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Early Criticism of Erasmus's Latin Translation of the Bible

Much has been made of the role and skill of Erasmus as a textual critic and exegete of the Bible.¹ Attention has focused on the manuscripts behind the text (particularly of the New Testament) and the unusual sloppiness of the scholarship surrounding what was later to become the *textus receptus*. The annotations have been scoured, and rightly so, to ascertain the extent and consistency of Erasmus's innovative, reformist thinking. But very little has been written since the sixteenth century analyzing the quality of the Latin translation that Erasmus produced, the publication of which was, in fact, Erasmus's original intent before being approached by the German printer John Froben about the Greek text. The Latin translation was reproached in many quarters at the time of its initial publication, but as most of its detractors were concerned in reality with protecting the Vulgate's position instead of with arriving at the best translation, not enough attention has been given to the *philological* merit of the translation. Certainly early criticisms were discounted as merely vindictive, such as the letters from an unknown monk, which Sir Thomas More refuted in great detail (1520):

Nam primum quid mihi periculi est, si Erasmum credam in Novo Testamento multa rectius vertisse quam interpretem veterem, si credam Graecis ac Latinis literis Erasmum illo peritiorum? Id quod non credo tantum, sed etiam plane video scioque. Nec potest id cuiquam esse ambiguum, cui vel exigua fuerit utriusque linguae noticia.

For first of all, what danger is there for me, if I believe that Erasmus rendered many things more correctly than Jerome, and if I believe that he is more skilled in Greek and Latin literature than Jerome? I do not just believe it, I see it and know it. And it is plain to anyone who has even the slightest knowledge of each language.²

Still, there were those who were not so negatively predisposed to changes in the Vulgate or even toward Erasmus himself; they nevertheless objected to his translation of the Bible on philological grounds also. Theodore Beza (1519–1605) was one who had doubts about Erasmus's

peritia in Greek and Latin, which Sir Thomas More so adamantly insisted upon, so he saw fit to attempt a more accurate and elegant translation into Latin. Beza's Latin translation is the one that, more than any other except Jerome's, has stood the test of time.³ Beza's criticisms of Erasmus's Latin translation of the New Testament,⁴ which occur in the preface of his own editions, his letters, and his annotations, provide us with the best tool for measuring Erasmus's latinity, because Beza's training and skill in the classical languages have scarcely been matched since the sixteenth century.⁵ In this article I will bring together the criticisms of Beza, both general and specific, and will draw some conclusions about Erasmus as translator of the Bible.⁶ To this I will add a brief digression on the true origin of the phrase "textus receptus."

GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF TRANSLATION

In the prefatory letter attached to his *Novum Testamentum* (1582)⁷ and addressed to Queen Elizabeth, Beza explains why he felt it necessary to produce a new Latin translation of the Bible in the face of so many existing versions, especially that of Erasmus. He also gives the method that he himself followed in constructing his own translation (and Greek text). At the time Beza produced his Latin translation and the subsequent revisions, there already existed a number of Latin versions, some of which were merely variations on the Vulgate, but others of which were completely original translations of the text: the Zurich Latin Bible, the translation of Sebastian Castellio, and the translation of the Old Testament and the Apocrypha by Tremellius and Junius. Erasmus's translation belongs with this latter group. Beza had previously attacked Castellio's version at length as being too classical in style to reflect the tone of the testaments and too inexact in its renderings to be relied upon.⁸ He now had strong criticisms of Erasmus's version.

That the Vulgate needed to be replaced, both Erasmus and Beza were agreed. Its problems were manifold. The existing edition, in Beza's opinion, had been corrupted through the years by the copyists to such a degree that, regardless of the quality of the original translation, anyone who knew Greek and Hebrew could not be satisfied with it. In many places it departs from all known Greek texts; in others it translates the Greek obscurely. At times it omits whole phrases, while elsewhere it adds whole phrases. In light of these irregularities, and in view of the fact that Augustine, Hilary, Ambrose, and other Fathers deviated from it from time to

time, Beza considered the Vulgate a stumbling block to the average Christian. A new translation was needed. The translation of Erasmus (first edition 1516, second edition 1519) was meant to correct the faults of the Vulgate, but Beza believed that it did not. As for the individual problems in Erasmus's translation, Beza dealt with them as they came up in the text. But there were some general principles that he outlined in the preface. In very general terms, Beza felt that translators had tended to fall into two categories: those who clung tenaciously to the wording of the Vulgate and who shunned any trace of novelty, and those who ignored the Vulgate altogether and relied solely on Greek sources. Into which of the two groups Erasmus falls, Beza does not make clear. But he quickly points out specific ways in which Erasmus goes astray with his translation. Erasmus first repeats a very basic mistake of the Vulgate:

Veterem interpretem Erasmus merito in eo reprehendit quod unum idemque vocabulum saepe diversis modis explicet. Atqui in eo ipso quoties peccat? Leviculum hoc est, dices. Ego vero aliter censeo, nisi quum ita necesse est, in his quidem libris in quibus saepe videas mirifica quaedam arcana velut unius vocabuli involucris tegi: ut quo propius abest a Graecis et Hebraeis Latina interpretatio, eo mihi quidem magis probanda videatur: ita tamen ut simplicitate illa sermonis servata, quae in his Spiritus sancti oraculis plane divina est et admirabilis, asperum illud et horridum scribendi genus vitetur.

Erasmus rightly criticized the old translator for expressing one and the same Greek word in various ways. But does not Erasmus often do the very same thing? This is trivial, you will say. Normally I would agree, except in special circumstances, as in these books in which you see certain marvelous mysteries covered by the wrappings, as it were, of one word. So the nearer the Latin translation is to the Greek and Hebrew originals, the better it seems to me. But keep in mind that although a simplicity of diction is maintained, which is divine and admirable in these oracles of Holy Spirit, the unpolished and choppy style of writing should be avoided.

Here Beza suggests that the casualness with which Erasmus and the old translator translated the text was a mistake. Instead, they should have aimed for a literal (but not wooden) translation, which through its precise rendering would leave intact the "marvelous mysteries" of the inspired Word of God and which would avoid unnecessary interpretation.

Secondly, Beza believed that Erasmus was confused in thinking that when the Vulgate disagreed with existing Greek exemplars, it was not right. Beza maintained that many witnesses of the New Testament text to which the Vulgate's translator had access must now be missing (a fact we now know to be true):

Deinde quam immerito multis locis Veterem interpretem reprehendit, tamquam a Graecis dissentientem? Dissentiebat, fateor, ab iis exemplaribus quae ille nactus erat: sed non uno loco comperimus aliorum codicum, et quidem vetustissimorum, auctoritate eam interpretationem niti quam ille reprehendit. Quinetiam aliquot locis animadvertimus, Veteris interpretis lectionem, quamvis cum nostris Graecis exemplaribus interdum ei non conveniat, tamen ipsis rebus multo melius quadrare: nempe quod ille quisquis fuit, emendatius aliquod exemplar nactus esset.

Therefore how unfairly does Erasmus criticize the old translator in many passages for disagreeing with the Greek originals? The old translator was disagreeing, I admit, with those exemplars which Erasmus had obtained. But we have discovered that the old translation which he criticized did not rely in a single passage on the authority of other codices, and even of the oldest. Instead we noticed that in a number of passages the reading of the old translator, though not agreeing sometimes with our Greek exemplars, nevertheless fitted the passage much better. That is to say that he, whoever he was, had a more accurate exemplar.

Here Beza shows an advanced understanding of textual criticism. He realized the fragility of textual transmission, the likelihood of important missing manuscripts, and the value of old translations.

Third, Beza found fault with Erasmus for relying too heavily and uncritically on the Fathers. In dealing with quotations from the Fathers, Beza points out, we must be aware that they did not, and in fact could not, always look up the reference they were citing.⁹ They had to rely on memory. Even the Apostles themselves quote from the Old Testament sometimes, not syllable by syllable, but by sense. Beza praises Erasmus for diligently searching and quoting the Fathers on various passages, but blames him for inconsistently, even capriciously, applying what he found there. Many times Beza finds that Erasmus rejects a reading in the annotations, but accepts it in his translation. And furthermore, Beza believed that the theological advances of the Reformation since the time of Erasmus indicated to him several passages that could be translated more accurately. In this the theology of Beza informed his translation, rather than vice versa.

Ideally, Beza concludes, in the interest of obtaining the purest possible translation into Latin, the church should strive to bring together the most learned Christian men from all over the globe to work diligently at producing it. Individuals will always fall short. Nevertheless, since the world is far from perfect, Beza took on the task reluctantly at the prompting of people who highly valued his gifts: "nisi me optimorum ac doctissimorum

hominum auctoritas in hanc velut arenam invitum ac reluctantem pertraxisset" ("if it were not for the fact that the authority of the best and most learned men dragged me, as it were, kicking and screaming into this arena").

That Erasmus was criticized at all did not sit well with some at the time, as I am sure it will not today, although anyone who knows Erasmian studies knows too that he is criticized for many reasons, such as his faulty textual work, as mentioned; his theological capitulation; and his work on the pronunciation of Greek. But there were those who felt Erasmus should be respected as a forerunner of the Reformation. In 1565 Beza received a letter from Anthony Cooke of London, praising his annotations and dedication to Queen Elizabeth, while chiding him for his stance regarding Erasmus:

Praefationem operis tui, antequam haec scriberem, cursim legeram, ita ferebat tempus, cuius mire placebant caetera; in Erasmo et Origene censuram tuam optarem aliquanto aequiorem fuisse, quorum alter inter vetustissimos fuit auctor celeberrimus, et Erasmus inter recentiores vertendo Novo Testamento adeo promovit Evangelii negocium, ut laboris illius auctoritatem non ita minuedam putem. Haec ad te liberius, ut ad amicum, fretus candore tuo.

I rapidly had read through the preface of your work before writing these things, as time permitted, since the rest of the work was so marvelously pleasing. I wish your censure of Erasmus and Origen were somewhat more charitable, since the latter was a very renowned writer among the ancients, and Erasmus more recently, by translating the New Testament, promoted the cause of the Gospel to such an extent, that I think the authority of his labor must not be diminished like this. I write these things freely to you, as a friend, relying on your candor.¹⁰

This rebuke did not deter Beza from printing later editions with the same preface.

Beza puts down several of the general principles that he followed in making his own translation to indicate how he avoided the mistakes of others. They can be summarized as follows:

a. Avoid *audacia*. The Latin translation should not stray loosely from the Greek words. I take this to mean that Beza preferred a literal translation in the same sense as the editorial board of the New American Standard Bible later meant it, when they set forth the first of the two principles that they followed: "to adhere as closely as possible to the original languages of the Holy Scriptures."¹¹

b. Maintain *proprietas*. The "propriety" or "proper signification" of the words should be observed to such a degree that even synonyms are avoided. That is, unless there is some special reason that can be explained in the notes, the exact same Latin word should translate the same Greek word throughout the New Testament.

c. Keep the flavor of the Hebraisms. The comments of the best scholars of the Hebrew language should be taken into account when rendering Hebraisms into Latin idiom. When necessary, the Hebraic form of the idiom should be maintained even at the expense of high latinity.

d. Secular classical authors should be cited to support a particularly difficult translation of the Greek.

e. Compare as many texts and translations as possible before making a translation.

f. In the end, the translation should be smooth to read.

Above all, these principles show Beza to be a conservative in his translation. He preferred to leave a Greek idiom or Hebraism as is—that is, translated word for word—than transfer it inaccurately into Latin idiom. Then he used his annotations to explain what he and others thought the phrase meant, and there to make a personal judgment. This conservatism was based on a lofty respect for the Scriptures as the inspired word of God and on the warning of Rev. 22:19, about which Beza ends this section by saying, "in quo tamen hunc modum tenuimus ut admonitione contenti, ex ingenio aut simplici coniectura ne apicem quidem mutaremus" ("in my commentary I have maintained this moderation, that I be content with the warning to not change even a jot or tittle from cleverness or mere conjecture").

Here I would like to correct a few misconceptions about the phrase "textus receptus" and about Beza as textual critic of the Greek New Testament. It is widely believed that the first use of the phrase "textus receptus" in reference to the near-common Greek text of Erasmus, Stephanus, and Beza occurred in the preface of the 1633 Elzevier Bible, which made the claim, "Textum ergo habes, nunc ab omnibus receptum: in quo nihil immutatum aut corruptum damus" ("Therefore you have the text that is received now by all: we have neither changed nor corrupted anything in it").¹² I suggest that the phrase was in use about the middle of the sixteenth century. In Beza's preface, referring to the 1550 folio and 1551 portable Greek text of Robert Stephanus (Estienne), there is a similar claim to that of the Elzevier Bible: "Studui autem in primis ut non modo

a Graecis, sed etiam a recepta iam olim editione quam minimum deflecerem." The "Graecis" refers to the Greek manuscripts at Beza's disposal, whereas the phrase "recepta . . . editione" points specifically to the text of Stephanus. I translate the phrase as follows: "I was careful not only not to deviate even a little from the Greek manuscripts especially, but also from the edition that is received now for a long time." While the phrase "editio recepta" is certainly different from *textus receptus*, the two are interchangeable enough to indicate that the advertisement by the Elzevier publishing house was not casual (as Metzger puts it), but rather a designation at least fifty years old. And I suspect that it was a common phrase by the time Beza wrote his preface.

Beza is also blamed for solidifying the position of the "textus receptus" by reprinting it almost intact in his own editions. We read, for example, in the *Cambridge History of the Bible* the following: "How far Estienne made effective use of his sources is arguable, but he had shown the value of collating the manuscripts and publishing the results. In spite of this there is little evidence that Beza saw the importance of Estienne's innovation, or of the two ancient manuscripts in his own possession. He made little significant change from the fourth edition of Estienne (which did not have the critical apparatus) and the Complutensian text, both of which he had before him in preparing his own edition.¹³ I take this to mean that Beza saw little value in collating manuscripts and noting the variations; but the opposite is true. Speaking in his preface of those who ignore the old Latin texts and use only the Greek, Beza makes the following statement:

Nam ut in genere de omnibus loquar, quum in ipsis Graecis codicibus maxima sit interdum varietas, videntur omnes vel satis multis exemplaribus non fuisse instructi, vel non satis de hac annotanda varietate solliciti. Video enim illos, caeteris neglectis, ea demum plerunque annotasse quae ipsi probabant: quum singula potius annotare oportuerit, ut suum cuique iudicium relinqueretur. Id ergo ab illis factum esse vehementer cuperem.

Speaking generally about everyone, since there is the greatest of variety at times among the Greek codexes themselves, everyone seems either insufficiently guided by enough exemplars, or not sufficiently worried about noting this variety. For I see that they only take note of those things of which they approve, and ignore the rest, whereas they should note each individual variation and let the reader make his own judgment.

We must reassess what Beza was trying to do with his editions of the New Testament. He was not, I suggest, attempting to publish a new text. His collating efforts were only meant to clean up minor problems in the

already received or standard text. Therefore he did not see himself as a textual critic of the New Testament at all, but rather as a translator, and thus he produced very scanty critical apparatus. Instead, he called on those who were producing Greek texts (evidence that he did not intend "received" to mean "the final word") to list variant readings in the margins.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF THE ANNOTATIONS

Just how the criticisms of Erasmus and the general principles that Beza sets forth in his preface work themselves out in actual translation can be ascertained by studying Beza's annotations. Limiting myself to the Gospel of Matthew only, for the sake of brevity and control, I have lifted some notes that deal with Erasmus's Latin translation and translated them here. Since there are 1,013 pages of text, with a conservative estimate of an average of two criticisms of Erasmus per page, reviewing all of Beza's criticisms of Erasmus is out of the question, even for one Gospel. The following is only a small selection.

Matthew 3:7 (11.46b¹⁴)

Praemonstravit, ὑπέδειξεν. These things are addressed to the Pharisees and the Sadducees, especially those who had not taken part formerly in his gatherings. But because they were moved by the novelty of the affair rather than by a zeal for learning, or maybe because they were led out of jealousy, they had come to look at him. But they certainly were not prepared for repentance, and therefore by such harsh rebuking they were not about to be prepared for baptism, since they were prideful, puffed up falsely by confidence in their own righteousness and birth. And so a great part of them left no better off. See below at Matt. 21:25. The Vulgate has *demonstravit*, so that it seems to have read ἀπέδειξεν. Erasmus has *sub-monstravit*. He used this new word to indicate (as he explained it) that it was done secretly, which seems to me to be completely foreign to this passage. For I think rather that ὑπό here has the same force as πρό, as in the words ὑψηλοῦσθαι, ὑποφθάνειν, ὑποφαινείν, and ὑποφήτης. It also appears to be used this way in Acts 9:16 where Erasmus, with the old translator [translator of the Vulgate], translated ὑποδείξω as *ostendam*, just as ὑπόδειγμα is taken for παράδειγμα in Hebr. 4:11.

Futura, τῆς μελλούσης. Erasmus witnesses himself that he found it written this way in the oldest Latin codex. Still he prefers to say *ventura*, as if it were written μελλούσης ἐλθεῖν.

Matthew 3:11 (13.36a)

Qui venit, ὁ ἐρχόμενος. The Vulgate and Erasmus have *Qui venturus est*. But (if I am not mistaken) John is talking about something in the present. Nor is he indicating who is about to come, but one who is already on the way, and in fact so near, he pointed him out with his finger. For this reason he said ὀπίσω μου, that is, *pone me*, rather than μετ' ἐμέ, which would be *post me*, to show that Christ is now very close behind his back.

Dignus, ἰκανός. Erasmus has *idoneus*. But (unless I am wrong) he is not here referring to how fit or suited to accomplishing this task he is, but how worthy he is to be compared with Christ. Elsewhere ἰκανός means that one is equal to a task that must be accomplished, just as in French they are said to be “sufficient,” not only whose bodily strength and mental capacities are up to the task that has to be accomplished, but also those who are worthy to be entrusted with something. The Hebrews use the word *raviim* in the same way. But in Latin I do not know really whether *sufficiens* is used with this meaning. And so I translated it as if it were written ἄξιος, and followed the Vulgate both in this passage, and also below in 8:8 and in 1 Cor. 15:9. Likewise these two words are interchangeable in Luke 7:4 and 6, and so also the Syrian translator renders ἰκανός as *schave*. But elsewhere (such as in Col. 1:12, 2 Cor. 3:5) I preferred to say *idoneum*. Thus also Herodian: ἰκανώτατος ὢν πάντων ἀνθρώπων προσποιήσασθαι τὴν εὐνοίαν, which in Latin is “*Omnium hominum erat aptissimus ad simulandam benevolentiam.*”

Matthew 9:2 (39.14a)

Obtulerunt, προσέφερον. Erasmus has *adduxerunt*, which translation neither corresponds accurately to the Greek word, nor fits this passage. For the paralytic was not being led, but carried, and in fact was lying on a bed, as Mark 2:1 tells us.

Matthew 9:16 (41.1b)

Illud enim ipsius supplementum, αἶρει γὰρ τὸ πλήρωμα αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ ἱματίου. The Vulgate has “*Tollit enim plenitudinem eius a vestimento.*” Erasmus has “*Aufert enim supplementum illius a vestimento.*” Budé has “*Aufert enim illud supplementum eius a veste.*” All of these seem to have considered τὸ πλήρωμα to be in the accusative case and linked with the

verb αἶρει. Certainly the Vulgate's translator felt it to be accusative, as is evident from the rendering *plenitudinem*; and Erasmus too, as is evident from his own annotations: annoyed at the differences in the new patch, he then tears it off, and so leaves an even uglier hole. But τὸ πλήρωμα (by which word the same thing is meant that was called ἐπιβλημα a little before, in other words, that which is put on to fill and patch a tear) is rather in the nominative case, and is said to tear something from a worn piece of cloth, since the patch is new, just as later new wine is said to burst old skins. Furthermore, he calls it his *supplementum* because it was added [to the main piece of clothing]. For this seems to fit the passage better than if you make *supplementum* refer to the coat, since immediately the term ἱματίου is repeated. Anyway, I expressed the article [*illud*] and I added another accusative [*aliquid*] so as to avoid the ambiguity of construction by which I have said the others were confused.

Matthew 6:32 (31.16a)

De crastino, εἰς τὴν αὔριον, that is, περὶ τῆς αὔριον, as Clement in his *Pedagogy* read. The Vulgate and Erasmus have it literally, *in crastinum*. But by this phraseology is indicated either putting off something to the following day, as in Acts 4:3, or the continuation of a matter all the way up to a certain time, as in Homer's *Odys.* 14, μείνα τελεσφόρον εἰς ἐνιαυτόν. But I think that neither is meant here, rather that it is a Hebrew phrase, since I found *beth* sometimes to mean *propter*. An example very similar to this one can be found in Prov. 27:1.

Matthew 11:6 (49.14b)

Qui non fuerit offensus in me, ὃς ἂν μὴ σκανδαλισθῆ ἐν ἐμοί, that is, who has not taken from me an occasion for an offense and therefore an occasion for not hearing me. The Vulgate has "qui non fuerit scandalizatus in me." Erasmus has "qui non fuerit offensus per me," according to which one could understand it to mean that Christ says they will be happy whom he himself has not harmed. But that does not make sense here. The way I translated it is like what Cicero often says, as in book 2 of *De inventione*, "Si qui in vitio eius offenderemus." Below, in chapter 13:57, Erasmus translated ἐσκανδαλιζοντο ἐν ἐμοί as *offendebantur super eo*. And in chapter 26:31 he translated σκανδαλισθήσεσθε ἐν ἐμοί as *offendiculum patiemini mea causa*; yet he denounced, and rightly so, the fluctuating and unpredictable method of translating.

Matthew 12:1 (53.32a)

Sabbatho, τοῖς σάββασι. Erasmus translated it *Sabbathis* and even criticized the old translator. But the fact that the plural is used for the singular is indicated sufficiently by what follows, and also by Mark 1:21. Nor is there indication here that he means a whole week. For Luke shows that here the subject is the seventh day only, and in fact about the holy day. Nor would this murmuring of the Jews arise about any other day, since the disciples had not violated the Law. For that Erasmus said the individual days of the week were called sabbath (which Theophylastus also asserts at chapter 28 below), even if it were true, it could not fit in the present passage.

Sata, σπορίμων. Erasmus has *segetes*. That is very far off from the Greek.

I do not want to give the impression here that Beza never agrees with Erasmus. In fact, he does, and says so occasionally. But criticism dominates, and to such a degree that in 1563 Beza could write that he no longer thought very highly of Erasmus's ability to translate.¹⁵ Nor should one have the impression that Beza utterly despised Erasmus as a scholar. He understood that Erasmus had carried translation of the Bible for the most part one step beyond the Vulgate. If anything was puzzling to Beza, it was the almost reverent attitude that some people had for Erasmus. He himself, by contrast, even at the height of his career at Geneva, was not beyond making light of Erasmus, as we see in the following pair of epigrams:¹⁶

In Erasmum, cingulo tenus depictum.

"Ἡμισυ ποῦ παντὸς πλέον εἶν' Ἀσκραῖος ἔειπεν.

"Ἡμισυ ἔστ', ὡς οἶμαι, τοῦτο λογισσάμενος.¹⁷

De eodem.

Ingens ingentem, quem personat orbis Erasmum,

Haec tibi dimidium picta tabella refert.

At cur non totum? Mirari desine lector;

Integra nam totum terra nec ipsa capit.

About Erasmus, who is depicted from his waist up.

Hesiod said that half is better than the whole. As I see it, the one who came to this conclusion has got half a brain.

On the same.

This huge painting portrays for you Erasmus, whom the whole world raves about, only from the waist up. But why not all of Erasmus? Marvel no more,

reader, for the whole wide world itself is not big enough to hold all of Erasmus.

Anyone who understands the character of Beza, with all of its Catullan and Martialian spirit, knows that Beza was not being malicious so much as comical and entertaining. He even made fun of himself at times.

The criticisms themselves as they appear in the annotations are surprisingly basic at times. Often Erasmus simply misunderstood the context, or the grammar, or some Hebraism. Other times he failed to command the nuance of a particular word, even a Latin word, which Beza felt could be illustrated from classical examples. The same carried over to idiomatic phrases. Nor did Erasmus follow his own rule of consistent translation, as Beza had already pointed out in the preface. Some mishaps of translation Beza attributed to Erasmus's murky theology, and some to mere carelessness of the current import of a word in the church.

All in all, if we take Beza's evaluation, Erasmus did a poor job of translating the New Testament. This is an astounding thing to say about a man whose latinity is lavished with such praise by his biographers. For example, we are told by Huizinga that Erasmus "could express himself as well in Latin as in his mother tongue."¹⁸ I am not about to overturn the opinions of Erasmian experts. Yet Beza's comments do call into question Erasmus's faculty for translating the New Testament into Latin, not necessarily because he had not mastered Latin, but at least because his methodology and approach were faulty. The New Testament was a special challenge. It demanded precision in rendering idiomatic expressions and careful attention to contextual and theological constraints. Every preposition and every tense had to be painstakingly weighed and considered. All optional translations had to be consulted. And the end result of such detailed labor had to be an unambiguous and fluid translation. What is clear is that Erasmus did not have a uniform and well-formed program in mind for the particular task at hand, a task that differed greatly from producing a work such as the *Encomium Moriae* from scratch.

APPENDIX

Matthew 3:7 (11.46b)

Praemonstravit, ὑπέδειξεν. Dicuntur ista Pharisaeis et Sadducaeis, praesertim qui antea concionibus ipsius non interfuerant: sed rei novitate

commoti potius quam discendi studio ad eum spectandum, ac fortassis etiam aemulatione adducti advenerant, minime certe ad resipiscentiam comparati, ac proinde tam acerba reprehensione, ut qui suae iustitiae ac generis falso fiducia inflati turgerent, ad baptismum praeparandi, quorum magna pars nihilo melior evasit, infra 21.25. Vulgate, Demonstravit: ut videatur legisse ἀπέδειξεν. Erasmus, Submonstravit: novo vocabulo id est (ut ipse exponit) clanculum indicavit: quod mihi quidem videtur penitus alienum ab hoc loco. Nam potius ὑπὸ idem his valere puto quod πρό, sicut in ὑφηγεῖσθαι, ὑποφθάνειν, ὑποφαίνειν, ὑποφητης. Sic etiam videtur usurpari *Act.* 9.16 ubi Erasmus cum Vetere interpretate ὑποδείξω vertit Ostendam: sicut ὑπόδειγμα accipitur pro παράδειγμα *Hebr.* 4.11.

Futura, τῆς μελλούσης. Ita etiam in antiquissimo codice Latino scriptum se reperisse testatur Erasmus: qui tamen dicere maluit ventura, quasi scriptum sit, μελλούσης ἐλθεῖν.

Matthew 3:11 (13.36a)

Qui venit, ὁ ἐρχόμενος. Vulgata et Erasmus Qui venturus est. Sed (ni fallor), Johannes de re praesenti loquitur: neque Venturum notat, sed eum qui sit in via, atqui adeo proximus, digito commonstravit. Quamobrem etiam dixit ὀπίσω μου, id est pone me, potius quam μετ' ἐμέ, post me: ut significet Christum iam a tergo imminere.

Dignus, ἰκανός. Erasmus, Idoneus. Atqui (ni fallor) non his agitur quam sit aptus aut accommodatus ad hoc officium praestandum; sed quam dignus sit qui cum Christo comparetur. Alioquin ἰκανός alicui rei praestandae parem significat: quo modo etiam Gallis dicuntur sufficientes quorum non modo vires corporis aut virtutes animi sufficiant rei alicui praestandae, sed etiam qui digni sint quibus aliquid committatur. Hebraei ad eundem modum utuntur voce *raviim*. Latinis tamen haud satis scio an Sufficiens hac significatione usurpetur: itaque converti tanquam ἄξιος scriptum esset, Veterem interpretem sequutus tum hoc loco, tum etiam infra 8.8 et 1 *Cor.* 15.9, quomodo etiam haec duo inter se permutantur, *Luc.* 7.4 et 6, et ita etiam Syrus interpres pro ἰκανός vertit *Schave*. Alibi vero (ut *Coloss.* 1.12 et 2 *Cor.* 3.5) idoneum, dicere malui. Sic etiam Herodianus, ἰκανώτατος ὢν παντῶν ἀνθρώπων προσποιήσασθαι τὴν εὐνοίαν, Omnium hominum erat aptissimus ad simulandum benevolentiam.

Matthew 9:2 (39.14a)

Obtulerunt, προσέφερον. Erasmus Adduxerunt. quae interpretatio neque Graeco vocabulo proprie respondet, neque huic loco convenit. Neque enim ducebatur sed ferebatur paralyticus, et quidem in lecto decumbens, ut narratur *Mar* 2.1.

Matthew 9:16 (41.1b)

Illud enim ipsius supplementum tollit, αἶρει γὰρ τὸ πλήρωμα αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ ἱματίου. Vulgata, Tollit enim plenitudinem eius a vestimento. Erasmus, Aufert enim supplementum illius a vestimento. Budaeus, Aufert enim illud supplementum eius a veste. Hi omnes videntur existimasse τὸ πλήρωμα positum quarto casu, et coniungi cum verbo αἶρει. Certe ita sensisse Veterem interpretem apparet ex eo quod vertit plenitudinem: et Erasmus quoque, ex ipsius annotationibus. Offensus enim (inquit) dissimilitudine novi panni, postea detrahit, et deformior sit ruptura. Atqui τὸ πλήρωμα (quo vocabulo idem illud significatur quod paulo ante vocavit ἐπιβλημα, illud videlicet quod ad implendam et sarcendam rupturam inditur) ponitur potius recto casu, diciturque detrahare aliquid de veste detrita, quum ipsum sit novum. quo modo postea Vinum novum dicitur veteres utres frangere. Supplementum autem eius vocat a quo videlicet inditum est. Hoc enim melius videtur convenire quam si ad pallium referas, quum statim repetatur nomen ἱματίου. Praeterea articulum expressi, et addidi casum verbo, ut ambiguitatem illam constructionis vitarem, a qua illos dixi fuisse deceptos.

Matthew 6:32 (31.16a)

De Crastino, εἰς τὴν αὔριον, id est, περὶ τῆς αὔριον, ut etiam legit Clemens in Paedagogo. Vulgata et Erasmus ad verbum, In crastinum. Sed hoc dicendi genere significatur vel differri aliquid in diem sequentem, ut *Act.* 4.3: vel rei continuatio ad certum usque tempus. Homerus *Odyss* ε.—μείνα τελεσφόρον εἰς ἐνιαυτόν. Neutrum autem hic significari puto, ac potius Hebraeorum phrasin esse, apud quos reperio *beth* interdum significare propter. Cuius exemplum habes huic nostro prorsus simile, *Prover.* 27.1.

Matthew 11:6 (49.14b)

Qui non fuerit offensus in me, ὃς ἐὰν μὴ σκανδαλισθῆ ἐν ἐμοί. id est, qui ex me non ceperit offendiculi ac proinde mei non audendi occasionem. Vulgata, Qui non fuerit scandalizatus in me. Erasmus, Qui non fuerit offensus per me: quod sic accipi posset, quasi dicat Christus eos fore beatos quos ipse non laeserit: qui sensus non convenit. Sic autem ut verti, loquitur etiam Cicero saepe, ut libro 2. *de Inventione*, Si quo in vitio eius offenderemur. Infra, cap. 13.57, Erasmus, vertit Offendebantur super eo, ἔσκανδαλίζοντο ἐν αὐτῷ. Et cap. 26.31, Offendiculum patiemini mea causa, σκανδαλισθήσεσθε ἐν ἐμοί, qui tamen variam istam et multiplicem interpretandi rationem saepe, idque merito, reprehendit.

Matthew 12:1 (53.32a)

Sabbatho, τοῖς σάββασι. Erasmus interpretatur Sabbathis et Veterem etiam interpretem reprehendit. Atqui plurale pro singulari positum esse, satis indicat sequentia, ut etiam *Mar.* 1.21. Neque est quod de hebdomade intelligas. Nam de septimo demum die hic agi, et eo quidem solenni, Lucas ostendit. neque hoc murmur Iudaeorum alio die exoriri potuisset: siquidem non violassent Legem discipuli. Nam quod Erasmus ait singulos dies hebdomadis fuisse sabbatha appellatos (quod etiam asserit Theophylactus infra, cap. 28) etiamsi verum esset, praesenti loco quadrare non posset.

Sata, σπορίμων. Erasmus, Segetes. Illud longuis abest a Graeco.

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NOTES

1. Bibliographical information on Erasmus can be found in J.-C. Margolin's *Quatorze années de bibliographie érasmiennne* (Paris: Vrin, 1969), covering 1936-1949; *Douze années de bibliographie érasmiennne* (Paris: Vrin, 1963), covering 1950-1961; and *Neuf années de bibliographie érasmiennne* (Paris: Vrin, 1977), covering 1962-1970. See also A. Gerlo, *Bibliographie des humanistes des anciens Pays-Bas* (Brussels: Presses Universitaires de Bruxelles, 1972). Also, the *Bibliographie internationale de l'humanisme et de la Renaissance* (Geneva: Droz, 1965-) gives the bibliography back to 1963.

2. Elizabeth F. Rogers, *The Correspondence of Sir Thomas More* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947), n. 83, 165-206. The quote is taken from p. 166; the translation is mine. More probably used *interpretem veterem* instead of Jerome's name because there were already at this time strong doubts as to how much Jerome was really responsible for the Vulgate as it stood.

3. As recently as 1897, D. Appleton and Company of New York published a text of Beza's *Novum Testamentum* for general, as opposed to scholarly, use. In view of the rapid decline of the study of Latin in America since the Yale Report of 1828, this point is significant. Many editions were published during the nineteenth century. For Europe a portable edition came out as late as 1911 in Berlin (funded by the Society of British and Foreign Bibliophiles), a reprint of the 1642 Cambridge edition. In contrast, recent editions of Erasmus have been intended for scholarly purposes.

4. The criticisms relate specifically to Erasmus's New Testament translation, since Beza himself only translated the New Testament and Psalms.

5. I will omit here a description and discourse on Beza's education, since I treated the subject recently in my article, "Theodore Beza's Classical Library and Christian Humanism," forthcoming in *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* (1991).

6. I hope this argument will supplement the excellent scholarship of Irena Backus in *The Reformed Roots of the English New Testament: The Influence of Theodore Beza on the English New Testament* (Pittsburgh: Pickwick Press, 1980).

7. The full title is as follows: *Jesu Christi D.N. Novum testamentum, sive Novum foedus. Cuius Graeco contextui respondent interpretationes duae: una, vetus; altera, nova. Theodori Bezae, diligenter ab eo recognita. Eiusdem Th. Bezae annotationes, quas itidem hac tertia editione recognovit, et accessione non parva locupletavit* (Geneva, 1582), printed by Henri Estienne. The other major (folio) editions appeared in 1565, 1588, and 1598. Because the prefatory letter covers only a few short pages at the beginning of the book (ii-vii) and can easily be perused, I have refrained from referencing each quote. I chose this specific edition because it is both reliable and easily accessible.

8. In *Theodori Bezae Responsio ad defensiones et reprehensiones Sebastiani Castellionis, quibus suam Novi Testamenti interpretationem defendere adversus*

Bezam, et eius versionem vicissim reprehendere conatus est (Geneva: H. Estienne), 1563.

9. They would have been prevented by the cumbersome nature of the scrolls, the expense and unavailability of books, and the limits of time.

10. Hippolyte Aubert, Henri Meylan, Fernand Aubert, eds., *Correspondance de Théodore de Bèze* (Geneva: Droz, 1960–), 6.137; hereafter cited simply as *Corr.*

11. See the foreword to any *NASB*, orig. publ. 1960.

12. See the discussion in Bruce Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 105–106.

13. S. L. Greenslade, *The Cambridge History of the Bible: The West from the Reformation to the Present Day* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 62.

14. The numbers refer to the page, line, and column of the comment in *Novum Testamentum*. Bracketed words in the text that follows are my own and meant to explain the sometimes terse phrases of Beza.

15. See Beza's preface to his *Responsio ad defensiones et reprehensiones Sebastiani Castellionis*, reprinted in *Corr.* 4.190. "Sed habet vicissim Castellio quos sequatur. Quosnam vero? Originem, inquit, Ambrosium, Hieronymum, Erasmus et Ochinum. Atqui magnam Ambrosio iniuriam facit, et ego hac in parte fateor me nimium Erasmo credulum fuisse."

16. The epigrams come from *Theodori Bezae Vezelli poemata varia* (Geneva, 1597), 218. The pair is taken together by the lines that separate the various poems in this edition. A slightly modified version of the second poem appears in the first edition of Beza's poems (1548).

17. The form is odd with its $-\sigma\sigma$, but it is necessary for the pentameter. For this Aeolic characteristic see Carl Buck, *The Greek Dialects* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), 166. Beza used the Aeolic form in 1548 for the epitaph of Guilamme Budé: $\delta\nu\omicron\mu\acute{\alpha}\sigma\sigma\alpha\tau\omicron$.

18. Johan Huizinga, *Erasmus and the Age of Reformation* (New York: Harper, 1957), 43.