HUMANISM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PARIS IN THE EARLY RENAISSANCE

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STATEMENT BY AUTHOR

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INTRODUCTION

Humanism was the dominant intellectual movement in France during the sixteenth century. The word is derived from the Latin word humanus (that which concerns man: homo). In its most general sense, Humanism is the name given to those intellectual activities that survey the whole cultural condition of man. In the context of this thesis, however, it is the name given to the rediscovery, translation, elucidation, commentary, and interpretation of the Greek and Latin classics.

Humanism, which originated in Italy, did not meet with the same initial success in France as it had in Italy. Indeed, the early stages of its development were very difficult. Its chief and most powerful opponent in France was the obscurantist and Scholastic Sorbonne, the Faculty of Theology of the University of Paris.

So great was the renown and influence of the University of Paris in a France then as now highly centralized, that Humanism could and would not triumph until it had overcome the constant opposition of the great University.

It is the purpose of this thesis to examine the intellectual aspects of this struggle between Humanism and the traditional learning at the Sorbonne in the sixteenth century, as revealed in the writings of French Humanists and men of letters, and in the writings of the doctors of the Sorbonne. First, there will be an examination
of the background of the University of Paris in the sixteenth century, which will show the University to be essentially a mediaeval institution. Secondly, there will be an examination of the evolution of the Humanism of the Renaissance at the University of Paris, which will show the slow but steady infiltration of Humanism into the University. Thirdly, there will be a detailed examination of the Faculty of Theology of the University of Paris in the sixteenth century, which will show its conservative temper and obscurantist spirit. Finally, there will be a very detailed examination of the clash between the new Humanism and the Faculty of Theology, with special emphasis on the intellectual aspects, which will show the emergence of Humanism over the implacable opposition of the Sorbonne at Paris.

The period under discussion in this thesis does not include the entire century, but rather the period from 1470 to approximately 1534. This period opens with the first printing press in Paris and closes with the Affaire des Placards. This is not the golden age of Humanism in France. It skirts such great writers as Montaigne and Calvin, such immortal poets as Du Bellay, Ronsard, Sceve, and, more relevant so far as this thesis is concerned, such great scholars as Henri Estienne, Etienne Pasquier, Claude Fauchet, and Jacques Amyot.

This thesis is primarily concerned, as stated previously, with the difficult but nevertheless successful struggle of Humanism to establish itself against its chief enemy in France, the Sorbonne. It will be shown that by 1530, with the establishment of the Collège de
France, the struggle reached its successful conclusion and that, in the following few years, the Humanists successfully beat off the rear-guard actions of the Sorbonne.

This thesis does not deal with the Reformation in France, whose early adherents included many of the leading Humanists. The religious question is introduced indirectly to illuminate the sources of the reaction of the Theologians of the Sorbonne to Humanism.

It will be shown that the Humanists were correct in judging the Sorbonne incorrigibly reactionary in spirit, and hence justified in their belief that salvation for Humanism lay in creating a new Humanistic University, independent of the Sorbonne.

Great attention is placed throughout on the words and actions of the two chief actors in this drama, the protagonist Guillaume Bude and the antagonist, Noël Beda.
CHAPTER I

THE BACKGROUND OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PARIS

The origin of the University of Paris is difficult to pinpoint exactly. It is generally agreed, however, that it developed from the Cathedral School of Paris. This school was placed on the intellectual map by Guillaume de Champeaux (d. 1121), its first great Master. It was not Guillaume, however, but rather Pierre Abélard, his pupil and adversary, who first started students swarming to Paris from all over, a migration that has not yet stopped. Abélard is today justly noted for his famous love affair with Heloise. Yet it was his peerless skill as a logician and his philosophical contributions to the development of Scholasticism which attracted numerous students to Paris and helped to establish there a University of the first rank. A University offering the studium generale or basic curriculum gradually came into being in the twelfth century. A Society of Masters, as those who taught at the University were called, was established about 1170.¹

Thus by the end of the twelfth century a cosmopolitan band of students already existed at Paris and became organized because of three main reasons.² First, there was the need to protect their privileges, as clerics, against the encroachments of lay authority. To this end the University became an ecclesiastical polity independent
of the King, capable of reacting quite vigorously to royal intrusions. Secondly, a long struggle ensued between the University of Paris and the Chancellor of Notre Dame, the agent of the Bishop of Paris, in which the school asserted its autonomy as belonging not to the kingdom or to the diocese alone, but to the Church universal. Thirdly, the Papacy, trying to centralize the activities of the Church, supported the University in its struggle for autonomy.

Albert Guérard summarized the evolution of the University of Paris as follows:

The University was not, as we have seen, a single school expanding in orderly fashion; it was a confused aggregation of cosmopolitan students and masters, which gradually, and by the usual method, conflict, grew conscious of its unity and extended its privileges.

The corporate existence of the University was acknowledged by Royal Charter about 1200. In 1215 it received a definite statute from the Pope's Legate. This was strengthened by the Bull *Papae Scientiarum*, issued in 1231, which placed it directly under Papal jurisdiction. In 1219 the different "Faculties" were first mentioned. By 1222, the students, always a friendly and gregarious group and blessed with a strong sense of national solidarity, had formed numerous regional Clubs or nations approximating their origins. These were later reduced to four—French, Picard, Norman, and English. "The "English nation," which also included Northern and Eastern Europeans and, above all, Germans, were later transformed into the "German nation."

By the middle of the thirteenth century, the rector was elected by the combined "nations." The Rector gradually became head,
not only of the Faculty of Arts, but of the whole University.

Prior to the fourteenth century, the University of Paris possessed no property of its own, unless mention be made of the Pre-aux-clerces. Thus lectures had to be held in random places; usually in churches or convents. The University did not provide classrooms for its staff, which rented its own until the fourteenth century. The classrooms of the Faculty of Arts were found about the rue du Fouarre. The staff, not being paid salaries by the University, was dependent on benefices, religious orders, or fees received from their students.

The University of Paris was noted for its system of Colleges, similar to that prevailing today at Oxford and Cambridge. The Colleges were originally modest dormitories (hospicia) endowed by their founders—sometimes University Masters—to provide room and board for impoverished scholars (bursars). The head of the College at first limited himself generally to looking after the physical needs of his charges but, with the passage of time, played a gradually increasing role in their education.

There were many Colleges at the University of Paris—some sixty were founded before 1500. Among the more famous ones were the Colleges of Montaigu, Navarre, Harcourt, and Saint-Barbe. Yet none of these were to play an intellectual role equal to that played by the Sorbonne. The College of the Sorbonne was founded and endowed by Robert de Sorbon in 1257. It gave its name, moreover, to the whole Faculty of Theology, and the main building of the present University of Paris. With regard to the Colleges, originally only the bursars lived there.
Gradually all the students at the University came to live in them.

The Masters originally had a monopoly of the teaching at the University. The intrusions of the Mendicant Friars into the Faculty of Theology challenged their supremacy, however. These intrusions provoked the bitter and strong reaction of the University against the friars, a controversy which lasted until the fifteenth century. The University in 1253 expelled the friars, who then proceeded to appeal to the Pope. The champion of the University in the initial dispute resolved in 1255 was Guillaume de Saint-Amour, immortalized by the poet Rutebeuf. By decision of the papal Bull *Quasi lignum vitae*, the friars were theoretically given permission to participate in the affairs of the University, although, in fact, every obstacle was placed in their way.

Student life at the University of Paris was very spirited and, if anything, even more boisterous than that of students today. Albert Guérard gives us an excellent description, well worth quoting at length:

Many of the students, clerics though they were, led singularly unedifying lives. The "Goliards," as the most riotous of them were called, were little better than vagabonds. Self-support through menial service, as it still exists in America, was not unknown in the mediaeval universities; but the meaning of self-support seems to have been stretched so as to cover petty larceny. Villon, a whilem student, who wrote some of his masterpieces in jail and under the shadow of the gallows, was exceptional only in his genius. The poor student, neither fish nor fowl—a cleric without a benefice, a layman without a trade—formed a picturesque rather than a reputable element in mediaeval society. The fabliaux are full of his mad pranks. He might turn, according to the whim of fate, into a monk, a minstrel, or a pick-pocket. There is a lesson in the fact that the same Celtic word which in English became truant meant in French beggar and thief.
This dissolute behaviour of the students of the University of Paris is even more shocking when it is remembered that they were legally considered to be clerics. Yet the students redeemed themselves by tempering their excesses with “piety also and a genuine democracy, and a wonderful eagerness for sacred and profane knowledge.”

The curriculum at the University of Paris consisted of two general categories, equivalent to the contemporary American undergraduate and graduate schools respectively. First, there was the general or preparatory course, which comprised the trivium (grammar, rhetoric, dialectic or logic) and the quadrivium (arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music). This was the all-important Faculty of Arts whose Rector served also as the Rector of the entire University of Paris.

Secondly, together with the Faculty of Arts were found the graduate or professional schools: medicine (physica), civil and canon law (leges and decreta), and theology (pagina sacra). French Universities specialized in one or two of these studies. Montpellier, for example, specialized in civil law and medicine (and attracted Rabelais, who took his degree in medicine there); Toulouse in civil and canon law, with some theology; Orléans and Angers in arts and law. Paris was renowned in Europe for the study of theology, and for that reason was to attract many of the greatest minds of the Renaissance to its doors.

The method of teaching consisted not in reading the original sources or works but rather text-books and commentaries on them, such as Cicero in rhetoric, Porphyrius in dialectic, and Donatus in
grammar. Great emphasis was placed on Boethius, who was highly valued as an authority on classical antiquity, and whose writings on arithmetic, music, and philosophy were scrutinized closely.\textsuperscript{16}

This method was not limited to the Faculty of Arts; rather it extended to all the Faculties:

\textsuperscript{16} ni pour la Médecine, ni pour le Droit, ni pour la Théologie on ne se préoccupait d'aller aux sources; le manuel d'un commentateur éminent offrait le cadre et la matière de l'enseignement; aux écoles de Droit on commentait Accurse et Bartole, et à celle de Théologie, la Bible et le Livre des Sentences de Pierre Lombard.\textsuperscript{17}

Disputation played a very important role at the University:

\textsuperscript{17} Une part très large était réservée aux disputes, argumentations souvent subtiles sur des sujets scolaires; exercice intellectuel qui n'est pas dénué de valeur quand il échappe à la futilité et à la subtilité, la dispute jouait dans la formation d'alors le rôle attribué aujourd'hui aux travaux écrits.\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{18} Everywhere prevailed the strong worship of tradition and the supremacy of formal logic. "Scholasticism was the application of formal logic to the data of revelation."\textsuperscript{19} Scholasticism was the dominant school of philosophy at the University of Paris during the Middle Ages. Its greatest figure was St. Thomas Aquinas, who had taught at the University.

\textsuperscript{19} In the fourteenth century the much-cherished autonomy of the University of Paris was restricted, while the royal influence over it increased. It was hardly surprising, therefore, that in the ever-continuing struggle between the king and the papacy it supported the former, thus ensuring for itself a key role at the Council of Constance (1414-1415). The University became an important voice in politics. As is often the case, however, the rising worldly fortunes\textsuperscript{20} of the
University were linked with intellectual and spiritual decline.21

The language of instruction was Latin, whose standard unfortunately declined. French professors visiting Florence and Rome compared the graceful Latin spoken in those two cities to the disadvantage of its less elegant variant spoken in Paris.22 Robert Casaubon, after listening to a long and probably typical disputation at the Sorbonne, remarked that "he had never heard so much Latin spoken without understanding it."23

Greek, moreover, fared even worse. Latin was at least used extensively, whereas Greek was generally ignored, at least until the late Middle Ages. The all-important Aristotle suffered the crowning indignity of being studied only by means of Latin translations and commentaries.24 The reading of classical literature and, moreover, that of the Church Fathers—Latin as well as Greek—was neglected generally.25

By the fifteenth century Scholasticism, once so powerful, seemed to have exhausted itself. It was no longer a vital intellectual force, but was now moribund and mechanical, drawing justified contempt from the new thinkers spawned by the Renaissance.

Thus the University of Paris, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, was a spent force. The spirit of the University was conservative. Its vast organized authority was mobilized and used on behalf of Scholasticism at a time when the latter was declining.

The University was thus inhospitable to the winds of the new Humanism blowing in from Italy. Hence it drew the ire and barbs of the Humanists:
Whatever the particular knowledge, or teaching, which Italian humanists or Protestant reformers from time to time denounce, satirize, or cast from them, we are certain to find that in the Colleges of the University of Paris it had its chief citadel and its most powerful defenders. Yet so universal was its renown, so strong its attraction, that, amongst the men of northern race at least, its critics and its fiercest enemies are often those who have passed through its doors. Agricola, Reuchlin, Erasmus, Vives, Calvin, Dolet, Cordier, Sturm, were all students or teachers in its colleges, and all spent the best years of their lives in fighting its most cherished ideals.26

The beginning of the sixteenth century thus found the University of Paris out of sympathy with the Renaissance, its free intellectual development having been arrested during the Middle Ages.
Footnotes, Chapter I


2 Albert Léon Guérard, French Civilization from its Origins to the Close of the Middle Ages, pp. 199-200.

3 Ibid., p. 200.

4 Ibid., p. 200.

5 Pré-aux-clercs—not a building at all but rather a meadow in front of the Abbey of Saint-Germain-des-Prés in Paris, was used in the Middle Ages as a playground of the University.

6 Harvey and Heseltine, op. cit., p. 727.

7 The earliest college was the "Collège des dix-huit," established in 1180 by an Englishman returning from a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. It was intended to support eighteen students.

8 Ibid., p. 727.

9 Guérard, French Civilization, pp. 200-201.

10 Ibid., pp. 201-02.


14 Morçay, op. cit., p. 163.


16 Ibid., p. 203.

17 Morçay, op. cit., p. 163.

18 Ibid., p. 163.

19 Guérard, op. cit., p. 205.

20 The University had acquired many buildings and its famous library.


CHAPTER II

THE HUMANISM OF THE RENAISSANCE

The period of the Renaissance was, for France, inaugurated by the series of wars in which she participated in Italy at the end of the fifteenth century and the beginning of the sixteenth. Louis XII (1423-1483) proved to be as astute and forceful a monarch as ever lived in France. His character did not escape denunciations by moralists. His great contribution, however, was to give a strong, orderly, central government to France, a country reeling under the impact of the chaos and weakness unleashed by the Hundred Years' War.

Charles VIII (1470-1498) and Louis XII (1462-1515), as if to proclaim France's newly recovered virility, followed a policy of military expansion abroad, most notably in Italy. This policy was continued with a vengeance by Francis I (1515-1547), the great king of the French Renaissance. Francis I was a leading political figure of his day, a formidable rival of the all-important Charles V of Spain.

Francis I was smitten by the Renaissance while on an expedition in Italy and, as a consequence, became the great protector and patron of Humanism in France.

The invasion of Italy by France led her to an awareness of the life and spirit of the Renaissance. She was forced to re-examine her own ideas and traditions in the light of what she had seen in Italy;
still chafing under medieval restrictions, she found these ideas and
traditions lacking. Commerce, as well as war, was a means of bringing
the Renaissance to France. The ancient city of Lyons, a former capi-
tal of France and home of a large Italian colony, served as the center
for the French trade with Italy, by virtue of its proximity to that
country as well as the entrance point of Renaissance culture into
France.

Thus during the first part of the sixteenth century, enthusi-
asm—even obsession—for things Italian was the order of the day. No
aspect of French literature and art went unaffected by the influence of
Petrarchism, Platonism, and Italian art. Literature and Humanistic
studies, with which this thesis is primarily concerned, flourished in
France during this period.¹

The study of the humanities, as distinct from the formal logic
and barbarous Latin of the Scholastics, had as its greatest champion,
the doughty Guillaume Budé. He declared grandiloquently that
"... G. B. ne changerait pas, pour toutes les richesses, les joies
que lui a données la Philologie."² Budé believed strongly that
"every man, even if he be a King, should be devoted to philology."³

Woodward summarizes Budé's definition of philology and its im-
portance as follows:

Philology is interpreted as the desire for and love of
Letters and all liberal learning, which is so-called because
for its pursuit a man must be independent and free. Such
learning again is called by the ancients "human" or "humanis-
tic," for without interest in it, without "erudito," the world
would become animal and not human. But such learning is at-
tainable only by such as know Greek and Latin. Budé sets
forth the claim for the study of Greek as above all other
knowledge. It is more important than Latin learning. As a
language, as the embodiment of ideas, as the essential instrument of expression of philosophical truth it is unique. It is the necessary key to Latin, as the Romans readily allowed.  

No feature of Budé's personality was so striking as this seemingly insatiable thirst for Greek learning. He believed that glory was to be found therein: "... c'est par l'étude du grec que les humanistes peuvent se distinguer. C'est par là que les jeunes gens peuvent arriver à la gloire."  

For Guillaume Budé life and philology were inseparable:  

It is philology that has so long been my companion, my associate, my mistress, bound to me by every tie of affection... But I have been forced to loosen the bonds of a love so devouring... that I found it destructive to my health.  

Guillaume Budé was France's great advocate of Humanism, continually exhorting his countrymen, young and old, to warm themselves at its hearth. This point of view had already been expressed by an earlier writer, L. B. Alberti, in his work *Traité de la famille* (1441):  

Jeunes gens donnez tous vos efforts à l'étude des lettres, ... ainez a connaître les choses du passé dignes de mémoire, ... goûtez la joie de nourrir votre esprit de belles sciences ... cherchez à connaître les choses humaines. ... Il n'est pas de promenade si bellement fleurie qu'elle vaille l'agrément et le charme d'un discours de Démosthène, de Cicéron, de Tite-Live ou de Xénophon.  

Humanistic studies in France may be said to have started in 1470. In that year Guillaume Fichet founded what was the first printing press in Paris. The professor and librarian of the Sorbonne en profita pour mettre à la portée de ses étudiants des ouvrages propres à leur enseigner l'art de bien dire en latin: traités de rhétorique, modèles de style épistolaire, recueils d'élegances.
Fichet felt that he was presiding at the inauguration of a golden age of Humanism, which he compared to the hard times it had encountered during his youth:

J'esprouve un grand contentement ... en voyant les Muses et toutes les parties de l'éloquence qu'âge précédent avait ignorées, fleurir enfin dans cette ville. Quand, au temps de mes jeunes années, je quittai le pays de Baux et me rendis à Paris pour me mettre à l'étude d'Aristote, je m'étonnais de voir qu'à Paris un orateur ou un poète était chose plus rare qu'un phénix. Personne n'étudiait nuit et jour Cicéron, comme beaucoup le font aujourd'hui; personne ne savait faire un vers correct ni scander les vers d'autrui; l'école parisienne avait disparu la latinité, et tous ses docteurs ou presque en étaient descens à un langage barbare. Mais, à présent, nous voyons enfin des jours meilleurs, car, pour parler le langage des poètes, les dieux et les déesses font renaître chez nous la science du bien dire.

A setback to the cause of Humanism occurred in 1472 when Fichet left France and did not return. Time was marked until 1494, when the Paris press definitely began publishing humanistic books. This suggests that a market for such books was beginning to exist.

During the next eight years, a small but influential and conscientious circle of Humanists at the University of Paris studied the Latin language and literature diligently. The group's leader was Robert Gaguin, a great leader of early French Humanism. He was a professor of rhetoric at the University, teaching it, among others, to Reuchlin. To assist the students of Latin, Robert Gaguin published a work on Latin versification, Ars versificatoria (1473).

The death of Gaguin in 1502 was a blow to French Humanism, as it signaled the end of the first phase in the revival of classical studies in France, the phase of Latin rhetoric.

RADIUS ASCENSIIUS inaugurated a new phase in the study of
Latin with the establishment at Paris of his press in 1503. Together with his friend Jean Petit, Badius worked incessantly on behalf of Humanism. His labor resulted in the works of many Latin classical writers, as well as improved Latin grammars, rolling from his busy press. To aid students of Latin he wrote his "familiar commentaries." Jean Petit was the leading contemporary Parisian publisher and bookseller. It was significant of the growing strength of Humanism at this time that Petit threw his support behind it.12

Meanwhile Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples, working at the Collège of Cardinal Lemoine, made important contributions to Humanism. Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples is one of the great names in French Humanism. For the purpose of this thesis, his theology (which brought him into conflict with Noël Beda and the Sorbonne) is not stressed. Of greater relevance is his important reform of the study of Aristotle. Lefèvre d'Étaples edited some of Aristotle's works. He preferred to examine Aristotle at the source, without commentaries: "il faut boire à la source la pure liqueur des livres d'Aristote."13 Indeed, his method of philology was similar to that of Guillaume Budé.

Greek (suspect as the language of heretics) had fallen to a low estate during the Middle Ages. Greek was inevitably a plant of more delicate growth than Latin at Paris. Only in 1496 did the study of Greek at Paris begin seriously, with the arrival of Janus Lascaris. This talented, non-professional scholar helped no less a personage than Guillaume Budé to master Greek. Budé, however, minimized the importance of Lascaris' help and insisted that "il ne m'a pas donné en tout vingt leçons."14 In any case, when Lascaris left France for
Italy in 1504, Guillaume Budé was already a competent Greek student. Lascaris, moreover, left Budé his famous library of Greek books, an invaluable gift to the budding Greek scholar.

Greek nevertheless continued to labor under the disadvantages of inadequate facilities for scholarship. For example, no Greek press as yet existed. Thus Greek studies got a needed boost with the establishment in Paris of the first Greek press in 1507. In 1508 two important Humanistic works were published and their influence was greatly felt. Erasmus published his Adagia (Aldine Edition) and Guillaume Budé his Annotations aux pandectes. These two tradition-defying books helped to stir up interest considerably in classical antiquity and their numerous translations of Greek writers proved most useful to students.¹⁵

Perhaps the most important event in 1508, however, was the arrival in Paris of the great Italian Humanist, Jerome Aleandro. From 1509 almost continually until 1513 he delivered brilliant and very successful public lectures. In addition to this, he took over the direction of Gourmont’s Greek press. He left France in 1514. With his departure the number of books issued from Gourmont’s press declined. In the period from 1514 to 1517 seven Greek books were issued, while from 1517 to 1528 an average of one Greek book a year was published in Paris.¹⁶

Matters improved in 1526 with the establishment of the Royal Press, with Robert Estienne (a member of the famous printing family) as the first printer. Its purpose was set out in its Charter as follows:
We are persuaded that these sound studies will give birth in our Kingdom to theologians who shall teach the sacred doctrines of religion; to magistrates who shall administer justice without partiality and in the spirit of public equity; and finally to skilled administrators, the lustre of the State, who will be capable of sacrificing their private interest to affection for the public good. Such are among the benefits that may reasonably be looked for from sound studies and from them almost exclusively.17

The Royal Press was a great success. Woodward remarks that "the Royal Press was the instrument through which the noblest achievements of French scholarship were given to the world."18 From the year 1528 on, the output of Greek books increased considerably.

The Estiennes, Robert and Henri, were Latinists of world renown. So fanatical were they in their advocacy of Latin that they forced even their own household to speak Latin.19

The second generation of French Humanists (the generation of Francis I) found generally a considerably easier task before them than their predecessors had. They were so fortunate as to benefit from the considerable apparatus of scholarship (printing presses, grammar manuals, translations) bequeathed to them by their predecessors after much painstaking and diligent work. The competent Greek teaching now available in France obviated the need both for Italian teachers and trips to Italy. Moreover, Guillaume Budé and others saw to it that needed Greek books not available in France were imported from Italy.20

The most noted personality of the earlier Humanism in France was Guillaume Budé (1467-1540). A man of great learning, his enthusiasm for Greek has already been mentioned. It is said that he was once so absorbed in gaining knowledge that he forgot that it was his wedding day and forsook his bride for his books.21 After leading the life of a
somewhat dissolute playboy, Bude, upon reaching manhood, had turned into a serious and productive scholar. He served as Louis XII's envoy to the Pope and was very highly regarded by Francis I, serving first as his secretary and later as his librarian at Fontainebleau. He was also instrumental in persuading Francis I to establish what was to be the Collège de France.  

Bude's chief works were Latin translations from Plutarch; Annotations aux pandectes, a work on Latin jurisprudence which blasted the Commentator's interpretation of the jurisprudence; De philologia, a dialogue with the king, in which Bude was in his familiar role of apologist for Humanism; De asse (1514), an essay on ancient coins, that attempted to relate classical literature to economics, interspersed with digressions on French patriotism and Christian piety; and Commentarii Linguae Graecae (1529), a philological study of the Greek language, of great value to contemporary students. His Institution du Prince was written in French.

Guillaume Bude was a founder of philology as a science. His method of studying Greek texts was very rigorous. He sought to establish a better text and to give truer explanations of its meaning. He did so by an expert knowledge of Greek and of classical history, and he deliberately disregarded the works of the Commentators.  

François Rabelais, during the period when he lived at the Franciscan convent of Fontenay-le-Comte, corresponded with Bude, and received from him encouragement on his Humanistic bent. Bude was wont to encourage talented Humanistic tyros. Bude's correspondence is
voluminous. It depicts him as a man engaged, the paladin of Humanism, and gives us much insight into the development of Humanism. Bude corresponded with most of the greatest Humanists of the day: Rabelais, Erasmus, More and others. His correspondence, which has been edited by Louis Delaruelle, shows Bude as the ever active propagandist of Humanism, elated by its triumphs and depressed by its setbacks. Yet Bude was confident that Humanism would eventually triumph and confound its critics: "... les adversaires de l'humanisme finiront bien par se taire; la faveur populaire les abandonnera." 25

Lascaris was certainly justified when he declared to Lazare de Baille that Bude had contributed as much to the cause of Greek in France as Cicero had in Italy. 26 In the period under discussion in this thesis (1470-1530), he was indeed the greatest personality of French Humanism.

A revitalized France, newly recovered from the enfeeblement of the Hundred Years' War, proved receptive to the new currents of the Renaissance blowing in from Italy. This receptivity towards the Renaissance was not shared initially by the entire nation, but rather by small but elite groups at the Universities and at the Court.

These Humanists had as their first task the mastering of the classical Greek and Latin languages. The establishment of the mechanics of classical scholarship followed. Greek and Latin presses were established, dictionaries were written, better translations were secured. The stress was laid on study of the works themselves rather than studies of commentaries of them. Many difficulties were faced and
surmounted. It was by the perseverance in study by a few lovers of classical learning, and above all by Guillaume Budé, that Humanism was established in France.

Before this happened, however, Humanism had to overcome the almost fanatical opposition of the old Scholastic and conservative University of Paris in general, and its reactionary and obscurantist Faculty of Theology, the Sorbonne, in particular. This fierce opposition will be discussed in the following chapter.
Footnotes, Chapter II

1 For an excellent account of the origins of the Renaissance in France, see Erich Auerbach, *Introduction aux études de philologie romane*, p. 152.


13 Delaruelle, *Guillaume Budé*, p. 52.


CHAPTER III

THE FACULTY OF THEOLOGY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PARIS

The Sorbonne was the Faculty of Theology at the University of Paris. It was not always thus, however; indeed its origins were much more modest. The Sorbonne had been established about 1257, the result of a philanthropic gesture by Robert de Sorbon, Canon of Notre Dame and confessor and counselor of Louis IX. The living conditions of poor theological students at the University during the Middle Ages were a matter of deep concern to thoughtful people. Many of the students underwent great privation, having inadequate room and board. Robert de Sorbon attempted to remedy this situation (to a small degree) by establishing a hostel to care for sixteen bursars. This hostel, later admitting students other than bursars and strengthened by further financial transfusions, developed into the College of the Sorbonne.1

In the sixteenth century the Sorbonne became the Theological Faculty of the University of Paris. This was the result of the decision of the Faculty about 1554 to use the Sorbonne as the locale to examine suspected heresies, as well as to hold the doctoral examinations there. The name Sorbonne was thus used for the whole University. The Sorbonne was suppressed at the time of the French Revolution, but
it was restored by Napoleon. 2 At present, the Sorbonne is the main block of buildings at the University of Paris; it is now the seat of public courses in arts and sciences at the University. For the purposes of this thesis, however, the Sorbonne is identified as the Faculty of Theology at the University of Paris, despite the fact that this was not officially so until after the period covered in this thesis.

The theological instruction at the Sorbonne was thorough and rigorous, and may be described as follows:

... the course was threefold: reading and interpretation of the Bible and of the maxims of the Church Fathers, disputation, and preaching. The exegetical exercises were held twice daily, each student being required to write a summary of the main points presented; the disputation, upon some theme previously announced, took place between two students each Sunday; but preaching seems to have received little attention.3

Robert de Sorbon early undertook to prevent his theological students from being infected with professional narrowness. To this end Robert founded in 1570 the Collège de Calvi. An annex to the Sorbonne, it was intended to provide the theological students with proper background in literature and philosophy. In addition, Robert founded (together with Guirard d'Abbeville) what was to be the great library of the Sorbonne.

Almost from the beginning, the Faculty of Theology had played a very active part in the life of the times, never limiting itself merely to theological instruction. In the thirteenth century, for example, it reacted most violently when it considered its position threatened by the mendicant friars. 4 Such was its reputation in
Christendom that in 1393 fifty-four of its doctors had been asked to give advice on ending the Papal schism. The University, moreover, was not only a religious power but also a political one. Throughout the Hundred Years' War it was deeply committed in French politics, generally supporting the Burgundian party. In addition to this, it recognized Henry VI and participated in the condemnation of Joan of Arc. Thus the Faculty of Theology was indeed a force in its own right, a force to be feared and reckoned with, but never to be ignored.

The great fame of the University of Paris rested largely on its Theological Faculty, whose degree of Doctor of Theology was the most prestigious in Western Europe. Students came from all over Europe to qualify for it. It was obtained only after fifteen long years of rigorous, concentrated study. The candidate applied himself to exhaustive study of the Bible (four years) and Peter Lombard's Sentences (two years). For his pains the candidate received the degree of baccalaureus ad biblia. This was a prerequisite to three years of assorted lecturing until he received his sententiarius or baccalaureus formatus. Only after six more years of study and teaching was the tired and harassed candidate finally permitted to take his doctorate. He forthwith joined the company of the most august intellectuals in Europe.

The Sorbonne was a formidable institution and such was its influence that it was frequently said that "Papa et Universitas Parisiensis duo lumina mundi" (The Pope and the University of Paris are the two lights of the world). Indeed when it came to theological
opinion it was regarded as rivaling the Papacy itself. Erasmus, often
as bitter a critic as it ever had, was forced to admit that "The
University of Paris is by the consent of the whole world the first of
all universities. . . ."8

During its prime the Sorbonne was generally a progressive
force. It was the Sorbonne, for example, that furnished the leaders
of the University of Paris who, in the fifteenth century, demanded the
reform of the Church by a general Council.9 It also drove the
scandalous Feast of the Fools out of the Church and opposed the intro­
duction of the Peter's-pence. To its eternal credit, it opposed the
extension of the Inquisition into France.

Throughout the Middle Ages the teaching at the Sorbonne was
the most brilliant in Christendom. Among the names connected with it
were Abelard, St. Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus, and Thomas of Occam.
The theology of the Sorbonne was Scholastic and may be summarized as
follows:

The general tendency of that theology was that which must
underlie all true theology—a perfect mediation between
faith and knowledge, religion and science, theology and
philosophy; but, in pursuing that tendency, the Sorbonne al­
ways kept its doctrines pure, that is, in harmony with the
 teachings of the Church, though without submitting in a
slavish manner to ecclesiastical misuses or sacerdotal ec­
centricities.10

Scholasticism reached its greatest maturity at the Sorbonne
during the Middle Ages. By the sixteenth century, however,
Scholasticism (once so vigorous and brilliant) had declined and become
narrow, sterile, and mechanical. It ceased contributing significantly
to the advancement of learning and became immersed in irrelevancies.
So too was it with the theologians. Their thinking was mechanical, their writings wooden. They became, indeed, fair game for contemporary satirists.

Erasmus, for example, satirized the logical gymnastics of the theologians of the Sorbonne:

... will tell you to a tittle all the successive proceedings of Omnipotence in the creation of the universe; they will explain the precise manner of original sin being derived from our first parents; they will satisfy you as to how ... our Saviour was conceived in the Virgin's womb, and will demonstrate, in the consecrated wafer, how accidents may subsist without a subject ... how one body can be in several places at the same time, and how Christ's body in heaven differs from His body on the cross or in the sacrament.

The Sorbonne had, in fact, become a sort of theological factory. Delaruelle summarized its aim succinctly: 

"C'est toujours la formidable machine construite au moyen Âge pour fabriquer les théologiens. Tout continue d'y être subordonné à cette fin." 12

These theologians were often bitterly criticized by their students. Clément Marot, for example, remarked that "I am willing to lose my share of paradise if those great beasts did not ruin my youth." 13

Disputation was stressed greatly, some thought too much. For example, a young Swiss, arriving at Paris in 1517, had this to say about a disputation which he was so unfortunate as to witness:

"On n'en voulait pas peu à Adam de ne/avoir mangé de poires au lieu de pommes et tous ces hommes graves contenaient à peine leur indignation. Mais la gravité du théologien l'emporta sur la colère. Adam réussit à s'en tirer favorablement et sans blessures. Je suis parti, écœuré par tant de sottises." 14

Another briefer, but equally acrid criticism was uttered by
Robert Casaubon. Once when he was shown the old hall of the
Sorbonne, his guide exclaimed: "Voilà une sale où il y a quatre cen
ans qu'on dispute." Casaubon replied with the question: "Qu'a-t-on
décidé?"\(^{15}\) Ramus declared that "On n'entendait parler que de supposi-
tions, d'ampliations, de restrictions, d'ascensions, d'exponibles,
d'insolubles, et autres chimeres pareilles."\(^{16}\)

Despite the decline of the University of Paris, its reputation
remained universal, its appeal powerful. It continued to be a magnet
to men of genius, particularly from Northern Europe. Thus Erasmus,
Calvin, Reuchlin, Vives, Agricola, Cordier, Dolet, and Sturm, were all
teachers or students at the University of Paris.

These gentlemen, all of them adventurous souls influenced by
the Humanism of the Renaissance, were repelled by the mediaevalism and
conservative temper of the University, and particularly that of the
Sorbonne. Their most active and creative years were devoted to sup-
pressing that which the Sorbonne considered most sacred.\(^{17}\)

Erasmus, the greatest Humanist of his time, was particularly
disgusted with the Faculty of Theology. He had made numerous visits
to Paris in the last years of the fifteenth century, having arrived
for the first time in September, 1494. His stay, with interruptions,
lasted until 1499, to be continued later. His aim, not attained at
Paris, was to receive the doctor's degree. Erasmus had wished to
study St. Jerome at the Sorbonne. He soon found, however, that very
few read his writings, that of these only a handful appreciated them,
and, moreover, that scarcely two or three could understand them.\(^{18}\)
Erasmus was repelled by the Scholasticism of the University of Paris, whose Colleges carried such names as "... Scot, d'Albert le Grand et d'autres auteurs encore plus ignorants." He found it particularly hard to reconcile himself to the views of the Scotistes:

A ce qu'ils disent, les mystères de la théologie restent inaccessibles à quiconque a fréquenté les Muses ou les Graces. Ils vous forcèrent de desapprendre le peu que l'on sait de belles-lettres; ils vous font revivre tout ce que vous avez bu à la source de l'Hélicon. Vraiment...
y a-t-il cervelles plus imbeciles que celles de théologastres? Pour moi, je ne sais rien de plus barbare que leur langage; rien de plus grossier que leur intelligence; rien de plus épineux que leur doctrine, rien de plus violent que leurs discours.

Erasmus continued his assault on Scholasticism. He observed pungently that:

Those studies can make a man opinionated and contentious; can they make him wise? They exhaust the mind by a certain jejune and barren subtlety, without fertilizing or inspiring it. By their stammering and by the strains of their impure style they disfigure theology which had been enriched and adorned by the eloquence of the ancients. They involve everything whilst trying to resolve everything.

Erasmus was one of the most intransigent of critics of the Sorbonne. Guillaume Budé was also contemptuous of the Sorbonne. Originally he underestimated its obscurantism, declaring "Ici les théologiens sont moins féroces." He later changed his mind, however, and dismissed it as "l'école des sophistes."

Probably the most famous satire of all against the Sorbonne was penned by François Rabelais, in *Gargantua*. He satirized violently the professors of theology at the Sorbonne, with the humorously unforgettable portrait of Maître Janotus, come to retrieve the bells of Notre Dame (carried off by Gargantua) and his pedantic, stilted
François Rabelais condemned Scholasticism in general. He sketched a very unappealing portrait of Maître Thubal Holopherne, the first of Gargantua's teachers, who contented himself with forcing his charge to learn by heart ridiculous and superannuated books. Maître Holopherne was depicted as a Doctor of Theology who succeeded in making his pupil progressively more ignorant by forcing him to study the alphabet for five years and three months until he was able to recite it backwards. Holopherne then made Gargantua study the mediaeval textbooks for thirteen years, six months, and two weeks until he knew them thoroughly. Next, Gargantua spent eighteen years and eleven months studying De Modis Significandi. Finally, Gargantua spent sixteen years and two months on an obscure Roman work.

Gargantua's next teacher, Maître Jobelin Bride', proved to be no better. He was a wheezy old pedant who read him such books as Liber Derivationum, De Octo Partibus Orationis, and the monkish Memmotreptus. Both these teachers represented, in perhaps an extreme...
and exaggerated form, the faults of the Scholastic Doctors of Theology of François Rabelais' day.

Perhaps the key figure in the Sorbonne and the leader of its struggle against Humanism was Noël Beda, Principal of the Collège of Montaigu and Syndic of the Faculty of Theology. Born in Picardy, date unknown, he died in 1536. During his lifetime he showed himself to be an implacable enemy of Erasmus, Lefèvre d'Étaples and, indeed, of anyone whom he considered, in the matter of studies and religion, contaminated by the heresy of the Renaissance. By the violence of his reaction, Beda succeeded in arousing Scholastic passions and dominated the Faculty of Theology. He managed to have the Sorbonne condemn, among others, Erasmus and Lefèvre d'Étaples.

Beda unfortunately did not write his autobiography. Virtually everything known about Noël Beda has been culled from the writings of his enemies and thus may be questioned as to accuracy. His critics have been merciless on him and have tried to defame his reputation. François Rabelais, for example, accused Beda of being the author of a work on the excellence of tripe, although he did not know him personally. Others accused Beda of being a gourmand, a reputation which has stuck. 26

Thus the beginning of the sixteenth century found the University of Paris and its Colleges the main bulwarks of mediaevalism in French intellectual and cultural life. During the Middle Ages the University of Paris had been the foremost seat of learning in all Christendom. Its Faculty of Theology, the Sorbonne, was the brightest jewel in its
crown. It had attracted the best minds of the time to its doors and, within the limits of its Christian faith, had encouraged free inquiry.

The dominant theology of the Sorbonne was Scholasticism. A vigorous force during the Middle Ages, it had now become restrictive and mechanical, making the Sorbonne the butt of ridicule of Humanists everywhere. The dominant temper of the Sorbonne was conservative, little adapted to the eager acceptance of the Humanism of the Renaissance.

The Humanists thus found the University, with its narrow and intolerant spirit, inimical to the new learning. The intellectual and spiritual domination of France lay in the hands of the University. Noël Beda, the head of the Sorbonne, was the incarnation of opposition to the Humanists, the symbol of reaction and obscurantism. Thus the opposition of the Sorbonne made the position of French Humanists particularly difficult. Humanism in France was destined to triumph only after a bitter and prolonged struggle with the Sorbonne when, to paraphrase John Milton, all the Sorbonne's passion had been spent.
Footnotes, Chapter III

2. Ibid., p. 680.
5. Albert Guérard, French Civilization from its Origins to the Close of the Middle Ages, p. 201.
6. Preserved Smith, Erasmus, a Study of his Life, Ideals and Place in History, p. 20.
12. Louis Delaruelle, Guillaume Budé, pp. 54-55.
19. Ibid., p. 55.
20. Ibid., p. 55.
21 Johann Huizinga, *Erasmus*, p. 27.


CHAPTER IV

THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN THE NEW HUMANISM AND THE SORBONNE

The attitude of the University of Paris towards Humanism was not at first hostile. Instead the University displayed a qualified tolerance, tempered by occasional sympathy. The theologians of the University of Paris did not declare war unconditionally against Humanism until the Reuchlin Affair. By that time, however, they had become aware of its potential threat to their authority.

From the beginning, nevertheless, Humanism had to wage an uphill struggle in a University dominated by tradition and suspicious of innovation:

... the new studies were under the disadvantage of being outside the University curriculum for the Arts degree. Grammar and rhetoric, under which names were comprised every branch of humanistic study, had no place in the Arts course. That course consisted entirely of logic, natural philosophy, and moral philosophy. When therefore the Italian humanists, Balbi, Andrelini, and Cornelio Vitelli, petitioned the University in 1488 that they might be allowed to give public lectures it was not very surprising that the required permission, which was extended to all the poets (i.e., lecturers on Latin poetry and rhetoric) without distinction, was granted on the condition that they should lecture for one hour only after dinner (when all "extraordinary" lectures were given), and on lines laid down by deputies of the University. It was also a natural corollary from the nature of the studies of the University that Masters of Arts who taught grammar and rhetoric were not admitted at Regents, and that a proposal to admit them, which was made in the German Nation in 1490, was not carried.2
The University of Paris, therefore, did not display an excessive enthusiasm for the first generation of French Humanists. Yet Humanism was tolerated and made important gains. Its development has been sketched in detail in Chapter II of this thesis. Humanism made greater progress in the Colleges than at the University. The attitude of the Colleges, as distinguished from that of the University, was more fluid. It varied according to the sympathies of their Principals and Professors. Humanism often found friends in unexpected places. The important College of Navarre, rightly considered a bastion of orthodoxy rivalling the Sorbonne, nevertheless contained many distinguished Humanists. Among its professors were:

Geoffrey Boussard and Jacques Merlin, editors of Eusebius and Origen respectively, Olivier of Lyons, the Master of the Grammarians, Jean Tissier of Ravisi, better known as Ravisius Textor, author of the Officina (1520), Josse Clichtove, who took his Doctor's degree there in 1506 and lectured there for a few years, and Louis Pinella, who was Principal from 1497 to 1505, and to whom Badius dedicated Beroaldos Commentaries on Lucan.

Humanism was fortunate in being able to benefit from the traditional jealousy that existed between the Faculty of Arts and that of Theology. Thus those Collèges with few or no theological professors were inclined to be more receptive to Humanism. There were, for example, the Greek lectures of Le Voyer in the College of Burgundy, and of Cherdame in that of Lisieux. The latter Collège was under the enlightened direction of Jean de Tartas (1525-1533), a friend of Humanism. In the Collège of Cardinal Lemoine, Francois Vatable was the Hebrew lecturer while Jean Bonchamp (Evagrius) served as the Greek lecturer.
The main center of Humanism at the University of Paris was, however, the Collège of Sainte-Barbe. Here the Portuguese Humanist Jacques de Gouvea, called approvingly by Montaigne "le plus grand principal de France," and his nephew André were successively Principals. From 1525 to 1528 the Collège was so fortunate as to have as a lecturer the distinguished Humanist Maturin Cordier. He taught rhetoric and Latin to the younger students at the University of Paris from 1514 to 1530. Maturin Cordier is best known, of course, for his work as head of the Collège de Guienne.

Yet at the Sorbonne itself the attitude towards Humanism, originally tolerant, began to harden. Humanism, with its critical examination of the sacred texts, was viewed as being potentially harmful to religion, as a sort of Lutheran cat's paw, as it were:

Depuis longtemps les théologiens de Paris surveillaient avec méfiance les humanistes. Sans doute, l'humanisme n'était pas essentiellement hostile à la religion. Mais il restreignait le domaine de la théologie en élargissant celui des belles-lettres; il tendait à affaiblir l'esprit chrétien en prononçant la sagesse antique; il pratiquait le libre examen des textes; il risquait donc de porter atteinte à l'interprétation traditionnelle des textes sacrés, partant d'ébranler l'Eglise; enfin, c'était un fait que les humanistes ruinaient leur enseignement.

In June, 1511, Erasmus published his Moriae Encomium, and immediately aroused the suspicions of the professors of theology. They began to look with suspicion on the Humanists, and the breach thus begun widened:

La publication de l'Encomium Moriae est en effet le point de départ des résistances que vont opposer les partisans de la théologie, telle qu'on l'entend jusqu'alors, aux tentatives des novateurs. Les poursuites contre Colet, contre Reuchlin,
The doctors of the Sorbonne were well-advised to be suspicious of Erasmus, as the latter's stormy controversies with the Sorbonne subsequently proved. Moreover, some French Humanists, such as Bude, counted on Erasmus to put the doctors in their place: "Les humanistes comptent sur Erasme pour introduire en France la saine théologie; il réduira au silence les derniers défenseurs de la théologie scolastique."...

In 1511 the quarrel between Reuchlin and the Dominicans broke out at Cologne. The next year, 1512, Lefèvre d'Étaples published his *Sanci* (sic) *Pauli Epistolae*, and although it caused no outburst of criticism, it was duly observed by the theologians. With this work Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples established himself as one of the leaders of the "Évangelisme," a movement which (stimulated by the revival of Greek and Latin) sought religious truth in the critical examination of the sacred texts:

De l'étude du texte de Saint Paul, il avait tiré ces conclusions: que les dogmes sont l'œuvre des hommes. De là le nom d'Évangelisme donné à cet ensemble d'aspirations et d'idées. Chacun est libre de son opinion, de sa pensée et de son jugement. De là le nom d'Évangelisme donné à cet ensemble d'aspirations et d'idées.

The essence of the great Reuchlin controversy, which finally set the Sorbonne against Humanism, was whether all branches of learning and science were to be subordinate to theology. Johann Reuchlin (1455-1522), who had studied at the University of Paris, fought the claim of theology to dominate all the other sciences. The Dominican obscurantists were affronted by the attempt of a man untrained in
theology to comment on the Holy Scriptures. Two years later, in 1514, the Theological Faculty of the University of Paris condemned Reuchlin's book, the Speculum oculare, the cause of the whole controversy.12

Thus, on the eve of the reign of Francis I, the Theological Faculty shocked the French Humanists by revealing strong obscurantist and reactionary tendencies. The leader of the Paris obscurantists was Noël Beda, Principal of the College of Montaigu, Syndic of the Theological Faculty as well as being one of its doctors. He demonstrated an opposition both to Humanists and Lutherans, so zealous that it shocked even his conservative colleagues.13

Guillaume Budé recognized the obscurantists of the University of Paris as the greatest enemies in France of his beloved Humanism. In his work De l'institution du prince (1516), dedicated to the young Francis I, he attempted to demolish the criticism of the study of Greek and of classical Latin by the obscurantists. Budé declared that the classical languages were not tainted with heresy, that no basic antagonism really existed between antiquity and religion. He cited biblical figures as well as the Church Fathers as proof of his assertion.14 Other Humanists felt likewise. Rodolphe Agricola, for example, believed that "L'étude des classiques doit surtout servir à nous donner une claire intelligence des saintes Ecritures."15 Jean Trithème believed that the classics could not but help religious studies. He declared that one ought to be following the example of the Church Fathers in using "... des fruits murs pour l'amélioration de la science chrétienne."16
Yet Bude and the other Humanists were not completely successful in their attempts to minimize the differences between Humanism and Christianity. The Sorbonne, of course, was completely unconvinced. Woodward remarks thus: "... Bude does not apparently realize the deep ethical-religious problems which a comparison of the Greeks with the Christian temper suggests to the student of moral ideals."^17

Humanism thus met with rebuff and repudiation from the very body to which it thought it had the most right to look for encouragement—the University of Paris. It was inevitable, therefore, that the hard-pressed French Humanists should look wistfully at the rapid strides being made by the new learning in neighbouring Italy. Shocked by the comparison, they denounced the obscurantist attitude that their own University manifested to the new learning. Thus the Humanists came to realize that support for the cause of Humanism had to come principally from outside the University of Paris.

Such was the intellectual pre-eminence of the Sorbonne in highly-centralized France that the Humanists were left with no choice but to turn to the King himself to realize their ambitions. They were aware of this, as the following letter of Guillaume Bude attests:

... On disait que des hommes d'une ignorance incurable avaient voulu, en exploitant les haines populaires, chasser de France les lettres grecques. Cela fit beaucoup rire le prince et les grands seigneurs. On en vint à déplorer que certains prédicateurs, au lieu d'expliquer l'Écriture, se laissaient guider par des passions mesquines dans le choix de leur sujet. Soutenus qu'ils sont par la faveur des gens de bien, les humanistes peuvent dédaigner les insultes de ces méchants. Mais sans doute les bons théologiens se lamentent du tort que ce langage furieux peut faire à la religion. ...^18

It was therefore to the young and energetic Francis I that the
Humanists turned in their crusade against the obscurantism of the Sorbonne. The young king was said to be friendly to Humanism. The hopes which the Humanists placed on him suffered initial disappointment but were ultimately fulfilled with the establishment of the College de France. In the meantime, however, the already difficult situation of French Humanism was further imperiled by the advent of the Reformation to France. Many French Humanists compromised themselves by the initial enthusiasm which they showed towards it.

During the decade after the outbreak of the Lutheran difficulty, Humanism at the University of Paris had to wage a fierce, uphill struggle against the prevailing hatred and opposition of the Sorbonne. Its enemies were successful in linking it with the hated Lutheranism and thus compounded its difficulties. Greek was in fact considered by the more ignorant of the orthodox as the language of heresy. Thus lawyer Conrad of Heresbach declared that he once heard a monk speak thus from the pulpit:

...they have recently discovered a language called Greek, against which we must be on our guard. It is the parent of all heresies. I observe in the hands of many persons a work written in that language called the New Testament. It is a work teeming with brambles and vipers. As for Hebrew, all who learn it immediately become Jews.

It was not until the year 1529 that the cause of Humanism triumphed definitively in France. In that year Francis I, on the advice of his librarian Guillaume Budé, established the "Lecteurs royaux," the nucleus of the future "Collège de France." This was the king's greatest service to Humanism in France.

From the beginning of his reign, Francis I had in mind the
establishment of that institution. His interest was stimulated by the success of the flourishing University of Alcalá, founded by the great Spanish Humanist Cardinal Ximénes. Francis I visited this school in 1525, while a prisoner in Madrid, and was greatly impressed. However, the military disaster at Pavia and his captivity in Spain, along with recurrent financial difficulties, made him postpone the project repeatedly.21

The Humanists, for their part, worked incessantly for the establishment of the Collège de France. They considered the contemporary University of Paris hopelessly obscurantist and reactionary. They felt they had no recourse other than to found a new University hospitable to Humanism:

Puissante citadelle des idées et des méthodes du moyen âge, il n'était guère probable que la Sorbonne s'inclinerais de bon gré devant le drapeau des novateurs. ... C'est pourquoi de bonne heure, dès le début du règne de François 1er, l'idée se fit jour, dans les milieux humanistes, que l'unique moyen de faire triompher leur idéal était de décider le roi à créer une institution qui serait le symbole et le foyer de l'esprit nouveau.22

Guillaume Budé, together with such Humanists as Guillaume Petit and Etienne Poncher—the Archbishop of Paris—never ceased lobbying for the proposed Collège. In 1517 the king had toyed with the idea of establishing the Collège, and wished Erasmus as its head. Francis urged Budé to invite Erasmus to Paris to assume the position. Accordingly, Budé wrote the following letter to Erasmus telling the latter about the king's decision:

... Celui-ci [Guillaume Petit] lui rapporte les paroles par lesquelles François 1er a déclaré sa volonté d'établir
Erasmus pondered the offer, which to him had its appeal. The chance to head a Humanistic University disapproved of by the Sorbonne was one that he would not put eagerly aside. Yet, fearing to jeopardize the handsome pension awarded to him by Charles V and doubtful perhaps of the devotion of Francis I to the cause of Humanism, Erasmus declined to head the proposed College.

In September, 1529, in the preface to his *Commentarii Linguae Graecae*, Guillaume Budé reminded the king of the latter's as yet unfulfilled promise to establish the new College:

>... Vous nous avez promis ... que vous fonderiez une école ... une pépinière en quelque sorte, de savants, d'érudits renommés. Vous nous avez dit que vous ormeriez votre capital de cet établissement, qui doit être pour toute la France une sorte de Musée. D'après vos promesses, un magnifique bâtiment devait s'éléver, où les deux langues seraient enseignées. ... Or, à l'heure qu'il est, on dit que vous n'avez pas tenu vos promesses et comme je m'en suis porté caution, on s'en prend à moi de ce retard. On se moque de moi et on me traite de parjure.  

Guillaume Budé's anguished words shortly bore fruit. In 1529 Francis I finally decided to establish the College which, in the words of Raoul Morçay, marked "vraiment chez nous le triomphe de l'Humanisme."  

The College, initially called "le Collège des lecteurs royaux,"
became known in the seventeenth century as "le Collège royal de France," assuming after the French Revolution its present-day title of "le Collège de France." The "lecteurs royaux" were to be instituted in Greek, Latin, Hebrew, and mathematics, with the object of countering the conservative teaching of the Sorbonne. It was a corporate body appointed by the king.

Owing to the opposition of the Sorbonne, no "lecteur royal" in Latin was founded at first. The Sorbonne feared Latin in particular because it was the language of the Holy Scriptures. Furthermore, because of severe financial difficulties, it was decided to postpone indefinitely the planned construction of a well-endowed College. Having no quarters of its own, the College used those of the Collège de la Montaigne Sainte-Geneviève. It was not until many years later that the College had its permanent buildings. The first stone was laid in 1610. The structure of the Collège de France was completed even later, however, about 1778. In front of the present buildings of the Collège de France broods the statue of Guillaume Budé.

The lectures of the "Lecteurs royaux" were originally given either in the Collège of Cambrai, on the east side of the Rue Saint-Jacques and opposite to the Sorbonne, or in the Collège of Trequier, which was separated from it by the narrow Ruelle de Cambrai, or in the Collège of Les Trois-Evêques.

The king boasted that he had "bâti le Collège non pas en pierres, mais en hommes." As a result of financial difficulties, the lecturers were paid irregularly. A Greek teacher, one Pierre Danès, found himself forced to suspend lectures in order to receive
payment of his back salary. Yet all these financial difficulties did not limit the academic success of the first lecturers, who agreeably found themselves surrounded by a large and enthusiastic throng of students.

The first "Lecteurs royaux" were François Vatable and Agathe Guidacerio for Hebrew, Pierre Danès and Jacques Toussain (both pupils of Bude) for Greek, and Orance Fine for Mathematics. Their annual salary was 200 crowns. Only in 1534 did the Humanists dare to brave the wrath of the Sorbonne by establishing a chair in Latin. In 1538 Guillaume Postel was appointed to the chair of Oriental languages, in 1542 the Italian Francesco Vicomarcato was appointed to that of philosophy.

For the Humanists, thus, the establishment of the Collège de France was their greatest triumph to date. The Collège underlined the importance of the new learning, now finally studied for its own sake. Poets and scholars celebrated the restoration of letters, but none did it better than François Rabelais:

"Maintenant toutes disciplines sont restituées, les langues instaurées, Grecque, sans laquelle c'est honte que une personne se die scévavant, Hebraïque, Caldaïque, Latine; les impressions tant élégantes et correctes en usance, qui ont esté inventées de mon eage par inspiration divine, comme à contrefil l'artillerie par suggestion diabolicque. Tout le monde est plein de gens savans, de precepteurs tresdoctes, de librairies tresamples, qu'il m'est advis que ny au temps de Platon, ny de Ciceron, ny de Papinian, n'estoit telle commodité d'estude qu'on y veoit maintenant. Et ne se fauldra plus doresnavant trouver en place ny en compagnie qui ne sera bien expoly en l'officine de Minerve. Je voy les brigans, les bourceaux, les avanturiers, les palefrenders de maintenant plus doctes que les docteurs et prescheurs de mon temps. Que diray-je? Les femmes et filles ont aspiré à ceste louange et manne celeste de bonne doctrine."
Tant a que, en 1ère age où je suis, jay esté contraint de apprendre les lettres grecques, lesquelles je navois contemnées comme Caton, mais je navoys eu loysir de comprendre en mon jeune age. Et voluntiers me delecte à lire les Morauxx de Plutarche, les beaux Dialogues de Platon, les Monumens de Pausanias et Antiquitez de Atheneus, attendant la heure qu'il plaira a Dieu, mon Createur, me appeller et commander yssir de ceste terre.33

In the meantime the Sorbonne had become alarmed over the new College, which now felt the wrath of the Sorbonne:

Les lecteurs royaux ne relevaient point de l'Université de Paris: l'enseignement des langues anciennes, du latin, du grec, de l'hébreu, se trouvait donc soustraît à la tutelle des théologiens. C'est ce dont la Sorbonne s'alarme.34

The foundation of the College de France had from the very first been strongly opposed by the obscurantist party of the University of Paris. The poet Clement Marot caught their mood in his poem written in 1535, *Epistre au roy du temps de son exil a Ferrare*:

Autant comme eulx, sans cause qui soit bonne,
Me veult de mal l'ignorante Sorbonne:
Bien ignaronle elle est d'estre ennemye
De la trilingue et noble academie
Quias erigée. Il est tout manifeste,
Que la dedans contre ton veuil celeste
Est defennu qu'on ne voyse allegant
Hebrieu ny Grec, ni Latin elegant,
Disant que c'est langage d'heretiques.35

The Faculty of Theology of the University of Paris developed a new plan to deal with the "new" languages, while at the same time still retaining an awareness of the harm which the languages and their teachers might cause:

... or perhaps, finding it impossible to resist their introduction, they determined to submit them to a wholesale supervision; for in the year 1530, just after the first royal professorships had been founded, we find a printer, Gerard Morrhuys, a native of Campen in Holland, established in the
Sorbonne itself, and issuing from his press no less than eleven Greek books. But the university professors not unnaturally looked with a jealous eye on the new professors, who, from the superiority of their teaching and from the fact that no fees were charged for their lectures, drew enormous classes.

The hostility of the Sorbonne towards Humanism soon took a more active form, however, with the tireless and redoubtable Noël Beda leading a frontal attack against it. In January, 1534, Beda handed to the Parlement de Paris, on behalf of the Faculty of Theology, a formal complaint against the delivery of public lectures on the Holy Scriptures by "simple grammarians or rhetoricians who had not studied in any faculty." This was obviously directed against the College de France.

Beda attempted to have the College de France suppressed, while declaring hypocritically that he did not object to the Humanists personally but only to theological incompetence:

A day having been fixed by the parliament for hearing the contending parties, Noël Beda, who appeared in person, said in the course of his speech that it was very far from his intention to object to the study of Greek or Hebrew, but that it was to be feared that the new professors, though excellent humanists, were not sufficiently versed in theology to interpret the Holy Scriptures, and criticise, as they did, the Vulgate; and that even if they were, there might be a danger of their inducing their hearers to doubt its fidelity.

Beda attempted to strengthen his case by making a strong appeal to the prejudices and emotions of the members of the Parlement:

... the greater part of the Greek and Hebrew editions which they use as text-books have been made in Germany, a country infected with heresy, either by Jews or by Catholics who have turned Lutherans, who are therefore quite capable of tampering with the original text.
The ruling of the Parlement de Paris is not known. It was presumably in favor of the Collège de France, as its professors continued to deliver lectures. Indeed, before the end of the year 1534, a Latin professorship was established at the Collège de France. This had been particularly opposed by the orthodox group at the University of Paris as likely to result in criticism of the Vulgate. It was indicative of the growing strength of Humanism that it managed to survive the massive onslaught of its enemies.

The first professor of Latin was the Ciceronian scholar Barthélemy Masson (Latonomoeus), a friend of the great Humanist Erasmus. This was an especially critical moment in the history of French Humanism. As the Affair of the Placards had recently occurred, Humanism was regarded with even greater suspicion than usual. By his religious orthodoxy and by lecturing almost entirely on Cicero rather than on the Holy Scriptures, Masson undoubtedly helped to allay the fears of the Sorbonne. Indeed, intransigence on Masson’s part might well have wrecked the chances of Humanism in France.

The Affair of the Placards had occurred on October 18, 1534. A startled Paris awoke to find the city placarded with denunciations of the Mass. Indeed on the door of the King’s chamber was placed the following violent pamphlet:

Articles véritables sur les horribles, grands et insupportables abus de la messe papale, inventée directement contre la Sainte Cène de Notre-Seigneur, seul sauveur Jesus-Christ.

The brazen, seemingly blasphemous tone of the pamphlet gave
rise to general indignation. Many Protestants were arrested and executed while others, such as Clément Marot and Jean Calvin, were obliged to flee from Paris. The King, initially friendly to the ideas of the "Evangeliques," now turned against them. Thus the flirtation between Humanism and the Reformation was at an end, with the Humanists compelled to choose sides. A few, like Etienne Dolet and Bonaventure des Périers, left Catholicism; but most retained it and broke with the Reformation.

Humanism survived the crisis. In a moment of panic (January 13, 1535) the king ordered the suppression of the printing presses. He soon recovered his senses, however. His adherence to Humanism remained unchanged, as the founding of the "lecteur royal" in Latin over the opposition of the Sorbonne indicated.

The solid achievements of French Humanism during the era of Francis I were threefold. First, there was the establishment of the free Humanist University, the College de France, over the strong opposition of the Sorbonne. Secondly, there was the systematic collection and augmentation of Greek manuscripts and the publishing of Greek texts and, finally, the publication of Bude's Commentarii Linguae Graecae (1529), so valuable to Greek scholars of the time. Thus before the end of Francis I's reign, Humanism had triumphed in France. Humanist education was now a fixture in almost every University and College in France—with the very notable exception of the Sorbonne. The Sorbonne continued to be cool to Humanism but its views did not prevail. Humanism now became the proper
education for the young. Montaigne, for example, born in 1533, was to receive a Humanistic education. The great age of Humanism occurred later in the sixteenth century. It was in the earlier period, however, under discussion in this thesis, that Humanism triumphed over many obstacles, chief among these, the Sorbonne.
Footnotes, Chapter IV

2 Ibid., pp. 212-13
3 Ibid., p. 319.
6 William Harrison Woodward, Studies in Education during the Age of the Renaissance, pp. 139-40.
10 Louis Delaruelle, Répertoire de la Correspondance de Guillaume Budé, p. 206.
14 Woodward, op. cit., p. 137.
15 V.-L. Saulnier, La Littérature française de la Renaissance, p. 22.
16 Ibid., p. 22.
17 Woodward, op. cit., p. 137.
18 Delaruelle, op. cit., pp. 231-32.
41 Plattard, *op. cit.*, p. 15.
42 Saulnier, *op. cit.*, p. 38.
CHAPTER V

RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

In the years that followed the expedition of Charles VIII to Italy, the Renaissance burst upon France. Much of its intellectual energy was channeled into the revival of classical learning that is known as Humanism. Classical learning was rediscovered, translated, and elucidated. This receptivity towards the Renaissance was not shared by the entire French nation, however. Rather, it was the passion of small but elite groups at the Universities and the Royal Court.

These Humanists had as their first task the mastering of the classical Greek and Latin languages. Robert Gaguin pioneered in Latin, and Girolamo Aleandro and Guillaume Bude in Greek. The establishment of the mechanics of classical scholarship followed. Greek and Latin presses were established by Josse Badius Ascensius, Guillaume Fichet, and the Estienne family. Dictionaries were prepared and better translations were written by, among others, Guillaume Bude and Jacques Lefevre d'Étaples. The emphasis was placed on the works themselves, which were studied in their original form rather than by means of commentaries.

Humanism was fortunate in attracting men of first-rate ability to its banner. Among these was Jacques Lefevre d'Étaples.
His greatest contribution was to theology, which lies outside the scope of this thesis. His contributions to Humanism, however, included the reform of the Quadrivium and the translations of several of the works of Aristotle. Another important Humanist was Robert Gaguin, who was an early advocate of Latin studies at the University of Paris. Girolamo Aleandro, an Italian Humanist, gave successful lectures at Paris and was responsible, in part, for Guillaume Bude's mastery of Latin.

Mention must be made of Erasmus who, despite his Dutch nationality, was a European scholar. French Humanism was greatly influenced by Erasmus, who had studied at the University of Paris. He understood the special problems of French Humanism and was sympathetic to it. Erasmus, with his great erudition and mordant wit, was regarded as the very symbol of Humanism.

Francois Rabelais was an equally great name in Humanism. His greatest work occurred after the period under discussion in this thesis. Rabelais typified the thirst for learning of the early French Humanists, however, and articulated their rage against the obstruction of the Sorbonne.

Another great name in Humanism was that of Guillaume Bude. A man of immense learning, he enjoyed the favour of Francis I. Bude was unquestionably the greatest French Humanist of his age. His chief passion in life was Greek learning, to whose success in France he contributed more than anyone else. His voluminous correspondence with the great men of his day (Rabelais, Erasmus, More, et al.)
attests to his incessant advocacy of Humanism. His greatest achievement occurred in 1529. In that year, the king established the "Lecteurs royaux" in Hebrew, Greek, and Mathematics. This marked a signal victory for Guillaume Bude and French Humanism.

The eventual triumph of Humanism in France, however, occurred only after a lengthy and embittered quarrel with its most formidable enemy, the conservative and Scholastic Sorbonne, the Faculty of Theology of the University of Paris.

This thesis has attempted to discuss the reasons for the opposition of the Sorbonne to Humanism. One reason was the view of the Reformation that a man could communicate directly with God without benefit of the Church. To this end man had to have the Bible in his own language. The Sorbonne believed that there was a parallel here between the Reformation and Humanism (with its emphasis on studying all works in their original language and its like rejection of mediaeval authorities). Hence the Sorbonne's opposition to Humanism. The attitude of the Sorbonne towards Humanism was rooted in the structure of the Sorbonne. This was shown by an examination of the Sorbonne at the sixteenth century.

The sixteenth century found the Sorbonne essentially a mediaeval institution, with its elan vital much diminished, however:

"... but the great theological school, the University of Paris, the fountain head of Christian philosophy, had lost its vitality beyond hopes of recovery. The task of formulating the data of revelation in the terms of Aristotelian logic had been performed once for all. Henceforth scholasticising could go no farther: it could only lose itself in the intricate maze of its own subtle absurdity. And from such a fate there was no appeal: the
Masters of Unreason were entrenched in their double infallibility, as theologians and as logicians. So the beacon set on Mount St. Genevieve diffused palpable darkness; all the efforts of the Doctors were bent on discovering even the most timid ray of light, in order to extinguish it.  

The Sorbonne was decadent and reactionary. It was decidedly unsympathetic to the new learning, so joyously greeted by Guillaume Bude and many others. The doctors of the Sorbonne quickly detected the scent of heresy in studies which might threaten their authority. Their distrust mounted as they noticed the seeming alliance between Humanism, on the one hand, and the Reform movement within the Church, on the other. The Humanists recognized in the Scholastic Sorbonne their most powerful opponent. Its intellectual vitality had declined, but its power remained formidable. The Sorbonne dominated the University of Paris. Its implacable opposition convinced the Humanists that the University of Paris was hopeless, where Humanism was concerned. For Humanism to triumph, a substitute Humanistic University would have to be created.

The Humanists were fortunate in the succession of Francis I in 1515. Receptive to the spirit of the Renaissance, he sided with the Humanists in their quarrel with the Sorbonne. As early as 1520 he promised Guillaume Bude, the unofficial leader of French Humanism, that he would found a new University to be devoted principally to the three classical languages: Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. It was not until 1529, however, that the plan was finally implemented; and then only in a very incomplete fashion.

The Sorbonne was especially fearful of the establishment of a
lectureship in Latin, fearing lest it undermine the Scriptures. The opposition thus prevented the initial establishment of a lecturer in Latin. The matter was taken to the Parlement where, in spite of a vitriolic attack by Noel Beda against it, a ruling in favour of the Latin lectureship ensued. The Affair of the Placards, in 1534, while causing Francis I to proscribe the Reform in France, did not lessen his enthusiasm for the new learning.

The Sorbonne remained cool to Humanism throughout the sixteenth century. Nevertheless, the establishment of what was eventually to be the College de France marked the triumph of Humanism in France. The new learning had emancipated itself from the dead hand of Scholasticism. The spirit of Guillaume Bude had triumphed over that of Noel Beda.

In retrospect, the triumph of Humanism over the Sorbonne was inevitable. A dying, sterile Scholasticism could not hope to stem the rapidly advancing tide of the new Humanism of the Renaissance. The University of Paris, extremely traditional-minded and heavy in reputation, was ill-suited to accept the new ideas, which it identified with heresy. Beset on all sides by critics and lacking the support of the monarch, Francis I, this strong citadel of mediaevalism proved unable to smother Humanism.

In conclusion, it may be said that Humanism had a direct effect on literature in the sense that the triumph of Humanism was the prerequisite for the subsequent rich flowering of the French Renaissance. Rabelais and Montaigne—indeed all of the great writers
of the French Renaissance—were nourished on the classics. Humanism (the rediscovery of the Greek and Latin classics) was the soil from which sprang the ideas and style of the great French writers that were to come later in the sixteenth century.
Footnote, Chapter V

1 Albert Guérard, The Life and Death of an Ideal: France in the Classical Age, p. 29.
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