

The Date and Purpose of Erasmus's *Castigatio Novi Testamenti*: A Note on the Origins of the *Novum Instrumentum**

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Two long-established opinions about Erasmus's edition of the New Testament have recently been revised.¹ In the first place, it has long been thought that Erasmus finished his Latin version of the text in 1506/9. But in 1984 A. J. Brown proved beyond doubt that this dating was not supported by the manuscript evidence from which it derived. According to Brown, Erasmus did not decide to publish a new translation until September 1514 and then carried out the work in less than a year.² In the second place, since the eighteenth century scholars have believed that Erasmus's editions of the New Testament were primarily text editions of the Greek. But again in 1984 decisive arguments were produced to show that both Erasmus and his contemporaries saw his editions above all as presentations of a new translation into Latin. He added the Greek text in order to enable the reader to control the translation—that is, as supporting evidence.³

Many questions remain open. One vital one is: does Brown's redating of the manuscript evidence really force us to conclude that Erasmus began work so late as 1514 or even 1515? A closer investigation of this problem will make our understanding of Erasmus's life and character more precise. But it will also make a contribution to what Silvia Rizzo has called 'Il lessico filologico degli umanisti'. For the terms Erasmus uses to describe his editorial work, when analysed and set into context, reveal the answer that we seek.

The first edition of Erasmus's Latin version of the New Testament was published at Basel in 1516. The new translation was one of the three main

* Abbreviations used in this article

ASD Desiderius Erasmus Roterodamus, *Opera omnia* (Amsterdam, 1969–)

Ep *Opus epistolarum Des. Erasmi Roterodami*, edited by P. S. Allen, H. M. Allen and H. W. Garrod, 12 vols (Oxford, 1906–58)

Holborn Desiderius Erasmus Roterodamus, *Ausgewählte Werke*, edited by H. and A. Holborn (Munich, 1933)

LB Desiderius Erasmus Roterodamus, *Opera omnia*, edited by J. Leclerc, 10 vols (Leiden, 1703–6)

¹ The more important older treatments of the *Novum Instrumentum* include S. P. Tregelles, *An Account of the Printed Text of the Greek New Testament* (London, 1854), A. Bludau, *Die beiden ersten Erasmus-Ausgaben des Neuen Testaments und ihre Gegner* (Freiburg i. Br., 1902), W. Schwarz, *Principles and Problems of Biblical Translation* (Cambridge, 1955), B. Hall, 'Erasmus: Biblical Scholar and Reformer', in *Erasmus*, edited by T. A. Dorey (London, 1970), pp. 81–113, H. Holeczek, *Humanistische Bibelphilologie als Reformproblem bei Erasmus von Rotterdam. Thomas More und William Tyndale* (Leiden, 1975). Recent surveys include J. H. Bentley, *Humanists and Holy Writ* (Princeton, 1983), E. Rummel, *Erasmus' Annotations on the New Testament* (Toronto, 1986), M. Screech's 'Introduction' to *Erasmus' Annotations on the New Testament: The Gospels*, edited by A. Reeve (London, 1986), and H. Holeczek's 'Einleitung' to Erasmus von Rotterdam, *Novum Instrumentum* (Basel, 1516, reprinted Stuttgart etc., 1986), the latter two are less useful than Bentley and Rummel as analyses, but they accompany valuable reprints of inaccessible texts.

² A. J. Brown, 'The Date of Erasmus' Latin Translation of the New Testament', *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society*, 8 (1984), pp. 351–80, see esp. p. 374.

³ H. J. de Jonge, 'Novum Testamentum a nobis versum', *Journal of Theological Studies*, 35 (1984), pp. 394–413, and 'The Character of Erasmus' Translation of the New Testament', *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 14 (1984), pp. 81–7. The former of my articles is curiously misunderstood as an apology for Erasmus by S. Timpanaro, *La genesi del metodo del Lachmann*, corrected reprint of the second edition (Padua, 1985), p. 152.

components of his *Novum Instrumentum*, which also contained an edition of the Greek text facing the Latin column by column and Erasmus's *Annotations*. Actually the Latin version was not an entirely fresh translation from the Greek, but a thorough-going revision of the Latin Vulgate, aiming at greater clarity, a more classical Latin style and closer agreement with the Greek text. The ambiguous character of the Latin version, standing half way between an edition of the Vulgate and a fresh translation, is reflected in the equally ambiguous terminology which Erasmus used for describing the end product. Sometimes he calls it his *castigatio*⁴ or *emendatio*⁵ or *correctio*⁶ of the New Testament, that is, his 'revision' or 'correction' or 'amended edition' (viz., of the traditional, current translation, the Vulgate); sometimes he speaks of the *Novum Testamentum a nobis versum*⁷ ('our translation of the New Testament') or simply of his *nova versio*,⁸ his 'fresh translation'; and sometimes he uses a phrase in which both ideas are conflated, for instance, *mea vel correctio vel interpretatio*, 'my corrected edition or translation'.⁹ But however much Erasmus's designations of his Latin text waver between the notions of a revision and a fresh translation, he certainly regarded his Latin version as a new rendering of the original text, as a translation on its own and as something new. Our problem is merely: when did the project take this complex shape in Erasmus's mind?

After the *Novum Instrumentum* appeared, in March 1516, Erasmus repeatedly claimed that he had originally planned to publish the Vulgate. The decision to revise the Vulgate and to publish this revised translation would thus not have been taken until Johann Froben had already prepared to print the *Novum Instrumentum*.¹⁰ This would imply that the plan to make and publish a new translation did not take shape until the slow process of printing the *Novum Instrumentum* started in the second half of August 1515.¹¹

In fact, from June 1516 onwards Erasmus claimed more or less consistently that the plan to alter the text of the Vulgate had originated when the printing of the *Novum Instrumentum* was about to begin or had already begun. The moment at which the plan to revise the text of the Vulgate and to change it to a new version arose is referred to by him in such phrases as 'when the work [the *Novum Instrumentum*] was already due to be published',¹² and 'when Froben had already made preparations for printing'.¹³ Then again he stated: 'The plan to

⁴ *Apologia*, Holborn, p 168, l 3 'nostra castigatone', see Appendix below, no 8

⁵ *Apologia*, Holborn, p 171, l 13 'nostra emendatione', *Ep* 373, II, p 167, l 36 'nostram emendationem'

⁶ *Ep* 337 (May 1515, to Martin Dorp), II, p 867, l 113 'nostra correctio', see Appendix below, no 6

⁷ *Ep* I, I, p 41, l 4, cf *Ep* 305, II, p 23, l 222 'Novum Testamentum a me versum'

⁸ *Responsio ad iuvenem gerontodidasalum*, *LB*, IX, col 987A, l 1 This *apologia* was published in 1529

⁹ *Ep* 421 (June 1516, to Guillaume Budé), II, p 253, ll 46-7

¹⁰ *Ibid*, *Responsio ad Annotationes Edvardi Lei* (1520), *LB* IX, col 169B, *Ep* I (1523, to Johann Botzheim), I, p 14, ll 8-12, *Ep* 1581 (1525, to Noel Béda), VI, p 91, ll 135-9, *Adversus Petri Sutoris debacchationes Apologia* (1525), *LB*, IX, col 751D, *Responsio ad iuvenem gerontodidasalum* (Frans Titelmans) (1529), *LB*, IX, cols 986F-87A, *Ep* 2758 (1533), X, p 145, ll 12-14 The passages have been collected by Brown, 'The Date' (n 2 above), pp 372-4

¹¹ Holeczek, 'Einleitung' (n 1 above), p xvii

¹² *Ep* 421, II, p 253, ll 46-7 My translations of this quotation and of the quotations referred to in nn 13-16, 18-19 and 21-6 below are borrowed from Brown, 'The Date' (n 2 above), pp 372-4

¹³ *Ep* I, I, p 14, ll 8-12

change the Vulgate translation arose during the business itself [of publishing the work]',¹⁴ or 'when the edition of the *Annotations* was already beginning to be printed'.¹⁵ Since the printing of the *Novum Instrumentum* did not start until the second half of August 1515, the plan to revise the text of the Vulgate, according to these accounts, would not have arisen before the summer of 1515, perhaps in the early summer of that year.

Before the *Novum Instrumentum* was published, on the other hand, Erasmus made no mention of a plan to publish the Vulgate, nor of any change of mind as to the translation to be included. On the contrary, these earlier statements, dating from 1512 to 1516, yield a consistent picture with no place for a change of opinion. In autumn 1512 Erasmus was engaged in a *castigatio* of the New Testament¹⁶—that is, as we shall see, a revision of the Latin text.¹⁷ In July 1514 he had finished this *castigatio*,¹⁸ and in September of the same year he announced his intention to publish the result, now referred to as 'the New Testament translated by me'.¹⁹ When the translation actually appeared in 1516, Erasmus defended it in his *Apologia* by arguing, *inter alia*, that this *castigatio* ('revised edition') was not meant to replace the Vulgate:

In fact the Vulgate is not harmed by this revision of ours (*nostra castigatione*), but rendered brighter, purer and more accurate. Let the Vulgate be read in the schools, chanted in churches, quoted in sermons. I dare to promise that anyone who reads this revised edition of ours at home will have a better understanding of his own translation (the Vulgate).²⁰

The two presentations of the matter are clearly incompatible. And the later account, with its late date for the genesis of the new Latin translation, is utterly improbable for the following reasons.

1. In May 1515 Erasmus himself informed Martin Dorp that: 'We have translated the whole New Testament'.²¹ Even earlier, as Erasmus's letter to Jakob Wimpfeling of 21 September 1514 shows, he had formed the plan to publish 'the New Testament translated by me'.²² Erasmus's later statements concerning the date of his new Latin translation are thus in clear contradiction with his testimonies of May 1515 and September 1514. Since the latter are chronologically closer to the events in question and free of the apologetic

¹⁴ *Responsio ad Annotationes Lei* (1520) (n. 10 above)

¹⁵ *Responsio ad iuvenem gerontodidascalum* (n. 10 above).

¹⁶ *Ep* 264 (autumn 1512, to Peter Gillis), I, p. 517, ll. 6-12, Appendix below, no. 1.

¹⁷ *Apologia*, Holborn, p. 168, l. 3. That the word *castigatio* means the same in *Ep* 264 of 1512 and in the *Apologia* of 1516, viz., the 'revised, corrected edition' of the Latin translation (i.e., Erasmus's own version), will be argued in the present contribution. For the text of the passage in question of the *Apologia*, see the Appendix below, no. 8.

¹⁸ *Ep* 296 (8 July 1515, to Servatius Rogerus), I, p. 570, ll. 155-6; Appendix below, no. 3.

¹⁹ *Ep* 305 (21 September 1514, to Jakob Wimpfeling), II, p. 23, ll. 222-4, Appendix below, no. 4.

²⁰ *Apologia*, Holborn, p. 168, l. 3. From the way in which Erasmus in this passage contrasts his *castigatio* and the Vulgate as two translations with complementary functions, it is perfectly evident that *nostra castigatio* here refers to Erasmus's Latin translation, not to his *Annotations* as well as his Latin translation. See Appendix below, no. 8.

²¹ *Ep* 337, II, p. 113, ll. 862-3, Appendix below, no. 6.

²² *Ep* 305, II, p. 23, ll. 222-4; Appendix below, no. 4. See also *Ep* 334, II, p. 78, ll. 163-6, of May 1515; Appendix below, no. 5.

tendency which characterizes Erasmus's later statements on the subject (see below), the earlier rather than the later testimonies deserve our confidence.

2. If Erasmus did not begin his work on the new translation until the summer of 1515, the space of time in which he carried out the whole translation would be incredibly short. While the *Novum Instrumentum* was being printed, Erasmus would have had to prepare the Greek text for the press, write the bulk of the *Annotations*, compose all the prefaces and see the whole work through the press—not to mention his work on the edition of Jerome's letters, published by Froben in four volumes in the course of 1516—and do the translation as well. Even Erasmus could not have carried this load.

3. There are obvious contradictions between the post-publication testimonies themselves. In 1520 Erasmus declared that the translation had been made 'during the business itself [of publishing the work]'.²³ This is not the same thing as 'when the work was already to be published'²⁴ or 'when Froben had already made preparations for printing'.²⁵ Particularly discordant and evidently untrustworthy is the account given in the apologia against Frans Titelmans (1529). There Erasmus claimed that the plan to revise the text of the Vulgate arose 'when the edition of the *Annotations* was already in the press'.²⁶ Now the printing of the *Annotations* began in about December 1515 (*Ep.* 273). This would point to a later date than that indicated by the other post-publication testimonies, but the account given in the apologia against Titelmans is a clear misrepresentation anyhow. In fact the printing of the *Annotations* on the sheets of the gatherings t⁶ to Ff⁶ was not undertaken until the printing of the gatherings a¹ to t⁵, containing the translation of the Pauline Epistles and the Apocalypse, was completed.²⁷ In other words, a great part of the translation had been carried out and even printed before the *Annotations* began to be printed. Obviously, in 1529 Erasmus no longer remembered correctly the details of the printing of the *Novum Instrumentum*.

4. Boasting about the high speed with which one wrote was a vice so common that Erasmus himself poked fun at it in his *Moria*.²⁸ Folly accuses orators of fraudulent boastfulness in bragging about the ease and speed with which they composed their works. But Erasmus himself often committed the same sin. He described his *Moria* as hardly worth seven days' effort.²⁹ He also claimed that he wrote his first apologia against Jacobus Lopis Stunica, seventy-one columns in the Leiden folio edition and a work of a highly technical nature, in no more than seven days in the summer of 1521.³⁰ P. S. Allen rightly observed, however, that the gap of between five and six weeks in Erasmus's correspondence from 5 July to 12 August 1521 was 'perhaps due to hard work'.³¹ Allen did not realize that this gap coincides precisely with the time of composition of the apologia against

²³ *Responsio ad Annotationes Edvardi Lei*, LB, IX, col 169BC

²⁴ *Ep.* 421 (n 9 above), ll 46-7

²⁵ *Ep.* I, I, p 14, ll 8-12

²⁶ *Responsio ad iuvenem geiontodidascalum*, LB, IX, cols 986F-7A

²⁷ Holeczek, 'Einleitung' (n 1 above), pp xi xii

²⁸ *Moria*, ASD, IV, 3, p 74, ll 50-6

²⁹ C H Miller in ASD, IV, 3, p 14

³⁰ ASD, IX, 2, p 266, ll 636-7

³¹ P S Allen, introduction to *Ep.* 1223, IV, p 551

Stunica, but the break in Erasmus's correspondence is indeed best accounted for by reference to his work on the controversy with Stunica.³²

5. Furthermore, Erasmus's later presentation of affairs originated as an excuse for the shortcomings of the *Novum Instrumentum*. As soon as it had been published Erasmus became aware of its deficiencies and the damage it could do to his reputation. He at once began to allege that the decision to alter the Vulgate text had only been taken at a very late stage of the production of the *Novum Instrumentum*. Moreover, he began to allege that the revision of the Vulgate had originally not been his own idea: it had been a suggestion of some learned friends, to whose pressure he regretted he had yielded. Not surprisingly, Erasmus used these arguments first in his obsequious, reverential letter to Guillaume Budé of June 1516 and then in the apologies against Lee, Sutor and Titelmans.³³ The apologetic function of the arguments naturally diminishes their credibility.

6. Finally it is quite remarkable that when Erasmus wrote the *Apologia* which he included in the *Novum Instrumentum* in 1516 in defence of his new translation, he by no means presented his translation as a rushed work which friends had pressed him to undertake at the last moment. On the contrary, in this *Apologia*, which serves as a preface to the translation and defends only the translation, there is no mention of friends and their suggestions. Erasmus claims here that he had carried out the translation not 'in the twinkling of an eye' (*levi bracchio*), but after examining first four, later five further Greek manuscripts, all in all no less than nine manuscripts. Moreover, he had examined a number of early Latin manuscripts as well as the biblical quotations in a number of patristic authors. Perhaps Erasmus is referring here to the collations which he had been working on in England since 1512 (*Epp.* 264, 270). But when he wrote the *apologia* of 1516 he obviously meant that those early collations had also been an aid in making the new translation, undoubtedly because he had made his collations and other observations in the margins of a copy of a printed edition of the Vulgate and used this information, accumulated in the margin, to alter certain readings in the printed Vulgate text. According to the *Apologia*, then, the translation was a work of years, not of months.

For these six reasons, Erasmus's second account must be regarded as implausible. Consequently, to form a picture of the origin of Erasmus's new translation we are forced to turn to his earlier statements on the subject, scattered in his correspondence from 1512 onwards and in his *Apologia*.

The first absolutely clear mention of an intended new translation of the New Testament in Erasmus's correspondence occurs in his letter to Wimpfeling (*Ep.* 305; see Appendix below, no. 4). Here Erasmus states: 'A beginning has already been made with the printing of the *Adagia*. What remains is [the task of publishing] the New Testament translated by me and accompanied by the Greek, together with our annotations upon it.' From these words it is clear that from September 1514 at the latest Erasmus intended that his Greek text of the New

³² The issue is discussed in *ASD*, IX, 2, p. 267.

³³ This argument was used by Erasmus in the *Responsio ad Annotationes Edvay di Lei*, *LB*, IX, col. 169BC; in *Ep.* I, I, p. 14, ll. 8-12; *Ep.* 1581, VI, p. 91, ll. 135-9; *Adversus Petri Sutoris debacchatones Apologia*, *LB*, IX, col. 751D and *Responsio ad iuvenem geronodascaleum*, *LB*, IX, cols 986F-7A

Testament should be accompanied by his own translation, not by the Vulgate, and that at the moment of writing the new translation was already complete or almost complete. Now Erasmus wrote this letter to Wimpfeling in Basel, where he had arrived by the end of August 1514, after having left England in July of that year. If his translation was more or less ready for the press in September 1514, he must have made it during his stay in England from 1511 to 1514. This inference is confirmed by a statement Erasmus made in his letter of 8 July 1514, written at Hammes Castle near Calais, on his journey from England to Basel (*Ep.* 296; see Appendix below, no. 3): 'I have corrected (*castigavi*) the whole New Testament.'

By the word *castigavi* in this passage Erasmus does not mean the writing of annotations, for he mentions his annotations separately in another phrase: 'et supra mille loca annotavi'.³⁴ Nor can *castigavi* refer to the establishment of a Greek text, for he corrected Greek manuscripts with a view to their publication only after his arrival in Basel. We are compelled to assume, therefore, that Erasmus's words *castigavi totum Novum Testamentum* of July 1514 mean that he had completed his revision of the Vulgate text, or at least a provisional revision, as early as July 1514 and that he carried out this revision during his years in England from 1511 to 1514.

Can *castigare* really refer to the making of a new translation of the New Testament by means of a revision of the Vulgate? The answer to this question is given by the 1516 *Apologia*, where Erasmus refers to this Latin translation as *nostra castigatio* ('our revised version/edition').³⁵ But it may be worth while to dwell upon the meaning of the words *castigare*, *castigatio* and *castigator* in Erasmus at some greater length.

Silvia Rizzo has pointed out that *castigatio* and *castigare* are used by several fifteenth-century Italian humanists as technical terms for the text-critical emendation of the writings of classical authors, both for the act of emending and for its result, the emended reading.³⁶ Among others who used *castigare* and *castigatio* in this technical sense Rizzo quotes Angelo Poliziano, Filippo Beroaldo the elder and Ermolao Barbaro, the author of the *Castigationes Pliniana*e (Rome, 1492).

Erasmus too sometimes used *castigare* and *castigatio* in the sense of text-critical emendation—the correction of errors which have crept into an ancient text in the course of its transmission. An example occurs in Erasmus's letter to Gregor Reisch of September 1514: 'Summis sudoribus adnixi sumus et adhuc adnitimur, ut divi Hieronymi epistolas castigatas emittamus in manus hominum' ('To the utmost of my powers I have striven, and am still striving, to publish a

³⁴ 'Castigavi et annotavi' is not a hendiadys, see *Ep.* 450, II, p. 315, ll. 45-6 'Castigatione Novi Testamenti simul et annotationibus tuis mirum quam illustrasti Christum'

³⁵ For the interpretation of *castigatio* in this passage of the *Apologia*, see n. 20 above. The meaning 'revised version/corrected edition' is warranted by Erasmus's use of *castigandi* in the *Apologia*, Holborn, p. 168, l. 33, where it means 'to make a corrected edition' and by his words *castiget canticum Magnificat* in the *Apologia*, fourth edition, Holborn, p. 169, l. 25, meaning 'he gives an altered version of the song Magnificat', 'he amends the canticle Magnificat'

³⁶ S. Rizzo, *Il lessico filologico degli umanisti* (Rome, 1973), p. 276

corrected text of St Jerome's letters').³⁷ Another instance occurs in Erasmus's preface to his *Opuscula aliquot Erasmo Roterodamo castigatore*. Here Erasmus says that, to the texts included in this volume, he has added the *Mimes* of Publilius Syrus and written short scholia on them 'after having corrected the text of this work, too, for we had found it in a very corrupt state': 'his quoque castigatis (offendimus enim depravatissimos)'. And some lines further down Erasmus speaks of 'these sentences of Cato and Publilius' as now 'corrected': 'hae Catonis ac Publinae [sc. sententiae] sic castigateae'.³⁸

Similarly, Erasmus uses the word *castigator* as a term for the critical editor. We had an example of this use of *castigator* in the title quoted above: *Opuscula aliquot Erasmo Roterodamo castigatore*, 'edited by Erasmus of Rotterdam'. There is another instance in Erasmus's dedicatory letter to William Warham in the first volume of his edition of Jerome's letters, dated the 1st of April 1516. Here Erasmus states that the greatest bane of literature is the half-learned, half-asleep, rash or injudicious *castigator*.³⁹

But Erasmus also uses *castigare* and its derivatives for several other sorts of correcting, revising and improving. Firstly, he uses it in the pedagogical sense of 'to put (someone) right, to reprimand, to rebuke', as parents correct their children; this is good classical, Ciceronian usage.⁴⁰ Secondly, he uses *castigare* as a stylistic term meaning 'to correct the imperfections of the uncompleted version of a literary composition': for example, in reference to the criticism and correction to which he often had to subject his pupils' and friends' exercises in verse and prose composition.⁴¹ In a letter of 1516 to his friend Andreas Ammonius, Erasmus announces that he intends to pass the winter in Brussels, rather than Louvain, since there the students would continuously bother him by yelping: 'Please correct this poem for me, please improve the style of this letter for me': 'castiga hoc carmen, emenda hanc epistolam'.⁴²

A third meaning of *castigare* in Erasmus is 'proof reading'.⁴³ This he distinguishes from what we call 'copy editing', that is, the preparation of a

³⁷ *Ep* 308, II, p 28, ll 1-3

³⁸ Published Louvain, 1514, *Ep* 298, II, p 2, ll 12-13, p 3, l 46

³⁹ *Ep* 396, II, p 221, l 376 In the same letter we find the following synonyms of *castigare emendare* (p 216, l 192) with the noun *emendator* (p 217, ll 235-6), *restituere* (p 217, l 241, p 219, l 293), *corrige* (p 218, l 249), *mendas tollere* (p 218, ll 269-70), *germanam reponere scripturam* (p 218, l 270) and *pistiniae integritati restituere* (p 221, l 372) Elsewhere Erasmus uses still other synonyms, such as *recognoscere* and *recognitio* (*Ep* 305, II, p 23, l 224), *expolire* (*Ep* 237, I, p 477, l 16), *instaurare* (*Ep* 456, II, p 321, l 7), *integrum restituere* (*Ep* 391, II, p 203, l 60), *a mendis vindicare* (*Ep* 325, II, p 51, ll 8-10), *emaculare* (*Ep* 305, II, p 23, l 227) and so on

⁴⁰ *Ep* 154, I, p 359, l 11, see, e.g., Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 3 64 'pueros castigare solent, nec verbis solum, sed etiam verberibus'

⁴¹ *Ep* 139, I, p 328, l 109

⁴² *Ep* 475, II, p 355, ll 15-16 Here two observations deserve to be made In the first place, the terms *castigare* and *emendare* are here used not for textual emendation but for 'enhancing the poetical or rhetorical style' of a literary composition This implies that in Erasmus the words *castigare* and *emendare* are mutually interchangeable, both in their text-critical and their stylistic senses In the second place, it can be demonstrated that Erasmus's contemporaries associated *castigare* as a stylistic term with the occurrence of the word in the well-known passage in Horace's *Ars poetica* (291-4), where the poet admonishes the Pisones not to content themselves with a poem until it has been subjected to prolonged filing and polishing and continued castigation This is evident from the words *castigationis lima* in *Ep* 309, a clear reminiscence of Horace's *limae labor* and *castigavit* (291, 294) See *Ep* 309, II, p 29, l 6

⁴³ *Ep* 311, II, p 32, l 22

manuscript for the compositor, for which he uses *praecastigare*.⁴⁴ He also uses the noun *castigator* for a ‘proof reader’ or ‘printer’s reader’.⁴⁵

But by far the most common meaning of *castigare* in Erasmus is ‘to revise’ a literary work with a view to its publication or with a view to an improved edition. Erasmus himself tended, as is well known, to keep on revising and enlarging and re-elaborating his own works. Small wonder that there is much talk of revision in his correspondence. The usual terms for it, then, are *castigare* and *castigatio*. From the eventual result of the revision, laid down in a new printed edition, we can see precisely what *castigare* implied for Erasmus: not merely the correction of misprints, but also the modification of style and contents. In 1511, for instance, he announced that he was about to revise his *De copia*: ‘Copiam quoque castigaturus’.⁴⁶ The book was published in 1512 (*Ep.* 260). It turned out to be an almost completely new book, considerably expanded and entirely recast as compared with its first edition of 1499. But the metamorphosis was referred to by Erasmus as the result of his *castigare*. In 1508 the second edition of the *Adagia* was published. In this case, too, the enlargements were enormous and the character of the work was entirely changed.⁴⁷ In a prefatory letter Erasmus invited his readers to supply further material from sources to which he had had no access. He declared that if somebody else wanted to anticipate his next edition by bringing out an enlarged and improved edition of the one just published, he, Erasmus himself, would be grateful to him. The word he uses for the preparation of a possible new, enlarged and improved edition of the *Adagia* is *castigare*.⁴⁸

In the *Moria*, *castigare* is the daily work of those pitiable, self-tormenting writers whom Folly mocks because they cannot cease ‘to add, to change, to delete, to substitute, to write down the same thing again, to recast, to reorganize, to submit their work to others, to keep it back until the ninth year, without ever being satisfied’.⁴⁹ Although *castigare* does not occur in this passage, the description precisely fits what Erasmus would normally call *castigare*. And the term was also used in the same sense by his contemporaries, such as Jacques Lefèvre d’Étaples. When the latter published the second, revised edition of his translation of, and commentary on, Paul’s Epistles, he called it *castigata*, explaining that he had not only corrected printing errors, but also altered certain passages which he had found unsatisfactory.⁵⁰

A most noteworthy instance of the word *castigatio* in the sense of a ‘thoroughly revised and corrected edition’ can finally be registered in Erasmus’s *Capita argumentorum contra morosos quosdam ac indoctos* of 1519.⁵¹ Here he

⁴⁴ *Ep.* 417, II, p. 248, l. 3, *Ep.* 421, II, p. 253, ll. 52-3

⁴⁵ *Ep.* 356, II, p. 146, l. 12

⁴⁶ *Ep.* 241, I, p. 485, l. 29

⁴⁷ P. S. Allen, introduction to *Ep.* 211, I, pp. 443-4

⁴⁸ *Ep.* 211, I, p. 446, l. 90

⁴⁹ *ASD*, IV, 3, pp. 140-1. For the phrase ‘until the ninth year’, see Horace, *Arts poetica* 388

⁵⁰ Jacobus Faber Stapulensis, *Contenta Epistola ad Romanos*, second edition (Paris, 1515), sig. a 1^r ‘In hac secunda editione obiter relegendo commentarios castigata sunt nonnulla, aut quia depravata, aut quia minus placebant, subtracta etiam nonnulla aut immutata, sed haec pauca, et insuper, ubi visum est oportunitate, adiecta nonnulla’

⁵¹ Included among the preliminaries to the second edition of Erasmus’s New Testament: *Novum Testamentum* (Basel, 1519), see sig. C 1^r, paragraph 54. In *LB*, VI, the passage in question occurs on sig. *** 1^v, l. 2

refers to the Latin version of the Gospels made by Jerome as a *castigatio*: the *castigatio Hieronymi*, that is, Jerome's revised version. In the same tract Erasmus points out that Jerome had made this new translation by revising and correcting an earlier Latin translation in accordance with Greek manuscripts.⁵² The parallel between Jerome's work as a translator and that of Erasmus is clear. Both scholars made their new translations by adapting existing, widely-used ones. Both altered their base text instead of starting from scratch. And both used Greek manuscripts as a criterion. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that Erasmus himself in the preliminaries to his *Novum Instrumentum* of 1516 also speaks of his own Latin translation as a *castigatio*.⁵³ For a *castigatio* it was, in the broad sense of the word: a drastically revised edition of the Vulgate.

Let us now return to the main issue of this contribution: when did Erasmus start his work on the Latin translation he published in 1516? From what precedes it is clear that when he spoke of his *castigatio* of the New Testament in 1514, 1513 and 1512, he probably referred to his translation work. The crucial question, however, is whether or not this very possible interpretation of Erasmus's statements of 1512–14 is the best possible one.

First it should be noted that when Erasmus speaks of his *castigatio* of the New Testament in 1516 and 1519, the word *castigatio* refers to nothing other than his revised version of the Vulgate text. The same applies to the instances of *castigatio* as used by two of Erasmus's correspondents, who shortly after the publication of the *Novum Instrumentum*, in July and August 1516, congratulated him on the felicitous result of his *castigatio Novi Testamenti*, clearly meaning his corrected Latin translation.⁵⁴ The most natural supposition is that *castigare* and *castigatio* in Erasmus's letters of 1512 to 1514 refer to the same thing: the revision of the Vulgate.⁵⁵

A second piece of evidence that Erasmus was engaged in his correction of the Vulgate (i.e., his new version of the New Testament) during his stay in England has long been available, but seldom rightly understood, in the *Apologia* of 1516. Erasmus claimed there that his Latin translation of 1516 was the result of two *recognitions*, that is, two revisions of the Vulgate. In the earlier stage of the work, the *prima recognitio*, he had used four Greek manuscripts, in the latter stage, the second *recognitio*, five.⁵⁶ Since the latter stage or *posterior recognitio* has to be identified with Erasmus's utilization of Greek manuscripts found in Basel, a logical conclusion would be to identify the *prima recognitio* with preparations in England.

⁵² *Capita argumentorum*, paragraph 37, *LB*, VI, fol. *** 1r, ll. 1-3 'Cum Damasus hoc negotium daret Hieronymo, ut Novum Testamentum ex Graecorum fontibus emendaret, habebat nimirum iam tum ecclesia quod legebat et fortasse seculis aliquot legerat. Id si syncerum erat, quid opus erat emendatione Hieronymi?'

⁵³ Those who claim that *castigatio* and *castigare*, said in reference to the New Testament, underwent a change of meaning in 1515–16 will have to accept the burden of proof.

⁵⁴ *Ep* 450, II, p. 315, l. 45 (see n. 34 above), *Ep* 459, II, pp. 334-5, ll. 46-8.

⁵⁵ *Ep* 264, I, p. 517, l. 13, Appendix below, no. 1, *Ep* 296, I, p. 570, ll. 155-6, Appendix below, no. 3, *Ep* 305, II, p. 23, ll. 222-4, Appendix below, no. 4.

⁵⁶ *Apologia*, Holborn, p. 166, ll. 4-5. The two *recognitions* are usually identified with the first and second edition of Erasmus's New Testament. Both *recognitions*, however, are already mentioned in the text of 1516. This was pointed out to me by Professor J. J. Bateman (University of Illinois). For the text, see n. 63 below.

An important clue may finally be found in the remarkable and difficult wording of the letter of 1514 in which Erasmus declared that he had made a corrected version of the New Testament. Before entering into the details of the passage in question, attention should be drawn to the fact that from 1516 at the latest Erasmus alluded explicitly to the parallels between his own labours on the Latin text of the New Testament and those of Jerome. He expected, for instance, that his new translation would encounter the same criticism as Jerome's—that it threatened the authority of the Scriptures and the Christian religion. However, 'What danger', Erasmus asked in his *Apologia* of 1516, 'resulted from the work of St Jerome in restoring the Old and New Testaments to the accuracy of the Hebrew and Greek originals for the benefit of an ageing world? He was criticized by some, but abundantly satisfied their objections in his books. I do not think they had any ground for objecting except ignorance of those languages. But did this produce the slightest disadvantage to the Christian religion?'⁵⁷ Erasmus admitted that if someone appeared to change what was written by the Apostles and Evangelists, he could rightly be censured for tampering with the Gospels.

But no such censure attaches to the scholar who in accordance with papal decrees makes use of the Greek originals and the judgment of saintly expositors to restore in sincere faith whatever had been miscopied by scribes or inadequately translated in Latin manuscripts, since it was in Greek that the Apostles wrote. But why labour the point? The great Jerome himself in his numerous letters plays the advocate in this case; and he did not lack detractors, for he was working in a very similar field. If his work of emendation were extant, I would not have needed to undertake this task, for it would have been available for me to follow.⁵⁸

With these considerations in mind we return to the letter to Servatius Rogerus in which Erasmus announced the completion of his work as translator: 'From the comparison of Greek manuscripts, and old ones at that, I have corrected and revised the whole New Testament': 'Ex graecorum et antiquorum codicum collatione castigavi totum Novum Testamentum'. This sentence seems odd. One would expect 'Greek and Latin'⁵⁹ or 'recent and ancient', but not 'Greek and ancient'. But this strange turn of phrase can be accounted for, and the larger meaning of the passage clarified, by reference to a passage in Jerome's preface to his revised Latin edition of the Gospels. Here Jerome claims that his revision of the Latin text of the Gospels took place by means of a comparison of the existing, old Latin version 'with Greek manuscripts, but old ones': 'codicum graecorum...collatione, sed veterum'.⁶⁰ Erasmus's expression no doubt echoes

⁵⁷ *Apologia*, Holborn, p 167, ll 16-22

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p 170, ll. 2-12.

⁵⁹ Brown, 'The Date' (n 2 above), p. 371, translates 'From the comparison of Greek and ancient [Latin] manuscripts I have corrected the whole New Testament'.

⁶⁰ Jerome, prologue to the Gospels. The complete text may be found in *Biblia Sacra iuxta Vulgatam editionem*, second edition, edited by R. Weber (Stuttgart, 1975), pp 1515-16. The most relevant passage runs as follows: 'Igitur haec praesens praefatuuncula pollicetur quattuor tantum evangelia, quorum ordo iste est Matthaeus, Marcus, Lucas, Ioannes, codicum graecorum emendata collatione, sed veterum. Quae ne multum a lectionis latinae consuetudine discrepant, ita calamo imperavimus ut, his tantum quae sensum videbantur mutare correctis, reliqua manere pateremur ut fuerant.' That Erasmus was familiar with Jerome's prologue to the Gospels is evident from his allusion to it in his *Apologia* of 1516, Holborn, p 167, ll 17-19: 'Hieronymus vetus et novum instrumentum mundo iam senescenti ad Hebraeam et Graecam veritatem instauravit', cf. Jerome's

Jerome's words. Both mention their comparison (*collatio*) of the Latin text with Greek manuscripts. Both characterize these manuscripts as Greek and old. Moreover Erasmus refers to his translation work on the New Testament as *castigare*, a term he uses elsewhere for Jerome's work as a translator.⁶¹ Thus the letter to Rogerus explicitly and implicitly affirms Erasmus's sense of himself as a critical translator like Jerome.

The evidence and arguments adduced above justify the conclusion that Erasmus began work on his 'translation' of the New Testament—that is, his correction of the Vulgate—in 1512 at the latest.⁶²

It should be stressed, however, that this revision probably did not result in a continuous Latin New Testament text on its own. No such continuous text in manuscript form has ever turned up. The revision (*castigatio*) probably consisted only of manuscript alterations entered in a copy of a printed edition of the Latin Vulgate. Erasmus may have made these changes in the printed Latin text at the same time that he made his collations of Greek and Latin manuscripts. The interesting readings which he found in the manuscripts he probably noted down in the margins of the same copy of the Vulgate. On the basis of the material collected in the margins Erasmus gradually modified the Latin text of the Vulgate. He also made stylistic improvements.

He worked on this revision of the Vulgate in England from 1512 to 1514, at which time he felt that it was more or less complete; but he continued to work on it in Basel from 1514 to 1515 or even 1516. In Basel it was put into the shape in which it was published in 1516. Perhaps the second stage of the work, the *posterior recognitio*,⁶³ which took place at Basel, entailed much more drastic changes in the Vulgate text that served as a basis for the revision than the former, English phase of the work had produced. In Basel Erasmus used more Greek manuscripts than he had done in England and perhaps allowed them to influence the Latin translation more strongly than he had done in the case of the manuscripts collated in England. In comparison with the translation eventually published in 1516, the corrected Latin text of 1514 was no doubt rather rudimentary.

We must nevertheless conclude that Erasmus worked at his Latin translation of the New Testament from 1512 at the latest. When he mentioned his *castigatio* of the New Testament in his correspondence of 1512, 1513 and the summer of 1514, he was already referring to the translation project that was completed in

prologue 'Pius labor, sed periculosa praesumptio senis mutare linguam et canescentem mundum ad initia retrahere parvulorum'

⁶¹ For example, in *Capita argumentorum contra morosos*, paragraph 54 in the 1519 edition, *LB*, VI, sig *** 1^v, ll 2-4) 'Postremo extra controversiam est, non extare castigationem Hieronymi Et constat, hanc rursus vitiatam, ut maxime demus, fuisse Hieronymo castigatam', *Apologia adversus debacchationes Sutoris*, *LB* IX, col 763B 'Et Damasi iussu legimus castigatum Novum Testamentum'

⁶² It cannot be objected that the format of the *Annotations* gives the impression of being designed to accompany the Vulgate text rather than a revised translation in that the *lemma* is always taken from the Vulgate. In fact the *lemmata* have no other function than modern verse numbers they are reference symbols (see *ASD*, IX, 2, p 48) In order to help the reader to locate the passage under consideration, the *lemmata* could best be taken from the text with which each reader was familiar. The fact that Erasmus retained a technical reference system that was based on the Vulgate does not imply that he ever intended to publish the Vulgate

⁶³ Cf *Apologia*, Holborn, p 166, ll 4-5 'Nos in prima recognitione quattuor Graecis adiuti sumus, in posteriore quinque'

1516 (and resumed and continued in his later editions of the New Testament). His own later account of the genesis of the translation must be rejected.

In another matter, however, Erasmus's sincerity can now be cleared of suspicion. In 1515 Erasmus declared that he had undertaken his work on the New Testament before he had heard of Lefèvre d'Étaples's new Latin translation of the Pauline Epistles, published in 1512.⁶⁴ It has sometimes been suggested that this claim was incorrect and that Lefèvre's publication set Erasmus thinking along the same lines.⁶⁵ It is indeed likely that Lefèvre's work stimulated Erasmus to publish his own translation, but Lefèvre's work was not published until Christmas 1512.⁶⁶ Since Erasmus was already engaged on his translation in the autumn of that year and expected to complete it within the foreseeable future,⁶⁷ the idea of undertaking it cannot have been suggested to him by the appearance of Lefèvre's translation. The idea of revising and correcting the Vulgate text of the New Testament was Erasmus's own, and his scholarly model—in so far as he had one—was not his contemporary and rival Lefèvre but Jerome.

⁶⁴ *Ep* 337, to Martin Dorp, end of May 1515, II, p 112, ll 844-9 'Porro Iacobus Faber commentarios illos iam tum habebat in manibus, cum nos hoc operis moliremur, ac parum commode evenit ut nec in familiarissimis colloquiis alterutri nostrum in mentem venerit de suo meminisse instituto Nec ante cognovi quid agitasset ille, priusquam opus formulis excusum prodisset '

⁶⁵ Brown, 'The Date' (n 2 above), p 374

⁶⁶ See its colophon 'Hoc opus absolutum fuit in coenobio Sancti Germani iuxta Parisios anno Christi vitae authoris quingentesimo et duodecimo supra millesimum et eodem anno circa natalem dominicae de purissima Virgine nativitatibus diem ex officina Henrici Stephani emissum '

⁶⁷ *Ep* 264, I, p 517, ll 13-14 'Absolvam castigationem Novi Testamenti', see Appendix below, no 1

Appendix

Erasmus's Statements Concerning his Work on the Latin Translation of the New Testament from 1512 to the Appearance of the *Novum Instrumentum* in 1516⁶⁸

Stay in England, 1511–14

- 1 *Ep* 264 (to Peter Gilles, London, autumn 1512, I, p 517, ll 6-12) 'Paravi Proverbiorum opus Absolvam castigationem Novi Testamenti, absolvam epistolas divi Hieronymi et, si dabitur ocium, emendabo et Senecam '
- 2 *Ep* 270 (to John Colet, Cambridge, 11 July 1513, I, pp 527-8, ll 58-61) 'Absolvi collationem Novi Testamenti, nunc divum Hieronymum aggredior Thomas Lupsetus magno mihi est et usui et oblectamento, cotidiana consuetudine et opera quam mihi commodat in his castigationibus '
- 3 *Ep* 296 (to Servatius Rogerus, Hammes Castle near Calais, 8 July 1514, I, p 570, ll 155-6) 'Ex Graecorum et antiquorum codicum collatione castigavi totum Novum Testamentum, et supra mille loca annotavi non sine fructu theologorum '

Arrival at Basel end of August 1514

- 4 *Ep* 305 (to Jakob Wimpfeling, Basel, 21 September 1514, II, p 23, ll 222-4) 'Adagiorum opus iam excudi coeptum est Superest Novum Testamentum a me versum et e regione Graecum, una cum nostris in illud annotamentis '

Short stay in England in May 1515

- 5 *Ep* 334 (to Domenico Grimani, London, c 15 May 1515, II, p 78, ll 163-6) 'Edidimus praeter alia permulta Chiliadum opus a nobis emendatum et ita locupletatum ut quarta voluminis pars accreverit, proxima aestate emissuri varias nec infrugiferas, ut opinor, annotationes nostras in Novum Testamentum, una cum Apostolicis epistolis sic a nobis versis ut intelligi possint, in quo labore ita puto me versatum, ut non sine causa post Laurentium Vallam, post Iacobum Fabrum, virum iuxta doctum ac diligentem, videar hoc negotii suscepisse '

On the return from England to Basel, May 1515

- 6 *Ep* 337 (to Martin Dorp, Antwerp, end of May 1515, II, p 113, ll 862-8) 'Nos universum Testamentum Novum ad Graecorum exemplaria vertimus, additis e regione Graecis, quo cuius promptum sit conferre Adiecimus separatim Annotationes, in quibus partim argumentis, partim veterum autoritate theologorum docemus non temere mutatum quod emendavimus, ne vel fide careat nostra correctio vel facile depravari possit quod emendatum est '

Back in Basel, August 1515

- 7 *Ep* 348 (to Thomas Wolsey, Basel, 30 August 1515, II, p 137, ll 10 11) 'Excuditur et Novum Testamentum Graecum, ut ab apostolis est scriptum, Latinum, ut a me versum, una cum nostris annotationibus '

⁶⁸ This list does not claim to be exhaustive but it includes at any rate the testimonies that play a major role in the argument of the present contribution

8. *Apologia* (written at the end of 1515 or beginning of 1516; in *Novum Instrumentum*, sig. bbb 7^r; Holborn, p. 168, ll. 1-7): 'Quibus haec placet aeditio [Vulgata], quam ego nec damno, nec muto, huic sua manet aeditio. Siquidem ea nostra castigatione non laeditur, sed redditur illustrior, purior, emendatior. Illa legatur in scholis, canatur in templis, citetur in concionibus. Illud ausim polliceri, quisquis hanc nostram domi legerit, suam rectius intellecturus est.'

Unus geminum rogatum
sustinebam: Hieronymi
castigationem et Novi
Testamenti.

Er. Apol. c. Fabricum Stap.,
BAS IX, p. 46;
LB IX, p. 53