

ARTICLES

Erasmus: The 16th Century's Pioneer of Peace Education and a Culture of Peace*

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More than a century before Grotius wrote his famous work on international law, his countryman Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam laid the foundations for the modern critique of war. In several writings, especially those published in the period 1515-1517, the "prince of humanists" brilliantly and devastatingly condemned war not only on Christian but also on secular/rational grounds. His graphic depiction of the miseries of war, together with his impassionate plea for its avoidance, remains unparalleled. Erasmus argued as a moralist and educator rather than as a political theorist or statesman. If any single individual in the modern world can be credited with "the invention of peace," the honour belongs to Erasmus rather than Kant whose essay on perpetual peace was published nearly three centuries later.

Keywords

Erasmus, Kant, "invention of peace," *Bellum*, *Education of a Christian Prince*, *Complaint of Peace*

I. Introduction

In 1969 festivities celebrating Erasmus took place in various cities around the world on what was then held to be the 500th anniversary of his birth. Since then, the traditionally

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favourite year of 1467 has again established itself as the most likely year of his birth; more recently a strong case has been made for 1466. The Royal Library in Brussels organised an important exhibition entitled *Erasmus and Belgium* which was the main event of the “National Commemoration of Erasmus.” It consisted largely of early editions of works by Erasmus. For our purposes it is felicitous that the first item on display, and the first entry in the published exhibition catalogue,¹ is his anti-war essay, *Dulce Bellum Inexpertis* (“War is sweet to those who do not know it”) - shown, moreover, in an edition printed in Leuven in 1517. The foregrounding of this work was not because the organisers somehow wanted to emphasise Erasmus as a pacifist. It is merely because this essay was first published in his *Adages*, and because the listing of early editions of Erasmus’s books printed in Belgium, which constituted the first section of the exhibition, was presented in alphabetical order of title. Before its publication as an independent pamphlet, *Bellum* (as the work became popularly known) had first appeared in the *Adages*, the enormously popular work in which Erasmus had collected 100s, and later 1,000s of sayings and proverbs culled from the writings of the ancients. The *Adages* thus became an ideal instrument to popularise, and make more widely available, the treasures of classical wisdom, which up to this time had remained inaccessible to a larger audience.

Erasmus’ *Adages* has been called the first great bestseller of the new age of printing. More than 150 editions published during the 16th century alone testify to its popularity. The book has received universal praise, not only during his lifetime but continuing up to the present. While contemporaries referred to it as “the arsenal of Minerva” (Guillaume Budé) or representing “the Garden of Wisdom” (Richard Taverner), more recently Roland Bainton has called the adages “pearls of wisdom.” Margaret Mann Phillips, a leading English expert on Erasmus, and translator of the *Adages*,² has called it “a key work of the 16th century... the book which formed the European mind.” The great Dutch historian and biographer of Erasmus, Johan Huizinga, wrote that with this book, “Erasmus brought the gold of the classical mind in circulation.” In terms of the history of literary genre, the book represents a lifetime before Montaigne, “the birth of the Essay” by Anton Gail.

However, our interest is not in this most influential and popular of books, but in what was soon to become its most famous, and longest essay. That it featured at the

¹ *Érasme et la Belgique*. Brussels: Bibliothèque Royale Albert Ier, 1969, at. 4-5. The same catalogue was also published in Dutch under the title *Erasmus en België*. Later in the year, the University of Leuven incorporated this exhibition into a larger one entitled *Erasmus en Leuven* which was shown in the city’s municipal museum. It is fully documented in a 500-page catalogue bearing the same title as the exhibition at the Stedelijk Museum, Leuven in 1969.

² MARGARET MANN PHILLIPS, *THE “ADAGES” OF ERASMUS* (1964).

very opening of the exhibition and catalogue is fortuitous because thus, from the beginning, the attention of the visitor and reader is drawn to the fact that Erasmus was a pacifist and critic of war. Further evidence of this follows soon, since the fifth work displayed was a collection of five works by Erasmus, published again in Leuven the following year (1518), and which includes *Querela Pacis* (The Complaint of Peace). It is unfortunate, and scarcely believable, that all too often Erasmus' pacifist sentiments and strivings have been ignored by his biographers especially in earlier centuries, even though they are a constant and important element in his life - as clearly evidenced by his publications on the subject which appeared in many editions and translations as well as by the many references to it in his correspondence. This hard-to-understand neglect of a vital part of his life's work and writings is also shown in the Erasmus House in Anderlecht near Brussels, "Maison d'Erasmus," where the great humanist lived from May to October 1521, after life in Leuven had become unbearable and his writings were beginning to be regarded as heretical. When the present writer visited this impressive museum, not long after its renovation and reopening in 1988,³ it was perplexing and dismaying to discover that none of his anti-war writings was on display - as if a deliberate effort had been made to hide this aspect from the visitor.

The pre-eminence of Erasmus as an early pacifist and critic of war is conclusively shown in the most extensive bibliography of historical peace and anti-war literature available, viz. the lists compiled in the 1930s by Dr. Jacob ter Meulen, the long-serving scholar-librarian of the Peace Palace in The Hague. He also compiled the definitive bibliography of Grotius, and who built up the famous Grotius collection of the Peace Palace.⁴ All but eight of the 58 publications listed for the earliest period (1480-1521) are by Erasmus.⁵ And yet, as mentioned, in many biographies this aspect of his life and work is hardly touched upon. Moreover, it is not only scholars and biographers who ignore Erasmus the pacifist, but also students of war and peace. As regards the former, there are of course exceptions, and some Erasmus scholars have highlighted the centrality of peace in his life and work. For instance, Ross Dealy writes that for Erasmus "war is...a phenomenon at the very center of his concerns."⁶ A leading Belgian expert, Leon-E. Halkin has similarly written that "throughout his life, Erasmus was preoccupied with the theme of peace."⁷ Another leading Erasmus scholar from Belgium,

³ See 62 PETROFINA, July-August 1988, at 11-20. This is the magazine of the Belgian company that financed the restoration.

⁴ See THE GROTIUS COLLECTION AT THE PEACE PALACE - A CONCISE CATALOGUE, published on the occasion of the 400th anniversary of his birth at the Peace Palace of The Hague (1983).

⁵ PETER VAN DEN DUNGEN, ED., FROM ERASMUS TO TOLSTOY. THE PEACE LITERATURE OF FOUR CENTURIES; IN JACOB TER MEULEN'S BIBLIOGRAPHIES OF THE PEACE MOVEMENT BEFORE 1899 53-55 (1990).

⁶ Ross Dealy, *The Dynamics of Erasmus' Thought on War in 4* ERASMUS OF ROTTERDAM SOCIETY YEARBOOK 53 (1984).

⁷ Leon-E. Halkin, ERASME ET L' HUMANISME CHRETIEN 81 (1969). He notes that Erasmus did so not as a statesman but

Alois Gerlo, in a chapter on him as a cosmopolitan and pacifist, draws attention to “that very important vein in his oeuvre: his numerous peace writings.” He continues, “Erasmus has not ceased to oppose war through his pen” and he relates him as regards this subject to such modern figures as Tolstoi, Thomas Mann, Romain Rolland, and Bertrand Russell. “In short, he is rightly regarded as the first principled European pacifist.”⁸ It hardly needs stating that editors and translators of Erasmus’ peace writings have always been the first to emphasise his life-long campaign for peace. For instance, in the introduction to her translation of *The Complaint of Peace*, Chantal Labre writes that Erasmus conducted tirelessly throughout his life and in work after work a “war against war.”⁹ That change is under way was notably shown in the title given to the large exhibition held in Basle in 1986 on the 450th anniversary of Erasmus’ death and which presented him as a “pioneer of peace and tolerance.”¹⁰ In *Images of Erasmus*, a major art exhibition recently held in the city of his birth, “War and Peace” was one of the three themes focussed on together with “Scholarship and Education” and “Church and Faith,” not unlike the major themes in Halkin’ s biography mentioned above.¹¹

II. “The Invention of Peace”

As regards scholars of war and peace, their neglect of Erasmus can be illustrated in the work of one of the leading military historians of our time, Sir Michael Howard, who in his book, *The Invention of Peace*, fails even to mention Erasmus.¹² The title of Sir Michael’s

as a Christian moralist. Following a biographical sketch, Halkin’ s book focuses on what he considers to be the three central themes of Erasmus’ s life and work: literature, peace, and the philosophy of Christ.

⁸ Alois Gerlo, *Wereldburger en pacifist*, in *GENIE EN WERELD: ERASMUS 277-287* (1971).

⁹ ERASME, *PLAIDOYER POUR LA PAIX*, (trans. from the Latin and presented by Chantal Labre) 5 (2002).

¹⁰ ERASMUS VON ROTTERDAM, *VORKÄMPFER FÜR FRIEDEN UND TOLERANZ. AUSSTELLUNG ZUM 450. TODESTAG DES ERASMUS VON ROTTERDAM VERANSTALTET VOM HISTORISCHEN MUSEUM BASEL* (1986) [catalogue].

¹¹ See the impressive catalogue by Peter van der Coelen, *Images of Erasmus*. (Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, 2008). Incidentally, no mention is made in the catalogue of one of the most curious images of Erasmus, viz. the carving made in oak, measuring one metre in height, and presenting him in full-length. Made in 1598, it was the figurehead of a ship, named Erasmus, constructed in Rotterdam in the same year. Renamed, shortly afterwards, “De Liefde” (Love), it was the first ship from the Netherlands to reach Japan where, in 1600, it was lost in a storm. The sculpture ended up in a temple and only in 1926 was identified. It was subsequently transferred to the Imperial Museum in Tokyo. The sculpture has been shown several times in museums in Rotterdam. In 1962 the Dutch-Japanese Societies of Tokyo and Kyoto presented the city of Rotterdam with a faithful replica (which is preserved and occasionally displayed in its Maritime Museum).

¹² MICHAEL HOWARD, *THE INVENTION OF PEACE. REFLECTIONS ON WAR AND INTERNATIONAL ORDER* (2000). A revised and extended edition appeared in 2002 as *THE INVENTION OF PEACE & THE REINVENTION OF WAR*. Howard’ s failure to mention Erasmus is not because of ignorance: he opened an earlier work with a discussion of Erasmus. See *WAR AND THE LIBERAL CONSCIENCE*. 5-8 & *passim* (2008; first published 1978).

book was inspired by a quotation from the 19th century English jurist, Sir Henry Maine: "War appears to be as old as mankind, but peace is a modern invention."¹³ Howard writes, "the medieval order, as it developed in Europe between the eighth and the eighteenth centuries, was largely a matter of a successful symbiosis between the ruling warrior class that provided order and the clerisy that legitimized it. Eventually critics emerged from within that clerisy who denied the essential legitimacy of their rulers on the grounds that war was not a necessary part of the natural or divine order, but a derogation of it. It was then that peace, the visualization of a social order from which war had been abolished, could be said to have been invented; an order, that is, resulting not from some millennial divine intervention ... but from the forethought of rational human beings who had taken matters into their own hands."¹⁴ Erasmus stands as a key figure in the transition from the medieval to the modern period who not only in his own lifetime but still today is recognised as a paragon of the class of learned men, of scholars, Howard's "clerisy." It is hard to think of another critic who argued as passionately, convincingly, and - not to forget - as courageously as Erasmus that "war was not a necessary part of the natural or divine order." For all his piety and Christian devotion, Erasmus condemned war and believed in the possibility of a social order from which it had been banned precisely because of "the forethought of rational human beings." It seems therefore that as far as Europe and the modern era are concerned, his name cannot be overlooked in any discussion of the modern invention of peace at least as this concept is interpreted by Howard. Yet, Howard claims: "... if anyone could be said to have invented peace as more than a mere pious aspiration, it was Kant. He was almost alone in understanding that the demolition of the military structures built up in Europe over the past millennium would be no more than a preliminary clearing of the ground. New foundations would then have to be laid: peace had to be established."¹⁵

Kant's essay, *Towards Perpetual Peace*, was published in 1795 - almost three centuries after Erasmus had addressed the question of war and peace. Of course, it cannot be denied that compared with Erasmus, the philosopher from Königsberg offered a much

¹³ HENRY SUMNER MAINE, *INTERNATIONAL LAW* 8 (1888).

¹⁴ Howard, *supra* note 12, at 6.

¹⁵ *Id.* at 31. One may question whether the sequence suggested here (demolition of military structures preceding the laying of new foundations) accurately represents Kant's views. It is surprising - and ironic - that whereas Howard does not mention Erasmus, Maine does not mention Kant. Maine held the Whewell Professorship of International Law at the University of Cambridge and he opened his book with the observation that: "[T]he eminent man who founded the Whewell Professorship of International Law laid an earnest and express injunction on the occupant of this chair that he should make it his aim ... to lay down such rules and suggest such measures as might tend to diminish the evils of war and finally to extinguish war among nations" (*Supra* note 13, at 1). In his last chapter, "Proposals to Abate War," Maine says "the great Erasmus wrote as strongly of the wickedness of war as any Quaker of our day could do" (*Supra* note 13, at 209) but Kant's legally-based essay for the elimination of war is passed over in silence.

more elaborate and specific, legally based, outline for humanity's long and arduous path which would eventually result in the establishment of a durable world peace. Erasmus' pacifist writings, for all their brilliance, were largely moral appeals as well as exhortations to the Christian rulers of his day to abandon the irrational and unchristian practice of war. Even so, his writings are not devoid of political insights or practical suggestions. Preserved Smith, in a highly regarded biography, has written: "As the political writings of Erasmus are of considerable importance and originality, it is remarkable that they have hitherto been so little noticed."¹⁶ For instance, Erasmus frequently made clear the connections between the internal structure of a state and its external behaviour, somewhat reminiscent of the theory which Kant was to develop in the first of his definitive articles, today popularly known as the "democratic peace theory." As an alternative to war, Erasmus frequently recommends arbitration - which would indeed become the main plank of the international peace movement when it emerged in the 19th century and which would also increasingly become state practice at the same time, culminating in the creation of the Permanent Court of Arbitration as a result of the First Hague Peace Conference (1899). A recent student of Kant's peace essay has written that Erasmus' *Instruction of a Christian Prince* already contains all the elements typical of an enlightened approach to war and peace which can be found in later peace projects, including Kant's.¹⁷ This view is echoed by Siegfried Wollgast in his study of the idea of peace in the Reformation era. Wollgast emphasises the emergence at this time of the modern concept of peace in the writings of Erasmus, Sebastian Franck and Paracelsus. Erasmus' *Complaint of Peace*, he says, "has decisively influenced all later peace efforts."¹⁸ Going beyond the Christian appeal for peace, among the new and additional bases for peace which are now adduced, so the German historian argues, are the principle of humanity; the ideas of the unity of the human race and of the equality of all people; the idea of tolerance; the notion of the irrationality of war. All these elements feature prominently in Erasmus' critique of war. One more instance of the significance of Erasmus in the story of the "invention of peace" is provided by Huizinga. While referring to the naivety of his subject's political ideas, Huizinga also admits that Erasmus had not laboured in vain for peace: "He has inspired a horror of unjust violence and the love of concord among philosophers of a whole era. He has prepared the soil for receiving the seed, slow to ripen, of the work of Grotius."¹⁹ More recently,

¹⁶ PRESERVED SMITH, *ERASMUS: A STUDY OF HIS LIFE, IDEALS, AND PLACE IN HISTORY* 196 (1962, first published in 1923).

¹⁷ GEORG CAVALLAR, *PAX KANTIANA* 24, 45, 156, 159 (1992).

¹⁸ SIEGFRIED WOLLGAST, ED., *ZUR FRIEDENSIDEE IN DER REFORMATIONSZEIT: TEXTE VON ERASMUS, PARACELUSUS XVII* (1968).

¹⁹ J. Huizinga, *Ce qu'Erasmus ne comprenait pas*, in GROTIVS, *ANNUAIRE INTERNATIONAL POUR L'ANNEE* 1936 13-20 (1936). Huizinga had been asked for a contribution on Erasmus to commemorate the 400th anniversary of his death. Another Dutch historian focused on Erasmus as a champion of peace as part of the same commemorations. He

Peter Haggenmacher has written: "Grotius is a direct spiritual descendant of Erasmus; both are outstanding representatives of Christian humanism" and he mentions Grotius' "veneration" of the Rotterdammer.²⁰

For Erasmus, a leading humanist, war was a barbaric and irrational institution which had no place in a society of reasonable human beings. It had even less cause for existence in a society which claimed to be Christian. To quote him, "If there is anything in mortal affairs which should be approached with hesitancy, or rather which ought to be avoided in every possible way, guarded against and shunned, that thing is war; there is nothing more wicked, more disastrous, more widely destructive, more deeply tenacious, more loathsome, in a word more unworthy of man, not to say of a Christian."²¹

Erasmus' condemnation of war is based on arguments drawn from both Humanism and Christianity which together makes his critique so powerful and which explains its enduring appeal even 500 years later. Erasmus' many writings on the subject are no "mere pious aspiration." There is, instead, a powerfully reasoned case which details the dangers, miseries, and uncertainties of war, which are contrasted with the blessings and certainties of peace. It should be pointed out that this is only one aspect of Erasmus' engagement with the subject of war and peace - but an aspect the importance of which should not be underestimated. Although already in ancient Greece and Rome some writers had argued that the benefits of peace always outweighed by far the miseries of war, no one before Erasmus - or since - has drawn the contrast so overwhelmingly, so dramatically, so passionately and thus so convincingly. It seems that every generation has to learn anew this old lesson which has not been fully accepted even in an age of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. The perennial validity and continued relevance of Erasmus' sharp condemnation of war by the "mere" showing of the disasters it brings about, seems to receive implicit support from Elizabeth Converse's observation made in an article in which she surveyed the first decade of the existence of the *Journal of Conflict Resolution*. It may be simple-minded to suggest that one thing that "causes" wars is a poor appreciation of what wars cause; it is not so simple-minded

referred to Erasmus "as pacifist, or better, the theoretician of peace, and as such perhaps the greatest of all time." L.M.G. KOOPERBERG, *ERASMUS ALS VREDESKAMPIOEN* 10 (1936).

²⁰ Peter Haggenmacher in his chapter in *HUGO GROTIUS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS* 152, HEDLEY BULL, BENEDICT KINGSBURY & ADAM ROBERTS, EDs. (1992). In his chapter in the same work, Bull writes, "Loyal to the programme followed in earlier generations by Erasmus and other Christian humanists, Grotius preached the reconciliation of Catholics and Protestants at the height of the Thirty Years War" (at 67). When Grotius entered Leyden University, the city's Burgomaster, Jan van der Does (Dousa) mentioned in his oration welcoming the young prodigy that "the mantle of Erasmus had fallen on his shoulders," praise which he never forgot. See LIESJE VANSOMEREN, *UMPIRE TO THE NATIONS: HUGO GROTIUS*. LONDON: DENNIS DOBSON 37-39, 134 (1965). For a comparison of their views on war and peace, see G.J. DE VOOGD, *ERASMUS EN GROTIUS* (1946).

²¹ ERASMUS, *DULCE BELLUM INEXPERTIS*, as quoted in Phillips, *supra* note 2, at 309.

if we try to analyze such poor appreciations more closely.²²

Indeed, the reality of war is often deliberately hidden, so as to prevent its real face from turning people against it. As soon as the Nazis came to power they closed down, and viciously destroyed, Ernst Friedrich's Anti-War Museum in Berlin, which he had established after World War One precisely to keep alive the memory of the horrors of war, as a warning and lesson for future generations.²³ The Austrian Alfred H. Fried, one of the great leaders of the pre-World War One peace movement (1911 Nobel laureate), mentions in an autobiographical fragment that a visit, when he was sixteen years old, to an art exhibition turned him overnight into an ardent pacifist and hater of war.²⁴ The exhibition in the Künstlerhaus, in Vienna in 1880 or 1881, showed anti-war paintings by the Russian Vassili V. Vereshchagin. Fried wrote: "Still today, after four decades, I feel the anger that arose in me when I saw those pictures." When they were being shown in Berlin in 1882, field-marshal Helmuth von Moltke tried to prevent soldiers and students from visiting the exhibition.²⁵ Today, visitors to the large and modern war museum in the controversial Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo are amazed to find that the history of Japan in World War Two, which occupies a large part of the exhibition, makes no mention of the destruction of Tokyo by incendiary air-raids, and mentions the atomic destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki only in passing, on two A-4 sheets, with a complete absence of any images. Pictures and film footage of the destruction of both cities were confiscated and censored by the U.S. occupation authorities in Japan because of their "potentially incendiary quality."²⁶ A few years ago, the Indian authorities only allowed a travelling exhibition of the Hiroshima Peace Culture Foundation to be shown in the country on condition that certain panels were removed. This was at a time when both India and Pakistan had become nuclear weapons states and the danger of a nuclear confrontation between them loomed. The suppression by governments and the military of images showing the reality of war is also in evidence today as regards the war in Iraq. And when wars are officially declared over, their aftermath - in terms of destroyed lives, livelihoods, and landscapes - is likewise kept from view, or deliberately ignored.²⁷ It

²² Elizabeth Converse, *The war of all against all: A review of The Journal of Conflict Resolution, 1957-1968*, in 12 THE JOURNAL OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION (1968), at 471-532

²³ Ernst Friedrich, *Vom Friedens-Museum ... zur Hitler-Kaserne. Ein Tatsachenbericht über das Wirken von Ernst Friedrich und Adolf Hitler*. Geneva: "Internationales Komitee für die Wiedererrichtung des Ersten Internationalen Anti-Kriegs-Museums" (1935). The museum was re-established by his grandson in 1982. See *Anti-Kriegs Museum/Anti-War Museum*, in RACHEL KAPLAN, LITTLE-KNOWN MUSEUMS IN AND AROUND BERLIN 16-21 (1999).

²⁴ ALFRED H. FRIED, JUGENDERINNERUNGEN 12 (Schwetschke, 1925).

²⁵ GISELA & DIETER RIESENBERGER, EDs., ALFRED HERMANN FRIED, MEIN KRIEGSTAGEBUCH 7 (Bremen, 2005).

²⁶ Hugh Gusterson, *Hiroshima and the power of pictures*, BULLETIN OF THE ATOMIC SCIENTISTS, Aug. 5, 2009, available at <http://www.thebulletin.org/print/web-edition/columnists/hugh-gusterson/hiroshima> (last visited on Oct. 20, 2009)

²⁷ For excellent documentation, see DONOVAN WEBSTER, AFTERMATH THE REMNANTS OF WAR. (Constable, 1997).

seems that, as much as possible, then and now, and as much here as there, the fiction of "*Dulce Bellum*" has to be maintained.²⁸

III. "War is sweet to those who do not know it" (1515)

Let us now take a closer look at Erasmus' anti-war essay, *Dulce Bellum Inexpertis*, popularly known as *Bellum*. It is a very important piece of writing, not only as regards his own oeuvre, but in European history since it is regarded as the first European writing against war. "This splendid essay," a German translator and editor of it has written, "should really assumed to be familiar to those who are involved in every contemporary discussion concerning armaments" but, instead, it is virtually unknown.²⁹ "The question of peace is today urgent, and an existential one," she continues, "It may be surprising to find that all important aspects of its problematique are already elaborated by Erasmus." What he wrote about war and peace in 1515 was and remains essential. Hannemann also writes, "Although Erasmus introduced a wealth of classical wisdom, his anti-war pamphlet was new in the overall picture it presented, and its courageous lack of equivocation." Significantly, she adds, "his contemporaries immediately understood it as revolutionary."³⁰ Werner Kaegi, the leading Swiss biographer of Erasmus, has called *Bellum* "one of the most impressive political tracts of Erasmus against war" and points out that it was particularly popular in the 17th century when it was repeatedly reprinted and read during the decades of the Thirty Years War.³¹ In the English speaking world, *Bellum* experienced a Renaissance at the end of the 18th century and first half of the 19th century after a new translation had appeared in 1794 under the title *Anti-Polemus*.³² This would soon become a bestseller when the first organised peace movements emerged in England and the USA in the

²⁸ See below for instances of censorship of Erasmus' own *Bellum*. Many of Erasmus' s theological writings were regarded as heretical and were repressed, burnt and put on the index. In 1559, his entire oeuvre was put on the index of prohibited books issued by Pope Paul IV. As a result, many of his books were removed from libraries and burnt, especially in Spain. The last section of the exhibition *Erasmus en Leuven* was devoted to this theme, which is detailed in the catalogue. See *supra* note 1, at 413-440.

²⁹ ERASMUS VON ROTTERDAM, SÜSS SCHEINT DER KRIEG DEN UNERFAHRENEEN. (trans. & ed. by Brigitte Hannemann, 1987).

³⁰ *Id.* at 26.

³¹ *Id.* at 25

³² The following year, another volume was published in London in which *Antipolemus: or the plea of reason, religion, and humanity, against war* was added to *The Complaint of Peace*. The translator and editor of both volumes was Vicesimus Knox. See Emile V. Telle, *In the Wake of Erasmus of Rotterdam: An Outcry for Perpetual and Universal Peace in England in 1793-1795*, in 3 ERASMUS OF ROTTERDAM SOCIETY YEARBOOK 104-129 (1983); MARTIN CEADEL, THE ORIGINS OF WAR PREVENTION 80, 545 (1996).

early decades of the 19th century.³³ It seems therefore that if anyone can be said to have “invented peace” in the modern era, the claims of Erasmus are hard to deny - and this would be true, even if they would be based on the merits of this essay alone.³⁴ Introducing a modern reprint of Erasmus’ essay, William Royall Tyler, former U.S. ambassador to the Netherlands, has written: “*Bellum* is as timely today as when it was written...He demonstrates the horrors and the folly of war more eloquently than has anyone before or since. No modern apologist has put forward arguments against war more persuasive than those of Erasmus, nor has anyone been able to devise practical means for its abolition any more than he could.”³⁵

Dulce Bellum Inexpertis appeared for the first time in the second major edition of *Adages*, published by Aldus Manutius in Venice in 1508 - five hundred years ago. Then, his comments comprised a mere five lines. However, in the next major edition, published by Froben in Basle in 1515, Erasmus’ commentary had grown to 1,000 lines. For the first time in the history of European literature, an extensive treatment was exclusively devoted to the theme which was of burning interest to humankind, viz. “war and peace.”³⁶ Its importance in Erasmus’s thought is not only indicated by the fact that he had expanded his commentary so much that it had become the longest of all commentaries, but also by the fact that he put this essay at the head of the fourth series of one thousand sayings, assigning to it the number 3,001. Moreover, throughout his life he would continue to improve and expand *Bellum* in the various new, expanded editions of his *Adages*. He revised *Bellum* for the last time in 1533, and this was also the text which appeared in the last edition of the *Adages* published during the author’s lifetime (Froben, 1536), and comprising 4,151 sayings. *Bellum* remained his favourite saying, and longest essay. In 1558 Erasmus’ writings were condemned by the Congregation of the Index. In an edition of the *Adages* published in Paris in 1570, 46 lines were removed from *Bellum*, and in an edition published in Florence five years later the essay was shrunk to a mere 29 lines. Only in countries which were not subject to an all-powerful religion, or an absolute monarchy, did the *Adages* escape such mutilations. During the 17th century, unexpurgated editions were published in Germany, the Netherlands, and Switzerland.³⁷

³³ Hannemann, *supra* note 29, at 31; Phillips, *supra* note 2, at 299 ; Van den Dungen, *supra* note 5, at 54.

³⁴ As regards “the invention of peace” it can be noted that when the Grotius Society in London in 1923 published a series of eight “Texts for Students of International Relations” under the heading “Peace Classics,” the first book selected was by Erasmus (see *infra* note 40). Among other authors included are Sully, Grotius, Saint-Pierre, Bentham, and Kant.

³⁵ OTTO DIX, *BELLUM: TWO STATEMENTS ON THE NATURE OF WAR. AN ESSAY ON WAR WRITTEN IN 1545 [SIC] BY ERASMUS; FIFTY ETCHINGS CREATED IN 1923 & 1924* 7 (IMPRINT SOCIETY, 1972).

³⁶ Hannemann, *supra* note 29 at 21.

³⁷ *Érasme et la Belgique*, *supra* note 1, at 5.

IV. “The Education of a Christian Prince” (1516)

Bellum was the first of the adages to be printed separately - an indication both of its importance to its author, and of its popularity. The latter is confirmed by the many printings and editions which followed, making *Bellum* a bestseller in its own right. It was first published separately by Froben in Basle in April 1517, and six months later by Dirk Martens in Leuven (this latter edition opened the 1969 exhibition mentioned at the beginning of this article). A year earlier, another important work of Erasmus regarding war and peace had been published: *Institutio Principis Christiani* (*The Education of a Christian Prince*). As with *Bellum*, the book was first published by Froben in Basle in May 1516, and then by Martens in August. If *Bellum* was the first publication of anti-war writing in modern European history, the *Institutio* can be considered the first book on peace education. As regards Maine's and Howard's "invention of peace," Erasmus saw education as its main foundation. In an era of absolute monarchy, the first to be educated in matters of war and peace were the rulers. Leaving aside for a moment questions of war and peace, and the education of the prince, and speaking more generally, Erasmus was first and foremost an educator. This aspect has been emphasised, for instance, by the great Dutch peace historian and activist Bart de Ligt who devoted three of his twelve chapters of his biography of Erasmus to it. Erasmus wrote not only several theoretical and practical educational works but pedagogical issues also surface in many of his other writings, including his correspondence. De Ligt points out that since the start of the 16th century he was widely regarded as an authority in this field whose advice was often sought in matters of pedagogy and appointment of teachers.³⁸ A well-known instance is the request by his friend John Colet, the dean of St. Paul's in London, in helping him when he was establishing St. Paul's School.

Institutio was dedicated to the 16-year old Prince Charles, the future emperor Charles V, to whom a few months earlier Erasmus had been appointed counsellor. His purpose in writing the book was to admonish the future ruler how to be a beneficent prince, and urge moral perfection, thus setting it apart from other great contemporary manuals of statecraft none more so than Machiavelli's *The Prince*, which was written at about the same time, in 1513, but published only in 1532.³⁹ In the first chapter, which is as long as

³⁸ Bart de Ligt, *Erasmus begrepen uit de geest der Renaissance*. 154: (Van Loghum Slaterus, 1936). The three chapters concerned are entitled "Erasmus as educator about the ancients," "Erasmus as educator of youth," and "Erasmus as educator of his age."

³⁹ However, it was in circulation earlier as manuscript. It is unlikely that Erasmus knew it as otherwise he would have refuted it in his own work. Jacob ter Meulen has rightly said that "it is difficult to think of a better reply" to it than his *Institutio*. DER GEDANKE DER INTERNATIONALEN ORGANISATION IN SEINER ENTWICKLUNG 1300-1800 126 (1917).

the remaining ten combined, Erasmus sets forth the ideal education of a Christian prince. The qualities which the princely tutor should inculcate are “wisdom, a sense of justice, personal restraint, foresight, and concern for the public well-being.”⁴⁰ Erasmus makes clear the high responsibility involved in the education of a prince when he argues, “Given that anyone who debases the prince’s coinage is punished with death, how much more deserving of that punishment is someone who corrupts his mind?”⁴¹ “... the tutor should first see that his pupil loves and honours virtue as the most beautiful thing of all, the greatest source of happiness.”⁴²

It is not long before Erasmus mentions war, and cautions the prince against light-heartedly launching one. He introduces the subject in a way which makes also readers today appreciate his urging of caution and deep reflection on those with the power to start war: If Africanus was right in saying that “I didn’t think” is not a fit expression for any wise man, how much more unsuited is it to a prince, when it not only costs him dear but costs the state too much as well? A war once started on impulse by a young prince with no military experience may last for twenty years. What a vast tide of misfortune rises from this! ... What is a mistake in other people is a crime in the prince.⁴³ A few pages later he says that a good king “realizes that war is the single source of all

Heinrich Lutz concluded his comparative study of Machiavelli and Erasmus with the observation that in the twentieth century, which has witnessed “two world wars and the madness of nuclear weapons,” it is the latter’s views which are gradually coming to - and have to - prevail. See *Erasmus - Machiavelli: Krieg und Frieden im Werden der Neuzeitlichen Staaten*, in TAETIGKEITSBERICHT DER OESTERREICHISCHEN AKADEMIE DER WISSENSCHAFTEN 1984-85 21-35 (Austrian Academy of Sciences, 1986).

⁴⁰ A modern edition of *The Education of a Christian Prince* (hereinafter, “Education”) is in 27 COLLECTED WORKS OF ERASMUS at 199-288 (1986). The quotation is at 206. The references which follow are to this edition. In his edition of the same work, entitled THE INSTRUCTION OF A CHRISTIAN PRINCE, Percy Ellwood Corbett writes that there is much in this book “and in his other utterances on peace, that is neither trite nor merely of historical interest” (1939) at 15. This book, as well as seven other “peace classics,” was originally published by the Grotius Society in London in 1923. (See *supra* note 34). Preserved Smith, whose *Erasmus* (*supra* note 16) was published also in 1923, offers implicitly an elaboration on Corbett’s view. He writes that this essay by Erasmus “is a really valuable contribution to several branches of political science” which, to be appreciated, must be compared with Machiavelli’s. Smith continues, “Erasmus followed Aristotle, Plato and Aquinas in making politics a branch of ethics, both being concerned with the actions of men, the one in a public, the other in a private capacity ... His essay was above all practical.” See 27 COLLECTED WORKS OF ERASMUS at 196-197. He points out: “Pacifism was one of the most valuable, as it was one of the most modern, features of Erasmus’ thought ... Next to pacifism, republicanism is the most original and valuable element of Erasmus’ political thought.” See 27 COLLECTED WORKS OF ERASMUS at 198-199.

⁴¹ *Education*, *supra* note 40, at 211.

⁴² *Id.* at 212.

⁴³ *Id.* at 218. The reference is to the Roman general Scipio Africanus, who made this remark about those who failed to make adequate military preparations for a campaign. See 27 COLLECTED WORKS OF ERASMUS, *supra* note 40, at 512(FN. 48). In WHAT HAPPENED: INSIDE THE BUSH WHITE HOUSE AND WASHINGTON’S CULTURE OF DECEPTION, former White House press secretary Scott McClellan has claimed that President Bush routinely made decisions on gut instinct and demonstrated a “lack of inquisitiveness [and] a detrimental resistance to reflection.” See Tom Baldwin, *Former press secretary accuses Bush of deceit over Iraq invasion*, in THE TIMES, May, 29 2008, at 38.

sorts of misfortunes to the state.”⁴⁴ Quoting Julius Pollux, moreover, he goes on to list the qualities of an ideal king.⁴⁵ It runs to half a page, and includes “peace-loving, a peace-maker, a peace-keeper.”⁴⁶ Using a device which he frequently employs in his writings, Erasmus concludes: “Now if a pagan teacher designed such a prince for the pagans, how much more saintly should be the plan drawn up for a Christian prince?”⁴⁷

The second chapter, entitled “The Prince must avoid flatterers” to which no doubt today he would add also spin-doctors and communication directors, is followed by one which Erasmus called “The arts of peace,” thereby apparently coining the expression. The chapter is concerned with how the prince should relate to his people, and ensuring that, by wise governance, war - domestic as well as international - can be avoided. He says: “Although ancient writers divided the whole theory of statecraft into two sets of skills, those of peace and of war, our first and foremost concern must be for training the prince in the skills relevant to wise administration in time of peace, because with them he must strive to his utmost for this end: that the devices of war may never be needed.”⁴⁸ Such is the power of education, he writes at the end of this chapter, and referring to Plato, “that a man who has been correctly brought up emerges as a kind of divine creature, while faulty upbringing ... reduces him to a horrible monster.”⁴⁹

It is not by chance that Erasmus’s exposition on the arts of peace comes at the beginning of the book, and that the chapter “On starting war” is placed at the end. He points out the unique consequences of war when he writes; “Although the prince will never make any decision hastily, he will never be more hesitant or more circumspect than in starting a war; other actions have their different disadvantages, but war always brings about the wreck of everything that is good, and the tide of war overflows with everything that is worst; what is more, there is no evil that persists so stubbornly. War breeds war ... the plague of war, breaking out in one place, infects neighbours too and, indeed, even those far from the scene.”⁵⁰ Keeping all this in mind, “The good prince will never start a war at all unless, after everything else has been tried, it cannot by any means be avoided. If we were all agreed on this, there would hardly ever be a war among men.” He goes on to specify that if war must be fought, “the prince’s first concern should be to fight with the least possible harm to his subjects, at the lowest cost

⁴⁴ Education, *supra* note 40, at 225.

⁴⁵ Julius Pollux was a rhetorician during the reign of Emperor Commodus. See 28 COLLECTED WORKS OF ERASMUS, *supra* note 40, at 515(FN. 105).

⁴⁶ Education, *supra* note 40, at 230.

⁴⁷ *Id.*

⁴⁸ *Id.* at 253.

⁴⁹ *Id.* at 259.

⁵⁰ *Id.* at 282.

in Christian blood, and to end it as quickly as possible.” Erasmus was not an absolute pacifist, but since in his days, the traditional doctrine of the just war had become totally abused, so that wars were happily waged by Christian rulers for the flimsiest of reasons, he often presents himself as if he were an absolute pacifist. He writes, “Augustine approves [war] somewhere...but Christ himself, and Peter, and Paul, always teach the opposite. Why does their authority carry less weight than that of Augustine?”⁵¹

In these final pages he makes an eloquent plea for the preservation of peace, and strongly condemns war: “What can war produce except war? But consideration breeds consideration, and fairness, fairness ... When the prince has made his calculations and reckoned up the total of all these woes if indeed they could ever be reckoned up, then let him say to himself: “Shall I alone be the cause of so much woe? Shall so much human blood, so many widows, so many grief-stricken households, so many childless old people, so many made undeservedly poor, the total ruin of morality, law, and religion: shall all this be laid at my door? Must I atone for all this before Christ?” ... we fight wars with such extravagance, at such expense, and with such enthusiasm and diligence, that peace could have been preserved for a tenth of all that ... How fleeting, how brief, how fragile is the life of a man, and how subject to misfortune, assailed already by a multitude of diseases and accidents, buildings which collapse, shipwrecks, earthquakes, lightning! We do not need to add war to our woes, and yet it causes more woe than all the others.”⁵² Erasmus not only condemns war among Christians as absurd: “I do not think, either, that war against the Turks should be hastily undertaken.”⁵³ Do we not find here a convincing plea for the adoption of the maxim, “If you want peace, prepare for peace,” and thus for the development of a culture of peace? If Erasmus was already decrying the expenses and efforts involved in war-making and war-preparation of his day, it is doubtful that even he would have found words to describe the madness of our times with the nominally Christian states of the USA and Britain in the forefront.

⁵¹ *Id.* at 284. Two good analyses of Erasmus’ position on the theory of the just war are: Robert Regout, “*Erasmus en de theorie van den rechtvaardigen oorlog*,” in *Voordrachten gehouden ter herdenking van den sterfdag van Erasmus op 10 en 11 juli 1936 te Rotterdam*, at 155-171 (1936), and, more recently, Jan van Herwaarden, “*Erasmus en de Turk: hoe aanvaardbaar is oorlog?*,” in *ROTTERDAMS JAARBOEKJE* 84-107 (2005). Rotterdam: Gemeentearchief, 2005. See also the study by Dealy, mentioned in *supra* note 6, and the references listed. See *infra* note 53.

⁵² Education, *supra* note 40, at 285-286.

⁵³ *Id.* at 287. He addressed the question of war against the Turks in a separate publication which first appeared in 1530, *De Bello Turcico* (On the War against the Turks). John Piolon has recently made a new Dutch translation: Erasmus, (2nd ed. 2008). See also FRED DALLMAYR, *A War against the Turks? Erasmus on War and Peace*, in 23 University of Notre Dame’s Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies’ Occasional Paper Series 3-8 (2002). This paper is substantially reproduced in the first two chapters of Dallmayr’s *PEACE TALKS - WHO WILL LISTEN?* (2004).

V. “Julius II excluded from heaven” (1517)

Whereas in the *Institutio* Erasmus put before the young prince Charles the model of an ideal ruler - who had to be convinced “that what Christ teaches applies to no one more than to the prince”⁵⁴ - in the same period he wrote another work, this time of satire, in which he lambasted the pope, Christ’s representative on earth, who had brought the papacy into disrepute. And just as in the *Institutio* he praised the pursuit of peace and avoidance of war as the wisest and most important policies for a prince to pursue, so in *Julius II Excluded from Heaven* Erasmus castigated the pope for his pursuit of worldly power and constant warfare. As John Piolon has remarked, “Julius II spent more time on the battlefield than in the Vatican.”⁵⁵ Erasmus’ satire is one of his most effective critiques of the depths to which the Church had fallen in embracing rather than abjuring war - Huizinga has even called it “the most biting and the most mortifying satire ever written.”⁵⁶ It is especially Pope Julius II’s eagerness to wage war which is the main charge that Saint Peter lays against him, and which leads to his dramatic exclusion from heaven. Erasmus had personal, first-hand experience of this pope’s bellicose behaviour during his sojourn in Italy from 1506 to 1509. Then, his travels had been more than once interrupted by wars and rumours of wars. Moreover, he actually witnessed the pope’s triumphant entry into Bologna (1506), and also, a few years later, the destruction by its irate citizens of the large statue of him by Michelangelo that had been erected in the city on his orders. Erasmus was never to forget the images of this warrior-pope. Indeed, so profound was the impact that, in the words of Margaret Mann Phillips: “It was Julius II who turned Erasmus into a pacifist.”⁵⁷

It is likely that *Julius II Excluded* was written soon after the warrior pope’s death in February 1513 and then circulated in manuscript until, without the permission of its anonymous author, it was printed early in 1517. From that moment the *Julius Exclusus* became one of the publishing successes of its day.⁵⁸ The earliest dated edition of the dialogue was printed by Dirk Martens in Leuven in September 1518. It is appropriate to

⁵⁴ Education, *supra* note 40, at 212.

⁵⁵ In his introduction to *De Turkenkrijg*, *supra* note 53, at 13.

⁵⁶ Huizinga, *supra* note 19, at 20.

⁵⁷ Margaret Mann Phillips, *supra* note 2, at 105. This quotation is reproduced in the editorial material accompanying a new translation, *Julius Excluded from Heaven: A Dialogue*, in 27 COLLECTED WORKS OF ERASMUS, *supra* note 40, at 155-197.

⁵⁸ *Id.* at 156. It has recently been newly translated into English: PRAISE OF FOLLY AND POPE JULIUS BARRED FROM HEAVEN, (trans. by Roger Clarke, et al., 2008). The translator has provided an abundance of editorial material. For a new Dutch translation, see *Julius. Hoe paus Julius II bij de hemelpoort aanklopt, maar door Petrus niet wordt binnengelaten.* (trans. by John Piolon, 2007).

say something about Dirk Martens, Belgium's first printer, who became a close friend of Erasmus.⁵⁹ As already noted above, in 1516 and 1517, he printed *Institutio* and *Bellum* very soon after the first printing of these works by Johannes Froben in Basle. Born in Aalst, around 1447, he printed the first dated book in Belgium in 1473. His business started to flourish from 1502 after he had established himself for the second time in Antwerp, and it was at this time that he first came into contact with Erasmus, who contributed to a book printed by Martens the following year. Their collaboration and friendship intensified especially after he moved to Leuven in 1512, where he was to stay until 1529, and when Erasmus also made Leuven his home from 1517 until 1521. These years were the high-point of Erasmus' influence as well as the beginnings of his difficulties, resulting in his departure for Basle. There, of course, he was close to another leading printer, Froben.

Martens became a pioneer of humanism in the Netherlands, largely through the works by Erasmus that he printed. Altogether, about 250 imprints came from his press, of which two-thirds, 170, date from his second residence in Leuven. Martens printed at least 71 works written or edited by his illustrious friend, of which 48 were texts written by Erasmus himself, including no fewer than 21 first editions. He also printed, on the first day of 1519, the first catalogue of Erasmus' publications in response, as he said in an address to the reader, to the daily requests he received to bring out such a work.⁶⁰ Two months later another noteworthy Erasmus "first" issued from his printing press, viz. the first edition of the *Colloquies* that its author recognised. Like the *Adages*, this was another famous and very popular book of which numerous editions appeared, growing all the time in both quantitative and qualitative respects. The book originally started out as simple exercises for his pupils to learn Latin, and various unauthorised editions appeared, including one which had been published two years before by Martens with the qualification "author uncertain" added to the title. From 1522 onwards, the *Colloquies* were no longer simple exercises but began to express, in Erasmus's inimical style, his great ideas. Included in it are a number of dialogues in which he satirises the military profession which for him was a school of robbery and mischief. The 1522 edition saw the first publication of "Militaria" which has been described as a little masterpiece, as short as it is incisive.⁶¹ Equally effective in mocking the trade of the mercenary soldier is "The Soldier and the Carthusian," which first made its appearance in a new edition the following year. As a modern translator and editor of the *Colloquies* observes in his note preceding this particular dialogue, "Erasmus, whose fondness for

⁵⁹ For details, see C. REEDJIK, *ERASMUS EN ONZE DIRK. DE VRIENDSCHAP TUSSEN ERASMUS EN ZIJN DRUKKER DIRK MARTENS VAN AALST* (The friendship between Erasmus and his printer Dirk Martens of Aalst) (1974).

⁶⁰ It was entitled *Lucubrationum Erasmi Roterodami Index*.

⁶¹ *Érasme et la Belgique*, *supra* note 1, at 8.

comparing or contrasting vocations is evident in many of these pages, never missed an opportunity to satirize soldiers or to attack their wickedness ... By contrast with the soldier ... the Carthusian has much to be complacent about. This mercenary is a mere debauched, reckless, sinful adventurer, of a kind well known to Erasmus in Switzerland and often met in his pages.”⁶² In “haron,” a dialogue first published in 1529, Erasmus attacks the folly and cupidity of kings while it also expresses his detestation of compliant ecclesiastics, whether prelates who by flattering princes incite them to war ... or priests and friars who assure the populace that “God is on our side.”⁶³ Thompson writes in his note accompanying Charon, “Erasmus had intuitions of a body of international law capable of arbitrating disputes and preserving peace, but he never worked these ideas out. That task was to be accomplished a century later by his countryman, Grotius. His writings had little or no direct political effect. Nevertheless as a propagandist for peace he produced some of the best and most widely read arguments on war and peace; and they are still worth reading.”⁶⁴

The single most famous book that issued from Martens’ press in Leuven - which Reedijk refers to as “one of the most important monuments of the 16th century culture, indeed, of world literature”⁶⁵ - was not by Erasmus, but by his good friend Thomas More: the *Utopia*, printed in 1516. Such was the friendship and collaboration between Erasmus and More that the Dutchman also had a hand in it and at the request of More contributed several fragments, often on his own favourite topics. In his correspondence with Erasmus, More referred to “our” Utopia; in the second Paris edition Erasmus’ name even appeared on the title-page.⁶⁶ If, as is widely assumed then as now, this book was meant to be the blueprint of an ideal society, it is perplexing to find that two widely detested social institutions, war and slavery, are not absent from it.⁶⁷ Erasmus’ most famous writing on peace is the *Querela Pacis* (The Complaint of Peace), published for the first time in 1517. It seems that Peace, whom Erasmus introduces as a person, would have had grounds to complain bitterly that she was not welcome even in the allegedly perfect human society that his friend More had sketched in his *Utopia*.

⁶² CRAIG R. THOMPSON(trans.), THE COLLOQUIES OF ERASMUS 127-128 (1965).

⁶³ *Id.* at 389.

⁶⁴ *Id.* at 390. For instances where Erasmus proposes arbitration, see ter Meulen, *Der Gedanke*, *supra* note 39, at 125-127.

⁶⁵ Reedijk, *supra* note 59, at 19-20.

⁶⁶ De Ligt, *supra* note 38, at 208. Another Dutch scholar has written that large portions of *Utopia* seem to have been inspired by Erasmus’ *Handbook of the Christian Soldier* “as if Thomas More has been quoting from memory.” N. DE ROOLJ, *UTOPIA GEWONNEN EN VERLOREN. DE TRAGEDIE VAN THOMAS MORE EN ERASMUS* 35 (Pax, 1950).

⁶⁷ For an overview and discussion of the various interpretations which have been offered, see Shlomo Avineri, *War and Slavery in More’s Utopia*, in 7 INTERNATIONAL REVIEW OF SOCIAL HISTORY 260-290 (1962). For a major breakthrough, so far apparently largely ignored by students of the *Utopia* and biographers of its author, see VICTOR N. BAPTISTE, BARTOLOME DE LAS CASAS AND THOMAS MORE’S UTOPIA: CONNECTIONS AND SIMILARITIES (1990).

VI. “The Complaint of Peace” (1517)

Querela Pacis is yet another of Erasmus’ many writings on the subject of peace and whose very early publication, once more, took place in Leuven. The *editio princeps* was published in December 1517 by Froben in Basle. Erasmus had also given a copy of the manuscript to Martens because he felt that Froben was taking too long in publishing it. In the event, the edition printed by Martens appeared some months after the one published by Froben, at the end of March or in April 1518.⁶⁸ Following *Bellum*, and *Institutio*, this work is a synthesis and elaboration of his earlier writings on the theme of war and peace which include also his long letter to Anton van Bergen (Antony Bergen), the abbot of St. Bertin, of 1514. This letter contained the seed of all the fundamental ideas on peace that Erasmus was to develop in the next few years. *The Complaint of Peace Spurned and Rejected by the Whole World*, to give the short work its full title, is his “most explicit and celebrated plea for general peace” in the words of one of its most recent translators into English.⁶⁹ The same year that her translation appeared - 1986, the 450th anniversary of Erasmus’ death - also saw a reprint of a Dutch translation of the same work where it was called “still the most beautiful in all the literature on peace.”⁷⁰ It is not only later generations of readers which have expressed their admiration for this work: Philip of Burgundy, the Bishop of Utrecht to whom Erasmus had dedicated it, wrote in a letter shortly after receiving the book: “Your *Complaint of Peace* delights not only myself ... but all sincere professors of Christianity. Sorry should I be that you should suffer your learning to remain in obscurity.”⁷¹ Not everybody shared the good Bishop’s opinion. Manuscripts of the French translation of *The Complaint of Peace*, together with three other translations of works by Erasmus, were condemned, confiscated and burnt by the Faculty of Theology of the University of Paris in the 1520s. In 1529 Louis de Berquin, the translator, himself was burned at the stake in Paris.⁷²

⁶⁸ It is puzzling to read, in *Erasmiana Lovaniensia* (*infra* note. 85) that “the *editio princeps* was prepared by Dirk Martens in 1518.”). Later on in the same volume, the correct publication sequence is given, at 162.

⁶⁹ Betty Radice, at 290 in her introduction to her translation, in 27 COLLECTED WORKS OF ERASMUS, *supra* note 40, at 292-322.

⁷⁰ DESIDERIUS ERASMUS, DE KLACHT VAN DE VREDE. (Ad. Donker, 1986). The quotation is on the backcover.

⁷¹ The letter, dated on (December 6, 1517) is reprinted in the foreword to the quatercentenary edition of THE COMPLAINT OF PEACE xv-xvi (Headley Bros., 1917).

⁷² It is not surprising that copies of the contemporary French translation of THE COMPLAINT OF PEACE are exceedingly rare. See James E. Walsh, *The Querela Pacis of Erasmus: the “Lost” French Translation*, in 17 HARV. LIBRARY BULL., 374-384 (Oct. 1969). The book, printed in Lyon in 1531 or 1532, is to be found only in the Houghton Library at Harvard (since 1954) and in the Royal Library in Brussels. The latter copy was used for the facsimile published in 1978: Le Chevalier de Berquin, *La Coplainte de la Paix*. Geneva: Droz. Emile V. Telle has enriched the 100-page facsimile with some 300 pages of editorial material.

It seems that no French translation of *The Complaint of Peace* was available until four hundred years later. In 1924, a translation by Elise Constantinescu Bagdat was published at the end of her scholarly study of the same book.⁷³ It also appears that her historical and philosophical analysis of it was unprecedented and constituted the first monograph, in any language, of the book.⁷⁴ Both of these circumstances can serve as confirmation of her observation that “the best commentators of Erasmus pay little attention, and only in passing, to the *Querela pacis*.”⁷⁵ She had indicated the rationale for undertaking its study - and her high regard of it - at the very start in the following arresting terms: “In this study we deal with a work of Erasmus which has been noticed the least and which deserves to be considered the most.”⁷⁶ “If Erasmus had written nothing else but only this *Querela Pacis*,” she says, “he would have earned all the celebrity which he enjoys.”⁷⁷ Constantinescu Bagdat praises the beauty as well as the courage of “this book which is the only one of its kind [and] which deserves to be placed among the most useful works concerning political and social morality.”⁷⁸ She lauds its eloquence, the richness of its arguments, and the profound sincerity of its sentiments. She also comments on more than one occasion that reading Erasmus’ ideas on war and peace transports one straight to the heart of the 18th century. It is not without reason, she says, that Thomas More has been called the real precursor of the *philosophes* of the 18th century but she believes that although nothing similar has been claimed for Erasmus, he has at least as much claim to that title as his friend. Constantinescu Bagdat goes as far as to argue that whatever is best in the thought and works of the *philosophes* they owe to Erasmus and More “who were the first to proclaim, at the dawn of the modern age, the rights of reason and of humanity.”⁷⁹ Her analysis lends further support to the view, argued above, that Erasmus - rather than Kant - should be credited with the “invention of peace.”⁸⁰

⁷³ Elise Constantinescu Bagdat, *La “Querela Pacis” d’ Erasme 135-174* (Paris, 1917).

⁷⁴ *Id.* at 131.

⁷⁵ *Id.* She makes an exception for a great English Erasmus expert, P.S. Allen (at 132 & passim).

⁷⁶ *Id.* at X.

⁷⁷ *Id.* at 132

⁷⁸ *Id.* at 133. She is equally most complimentary about Erasmus’ s other main writings on peace. She writes of the “incomparable beauty” of *Bellum* (*Id.* at 74) and refers to *Institutio* as “the most beautiful of Erasmus’ s political works which still today is a masterpiece of political and social morality” (*Id.* at 79).

⁷⁹ *Id.* at 90, 115, 117, 128.

⁸⁰ Erasmus, as noted, is a great admirer of what is best in the ancient civilisations of Greece and Rome and draws frequently on the classical writings as well as Christian sources when constructing his argument. To that extent he stands on the shoulders of those who had gone before him. It hardly needs pointing out that eloquent critics of war and determined advocates of peace are also to be found in the ancient civilisations of the East. For instance, one finds great echoes of Erasmus in the writings of Mo Ti (Mo-tzu) who strongly denounced the criminality as well as futility of war; exposed the hollow nature of military victories; constantly appealed to reason; and expounded the principles of universal love. See Harold H. Rowley, *The Chinese Philosopher Mo Ti*, Manchester University: 31

Of all the many translations, in various languages, none is perhaps equal to that by José Chapiro, published as *Peace Protests!*⁸¹ The care that he has taken to make Erasmus' text as appealing and as striking to us as it was to his contemporaries almost five hundred years ago is already shown in the translation of the title itself which has a directness and liveliness which the original no longer conveys. His translation is preceded by a book-length biography of Erasmus which focuses on his peace ideas. Not only has Chapiro provided the best modern translation of this work by Erasmus but at the same time few others have analysed so thoroughly the peace ideas of Erasmus, or argued the centrality of peace in all of Erasmus's strivings, or demonstrated the continued great relevance of his writings on the subject, first and foremost *Peace Protests!* Chapiro calls it "a masterpiece without any counterpart in the pacifist literature of the world."⁸² Dedicating his book to the United Nations, "Embodiment of the ideals of Erasmus and source of the highest hopes of our times," Chapiro has no hesitation in calling *Peace Protests!* "the book of our time."⁸³ There is no better study of Erasmus' views on war and peace, and no more convincing demonstration that, if anyone, he should be credited with "the invention of peace" and regarded as the founder of peace research and pioneer of peace education, than *Erasmus and Our Struggle for Peace* which in its eloquence, lucidity, and passion manages to do justice to its subject.

BULLETIN OF THE JOHN RYLANDS LIBRARY, (November 1948); Mo Ti, *Gegen den Krieg und Solidaritaet und allgemeine Menschenliebe*. Duesseldorf: Eugen Diederichs, (1975). Both books were translated from the Chinese and edited by Hedwig Schmidt-Glinterz. The "invention of peace" has truly been the work of many hands in many civilizations. When we come to our own times, one figure indisputably towers above all others as regards the "invention of peace": Gandhi - the greatest exponent of the philosophy and practice of nonviolence of the modern world. It is appropriate to point out that Richard B. Gregg, one of his earliest and best students in the West, has explicitly referred to Gandhi as "a great social scientist and social inventor." Gandhi's empirical approach is also reflected in the title he gave to his autobiography, MY EXPERIMENTS WITH TRUTH. See Gregg's contribution entitled *Gandhiji as a social scientist and social inventor*, in MAHATMA GANDHI, ESSAYS AND REFLECTIONS ON HIS LIFE AND WORK 80-86 (S. Radhakrishnan, ed., 1939). Gandhi believed in the possibility of opposing the science of war with a "science of peace," a "science of nonviolence," and he did more than anyone else to develop this science and demonstrate its practical significance. For his use of these terms, see RAGHAVAN IYER, ED., 2 THE MORAL AND POLITICAL WRITINGS OF MAHATMA GANDHI 478, 487 (1986). See also Gene Sharp, *Gandhi's Lessons for the Twenty-first Century*, in MEDITATIONS ON GANDHI [19 Gandhian Studies and Peace Research Series] 63-75 (M.P. Mathai, M.S. John & Siby K. Joseph, eds., 2002).

⁸¹ JOSÉ CHAPIRO, *ERASMUS AND OUR STRUGGLE FOR PEACE* (Beacon Press, 1950).

⁸² *Id.* at 72.

⁸³ *Id.* at 130.

VII. Conclusion

One of the arguments advanced above for preferring Erasmus over Kant in the question of precedence concerning “the invention of peace,” is that no other writer has put before the reading public so constantly, so forcefully, and so vividly, the contrast between the miseries of war and the advantages of peace. He was fond of quoting Cicero’s “The most unjust peace is preferable to the most just war.” It seems that this message has to be taught afresh to each generation, loudly and clearly. The history of Europe since Erasmus’ days has shown the accuracy of this insight, and also the way it has virtually always been ignored and neglected. Is it necessary to bring the story up to date? What better illustrates the illiteracy, the inaptness, the irresponsibility of the leaders of the western world, in the persons of George W. Bush and Tony Blair, than the war against Iraq over which they presided and which they initiated? Ever since, every day has borne out the truth of Erasmus’ observation concerning the miseries and uncertainties of war, and the blessings of peace even under a dictatorship. For anyone familiar with his writings on war and peace, Bush and Blair appear, at best, as misguided, reckless simpletons, ignorant of the most obvious lessons of history. Moreover, Erasmus would accuse them, as Christians, of being oblivious of the core teaching of the founder of the faith.⁸⁴

Regarding the material costs of war, it is poignant to remember that the native cities of the two great peace philosophers, Erasmus and Kant, were both destroyed by aerial bombardment in the Second World War - Rotterdam by the Luftwaffe at the start of the war in May 1940, and Königsberg by the RAF towards the end of the war in Europe in 1945. Erasmus would have been further horrified to learn that the Leuven he knew was raised to the ground in August 1914, when the German invader systematically burnt well over 1,000 houses in the centre of the medieval city, about one in nine of the city’s dwellings. Also the university library, in one of the most infamous acts of cultural vandalism, was set alight. Few of the approximately 300,000 volumes escaped the fire. Among the precious historical documents which fell victim to the fire was also the papal bull issued by Pope Martin V in 1425, granting permission for the establishment of a university. The university, established in 1425, was one of the earliest and most famous of continental Europe, second only to the Sorbonne. When its library was formally created two centuries later, it achieved fame because of the richness, especially, of its

⁸⁴ Not a few experts also accuse both leaders of having infringed international law and being war criminals. See e.g., FRANCIS A. BOYLE, *DESTROYING WORLD ORDER: U.S. IMPERIALISM IN THE MIDDLE EAST BEFORE AND AFTER SEPTEMBER 11TH AND BREAKING ALL THE RULES: PALESTINE, IRAQ, IRAN AND THE CASE FOR IMPEACHMENT* (2008).

collection of books and manuscripts of the early humanists. We can only imagine how Erasmus, “the prince of humanists” - who epitomised the scholar and writer, and who loved books and their makers - would have lamented that catastrophe which doubtlessly also consumed many of his own and by now precious editions. After the First World War, the university library was built up again only for the same fate to befall it yet again a few years later at the start of the Second World War.⁸⁵

This presentation and these pages were also meant to ensure that Erasmus’ name would not be forgotten at a conference of the leading international association of peace researchers and educators, especially when the venue is Leuven. Not only did he spend an important part of his life in this city but as shown, several of his most important writings on peace were published here - if not for the first time, then certainly very shortly after their first publication. The frequency with which Erasmus condemns war and praises peace, and the urgency in getting his message across, are clear indications of the importance their author attached to this subject. Less than a decade from now will see the 500th anniversary of the first publication of *Querela Pacis* and of several of his other peace and anti-war writings briefly referred to above. This will provide a special opportunity for peace historians, peace researchers, peace educators, and peace activists to reflect on Erasmus as their great precursor whose message has lost none of its relevance, on the contrary. Unfortunately, five hundred years on, Peace is complaining as bitterly as ever. Erasmus’ pleadings and teachings are more relevant and urgent than ever. This, for peace educators and historians of peace important forthcoming anniversary period (2015-2017) might also be a good opportunity to re-name the peace research institute at the University of Leuven and incorporate the name of the pioneer of modern pacifism and peace studies in it. Although the name of Erasmus has in recent times been attached to not only the programme of academic exchange of the European Union but also the name of the University in his native city, Rotterdam - as well as to various features of that city, such as the imposing Erasmus bridge⁸⁶ - it seems that so far

⁸⁵ For details on the story, see WOLFGANG SCHIVELBUSCH, *DIE BIBLIOTHEK VON LÖWEN. EINE EPISODE AUS DER ZEIT DER WELTKRIEGE* (Carl Hanser Verlag, 1988). See also J. Roegiers, *Erasmiana te Leuven*, in *ERASMIANA LOVANIENSIA, CATALOGUS VAN DE ERASMUS-TENTOONSTELLING IN DE CENTRALE BIBLIOTHEEK TE LEUVEN, NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 1986* 13-18 (Chris Coppens et al. eds., 1986). The exhibition, held on the occasion of the 450th anniversary of the death of Erasmus, showed precious books and documents and other artefacts concerning Erasmus and his times in the possession of the University library. It showed the great progress the university had made in barely four decades to rebuild, for the third time, its collection of valuable works by and about one of the most famous scholars to be associated with the university.

⁸⁶ The most prestigious international prize annually awarded in The Netherlands - the 50th anniversary of which was celebrated in 2008 - is the Erasmus Prize. Important initiatives in recent years in his native city which are meant to promote knowledge about Erasmus and his legacy are the creation of two similarly-named institutions, viz. the Erasmus House, and the House of Erasmus, available at <http://www.erasmushuisrotterdam.nl> & <http://www.huisvanerasmus.nl> (last visited on Oct. 20, 2008).

his name has not been linked to any association or institute concerned with peace research and peace education. This is long overdue and would help to draw attention to the enduring legacy of his teachings which remain so important for the future of the world.

