

The New Testament Scholarship of Erasmus

In May 1984, the Collected Works of Erasmus sponsored a conference in Toronto on the New Testament scholarship of Erasmus. Our purpose was to bring together the scholars who were actively at work on that part of the CWE, some nearing completion of their assignments, some still only in the first stages. In every instance, they were engaged in closely-related problems derived from the New Testament scholarship of Erasmus, his *Annotations*, his *Paraphrases*, and of course, his translation and Greek text. The result was a meeting of remarkable interest for participants and auditors alike. We are pleased to bring

to the readers of *Erasmus in English* a small part of the fruit of those meetings.

While afternoons were spent in working seminars on particular textual and other problems, each of the two days began with an open session of two papers. The first, on 'The Bible in an Age of Controversy,' was addressed by Bruce Metzger of the Princeton Theological Seminary and by Henk Jan de Jonge of the University of Amsterdam (now at Leiden University). The second day's open session was devoted to the theme, 'Rhetoric and Theology in Erasmus' Biblical Scholarship,' and was addressed by John J. Bateman of the University of Illinois (Champaign-Urbana), and Robert D. Sider of

Dickinson College. These papers follow in this issue, with the exception of Dr Metzger's lecture, which is not available for publication.

While each paper shows a quite distinct problematic and theme, there is common orientation in what must be the central issue for any investigation of Erasmus' biblical scholarship: What exactly was his purpose? What did he hope to achieve? We trust that you will find the following pages as absorbing to read as they were to hear.

James K. McConica, CSB
Chairman
Editorial Board, CWE

The Relationship of Erasmus' Translation of the New Testament to that of the Pauline Epistles by Lefèvre d'Étaples

HENK J. DE JONGE

In 1516 Erasmus published the first edition of his Latin version of the New Testament. Although this version was a thorough revision of the traditional Vulgate with the help of Greek manuscripts rather than an entirely fresh translation, it was the first published Latin version of the entire New Testament rivalling that contained in the Vulgate.¹ For a thousand years the Latin Vulgate had been the Bible generally known and used in Western Europe. Now there was, at least for the New Testament, a competitive Latin translation. The importance of Erasmus' new version lies in the fact that it made the New Testament accessible to many readers in a clearer, purer, more understandable, more classical Latin than that of the Vulgate, which was written in the somewhat obscure idiom of fourth-century ecclesiastical Latin. Moreover it was the first modern translation of the New Testament systematically based

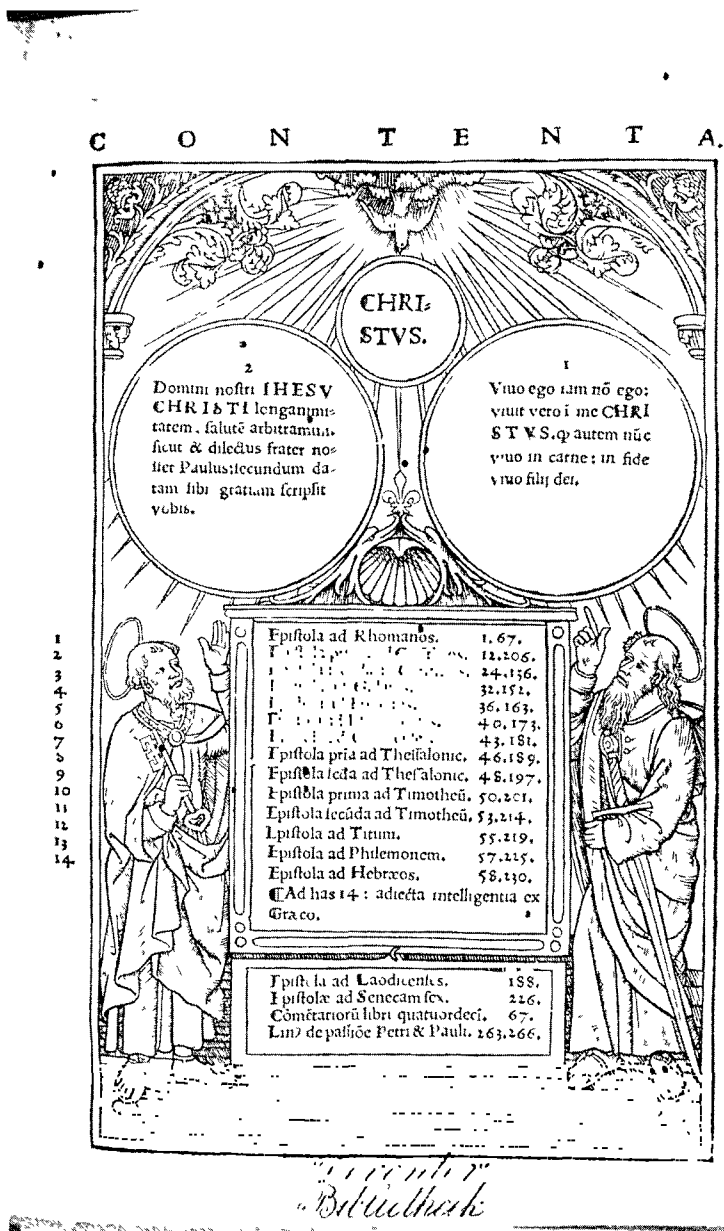
on the Greek text, that is, using it as the authoritative grammatical norm for establishing the meaning of the biblical text. However, a considerable portion of the New Testament – the epistles of Paul – had already appeared prior to Erasmus' edition in a new Latin translation made by the French humanist Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples (c 1455–1536) and published at Paris in 1512.² Lefèvre's translation of the Pauline epistles was the direct predecessor of Erasmus' translation of the whole New Testament, and there can be no doubt that Lefèvre's work was among the factors prompting Erasmus to publish a new translation of the entire New Testament. In 1515, when the Louvain theologian Maarten van Dorp, fearing that Erasmus' translation would endanger the authority of the Vulgate, tried to dissuade Erasmus from publishing it, Erasmus defended his plan by referring to the precedent set by Lefèvre: Lefèvre, Erasmus alleged, had already 'altered a great many passages [in the Vulgate] which had been corrupted or wrongly translated.'³ Indeed, Lefèvre had 'translated the Pauline epistles in his own manner.'⁴ It cannot be coincidence that the first

argument Erasmus advanced⁵ in the defence of his new translation – the *Apologia* which he prefixed to his *Novum Instrumentum* of 1516 and to all its later editions – was identical to the only argument Lefèvre had adduced in justification of *his* translation: it could by no means be construed as a threat to Jerome's Bible translation since the Vulgate was not his version, and the text of Jerome's translation had been lost.⁶ Moreover, Erasmus concluded his *Apologia* with the words: 'If I am not mistaken, the very result of my work will show that it was neither without good reason, nor without benefit that I have engaged upon the study of the New Testament after Lorenzo Valla, to whom this branch of literature does not owe very much, and Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples, the champion of all virtue and letters, had done their work.'⁷ In short, when Erasmus was working on his translation of the New Testament in the years 1512–1516, he was certainly familiar with the translation of the Pauline epistles made by Lefèvre d'Étaples.

In view of Erasmus' acquaintance with Lefèvre's translation, one may ask whether it influenced his own. I have already devoted some attention

to this question in a recent article,⁸ but taking my departure from a date for Erasmus' translation that is now recognized as erroneous. I take this opportunity to pose the question anew and to arrive at a more satisfactory answer.

There are indeed a striking number of agreements between Erasmus' and Lefèvre's translations of the Pauline epistles. In a single chapter, chosen at random (Hebrews 9), I counted no fewer than 48 deviations from the Vulgate which Erasmus and Lefèvre have in common. Until recently it was impossible to attribute these coincidences to Lefèvre's influence, since all the readings in which Erasmus agrees with Lefèvre and differs from the Vulgate also occur in a manuscript copy of Erasmus' translation and the Latin Vulgate in parallel columns dated 1506.⁹ On the basis of the colophons of this and of other manuscripts containing both the Vulgate and Erasmus' Latin version of the New Testament, it was generally assumed that Erasmus had completed his translation in the years 1505/1506, when he was in England. In a masterly article published in the summer of 1985, however, Andrew Brown proved conclusively that the colophons in question do not pertain to the whole content of the manuscripts in which they occur and which include Erasmus' translation, but only to the text of the Vulgate.¹⁰ Erasmus' translation was not included in these manuscripts until the 1520s, when it was copied from a printed edition of Erasmus' New Testament. Consequently, there is no reason to suppose any longer that Erasmus completed his Latin translation as early as 1505/1506. In fact he did not begin preparations until 1512.¹¹ This means that his translation is not earlier, but later than that of Lefèvre, for the first edition of the latter's translation was published about Christmas 1512. Consequently, it can no longer be ruled out that in working on his translation during the years 1512 to 1516, Erasmus occasionally consulted Lefèvre's version and adopted some readings from it. As Andrew Brown put it: 'It is entirely



1 Title-page of Jacobus Faber Stapulensis Contenta. Epistola ad Rhomanos etc. [the Epistles of Paul in two Latin versions, the Vulgate and Lefèvre's own fresh translation, with Lefèvre's commentary on them] Paris: H. Estienne 1512 (first edition). Courtesy of the Athenaeumbibliothek, Deventer.

possible that Erasmus borrowed some of Lefèvre's ideas.¹²

The question remains, however, whether this hypothesis can be demonstrated. In other words: is there any reading in Erasmus' translation that cannot be accounted for except in terms of Lefèvre's influence? From Erasmus' *Annotationes in Novum Testamentum* we know that he criticized and explicitly rejected Lefèvre's renderings of at least six passages in the epistles.¹³ But is there any Pauline

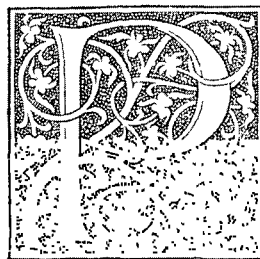
passage which Erasmus translated in such a way as to show undeniably that he adopted a rendering already given by Lefèvre? Is there any word in Erasmus' translation which can be demonstrated to have been chosen because he had found it in the translation of Lefèvre?

A renewed evaluation of the 48 deviations from the Vulgate which Erasmus and Lefèvre share in Hebrews 9 has not changed my view that the coincidences between the two

INTELLIGENTIA EX
GRÆCO. EPISTOLA BE
ATISSIMI PAV. APOSTO
LI AD COLOSSENSES.



VULGATA AEDITIO. EPI
STOLA BEATIS. PAVLI APO
STOLI AD COLOSSENSES.



Aulus a
postolus
IHESV
CHRIS
TI per
voluntate

A
I

in CHRISTO / gratia vobis &

pro vobis orantes cū audiuim⁹
CHRISTO III

celesti. qui ante audiuistis in ser
mone euāgelij qd̄ per
uenit in vos vt̄ & in totū mūdū.
& fructificat atq; augetur vt̄ & i
vobis a die qua audiuistis & co

gnouistis gratiā dei i
veritate. sicut didicistis ab Epaphra
chasi
mo cōseruo nostro qui ē fidelis pro vobis
minister CHRISTI IHESV. Qui etiā
manifestauit nobis dilectionē ve
strā i spū.

Idēo & nos ex qua die audiuimus: nō ces
samus pro vobis orantes & postulantes vt̄
impleamini cognitione volūtatē eius i om
ni sapientia & intellectu spūituali vt̄ abule
tis digne deo per omnia placētes in omni ope
re bono fructificantes & crescētes in sciētia
dei. i omni virtute cōfortati secū dū potētiā

agentes patri qui nos iussit in
partem sortis sanctorum in luz
mine. qui liberauit nos ex pos
tulate renebrarum. & transfuit
in regnū filij dilectionis suae.

Qui eripuit nos de potestate tenebrarū &
trāstulit i regnū filij dilectionis suae. In quo
habem⁹ redemptionē & remissionē peccato
rū. Qui est imago dei iuisibilis: primogē
nitus.

delib⁹ fratribus i CHRISTO IHESV /

gratia vobis & pax a deo patre nō. Circa

agimus deo & patri dñi nostri IHESV

CHRISTI sēper pro vobis orātes: audiē

tes fidē vestrā in CHRISTO IHESV /

& dilectionē quā habetis i factis oēs: pro

pter spē quā reposita est vobis i caelis. quā

audiistis in verbo veritatis euāgelij qd̄ pue

nit ad vos: sicut & in vniuerso mūdo. Et

fructificat & crescit: sicut & in vobis ex ea

die qua audistis & cognouistis gratiā dei i

veritate. sicut didicistis ab Epaphra

chasi

mo cōseruo nostro qui ē fidelis pro vobis

minister CHRISTI IHESV. Qui etiā

manifestauit nobis dilectionē ve

strā i spū.

Idēo & nos ex qua die audiuimus: nō ces

samus pro vobis orantes & postulantes vt̄

impleamini cognitione volūtatē eius i om

ni sapientia & intellectu spūituali vt̄ abule

tis digne deo per omnia placētes in omni ope

re bono fructificantes & crescētes in sciētia

dei. i omni virtute cōfortati secū dū potētiā

agentes patri qui nos iussit in

partem sortis sanctorum in luz

mine. qui liberauit nos ex pos

tulate renebrarum. & transfuit

in regnū filij dilectionis suae.

Qui eripuit nos de potestate tenebrarū &

trāstulit i regnū filij dilectionis suae. In quo

habem⁹ redemptionē & remissionē peccato

rū. Qui est imago dei iuisibilis: primogē

nitus.

B

deviations from the Vulgate, his translation of 1516 turns out to agree with Lefèvre's version of 1512. Among these agreements are instances such as the following:

| Vulgate | Erasmus / Lefèvre |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| v. 7 charissimo | dilecto |
| 16 condita | creata |
| 17 ante omnes | ante omnia |
| 22 coram ipso | in conspectu suo |
| 28 corripientes | admonentes |

The full list of agreements between Erasmus 1516 and Lefèvre 1512 is of impressive length and grows longer in later editions of Erasmus' New Testament. But on closer investigation these agreements can all be explained without reference to a direct dependence of Erasmus on Lefèvre.

One can categorize the readings common to them and differing from the Vulgate as follows, according to the purpose or reason for each change.

1 A striving for grammatically more correct, purer, more classical Latin

| Vg ¹⁵ | Erasmus and Lefèvre |
|------------------|---|
| 6 vniuerso | toto Er, totum Lef |
| 9 orantes | orare |
| 16 in coelis | quae in coelis (+ sunt Er) |
| | in terra |
| 20 ipsum | se |
| 22 eius | suae |
| | exhibere |
| 28 corripientes | vt + subjunctive admonentes (in accordance with Erasmus' rendering of <i>nouthetein</i> in Rom 15:14; 1 Cor 4:14 and 2 Thess 3:15). Cf category 2, at v 28. |
| 29 In quo | Ad quod |

2 Dependence on the same exegetical sources or traditions¹⁶

| Vg | Erasmus and Lefèvre |
|---------------|---|
| 7 charissimo | dilecto (Ambrosiaster) ¹⁷ |
| 11 claritatis | gloriae (Ambrosiaster) |
| 16 condita | creata (Ambrosiaster and Valla). ¹⁸ Cf category 5, at v 16. |
| 17 ante omnes | ante omnia (Ambrosiaster's commentary runs: 'antequam fierent omnia natus est') |

2 Jacobus Faber Stapulensis *Contenta ...*, Paris: H. Estienne 1512, fol. 43 recto: the beginning of Paul's Epistle to the Colossians (1:1-15). Courtesy of the Athenaeumbibliothek, Deventer.

translators in this chapter do not prove Lefèvre's influence on Erasmus. They all admit of another satisfactory explanation and can be accounted for in one of the following terms: the two translators' adherence to the same standards of correct humanistic Latin or to the same principles of translation; their following a Greek reading different from the one underlying the translation given in the Vulgate; their being indebted to the same exegetical sources or traditions.¹⁴ True, the possibility that Erasmus borrowed some rendering or

other from Lefèvre cannot be entirely excluded, but the agreements between the two translators may all be owing to their common basic objective and methods of improving the Vulgate.

In the hope of bringing the problem at issue closer to a solution, I have examined Erasmus' and Lefèvre's translations of another chapter chosen at random, Colossians 1. In his 1516 edition Erasmus altered the Vulgate text of this chapter 103 times. In 32 of these changes, that is, in 31 per cent of the total of Erasmus'

| | | |
|----|---|---|
| 22 | coram ipso | in conspectu suo (Ambrosiaster) |
| 27 | notas diuitias | notum (Valla) quae sint diuitiae (Ambrosiaster, whom Er says he is following here; and Valla: quae diuitiae) |
| | sacramenti | mysterii (Ambrosiaster and Valla). Cf category 5, at v 27. |
| 28 | corripientes | admonentes (Er explicitly says he is following here Ambrosiaster's 'monentes'). Cf category 1, at v 28. |
| 3 | Adoption of a Greek reading different from the one translated in the Vulgate | |
| | Vg | Erasmus and Lefèvre |
| 2 | Iesu ¹ | om |
| 4 | quam habetis | om (Byzantine text) |
| 7 | didicistis | et didicistis (Byzantine text) |
| | Iesu | om |
| 12 | Deo | om |
| 27 | quod est | qui est |

The changes introduced in verses 2, 7 (latter item), 12 and 27 can be regarded as text-critical improvements. In verses 4 and 7 (former item), however, Erasmus adopted inferior, Byzantine readings in preference to the superior traditional readings of the Vulgate. Here we are confronted with one of the serious drawbacks of Erasmus' Latin translation of the New Testament, a drawback generally overlooked by writers on the subject, the systematic introduction of Byzantine readings in the place of superior readings preserved (albeit in translation) in the Vulgate.¹⁹ On account of this systematic confusion of different branches of the textual tradition, Erasmus' translation must be regarded, from a point of textual criticism, as a monster.

4 A striving for closer agreement with the Greek text

| | | |
|----|----------------------|---|
| | Vg | Erasmus and Lefèvre |
| 4 | sanctos omnes | omnes sanctos (<i>pantas tous hagious</i>) |
| 5 | quae reposita est | repositam (<i>apokeimenen</i>) |
| 20 | terris | terra (<i>tes ges</i>) |

EPI.

C nitus omnis creatura, quoniam in ipso cō-
dita sunt vniuersa in cœlis & in terra: vñsibi-
lia & insibilia. Sive throni sive dñationes/
sive principatus sive potestates omnia per
ipsum & in ipso creata sunt. Et ipse est an-
te omnes: & omnia in ipso cōstant. Et ipse
est caput corporis ecclesie: qui est principū/
primogenitus ex mortuis: vt sit in omnibus
ipse pinnatū tenens, quia in ipso compla-
uit omnem plenitudinē inhabitare: & per
eum reconciliati omnia in ipso pacificans
per sanguinem crucis eius, siue qua in ter-
ris siue qua in cœlis sunt. Et vos cum esse-
tis aliquādo alienati & inimici sensu in ope-
ribus malis: nunc autē reconciliati in cor-
pore carnis eius per mortem exhibere vos
sanctos & imaculatos & in epra hēn-
sibiles

D uerfa creatura qua sub cœlo est, Cuius fa-
ctus sum ego paulus minister; qui nunc
gaudeo in passionibus pro vobis; & admi-
pico ea qua defunt passionum CHRI-
STI in carne mea pro corpore eius quod
est ecclesia. Cuius factus sum ego minister
secundum dispensationem dei / quae data
est michi in vobis: vt impleam v eibum dei/
mysterium quod absconditum fuit a sacu-
lis & generationibus: nūc autē manifestatū
est factis eius, quibus voluit deus notas fa-
cere diuitias gloriae faciamenti huius in gē-
tibus: qd est CHRISTVS in vobis spes
gloriae / quem nos annūciavimus: corripien-
tes omnem hominem & docentes in omni
sapientia, vt exhibeamus omnē hominem
perfectum in CHRISTO IHESV: in
quo & laboro / certādo secūdam operatio-
nem eius: quam operatur in me in virtute,

II A Volo enim vos scire qualē sollicitudinem ha-
beam pro vobis & pro ijs qui sunt Laodice-
cia: & quicunq; nō viderunt faciem meam
in carne: vt consolentur corda ipsorū in situ
cū charitate: & in omnes diuitias plenitu-

ditus omni creatura, quia in ipso
creata sunt omnia quae in cœlis
& quae in terra: visibilia & inuisi-
bilia, sive throni sive domina-
tiones, sive principatus, sive potestates,
& omnia in ipso constant. Et ipse
est caput ecclesiae, qui est principū
& primogenitus ex mortuis: quia
in ipso completus est habitatio omnis
plenitudinis: & per eum reconciliati
sunt omnia in ipso pacificans per
sanguinem crucis eius, sive qua in
terris sive qua in caelis sunt. Et vos
cum essetis aliquando alieni & inimi-
ci in operibus malis: nunc autem
reconciliati in corpore carnis eius
sunt per mortem: vt exhiberet vos
sanctos & imaculatos & inepre-
hensibiles in conspectu suo: huius
mysterii permanens in hunc fundatum
& firmum: & in omni spe euangelij
quod audistis quod praedicatum
est in omni creatura quae sub cœlo
est. Cuius ego Paulus factus
sum minister: nunc gaudeo in pas-
sionibus pro vobis: & vice eius
impleo quod defuit pressurae CHRI-
STI in carne mea pro corpore eius
quod est ecclesia, cuius ego mini-
ster factus sum secundum dispen-
sationem dei: quae data est michi
ad vos: vt impleam sermonem
dei: mysterium occultum a saculis
a generationibus: nunc autem mani-
festatum est factis eius, quibus voluit
deus notas facere diuitias gloriae
faciamenti huius in gentibus: quod
est Christus in vobis spes gloriae: quem
nos annūciavimus: corripientes omne
hominem & docentes omnem
hominem in omni sapientia, vt
cōstituiamus omnem hominem
perfectum in CHRISTO IHESV: ad
quod & laboro certans secundum
operationem eius: quam operatur
in me in potestate.

Vos autem scire vellem: quale certamen habeam pro vobis: & pro ijs
quae Laodiceae sunt: atque ijs quicunq;
non viderunt faciem meam in carne:
vt consolentur corda ipsorum in situ
cum charitate: & in omnes diuitias plenitudinis
diuitijs plenariae certum

3 *Jacobus Faber Stapulensis Contenta ...*, Paris: H. Estienne 1512, fol. 43 verso: *Colossians 1:15 – 2:2*. Courtesy of the Athenaeumbibliothek, Deventer.

| | | | |
|----|-----|---|-------------------------------------|
| 24 | Qui | om (the Greek has no equivalent to 'Qui') | 2:2 'mysterii,' 4:3 'mysterium') |
|----|-----|---|-------------------------------------|

| | | |
|----|---|---|
| 5 | A striving for a more consistent (i.e. 'concordant') translation | |
| | Vg | Erasmus and Lefèvre |
| 16 | condita | creata (with Ambrosiaster and Valla, cf category 2; see v 15 'creaturae' and v 16 end 'creata') |
| 27 | sacramenti | mysterii (with Ambrosiaster and Valla, cf category 2; see v 26 'mysterium,' |

6 A striving for a clearer, more expressive, more adequate rendering of the Greek into Latin

| | | |
|---|-----------------------|------------------------------|
| | Vg | Erasmus and Lefèvre |
| 4 | audientes | a conjunction + audiuimus |
| | in (sanctos omnes) | erga (omnes sanctos) |

Let us look somewhat closer at these last two instances. In Col. 1:4, Lefèvre has 'cum audiuimus,' Erasmus 'quoniam audiuimus.' Both expressions mean 'since we have heard.'

The Vulgate reads 'audientes,' that is, 'hearing' This present participle does not render adequately the implications of the Greek aorist participle *akousantes* ('having heard'), at least not by the standards of correct classical and humanistic Latin Both Lefevre and Erasmus felt the need to express the relationship between the participle *akousantes* and the main verb *Eucharistoumen* ('We thank') more precisely by translating the participle as a subordinate clause '(We thank God) since we have heard of the love you have' This type of correction of the Vulgate, introduced for the sake of greater clarity and precision, is quite common in Erasmus' translation, nothing betrays the influence of Lefèvre in this specific case, especially since the two translators used different conjunctions

As to their common reading 'erga' in lieu of 'in' in v 4, the same alteration was introduced by Erasmus in v 20, where he changed 'in ipsum' to 'erga se' Both expressions mean '(to reconcile) to himself,' but the latter is more expressive and less ambiguous than the former, if we assume that the corresponding Greek pronoun *auton* is a reflexive here and refers to the subject of 'reconciliare' But in v 20 Lefèvre retained 'in,' so that Erasmus cannot have borrowed 'erga' in that verse from Lefèvre Nor is there, consequently, any need to regard 'erga' in v 4 as a change owing to Lefèvre

Conclusion

When Erasmus was preparing his translation of the New Testament in the period 1511/12 to 1516, he certainly knew and consulted the Latin translation of the Pauline epistles published by Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples in 1512 Although the possibility cannot be ruled out that Erasmus occasionally borrowed a word or phrase from Lefèvre's translation, it has not yet been demonstrated that he actually did so²⁰ The agreements between Erasmus' and Lefèvre's translations are numerous, but those occurring in Hebrews 9 and Colossians 1 can all be

explained as a result of the translators' pursuing a common objective based on the same presuppositions, the same methods, and the same exegetical tools None of these agreements is demonstrably the result of Lefèvre's influence on Erasmus So far, therefore, nothing warrants the conclusion that Lefèvre's translation has affected Erasmus' wording

Continued research may bring to light the evidence sought in vain in the present contribution Such research, however, will have to observe strictly the principle that no coincidence between the translation of Lefèvre and Erasmus can be accepted as proof of a direct dependence, if such a coincidence can be explained as the result of their common objectives, their common approach, or their common tools

NOTES

- 1 Desiderius Erasmus *Novum Instrumentum* (Basel Froben 1516) On the character of Erasmus' version of the New Testament, see Erika Rummel *Erasmus as a Translator of the Classics* (Toronto University of Toronto Press 1985) chapter 5 pp 89–102
- 2 Jacobus Faber Stapulensis *Contenta Epistola ad Romanos*, etc (Paris H Estienne 1512, revised reprint, Paris H Estienne 1515, 2nd edition, Paris F Regnault and J de la Porte 1517)
- 3 Erasmus Ep 326, lines 89–90 *per multa mutavit vel depravata vel male reddita*
- 4 Erasmus Ep 337, lines 860–61 'Faber Paulinas duntaxat epistulas suo more vertit'
- 5 Erasmus *Apologia*, in H and A Holborn edd *Des Erasmus Roterodamus Ausgewählte Werke* (München C H Beck 1933) p 165, lines 26–31 'reor hanc noui testamenti editionem (sc Vulgatam) Hieronymi non esse' ('I believe that this edition of the NT [the Vulgate] is not the one made by Jerome') This view had already been defended by Valla
- 6 Lefèvre d'Étaples, prefatory letter to his edition of Paul's epistles (1512) 'Nonnulli etiam forte mirabuntur non parum quod ad translationem Hieronymi intelligentiam graecam aducere ausi fuerimus, id nimis insolenter factum arbitantes et me temeritatis et audaciae non tam accusabunt quam damnabunt Quibus nichil succensemus, nam iuste id quidem facerent, si ita res haberet, vt et ipsi coniectant et iam quam plurimus est persuasum Verum nos bona venia dignabuntur cum plane intelligent nos ad sacri Hieronymi translationem nichil ausos, sed ad vulgatam aeditionem, quae longe fuit ante beatum et gloriosum eccle-

siae lumen Hieronymum, et quam nobiscum ipse suggillat, carpit et coarguit et quam veterem et vulgatam appellat aeditionem (Many people may be surprised that we have ventured to add a rendering of the Greek to Jerome's translation They may regard this as too gross an insolence and condemn me for, rather than accuse me of temerity and impudence But we do not blame them for this For their reaction would be justified if the matter stood as they suppose it stands and as very many people are already convinced it stands However they will gladly forgive us once they fully understand that we have undertaken nothing against the translation of Saint Jerome, but against the widely used edition dating back to long before Jerome, that blessed and glorious light of the church He himself censures and criticizes it and shows it to be wrong, just like we do, calling it the old and widely known edition)

- 7 Holborn p 174, lines 1–5
- 8 H J de Jonge 'The Character of Erasmus Translation of the NT' *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 14 (1984) pp 81–87
- 9 See P S Allen *Opus Epistolarum Des Erasmi Roterodami* vol 2 (Oxford Clarendon Press 1910) p 182, J B Trapp Pieter Meghen 1466/7–1540 Scribe and Courier *Erasmus in English* 11 (1981/82) pp 28–35, see p 30 no 4, H Gibaud *Un inédit d Erasme* (Angers Moreana 1982) pp 14–19 and 531
- 10 Andrew J Brown 'The Date of Erasmus Latin Translation of the New Testament *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society* 8 (1984) pp 351–80
- 11 I take it that the words *castigatio* (Ep 264, line 13) and *collatio* (Ep 270, line 58) refer to a revision of the Vulgate, that is, to the earliest stages of Erasmus' preparation of his Latin version of the New Testament in 1512 and 1513 For the grounds of this view, see H J de Jonge, 'The Date and Purpose of Erasmus's *Castigatio Novi Testamenti*' in A C Dionisotti, A Grafton, J Kray edd *The Uses of Greek and Latin Historical Essays* (London Warburg Institute 1988)
- 12 Brown 'The Date' p 380, n 59
- 13 This applies to Lefèvre's rendering of Rom 8 33, 1 Cor 5 4 6 8 and 12 28 2 Cor 8 9 and Hebr 2 7 Erasmus discussed Lefèvre's translation of all these passages in his *Annotaciones* of 1516
- 14 Cf de Jonge 'The Character of Erasmus' Translation of the NT' p 83
- 15 The Vulgate will be quoted here from Lefèvre's first edition of the Pauline epistles (1512) which contains the Vulgate and his own translation side by side in parallel columns Since in some cases several impulses may have been at work simultaneously, there is some overlap between the categories The agreements between Erasmus and Lefèvre in Colossians 1 will be enumerated exhaustively
- 16 I shall restrict myself to two authorities

- which Lefèvre and Erasmus certainly had ready at hand, Ambrosiaster and Valla. Several other sources could be mentioned
- 17 The 4th-century pseudo-Ambrosian commentary on Paul's epistles which owes its attribution to 'Ambrosiaster' to Erasmus. See Ambrosiaster *Commentarius in Epistulas Paulinas* III, ed H I Vogels (CSEL 83, Vienna Hoelder-Pichler-Tempsky 1969) pp 167–78
- 18 Lorenzo Valla (c 1406–1457), the Italian humanist, whose *Annotationes in Novum Testamentum*, written in 1442/43 and revised in the period 1453 to 1457, were discovered by Erasmus in 1504 and published in 1505
- 19 The same applies, of course, to Lefèvre's translation
- 20 For accounts of the relationship between Lefèvre's and Erasmus' biblical scholarship in general, see J H Bentley *Humanists and Holy Writ* (Princeton University Press 1983) pp 176–178, and Erika Rummel *Erasmus' Annotations on the New Testament* (Toronto University of Toronto Press 1986) pp 14–15. I wish to thank Dr Rummel for permitting me to read the typescript of her forthcoming book and for her comments on this article

From Soul to Soul: Persuasion in Erasmus' Paraphrases on the New Testament

JOHN J. BATEMAN

In modern rhetorical theory persuasion is seen as a dynamic series of events in which a persuader influences the behaviour of a persuadee by causing a change of attitude and subsequent modification of behaviour through the appropriate use of speech and, depending on the occasion, various visual techniques.¹ Author and audience are intimately related through the speech act and can and do reciprocally influence each other. This process of reciprocal persuasion with its concomitant attitudinal changes is illustrated by Erasmus' own brief account of the genesis and growth of the Paraphrases on the New Testament. Writing the preface to the Paraphrase on the Gospel of Matthew he recalls in January 1522 the time some five years earlier when

he first had the idea of 'explaining by means of a paraphrase the genuine epistles of Paul.'² The idea struck him as 'a bold, naughty, and risky venture' (and the more delightful for that reason?). He recounts how after making a trial paraphrase of one or two chapters he was ready to furl his sails and quit but the amazing agreement of learned friends – he does not identify them – pushed him into continuing the voyage. In response to their pressing demands he did not stop until he had eventually completed paraphrases on all the apostolic epistles. Whether this account is an accurate recollection or a reconstruction from half-remembered encounters is not my immediate concern. I want rather to point to the psychology of the event as Erasmus narrates it for his present reader. There is first a mental impulse, a movement within the soul (whether we are to think of this impulse as self-generated or divinely inspired is left vague). This impulse releases itself in a speech act which is for Erasmus an act of writing rather than of oral discourse. This written communication produces in its learned audience a simultaneously cognitive and emotional response. The minds of his friends are stirred and their admiration at what they have read (or heard, if he read aloud to them) induces them to persuade the author to continue his discourse. Persuasion thus involves some interaction between two or more minds, or souls (to use the older vocabulary of Erasmus and his world), with the object of changing the mind in some way and consequently the outward behaviour which is the perceptible evidence of the state of the otherwise imperceptible soul.

I shall beg the question somewhat and assume that Erasmus' purpose in making paraphrases on the Apostolic Epistles is not only to elucidate their content for his readers, but also and, I shall argue, primarily to influence their response to that content.³ Letters constitute for Erasmus a rhetorical genre and it is hardly surprising that he views the New Testament Epistles in their historical or literal meaning as

composed with rhetorical intentions by their authors. Enhancing this rhetorical intention and adapting it to the immediate needs of his own contemporary audience would simply be fulfilling the divine purpose of the Epistles and carrying out his own responsibility as an exegete. Erasmus' conception of rhetoric, however, is conditioned by his profound knowledge and long experience in the use of classical rhetoric. I shall, therefore, use the concepts of classical rhetoric as well as of later medieval and renaissance rhetoric for my own analysis of Erasmus' rhetoric.⁴ Classical rhetoric distinguishes clearly between speaker (writer), listener (reader), and discourse, the concatenated words (*logos, sermo, oratio*) which bind the two parties in the speech act. Although, as we shall see, all three coalesce in the persuasive event, we shall for the sake of this analysis discuss them one after the other, beginning with the message, the written text of the Paraphrases about which we have the most knowledge; then, the audience, Erasmus' readership about which we at present know the least; and finally, the most complex and in some respects most perplexing of the three components, the author, or rather authors, since at least two are present in the written text, the biblical author who purports to be writing the paraphrase on his own original letter and the actual writer of the paraphrase, Erasmus who is ostensibly not there at all; and there may even be a possible third author, the Divine Word who is the true author of *sermo evangelicus* and whose mind is being somehow mysteriously transmitted through it.

We shall begin then with the simplest and most tangible topic, the words through which the writer seeks to influence and change the souls of his readers.⁵ Erasmus appears to have taken quite literally the medieval proverb: 'Speech is a mirror of the soul.'⁶ In his paraphrase on the opening words of John's Gospel he writes, 'There is nothing which more fully and more clearly expresses the hidden image of the mind than speech