

COLLECTED WORKS OF ERASMUS

THE NEW TESTAMENT SCHOLARSHIP
OF ERASMUS: AN INTRODUCTION
WITH ERASMUS' PREFACES
AND ANCILLARY WRITINGS

Edited by Robert D. Sider

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Collected Works of Erasmus

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THE APOLOGIA OF DESIDERIUS ERASMUS
OF ROTTERDAM

D. Erasmi Roterodami apologia

translated by
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THE APOLOGIA OF DESIDERIUS ERASMUS OF ROTTERDAM¹

And now to make my defence² against the few³ who will protest: the apostle Paul, in Luke's account, declares himself fortunate that he would be pleading his case before Agrippa, who, on account of his long association with the Jews, knew well and had long experience with all those matters on which the issue turned.⁴ I only wish that I too could congratulate myself on the same score! In fact, my situation is quite different from that of St Paul, for I do not even need a defence except before those who have no understanding of the whole matter in dispute and who resort to slander simply because they do not understand. Even if I have not fully achieved what I attempted, I have no doubt whatever that I shall earn the gratitude of those who have even a modest acquaintance with Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, have engaged seriously in the investigation of the mysteries of Divine Scripture, and have applied themselves diligently and profitably to the great theologians of the past, whose reliability is matched by their antiquity. So, paradoxically, the people who will not only sanction and approve my efforts but will also be extraordinarily grateful for them will be the very ones who have no great need of this work of mine, and who alone, because of their training in good literature,⁵ can be critical of certain things because they are in a position⁶ to

1 The title in all Froben editions (1516-35) of the New Testament; in Holborn, 'The *Apologia* of Desiderius Erasmus'

2 'Defence': *apologia*, a Latin transliteration of a Greek term designating a speech of defence before a judge or jury. Although the Greek word appears in the New Testament (eg Acts 22:1; 2 Tim 4:16), its transliteration did not become domiciled in Latin until late antiquity. Cf *Ratio* n551.

3 against the few] Added in 1519; in 1516, 'against those' understood from the context. Cf *Apologia contra Latomi dialogum* CWE 71 58: 'I knew there was going to be trouble, for there was no lack of protests before the work was even published.'

4 Cf Acts 26:2-3. In 1527, under attack from the Spanish monks, Erasmus began his defence in precisely the same vein in a letter to Alonso Manrique de Lara, archbishop of Seville and inquisitor-general in Spain, a letter that served as the first preface to the *Apologia adversus monachos*; cf Ep 1879:5-10. For the use of this allusion to the speech of Paul, Erasmus had a model in Jerome; cf Jerome Ep 57.1 *De optimo genere interpretandi*.

5 'Good literature': for the expression see *Methodus* n49.

6 are in a position] First in 1527; previously, 'are able'

judge. On the other hand, those who cannot possibly cast a vote on these matters and who stand in greater need of this work precisely to the extent that they are ignorant of good literature, these not only will *not* welcome a work prepared specifically for their use but will even raise a cry against it and calumniate and condemn it.

To reject it seems a matter of gross ingratitude, to condemn it is a mark of utter shamelessness, for can you imagine anything more shameful than to condemn a book you have not even read⁷ – and a book of such a kind that, even if you were to read it, you would not be able to deliver a verdict upon it without a knowledge of the languages? And can you imagine a worse case of ingratitude than to repay with malicious misrepresentation such immense labour and such long hours of work, which have been undertaken only with an intent to help and which no expression of gratitude could adequately repay? Ingratitude is everywhere an ugly thing, and no one is more deserving of our gratitude than those who, at considerable financial cost to themselves and with the sacrifice of their pleasures – even with some danger to health and life – devote all their energies to this one end: to make some contribution to the welfare of the world through the monuments of their talents and ability. But I doubt whether you will find a worse example anywhere of man's ingratitude than this, nor can I think of any other circumstance where there is more truth in Seneca's elegant but weighty saying that it is safer to offend certain people than to put them under an obligation.⁸ 'Nothing is wasted,' says he,⁹ 'like a benefit conferred on the ungrateful.'¹⁰ But more wasted, at least in my opinion, is a kindness bestowed on those who do not recognize it as a kindness; and those who do not understand a favour show less gratitude than those who do not acknowledge it. For the latter, even if they pretend otherwise, still feel themselves under obligation and are sometimes compelled through shame to make some acknowledgment; hence the hope remains that

7 Erasmus frequently complained about people who condemned his books without reading them; cf eg Epp 1196:129-32, 1200:50-4 with n10, and *Contra morosos* paragraph 88. Jerome made a similar complaint; cf the *Prologus* to Isaiah, Weber 1096.

8 Seneca *De beneficiis* 2.24.1

9 says he] Added in 1535

10 Seneca *De beneficiis* 4.27.5. With the characterization of ingratitude here compare Erasmus' comments in *Contra morosos* paragraphs 102-5.

they will some day think better of it.¹¹ The former interpret a benefit as an injury and when benefited by a good deed haul their benefactor into court.

Theologians in particular have a duty to show not just gratitude but generosity and kindness. And it is for theologians especially that I have toiled at this work of mine, particularly those theologians who have not had either the leisure or the opportunity to acquire that liberal education without which Scripture cannot be¹² completely understood or responsibly handled. I made this effort to assist their studies, so that my industry might supply what their lot in life denied them.

Yet if any are going to protest, my guess is that it is from this crowd they will come. Physicians welcome anything that is conducive to the renewal of their profession, lawyers do not despise such help, and philosophers accept it. God forbid that¹³ we theologians alone should obstinately protest and that we should be the ones to reject what is to our advantage. It is certainly very annoying to get no thanks for a benefit conferred in a generous spirit. It is more annoying to receive abuse instead of a reward from those whom you are eager to help, and to have to defend yourself against a charge of personal injury when the plaintiffs are the very people from whom you might rightly have demanded the gratitude you deserved. Seneca considers it the highest kind of generosity and close to the divine beneficence to do good not just gratuitously but also in the full knowledge that one's generosity is not wasted.¹⁴ I think I shall surpass even this if I continue to confer a benefit even on those who repay kindness with injury. Just as faithful physicians continue to help the sick in spite of protests and abusive language, so I shall add this additional bonus¹⁵ to my good deed; I hope that as a result my critics will come to recognize the benefit they are receiving.

- 11 'They will think better of it': *resipiscent*, an important word in Erasmus' New Testament scholarship. In 1516 he recommended it in the annotation on Matt 3:1 (*poenitentiam agite*) as an alternative to the Vulgate expression; in a 1522 addition to the annotation on 2 Cor 7:10 (*stabilem*) he explained in detail how the word reflected the process of repentance; cf the paraphrase on the verse, CWE 43 242 with nn12, 16; also CWE 44 13 n5 and 'New Testament Scholarship' 202 with n788.
- 12 be ... handled.] First in 1535; previously, 'be understood in its full depth'
- 13 God forbid that] Added in 1527; previously the sentence read: 'We theologians obstinately protest and are the ones that reject what is to our advantage.'
- 14 Cf Seneca *De beneficiis* 4.25.3.
- 15 'This ... bonus': *hoc velut auctario*, ie the *Apologia*. The *auctarium* was an addition beyond the due measure or weight (cf L&S); the 1518 edition of Erasmus' letters was published under the title *Auctarium selectarum aliquot epistolarum* and is called a 'supplement' in CWE 3 349.

First, therefore, I earnestly exhort all theologians whose age or responsibilities allow them the time to make some acquaintance with Greek – and with Hebrew as well, if they can. They should philosophize in the actual sources of arcane Scripture,¹⁶ should diligently¹⁷ read through the ancient theologians, who are commended to us both by their erudition and by the saintliness of their lives. Then if they wish, let them compare and evaluate my work; only then¹⁸ let them express their approval if I have judged a passage rightly, or correct me in a friendly spirit if, being human, I have strayed from the truth and fallen short of achieving what I have unremittingly pursued. If I¹⁹ am granted this, I have won my case, and I shall have advocates instead of accusers. But let those who do not grant me this concede this much at least, if only as a favour: let them recognize that I undertook all these labours with the pure and godly desire to help. If at some point I have not succeeded, it is an error, not a crime, and I deserve to be corrected; I do not deserve to be assailed. For there is nothing that I admit more readily than that I know nothing.²⁰ Let others make what claims they please. For my part, as befits²¹ my modest abilities, I make no claims, but I offer what I can, unhesitatingly ready to sing a palinode if I have somewhere slipped, for we all make mistakes. In fact, as soon as I discover a mistake, I shall even act as my own censor.²² St Jerome has no patience with a critic who can condemn

- 16 In this context, the 'sources of arcane Scripture' are evidently the Scriptures in their original languages. They are 'arcane' because of their mystic meaning; to philosophize in them is to ponder imaginatively that meaning. Cf *Methodus* n95 (philosophize) and n19 (mystic); for 'arcane' see CWE 43 148 n38, CWE 50 99 n64, and the paraphrase on Matt 26:14 CWE 45 345 with n22.
- 17 diligently] First in 1535; previously, 'continually'
- 18 only then] First in 1535; previously, 'and so'
- 19 If I ... my case] First in 1527; previously, with a change only in the position of a comma, 'But if I am granted my case, I have won,' which is the reading followed by Holborn.
- 20 Perhaps an intended reminiscence of the famous defence of Socrates as told in Plato *Apology* 21B-D, where Socrates admits that he has no wisdom and neither knows nor thinks that he knows.
- 21 as befits] *pro* added in 1519; perhaps omitted in 1516 by mistake
- 22 'Censor': *censor* here possibly meaning simply 'critic,' but elsewhere the term is applied with obvious allusion to the ancient Roman magistrate who might officially pass judgment on morals and conduct; cf eg Ep 1033:199–201 with n28. Among other critics, Erasmus refers to both Lee and Bédā with this image in mind; for Lee see *Responsio ad annotationes Lei* 2 (Note 133) CWE 72 262; and for Bédā, *Supputatio* ASD IX-5 236:512n and ibidem 416:691–701.

but cannot teach.²³ The former is the mark of a tyrant, the latter of a friend and scholar.²⁴

Now, it is beyond dispute among scholars and has – I think, as a result of the writings of many authors – been accepted even by the unlearned that this edition of the New Testament is not Jerome's as he himself revised it.²⁵ Even so, I am not tearing this work to pieces or disparaging it, whatever its quality or authorship. I have only restored what the passage of time and the mistakes of copyists had corrupted, noting also in passing what the Translator had rendered either ambiguously or with insufficient care – I hesitate to say, 'incorrectly,' though Jerome was not afraid to say so in many places.²⁶ This I have done not, as they say, with a wave of the hand²⁷ or rashly, but, following the intent of the canons,²⁸ I first checked the Latin copies against the Greek originals – relying not just on any exemplars or on a few. Lorenzo Valla affirms that he had followed seven reliable manuscripts.²⁹ For my first revision³⁰ I had

23 Cf Jerome Ep 57.12.

24 'The former,' ie the critic who can condemn but cannot teach; 'the latter,' ie the critic who can teach, that is, both point out a fault and help to correct it

25 as he himself revised it.] Added in 1535. For Jerome's work of revision and translation see *Methodus* n27. In the prefatory letter to his edition (1505) of the annotations of Valla (cf n29 below) Erasmus had described clearly the nature of Jerome's work on the biblical texts and the relation of Jerome's work to the subsequent text of the Vulgate; cf Ep 182:165-91.

26 In his commentaries on several of the Pauline Epistles Jerome occasionally 'corrects' the Latin text he was reading – an indication that he was not the translator of that text; cf eg the 1516 annotation on Eph 5:14 (*et illuminabit te*). Erasmus makes the point more explicitly in a 1527 addition to the annotation on Eph 4:29 (*aedificationem fidei*); cf *Contra morosos* paragraphs 54 with n149 and 79b with n204.

27 Cf *Adagia* I iv 27.

28 Cf Ep 182:191-4, where Erasmus refers to Gratian's *Decreta*, identified in Ep 182:193n.

29 Lorenzo Valla (1400-64) produced two sets of notes on the New Testament. The first set, the *Collatio Novi Testamenti* was undertaken in the 1440s, while Valla was in Naples, the second between 1453 and 1457, when he was in Rome employed in the papal curia. In 1505 Erasmus published Valla's second set of notes as the *Annotationes*; cf Ep 182. For the seven Greek manuscripts (and four Latin) used by Valla see Bentley *Humanists* 36-8; and 'New Testament Scholarship' 19 with n102.

30 'Revision': *recognitione*. In 1516 the word apparently meant quite specifically 'revision,' ie the revision of the Vulgate; see de Jonge *Novum Testamentum* 394-413. Cf 'New Testament Scholarship' 29 with n149, 46 with n202; Translator's Note to 'Title Pages' 740 with n2; also n31 immediately below.

the help of four Greek manuscripts; for the second,³¹ five; for³² the third the Aldine edition was available and some further manuscripts; for the fourth³³ the Spanish edition also was at hand.³⁴ Finally, I consulted some volumes of

31 second] First in 1527. From 1516 to 1522 in *posteriore* 'subsequent,' a reading that suggests that in 1516 Erasmus referred to two revisions for the 1516 edition: the first perhaps in England, where, according to this statement, he would have used four manuscripts; the 'subsequent' presumably at Basel, where he was preparing the text for Froben, his publisher, and in the text here claims to have had five manuscripts at his disposal. But the change in 1527 from *posteriore* to *secunda* would seem to suggest that Erasmus now wished *recognitione* to be understood as the equivalent of 'edition,' and that four Greek manuscripts were used for the first edition, five for the second. The reading of this sentence, however, has been widely debated; see especially de Jonge *Novum Testamentum* 403-4 and ibidem *Castigatio* 105; also Rummel *Erasmus' Annotations* 35-42.

32 for ... also was at hand.] Added in 1527, but see next note.

33 the fourth] First in 1535; in 1527, 'this fourth'

34 In this 1527 addition to the text, Erasmus focuses attention on two recently published editions of the New Testament text and passes lightly over manuscripts that he cited in his annotations far more frequently than the published editions. In the third edition he appeals very often to the witness of the *codex aureus*, a manuscript of the Gospels in the possession of the regent Margaret in Mechelen, and to codices of both Gospels and Epistles from the library of St Donatian in Bruges. He makes no mention here of the manuscripts borrowed from Johann von Botzheim, which were important witnesses in the fourth edition. The Aldine Bible, produced in Venice in 1518, was an edition of the Greek text of the entire Bible – the Old Testament Septuagint and the Greek New Testament. Its New Testament readings frequently, but not always, corresponded with those of Erasmus' 1516 text. Cf *Apologia qua respondet invecivis Lei* CWE 72 33 with n167 (for a slightly longer version of which note see ASD IX-4 46 684n); cf also *Contra morosos* paragraph 57 with n157. Erasmus knew of the Aldine Bible while working on his second edition but did not then have access to it; however, he claims he was able to use it, thanks to friends, to restore in the second edition the Greek text of Rev 22:19, a text he had been obliged to construct from the Latin in the first edition; cf *Responsio ad annotationes Lei* 2 (Note 243) CWE 72 343 with nn749, 750 and 'New Testament Scholarship' 195 with n757. The Spanish edition is the Complutensian Polyglot Bible, the work of scholars at Alcalá (Latin *Complutum*), Spain, under the supervision of Francisco Jiménez de Cisneros (c 1436-1517), who had become archbishop of Toledo and primate of Spain in 1495, cardinal and inquisitor-general in 1507. The Complutensian Bible was a six-volume edition that included the Old Testament in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, with the Targum of Onkelos (an Aramaic paraphrase of the Pentateuch), and the New Testament in Greek and Latin. Although the New Testament was printed by 1514 and the Old Testament by 1517, the work was not 'offered for sale until 1522' (CEBR II 236), since papal approval awaited the return of a manuscript borrowed from the papal library. See Bentley *Humanists*

the Latin text that were both very old and correct.³⁵ Not content with this, I analysed and examined the most approved authors, and noted with close attention their readings, their emendations, and their interpretations. When all this material had been collated and evaluated with as much vigilance as I could command, certainly with absolute honesty, I adopted the reading I judged best and placed it in the general pool, but with the understanding that each person exercise his own judgment.³⁶

Now, should there be any who fear that, if a change is anywhere introduced, the authority of sacred literature will be called into question, they should know that already for a thousand years the manuscripts, whether Latin or Greek, have not agreed in every respect. Agreement would not, in fact, be possible, given not only the large number of copyists but also³⁷ their ignorance, carelessness, and indiscretion – not to mention the many alterations made by the semi-educated or, at least, the inattentive. I find certain words removed or inserted by factions, through whose agitation all things were in times past thrown into confusion, especially the factions of the Eastern church,³⁸ each person altering Scripture in the interest of his own party. Jerome shows clearly in several places that this was done.³⁹

91–111; CWE 56 296 n10, *Contra morosos* nn124 and 298, and 'New Testament Scholarship' 312 with n1302. Also for the manuscripts used by Erasmus for his New Testament see further Ep 384 introduction CWE 3 216–21.

35 Erasmus frequently spoke of two Latin manuscripts in St Paul's, London as 'very old'; cf CWE 56 108–9 with n5 and 'New Testament Scholarship' 28 with n146.

36 A principle commonly asserted in the *Annotations* cf eg CWE 56 19–20, 24, 24 n42, 227. Erasmus makes the point almost immediately in the *Contra morosos*; cf paragraph 2 with nn10 and 11.

37 but also] *verum etiam*, first in 1527; previously, *sed* 'but'

38 the Eastern church] first in 1527; previously, 'the East.' Controversies were rife in the Eastern church of the post-Constantinian period, evident most famously in the Arian and Origenist conflicts and also in the intense debates over the nature of Christ and the *theotokos*, ie Mary as the 'God-bearer.'

39 Cf the annotation on 1 John 5:7–8 (*tres sunt qui testimonium dant in coelo*) where Erasmus cites Jerome speaking of biblical manuscripts, 'in which we find faithless [*infidelibus* 'untrustworthy'] translators have often strayed from the true faith' ASD VI-10 544:299–300. In 1520 Erasmus cited the passage (with some skepticism) in *Apologia qua respondet invectivis Lei* 3 (Note 25) CWE 72 405, where 'Jerome's statement' is identified as that of Pseudo-Jerome in *Prologus septem epistolarum canonicarum* PL 29 828–9, and he cited it again in 1522 in *Apologia*

A⁴⁰ lesser type of corruption arises whenever a reader inserts something similar from another passage. It is more serious when the reader transfers to the text a note added in the margin by the scholiast. Yet has anything happened to the Christian religion because for many centuries now Jerome has offered one reading, Cyprian another, Hilary another, Ambrose another, Augustine another? Among these authors you will find readings that are not only different but even contradictory, though they agree on the essentials of the Christian faith. Has⁴¹ anything happened to the Greek Orthodox church because they followed the Septuagint, while at the same time frequently recalling the translations of Symmachus, Theodotion, and Aquila? What is one to do when not even the modern text is always consistent?⁴² If anyone has doubts about this, he will find additional proof in books printed with marginal notes that indicate the variants,⁴³ and if this is not enough, he will reach the same conclusion from⁴⁴ the commentaries of Bede, Rabanus, and Thomas, from those of Nicholas of Lyra, and from

ad annotationes Stunicae (on 1 John 5:7–8) ASD IX-2 254:453–5, 479–88 (for the *Prologus* as pseudepigraphical see 254:479–88n). Cf *Contra morosos* paragraph 78.

40 A ... scholiast.] Added in 1527

41 Has ... Aquila?] Added in 1527. Jerome in *Prologus in libro Iob* noted that 'the Jewish Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion – Judaizing heretics though they were – had found a place, after the Septuagint, among the Greeks'; Weber 732. Similarly in *Prologus Hieronymi in Isaia propheta* Jerome had noted that the Greeks read the work of these three scholars along with the Septuagint (Weber 1096). Cf *Contra morosos* paragraph 25b. Theodotion, evidently a Jewish proselyte from Ephesus (late second century), provided a translation of the Old Testament that may well have been a revision of an already existing translation; Symmachus, an Ebionite (also late second century), undertook a translation from the Hebrew into idiomatic Greek with some sense of literary style. The translations of both Symmachus and Theodotion were each placed in a column in Origen's *Hexapla*. Aquila, a convert to Judaism (early second century), translated the Old Testament into Greek in a very literal fashion. His translation was apparently known to Symmachus and was used by Origen for the *Hexapla*.

42 In his letter to Henry Bullock (August 1516) Erasmus repeated the point made here that both ancient and 'modern' texts give evidence of variants; cf Ep 456:51–3. He reiterated the observation in *Contra morosos* paragraph 44.

43 that indicate the variants] Added in 1527. Marginal notes in the *Gloss* occasionally acknowledged variants; indeed, in a very few cases Erasmus' editions of the New Testament from 1522 to 1535 printed a variant in the margin beside the Greek text.

44 from ... Thomas] first in 1527; previously, 'from the commentaries of St Thomas.' Cf *Contra morosos* paragraph 43.

the commentaries of Hugh of St Cher.⁴⁵ Already⁴⁶ in his day Origen complained about puzzling variations in the Gospels.⁴⁷ In their public liturgies the Greek church reads one text, the Western church another. About the time of Jerome, some churches were following the Septuagint translation, while some were embracing the new translation made from the original Hebrew.⁴⁸ Even later than this, the churches of Gaul were reading one text, the churches of Rome another.⁴⁹ Finally, if you inspect the old manuscript

45 **Bede** (c 672–735), perhaps best known for his *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* (*Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation*), ‘began his works on the Bible with commentaries on Acts, the Catholic Epistles, and Revelation’ CWE 44 xv n28; his exegetical work includes commentaries on parts of the Old Testament and the Gospels. He is extensively referenced in Erasmus’ annotations on the Catholic Epistles. The commentaries of **Rabanus Maurus**, abbot of Fulda and later archbishop of Mainz (d 856), were largely compilations from the exegetical work of his predecessors; he is infrequently cited by Erasmus in the *Annotations*, but cf the annotation on Acts 2:23 (*praesentia Dei traditum*) where in 1527 he attests a variant. In the *Declarationes ad censuras Lutetiae vulgatas* Erasmus calls Rabanus a ‘man not without learning and honour’ CWE 82 102 (cf 102 n349). He is mentioned in the *Ratio* (cf n977) as a theologian who made theological matter ‘fit figures and outlines of letters.’ **Thomas Aquinas** (ca 1225–74) wrote extensively on Scripture, including commentaries on Matthew and John and the Pauline Epistles, and in his *Catena aurea* offered excerpts from the work of earlier exegetes on the Gospels; cf *Paraclesis* n83; and for Erasmus’ evaluation of Thomas, *ibidem* n97; **Nicholas of Lyra** (d 1349) knew Hebrew and commented on both Testaments. The commentaries of **Hugh of St Cher** (d 1263) ‘were intended to update and supplement the existing [*Glossa ordinaria*]’ CWE 44 134 n12. For Erasmus’ evaluation of these two see ‘New Testament Scholarship’ 82.

46 Already ... Latin.] The remainder of the paragraph was added in 1527.

47 In *Contra morosos* paragraph 45 (cf n130) Erasmus cites for the same allusion the *Homilies on Matthew* 8 of Origen (ie Pseudo-Origen). The passage is found rather in Origen’s *Commentarius in evangelium secundum Matthaeum* 15.14 (Matthew 19:16–30) PG 13 1289–95 (cf especially 1293).

48 A reference apparently to Jerome’s translation of the Old Testament from the original Hebrew into Latin; cf *Methodus* n27.

49 A reference specifically to the Psalms. Jerome made three Latin versions of the Psalms. His last was directly from the Hebrew, but it was the first two that found a widespread liturgical use: the Roman Psalter (which survived in Italy until modern times) was the product of Jerome’s revision first of the Old Latin in light of the Septuagint; the Gallican Psalter, which was to be incorporated into the Vulgate, was a Latin translation based on the Greek that Jerome emended from the Hebrew text, using Origen’s *Hexapla*; it took its name from the fact

codices that were used in those times in public worship, you will scarcely⁵⁰ find two that agree with each other. Certainly it is clear that Augustine used manuscripts that were not free from faults. And yet all down through the centuries the authority of Scripture has stood firm. If textual variation in the manuscripts completely deprives the Scriptures of their reliability, then, remember, there is manuscript variation in the Hebrew, in the Greek, and in the Latin.⁵¹

I ask you what danger arose from St Jerome’s restoration of the Old and New Testaments in accordance with the Hebrew and Greek originals for a world already growing old? Some objected at that time, whom he himself answers quite sufficiently in his books.⁵² They objected, I think, simply because they did not know those languages. Did the slightest harm come to the Christian religion as a result of his labours? Augustine confesses that the very disagreement in the texts of the manuscripts had been of no small help to him, for what one copy had said not very well another expressed more clearly and correctly – a necessary result, even if fortuitous.⁵³ What did the majesty of the Gospels lose because Juvenius turned them into an epic poem, or because⁵⁴ Arator dared to do the same with the Acts of the Apostles?⁵⁵ I

that ‘it was adopted first in Gaul, where an independent liturgy thrived in the early centuries of the Christian era’ CWE 63 78 n28; cf also CWE 63 xxi and *Contra morosos* paragraphs 21 and 79b.

50 scarcely] First in 1535; in 1527, ‘not’

51 Cf *Contra morosos* paragraphs 38 and 44.

52 Cf eg Jerome’s *Praefatio* to the Gospels, where Jerome undertakes to answer those he suspects will be his detractors – people who call him ‘an impious forger, who dared to add to, change, correct the old books’; Weber 1515:8–10. In the preceding sentence Erasmus echoes the language of this preface: ‘A pious labour, but a dangerous presumption ... to bring back to the freshness of childhood a world growing old’ Weber 1515:4–6. Cf also the *Prologus* to the Pentateuch, Weber 3–4.

53 Cf Augustine *De doctrina christiana* 2.12.17. Erasmus cites the passage elsewhere, eg *Apologia ad annotationes Stunicae* ASD IX-2 78:362–3 and 115:136–8.

54 or because ... Apostles?] Added in 1527

55 Apostles?] From 1516 to 1522 an additional sentence followed here (with a short omission in 1516): ‘What harm did Divine Scripture suffer because our own Gillis van Delft, a distinguished theologian, turned almost the whole of it into elegiac verse?’ In 1516 the words rendered by ‘harm did suffer’ were omitted, apparently by accident. Erasmus elsewhere appeals to the examples of Juvenius, Arator, and Gillis van Delft in defending his own New Testament scholarship; cf CWE 42 xvii. For Juvenius and van Delft see also Ep 456:93–8 and the much later (1529) *Responsio ad epistolam Alberti Pii* CWE 84 78–9 with

have altered some passages not so much to improve the style as to make the text clearer and more accurate. But what was the danger had I changed the whole text into a paraphrase, as⁵⁶ Jerome almost did in the Old Testament.⁵⁷ For those who are fond of the Vulgate, their edition is still available for them to use – I neither change it nor condemn it; in fact, it is not spoiled by my revision but rendered clearer, purer, and more accurate. Let the Vulgate be the edition that is read in the schools, chanted in the churches, quoted in sermons; no one⁵⁸ is standing in the way. I think I can promise that whoever reads my version at home will better understand his own.⁵⁹

nn389-91. **Juvenius**, an early fourth-century Spanish priest, wrote a poetic paraphrase of the life of Christ based on the Gospels; **Arator**, first half of the sixth century, wrote an epic poem *De actibus apostolorum* that followed more or less closely the book of Acts. For an account of their works see Michael Roberts *Biblical Epic and Rhetorical Paraphrase in Late Antiquity* (Liverpool 1985) 67-76, 87-92. **Gillis van Delft** was a theologian of the Sorbonne, who taught also for some time at Cologne. He made verse paraphrases of the seven penitential psalms and of Paul's Epistle to the Romans; cf Ep 456:98n. His 'elegant style and poetry made him a Renaissance author' CEBR I 382. He died in 1524, which may explain the omission of the reference to him in the editions of 1527 and 1535, although he appears with a brief appraisal in *Ciceronianus* CWE 28 425, first published in 1528. Erasmus alludes again to Juvenius in *Contra morosos* paragraph 56 (cf n153).

⁵⁶ as ... Testament.] Added in 1527

⁵⁷ Cf *Apologia adversus rhapsodias Alberti Pii* CWE 84 145, where Erasmus refers to Jerome's practice of 'first [quoting] the passage of Scripture,' then giving 'a version that is nothing but a paraphrase.' Some of Jerome's comments in the prologues to his translations invite the reader to think of his biblical translation as a paraphrase, eg the *Prologus* to the book of Kings (Samuel): the reader who is pleased with his work may regard it as a translation, one who is not pleased may read it as a paraphrase (Weber 365); cf 'New Testament Scholarship' 270 with n1131; and the *Prologus* to Isaiah, where Jerome says that he did not attempt to maintain the precise poetic character of the Hebrew, but 'looking to the advantage of the readers marked a new translation with a new kind of writing,' Weber 1096.

⁵⁸ no one ... way.] Added in 1527. Cf *Contra morosos* paragraph 65 with n177 where Erasmus asserts that he has not changed but improved the Vulgate, which remains available for those who want it.

⁵⁹ In his letter to Henry Bullock Erasmus echoed the comments made here; cf Ep 456:88-102. He frequently claims that he intended his New Testament for study at home; cf *Contra morosos* n137. One may note also in Jerome's prologues the parallels to some of the themes in this paragraph, eg in *Prologus in libro Paralipomenon* 'Prologue to Chronicles,' where Jerome insisted that his

If the only objection to my work is its novelty, well then, the version that is now old was once new, and this new version, if we permit, will at some time in the future be old. It is the mark of a person altogether inexperienced to value a book by the number of its years and not by judging its contents. I too would wish that in sacred literature nothing was corrupt, nowhere was there any disagreement. And yet, while it is easy to wish for this, it never has been the fact, nor, I think,⁶⁰ ever will be.

I⁶¹ wholeheartedly support⁶² those who preach the inviolable authority of the divine Scriptures. One who knowingly corrupts them insults the Holy Spirit.⁶³ I acknowledge this. But the sovereignty of Scripture lies in the originals themselves. Isaiah did not err, nor does anyone try to alter what he wrote. Matthew did not stumble; no one corrects what he recorded. Our concern is with the translators, with the scribes, with the corruptors. But if all authority collapses because of a certain number of corrupt passages, the Holy Spirit ought to have attended the copyists as he did the prophets and evangelists. The Holy Spirit is present everywhere but exerts his force in such a way as to leave some of the work for us to do.⁶⁴ That inviolable authority of Scripture stopped with the prophets and apostles or evangelists. But it is the great glory of Scripture that, although re-expressed so often in so many languages, so often mutilated or corrupted by heretics, contaminated in so

translations, though new, left the old unchanged, and *Prologus in libro Ezrae* 'Prologue to Ezra,' where Jerome requested that the dedicatees use the translation for their private reading and not bring it out for public use; cf Weber 546 and 638.

⁶⁰ I think] Added in 1527. Compare this paragraph with *Contra morosos* paragraphs 64 and 65.

⁶¹ I ... Septuagint.] This and the next paragraph were added in 1527.

⁶² 'wholeheartedly support': *utroque favemus pollice*, literally, 'give support with both thumbs,' as in Horace *Epistles* 1.18.66; *Adagia* I viii 46 'Thumbs down, thumbs up.'

⁶³ Cf Matt 12:32. The extensive addition of the two paragraphs inserted here in 1527 must to some degree reflect the debate, especially with Bédá and Cousturier, over the respective roles of the Holy Spirit and the translator(s) of Scripture in producing the biblical texts. Cf the late (1535) additions to the *Contra morosos* on this question, paragraphs 27a-e and 38; 'New Testament Scholarship' 813-14 (Bédá) and 820 (Cousturier). The issue was, however, clearly alive in 1518; cf Ep 843:240-66.

⁶⁴ Cf *Contra morosos* paragraph 27. The principle enunciated here is illustrated in the paraphrase on Acts 18:27, where 'some of the work' belonged to Apollos, in whom 'the Holy Spirit supported an eloquence joined with sacred erudition' CWE 50 115.

many ways by the carelessness of scribes, it nevertheless retains the vigour of eternal truth. So the church, constantly shaken by all the storm winds of adversity, stands firm. But one who has, to the best of his ability, restored to its original integrity what human beings have corrupted serves the Holy Spirit. We shall never lack those who corrupt; accordingly, our efforts to correct must never cease.

Sacred Scripture, therefore, is one thing; what translators have rendered badly, or scribes have corrupted, is another. Again, it is one thing to change what is read in public, another thing either to amend or illuminate a public text with one intended as private.⁶⁵ These two things are amazingly confused by certain people who regard themselves as quite the dialecticians. I do not refute the claim of some who say that mysteries are concealed in letters and dots, provided they acknowledge the hyperbole.⁶⁶ Otherwise, one would have to drink in Scripture only from the original sources, for whoever translates into a foreign language is compelled to depart completely from the letters and dots. The Jews bandy about some strange interpretations of the names of God, especially the tetragrammaton; Christians likewise of the names of Jesus, but these mysteries are lost in translation.⁶⁷ Indeed, the very name of Jesus is written in letters that are quite different in Hebrew from those used by the evangelists and Paul. If a matter so serious lies concealed in

65 For Erasmus' New Testament as a Bible for private study see n59 above.

66 In the *Moria* (CWE 27 133) Erasmus, less generously, lampoons those who attempt to find mysteries in letters. Alberto Pio, a cabbalist of whose *Responsio paraenetica* Erasmus had received a copy by September 1526 ('New Testament Scholarship' 279 with n1181), exemplified the extravagant interest in the mystic meaning of the 'words and letters' of Scripture; cf *Responsio ad epistolam Alberti Pii* and *Apologia adversus rhapsodias Alberti Pii* CWE 84 76 with n375 and 263 with n933. Indeed Erasmus himself, in the 1515 preface to the *Annotations*, had recognized the possibility of mystery 'in the very strokes of the letters,' Ep 373:125-7 (cf 'Prefaces and Letters' 787). This extravagant claim had ancient precedent; cf eg Origen CWE 56 156 n39. For 'dots' see n68 below.

67 For Christian speculation over the name of Jesus see the reference to the *Moria* in the previous note. The Tetragrammaton, ie 'four-lettered,' refers to Yahweh as the personal name of God in the Old Testament, spelled with the four capital letters YHWH; cf Exod 3:13-15. Cf ABD II 1002-4 'The Divine Name Yaweh' and ABD VI 392-3 'Tetragrammaton in the New Testament.' Erasmus was well aware of the problem of interpreting Hebrew names on the basis of a Greek transliteration; cf the 1519 annotation on John 2:20 (*quadraginta sex annis*), and the discussion of the problem in 1531 between Erasmus and Agostino Steuco, Ep 2465:133-50; cf also the annotation on Rom 1:1 ('Paul') CWE 56 3-4 with n12 and the Translator's Note prefacing the *Paraclesis*, 397-9.

points and dots,⁶⁸ why did the apostles, who knew Hebrew, not hand down to us that most sacred name in the same characters as it had in Hebrew, since they so frequently insert it into their writings? But when I pressed this argument upon someone, he replied that Jesus' name is written in a corrupt form and so read in all the books of the New Testament.⁶⁹ If this were true, the Catholic church would have groped through all these centuries in the darkness of a monumental error! Rather, it is more probable that the Greeks and Romans commonly pronounced the name in this way, and the apostles used the pronunciation they heard with no concern over letters and dots. In fact, these same evangelists and apostles were not so scrupulous in citing the witness of the Scriptures, sometimes following the Septuagint, sometimes borrowing from the original Hebrew, at other times giving whatever meaning they chose, agreeing totally with neither the Hebrew nor the Septuagint.⁷⁰

Now what good is it to refute those who, out of an ignorance that is matched only by their effrontery, are always exclaiming that it is an intolerable crime for anyone to correct the Gospels, amend⁷¹ the Magnificat, alter the Lord's Prayer? What an outburst! – hardly worthy of a stable boy, never

68 'Points' here are, presumably, the vowel signs placed in most cases below Hebrew letters. 'Dots': *apicibus*, apparently reflecting Matt 5:18; cf the annotation on the verse (*iota unum aut apex*), where Erasmus explains the Vulgate *iota* as the Hebrew *iod* but is uncertain about the precise meaning of *apex*. Cf the expression 'letters and dots' just above with n66.

69 The incident is unidentified, but see the annotation on Matt 1:16 (*qui vocatur Christus*), where in a 1519 addition Erasmus refers to certain scholars who believe that in Matt 1:16 the name *Iesu* in the Hebrew (one assumes that Matthew was originally written in Hebrew; cf n74 below) was different from the name of *Iesu* (Joshua) in the books of Joshua, Haggai, and Zechariah, and was originally written like the name of 'the ineffable God' (ie the Tetragrammaton YHWH) with an *s* (Hebrew *shin*) 'interposed.' (Erasmus wished there were solid arguments for a view so pleasing to Christian ears!) Cf Chaim Wirszubski *Pico della Mirandola's Encounter with Jewish Mysticism* (Cambridge MA 1989) appendix 7, 218 (on the name of Jesus), who notes Johann Reuchlin's pentagram, which was the Tetragrammaton with the Hebrew letter *shin* inserted between *H* and *W*.

70 Erasmus reflects here his intention, clearly stated in 1516 in the preface to his *Annotations*, Ep 373:72-83 (cf 'Prefaces and Letters' 785), to trace the sources of the Old Testament quotations in the New Testament; cf 'New Testament Scholarship' 42-3.

71 amend ... Prayer.] Added in 1527. These apparently widespread charges against Erasmus' New Testament scholarship echo through Erasmus' work for many years, eg in Ep 456:83-7 (1516), Ep 948:99-119 (1519), Ep 1062:92-4 (1520 and 1521; cf CWE 43 290), Ep 1196:423-5 (1521), Ep 2045:40-2 (1528); also in the

mind a theologian. Let⁷² not the theological profession become angry with me because I mention a theologian. They should reserve their anger for those who, though theologians of the first rank, have been proclaiming, and are still proclaiming, such things in a most provocative manner in ordinary lectures and in sermons.⁷³ But back to the point. Is it right for any fool to corrupt the Gospel books, and will it be wrong for someone to restore what is corrupted, especially a man who (not to speak too arrogantly) is in this kind of study neither careless nor unpractised – especially when he has taken into account so many Greek and Latin manuscripts and so many distinguished authors?

To me the weight of argument makes it overwhelmingly probable that the whole of the New Testament was written in Greek, not Latin. Certainly, if one excepts the Gospel according to Matthew and the one Epistle to the Hebrews, there is no controversy about the rest.⁷⁴ So anyone who proposes to alter what the apostles and evangelists wrote would be justly criticized for 'correcting' the Gospels, but not one who, in accordance with pontifical decrees,⁷⁵ makes use of the Greek sources and the judgment of venerable interpreters to restore in good faith what was either corrupted by scribes or ineptly translated in the Latin manuscripts, since it was in Greek that the apostles wrote. But why labour the point, when St Jerome in several letters plays the advocate for my case; not even he, when he had laboured at a quite

annotations on Matt 6:12 (*et dimitte*; 1519 addition) and on Luke 1:48 (*humilitatem ancillae*; 1527 addition); and in the colloquy 'The Sermon' (1531) *CWE* 40 940-53. Cf also *Contra morosos* paragraph 20 with n61.

⁷² Let ... point.] Added in 1527

⁷³ Cf the witnesses cited in n71.

⁷⁴ As Erasmus notes, the point seems incontrovertible, but he observes in his annotation on Rom 1:7 ('to all who are in Rome') that some people think Paul wrote to the Romans in Latin. The view that Matthew was written in Hebrew was held from very early times; cf Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 3.39.16 and Jerome *De viris illustribus* 3.1-3. In the annotation on Matt 1:2 (*genuit Isaac*) Erasmus expresses doubt about this opinion but does not explicitly deny it. Jerome attests the view that the Epistle to the Hebrews was written in Hebrew; *De viris illustribus* 5.10-11. In the Argument to his *Paraphrase* on the Epistle to the Hebrews, Erasmus assumes that the recipients of the letter are believers in Jerusalem – Jews it would appear (*CWE* 44 214) – but in his annotations on the Epistle he repeatedly observes that the Old Testament is cited from the Greek Septuagint.

⁷⁵ Cf *Methodus* n28.

similar task, escaped calumny.⁷⁶ If his revision were extant, either I would not have needed to undertake this task, or there would have been something for me to follow.

So I ask you, good reader, that when you come upon some alteration of mine, you do not immediately reject and condemn it, letting the taste and flavour of the customary reading influence your judgment, as though anything different is necessarily bad.⁷⁷ That would at one and the same time cheat me of the acclaim I deserve and you of the benefit of my work. You should first compare my version with the Greek: to facilitate this I have added the Greek text, placing it in an adjacent column.⁷⁸ Then consider whether I have not expressed the Greek more faithfully, more clearly, and more fully than the old Translator. Here again, I should not be dragged into court if the translation is not completely word for word; such a translation cannot possibly be made however hard you try. If it is considered wrong to deviate at all from the letters and syllables of the Greek, why has the Translator everywhere dared to do so, sometimes when he was neither compelled by necessity nor encouraged by the improvement it offered, but was simply unconcerned and half-asleep as though it were a matter of small importance.⁷⁹ But if it is legitimate, as it certainly is, to depart⁸⁰ sometimes from a letter or a syllable, and if you find that I have rendered ideas with greater accuracy than the Translator, then do not condemn it because it is new, but embrace it because it is more correct. After that, if the comparison of my version with the Greek does not satisfy you, do not immediately pronounce the verdict. Consult my *Annotations*; perhaps they will satisfy you either through the authority of the witnesses cited or through the arguments adduced. Sometimes one finds that there is a variant reading or that several senses can be taken from the same

⁷⁶ Cf the reference in *Methodus* n23 for Jerome's 'advocacy' of Erasmus' case. Jerome complains about the calumnies directed against him in eg the prologues to the Pentateuch and Job; Weber 3 and 731.

⁷⁷ Cf the similar comment in Jerome's preface to the Gospels, Weber 1515. The image appears also in *Contra morosos*, cf paragraph 65 n178.

⁷⁸ column.] In 1527 only, a further sentence was added here: 'Now I have added also the old edition that has until the present been accepted for public use.' For the Vulgate added in the edition of 1527 see 'New Testament Scholarship' 291-2 with n1238.

⁷⁹ For these criticisms of the Translator see 'New Testament Scholarship' 63-4. The Translator's faults are abundantly illustrated in 'Errors in the Vulgate' 871-948.

⁸⁰ to depart ... syllable] Added in 1535; previously the idea expressed by the words had to be supplied by the reader from the preceding sentence. For Erasmus' 'freedom' in translation see 'New Testament Scholarship' 124 with n534.

words. I first put forward a single reading only – in fact, I could not have done otherwise.⁸¹ But in my *Notes*⁸² I record various readings, either indicating what I think best or leaving to the judgment⁸³ of the reader which one he prefers to follow. There are some annotations in which the Vulgate or the Ambrosian⁸⁴ reading is preferred to that in the Greek codices. And yet where all the Greek copies agreed, I accommodated the Latin to the Greek (since it was not open to me to alter the latter), and I did so to avoid discrepancies between the Latin and the Greek texts, for they were added for this very purpose.⁸⁵ But I discuss this in the scholia.⁸⁶ I find that the Greeks take over certain things from established practice, like the concluding ascription in the Lord's Prayer,⁸⁷ just as we add the *gloria patri* at the end of the Psalms.⁸⁸ I have

81 Ie Erasmus could offer only one reading in the text; he could note variants in the annotations.

82 '*Notes*': *Annotamentis*; just above *Annotationes*; both words are capitalized in 1535, referring evidently to the *Annotations* as a published work; neither is capitalized in 1527, with reference apparently to the notes in the *Annotations*. I have capitalized both, following the latest lifetime edition, though this somewhat strains the pronoun 'they' that follows '*Annotations*.'

83 the judgment ... follow.] First in 1535; previously, 'your judgment which one you prefer to follow'

84 Erasmus generally did not distinguish between Ambrose, fourth-century bishop of Milan, and Ambrosiaster, the anonymous exegete of the late fourth century. He believed that Ambrose knew Greek and was therefore a valuable witness to the authentic biblical text. See 'New Testament Scholarship' 62 with n252.

85 Erasmus seems to have begun his work on the New Testament by writing notes and translations for some expressions and later, no doubt with encouragement from others, decided to 'add' the Latin and Greek texts; cf 'New Testament Scholarship' 27–8 with nn145, 147; and de Jonge *Novum Testamentum* 400–1.

86 '*Scholia*': *scholiis*, ie the annotations; cf just below 'brief notes': *commentariolis*; and 'supporting notes': *annotamenta*; also n82 above. Cf 'New Testament Scholarship' 50 with nn214, 217.

87 Prayer] *precatione* first in 1519; in 1516, *oratione*. A similar change is made elsewhere in 1519; cf the annotation on 1 Tim 2:1 (*primum omnium*), where *oratio* and *orationes* (1516) were replaced with *deprecatio* and *precationes* (1519–35). To his paraphrase on the Lord's Prayer (1523) Erasmus gave the title *Precatio dominica*, although distinguished writers of the past had spoken of the *Oratio dominica*. Erasmus explained his preference for *precatio* in *Modus orandi Deum* CWE 70 154. Cf further the brief comment in *Supputatio* ASD IX-5 398:268–9.

88 See the annotation on Matt 6:13 (*quia tuum est regnum*), where Erasmus explains that the words 'For thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever, Amen!' found in all his Greek manuscripts are an addition to the evangelist's text and are found there because they were customarily added in liturgical

not pruned these from the text, but I point out in brief notes that they are additions. When, as I often find, a reader inserts from certain passages what was missing in another similar place, the error is less dangerous; but this too I have been careful to point out.⁸⁹

Accordingly, I offer this reading of the text not as though everything is certain and beyond doubt, but because from my emended version, along with the supporting notes, the attentive and vigilant reader cannot but be considerably helped. There will be many things here that someone will think should be dismissed as frivolous minutiae. But anyone who compares, evaluates, studies, and interprets sacred literature will discover for himself that there is no small value in these minutiae. Besides, I shall readily be forgiven for having pursued such small details by anyone who reflects that authors of the first rank have stumbled over stones of this kind, sometimes even slipping into an embarrassing blunder, certainly Hilary himself, Augustine, Ambrose,⁹⁰ and among the moderns the erudite Thomas Aquinas, not to mention others.⁹¹ In carrying out this task it was sometimes necessary for me to disagree with such authors. While I have always done this openly, I have never been abusive. I have never even been particularly severe on those whose brazen impudence and arrogant ignorance hardly deserved such courtesy. Even if I had attacked these people more boldly, I could still

practice, just as the chanting of the Psalms was traditionally concluded with the words, 'Glory to the Father, and to the Son, etc.' Normally the ascription was not added to the Lord's Prayer in Vulgate Bibles. Erasmus, following his Greek text, had added it in his New Testament but from 1519 printed it in small roman letters to indicate the textual difficulty; cf 'New Testament Scholarship' 126 with n537. Nevertheless, both Lee and López Zúñiga challenged the position he took in his annotation; cf *Responsio ad annotationes Lei 1* (Note 4) CWE 72 90–2 and *Apologia ad annotationes Stunicae* ASD IX-2 92:641–56. A 1522 addition to the annotation responds to both critics.

89 Erasmus refers to scribal assimilation, a phenomenon often observed in textual criticism; for examples see the annotations on Matt 5:43 (*diligite inimicos vestros*) and on Rom 9:25 ('and her that has not obtained mercy, her that has obtained mercy') CWE 56 268–9 with n19.

90 Ambrose] Added in 1527

91 Erasmus offered a much more extensive defence of his attention to minutiae in his preface to the *Annotations*, Ep 373:84–149 ('Prefaces and Letters' 785–8). Cf also *Contra morosos* paragraphs 80–82i, as well as paragraph 84, where in 1519 Erasmus furnished a long list of minutiae that had been annotated by Augustine and Jerome. For the 'shameful mistakes' of the great exegetes of the past see *Methodus* nn29 and 36, *Ratio* 499 with n51, and *Contra morosos* paragraphs 27h and 81.

find vindication among all the learned in that line from Plautus: 'A curse deserved is a blessing, not a curse.'⁹² However, I have preferred to consider what was worthy of me rather than what they deserved. I had intended to conceal their blunders entirely, but everywhere the books written by such petty practitioners⁹³ were being thumbed by every hand and read and quoted like oracles. Again I did so not with zealous thoroughness but only in some places here and there, so that those who have swept into their notes (by a white rule, as they say)⁹⁴ whatever they found in such writers, no matter how it was expressed or introduced, should in the future be less trusting; or at least that those who so highly esteem these authors should understand that even esteemed authors have made conspicuous⁹⁵ mistakes and fallen into some exceedingly childish delusions because of their ignorance of the things I mentioned. Otherwise, if I had wanted to pursue everything in their books that could either be laughed at⁹⁶ or condemned, I would truly have faced an *Iliad* of troubles⁹⁷ (to quote the Greek proverb) – indeed a single *Iliad* would not have been enough to refute their remarks. But with respect to the others who, besides being commended by their erudition, are distinguished by the holiness of their lives, far from making a virulent attack on them, I have often snatched at any excuse to make light of an error or excuse it or conceal it.⁹⁸ People should not be angry at me for some mistake Augustine or Thomas made, when the error is too obvious to be concealed. Let them lay

⁹² *Curculio* 513-14

⁹³ by such petty practitioners] Added in 1535. To judge from the comments in the annotations, these men of 'brazen impudence and arrogant ignorance' would be well represented by Hugh of St Cher and Nicholas of Lyra; cf 'New Testament Scholarship' 82-3 with n336.

⁹⁴ Cf *Adagia* I v 88, defining 'white rule': 'This means "without selection, making no distinctions"'; Erasmus continues by quoting Gellius, who applied the image to those people who 'read eagerly and widely and swept together everything they came across without discrimination.'

⁹⁵ conspicuous] First in 1535; previously 'shameful.' For 'shameful mistakes' see n91 above.

⁹⁶ laughed at] Reading *rideri* (with all editions) for *videri* 'seen' (Holborn)

⁹⁷ 'Iliad of troubles': Erasmus cites the proverb in Greek; see *Adagia* I iii 26, where Erasmus explains the phrase as 'the simultaneous occurrence of the greatest catastrophes.'

⁹⁸ conceal it.] Reading *tegam* (with all editions) for *legam* in Holborn. López Zúñiga cited this passage, which he interpreted as a promise not to attack esteemed authors such as Jerome; cf *Apologia ad annotationes Stunicae* ASD IX-2 107:964-108:973; elsewhere López Zúñiga, referring to this passage as a promise, called

the blame on ignorance of the languages or, if they prefer, on the age in which those writers lived.⁹⁹

It was to the advantage of students that such things should not be entirely concealed. Not that I think myself more keen sighted than these eminent men, but perhaps in some passages I was more attentive, or perhaps I was better equipped with the valuable resources of language; certainly I was in a better position than Aquinas, who knew only Latin, and not¹⁰⁰ even that very well – he held that *luxuria* [self-indulgence] properly belonged to *libido* [lust]! All these, inasmuch as they were always most zealous in their pursuit of truth are, I am sure, more indulgent towards me, especially because I have made their books somewhat freer from error.

What is tinier than a comma? But such a little thing can give rise to a heretical interpretation, as Aurelius Augustine shows in *On Christian Doctrine* book 3, citing as an example this passage in John: 'In the beginning ... the Word was with God, and God was [ie existed]' [1:1], thus placing the period after 'was.' Then there follows, 'This Word was in the beginning with God' [1:1-2].¹⁰¹ This reading he terms heretical for it was the reading adopted by those who denied that the Word of God was God. Another example is

Erasmus a *fidefragius* 'faith breaker'; cf ibidem 174:184-6. Frans Titelmans also strongly objected to Erasmus' 'disparagement' of both ancient and medieval exegetes; cf eg Ep 1837A:66-84 and *Responsio ad Collationes* CWE 73 258-61.

⁹⁹ In the annotation on Rom 1:4 ('who was predestined') CWE 56 10 Erasmus imputes the exegetical limitations of Thomas to the age in which he lived and the absence of 'good literature.' See also Erasmus' defence of Thomas in *Apologia ad Fabrum* CWE 83 18-19; and Lefèvre's response in his *disputatio* on Erasmus' 1516 annotation on Heb 2:7, where Lefèvre likewise attributes Thomas' exegetical limitations to the times in which he lived and the absence of 'good literature' ASD IX-3 220:466-70.

¹⁰⁰ and not...*libido*] Added in 1527. See the annotation on Eph 5:18 (*in quo est luxuria*), where Erasmus refers to Thomas' explanation of *luxuria* as *libido*. Erasmus' discussion of Thomas' interpretation becomes a major 1522 addition to the annotation; cf 'New Testament Scholarship' 209 with n809. Erasmus concludes the annotation with the observation: 'I am not censuring Thomas, but I am very sorry for those who learn nothing else, and I am not so unhappy with myself for having spent less time than they in writers of this sort.'

¹⁰¹ Cf Augustine *De doctrina christiana* 3.2.3. The text of John 1:1-2 (here abbreviated) is usually punctuated, 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. This [ie the Word] was in the beginning with God ...' The punctuation cited in the text above avoids a direct equation of the Word and God, a reading that accommodated the Arian heresy, which claimed that the Word was not fully equal with God, inasmuch as the Word

found in the Epistle of St Paul to the Romans, 'Who will bring any charge against God's elect?' [8:33]. The sentences that follow this quotation, unless read as questions, give a sense that is not only heretical but also¹⁰² downright blasphemous – as though in reply to the question asked above you answer, 'God, who justifies.' Then, 'Who is to condemn?' And to this again you reply, 'Christ Jesus, who died' [8:34].¹⁰³ Augustine also took offence at the ambiguity of Paul's language when he says, 'The foolishness of God is wiser than men' [1 Cor 1:25 VG]. Augustine prefers that the passage be translated, 'The foolishness of God is wiser than that of a man,' because otherwise it would be uncertain whether 'men' is in the dative or the ablative case.¹⁰⁴ So great a man as he commented at length on these problems and others quite like them – problems it takes no trouble to notice, even if no one were to point them out. What if he had read a text wherein I had exposed and removed so many hideous blunders, had scattered the profound darkness of so many obscurities, had restored to their proper meaning so many passages rendered not just ambiguously but absurdly – would he not have embraced this work of mine with both arms?¹⁰⁵

* * * * *

was a creation of God; cf CWE 56 247 n6 and *Contra morosos* paragraph 82. Cf the problem Erasmus addressed in the construction of John 1:3-4, 'New Testament Scholarship' 302 with n1270.

¹⁰² also] Added in 1527

¹⁰³ Cf the discussion of this passage in the annotation on Rom 8:33 ('who will make accusation against the elect of God'), where Erasmus argues for the construction he adopts here. In the first four editions of the *Annotations* Erasmus had said that 'printed editions' read the passage 'falsely, indeed with insolence towards Christ' – a statement removed from the edition of 1535.

¹⁰⁴ Cf Augustine *De doctrina christiana* 2.13.20. In the Greek, 'men' is in the genitive case and as such could be read as either a genitive of possession, 'wiser than that of men,' or a genitive of comparison, 'wiser than men.' The Vulgate correctly understood the Greek genitive as one of comparison and translated with the corresponding Latin ablative construction. In Latin, however, the ablative plural of men, *hominibus*, has the same form as the dative, so that the phrase could be understood in the sense, 'The foolishness of God is wiser for men.' Erasmus translated (from 1522), 'God's folly is wiser than human beings'; cf NRSV 'God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom.' Erasmus offers a fuller discussion in the annotation on 1 Cor 1:25 (*quod stultum est Dei*).

¹⁰⁵ 'With both arms': *utrisque manibus*, literally, 'with both hands'; for the expression see *Adagia* I viii 46. See also Ep 1171:74 and the reference there to *Adagia* I ix 16.

I have annotated some things with such brevity that unless you compare my brief annotation with the passage itself, you may not notice what I wanted you to observe. Certainly, the same observation appears in a number of places, deliberately so for the benefit of the reader who is liable to forget or who shirks the hard work of research. I also have a real fear that, just as many will take exception to the book's novelty, so there will be some on the other side who will be unhappy that anything at all agrees with the old translation. Some approve of nothing that is different, others think unscholarly anything that does not completely contradict and disagree. Again, a somewhat purer Latinity offends some, in particular those who judge nothing cogently argued unless it abounds in monstrous solecisms. Others, on the contrary, disdain anything that does not reflect that Ciceronian polish.¹⁰⁶ In this work I have not aspired to eloquence; at the same time I have not rejected an elegant expression when it was available. God is not offended by solecisms, but neither does he delight in them. He hates a haughty eloquence, I admit, but he hates much more an arrogant and conceited bumbling. I tolerate their stammering; let them in turn put up with my middling powers of expression.

But to make an end at last! I freely admit that there are a great many things that I could have treated in a more scholarly fashion. I do not deny that in some places I fell asleep out of weariness. At the same time, the facts themselves, if I am not mistaken, will show that after Lorenzo Valla, to whom good letters are indebted not only in this field, and after Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples, foremost in every virtue and in literature,¹⁰⁷ I have been occupied in this business neither without cause nor without result. Farewell, dear reader, and if you desire anything further, look for it in the preface to the *Annotations*.¹⁰⁸

End of the *Apologia*

* * * * *

¹⁰⁶ Cf the Introductory Note to 'Solecisms' in 'Errors in the Vulgate' 872-4, and *Contra morosos* paragraphs 6-19. On 'Ciceronian polish' see Erasmus' late evaluation in Ep 3043 (August 1535) cited in 'New Testament Scholarship' 388 with n1669. The discussion here finds a broader context in the *Ciceronianus* (1528); cf 'New Testament Scholarship' 321 with n1357 and 329 with n1409.

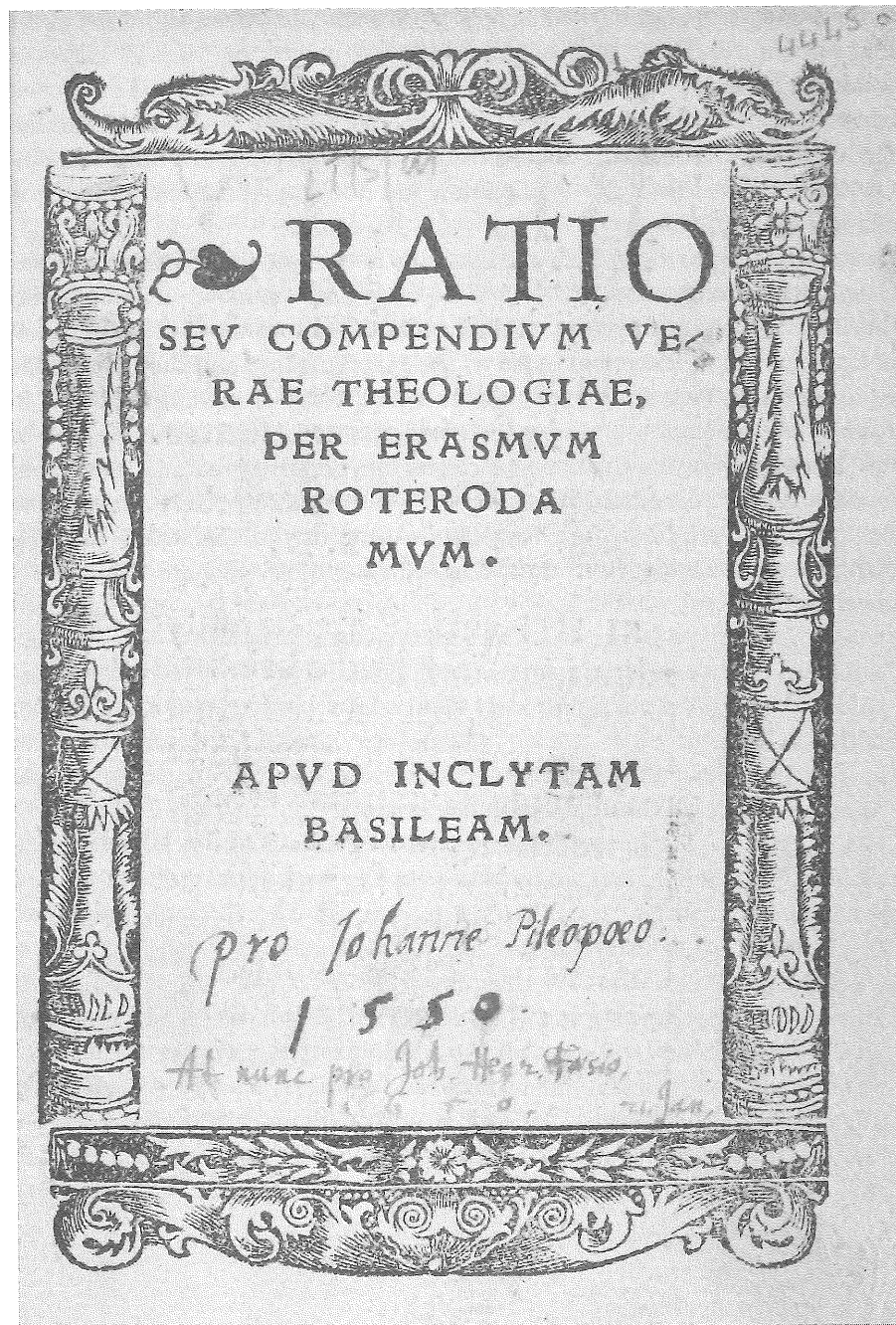
¹⁰⁷ For Erasmus' early perception of the relation of his work to that of Valla and Lefèvre d'Étaples see the correspondence between Maarten van Dorp and him, Epp 304:97-101, 131-8 (September 1514, Dorp) and 337:877-919 (May 1515, Erasmus). For his early evaluation of both of these exegetes see 'New Testament Scholarship' 83-5.

¹⁰⁸ The reference is to the preface of 1515, Ep 373 ('Prefaces and Letters' 781-92).

A SYSTEM OR METHOD OF ARRIVING
BY A SHORT CUT AT TRUE THEOLOGY
BY DESIDERIUS ERASMUS OF ROTTERDAM

*Ratio seu methodus compendio perveniendi ad veram theologiam
per Des. Erasmus Roterodamum*

introduced, translated, and annotated by
ROBERT D. SIDER



Title page of the *Ratio*, Froben 1519
Bodleian Library, University of Oxford (Shelf mark Vet D 1 f. 78)

A SYSTEM OR METHOD OF ARRIVING BY A SHORT CUT AT TRUE THEOLOGY BY DESIDERIUS ERASMUS OF ROTTERDAM¹

When I was first about to publish my revised version of the New Testament,² I had taken the trouble to add, as certain friends of mine had requested, a sort of method and system for the study of theology. It was indeed brief but sufficiently copious, I thought at the time, for the preface of a work, for I was afraid that it should appear to be not a preface but a second work added to the first. Even if this reason had not motivated me, the speed with which the work was already hastening to an end demanded brevity.³ Now I shall do the same work over again, but somewhat more expansively, and I shall arrange it in such a way that this piece can, if one likes, be added as a preface; otherwise it can be read separately. I shall, no doubt, imitate hosts who, parsimoniously

- 1 Hoffmann (*Rhetoric and Theology* 156 n100) indicates that the phrase *ratio seu methodus* 'a system or method' adapts a standard rhetorical idiom, *ratio et via*, used by the rhetoricians to refer to the principles of a subject; the idiom is variously translated in the Loeb Classical Library: 'outline and method' (Cicero *De inventione* 1.4.8), 'principles and method' (Cicero *De oratore* 1.25.113), 'general lines and method' (Quintilian *Institutio oratoria* 5.1.3). For *Methodus*, a Latinization of the Greek compound μέθοδος (ὁδός 'road,' 'way'), cf *Methodus* n1; and for the word in the Renaissance see W.P.D. Wightman *Science in a Renaissance Society* (London 1972) 94. Elsewhere also Erasmus encourages the 'short cut' to knowledge; cf eg Ep 66:9–11 and *De ratione studii* CWE 24 691. Erasmus regarded his *Enchiridion* as a *compendium*; cf the expression "'short way" to Christ' CWE 66 127. He speaks of Christ himself as a *compendium* in the *De philosophia evangelica* 735 with n56.
- 2 Erasmus speaks of the first edition of his New Testament as a revision and correction of the Vulgate; cf the Translator's Note to 'Title Pages' 740 with nn1, 2.
- 3 For the haste with which the first edition of the New Testament was completed see Ep 384 introduction and 'New Testament Scholarship' 56–7. The statement here suggests that the *Methodus* was composed in the final stages of the preparation of the New Testament, though scholars have debated whether it was completed before printing began; cf A.F.C. Koch *The Year of Erasmus' Birth and Other Contributions to the Chronology of His Life* (Utrecht 1969) 15.

sumptuous and magnificently mean, conceal with a common seasoning the scraps of yesterday's victuals that they mix in with fresh fare.⁴

If only I could provide what is demanded of me! It is indeed a great thing to arouse in human hearts a burning desire for the study of theology, but it takes a more expert practitioner to expound the way and the method of this heavenly study. Not that I do so in a manner worthy of the subject (for what can human effort do to match the divine realities?), but in such a way that this labour of mine might offer some small advantage to candidates of a most venerable theology.

Not the least part of a task is to know how to set about it. And one makes speed enough⁵ who nowhere strays from the path. One often doubles both the expense and the effort when with frequent deviations and long digressions one arrives at length at his destination – if he succeeds in arriving at all. Moreover, the person who points out a way that is also short helps the eager student with a double kindness: first, the student reaches the end of his course in better time; and second, he achieves his goal with less effort and expense.⁶ But I am a little apprehensive that someone who knows my slight

- 4 The *Methodus* was expanded to become the *Ratio* in the autumn of 1518, when it was published separately from the New Testament. This new *Ratio*, a major hermeneutical essay in its own right and no longer prefatory in character, appeared as a preface to the New Testament in the edition of 1519 only. Much of the *Methodus* was incorporated into the *Ratio*. In fact, a line count based on Holborn's edition shows that approximately 90 per cent of the *Methodus* is incorporated into the *Ratio*. In general, the first seven pages of the *Methodus* (Holborn 150–6) are absorbed into the first twenty pages of the *Ratio* (Holborn 177–96), and the last six pages of the *Methodus* (Holborn 159–62) into the last twenty-two pages of the *Ratio* (Holborn 284–305). The large central section of the *Ratio* (Holborn 197–283) is, for the most part, fundamentally new material in 1518/1519, with substantial later additions. I regard the *Ratio* as an essentially new work and not merely a second enlarged edition of the *Methodus*. Therefore, the notes that follow designating textual changes or additions presuppose the 1518/1519 edition as the base text. Nevertheless, for the convenience of the reader, passages incorporated into the *Ratio* from the *Methodus* are printed in italic script. In such passages I have attempted to avoid unnecessary duplication in the annotation; hence a number placed in square brackets in the text of the *Ratio* indicates that a note with that number will be found with the *Methodus*.
- 5 Cf *Adagia* II i 1, where Erasmus sets out three methods of 'setting about a task,' CWE 33 15–17. Cf Ep 858:34–5 (to Paul Volz, 14 August 1518).
- 6 For Pierre Cousturier's critique of the *compendium* 'short way' see 'New Testament Scholarship' 275 with n1161.

competence will here at once cry out, 'Will you then point out a way in which you yourself have never walked, or, at least, have walked with little success – about to act in a manner no less ridiculous than if a blind man should claim to lead the blind, as in the gospel saying?'⁷ Indeed, I should very much like truly to be able to deny your point. But why should I not imitate those sailors who, though they themselves have barely escaped with nothing at all when their ship has struck upon a rock, nevertheless are accustomed to have regard for others who set sail, pointing out to them the dangers? Or, at least, those many-headed⁸ statues of Mercury that were once customarily placed at cross-roads, and from time to time by their direction conduct the traveller to a place where they themselves will never arrive [4]. To quote a line or two from the poets, 'I shall do the work of a flintstone, which, though itself incapable of cutting, can sharpen a sword.'⁹ Finally, blind man though he may be, if he shows the way, give him consideration nevertheless.

Now it is true that St Aurelius Augustine, in the four books to which he gave the title *On Christian Doctrine*, has discussed virtually this very subject both fully and with exacting care, and before him, I suppose, a certain Dionysius in the work that he entitled¹⁰ *On the Divine Names*, again¹¹ in the little book to which he gave the title *On Mystical Theology*¹² – and it is probable that he did so in the books of *Theological Institutes* and again in the work *On Symbolic*

7 Cf Matt 15:14; Luke 6:39. Compare Erasmus' comments in 1528 when he was attempting to engage with his work on preaching (the *Ecclesiastes*): 'I will prepare my notes for the *De concionando*, and already magpies and jackdaws are squeaking about it, "What?" they say, "Is he going to teach us how to preach when he has never preached in his life?"' Ep 2033:49–52.

8 'Many-headed': πολυκεφάλους. For the iconography of the many-headed Mercury see *Lexicon iconographicum mythologiae classicae* ed Bertrand Jaeger, Pierre Müller, and Christian Augé (Zürich 1990) v 1:304 #140.

9 Horace *Ars poetica* 304–5

10 he entitled] First in Schoeffer 1519; in Froben 1519, 'is entitled'

11 again ... *Symbolic Theology*.] Added in 1520

12 Pseudo-Dionysius, long generally assumed to be the Areopagite converted by Paul (Acts 17:34), was a Neoplatonizing Christian of the late fifth–early sixth century, whose works (written in Greek), were popular in Latin translation in the sixteenth century. With the qualification 'I suppose,' Erasmus implicitly questions the traditional date and identification of this author. In the *Antibarbari*, published in 1520 but drafted in 1494–5, Erasmus reflects the traditional view (CWE 23 107:23–4), which, however, is qualified in the *Enchiridion*, composed in 1501–2 and first published in 1503 (cf CWE 66 69 with n29). In 1516, in an annotation on Acts 17:34 (*in quibus et Dionysius*) Erasmus cites Valla to demonstrate the improbability that this author was the Areopagite, and he explains the false attribution again in the preface to II 1 of his 1516 edition of

Theology.¹³ All the more reason why I shall treat this subject not only more succinctly but also in a plainer and less elegant fashion – with a fatter Minerva, [7] as they say – for I am certainly not preparing this for distinguished persons, but am striving with such industry as I have to bring help to unsophisticated folk and to ordinary intellects of a lower order.

Accordingly, what should have in the first place been taught is extremely easy and can be told, as those say, like one, two, three [8]; but in practical experience it is by far the first and greatest thing of all, and just as it requires only the slightest effort to teach, so it takes an enormous effort to manifest in practice. What I mean is this: that to this philosophy, which is neither Platonic nor Stoic nor Peripatetic¹⁴ but entirely of heaven, we bring a mind worthy of it, one that is not only free from all the stains of sin (as far as possible) but at peace and rest from every tumult of the passions, so that the image of that eternal truth may be reflected more distinctly in us, as in a peaceful river or a smooth and highly polished mirror [9]. For if Hippocrates [10] requires of his disciples a blameless and holy character, if Julius Firmicus [11] in the superstitious art does not admit a heart and mind corrupted by the disease of gain or glory,¹⁵ if the ancient worshippers of the

Jerome, CWE 61 73. Erasmus' later view was widely met with hostility; cf eg Ep 1620:79–82, *Manifesta mendacia* CWE 71 123, and *Declarationes ad censuras Lutetiae vulgatas* CWE 82 242–4. Dionysius appears later in Ratio 677 (cf n988) and in *Peregrinatio apostolorum* 964, where see n75.

13 Four authentic works of Pseudo-Dionysius are extant: *The Divine Names*, *Mystical Theology*, *The Celestial Hierarchy*, and *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*. In *The Divine Names* the author explains at the beginning that the approach to theology must be through the Scriptures and with a pure and humble heart that waits to receive illumination, a point more briefly made in *Mystical Theology*. *Theological Institutes* translates *Institutiones theologicae*, while *Symbolic Theology* renders *Significatio theologia*, allusions, apparently, to works described by Pseudo-Dionysius in *The Divine Names* and *Mystical Theology*; for *Theological Institutes* see *Divine Names* PG 3 593B, 646B; and for *Symbolic Theology* see *Mystical Theology* PG 3 1033A–B. These works either were lost before the Dionysiac corpus was assembled or are wholly fictional; cf Paul Rorem *Pseudo-Dionysius: A Commentary on the Texts and an Introduction to their Influence* (New York 1993) 134.

14 'Stoic' and 'Peripatetic' identify the philosophical schools that found their origin in, respectively, Zeno (320–280 BC) and Aristotle (380–300 BC). The Academy of Plato (429–347 BC) gave rise to the Academic school, on which see *Methodus* n121.

15 Erasmus frequently describes evil affections as diseases; cf eg Ratio 582, 584 and *Enchiridion* CWE 66 44 where the passions are called 'diseases of the mind'; similarly in the paraphrases, eg on Matt 5:2 and 3, 6:19, 8:16 CWE 45 84, 85, 121, 145. In the annotation on Rom 1:26 ('to passions of shame') Erasmus cites Horace for the image; cf CWE 56 56 with n3.

demons would not receive anyone into their profane mysteries unless they had first been cleansed by many observances,¹⁶ *how much more is it right for us to approach the school – or, more truly, the temple – of this divine wisdom with minds completely cleansed.*

In Exodus¹⁷ the people of God, about to hear the voice of God from afar, are ordered to undergo cleansing during a period of two days. Further, what extraordinary purity do we think is demanded of Moses and Aaron, who climb to the top of the mountain and penetrate that misty and awesome darkness where there is seen what no light either of earth or of heaven can show, where they engage close up in conversation with God? It is of the same import, I think, that when Moses was hastening close to Mount Horeb, running up to see the exceptional wonder of a bush that was burning but was not consumed, he was not admitted to conversation with God until he cast off his shoes from his feet. What are the feet except the affections? What are feet freed from the encumbrance of shoes except the soul that is not weighed down by earthly desires, desires for things that are fleeting?¹⁸ But God speaks to us in the arcane books more truly and more effectively than he spoke to Moses from the bush, provided we approach the conversation with a pure heart. Paul calls the exposition of arcane Scripture not philosophy but prophecy.¹⁹ But prophecy is a gift of that eternal Spirit.

- 16 For rites of purification preparatory to initiation into the ancient mysteries see Marvin W. Meyer *The Ancient Mysteries: A Source Book* (San Francisco 1987) 10; also, from antiquity, Apuleius *Metamorphoses* 11.21-3.
- 17 In Exodus ... pure heart.] Except for the last two sentences, this paragraph was added in 1520. For the allusions in this passage see Exod 19:10-12 (the people, remaining at a distance from the mountain, cleanse their garments), Exod 19:24 (Moses and Aaron ascend the mountain; cf 24:12), Exod 20:21 (thick darkness), Exod 20:21-24:18 (the Lord speaks to Moses on the mountain), Exod 3:1-4:17 (the burning bush and conversation with God).
- 18 Erasmus frequently reflects a Platonizing psychology; cf *Enchiridion* CWE 66 41-54, *Moria* CWE 27 150, and CWE 50 109 n42. For the passions as an encumbrance to the soul see Plato *Phaedo* 65A-67B; *Enchiridion* CWE 66 66; also John B. Payne 'Toward the Hermeneutics of Erasmus' in *Scrinium Erasmianum* ed J. Coppens (Leiden 1969) II 13-23. Compare the image of 'feet' with the image in the preface to Cratander's Latin edition of Erasmus' New Testament: We must 'go to Christ ... on the feet of our hearts,' 'Separate Latin Editions' 721.
- 19 On prophecy as the exposition of Scripture see the paraphrases on 1 Cor 12:10 CWE 43 151-2 with nn11 and 15, on 1 Cor 13:2 CWE 43 157-8 with n4, and on Acts 15:32 CWE 50 99 with n64.

For this, therefore, you should prepare your heart, so that you also may deserve to be called by the prophetic term 'taught by God.'²⁰ *Let there be in you an eye of faith that is sound and like that of the dove, an eye that sees nothing but the heavenly things.*²¹ *Add to this a most ardent desire for learning. This incomparable pearl does not deign either to be loved in any ordinary way or to be cherished along with others; it demands a thirsting soul and a soul thirsting for nothing else [12]. Let all pride now be far away, all arrogance be far away from those about to approach this sacred threshold [13].* From things of this sort that Spirit at once recoils, for it takes delight in souls that are gentle and meek.²² The palace of this queen is majestic if you go all the way into its innermost chambers, but access lies through an extremely low portal; you must bend your neck if you want admittance.²³ *Let the appetite for glory be far away, that plague most pernicious to the truth and customary companion of indomitable natures; far away obstinacy, the breeder of brawls, and, even more, blind temerity.* What his disciples offered to Pythagoras when he taught them certain magical numbers,²⁴ you should much more offer to the Spirit, your teacher, and distrusting your own judgment, give yourself to the Spirit to be formed and moulded.

When you enter places that are to be venerated with religious devotion, you fondly kiss everything, you reverence everything, and as though some divine power is everywhere present, you treat everything with religious awe. Remember that you must do this much more scrupulously when you are about to enter this inner

- 20 'Taught by God': *θεοδιδάκτος*. The Greek word is found in 1 Thess 4:9, while the phrase 'taught of God' appears in John 6:45, quoting Isa 54:13; cf the annotations on 1 Thess 4:9 (*a Deo didicistis*) and on John 6:45 (*docibiles*).
- 21 For the 'sound' eye see Matt 6:22 and Luke 11:34. Adopting here the Vulgate expression *oculus simplex* found in both passages, Erasmus explains the image in the annotation on Matt 6:22 (*si oculus tuus nequam*) as an 'eye free from mucus, or inflammation or disease.' The 'eyes of doves' is an expression found in the Vulgate of the Song of Sol 1:15 (VG 1:14) and 4:1. For the dove as an image of the heavenly Spirit see Matt 3:16; Mark 1:10; Luke 3:22.
- 22 For the gentle soul as the habitat of the Holy Spirit see the references in *Methodus* n9.
- 23 Cf *Enchiridion* ('the doorway is low') CWE 66 34, *In psalmum* 33 CWE 64 279, and *Explanatio symboli* CWE 70 237-8; cf also Virgil *Aeneid* 8.359-68. The image of palace and queen suggests the common designation of theology as 'the queen of the sciences'; cf Epp 108:30-41 and 980:9-10.
- 24 For Pythagoras as an educator see C.J. de Vogel *Pythagoras and Early Pythagoreanism* (Assen 1964) 159-89. For Pythagoras' 'magical numbers' see Walter Burkert *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism* trans Edwin L. Minar Jr (Cambridge MA 1972) 185-90; also *Moria* CWE 27 90 with n87 and *Adagia* I i 2 (on 'odd and even numbers' listed under 'The Precepts of Pythagoras') CWE 31 40:257-41:279.

sanctuary of the Divine Spirit. What is granted to you to see, fall down before it and kiss it; what is not granted to see – this, though concealed, worship nevertheless from afar in sincere faith and venerate, whatever it is. Let ungodly curiosity be absent [14]. You will deserve to see certain mysteries [15] perhaps for this very reason, that in reverence you withdraw yourself from their sight. Perhaps²⁵ Moses taught us this when he veiled his face so that he might not look upon the Lord speaking to him from the bush.

In the case of other disciplines, Augustine wants us to apply ourselves to them with caution and prudence; he wants us to read books of human learning²⁶ with judgment and discrimination.²⁷ In the Scriptures, if you meet anything that little accords with the divine nature or seems to conflict with the teaching of Christ, do not unfairly blame what is written, but assume rather that you do not grasp what you are reading, or that the words contain a trope, or that the text is corrupt, as for example, when you read that God is angry or is moved to repent, though Christian faith regards it as certain that God is absolutely free from affections of this sort; or when you read that Christ bids his disciples to sell their cloaks and buy themselves swords, though earlier it was he who had forbidden them to resist evil.²⁸

In the case of the disciplines of human learning, each has its own goal: in the case of an orator, you seek to speak with facility and flare;²⁹ in the case of a logician, to make clever inferences and ensnare your opponent. *Let this be your first and only goal, this your prayer, attend to this alone, that you be changed, be swept away [16], be inspired, be transformed into what you are learning. The food*

* * * * *

25 Perhaps...bush.] Added in 1520; cf Exod 3:2–6.

26 'Books of human learning': *libros humanos*. Erasmus sets up a contrast between 'human books' and the divine Scriptures, each of which requires from the reader a distinctive approach.

27 Cf Augustine *De doctrina christiana* 2.39.58.

28 Cf Exod 4:14; Num 11:1 (God becomes angry); Gen 6:6 (God repents); Luke 22:36 (buying swords – for Erasmus' interpretation of which see 640 with n791 below); Matt 5:39 (resisting evil). In his annotation on Luke 22:36 (*sed nunc qui habet sacculum*) Erasmus made great efforts beginning in 1516 to explain Jesus' command to buy swords, with large additions in 1519 and 1527, in the latter of which he seems grudgingly to accept the theory of the just war; cf 'New Testament Scholarship' 74 with n301 (1516), 136 (1519), and 305–6 (1527). Erasmus' recurrent attention to difficult problems of exegesis is a characteristic feature of the *Annotations*; cf 'New Testament Scholarship' 137 with n570.

29 'Facility and flare': *copiose splendideque*, words fundamental in rhetorical art; for copious speech as one of the goals of the orator see *De copia* CWE 24 295–300; for *oratio splendida* see Cicero *Brutus* 79.273, also 20.78 and 55.201.

of the soul is useful not if it remains in the memory as in the stomach, but only if it penetrates into the very affections [17] and into the very viscera of the mind. You may conclude that you have made progress, not if you debate more keenly [18], but only if you sense that little by little you are becoming a different person, less proud, less irascible, less fond of money or pleasures or of life, if every day some vice disappears and some growth in godliness occurs. In debating you must observe prudence and the greatest self-control so that you seem to be engaged in a conference, not a conflict. Let prayer or thanksgiving frequently interrupt the reading³⁰ – prayer that seeks the help of the sacred Spirit; thanksgiving that acknowledges the favour whenever you feel that you have made progress.

As a result of the habits of certain people, this most holy study has a bad reputation among some, since those who have climbed to the summit and peak of this profession are sometimes³¹ more uncouth than rustics, more vain, more irritable, more poisonous in tongue, and absolutely more disagreeable in all the familiar intercourse of our lives not only than the uneducated, but even than they themselves normally are, so that in the eyes of some theology itself seems to have made them what they are.³² St James admonishes that the one who has achieved true wisdom should exhibit and show it not by arrogance and obstinacy in debate but by gentleness and an upright character. He says, moreover, that the knowledge that brings with it a somewhat bitter³³ jealousy and obstinate contention does not come from above; rather, he calls it earthly and unspiritual and devilish. For the wisdom that is truly theological is, he says, first pure, then modest, peaceable, pliant, full of mercy and good fruits, knowing nothing of partiality, nothing of hypocrisy.³⁴

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30 'Reading': *lectio*, a term long in use to designate both the scientific investigation of Scripture as in the schools, and the devotional reading of Scriptures as in the monasteries; cf CHB II 193–5.

31 sometimes] Added in 1522

32 Cf the portrait of the moral character of the theologian in *Moria* CWE 27 126–30 with n399. Jacobus Latomus objected to Erasmus' claim that a good theologian was also a pious man; cf Ep 936:53–7 and *Apologia contra Latomi dialogum* CWE 71 55 and 61.

33 somewhat bitter] *subamarulentam*, first in Schoeffer 1519; in Froben 1519, *amarulentam* 'bitter'

34 Erasmus cites from James 3:13–17, mingling the Vulgate with his own translation. For the characterization of wisdom found here see the paraphrase on these verses, CWE 44 159 with n35.

Now, in regard to that literature by whose support we more easily attain this, without question our first concern should be³⁵ to learn well the three languages – Latin, Greek, and Hebrew – since it is clear that all of mystic Scripture has been handed down in these. Of these languages St Augustine was genuinely skilled only in Latin, had some small acquaintance with Greek, but neither knew nor hoped to know Hebrew; nevertheless, in *On Christian Doctrine* book 2 he does not hesitate to declare that the knowledge of these languages is essential whether to understand the sacred books or to restore³⁶ them.³⁷ For just as no one reads a text written with an alphabet he does not know, so without a knowledge of the languages no one understands what he reads. And do not, dear reader, I pray you, here forthwith recoil, beaten back as though with a club, by the difficulty of the task. If you have the intent, if you have a suitable teacher, these three languages will be learned with almost less trouble than one learns the pitiful stammering of a single 'half language' [20] today – no doubt because of both the ignorance and the lack of teachers.³⁸

On this count especially it is right that the memory of the most distinguished Jérôme de Busleyden, once provost of Aire, be sacred both to all who pursue the liberal arts³⁹ and, above all, to candidates of theology. Busleyden, cheating even his heirs, bequeathed a large sum of money specifically to procure with a decent salary those who should profess the three languages at Louvain. His brother, Gilles de Busleyden, also deserves a large portion of this praise, for he so supports his brother's last will and testament, or rather, is himself so steeped in liberal learning, that he prefers the money be devoted to supporting the studies of all rather than to enhancing his own coffers.⁴⁰

35 should be] *debetur* first in Schoeffer 1519; in Froben 1519, *dabitur* 'will be given'
36 restore] In all editions except Schoeffer 1519, which reads *recte tuendos* 'to preserve correctly'

37 Cf Augustine *De doctrina christiana* 2.11.16. On Augustine's skill in languages see *Methodus* n32.

38 'Lack of teachers': The comment may reflect Erasmus' concern in 1518 and 1519 to find good teachers for the Collegium Trilingue; cf eg Maarten van Dorp's observation in Ep 852:74-7 (July 1518), and Erasmus' not always successful search for teachers for the new institution, Ep 865:61-4 with n61.

39 'Liberal arts': *honestarum disciplinarum*

40 Jérôme de Busleyden (c 1470-1517) acquired an excellent education at Orléans and at Padua, where he received a doctorate in law in 1503. In 1500 he had become provost of St Peter's at Aire, a small town not far from Saint-Omer and after numerous ecclesiastical preferments was appointed in 1517 to the council of Charles, heir to the Spanish kingdoms and future emperor. In this capacity he was in the same year travelling to Spain with the chancellor Jean Le Sauvage

Etienne Poncher, once⁴¹ bishop of Paris, now archbishop of Sens,⁴² a man worthy of the memory of all ages, diligently emulates this most splendid example, summoning from all sides with generous rewards those who would teach the languages.⁴³

Aurelius Augustine does not demand that you advance in Hebrew and Greek literature to prodigious fluency, which, even in Latin, is the fortunate lot granted to only a few. It is enough if you get as far as neatness and propriety of expression, that is, if you achieve some modest skill such as suffices for making judgments [21]. For, to pass over all the other disciplines of humane learning, it is in no way possible to understand what is written if you are ignorant of the language in which it is written – unless, perhaps, sitting idly by we prefer to wait with the apostles for this as some gift from heaven.⁴⁴ We must not, I think, listen to

to make preparations for Charles' return there as king, but Busleyden fell ill and died at Bordeaux; cf Epp 205 and 608 introduction. Two days before he had left, he had made his will, which provided funds for the establishment of the Collegium Trilingue in Louvain. Erasmus had made the acquaintance of Busleyden in Orléans in 1500, and by 1516 the two enjoyed a close relationship. Erasmus provided much of the inspiration that established the Collegium; cf Ep 691 introduction. After Jérôme's death, Gilles (1465-1536), eldest of four brothers, helped to carry out the plans for the Collegium Trilingue and continued to support it once it had been established; cf 'New Testament Scholarship' 97 with n391. On the brothers see further CEBR I 234-7.

41 once] Added in 1520

42 now archbishop of Sens] Added in 1520

43 Etienne Poncher (1446-1525) studied civil and canon law, and under both Louis XII and Francis I enjoyed a successful career as diplomat and churchman. He became bishop of Paris in 1503, and archbishop of Sens in 1519. Others confirm Erasmus' appreciation of him here as a patron of learning. Budé described him as 'one who inspires and encourages literary men,' Ep 522:122; Germain de Brie declared that 'he alone of all our bench of bishops not merely respects aspirants to sound learning ... but spurs them on with rewards,' Ep 569:21-3; and Nicolas Bérault thought him to be the 'almost unequalled Maecenas of our times,' Ep 925:23-4. Budé, in the letter cited, informed Erasmus that Poncher supported the effort to bring Erasmus to Paris for the Collège Royale to be established by Francis I (Ep 522:163-6); cf Ep 531:618-34.

44 Cf Acts 1:4-5 and 2:1-4. Erasmus' guarded sarcasm here may reflect a concealed response to criticism of his 1516 annotation on Acts 10:38 (*quomodo unxit eum*), where he had observed that the apostles spoke idiomatic vulgar Greek; the gift of tongues at Pentecost could not therefore have been perpetual. Johann Maier of Eck had criticized the annotation early in 1518; cf Ep 769:69-83. Edward Lee also objected; cf *Responsio ad annotationes Lei* 2 (Note 122) CWE 72 254-6. Cf 'New Testament Scholarship' 135 with n566.

those persons who, though they waste away in sophistical trumpery and illiterate literature even to a decrepit old age, are accustomed to say, 'Jerome's translation is enough for me,' – as those above all reply who do not care to know even Latin, so that for them, certainly, Jerome translated in vain [22].

But to disregard for the moment the fact that it matters very much whether you draw from the originating springs of Scripture or from any sort of pool whatever, what of the fact that certain things, because of idioms peculiar to the languages, cannot even be transferred to a foreign language without losing their original clarity, their native grace, their special nuance?⁴⁵ What of the fact that some things are too small to be translated at all, as Jerome everywhere cries out and complains? [24] What of the fact that many things restored by Jerome have perished due to the ravages of time – for example, his New Testament⁴⁶ emended according to the Greek original, or the marks of the obelus and the asterisk, or the prophets punctuated by phrase, clause, and full sentence?⁴⁷ What of the fact that either through the error or the indiscretion of the scribes the sacred codices⁴⁸ were long ago corrupted and today at many points are being corrupted? What of the fact that Jerome did not by himself restore everything, nor was he able to do so? What if he also wrongly emended or translated some things? Here, I beg you, desist from that tragical lamentation, 'O heaven! O earth!'⁴⁹ Let the truth be told: however godly the man, however learned, he was a human being and able both to be led astray and to lead astray. Many things, I would imagine, escaped his

45 On the critique here of translations see *Methodus* 429 with n23. These comments in the *Ratio* were attacked at an early point by Jacobus Latomus and later were cited by Pierre Cousturier, who called them 'silly'; cf *Apologia adversus Latomi dialogum* CWE 71 46 and 54 and *Apologia adversus Petrum Sutorem* LB IX 770C-D.

46 New Testament] First in 1522; previously 'Gospels,' as in the *Methodus*. In fact, Jerome revised the Gospels but not the entire New Testament; cf *Methodus* n27.

47 The use of the obelus and asterisk to mark passages that ought to be added to or omitted from a received text was borrowed from the practice of classical grammarians and had been used by Origen; cf CHB I 457-8. Jerome repeatedly comments on his use of these signs; cf eg the *Prologus* to the Pentateuch and to Job, and the *Praefatio* to the Psalms, Weber 4, 731, 767. Cf Augustine Ep 71, where the system is described. For Jerome's efforts to mark through phrases and clauses the movement of thought in the books of the prophets see the *Prologus* to Isaiah, Weber 1096.

48 'The sacred codices': *sacri codices*, in place of *libri* 'books' in the *Methodus*. On 'codex' see Chomarat *Grammaire et rhétorique* I 486.

49 Cf Terence *Adelphi* 790. Pierre Cousturier thought this paragraph 'perverse,' 'heretical,' 'blasphemous'; cf *Apologia adversus Petrum Sutorem* LB IX 771E-F.

notice, many things led him astray. Finally, what of the fact that not even those annotations with which Jerome restored these texts are well understood if you are completely ignorant of the languages on whose evidence he depends?

But if Jerome's translation [27] sufficed once and for all, whatever was the point of assuring through pontifical decrees that the true reading of the Old Testament be sought in the Hebrew books, an accurate text of the New in the Greek sources [28] – the very thing Augustine teaches in more than one place?⁵⁰ Lastly, if the translation we commonly use was sufficient, how did it happen afterwards that theologians of the first rank slipped as a result of so many manifest and shameful errors, which is so obvious that it can be neither denied nor concealed. Among these are both Augustine, foremost among the ancients, and Thomas Aquinas himself (in my opinion the most assiduous of all the moderns) [29] – and let their⁵¹ curse be upon me if I lie or say this as an insult. Not to speak at all for the moment about the rest, who, in my judgment at least, are not to be compared with Thomas.

If anyone has already grown too old for this, let him play the part of a prudent man, be content with his lot, and, to whatever extent possible, rely on the industry of others, provided he does not obstruct young people of promise, for whom above all this is written. And yet I, certainly, would not be the cause of despair even to the old, since I can name four men specifically, well known personally to me and also distinguished by their books already published, who came to the study of Greek, none of them under the age of forty, and one forty-eight. Moreover, they themselves by their own work witness to the mastery they have achieved [30]. If Cato's example means little to us [31], St Augustine, himself already a bishop, already growing old, returned to Greek, which as a boy he had indeed tasted – and loathed [32]. Rodolphus Agricola, the singular light and ornament of our Germany, neither was ashamed, great connoisseur of letters that he was, to learn Hebrew when he was already beyond his fortieth year, nor did he despair, a man as old as he was, for as a youth he

50 Cf Augustine *De doctrina christiana* 2.11.16 and *De civitate Dei* 15.14.2, where, however, the Septuagint is also granted an independent authority. The authority of the Hebrew is even more emphatically qualified in *De civitate Dei* 18.43, following an allusion to Jerome's translation. Pierre Cousturier regarded Erasmus' appeal to pontifical decrees as simply false, and Erasmus in response identified the statement as from the *Decretum* of Gratian, *Apologia adversus Petrum Sutorem* LB IX 775A-C; in fact in the *Decretum* the statement is taken from Jerome Ep 71.5.3, though attributed to Augustine; cf Ep 182:191-4 with 193n.

51 their] First in 1520; previously 'his,' as in the *Methodus*. For one of Augustine's most 'shameful errors' see the annotation on Rom 14:5 ('for one judges'). Cousturier attacked this statement, as well as those identified just above (nn49, 50); cf LB IX 775E-F.

had imbibed Greek [33]. I myself have already begun my fifty-third year,⁵² and when I can, I come back to Hebrew, with which I made some acquaintance long ago. There is nothing, in fact, the human mind cannot achieve provided it has learned self-discipline, and provided it greatly desires something. For this task, as I said, some modest ability is enough, provided, of course, that it is free from temerity, which generally pronounces an opinion more boldly precisely as its judgment is less discerning. In this respect, youth is indeed more fortunate, but nevertheless we must not despair of the elderly [35]. The former offers in itself more hope, but to the latter intensity of desire sometimes furnishes what the strength of youth does not provide for others. Moreover, in the letters and prefaces Jerome himself sufficiently refutes the opinion of Hilary and Augustine, who think that nothing beyond the Septuagint is to be required for the books of the Old Testament;⁵³ and if he had not, Hilary's egregious mistake in the word 'Hosanna' quite adequately did so. St Ambrose, too, stumbled over the same stone [36].

But it is a human characteristic that each of us approves only so much as we can understand. Augustine checked the Old Testament against the Septuagint; much rather would he have checked it against the Hebrew verity if he had acquired the language. Elsewhere⁵⁴ also, when he was debating with Cresconius (if I remember correctly), and his opponent had introduced a text from Ecclesiasticus that made no sense, he bade him consult the Greek translation, as though the more reliably true text could be found there.⁵⁵

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⁵² See *Methodus* n34 for Erasmus' age; and Ep 373:81–3, the preface to the *Annotations* (1516) ('Prefaces and Letters' 785 with n14), on his Hebrew.

⁵³ On Jerome's evaluation of the Septuagint see eg his *Prologus* to the Pentateuch, Weber 3–4.

⁵⁴ Elsewhere ... there.] Added in 1522

⁵⁵ In *In Heptateuchum locutiones* and *In Heptateuchum quaestiones*, both written in 419, Augustine frequently cites the Septuagint, 'checking the Latin against the Greek.' For advice to consult the Greek see Augustine *Contra Cresconium Donatistam* 2.27.33. The debate turned on Ecclus 34:30: 'If one washes after touching a corpse, and touches it again, what has been gained by washing?' (NRSV). In the debate, the second clause was omitted and the Vulgate's literal translation of the text gave the absurd sense, 'If one is baptized for the dead, how has the baptism helped?' Hence Augustine's request to check the Greek. The Wisdom of Ben Sira was originally written in Hebrew by Jesus Ben Sira just after 200 BC but was translated into Greek by Ben Sira's grandson, and from Greek into Latin probably in the second century AD. From the time of Cyprian it became known in the early church as the book of Ecclesiasticus. On the Donatists see *Ratio* 689 with n1042.

Father.⁷⁴⁰ He imparts to them the Spirit that he shares with the Father, the Spirit that reconciles all things.⁷⁴¹

He does not entrust to Peter the feeding of his sheep without Peter's triple confession of his love for Christ,⁷⁴² implying that a bishop should have no other aim than the welfare of the flock and the glory of Christ. And at once he shows to what end the true and faithful pastor should prepare himself, adding, 'Truly, I say to you, when you were young, you girded yourself and walked where you would; but when you are old, you will extend your hands, and another will carry you where you do not wish' [John 21:18]. For⁷⁴³ one cannot be a true pastor whom financial gain, the pursuit of glory, the fear of princes or even of death diverts from duty.

It is in this way that it will be appropriate to philosophize over individual passages in the mystic volumes,⁷⁴⁴ especially in the Gospels – for I have introduced the above only as examples to show the way to others who will perhaps find better examples than these.

But considerable difficulty lies in the very character of the speech in which sacred literature has been handed down to us. For Scripture generally speaks indirectly and under the cover of tropes and allegories, and of comparisons or parallels, sometimes to the point of obscurity in a riddle.⁷⁴⁵ Perhaps Christ thought it fitting to reproduce the speech of the prophets to

⁷⁴⁰ Cf John 15:4–5.

⁷⁴¹ Cf John 20:21–3, 14:26; 2 Cor 5:18–19; also Col 1:20.

⁷⁴² Cf John 21:15–17.

⁷⁴³ For ... duty.] Added in 1520. A similar exposition concludes the paraphrase on John 21:17 CWE 46 224.

⁷⁴⁴ For 'mystic,' used of Scripture, see *Methodus* n19. Here the meaning of the expression 'to philosophize' (*philosophare*) has been amplified largely by the useful and practical application of Scripture, in the preceding discussion, to the life of the Christian individual and society. Just above (cf n736) Erasmus has spoken of the method in terms of typology. See, however, *Ratio* 555 with n336 and the references there. Erasmus will now proceed to discuss the literary modalities of Scripture. The 1519 text continues.

⁷⁴⁵ Erasmus describes the use, for rhetorical purposes, of comparisons and parallels in *De copia* CWE 24 616–26; for tropes, parallels, and allegories see further *Methodus* n42. For 'riddle' (*aenigma*) see CWE 43 161 n18, CWE 44 236 n15, and CWE 48 14 n38. For brief definitions see *Ecclesiastes* 3 CWE 68 930–4. For the figurative mode of speech in Scripture, especially in relation to the role of persona, see 523 with nn170, 171 above. For allegory see *Ratio* 661 with n906. In Ep 1333:39–46 Erasmus notes the difficulties created for the paraphrast by the figures of speech in the Gospels; for the difficulty biblical figures of speech created in the discussion with Luther see *Hyperaspistes* 2 CWE 77 447–88.

which Jewish ears had grown accustomed,⁷⁴⁶ or he wanted to stimulate our sluggishness with this difficulty so that fruit sought with effort might later be more pleasing, or through this design he wanted his mysteries to be covered and concealed from the profane and the ungodly without at the same time cutting off hope of understanding from godly investigators.⁷⁴⁷ Or perhaps he particularly liked the mode of expression that is most effectively persuasive and, likewise, accessible to learned and unlearned alike, and familiar and completely natural, especially if similitudes are drawn from things best known to the common crowd; we⁷⁴⁸ read that Socratic comparisons were generally of this kind.

A parable is effectual, however, not only for teaching and persuading but also for stirring the emotions, for alluring with its charm,⁷⁴⁹ for bringing clarity, for implanting one central idea deep within the mind, beyond the possibility of escape. The mind is quite extraordinarily moved by the parable that is introduced concerning the prodigal son, who came to his senses and repented.⁷⁵⁰ In this parable the story is told of a young man who demands from his father the portion of wealth that was coming to him; then with self-confidence he boldly ventures into a country far off. Soon, forgetful of his most indulgent father, he squanders with harlots and spendthrifts the resources given to him by the kindness of a parent. Finally, compelled by his utter want of everything, he acknowledges at last his madness, and

⁷⁴⁶ 'Speech of the prophets,' ie figurative speech; cf eg Isa 5:1–7; Ezek 37:1–14; Daniel 7; Hosea 1–3.

⁷⁴⁷ This explanation for the obscurity in Scripture is repeated in *Hyperaspistes* 1 (1526) CWE 76 220, where it is identified (n675) as 'a commonplace argument in medieval and Renaissance defences of poetry.' Cf 'New Testament Scholarship' 263 with n1096.

⁷⁴⁸ we read ... kind.] In 1519 only; subsequently with a very small change, 'we read that Socratic comparisons generally were of this kind.' Cf eg in Plato's *Republic* the fable of the race generated in the womb of earth (allegory of the metals), the allegories of the line and the cave, and the myth of Er, respectively 414B–416B, 509D–511E, 514A–517E, and 614B–621B.

⁷⁴⁹ 'For alluring with its charm': *ad delectandum*. The phrases recall the classical formulation of the primary goals of good oratory: to instruct, to move, and to delight (*docere, movere, delectare*); cf Quintilian *Institutio oratoria* 3.5.2; 8.Pr 7. For these 'rhetorical offices' as benchmarks of good narrative see *Vita Hieronymi* CWE 61 58: 'Who instructs ...? Who delights ...? Who stirs the emotions more effectively?'; and for their significance in Erasmus' thought see Hoffmann *Rhetoric and Theology* 74–81.

⁷⁵⁰ Cf Luke 15:11–32.

a desire for the life he had left behind comes over him. The son returns, acknowledges his error; the father meets him, opens his arms to embrace his son. New clothes are brought out, a ring is offered, the fatted calf is killed, the whole house rings out with joy. In regaining the youth the old man rejoices as though the son had come to life again from the grave.⁷⁵¹ There is no reproach for the rashness of the young man in demanding, nor for his luxury and wickedness in spending. The father's devotion no longer remembers these things. For paternal devotion it is enough that the son has come to his senses and repented, that the son has been restored to him. These images, I say, strike the mind more sharply than if, without a parable, one should say that God willingly receives a sinner provided the sinner sincerely repents of his former life, and God does not hold the sin against one who profoundly hates his transgressions. Just⁷⁵² as this idea steals into the minds of hearers more effectively through the allurements of a similitude,⁷⁵³ so it is etched more deeply when it is restated through the image of the wandering sheep that is brought back home on the shoulders of the shepherd after a long search – likewise, through the parable of the coin that is finally found after it had been so eagerly sought.⁷⁵⁴

Again, there is the mystic parable from Genesis: Abraham everywhere digs wells, the Philistines fill up the pits by throwing earth in them, Isaac digs the same wells again and adds several more besides that have veins of living water.⁷⁵⁵ When you introduce this parable, will you not be heard with greater pleasure than if you should simply say that one must seek in the divine books instruction for good living – that those who are devoted to earthly

751 from the grave.] Added in 1520

752 Just ... sought.] Added in 1522

753 'Of a similitude': *similitudinis*. In Erasmus' New Testament vocabulary *similitudo* appears to include various forms of 'likeness' and has been translated 'similitude' in CWE 45 (cf 213, 216), 'parallel,' 'metaphor' in CWE 46 (cf 13 n2, 129 n2, 176 n45), 'simile' in CWE 49 (cf 55–6, where 'parables' are said to be 'similes' [*similitudines*] drawn from things that are familiar to everyone). In *De copia* 'similitudes' are included as 'examples' along with 'parallels or comparisons, analogies, and anything else of the sort' (CWE 24 607), while 'simile' is abundantly exemplified (*ibidem* 641–4).

754 Cf Luke 15:3–7 (lost sheep) and 15:8–10 (lost coin). Erasmus has reversed the biblical order in this discussion, placing first the long parable (prodigal son), which is followed by the two short parables.

755 Cf Gen 26:15–22.

goods have no taste for these?⁷⁵⁶ Likewise, one who makes a bare statement of the virtues a bishop should possess will receive a less receptive hearing than if he applies as an allegory Aaron's entire vestments, most carefully described by Moses.⁷⁵⁷

In the same way,⁷⁵⁸ suppose you explain that a person's desire entices to sin when the opportunity arises; that unless reason rules, obeying the divine will rather than human affection,⁷⁵⁹ a brief pleasure is purchased with death; that often, moreover, affection steals in under the cloak of necessity or some other honourable reason and deceives. This statement will delight or affect the hearer less than if you introduce⁷⁶⁰ the story of Genesis: God commands, the serpent sets the trap, Eve entices her husband to share her sin, soon punishment becomes the companion of the pleasure tasted.⁷⁶¹

In addition, if someone should explain that one must with one's whole heart abandon vices and withdraw from association with the wicked, and must always progress towards the better things, until one has attained the reward promised to those who have persevered to the end, he will more forcibly move his hearers if he applies the allegory of the Hebrews who fled from Egypt under Moses' leadership, set themselves free from a harsh and base servitude, and after crossing the sea, made their way through various stages – like points of progress in practising the virtues – to a land flowing with milk and honey.⁷⁶² Again, one who teaches that true piety is a difficult

756 Cf Origen *In Genesim homiliae*, where Isaac's wells are interpreted as the 'living word of God' (13.1.3), 'the mystical interpretation of Scripture' (13.2.4), and 'heavenly as opposed to carnal perceptions' (13.3–4). Isaac's well are the 'heavenly philosophy' and the 'authentic gospel' in Ep 916:254–61 (5 February 1519). Erasmus had also appealed to the image earlier in the letter to Paul Volz (14 August 1518), Ep 858:191–224.

757 Cf Exod 28:3–43 (the vestments). Origen *In Exodum homiliae* 9.4 offers an allegorical interpretation of the dress as priestly virtues.

758 In the same way ... shown by some examples] This addition, extending just beyond this and the next two paragraphs, appeared first in 1520; cf n765 below. Cf 'New Testament Scholarship' 188 #5, where three major areas of additions to the *Ratio* are identified, all made in 1520, as they appear from here to the end of the work.

759 For *affectus* 'affection' in Erasmus' New Testament scholarship see *Ratio* 628 with n719.

760 you introduce] First in 1523; in 1520 and 1522, 'he introduces'

761 Cf Genesis 2–3.

762 'A land flowing with milk and honey' is a frequent designation in the Hexateuch for Canaan; cf eg Exod 3:8, 17; Lev 20:24; Num 14:8; Deut 6:3; Josh 5:6. For the progress 'through various stages' (*per varias mansiones*) see Exod 17:1 and the Vulgate expression there, *per mansiones suas* (Weber 100).

thing and does not fall to the listless, but is scarcely acquired even with much industry and much struggle, will add much charm if he will adapt to allegory the battles and the uprisings that the Hebrews had against the Jebusites, the Philistines, and the other barbarian enemies.⁷⁶³

In addition, if you state in a straightforward way that nothing is more peaceful, nothing more pleasant than a good conscience that evil passions no longer molest, the auditor will be sleepier than if you add the wrapping of allegory: Isaac was born to Abraham and Sarah only when Abraham's body was dead and it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women.⁷⁶⁴

However, it will not be the task of one who is writing a compendium to recount all these stories from the books of the Old Testament. It is enough to have shown by some examples that there are⁷⁶⁵ things that appear in a more pleasing way through crystal or amber than if they are looked upon alone and bare. And somehow sacred things have more majesty if they are brought before the eyes under a cover than if they are seen absolutely bare. Thus⁷⁶⁶ truth that has tormented us first under cover of a riddle⁷⁶⁷ is more pleasing once grasped – we who are the animal that walks first on four feet, then two, finally three.⁷⁶⁸ Now if someone should say that any good that dwells in us comes to us from Christ, its author,⁷⁶⁹ he will be understood, it is true; but if he will apply to this same thought the similitudes of the vine stock and the

763 For the battles against the Jebusites and 'other barbarians' see eg Josh 11:1-15; 2 Sam 5:6-9; and 1 Kings 9:20-1, where the Jebusites are mentioned; the story of the battles with the Philistines is told in the books of Judges to 2 Chronicles.

764 Cf Gen 18:11; Rom 4:19. The language here reflects the Vulgate: 'body was dead' (Rom 4:19 AV) and 'after the manner of women' (Gen 18:11 AV).

765 that there are] From 1520; in 1519, 'there are,' appropriately, as following the text before the 1520 insertion; cf n758 above.

766 Thus ... three.] Added in 1520

767 'Under cover of a riddle': *aenigmati involucri*; cf just above 'the wrapping of allegory' (*allegoriae involucri*) and CWE 43 161 with n18 'veil of mystery.' Cf also *Parabolae*: '... in the inner hive [bees] store up the sweetest thing there is. In like manner theology conceals her wisdom under layers of tasteless allegory to keep outsiders away' CWE 23 260. Cf *Ratio* nn745 and 789. Compare Erasmus' favourable attitude here to the obscurity of Scripture with his approach in his discussions with his opponents; cf 'New Testament Scholarship' 263-4 (Luther), 270-1 (Béda), and 274-6 (Cousturier).

768 An allusion to the famous riddle of the Sphinx: what is it that walks on four legs, then on two, finally on three? In Greek legend the riddle, to which the answer is 'man,' was solved by Oedipus; cf Sophocles *King Oedipus* 390-8, especially 393 where *αἰνυῖα* designates 'riddle.'

769 For the expression and thought see Rom 7:18, 8:9-11; James 1:17.

vine branches, of head and members, of root and branches, the idea is at once placed before the eyes as though portrayed in a picture.⁷⁷⁰

Moreover,⁷⁷¹ just as Christ imitated the speech of the prophets, so Paul and the other apostles reflect the speech of Christ, projecting a theme visually, through parables, and, by frequent repetition, fastening it upon the mind. Thus Paul repeatedly calls us temples dedicated to God and temples of the Holy Spirit, which it is forbidden to desecrate.⁷⁷² Thus also he concludes that whole discussion about the rejection of Israel and the adoption of the gentiles with the parable of the olive tree and the wild olive, the root and the branches.⁷⁷³ He calls 'leaven' the doctrine that, once handed down, influences⁷⁷⁴ many, indicating the large number by the term 'dough'; he calls those who are sound 'unleavened,' the corrupt, 'leavened.' He says that those who are of a strong and resolute mind 'stand,' those who vacillate or sin 'fall,' those who are dead 'have fallen asleep,' or those who neglect their salvation 'sleep,' those who come to their senses and repent 'are awakened,' those who engage in the work of salvation eagerly and attentively 'keep watch.'⁷⁷⁵ He

770 Cf John 15:1-10 (vine and branches); Eph 4:15-16, 1 Cor 12:12-27 (head and members); Rom 11:16-24 (root and branches). At numerous points Erasmus reveals his predilection for pictorial representation enabling the visualization of ideas and abstract truths. In the *De copia* such representation is a means for creating 'vividness' – 'setting out the subject ... so that we seem to have painted the scene rather than described it' CWE 24 577. He prefers an interpretation of Gal 3:1 that assumes that Christ was portrayed crucified before the eyes of the Galatians; annotation on Gal 3:1 (*ante quorum oculos*) ASD VI-9 100:689-93 and its paraphrase, CWE 42 108. Cf above: in the story of Abraham 'a pattern is set before our eyes,' *Ratio* 507 with n85.

771 Moreover ... course begun] Added in 1520; for the resumption of the 1519 text cf n788.

772 Cf 1 Cor 3:16-17, 6:19; 2 Cor 6:16.

773 For the discussion see Rom 9:1-11:24; for the images of the olive tree and the wild olive, and of the root and the branch, Rom 11:16-24.

774 influences] Latin *afficiat*, as in the paraphrase on 1 Cor 5:7; first in 1522; in 1520, *inficiat* 'imbues,' 'infects.' 'Once handed down': *semel tradita*, an expression that echoes the Vulgate of Jude 3 'the faith once handed down.' But the reference to 1 Cor 5:6-8 may be confused with the similar expression in Gal 5:9, where the paraphrase interprets the 'yeast' as the teaching of the Judaizers. However, in the annotation on Gal 5:9 (*totam massam corrumpit*) Erasmus recalls (1535) the reference to 'leaven' in Matt 13:33, where 'yeast' is equated with the teaching of Christ, CWE 45 214.

775 Cf Rom 14:4, 1 Cor 10:12 (stand, fall); 1 Cor 15:18, 1 Thess 4:13, 14, 15 ('have fallen asleep' [*dormisse*]); 1 Thess 5:6 ('sleep' [*dormire*]); Rom 13:11 ('are awakened' [*expergisci*]; cf the annotation on the verse ['to rise from sleep']; 1 Cor 16:13 ('keep watch' [*vigilare*]).

calls a life sunk in error and vice 'night,' an honourable and blameless life 'day.' Occasionally, he calls the Last Judgment a 'day'; he calls 'day' a full and unerring judgment, which sometimes the word 'fire' also designates – 'The fire will make manifest each person's work, of what sort it is.'⁷⁷⁶ He calls the gifts of the Holy Spirit 'treasures,' our bodies, or rather ourselves, 'earthen vessels.'⁷⁷⁷ He calls the human race a 'lump,' God a 'potter.' He says that the godly are vessels destined for honourable uses; the ungodly, he says, are vessels prepared for dishonour.⁷⁷⁸ He calls the frail body of a human being sometimes a 'dwelling,' sometimes a 'garment,' sometimes a 'tabernacle.'⁷⁷⁹

Through the similitude of the pedagogue and the young heir he shows that the Mosaic law was handed down for a limited time.⁷⁸⁰ He calls a kindness invested a 'sowing,' and the returns gained from a kind deed done he calls a 'harvest.'⁷⁸¹ He commends concord at one point under the figure of the body and its members, at another, under that of a building well-constructed through a tightly fitting arrangement of stones in equilibrium right to the

⁷⁷⁶ 'Night' and 'day' serve as metaphors of contrasting conduct in Rom 13:12-14; 1 Thess 5:5-8. 'Day' refers to the Last Judgment in Rom 2:5, 16; 2 Tim 1:12, 18 and 4:8. Erasmus cites the last part of 1 Cor 3:13, but in the full verse both 'day' and 'fire' appear as images of judgment; cf 'The work of each builder will become visible for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each has done' (NRSV). In an annotation (extended further in each edition) on 1 Cor 3:12 (*foenum, stipulam*) Erasmus explains the figurative interpretation of the word 'fire' in distinction from the interpretation of those who think the fire is the fire of purgatory or the eternal punishment of sinners. In the paraphrase on the verse the fire is the 'storm winds' of persecutions or the goads of passion that test the work or the teaching of Christians; cf CWE 43 57-8 with n25. In *Responsio ad annotationes Lei 2* (Note 160), answering Lee's criticism of the annotation, Erasmus interprets 'fire' as the 'shame felt by the person who is refuted and abandons his false teaching,' CWE 72 279. Cf 'New Testament Scholarship' 367 with n1591 and the reference there to 'Errors in the Vulgate.'

⁷⁷⁷ A reference apparently to 2 Cor 4:7

⁷⁷⁸ Cf Rom 9:21-3, but the expression 'vessels for honour and dishonour' is also found in 2 Tim 2:20-1. 'Lump': *massa*, for the Greek *φύμα* in Rom 9:21 (both VG and ER), but elsewhere Erasmus preferred *conspersio* 'paste,' 'dough,' as in his translation of 1 Cor 5:6 and Gal 5:9; cf the annotation on Gal 5:9 (*totam massam corrumpit*).

⁷⁷⁹ Cf 2 Cor 5:1-4. 'Garment': *vestem*, implied in the verbs of 5:2-4 'to be clothed'; cf RSV.

⁷⁸⁰ Cf Gal 3:23-9; and the paraphrase on these verses, CWE 42 113-14.

⁷⁸¹ Cf 2 Cor 9:6.

gable that provides their common peak.⁷⁸² Whatever in anything is courser he calls 'flesh,' 'body,' or 'letter'; whatever is finer and is more like the force of the intellect he terms 'spirit' or 'mind.'⁷⁸³ He says that the teaching adapted to the capacity of the weak is 'milk,' the more complete teaching is 'solid food.'⁷⁸⁴ In more than merely one place he shows through the parallel of marriage and its dissolution that the Mosaic law has been rendered of no effect since evangelical doctrine has succeeded to it.⁷⁸⁵ In the fifteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians he treats the whole matter of the resurrection not by Aristotelian or Platonic enthymemes but by comparisons, likening a body buried in the ground to a seed, citing wheat that has sprouted or a tree that has sprung up as an image of the glorified body.⁷⁸⁶ Now it would be superfluous to recount the times he introduces a similitude from athletes and soldiers, from stadiums, boxers, war.⁷⁸⁷ In the ninth chapter of the same Epistle, with how many comparisons does he insistently repeat the same idea, that thanks is owed for a kindness provided: 'Who serves as a soldier at any time at his own charge? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of the fruit thereof? Who feeds a flock and does not take the flock's milk?' [1 Corinthians 9:7]. Likewise, 'You will not muzzle the mouth of an

⁷⁸² Cf 1 Cor 12:12 (the body); Eph 2:14-22 (the building).

⁷⁸³ Cf Rom 6:6, 7:24, 8:13 (body); Rom 7:25 and 8:3-4, 1 Cor 3:3 (flesh); 2 Cor 3:6 (letter); Romans 8 passim and 2 Cor 3:6 (spirit); Rom 11:34 and 12:2, 1 Cor 2:16 (mind – *mens* in ER, as also here in the *Ratio*). 'Coarser' translates *crassius*; cf *Ratio* 534 with n229. For the contrast between body and spirit in terms of 'coarse,' 'weighty' and 'light,' 'agile' see eg *Enchiridion* CWE 66 41-52 and the paraphrases on Rom 7:17 and 8:22.

⁷⁸⁴ Cf 1 Cor 3:2; and Erasmus' paraphrastic interpretation of this passage, CWE 43 50-1 with nn2 and 3.

⁷⁸⁵ Rom 7:1-4 seems to be the only passage in the Pauline corpus where the marriage-dissolution comparison illustrates the relationship of the old and new covenants. In 1 Corinthians 7, however, Paul discusses at length marriage and Christian terms for its dissolution; cf especially 1 Cor 7:39. Cf also Gal 4:21-31, where Hagar and Sarah and their children are allegorized as the two covenants, and Scripture is cited that demands Hagar and her son be cast out.

⁷⁸⁶ Cf 1 Cor 15:35-44, especially 37: '[You sow] a bare kernel perhaps of wheat or of some other grain' (RSV). So too in his paraphrase on 15:37 Erasmus interprets the 'other grain' as a grain that produces a large tree, and he enhances the image with attractive rhetoric: 'How broad the spread of its branches, what pageantry in its leaves, what loveliness in its blossoms ...' CWE 43 186. On the enthymeme see *Ratio* 569 with n418.

⁷⁸⁷ Cf eg 1 Cor 9:24-6 (athlete, stadium [translated 'race' DV, RSV], boxer); 1 Cor 9:7 (soldier); Eph 6:12-17 (war); and 2 Tim 2:4-5 (athlete, soldier).

ox that treads out the grain' [1 Corinthians 9:9]. Again: 'If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great matter if we reap your carnal things?' [1 Corinthians 9:11]. And again, 'Do you not know that those who work in the holy place have their food from the holy place, and those who attend at the altar partake of the sacrifices?' [1 Corinthians 9:13].

But perhaps we are pursuing this at greater length than an account of method warrants. Accordingly, to finish the course begun: Christ⁷⁸⁸ sometimes deceives his disciples temporarily through riddles of an allegorical nature⁷⁸⁹ so that what he wanted them to understand would stick more deeply later on. For example, in the sixteenth chapter of Matthew, when Christ warns the disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, it is the loaves they had forgotten that come to their minds, though he was speaking about avoiding the hypocrisy of the Pharisees.⁷⁹⁰ Again, in Luke he bids them sell their tunics and buy a sword; they reply that two swords are at hand, and he says, 'It is enough.' When the opportunity arose, the words added incentive to Peter to set about the matter with a sword, though Christ was trying to pluck out of their hearts from its very deepest roots this desire to protect themselves by force against their persecutors.⁷⁹¹ Likewise, when in John he speaks to those who were admiring the great edifice of the temple and says, 'Destroy this temple and within a space of three days I will raise it up' [2:19], not even the apostles perceived that he was speaking about his body that was to be killed and that would live again within a period of three days.⁷⁹² In addition, when in the same Gospel he says, 'A little while and you will not see me, and again a little while, and you will see me' [John 16:16], he signified as

788 Christ] First in 1520; previously, 'Indeed, Christ,' continuing the discussion preceding the 1520 addition, for which see n771.

789 'Riddles of an allegorical nature': *allegoriarum aenigmatibus*; cf *Ratio* n767.

790 Cf Matt 16:5-12. Hoffman finds in the representation of Jesus' dissimulation a pedagogical intent; *Rhetoric and Theology* 122-5.

791 Cf Luke 22:36-8, 49-51; and for the identification of Peter as the swordsman, John 18:10. The paraphrase on this Lukan passage reflects the disciples' incomprehension of the riddle: 'Jesus left [them] in this very dull-witted state for the time being' *CWE* 48 197. The Lukan text (22:36-8) was cited earlier as an example of a biblical problem; cf *Ratio* 494 with n28; cf also *Methodus* n103. It is listed among the 'Obscure Passages' (#8) in 'Errors in the Vulgate' 890.

792 That Jesus was addressing those who were admiring the temple is a detail taken from the synoptic Gospels, where the destruction of the temple is foretold; cf Matt 24:1-2; Mark 13:1-2; Luke 21:5-6; cf *Ratio* 631 with n734. In the paraphrase on John 2:19-22 Jesus did not 'uncover' the 'hidden meaning of his remark,' but 'it stayed fixed like a seed in the hearts of the listeners,' *CWE* 46 43.

though with a riddle that he would shortly die but would soon show himself to them from the resurrection right to the day of the Ascension.

Thus,⁷⁹³ by whatever design, it pleased the eternal wisdom both to insinuate itself into the minds of the godly, and, if I may use the expression, to deceive the minds of the profane through images sketched in outline only. For how many centuries do the Hebrews await their Messiah, the one so often promised? But what were the common crowd expecting? Some extraordinary ruler who would far extend the confines of their dominion, who would restore the Jews to liberty, who would bless their race with riches, who would with fire and sword lay waste the nations that were strangers to the law of Moses. But how vain and deluded was their expectation! Christ came, an example of lowliness and poverty; he came teaching that absolute power of a worldly sort was to be despised; he came exhorting us to take up the cross, and he himself led the way.⁷⁹⁴ Accordingly, when he came, they turned away from him with a hatred that matched the zeal with which they had awaited his coming, deluded as they were by the fanciful images of their dull minds. But⁷⁹⁵ in Matthew, with how many parables does he sketch out for us the kingdom of heaven: the sower whose seed fell on different kinds of soil, then the sower of good seed, the grain of mustard, the little bit of leaven hidden in a large quantity of flour, the treasure buried in a field, the exceptional pearl.⁷⁹⁶

One could put in the same class the practice of Paul, a man who always imitates Christ: he refers everything from its normal meaning to its inner meaning, which is always the sense that is truest, and also the most salutary and of the most extensive application.⁷⁹⁷ According to the general opinion, a Jew is one who has a little bit of foreskin cut off. According to Paul's interpretation, a Jew is a person who has a mind cleansed from earthly desires,

793 Thus ... many examples.] This paragraph and the next two, along with the first sentence of the third, were added in 1520 with the exceptions noted (cf nn795, 803, 805). For the continuation of the text in 1519 cf n809.

794 Cf eg Matt 20:25-8, Mark 10:42-5 (despising power); Matt 10:38 and 16:24, Mark 8:34, Luke 9:23 (taking up the cross).

795 But ... pearl.] This sentence appeared already in 1519, following the last sentence of the previous paragraph. Cf n793.

796 These parables are all found in Matt 13:3-45, in the sequence given here.

797 Cf *Enchiridion* *CWE* 66 34, where Paul is listed first among those 'who depart as much as possible from the literal sense'; also Ep 980:46-7. For Paul as imitator of Christ see 1 Cor 11:1; and *Ratio* 612 with n644.

Origen's observation is also relevant here: Jesus says to Peter, *ὑπάγε ὀπίσω μου* ['Get behind me'; Matthew 16:23], for Christ wants him to be an imitator of his death. To Satan he says only, *ὑπάγε ὀπίσω* ['Get behind'; Matthew 4:10], no doubt sending him away and not inviting to imitation one whose lamentable perversity he knew.⁹⁰⁵ Since these instances occur everywhere, there is no reason to pursue them; it is enough to have pointed to them.

But to return to allegories.⁹⁰⁶ Special care must be devoted to these, since almost all Divine Scripture, through which the eternal wisdom speaks with us in a stammering tongue, as it were, rests upon allegories. Unless these come to our attention, especially in the books of the Old Testament, the reader will lose a large part of the fruit. If⁹⁰⁷ a passage were taken in a

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⁹⁰⁵ In 1516 in the annotations on both Matt 4:10 (*vade Satana*) and Matt 16:23 (*vade retro Satana*) Erasmus had said that Jesus gave the same command to both Satan and Peter. In 1519 in both annotations he added the allusion to Origen, noting now the significant difference in the words of the command: Satan is told to be gone, Peter is told to follow. Here in the *Ratio* Erasmus misquotes Matt 4:10, which in his text of the New Testament (and in the preferred reading) expresses Jesus' command with a single word *ὑπάγε* 'go.' By adding here the word *ὀπίσω* (*hypage opiso*) the two commands (Matt 4:10 and 16:23) become parallel except for the additional *μου* 'me' in 16:23, thus giving the word 'me' a special emphasis.

⁹⁰⁶ Erasmus has already touched briefly on allegory; cf *Ratio* 632 with n745. With the study of allegory that follows here, compare the extensive discussion in *Ecclesiastes* 3 cwe 68 930–72. By at least 1508, Erasmus was planning a work on 'scriptural and theological allegories'; cf Ep 211:24–50. He refers again in the *De copia* to a 'short work I have in hand on scriptural allegories,' cwe 24 635:12. Three editions of the *De copia* (1512, 1514, 1517) had preceded the *Ratio* of 1518/1519, and Erasmus may have regarded the discussion here as the completion of or an alternative to a preliminary sketch previously made for a study of biblical allegories; cf Betty Knott's suggestion in cwe 24 635:12n; also 'New Testament Scholarship' 21–2 with nn119 and 121.

⁹⁰⁷ If ... absurd.] Added in 1522. Beginning with this addition a large part of this section on allegories (661–78) appeared first in additions made in 1522 and 1523. The insertions in the passage here (extending from the beginning of this paragraph to n941) render the sequence somewhat difficult to follow, but note: a single sentence from 1519 (cf n932) appears in the midst of the additions of 1522 and 1523; otherwise the text of 1519/1520 returns at n938. Thus in 1519/1520 this passage was brief, reading: 'But to return to allegories. Special care ... rests upon allegories. Unless these come to our attention, especially in the books of the Old Testament, the reader will lose a large part of the fruit. Sometimes the sense of the words is destructive unless you apply the remedy of allegory, for example, "Blessed are those who have made themselves eunuchs

straightforward way, the sense of the words would sometimes be manifestly untrue, occasionally even ridiculous and absurd. And⁹⁰⁸ by a salutary plan the divine wisdom has taken precaution lest, if no obstacle appeared in the historical text,⁹⁰⁹ we should suppose there was not any more meaning there. Accordingly, the divine wisdom breaks up the course of the biblical reading with certain rough bogs, chasms, and similar obstacles, mixing in things either that cannot have happened or could not happen, or that, if they happened, they would be absurd. In this way, the mind, barred by such obstacles from understanding the passage in the ordinary manner, might wander through more hidden byways and at length arrive at the place where the riches of a more recondite understanding are spread out. This pattern occurs not only in narratives but also in prophecies and precepts.

And yet we must not remove all the historical sense in the divine books just because, for the reasons mentioned, certain passages are found through which the divine providence wished to compel, as it were, our mental powers to explore the spiritual meaning. Generally, both senses stand together. For I believe that God's precept, 'You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain' [Deuteronomy 25:4] had long ago been observed among the Hebrews also according to the historical sense. And yet Paul writes, 'Does God take care for oxen? Or does he not speak especially for our sake? For this was written for our sake, because one who ploughs should plough in hope, and one who threshes in the hope of receiving' [1 Corinthians 9:9-10].⁹¹⁰

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for the kingdom of heaven," and this prescript of Paul ['Peter' in *Froben* 1519 – by mistake], "For doing this you will heap coals of fire upon his head." It is Augustine's opinion ... a little book.'

908 And ... single example] Added in 1523; nn917 and 919 indicate the conclusion of this 1523 insertion.

909 'Historical text': *historico contextu*. The 'historical text' is a near equivalent to the 'literal text,' as 'historical sense' is to 'literal sense,' but carries a somewhat broader connotation, pointing more suggestively to the biblical text as a historical construction in a context of real historical events; cf *In psalmum* 2 CWE 63 78-9, and the introduction to the volume, xxiii-xxx. In the 1523 insertions here Erasmus consistently speaks of the *sensus historicus* 'historical sense'; but cf *Ratio* n934.

910 Erasmus, citing perhaps from memory, quotes predominantly the Vulgate text, intermingled with his own translation. The Vulgate concluded the sentence with the expression 'of receiving fruit,' from which Erasmus here omits 'fruit,' an expression he regarded as unauthentic, 'added to clarify.' He himself translated, 'One who threshes in hope ought to partake of his hope'; cf the annotation on 1 Cor 9:10 (*et qui triturat*).

But if anyone should look for an example of an incongruous narrative, many are encountered straight off in Genesis itself. For how is it consistent that the first day of the created world, the second, and the third, for which both evening and morning are mentioned, were without sun, moon, stars – the first day, moreover, even without sky?⁹¹¹ Next, how incongruous to understand according to the historical sense that God, like some farmer, planted trees in Paradise, in Eden towards the East,⁹¹² and there he planted a certain tree of life, that is, a real tree that could be seen and touched; that this tree had such power that whoever had eaten of its fruit with his physical teeth would receive life, [and] that he planted also another tree from which, if anyone ate, such a person would understand the distinction between good and evil!⁹¹³ The narratives that follow are almost as feeble: where it is said that God walks in Paradise in the cool afternoon air; that Adam hides under a tree; that Cain withdrew from the face of the Lord; finally, where it is written that God completed some portion of his work on each day and at last on the seventh day rested from his work, as though he was worn out.⁹¹⁴

Inasmuch as the exterior form of this sort of story offends the reader at first blush, it advises him that under this covering there lies hidden some more recondite sense, so that he should ask what an allegorical day is, what is the division of days, what is the rest from work, what the planting, the tree of life, the tree giving knowledge of good and evil, what is the 'afternoon,' what is 'God walking in the cool air,' Adam lying hidden, what is the face of the Lord, what is 'departing from him'?⁹¹⁵ But whoever will examine the books of the Old Testament, which abounds in tropes of this kind, will find many examples like these.

The same thing is somewhat more rare in the New Testament, but, nevertheless, we may even here, perhaps, find narrative that is absurd according to the historical sense. For example, we read that the Lord was led away into

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911 Cf Gen 1:1-13. The allegorization that follows here has a close parallel in *Enchiridion* (1503) CWE 66 67-8.

912 'In Paradise, in Eden towards the East' seems to reflect the Septuagint of Gen 2:8 rather than the Vulgate's *paradisum voluptatis a principio*.

913 Cf Gen 2:8-9 and 15-17, 3:22-3.

914 Cf Gen 3:8 (God walks, Adam hides), Gen 4:16 (Cain), Gen 2:1-2 (seventh day). The language here partially reflects that of the Vulgate (see next note).

915 The reference is to Gen 4:16: 'Cain withdrew from the face of the Lord.' 'Cool afternoon air' seems to reflect the Vulgate of Gen 3:8, *ad auram post meridem*; the Septuagint reads '[walking] in the evening'; cf NRSV, 'They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze.'

a high mountain, from where he looked upon all the kingdoms of the world and their glory.⁹¹⁶ How would anyone be able to show to corporeal eyes from a single mountain – no matter how high – the kingdom of the Persians, Scythians, Indians, Spaniards, Gauls, Britons, and to show in what ways each particular nation does homage to its king? But as I have quite frequently said, this also occurs in the prophets.⁹¹⁷ Here⁹¹⁸ is a case in point – for⁹¹⁹ I want to be satisfied with a single example: Isaiah in the seventh chapter writes about Christ: 'Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Emmanuel' [7:14]. It is clear that the name given to Christ was not Emmanuel but Jesus. From this circumstance, indeed, certain Jews and heretics used to make their case that the Jesus whom we worship was not he whom God had promised through Isaiah.⁹²⁰ In fact, the prophet had in mind not simply the appellation given but its meaning, for God began truly to be with us when Jesus was born, restoring the world through his Son. But what follows is even more absurd: 'For before he knows how to say father and mother, he will take the forces of Damascus and the spoils of Samaria' [Isaiah 8:4] – so reads Tertullian; certainly Jerome, too, applies the passage to Christ.⁹²¹ How is it appropriate for a child to be called a warrior? Will a child with his squalling summon to arms an army and give the signal for war not with a trumpet but with his rattle? Will he attack the enemy not from a horse and chariot but from the neck of his nurse or nanny, and press down on Damascus and Samaria instead of the breasts?⁹²² As a result of this incongruity of expres-

916 Cf Matt 4:8.

917 Cf eg *Ratio* 632–3 and *Enchiridion* CWE 66 34, 68.

918 Here ... evangelical word.] This remaining portion of the paragraph was added in 1522 except for the short insertion in the first sentence; cf next note.

919 for ... single example] Added in 1523; cf previous note.

920 Erasmus might have gathered the information from the writings of Tertullian (*editio princeps* 1521), to whom he presently refers. Tertullian indicates that to support their case Jews and Marcionites argued from the discrepancy in name; cf *Adversus Iudaeos* 9.1–2 and *Adversus Marcionem* 3.12.1–2.

921 Cf Tertullian *Adversus Marcionem* 3.13.1; Jerome *Commentarius in Isaiam prophetam* 3 (on 8:1–4). Erasmus adopts Tertullian's text, in which the historical improbability (the infant will capture Damascus) is patent. The Vulgate text approximates the text in modern translations (Damascus will be captured), where the scenario portrayed is historically quite possible. Tertullian's text appears to be based on a reading of the Septuagint. For Tertullian cf *Ratio* 516 with n121 and 695 with n1077.

922 Erasmus has adopted this and the previous sentence from Tertullian with very little change; cf *Adversus Marcionem* 3.13.2.

sion heretics denied that this prophecy belonged to Christ. But if you apply allegory, it will fit nicely the Gospel story, which relates that the three Magi had come of their own accord to Bethlehem to acknowledge the new king by offering gifts. This was a king who was bringing the whole universe under his control, not by troops or arms but by celestial power and the sword of the evangelical word.⁹²³

Now⁹²⁴ in the case of the commandments in both Testaments we must not, it is true, doubt that certain ones must be observed according to the historical sense, for example: honour your father and your mother, worship one God, do not steal, do not swear falsely, do not kill.⁹²⁵ It is just as true that certain commandments seem incongruous if you look for nothing beyond the outer shell of the words. The Law prescribes that a boy be circumcised on the eighth day, and it was right that parents be punished who did not take care to have their little infants circumcised. But then Scripture says that a boy not circumcised is to be utterly cut off from his people.⁹²⁶ But of what was the boy himself guilty if he had not been circumcised? It is even more incongruous that although the Law enjoins observance of the sabbath on pain of death, it nevertheless uses these words: 'But each of you will be in your houses; no one will be moved from his own place on the day of the sabbath' [Exodus 16:29].⁹²⁷ For how is it possible for one to sit at home all day and not move from his seat? Not unlike these is the prohibition against bearing any burden on the sabbath. This kind of absurdity forced even the Jews themselves to look for some trope in these words, for they had no scruple about pulling an ox or an ass out of a pit into which it had fallen.⁹²⁸

One may find some prescripts of this kind in the literature of the Gospels, too. Here is an example: 'Do not greet anyone on the way' [Luke 10:4]. Are the apostles forbidden to offer a salutation to a person who meets

923 'Sword of the evangelical word,' an expression adapted from Eph 6:17. Cf the annotation on Luke 22:36 (*sed nunc qui habet sacculum*), which Erasmus concludes (all editions) by noting that the 'sword' of Luke 22:36 must be allegorized as the 'divine word,' recalling Heb 4:12, a passage he associates with the sword of Eph 6:17 in his paraphrase on that verse; cf CWE 43 355.

924 Now ... night.] This and the following paragraph, apart from the final sentence, were added in 1523.

925 Cf Exod 20:12, 3, 15, 16, 13.

926 Cf Gen 17:12–14.

927 The Vulgate reads, 'Let no one go out of [*egrediat*] his own place'; similarly the Septuagint. On the sanction of death for breaking the sabbath see Exod 31:14.

928 Cf Jer 17:21–2 (the prohibition); Luke 14:5 (the permitting scruple).

them on their journey? Likewise, the prohibition against having two tunics each or shoes on the feet:⁹²⁹ how can this precept be kept, especially in regions frozen stiff with cold and frost? Again, the prescript that one who has been struck on the right cheek offer the striker the left also – especially when it is common practice for one who strikes with the right hand to strike the left cheek?⁹³⁰ These, too, I think, belong to the same genre: ‘Let your loins be girded and your lamps be burning in your hands’ [Luke 12:35],⁹³¹ and, ‘Give to everyone who asks of you’ [Luke 6:30], for if you insist on a literal interpretation, it will not be right to deny a girl a night. In⁹³² some instances, the sense of the words is even destructive unless you apply the remedy of allegory, for example, ‘Blessed are those who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of God’ [Matthew 19:12].⁹³³

Similar⁹³⁴ to this are the precepts about cutting out the right eye, about cutting off the right hand or foot, about praying always – which in trying to observe according to the literal meaning of the words, certain people have won for themselves a place among the heretics.⁹³⁵ And yet the precept put forth by Christ in Luke is repeated by Paul.⁹³⁶ For in the apostolic Epistles,

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929 Cf Matt 10:10; compare the interpretation Erasmus gives these precepts considered as tropes, *Ratio* 650 with n842.

930 Cf Matt 5:39.

931 Erasmus cites the Vulgate as represented in the 1527 and the Clementine texts, where ‘in your hands’ is added as here; cf Weber 1633 with 35n. It is omitted from Erasmus’ New Testament text, both Greek and Latin, but is included in his paraphrase on the verse.

932 In some instances, even] The reading of 1522 and 1523; in 1519 and 1520, ‘sometimes’; cf *Ratio* n907.

933 The beatitude expressed here (‘blessed’) is without explicit warrant from the New Testament text of either Erasmus or the Vulgate, but Erasmus elsewhere also associates the text with beatitude; cf the paraphrase on Matt 19:12, ‘... the gospel has its eunuchs too, clearly blessed ...’ cwe 45 273; and the paraphrase on 1 Cor 7:7: ‘[Christ] declares blessed those who had castrated themselves for the kingdom of God’ cwe 43 90. Cf *Ratio* 594 n155.

934 Similar ... literal sense] Added in 1523. In this paragraph ‘literal meaning’ renders *sensum verborum* and ‘literal sense’ translates *grammaticum sensum*; cf *Ratio* n909.

935 Cf Matt 5:29–30 (eye, hand); Luke 18:1 (praying always). Erasmus may be referring to the Euchites, known as the Messalians, who taught that concentrated and ceaseless prayer was essential for delivery from the demon that dwelt within each person as a result of Adam’s sin; cf oDCC 574 ‘Euchites’ and 1081 ‘Messalians.’

936 Cf Rom 12:12; 1 Thess 5:17.

who are out of the world as much as kidneys are outside the body of a living being. *What is said about divine worship we divert to ceremonies alone; what is said about the duty of the priest we refer to the prayers alone however said.* Meanwhile,⁹⁹⁹ with this whole explication violence is done to sacred literature, and the structure of an empty building is placed upon rotten foundations.¹⁰⁰⁰

Accordingly, whoever wishes to use the Scriptures rightly *should not think it enough to have picked out four or five little words without considering rather the context from which the words arise.* Frequently the sense of this or that passage depends upon what has preceded. He should weigh carefully by whom the words are said, *to whom, the time, the occasion, the words, the intent, what has preceded, what follows.* For it is from gathering and weighing these things that one grasps the meaning of what is said [103].

In these matters, this rule, too, must be observed, that the sense we elicit from obscure words should conform to that circle of Christian teaching, should conform to the life of Christ, finally, should conform to natural justice.¹⁰⁰¹ Thus¹⁰⁰² Paul, urging the Corinthians that women should pray with their heads veiled, men, on the other hand, with heads uncovered, appeals to nature itself as evidence.¹⁰⁰³

I¹⁰⁰⁴ must here indicate the error of those who take from the sacred books (in which various things are set forth in accordance with the difference in times, circumstances, and persons)¹⁰⁰⁵ only those bits that tend to justify their own inclinations, although no one understands a human law who has not examined carefully each of its principal parts, one by one. Hear the divine word, but hear all of it. You are a bishop; you are pleased that Christ said to Peter,¹⁰⁰⁶ 'I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven' [Matthew 16:19]. But mark the words spoken to him when he dissuades Christ from facing the cross: 'Get behind me, Satan, because you savour not the things that are of God, but that are of men' [Mark 8:33]. Remember what was said to the same Peter: 'Follow me' [John 21:19, 22]. You are the pope; it is gratifying

999 Meanwhile ... foundations.] This sentence was added in 1520.

1000 Cf 1 Cor 3:10-15.

1001 Cf *Ratio* 548 with n297 above: 'Just as his teaching in its entire orb is self-consistent, so it is consistent with his life, consistent even with the judgment of nature itself.'

1002 Thus ... evidence.] Added in 1523

1003 Cf 1 Cor 11:4-15. Cf the *Paraphrase on Matthew* for repeated references to 'natural law,' *CWE* 45 133 n17, 178 n53, 232-3 with n8.

1004 I ... healing.] This paragraph was added in 1520.

1005 For 'times, circumstances, and persons' see *Ratio* 519-27.

1006 Peter] First in 1522; in 1520, 'him'

to be called the vicar of Christ, but meanwhile let the example of Christ, the death of Christ, come to mind. The one who succeeds to the office and title of Christ ought to succeed to his disposition and will. You are a priest; you are flattered by the words spoken to the apostles, 'Those whose sins you forgive, are forgiven' [John 20:23]. But notice what has preceded: 'Receive the Holy Spirit' [John 20:22]; mark what was said to these same apostles, 'Go and teach all nations' [Matthew 28:19]. You are pleased that Paul says presbyters¹⁰⁰⁷ are worthy of a double honour, but add what he adds, 'who rule well' [1 Timothy 5:17]. You put to your advantage the injunction in the books of the Old Testament that tithes be given to the Levites; but add to this the command that tithes be given to those excluded from a share in the land when it was divided, that tithes be given to those who would always attend on sacred things and be free for this alone, that tithes be given to those whose portion was the Lord God.¹⁰⁰⁸ How far from all this are those who now require from the populace more than the tithe. We plume ourselves because Peter said priests are a royal race;¹⁰⁰⁹ but it does not occur to many that these same people must exhibit that of which Christ spoke: 'You are the salt of the earth; you are the light of the world' [Matthew 5:13, 14]. You are flattered because you imagine that Christ's words to Peter, 'Feed my sheep' [John 21:17] were also addressed to you; but remember, meanwhile, that he who said this demanded thrice the promise of love, even an extraordinary love, towards himself – for¹⁰¹⁰ he says, 'Do you love me more than these?' [John 21:15]. You preside over other bishops, but you are commanded to be superior to them also in love, you are commanded by the example of the supreme pastor to

1007 'Presbyters': *presbyteros*, as in *VG* and *ER* 1 Tim 5:17, though just above, *sacerdos* es 'You are a priest.' For *presbyterus* as equivalent to 'priest' see *CWE* 44 169 n25; and for Erasmus' wider use of the word see *CWE* 50 96 n22. In the annotation on 1 Tim 5:17 (*qui bene praesunt presbyteri*) Erasmus observes that here in 1 Timothy *presbyteri* designates 'bishop' not 'age.'

1008 For the injunction that tithes be given to the Levites see Num 18:21-4 and Deut 14:27-9; for the exclusion of the Levites from a portion of the land see Num 26:52-62; for the Levites' sacred duties, Num 3:5-13, 8:14-19, 18:2-6, 21-4; for God as their portion see Num 3:12, 8:16; for the expression see Num 18:20 (where God says to Aaron, a Levite, 'I am your portion and your inheritance') and Ps 73:26, 119:57.

1009 'Royal race': *regale genus*; cf 1 Pet 2:9, which, however, refers to 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood' (*genus electum, regale sacerdotium*; both *VG* and *ER*). On the expression 'We plume ourselves' (*cristas erigimus*) see *Adagia* I viii 69.

1010 for ... more than these?'] Added in 1522

guard the safety of all at the cost of your own life.¹⁰¹¹ You rejoice that your place on earth is next to Christ, but remember that it is your duty also to be next to him in sanctity of life. If we use sacred literature in this way, then, and only then, will it bring us health and healing.

Certain people shamelessly turn the divine Scripture aside to a sense utterly foreign to it, like the man who twisted the words in Habakkuk, 'The tent-curtains of the land of Midian will tremble' [3:7].¹⁰¹² These words were spoken about the tents of the enemy, but he twisted them to refer to Bartholemew, who had been flayed, as the story goes (though the story lacks credibility).¹⁰¹³ Or like the man who,¹⁰¹⁴ with utmost folly, diverted the statement found in the book of Judith, 'Circling round the valley, they came to the gate,' to the argumentation in the four books of Peter Lombard, who wrote the theological 'sentences'.¹⁰¹⁵ And¹⁰¹⁶ what is even more subtle is this: he wants to see in these same words an allusion to the Lombard's name and

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1011 Cf John 10:11–15; also the paraphrase on Acts 2:14: 'The shepherd protects the flock' CWE 50 18.

1012 Erasmus follows the Vulgate, reading *pelles* 'skins (tent-curtains NRSV)' and the verb in the future tense, rather than the past (cf AV, NRSV).

1013 For the various legends of Bartholemew's missionary endeavours and martyrdom, including death by flaying and beheading, see ABD I 614 'Bartholomew.' The flaying of Bartholemew was portrayed in Renaissance art eg by Michelangelo in *The Last Judgment*; and cf the portrayal of Bartholemew with the knife, CWE 40 626 and 655 n37. The example is cited again in *Ecclesiastes* 2 CWE 68 513.

1014 who] First in Schoeffer 1519; previously omitted

1015 Cf Jth 13:10 (VG 13:12). Peter Lombard (c 1100–60) from Lombardy taught in the cathedral school in Paris, becoming bishop of Paris in 1154. He published extensive commentaries on the Psalms and the Pauline Epistles, but his four books of *Sententiae* (so named because they contained the *sententiae* 'opinions' of the Fathers) became a standard text for the systematic study of theology; cf *Paraclesis* n83). For an appreciation of Peter Lombard see the annotation on Matt 1:19 (*nollet eam traducere*). Erasmus speaks of him as 'a good man and for his day a learned man, one not to be despised,' but he is described in a less positive tone as the 'rhapsodist' who stitched together his book from the opinions of others, ASD VI-5 78:328–80:335. He regrets that this collection of opinions, designed to answer all questions, served only to open the door to an unending stream of questions; cf 'New Testament Scholarship' 58. Elsewhere Erasmus finds occasion to commend the Lombard; cf Ep 1334:168–70, where he observes the rhapsodist's 'restraint.' Indeed, at points he makes him a useful ally; cf eg in the controversy with Lee, Erasmus' appeal to Peter Lombard in support of his designation of the angel of the annunciation as a 'groomsman' and of his view of the sacramental nature of marriage, *Responsio ad annotationes Lei* 1 and 2 (Notes 32 and 188) CWE 72 134–5 and 300–1.

1016 And ... in earnest.] Added in 1520

surname! I would not be reporting these things if these same persons had not published their ditties, and if people were not lacking who read such stuff eagerly and in earnest.

There are those who play with the words of Divine Scripture, and, as happens in the centos of the poets, use them, as though in sport, in a sense foreign to them.¹⁰¹⁷ St Bernard sometimes does so – with more grace than gravity, at least in my judgment – for this distinguished man had drunk so deeply from sacred literature that Scripture appeared everywhere.¹⁰¹⁸ Today, if some people want to seem amusing, they pervert the mystic words, turning them into scurrilous jokes, which is not only ignorant but also impious and deserves to be punished. Jerome throws in the face of Origen the charge that he sometimes does violence to the Scriptures, though I think Origen's purpose is to lead us far away from the frequently sterile letter.¹⁰¹⁹ Rather, nearly every one of the ancients sometimes twists the Scriptures whenever

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1017 Tertullian *De praescriptione haereticorum* 39.3–5 witnesses to a custom in antiquity whereby words and clauses were taken from a classical work and placed in a new arrangement to create an entirely new work. A Christian author Proba (c 360) made a cento by taking lines and half lines from Virgil's poetry to create a poem that followed primarily the narratives of Genesis and Exodus, a work that was frequently used in schools in the Middle Ages; cf Daniel Nides *Doctrine and Exegesis in Biblical Latin Poetry* (Leeds 1993) 12–16, 22–5, 78–82.

1018 When Georg Schirn, a Cistercian monk (of whom little is known beyond his reaction to this passage in the *Ratio*; cf CEBR III 224) read these words, his 'blood froze in [his] veins,' and he begged Erasmus, 'master of all learning,' for a letter of explanation; Ep 1142:49, 104–7 (10 September 1520). St Bernard (1090–1153) entered the Cistercian monastery of Cîteaux in 1112, and in 1115 established a new house at Clairvaux, of which he became abbot. Active in ecclesiastical politics, he preached the Second Crusade (1147). His sermons on the Song of Songs, reflecting a mystical theology, became a classic of Christian spirituality. His deep knowledge of Scripture, which enabled abundant allusions, echoes, and citations throughout all his extant writings, was acknowledged by his younger contemporary, John of Salisbury (1115–80): '... he was so saturated in the Holy Scriptures that he could fully expound every subject in the words of the prophets and apostles. For he had made their speech his own, and would hardly converse or preach or write a letter except in the language of Scripture' *Historia pontificalis* 12, in Marjorie Chibnall ed and trans *The Historia Pontificalis of John of Salisbury* repr and corr (Oxford 1986) 26.

1019 Cf Jerome *Commentarius in Ieremiam prophetam* 5 (on 27.3–4 and 9). Though Jerome had originally found in Origen a congenial exegete, he became a severe critic after the accusations against Origen in Palestine in AD 393. For Erasmus' appraisal of Jerome's relation to Origen see his *Vita Hieronymi* and the preface to his edition of the *Opera omnia* II (1524) in CWE 61 33–4, 37, 100–1; cf also CWE 56 248 n15 and 95 n14, and *Apologia contra Latomi dialogum* CWE 71 67 and 74.

they contend with an adversary, even Jerome himself, as he virtually confesses at one point.¹⁰²⁰ In these endeavours, therefore, one must observe very carefully whether any violence is being done to the sacred words – unless someone thinks it is right to do so whenever an enemy has to be taken, or the souls of the weak have to be deterred from vices.

I think the right way is to treat the sacred words appropriately and without violation. If you take care at first to do this as well as you can, later you will do so with ease besides. Although I should like this principle to be maintained everywhere, it is, nevertheless, especially appropriate to maintain it when we are dealing with an opponent of our religion, or when falsehood is being refuted and the truth affirmed, or when the sense of mystic Scripture is being expounded. Otherwise, the effect is that we not only fail to carry the point we are establishing, but we become a laughing stock to our own adversary. And yet in my opinion there is no other respect in which the ancients were more at fault.¹⁰²¹

This is the case, I think, with Ambrose in the sixth chapter of the second book *On the Holy Spirit*.¹⁰²² Against the Arians, he infers from the passage in Paul's Epistle to the Philippians, the third chapter, 'who in spirit serve God' [3:3 DV], that the Holy Spirit is plainly called God; for he connects these two words, *πνεύματα* [spirit] and *θεῶν* [God], though a different sense is expressed by the Greek words. The Greek means rather that we worship God not with ceremonies and corporeal victims but with our spirit – especially since the definite article is not added to 'spirit,' which,¹⁰²³ it would seem,

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¹⁰²⁰ Erasmus seems to have had no hesitation in pointing to Jerome's unscrupulous use of Scripture, particularly in his books against Jovinian and Helvidius, where Jerome himself acknowledges that his interpretations are not always consistent with one another (cf eg *Adversus Iovinianum* 1.13 and *Adversus Helvidium* 20). Erasmus notes this in eg a short addition of 1519 to his annotation on Rom 5:14 ('unto the likeness'); cf CWE 56 165 with nn28 and 30, *Responsio ad annotationes Lei* 3 (Note 25) (1520) CWE 72 404–5, and extensively *Ecclesiastes* 3 (1535) CWE 68 917, 924–9.

¹⁰²¹ In his annotation on Phil 2:6 (*esse se aequalem Deo*) Erasmus had observed in a 1519 addition that 'nowhere do we commit greater violence against the sacred Scriptures than when in controversy with heretics we twist everything to gain a victory' ASD VI-9 290:251–3. Edward Lee, in his review of the second (1519) edition of the *Annotations* objected; in response, Erasmus cited this passage from the *Ratio*; cf *Responsio ad annotationes Lei* 3 (Note 20) CWE 72 393–4.

¹⁰²² Cf Ambrose *De spiritu sancto* 2.5.45–7.

¹⁰²³ which ... Divine Spirit.] Added in 1522

PREFACE TO ERASMUS' TRANSLATION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT PUBLISHED BY CRATANDER AT BASEL IN AUGUST 1520

ERASMUS OF ROTTERDAM TO THE PIOUS READER, GREETING

Everyone in my opinion should take as a personal message to himself what our Lord and Master Jesus Christ says in Matthew's Gospel: 'Come to me all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.'¹ The Saviour of all turns away no class of men: he invites all to be refreshed, for there is no one in this world who is not beset by some affliction. He makes no distinction between man and woman, young and old, slave and free, king and private person, rich and poor, Jew and gentile, priest and layman, monk and non-monk.² 'Whoever you are, whatever your station, if you seek to be refreshed, come to me.' Ambition is a weighty burden, the tyranny of desire is a heavy yoke to bear. One man is tormented by envy, another is racked by anger and the lust for revenge. Love makes one man miserable, hatred makes another more miserable still. Here is a man plagued by dire poverty, there is someone depressed by illness and old age. Tyranny holds one man in its grip, human laws weigh heavily on another. Is there any misery from which our life is free? But Christ, our excellent Lord, says to all, 'Come to me.'

In earlier times men had recourse to philosophers, to Moses, to the Pharisees, to the rabbis, to one place and another. Now 'Come unto me, and I will do what they did not do – I will refresh you.' All men seek rest and quiet. Who would not snatch at such a blessed gift so freely offered by our most merciful Lord who of his own accord calls the whole world to himself? Who would not immediately feel a profound certitude in his mind when he reflected that the one who made this promise can do all things?³ 'Whatever

¹ Matt 11:28: 'I will refresh you' (DV); 'I will give you rest' (AV). Erasmus follows the Vulgate here and reads *reficiam* 'I shall refresh you'; cf his annotation on Matt 11:28, where he argues that *reficiam* and the Greek verb that lies behind it are used in a medical sense 'to restore,' 'revive' (the weary). In 1516 all annotations on 11:26–30 were included in a single paragraph introduced by the cue phrase *et ante te*. Although the others were distinguished in 1522, the note on *reficiam* remained attached to that on 11:26; it is, however, given its own paragraph in ASD VI-5 204.

² Cf Gal 3:28.

³ Matt 19:26

sorrow you bear, however heavy your burden, I will refresh you.' He makes us a magnificent promise, saying not a word about the price – all he says is 'Come.' Why hesitate to come to him? He came to us for our sake.

Someone will say: 'How shall we go to him?' We are creatures who crawl upon the earth: he sits on high in heaven; so we must find our way there if we wish to go to Christ. We cannot go on foot – we can go only with our hearts, or rather we must walk not on our physical feet but on the feet of our hearts. If the things of this world that hold us back from the blessings of heaven are beginning to lose their lustre, you are already starting on the path to Christ. There is no need to cross the seas or travel to unknown regions. The word of God is here before you, on your lips and in your heart.⁴ Take no notice of anyone who says, 'Look, Christ is here in the country' or 'He is here in the city,' for the kingdom of God is within you.⁵ If you wish to go to Christ, go to your own self. There is nothing deeper within you than your soul. It is there you must go with your whole being. When you are attracted by things of the body, you withdraw from yourself, and the further you withdraw, the further you are from Christ. The more you fall under the spell of riches and those 'goods' that even the pagan philosophers call 'external,'⁶ the further you withdraw from yourself. It is not possible, however, to come to Christ unless the Father draws you to him, or rather unless Christ calls you. Let us cry out with the bride, 'Draw me after you';⁷ let us cry out with Peter, 'Bid me come to you.'⁸ Long ago the Pharisees and the Herodians came to Christ,⁹ but they departed in a worse state than when they came. No one really approaches Christ unless he does so with a sincere faith, unless he 'hungers and thirsts after righteousness.'¹⁰

As long as we approach him in the proper manner, there is no danger of our approaching in vain. He is present to his own, he is more truly present than he was long ago when he was physically present to the Jews. In the

⁴ Cf Rom 10:8 with its reference to Deut 30:11–14.

⁵ Cf Luke 17:21, a controversial logion that Erasmus interprets similarly in his paraphrase on the verse; cf CWE 48 112 with n22; also Matt 24:23.

⁶ Greek philosophers, particularly Aristotle and the Stoics, distinguished 'external goods' (such as riches, honour, health, good looks) from the 'highest good.' Cicero discusses the different views of the Peripatetics and Stoics on the importance of 'external goods' in *De finibus* 3.41–50.

⁷ Song of Sol 1:4

⁸ Matt 14:28

⁹ Cf Matt 22:16; Mark 12:13; cf also Mark 3:6.

¹⁰ Matt 5:6

Gospels and apostolic letters he left us the crystal-clear springs of his own mind. You can go to these as often as you please. You can even carry them around with you. We have access to the fountains given us by the Saviour, and what we draw from them is nothing less than our salvation. Why, then, do we neglect them and prefer to drink from the trampled pools of others that are choked with rubble and contain more mud than water – and I say nothing for the moment about those springs of water that some have defiled with poison.¹¹

There is no reason why we should sit on the fence, saying, 'It is the business of the theologians to dip into these fountains and to serve to others what they have drawn from them; our duty is to accept eagerly what is offered whenever we have the good fortune to find a theologian to whom that verse of Solomon's truly applies, "The mouth of a righteous man is a fountain of life."'¹² But since there is a remarkable paucity of such people and most of them seek what is in their own interests, not in Christ's, the safest course is to go to the actual wellsprings on one's own. They are close at hand and plain to see. They call for no riddling sophist or relentless logician or wily philosopher. What they need is a mind elevated in Christ and humble in itself,¹³ that is, a mind that claims nothing for itself and expects everything from Christ. It will be enough if it has learned these simple truths that the teachings of Christ alone are a sufficient rule for piety and that the life of Christ, and of Christ alone, is the only model we need of a righteous life. Whatever blessings God in his goodness has lavished upon us have come to us freely through Christ; so we may claim no praise or glory for ourselves. God exalted him through various afflictions and raised him through the cross to the glory of immortality so that we too may experience here and now a kind of immortality¹⁴ through the innocence of our lives; through acts of charity, doing what good we can to all men, even to the godless; through endurance, cheerfully tolerating, in hopes of a future reward, whatever is inflicted upon us for the sake of Christ; always controlling our actions so that even the wicked are attracted to the way of the gospel, allowing no one a plausible reason to malign us, but imputing all that we do or say or suffer to the glory

11 For the contrasting images of pure spring and muddy pool, found very frequently in Erasmus' hermeneutical comments see *Methodus* 429 with n23.

12 Prov 10:11

13 Cf the final sentence in the annotation on Rom 15:19 ('of wonders in the strength of the Holy Spirit').

14 For the sentiment see the paraphrase on Rom 6:5 CWE 42 37 and the paraphrase on 1 John 3:3 CWE 44 188; in both passages we are said to acquire the immortality of Christ by 'practising' the pattern and virtues of his life.

of Christ. Over such a life ambition will have no control, nor will anger nor envy nor greed nor any of those other evils that plague the life of man. Death will hold no terrors for one who is persuaded that for the godly nothing perishes; indeed it is through the actual loss of life that we gain immortality.

Such is the philosophy that we can draw from these springs. From it we take the name of Christians. If there is no one who does not delight in being called a Christian, then no one should be ignorant of the teachings of his Founder. No one dares to call himself an Augustinian who has not read the Augustinian Rule. No one would claim to be a Benedictine if he were ignorant of the Rule of Benedict. No one would call himself a Franciscan if he has not seen the Rule of Francis. Do you, then, consider yourself a Christian when you have never troubled to get to know the rule of Christ? Francis states, 'Anyone who does not wear such and such a colour and is not girded with a rope is not my disciple,'¹⁵ and they all strictly observe this injunction, which is the work of a human being. Christ proclaims, 'He who does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.'¹⁶ Men have no scruple about disobeying this command, yet no one considers himself any less a Christian. If a Franciscan wore black or went about without a cincture, he would be gripped with terror lest some devil should suddenly carry him off to hell¹⁷ for daring to do something that is not in itself either good or bad but is an offence only because a human being forbade it. Christ, who is much greater than Francis (if indeed any comparison can be made), commanded you not to fight back against a wicked man¹⁸ but to repay evil with good and respond to insults with kind words;¹⁹ yet you do not tremble or shiver or fear the earth will open up before you when you reward good with evil and lash out at a benefactor with false and virulent

15 These can hardly be the precise words of Francis. In Erasmus' time, the Franciscan habit was grey, but in the *Regula Bullata* of Pope Honorius III of 1223 the only requirement stated is that the habit be of 'cheap cloth' and that the friars learn to mend it with sackcloth or other patches. In the dream that Erasmus had of Francis, which he relates in *Allen Ep* 2700: 37–53, the saint is dressed in 'dusky undyed wool ... just as it was when clipped from the sheep.' A similar comparison between the Christian and the monks in their orders is made in *Paraclesis*; cf 418 with n80.

16 Matt 10:38

17 This remark was criticized by Nicolaas Baechem, whose views were reflected in a document that circulated anonymously; cf *Ep* 1469:195–7. For the context see 'New Testament Scholarship' 265 with n1104, and note the reference there to the *Paraclesis*.

18 Cf Matt 5:39.

19 Cf Matt 5:44; 1 Thess 5:15; 1 Pet 3:9–17.

tongue? This rule applies equally to all Christians. By it everyone, whatever his status, will be tried in the judgment hall of God; in that court it will be a question not of fish or meat or the colour of one's vestments, but of things that truly matter. If a Minorite²⁰ wears a colour that shades a little towards black, you denounce him as an apostate, yet you do not consider yourself an apostate although you have forgotten the whole teaching of the gospel and all your baptismal vows, and have become a total slave to Mammon, to the pleasures of this world, and to ambition; and you, who dedicated yourself once and for all to Christ and swore allegiance to him, live at the pleasure of the Adversary, whom you abjured and execrated for all time.²¹

If we have such scrupulous regard for man-made rules, whence this supine neglect of the one thing that ought to be scrupulously observed? This is not a new complaint. Long ago God made the same complaint through the prophet Jeremiah that, while the children of Jonadab always obeyed their father's command, abstaining from wine whose use he had forbidden to his family, at the same time the people of Israel were disregarding the commandments of God.²² Christ made this self-same complaint in the Gospel, crying out against those who transgressed the laws of God on account of regulations imposed by men.²³ Peter and Paul, the first among the apostles, lament this neglect in many passages.²⁴ Now things have reached the point where it is not even permissible to complain. The world is full of preachers, and yet a great part of them preach about human concerns, not divine, for their aim is not the glory of Christ but material gain, a life of pleasure, some rich bishopric or comfortable abbacy. Now they do these things openly and evangelically. They dance attendance on the great but neglect the poor and

20 'Minorite': i.e. a Franciscan friar or Friar Minor. For Mammon see Matt 6:24 and Luke 16:13; NRSV translates the word in both passages by 'wealth' with a footnote.

21 The reference here is to the vow taken at baptism 'to renounce the devil and all his works.' For Erasmus 'the most sacred vow ... is the vow we take to Christ in baptism,' Ep 1196:352-5.

22 The 'children of Jonadab,' also known as Rechabites after Rechab, father of Jonadab, were a conservative sect of the Kenites, a nomadic people who at various times came into contact with the people of Israel (cf 2 Kings 10:15-17) but were not themselves considered Israelites. Jeremiah contrasts the Rechabites' fidelity to their ancestral practices with the apostasy of the men of Judah; Jeremiah 35.

23 Cf eg Matt 15:1-6; Mark 7:5-13; Matt 23:1-12.

24 This would seem to be an inference rather than an allusion to passages that explicitly 'lament' the neglect of divine laws because of human regulations. Peter's words in Acts 15:10 may fit here, likewise Paul's expositions of human helplessness before the demands of the Law, eg Romans 2 and 7.

humble; they despise the latter, while for the former they provide a trickle of bland platitudes instead of the message of salvation. It is not much safer today than it was in the time of Nero to offer the pure waters of Christ to a people who are thirsty and have long grown sick of the fantasies of men. The fault lies with those pseudoapostles who are slaves to their bellies, not servants of Jesus Christ.²⁵

But I prefer to drop these protests, however justified they may be, and urge Christians to bring a pure mind to the pellucid fountains of Christ and to thirst only for that teaching that makes us worthy of our master Christ. He will not fail us if we try. Once we have tasted the waters of this stream, once we have appreciated how sweet our Lord is, the teaching of the sophists will begin to revolt us, and we shall never be able to tear ourselves away from him but shall say with the disciples, 'Lord, to whom shall we go; you have the words of life.'²⁶ I have attempted, by repairing the channels and cleaning the reservoir, to let the stream flow more clearly and to render it more fit for drinking, for what was produced for all alike ought to be accessible to all.

I do not know whether I should repeat the warning I made before since I realize that I am repeatedly singing to the deaf,²⁷ who, like asps, deliberately block their ears, not wanting to hear the voice of the charmer calling them to better things.²⁸ I have translated into Latin what I found in the corrected Greek texts, adopting as far as possible a simple and elegant Latin style. So if anything is at odds with the traditional version, critics should not immediately conclude that I have insolently dismissed it, but should first consult my *Annotations* and then accept what seems best. Show at least this much restraint, not to condemn unseen what has already been approved more than once²⁹ by the supreme pastor of the church, Leo x. Farewell.

25 Cf 2 Cor 11:13; Phil 3:18-19 and 1:1.

26 John 6:68

27 *Adagia* I iv 87

28 'Asps': Cf Ps 58:4-5: 'like the deaf adder [*aspis* vg according to LXX] that stops its ears so that it does not hear the voice of charmers or of the cunning enchanter.' This supposed characteristic of the asp is described in more detail in Isidore *Etymologiae* 12.12.

29 'More than once' seems to be something of an exaggeration, since Leo's formal letter of approval appeared for the first time in 1519. And despite several appeals from Erasmus for a further statement of support, there is no evidence that the pope responded, though Erasmus could legitimately claim that Leo had earlier encouraged and lauded his work, having expressed approval for eg the *Moria* (cf Epp 673:7-9, 739:14-15), for the *Novum Testamentum* (cf Ep 843:369-71, 510-16, and Ep 835 introduction), and more generally for Erasmus' endeavours

PREFACE TO ERASMUS' LATIN
TRANSLATION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT
PUBLISHED BY FROBEN AT BASEL IN JULY

1522

ERASMUS OF ROTTERDAM TO THE PIOUS READER, GREETING

Because of slanders put about by certain people, I must say again, gentle reader, what I have often said in the past, that in preparing this present translation I am not condemning the common version that is now used in the Roman church but attempting to make it more accurate and easier to understand, and that I have faithfully rendered what I found in the Greek manuscripts. Wherever these differ, I have followed the old interpretation given by the orthodox Fathers. Where alternative readings are of equal weight, I have favoured that which agrees with the Latin manuscripts. This seems all I need say by way of explanation for the present. Anyone who wants more should consult the *Apologia* that I prefixed to the full work, and not be tempted into calumny. So let us read the gospel with a burning zeal – and not just read it but live it. It was called by the prophet the 'gospel of peace';¹ we must take care not to let it become the gospel of discord. This is not a different gospel; it is not new. It is one and the same gospel, and since it was given to all people, it is right for all of us to come together in it. So let us urge one another to do this so that we may truly be the children of our Father who is in heaven and be acknowledged as his true disciples by our Lord Jesus, who is blessed for evermore. Amen.

(cf Ep 389:12–17). In May 1515 Erasmus wrote to Leo to ask permission to dedicate to him his edition of Jerome. Leo accepted the dedication in a letter dated 10 July. But Erasmus later decided to dedicate the Jerome to Archbishop Warham and the New Testament to Leo (cf 'New Testament Scholarship' 31–2). He was inclined, however, to regard the pope's positive response to the edition of Jerome as also embracing the New Testament, and when he included Leo's letter in his *Epistolae aliquot illustrium virorum ad Erasmum* (Louvain: Dirk Martens 1516), he quietly altered Leo's 'We shall look forward ... to the volumes of St Jerome edited by you' to '... the volumes of St Jerome and of the New Testament ...'! Cf Ep 338:26–8 with 27n. For this edition of Erasmus' letters, the second to be published, see CWE 3 348 and Ep 338 introduction.

¹ 'Gospel of peace': Cf Nah 1:15 and Isa 52:7, reflected in, respectively, Eph 6:15 and Rom 10:15 DV, AV, VG, and ER (but not in RSV and NRSV).

[TITLE PAGE OF THE
NOVUM INSTRUMENTUM 1516]

The complete New Testament,¹ carefully revised and corrected by Erasmus of Rotterdam not only in the light of the original Greek but also in accordance with the evidence of many manuscripts in both languages,² manuscripts of great antiquity and correctness, and taking account also of citations, corrections, and interpretations in the most respected authorities, especially Origen, Chrysostom, Cyril, Vulgarius,³ Jerome, Cyprian, Ambrose, Hilary, and Augustine; also accompanied by annotations to explain to the reader what changes have been made and the reason for making them. Let everyone who loves the true theology read and study these before passing judgment. Do not be upset as soon as you stumble upon a change,⁴ but consider if it is a change for the better.

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- 1 'New Testament': *Novum instrumentum*, the title Erasmus gave to the first edition of his New Testament, although he returned to the more familiar *Novum Testamentum* for all subsequent editions. Strictly, however, *Novum instrumentum* is not the title of the work but refers specifically to the Vulgate. It is the Vulgate that is being 'revised and corrected' (cf Translator's Note 740 above). *Instrumentum* and *Testamentum* are not exact synonyms, but they share a number of meanings in common: 'testimony,' 'evidence,' 'record,' 'document' (especially a legal document). Both words are also commonly used in ecclesiastical Latin to refer to the Old or the New Testament. *Instrumentum* implies a written document, *testamentum* means a covenant whether written or not; see de Jonge *Novum Testamentum* 396 n5. For *instrumentum* see eg Tertullian *Apologeticus* 47.9; Jerome Epp 54.17 and 55.1. For criticism of the term *instrumentum* cf *Methodus* n28 and *Ratio* n288.
- 2 The claim for the number and antiquity of the manuscripts available for the first edition seems something of an exaggeration, though perhaps a pardonable exaggeration. For Erasmus' Greek and Latin exemplars see Ep 384 introduction; Rummel *Erasmus' Annotations* 35–8; and for the studies of Andrew Brown in ASD see 'New Testament Scholarship' 28 and 43 with nn146 and 192.
- 3 Vulgarius is a mistake for Theophylact, archbishop of Ochrida, seat of the Bulgarian patriarchate. Erasmus corrected the error on the title page of the second edition of 1519, but it was not generally corrected in the *Annotations* until the third edition of 1522. Cf 'New Testament Scholarship' 106 with n461 and 132 with n554.
- 4 Literally, 'Do not take immediate offence [*offendere*], if you come upon [*offenderis*] something that has been changed,' but the pun on the two meanings of *offendere* cannot be brought out in translation.

NOVVM IN

strumentū omne, diligenter ab ERASMO ROTERODAMO
recognitum & emendatum, nō solum ad græcam ueritatem, ue-
rumetiam ad multorum utriusq; linguæ codicum, eorumq; ue-
terum simul & emendatorum fidem, postremo ad pro-
batissimorum autorum citationem, emendationem
& interpretationem, præcipue, Origenis, Chry-
sostomi, Cyrilli, Vulgarij, Hieronymi, Cy-
priani, Ambrosij, Hilarij, Augusti-
ni, una cū Annotationibus, quæ
lectorem doceant, quid qua-
ratione mutatum sit.

Quisquis igitur
amas ue-

ram

Theolo-

giam, lege, cogno-

sce, ac deinde iudica.

Nec statim offendere, si

quid mutatum, offenderis, sed

expende, num in melius mutatum sit.

APVD INCLYTAM
GERMANIAE BASILAEAM.



CVM PRIVILEGIO
MAXIMILIANI CAESARIS AVGVSTI,
NE QVIS ALIVS IN SACRA ROMA-
NI IMPERII DITIONE, INTRA QVATV-
OR ANNOS EXCV DAT, AVT ALIBI
EXCVSVM IMPORTET.

At the celebrated city of Basel in Germany⁵

[Printer's device]⁶

With a privilege⁷

from the august emperor Maximilian, for-
bidding anyone within the sacred domain
of the Roman empire for a period of four
years to print it or, if it is printed elsewhere,
to import it.

- 5 Basel is often referred to in publications from the Froben Press as a city in Germany. Such an identification would have been challenged by Swiss patriots like Henricus Glareanus and possibly Bonifacius Amerbach; cf Allen Ep 2846:158–62.
- 6 At this point the famous printer's mark of the Froben Press is inserted (see illustration, 750 below): it is composed of the caduceus, an upright staff entwined with two serpents and held by two hands that emerge from clouds (a sign of divine inspiration); a heraldic dove is perched on top of the staff. The motif of the serpent and the dove comes from Matt 10:16. For its significance see G. Marc'hadour 'Symbolisme de la colombe et du serpent' *Moreana* 1 (1963) 47–63; *Adagia* II i 1 CWE 31 15.
- 7 Privileges, given by the pope, the emperor, or kings, were a way of protecting publishers from the pirating of their work by other printers. Here the privilege is for four years; the Froben edition of Jerome, published in the same year, received a privilege for five years from Emperor Maximilian and Pope Leo x (Ep 802:11n). A privilege did not always assure copyright to the publisher, although when breached, it was possible to sue. Nor were privileges always easy to obtain. Froben and his friends tried many times to secure a French privilege from Francis I for the monumental edition of Augustine, apparently without success; cf Ep 2291:22–6. On privileges given to printers in the Renaissance see Lucien Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin *L'apparition du livre* (Paris 1958) 327–75, esp 365–70.

Letter of Johann Froben, 1516

This letter was printed immediately following the title page and before the prefatory letter to Leo x in the first edition of the New Testament in 1516 (that is, it was printed on the verso of the title page). It was not repeated in later editions, though there is another and different letter from Froben in the second edition of 1519 (see 777–9 below). There is no letter of Froben's in 1522 except for a brief sentence at the end of the volume introducing a list of errata. A further letter from Froben forms the title page of the edition of 1527. By the date of the final edition of 1535, Froben was dead.

JOHANN FROBEN TO THE PIOUS READER, GREETING

It has always been my ambition, gentle reader, that good authors should issue from our press, especially authors who will inspire the reader to virtuous and pious conduct, and this, as Christ is my witness, is the recompense I seek no less than financial gain. But although in everything I do I try to send out into the world texts that are as accurate as I can make them, yet I have never devoted as much care to any volume as to this. I do not know what profit it will bring me, but I am confident that, with the help of Christ our Lord and master, it will prove of the greatest value to all Christians. So I have spared neither effort nor expense. Indeed, I have used entreaties and rewards to secure several correctors of more than ordinary learning, foremost among whom is Johannes Oecolampadius of Weinsberg, who, besides being commended by his integrity and piety, is an outstanding theologian with an excellent command of the three languages; and Erasmus himself has also supervised this aspect of the work. Yet all these men have been drawn to undertake such a labour more by the religious value of the work than by any thought of gain. Perhaps there are printers who will wish to pirate this edition, for today that saying of Hesiod's is all too true that 'beggar is jealous of beggar and workman of workman.'¹ But I shall accept this with a good grace if only they will surpass, or at least equal, me in fidelity to the text. There are those, however, who do not care how accurate or corrupt are the books they publish as long as they do so at a profit. So remember that this is a matter of great concern to the reader: a man who buys a book that is brimful of errors has got himself a headache, not a book. I warn these piratical

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¹ Hesiod *Works and Days* 25–6 (misquoted). Hesiod wrote: 'Potter bears a grudge against potter and workman against workman, / and beggar is jealous of beggar and singer of singer.' See *Adagia* 1 ii 25.

publishers that if they are rash enough to attempt this while the author is still alive and is kind enough to remain my devoted friend, they may suffer the same fate as befell some publishers over the earlier edition of the *Chiliads*.² Farewell, reader, and enjoy this work; and in return grant me this favour, that our enterprise, which is both pious and useful to all men, may not turn out unhappily for me.

Basel, 24 February 1516

Preface to the New Testament, 1516

This letter to Leo x forms the preface to the *Novum instrumentum* of 1516. It was reprinted, substantially unaltered, in each of the succeeding editions. Except for the substitution of *sermo* for *verbum* in 1519 and thereafter (see 769 n10 below), all other changes involve small points of style or usage (eg *praestas* for *exhibes* in Allen Ep 384:28) that do not materially affect the sense. The more important changes are listed in the notes.

The letter begins with the customary flattering address that tradition demanded in a dedicatory letter. After this, in a brief paragraph, Erasmus gives an admirably succinct account of the nature and purpose of the book. Using the imagery of the building of the temple in Ezra, he suggests to Leo that the church can most effectively be rebuilt on the basis of a renewed study of the Gospels and the Epistles. It was this noble aim, he explains, that inspired him to provide a purer text, founded on the evidence of the oldest Greek and Latin manuscripts and checked against citations in the church Fathers; the purpose of the annotations is simply to justify the textual changes and clarify obscurities in the text. These are points Erasmus made on the title page and will reinforce in the *Apologia* and frequently elsewhere.

After this summary, almost half of the letter is devoted to a somewhat embarrassed encomium of Archbishop Warham. Warham was one of the most influential and generous of Erasmus' friends and might perhaps have expected the *Novum instrumentum* to be dedicated to him. At one time Erasmus probably intended to do so, but eventually he decided to dedicate his edition

² This may be a reference to Matthias Schürer's unauthorized edition of the *Adagia*, which he published in 1509, just a short time before a greatly enlarged edition was issued by the Aldine Press. Clearly Froben is anticipating (correctly) that further editions of the New Testament will continue to appear as long as Erasmus lives. For Erasmus' early promise of a second edition see 'New Testament Scholarship' 103 with n430.

of Jerome to Warham and the New Testament to Leo, whose name, he bluntly states, will guarantee the work a wider acceptance. However, Erasmus manages to associate Warham with the dedication in a graceful and diplomatic gesture that won the admiration of Budé (see Ep 403:145-52). Dedications were always a matter of concern for Erasmus; we know from his correspondence that he often discussed the pros and cons of a particular dedication with friends and sought their advice (see, for example, Epp 333:96-106, 334:143-70, 1739:8-19, and 1769:22-6).

This letter (dated 1 February 1516) is printed in Allen and in CWE as Ep 384. Both Allen and CWE offer introductions on the development of Erasmus' New Testament. The reader should know, however, that recent research has made Allen's belief in an early version of Erasmus' Latin translation, done in England in 1505-6, no longer tenable (see A.J. Brown 'The date of Erasmus' Latin translation of the New Testament' *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society* 8 (1984) 351-80; and H.J. de Jonge 'Wann ist Erasmus' Übersetzung des neuen Testaments entstanden?' in *Erasmus of Rotterdam* ed J. Sperna Wieland and W.Th.M. Frijhoff (Leiden 1988) 151-7).

The translation that follows is that of Sir Roger Mynors in CWE 3 221-4 with a few minor adjustments.

TO LEO THE TENTH, PONTIFF SUPREME IN EVERY WAY,
FROM ERASMUS OF ROTTERDAM, LEAST OF THEOLOGAINS, GREETING
Many and great were the distinctions, most holy father, which made you universally renowned and respected before you ascended the pontifical throne as his Holiness Pope Leo the Tenth: on the one hand, the uncounted glories of the house of the Medici,¹ no less celebrated for the legacy of its eminent scholars than for the glorious line of your ancestors; on the other, the innumerable gifts of body and mind of which some were lavished on you by the bounty of heaven and some achieved under heaven's encouragement by your own efforts. Yet nothing distinguished you more truly or more amply than the fact that you brought to an office, which is the greatest that can fall to a mortal among mortal men, not only an equally great integrity of character – a life far, far removed from everything discreditable – but you² have also brought to the sublime office of the papacy a reputation unsullied by any taint of evil gossip. Hard enough anywhere, this is particularly hard to

¹ Leo was the second son of Lorenzo de' Medici, 'Lorenzo the Magnificent.'

² you ... papacy] Added in 1535, presumably to emphasize the balance between the two clauses

achieve in Rome; for in that city the liberty (not to call it licence) of speech is such that integrity itself is not safe from slander, and even those men who are entirely free from faults are not free from aspersions. We can truly say that to have deserved the papal dignity brought Leo far more true glory than to have received it.

And now, in the exercise of this splendid and most holy office, you in turn enhance the eminence conferred upon you by many glorious acts and many outstanding virtues; but nothing more effectively commends you alike to heaven and to mortal men than the great zeal and wisdom with which you take as your particular aim the daily advancement of the Christian life, which through the fault of the times and especially the wars has hitherto been undermined and shown signs of collapse.³ Like all else in human affairs, it naturally sinks back by degrees into something worse and seems to degenerate, unless we fight against this with all our might.⁴ But to restore great things is sometimes a harder but a nobler task than to have introduced them. And so, since you appear to us as a second Esdras,⁵ doing all you can to pacify the storms of war⁶ and vigorously pursuing your chosen purpose to rebuild religion, it is right that Christians of all lands and all peoples should support, each of them to the best of his power, one who follows this most noble and most profitable aim. Already I see men of outstanding gifts, like great and wealthy kings, sending our Solomon marble, ivory, gold, and precious

³ Cf *Queralia pacis* (1517) CWE 27 305 n98, where the wars of the 'past ten years' are explained as the wars fought against Venice, then against France, and the efforts of Julius II to recover the papal states.

⁴ The sentiment and to some extent the wording reflect the pessimistic lines in Virgil *Georgics* 1.197-200.

⁵ Esdras (or Ezra) was the priest and scribe involved in the rebuilding of the temple after the Babylonian exile; cf Ezra 2-7. In this whole passage there is an unmistakable reference to the contemporary rebuilding of St Peter's. But Erasmus is more concerned with the rebuilding of the church. The imagery seems in part to derive from Ezra 2:68-9 on providing for the rebuilding of the temple: 'And some of the chief of the fathers ... offered freely for the house of God to set it up in his place. They gave after their ability unto the treasure of the work threescore and one thousand drams of gold ...' (AV).

⁶ After the military campaigns of Pope Julius II, Leo X instituted a policy of peace. Shortly after his accession, the Holy See was reconciled with Louis XII of France, an event which won Erasmus' enthusiastic support; cf Ep 335:113-36.

stones for the building of the temple.⁷ We petty chieftains, and indeed we ordinary mortals, rather than contribute nothing, gladly bring what we can, timber perhaps or at any rate goatskins;⁸ what I am offering is a small thing, to be sure, if measured by what I have accomplished, but (unless I am all astray) likely to be of not a little use, though not much beauty, in the temple of Christ, especially if it win the approval of him whose yea or nay alone governs the whole sum of human things.

One thing I found crystal clear: our chiefest hope for the restoration and rebuilding of the Christian religion, our sheet anchor as they call it,⁹ is that all those who profess the Christian philosophy the whole world over should above all absorb the principles laid down by their Founder from the writings of the evangelists and the apostles, in which that heavenly Word,¹⁰ which once came down to us from the heart of the Father, still lives and breathes for us, and acts and speaks with more immediate efficacy, in my opinion, than in any other way. Besides which, I perceived that the teaching that is our salvation was to be had in a much purer and more lively form if

⁷ Erasmus in a letter to Leo of May 1515 had already found a resemblance between the pope and 'Solomon the peacemaker' (Ep 335:132). Here the reference is to Solomon as the builder of the first temple; it seems from 1 Kings 6-10, however, that the gifts of great and wealthy kings for the building of the temple were in reality levies imposed on client rulers by Solomon.

⁸ A gift of timber (*materiae*) would obviously be useful in the building of a temple, but what about 'goatskins'? This may simply be a variant of the adage *De lana caprina* 'About goat's wool,' symbolizing an object of small value; cf *Adagia* I iii 53. But we may see a clue to a more pointed meaning in Exodus 26, describing the making of the tabernacle; see Exod 26:7 for the reference to 'goats' hair' used for the 'curtains' of the tabernacle; and for the Latin see 1 Sam 19:13 *pellem pilosam caprarum*. In fact, Erasmus appears to have followed Jerome, who had developed the metaphor in the *Prologus* to the book of Kings to express an evaluation of his biblical enterprise by using the image of goatskins: *pelles et caprarum pilos* (Weber 365); cf 'New Testament Scholarship' 42 with n189.

⁹ *Adagia* I i 24

¹⁰ Word] *verbum* in the first edition, as in VG. But when this letter was reproduced in subsequent editions of Erasmus' New Testament, *verbum* was altered to *sermo* to agree with the change introduced in 1519 into the translation of John 1:1. This departure from the reading of the Vulgate was bitterly opposed, and Erasmus felt called upon to defend himself in his *Apologia de 'In principio erat sermo'* CWE 73 3-40. Cf C.A.L. Jarrott 'Erasmus' *In principio erat sermo*: A Controversial Translation' *Studies in Philology* 61/1 (1964) 35-40; and M. O'Rourke Boyle *Erasmus on Language and Method in Theology* Erasmus Studies 2 (Toronto 1977) 3-31. Cf 'New Testament Scholarship' 207 with n804 and the reference there to n749.

sought at the fountainhead and drawn from the actual sources than from pools and runnels. And so I have revised the whole New Testament (as they call it) against the standard of the Greek original, not unadvisedly or with little effort, but calling in the assistance of a number of manuscripts in both languages – and not just any sort of manuscript, but those that are both very old and very correct.¹¹ And well knowing that sacred subjects also demand scrupulous treatment, I was not content with that degree of care but passed rapidly over all the works of the classical theologians, and ran to earth from their quotations or their comments what each of them had found or altered in his text. I have added annotations of my own, in order in the first place to show the reader what changes I have made, and why; second, to disentangle and explain anything that may be complicated, ambiguous, or obscure; and lastly, as a protection, that it might be less easy in the future to corrupt what I have restored at the cost of scarcely credible exertions.

And yet, to speak frankly, this whole undertaking might be thought too lowly to be offered to one than whom the world can show nothing greater, were it not fitting that whatever contributes to the restoration of religion should be consecrated to the supreme head of our religion who is its champion. Nor am I afraid that you may reject this gift of mine, such as it is, for it is not in your high office alone that you represent him whose custom it is to value gifts by the intentions of the giver, who preferred the poor widow's two mites to the rich and splendid offerings of the wealthy.¹² Do we not see every day, hung up in honour of the saints among the offerings of kings gleaming with gold and jewels, garlands of meadow flowers or garden greenery offered by humble folk who are poor in this world's goods but rich in piety?

Besides, whatever be the produce great or small, serious or trivial, of this small holding of my mind, it can be claimed entire with perfect right, even if I do not so dedicate it, by the supreme patron and champion of the virtues and of literature among his own people, William Warham,¹³ archbishop of Canterbury, true primate of all England in merit as well as in title and *legatus natus*,¹⁴ as they call it, of your Holiness; to him I owe all that I am

11 For the manuscripts used by Erasmus see 'Title Page of the *Novum instrumentum* 1516' 743 n2.

12 Cf Mark 12:42; Luke 21:1-4.

13 Warham] Added in 1522

14 The *legatus natus* was one of three kinds of papal legate (the other two were known as 'legates a latere' and 'nuncios'). The *legatus natus* was a legate ex officio by virtue of holding a certain office. Until the Reformation, the archbishop of Canterbury was *legatus natus*.

and not merely the entire produce of my labours. For, to say nothing for the moment about what he has meant to me in public and in private, he does for his native England what Leo does for the whole world and what the house of the Medici has so long been doing for Italy (making it, even if for no other reason, the most fortunate country of them all). For his fellow Englishmen William is like a favourable star, a gift given by fate itself, so that under his leadership all that is good may germinate afresh and grow. It is just as if several men were united in one body and more than one divine spirit dwelt in that single heart, for, in a wonderful way, he is archbishop to the church, legate to the Roman see, privy councillor to the court, chancellor to the courts of justice,¹⁵ and Maecenas¹⁶ to the humanities. It is his doing more than any man's that an island, long renowned for its men, its arms, and its riches, now shows such a high standard also in laws, religion, and public morality, and even in gifted minds cultivated in every branch of letters that it can contend on equal terms with any other region of the world.

But to secure for this labour of mine a wider sphere of usefulness, I have decided to borrow your name, as one that all men venerate, to bait the hook, as it were, for the general advantage of the world, especially as this course is suggested by the nature of the case; for it was exquisitely appropriate that this Christian philosophy should be channelled to every mortal under the auspices of him who holds the citadel of the Christian religion, and that the heavenly teaching should set out on its mission to the human race through him, through whom it was Christ's will that we should receive all that raises man from earth to heaven. Although, for that matter, why should not this book go forth into men's hands supported by a double commendation, that is, with even better prospect of success, by being dedicated in common to the whole world's two greatest men, just as we see altars and churches gain in sanctity and grandeur when they are dedicated to more than one saint? It does not matter how novel this may seem, provided that it is for the public good. And Leo is so modest, so approachable, that this quality contributes to his greatness no less than that eminence in which he far surpasses all other great men. Moreover, the archbishop is so outstanding in every kind of merit

15 Warham was councillor both to Henry VII and to Henry VIII; he was lord chancellor from 1504 to 1515.

16 Maecenas, the name of the famous patron of Virgil and Horace, has become a synonym for a 'patron of the arts and of learning.' Erasmus included an extravagant laudation of Warham in the 1516 annotation on 1 Thess 2:7 (*sed facti sumus parvuli*); cf 'New Testament Scholarship' 76 with n309.

that, if Leo with his all-round supremacy is to have a colleague, one could not find a more suitable one.

And one last word: if it is proper before so great a prince to show a touch of Thraso¹⁷ in the comedy, this work of mine may look at first sight as humble as you please, but I am confident that the attentive reader will find much more within than my work displays on the surface.

Your Highness, however, must be continually attentive to the welfare of the whole world, and if I take up more of your time by writing at greater length, I shall do the public a disservice; so I must from this point forward do business with the common reader. First let me say a prayer: may he whose providence gave us our tenth Leo, that the world might become a better place, be pleased to grant him a long life, crowned with success.

Basel, 1 February in the year of our salvation 1516

Letter of Pope Leo x to Erasmus, 1519

After the publication of the first edition of his New Testament and its dedication to Leo x, Erasmus tried through his friends to obtain some formal expression of papal approval for his work. This letter (Ep 864) was the result (for Erasmus' efforts to obtain the papal letter see 'New Testament Scholarship' 113-14 with n492). Erasmus attached great importance to it, and it was printed prominently in the four succeeding editions of the work from the Froben Press, beginning in 1519. The translation is by Sir Roger Mynors.

TO OUR BELOVED SON ERASMUS OF ROTTERDAM,
DOCTOR OF DIVINITY, FROM POPE LEO X

Our beloved son, greeting and apostolic benediction. We derived great pleasure from the studies on the New Testament that you published some time ago, not so much because they were dedicated to us as for the new and exceptional learning by which they were distinguished and which earned them a chorus of praise from the world of scholars. The news that you had lately revised them, and enriched and clarified them by the addition of numerous annotations, gave us no little satisfaction; for we inferred from the first edition, which used to seem a most finished performance, what this new one would be and how much it would benefit all who have at heart the progress of theology and of our orthodox faith. Go forward then in this same spirit:

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¹⁷ Thraso, a character in Terence's *Eunuchus*, stands as the type of the boastful man.