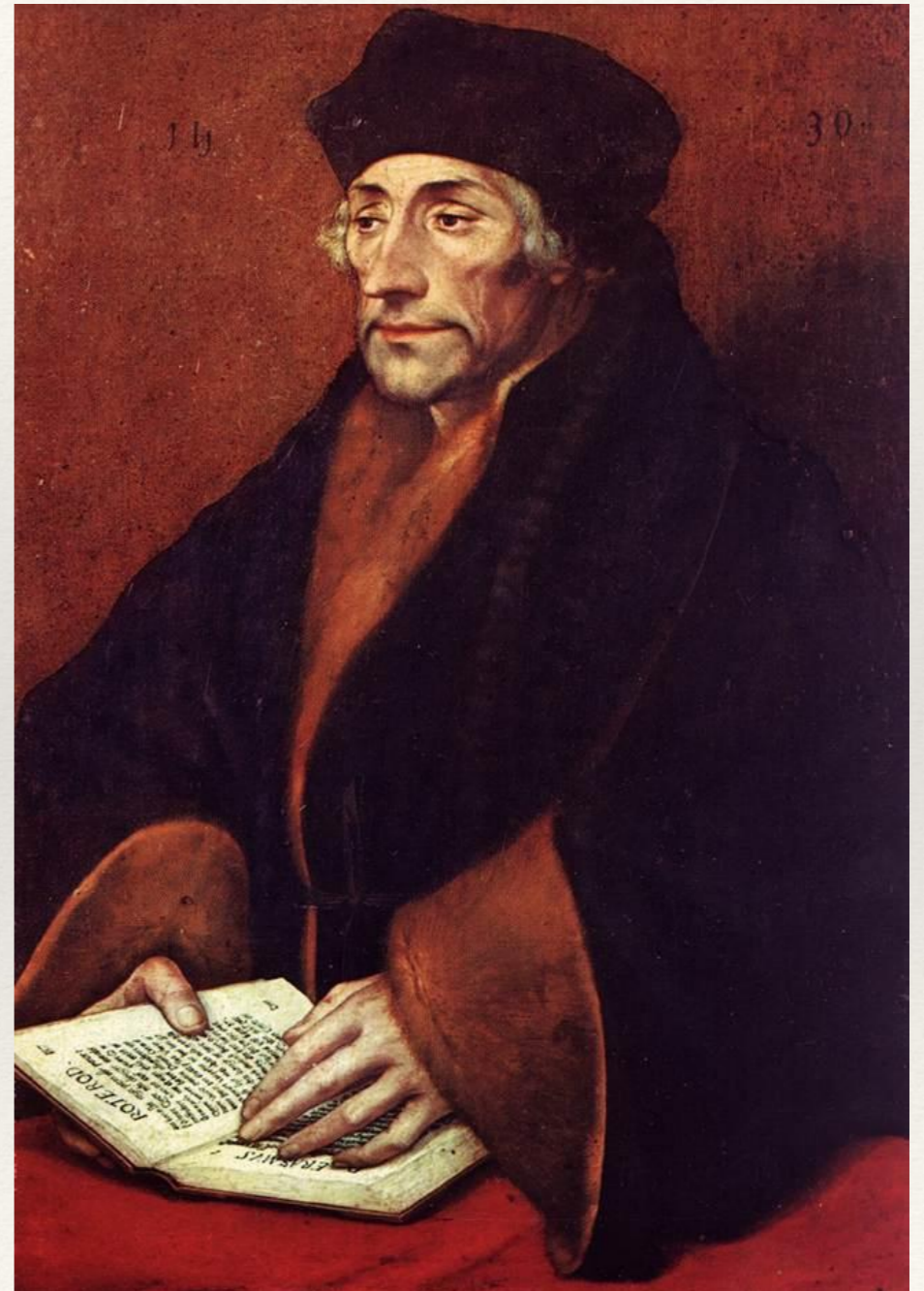


Short Biography

- * **Obscure youth** - son to a priest and a doctor's daughter (*Desiderius* - "the desired one" - was looked after his parents);
- * **Parents** died from the Plague in 1483. That reinforced viewing his origins as a stain;
- * **At 9**, he and his older brother Peter were sent to the best Latin school in Deventer;
- * **Victimisation**: weak body, poor health X harsh rules, strict methods of the school and bullying;
- * **±1487**: forced by poverty, enters religious life, as an Augustinian canon regular;
- * **Ordained** catholic priest at 25, by **Henry of Bergen**, Archbishop of Cambrai.

Breaking Free

- ❖ The bishop needed a Latin Secretary;
- ❖ Erasmus is to join in the bishop's travels;
- ❖ Erasmus is dismissed by Pope Leo X from priest's obligations (a rare privilege, even today);
- ❖ Goes to England and makes many friends, refuses positions;
- ❖ Lots of minor jobs, to keep freedom to write his own works;
- ❖ Lots of travels all around Europe, including Portugal.



Rise of Humanism

- ❖ From the 14th to the 16th Centuries there was an increase in interest in classical Greek-Roman culture
- ❖ New values: individualism, reasoning, criticism to dogma, interest in learning
- ❖ More openness to criticism, even within the church

Reformation

- ❖ Wish to maintain harmony and unity of the Catholic church, reformation would follow from within
- ❖ Criticized many aspects of the church, including corruption and abuse
- ❖ Interest in returning to a simpler, more primitive form of christianity
- ❖ Protected by high-rank people in the church
- ❖ Constantly criticized by extremists from both sides
- ❖ Achilles' heel: **Ulrich von Hutten**
- ❖ Initial agreement, then disagreement with **Luther**

*“Erasmus injured us more with his wit than Luther
by his anger.”*

–Pope Leo X

Erasmus' Influences

- ❖ British humanists - help in Greek
- ❖ Thomas More - one of his best friends
- ❖ Jean Vitrier - Franciscan friar. Spiritual counselor
- ❖ First fathers of the church - Origenes (185-254), St. Jerome
- ❖ Greek philosophers - Plato, Socrates, Aristotle
- ❖ Cicero - Roman philosopher and politician of the 1st Century

Strong Traits

- ❖ **Intellectual.** Lots of books and letters, skills in Greek and Latin, **translations**, criticism to the church
- ❖ **Pacifism.** “*Dulce bellum inexpertis*” Always against war and death penalty. Wish to reconcile conflicting sides of the church
- ❖ **Autonomy.** Always tried to keep away from external influence to have free thinking. Refused positions and advantages
- ❖ **Multicultural.** Lived in many countries, use of Latin as *lingua franca*. No nationalism
- ❖ **Optimism.** All disputes could be resolved through dialogue if there is education

“By burning Luther’s books you may rid your bookshelves of him, but you will not rid men’s minds of him.”

—

Weak Traits

- ❖ **Religiosity.** Primordial importance of religion above anything else. "Christocentric"
- ❖ **Elitist.** Believed that only people from the elite could be educated to act more kindly. Wrote for the Elite and only in Latin
- ❖ **Sexuality.** Remained celibate all his life
- ❖ **Pride.** Was proud of his works and sensitive to criticism
- ❖ **Conflicts.** Had many disputes along life, leading to bitter attacks

Concedo nulli!

“I yield to nobody!”

Erasmus' famous motto. Seen by his enemies as a sign of intolerable arrogance. He tried to justify it, but humility was not one of his biggest virtues.



Relation With the Protestant Reform

- ❖ Ideas about abuse from the Catholic church, conveyed by *A Praise to Folly*
- ❖ Compilation of the Gospel - Erasmus' Greek translation was used as a source by Luther's bible in German
- ❖ Initially, Luther admired him; but over time hostility escalated between the two; divergence of ideas
- ❖ **Von Hutten** forced Erasmus to be publicly against Luther; theology disputes about free will
- ❖ Erasmus always believed in the unit of church, he was against the separation
- ❖ At the same time Catholic authorities: "Erasmus laid the egg that Luther hatched"

Causes of the Reformation

- ❖ Breaking of celibacy
- ❖ Corruption
- ❖ Simony: commerce of indulgencies, positions
- ❖ Greed

What about Luther?

- ❖ In one of his letters: *"I drink like a German; I eat like a Bohemian "*
- ❖ **Bohemian - *Jan Hus:** also tried a reformation; executed in the fire

“You are burning a goose (hus). But in one hundred years it will become a swan”

–Jan Hus

Last Chance - Peace of Augsburg

- ❖ Emperor Charles V is decided to settle the question, even if it involves violence
- ❖ **Erasmus' worst failure:** called urgently by the Emperor to be the mediator, he does not attend. Sends lots of letters, gives a thousand excuses for not going
- ❖ **Melanchton's** brilliant role
- ❖ Tolerance is given to Lutherans, but many things remained unsolved, regarding Calvinists
- ❖ Consequence: 30 Years War - could that be avoided?

The End

- ❖ After Augsburg: depart from Freiburg, at 69, after a lifetime living in many cities
- ❖ Intimate feeling: life will end; affective need: to see again his homeland (The Netherlands)
- ❖ Stops in Basel, Switzerland, at Froben's, waiting for the snow to melt
- ❖ Bad news: friends Thomas More, John Fisher, Zwingli are killed "it's like I died with them"
- ❖ Desperation - "My friends disappear. My enemies increase"
- ❖ His books are forbidden; ostracized by both sides. Is offered a position as cardinal (bad joke?)
- ❖ Still works, even in his death bed. Letters, comments on Origenes, pamphlets. Trembling hands, body twisted in pain, writes and writes
- ❖ Lucid until the end, talks in refined Latin with Froben. Comes the moment. Last words "*Lieve God!*"



Peace

- ❖ Should we review our definition(s) of peace? For centuries we've been thinking as if we really knew it, taking it for granted.
- ❖ Is it time to *complexify* the concept?
- ❖ What prevents us from perceiving more of peace processes? What are the filters?

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