



A Salisbury-Cathedral-centric view of History.

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THE FIRST EUROPEAN

I have been fascinated by Desiderius Erasmus (1466 - 1536) ever since reading Charles Reade's *The Cloister and the Hearth* (Harper & Brothers 1861) at school. I recently ordered two books: *Erasmus Man of Letters* by Lisa Jardine (Princeton University Press 1993) and *Triumph and Tragedy of Erasmus of Rotterdam* by Stefan Zweig (Amazon reprint of 1934 book).

The first is an highly academic book by the daughter of Jacob Bronowski and argues that she has begun to trace the complex, and correspondingly virtuoso, ways in which Erasmus, master of print, masterly producer of himself as European man of letters, has come to stand, for all posterity, as the archetype and exemplar of the European scholar.

An Austrian Jew, Stefan Zweig (1881 - 1942) was, between the wars, one of the most widely translated and popular writers in the world. His work is insightful and philosophic but much more readable than Jardine's.

School history was rather simplistic and so on the Reformation we were taught that *Erasmus laid the egg but Luther hatched it*. However Erasmus was a complex character and quite unique for his time. He abhorred any kind of fanaticism so soon fell out with



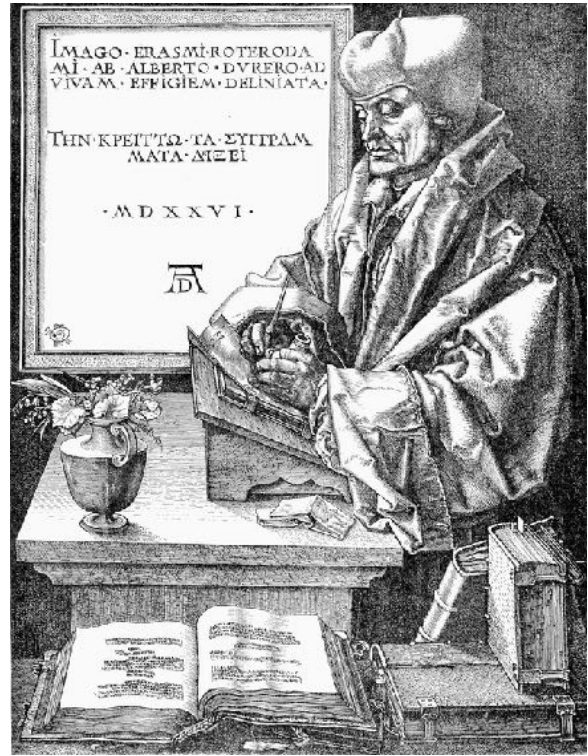
Martin Luther. He was born 'out of wedlock' and had a fairly tough and impecunious upbringing in the Church. He suffered from poor health all his life and never married. He learned to 'play the system' and managed to carve out an independent life, free from the controls of priory, university, pope and aristocracy. He did not regard any country as home and travelled a great deal.

Life changed for him when he came to England which was both peaceful and more open to ideas. His intellect soon brought him into contact with fellow humanist thinkers that would remain his firm friends: Sir Thomas More, dean of St Pauls John Colet, Richard Fox, bishop of Winchester, John Fisher, bishop of Rochester and Chancellor of Cambridge and many more.

I mention *Humanism* so perhaps a dictionary definition would be appropriate at this point: *A system of thought concerned with human rather than divine or supernatural matters. Seeking solely rational ways of solving human problems and concerned with mankind as responsible and progressive intellectual beings.*

An indefatigable letter writer, Erasmus became the hub of a great circle of humanists who could all communicate in Latin. Erasmus also learned Greek which unlocked even more links to the past. Among his contacts were the younger Hans Holbein and

Albrecht Dürer who along with Quinten Massys (Quinten Matsys) have left us many portraits of the great man. Of Albrecht, Erasmus wrote *What cannot Dürer express in monochromes, that is, black lines only (even though other techniques of his deserve admiration also)?* You will notice that Erasmus is portrayed in furs and a cap. He always felt the cold and had become prematurely bald. The Holbein on Page 1 is at the National Gallery (lent by Longford Castle!). The 1526 Dürer (above) is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, *both pictures are in the Public Domain*. Dürer, like Erasmus was a master at using printing, in his case to bring his art and message to the ordinary person.



Erasmus is often consciously posed in the copy of a St Jerome painting but in reality I think he is mentally descended from Socrates. As a sick man, only needing four hours sleep and totally devoted to his subject - and able to communicate it, he reminds me of a latter-day Stephen Hawking.

His refusal to join any party or cabal and value his independence above everything has meant that he has had 'a bad press' for being indecisive or for not joining one side or another (as in the Catholic Church v Lutherism). He first became involved with printing, proof-reading for Aldus Manutius' Aldine Press in Venice whilst studying for a Doctor of Divinity degree in 1508. Here he brought his humanist aesthetic and published his *Thousands of Adages* based on his collection of 3,260 proverbs. '*Erasmus sat in one corner of the printing-room, writing the Adagia from memory, according to the account reconstructed by University of Warwick historian Martin Lowry, and handing the text sheet by sheet to the compositors, too busy, by his own account, to scratch his ears, while in another corner sat Aldus, quietly reading over the proofs.*

His first widely-read book was *Lob der Narrheit* written in seven days whilst staying in the home of Thomas More. According to Zweig, *behind its carnival mask, this seemingly farcical Praise of Folly*



was one of the most dangerous books of its time, and what appears to us today to be merely witty fireworks was in reality an explosion that blasted the way open for the German Reformation: the Praise of Folly is one of the most effective pamphlets ever written....Seriousness and jest, knowledge and light-hearted teasing, truth and exaggeration swirl together in a colourful ball of yarn that unwinds again and again when one wants to grasp it and unwind it seriously. And if one compares it with the coarse knocking and mindless ranting of his contemporaries, one can well understand how such dazzling fireworks in the midst of intellectual darkness delighted and redeemed an entire century. He contrasts the Catholic Church's behaviour with Christ's meekness, patience, and contempt for earthly things and leaves the reader to make up their own mind. His judicious use of humour is just enough to prevent the authorities from banning the book.

Left is an excerpt from the first edition (1515) with marginal notes by the illustrator, Holbein. Courtesy of the Kunstmuseum, Basel and in the Public Domain.

There will no doubt be more on Erasmus in due course.

CORRESPONDENCE

Jon Scawin writes: A while ago I troubled you with some information relayed from a visitor about Regensburg Dom in Germany...that the ballflower decorations on the cathedral spire were there to control in some way the wind flow around the spire.

I had some confirmation of this from a visitor I took up the tower at the end of last week. He was, I think from his comments, a civil engineer or aerodynamicist. His view was that the spire decorations are there very definitely to control wind flow around the spire. He cited two examples: the spirals placed around factory chimneys Vortex shedding - Wikipedia and the reason why golf balls have dimples Turbulence - Wikipedia.

Cathedral Clerk of Works, Gary writes: I have no doubt that the decorations help break up the wind flow over the spire, but there are probably more spires in the country without them than there are with, and I very much doubt that it was ever a consideration when our spire was built.

Ref. J&T No.127 - Catherine Pell writes: I just wanted to let you know that Salisbury Cathedral currently cares for the Teffont Evias and Teffont Magna silver chalice and paten. I have a copy of a loan agreement dated 18/02/2002 and counter signed by Chris Crooks, Head Verger at that time. This was followed by a letter dated 26/02/2002 from D.M. McBain that pointed out that the two items belong to Teffont Magna, not Teffont Evias. The author states, 'We are actually not keen on playing up the distinction between the two churches since the parish has to support both of them (following its refusal to give up either one of them). The Diocese refers to Teffont Evias with Teffont Magna, which seems to me to be helpful in reducing the distinction.' The letter goes on to say that McBain will be back in touch when he has recovered the silver gilt flagon that is currently in the V&A museum. This belongs to Teffont Evias.

Ref. J&T No.127 - Gordon Verity writes: Reference Osmund / Aldhelm, I went to school as a small boy at Sandle Manor and on Sunday we went in procession to church in Sandleheath. The church was dedicated to St Aldhelm, a bit surprising as Sandleheath is just in Hampshire, not Wiltshire. Sadly I believe the church is now redundant.

TOMB TALK - Alexander Hyde (1598 - 1667)

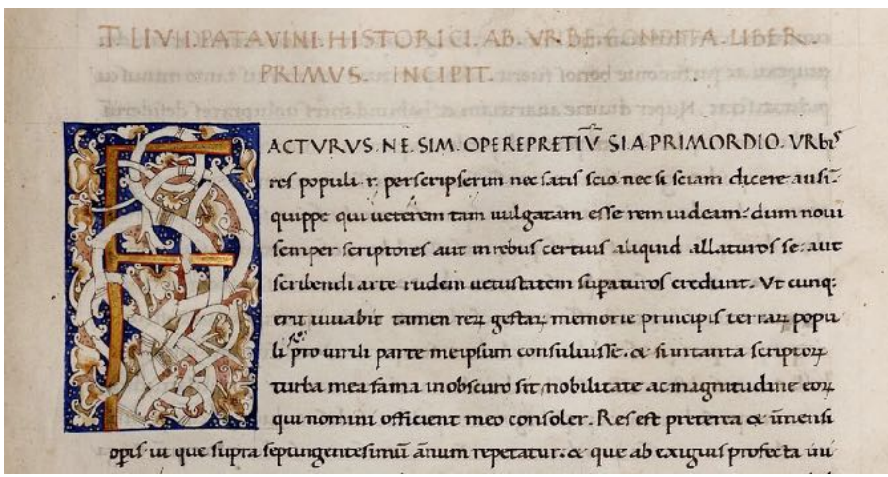
Buried under a slab in the south aisle of the nave. James Harris' 1825 book of epitaphs entry reads: *Hold stranger! here ends the journey of life. Beneath this stone lies Alexander Hyde, of a family you tread on all around you. A part of the church which you see the Head; to which in adversity he was a constant son; in prosperity a reverend father; in both, a patron; although he lived under both forms of government. However great this suffering in one, (surviving,) he was equalled in honors in the other. Strongly resembling Adam, both in prosperity and adversity; happier than Adam, because always innocent. He adorned this see almost two years, 1666 and 1667; his remains were brought from London, when he had not yet arrived at the 70th year of his age. If you reckon his years, he had almost reached the life of man, more than the life of man according to the general bounds of human existence.*



This Right Rev. Gentleman, Alexander Hyde, was 4th son of Sir Lawrence Hyde (above, courtesy of the National Trust and in the Public Domain) in the Close, where he was born. Being educated at Winchester, he was admitted of New College, and to a Doctor of Laws degree in 1632. In May the year following he was made Subdean of Salisbury, on the death of Giles Thornborough, and on the 5th of January 1638, was collated to the Prebend of South Grantham, in the same Church, upon the resignation of Dr. Humphry Henchman. It appears that his conduct and sufferings, during the civil wars, but little entitled him to a bishopric let that be as it may. Sir Edward Hyde, then Lord Chancellor, (whose kinsman he was,) made him in 1660 Dean of Winchester, and on the death of Dr. Earle, he was advanced to the See of Salisbury. On the 31st of December, he was consecrated in New College Chapel, the King, Queen, and their Courts being then at Oxford ; however, he did not long enjoy his dignity, dying in 1667, as aforesaid.

In 1634, Hyde was made rector of Wylve and Little Langford, Wiltshire. Like other members of his family, he was a staunch royalist and was sequestered from his livings under the Commonwealth, but reoccupied them at the Restoration. According to his epitaph, he gave generously to the repairs of the cathedral after its desecration by the soldiers of the parliament. He resigned the subdeanery of Salisbury in 1661 and his prebend there in 1665. His consecration as a bishop took place 31 December 1665 in New College Chapel, Oxford. Hyde died in St Giles in the Fields (near London), on 22 August 1667, aged 69, and was buried in the south aisle of the nave of Salisbury Cathedral, beneath a black marble slab bearing a Latin inscription.

His father, Lawrence Hyde, was the second son of Lawrence Hyde of Gussage St Michael, Dorset, who was third son of Robert Hyde of Norbury, Cheshire. His mother was Barbara Castilion of Benham, Berkshire. His brothers were Edward Hyde (a priest), Robert Hyde (a judge), and Henry Hyde (a diplomat), who was beheaded in London in 1650. His first cousin was Edward Hyde, 1st Earl of Clarendon. By his wife, Mary, daughter of Robert Tounson, and niece of John Davenant, Hyde had three daughters and a son, Robert (1650–1722), who ultimately succeeded to the family estates. His daughter, Margaret, was married to the paternal grandfather of vice-admiral Sir Hyde Parker (It was his signal Nelson ignored at Copenhagen).



TYPECAST

In talking about Erasmus, I mentioned Humanism. Well, this also affected printing. In fifteenth century Italy, writers and scholars rejected the gothic scripts in favor of the *lettera antica*, a classical mode of handwriting with wider, more open forms. Nicolas Jenson, a Frenchman who had learned to print in Germany, established

an influential printing firm in Venice around 1469. His typefaces merged the gothic traditions he had known in France and Germany with the Italian taste for rounder, lighter forms. Many typefaces we use today, including Garamond, Bembo, Palatino and Jenson, are named for printers who worked in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. These typefaces are generally known as “humanist”.

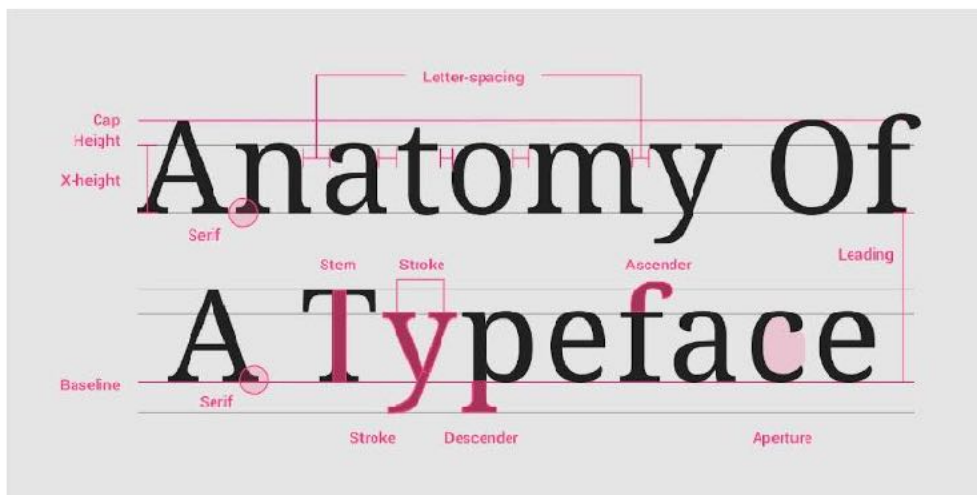
Above, sample of Poggio Bracciolini’s formal miniscule hand. From Livius, *Ab urbe condita* 1425–26. Miniscule is what we now refer to as lower-case, named after the lower drawer in a printer’s box of fonts. The attributes of a Humanist font are:



- 1 Sloping cross-bar on the lowercase “e”;
- 2 Relatively small x-height;
- 3 Low contrast between “thick” and “thin” strokes (basically that means that there is little variation in the stroke width);
- 4 Dark colour (not a reference to colour in the traditional sense, but the overall

lightness or darkness of the page). To get a better impression of a page’s colour look at it through half-closed eyes.

Everyone involved in Typography loves jargon, most of which comes from the days of letterpress and metal type. The diagram below explains some of the main terms. Technically, typeface refers to a particular style of lettering while font refers to its variations in size and weight. I am greatly indebted to *Thinking With Type* by Ellen Lupton (Princeton Architectural Press 2010).



QUOTE UNQUOTE

“Without education, we are in a horrible and deadly danger of taking educated people seriously.” GK Chesterton quoted in *The Knowledge* (newsletters@theknowledge.com).

SAINT NICK

One of our regulars, David Sherratt, recommended *The Perpetual Almanack of Folklore* by Charles Kightly (Thames & Hudson 1987), which I duly bought. I couldn't wait to dip into this fascinating little book which of course is in date order. Under 6th December I came across the following entry:

St Nicholas was a fourth-century bishop of Myra in Asia Minor, who was so pious even as a baby that he would only suckle once on fast days. He is said to have saved three maidens from prostitution by covertly throwing three golden balls for their dowries through their window by night: and to have miraculously revived three murdered boys pickled in a brine tub. He is thus the special patron of children (as well as of pawnbrokers, who use his three golden balls as a sign) and his nocturnal kindness is perpetuated in the gifts left by 'Sinte Klaas' - the dutch-American version of his name.*

'In Sarum Cathedral is a little monument of a Boy Bishop, who died in his office....The Tradition is, that this Child-Bishop being melancholy, the Children of the Choir did tickle him to make him merry; but they did so over-do it, that they tickled him to death.' John Aubrey *Remains of Gentilism and Judaism* 1686-7.

*Also mentioned in *Phrase and Fable* alongside the more usual explanation of the Medici coat of arms. According to *Lives of the Saints* by Fr. Alban Butler (Tan Books 1955), St. Nicholas died in 342 and in 1807 his relics were translated to Bari in Italy where the 'manna of St. Nicholas' still flows from his bones and heals all kinds of sick.

Below, St. Nicholas on his annual walkabout.



DID YOU KNOW?

Alexander the Great was only five feet tall (explains his belligerence). The appalling carnage at the battles of Magenta and Solferino between the French and Piedmontese on the one hand and the Austrians on the other, prompted Swiss humanitarian/businessman Henry Dunant (1828 - 1910) to found the Red Cross. *Courtesy of Military Mavericks by David Rooney (Cassell 1999).*