Book Reviews

Jane E. Phillips (transl. and ed.)

Collected Works of Erasmus, vol. 47: *Paraphrase on Luke 1–10* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016). x–xix + 316 pp. ISBN 978-1-4426-4885-2.

This volume, which completes the English translation of the *Paraphrases on the New Testament*, is another excellent addition to the *CWE* series of Erasmus' New Testament scholarship under the general editorship of Robert Sider. Congratulations are due to the editors, the University of Toronto Press, and to the translator. Jane Phillips produced a wonderful translation with extensive notes, which not only trace the exegetical tradition of the Church Fathers on each and every passage, highlight the Bible quotations Erasmus inserted or to which he alludes, and point to material he used from his own *adagia*, but also explain *realia* that are helpful to understand and appreciate Erasmus' paraphrasing labors. A critical edition of this kind makes one realize how immense a task Erasmus had taken upon him, how much theological learning and rhetorical skill is needed to write such paraphrases, and how much learning is needed to study and appreciate them. In 2003, Phillips had already delivered *CWE* 48, containing the second half of the *Paraphrases on Luke* (Chapters 11–24), and in 1991 the *Paraphrase on John* (*CWE* 46). If in this review I make a few critical remarks, the reader should be aware that these are made in sincere admiration for her 'Herculean labor' and its great result.

For the ordinary reader of this kind of translation, some of the notes may be overwhelming. Phillips often provides the exegetical tradition of an idea or a pericope well beyond what seems necessary. One example may suffice. The note to *Paraphrase on Luke* 4, 2 (126, n. 5) runs as follows: "For the connection between OT law and gospel law, cf John 1:17 and Rom 3:21–31. The exegetical tradition at this point invokes Moses and Elijah (mentioned below), representatives of the Law and the prophets, and thus in their fasting forerunners of Jesus' forty days; Ambrose *Expos in Lucam* PL 15 1700D–1701A, Chrysostom *Hom in Matthaeum* 13 PG 57 210, Bede *In Lucam expos* PL 92 366B–C, the Gloss (on

4,2), quoting Bede, Theophylact *Enarr in Lucam*, PG 123, 745C–D, and Hugh of St Cher (on 4:2) 153r.” Curious and careful readers may appreciate the list of seven possible sources, but even they may find it difficult to check and appreciate them all.

Moreover, these readers may be led astray to some extent. Some of the interpretations given by Erasmus are rather obvious, and could have been produced by himself, even when they vaguely resemble what a Church Father or theologian already said. In those instances, Phillips’ notes give the impression of an indebtedness that need not correspond to Erasmus’ way of working. In many cases, the tradition is so strong and broad that pinpointing specific texts as sources creates a misguided sense of exactness. As the editor of the *Paraphrasis in Lucae evangelium* for the ASD series, the more I study the Paraphrases, the more I have the impression that, while writing them, Erasmus did not have the complete tradition ready in his mind (even though he edited texts of many Church Fathers and other theologians of the early Church). Rather, he had the various authors on his desk in compilation works, such as Beda Venerabilis’ *In Lucae evangelium expositio*, the *Biblia cum glossa* (the Gloss, i.e. the *Glossa ordinaria*, that is the annotated Bible with interlinear and marginal glosses), and the *Catena aurea* of the four Gospels, all works that quote many Fathers and other theologians, and echo the previous compilations. Phillips lists the compilation works among the sources, whereas I tend to see them as the intermediate sources for earlier exegesis. Since these intermediate sources often give the same quotations or citations, in many instances it is difficult if not impossible to indicate the exact sources.¹ Moreover, Erasmus paraphrases the Bible text, but if he uses sources—and we can be sure he did—he also paraphrases them. One should therefore remain cautious when tracing them. While Phillips rightly points to Erasmus’ own *Annotationes*, which contain many references to authors from the exegetical tradition (xix), it should be kept in mind that the annotations are more ‘scholarly’ than the paraphrases, and that in the former Erasmus adduces many more testimonies to defend his cause, which are likely to have served the mere purpose of demonstration. Finally, the paraphrast does not shun deviating from his own annotations.

In this respect, it may be helpful to bear in mind Erasmus’ way of working as described by John Bateman (ASD VII-6: 13), who assumes that Erasmus “followed a practice common in sixteenth-century letter-writing”:

1 See also John Bateman, “General Introduction”, ASD VII-6: 1–16, here 12–15.

He would have begun by making a draft of the argument, the thought or *sensus* of the epistle, unit by unit as he defined them, analogous to the rough draft (*précis*, *Konzept*) which writers of letters commonly made prior to the final version to be sent to the addressee. This initial draft would then be elaborated with whatever detail seemed called for, including the elimination of the difficulties presented by the content or the style of the biblical text. Either prior to or in the course of the composition of the more polished draft(s) the authorities were consulted to ensure that the paraphrase was not distorting the thought (*paraphronesis*). Not only the thought but also the language of the authority could creep into the paraphrase ... But in view of the limited time available for the writing of the Paraphrases ... consultation was very likely both minimal and rapid.

Phillips' extensive notes—admirable as they are for her meticulous and careful reading of so many sources—, give a different impression, namely of an Erasmus assiduously studying his books. Erasmus' rashness in producing many works is well known, so Bateman's assumption of consultation being rather "minimal and rapid" might be more plausible. Yet I hasten to admit that I too, when editing the *Paraphrase on Luke*, regularly provide more quotations than necessary. There are numerous *possible* sources, and I believe the users of the volume should be given the chance to draw conclusions for themselves.

In my opinion, there are a few instances when Phillips is emphasizing too many parallels. In a passage in which Jesus teaches in the synagogue, and first reads standing, then explains sitting, Erasmus clarifies as follows: "That he stood to read was owed to the authority of divine Scripture, before which it behoves every human rank to rise; that he sat to teach makes it clear that the interpreter of divine Scripture should be free from the tumult of all human desires" (143). In note 51 Phillips annotates: "Bede *In Lucam expos* PL 92 374C notes that standing to read is appropriate because it is the posture of one who is working, and sitting afterwards is the posture of one resting or passing judgment". It is understandable to seek some kind of parallel for Erasmus' hermeneutics here, but these parallels miss the exegetical point.² However, I admit that I have not yet found a better alternative.

Since Phillips is mostly concerned with the paraphrase's English translation, she does not deal much with the Latin text. However, in some cases the original

2 For the issue of the Paraphrases as both exegesis and hermeneutics, see my "Exegesis and Hermeneutics in Erasmus' *Paraphrase on Luke*," *Erasmus Studies* 36 (2016): 148–162.

Latin is brought to the fore in an admirable way, for instance in her annotation on the paraphrase on the *prooemium* of Luke's Gospel (1, 1–4), where she discusses Erasmus' use of the words "fides" and "fiducia". Furthermore, in her annotations she understandably needs to limit the discussion of Erasmus' use of the Vulgate or of his own *Novum Testamentum*. She does incorporate his use of the *Annotationes*, although she could perhaps have highlighted more Erasmus' deviations, at times rather remarkable, from his own annotations. For instance, in the *Paraphrase on Luke* 4, 14, the Vulgate text runs: "fama exiit per universam regionem de illo". The question here is whether Jesus' fame spread over all Galilee, or also in other adjacent regions. Whereas Erasmus' annotation suggests various alternatives (*ASD* VI-5: 508, ll. 639–640), such as "per totam finitimam regionem" or "per omnem vndique regionem", in the paraphrase Erasmus retains the Vulgate text (as he had also done in the *Nov. Test.*): "fama ... diuulgata est in vniuersam eam regionem". It is only one example of many such deviations from the *Annotationes*. This issue raises a larger question regarding the *Paraphrase on Luke* (one that Phillips in her effort to provide an English translation indeed did not have to deal with extensively), which is that of the relationship between the paraphrase, the text of the Vulgate, and the text of his own revision of the Vulgate, i.e. the *Novum Testamentum*, of which the third edition had appeared in 1522 shortly before Erasmus wrote the *Paraphrase on Luke*. Even though the texts of the Vulgate and the *Novum Testamentum* are often the same, when they diverge, Erasmus in his *Paraphrase on Luke* sometimes follows the wording or interpretation of the former, and at other times that of the latter.

There are a few *minutiae* that I would like to point out. First, it is somewhat puzzling that Phillips cites Erasmus' polemics with Noel Beda by referring to *LB* although the *ASD* volume (IX-5) appeared in 2012. One could argue that she is giving references for people who read Erasmus in English, and she often refers to the *CWE* volumes, which is indeed practical for those readers. When a *CWE* volume is still lacking, she falls back on the Latin *LB* but in the case of the *Annotationes* she refers to the Latin *ASD*, so then why not rather use *ASD* IX-5 for the Beda polemics too? Furthermore, on p. 23, l. 10 Phillips translates "caput" as "source" ("the source of our salvation was for everyone to be persuaded that Jesus was the Messiah"), but it is rather the "sum", the "main thing"; on p. 34, n. 46 "praeparatam" and "instructam" should be "praeparatum" and "instructum"; on p. 39, the last line of the translation, a sentence has been omitted ("Moribus inculpatissimis ac purissimis delegerat, ne quid in hos criminis posset impingi"): "God had chosen people of irreproachable and pure behavior so that no accusation whatsoever could be brought in against them"; on p. 104, l. 6 from the bottom, "renewal" of all things (for *novator*) should be

“the renewer”, i.e. Christ; on p. 125, n. 1 Origen does not allude to *per omnia probatus*; on p. 125, n. 3. Horace *Odes* 3:1–2 should be 3,25: 1–2.

This being said, however, these points of discussion do not diminish my admiration for Jane Phillips’ achievement, and for the wonderful job done in the other volumes of the *Paraphrases on the New Testament*, *CWE* 42–50. Thanks to Phillips and her colleagues, Erasmus’ *Paraphrases* can now be read, studied, and savored in their entirety, also by those who do not know Latin or find it easier to read them in English than in the original language. They, too, can now value their rhetorical and religious flavors. The volumes containing the *Paraphrases* in the *ASD* series are currently being prepared by Jean-François Cottier, Miekske van Poll-van de Lisdonk, Edwin Rabbie, and myself—only VII, 6, John Bateman’s edition of the last Epistles already appeared, twenty years ago—and after its completion researchers will be able to study Erasmus’ paraphrases in both languages. It is my hope that these volumes may continue and advance the scholarship on the *Paraphrases*.³

The main goal of Erasmus’ paraphrases is to speak “from soul to soul”, to use John Bateman’s expression, in order to advocate a “new”, or rather “renewed Christianity”.⁴ As such, the paraphrases were meant as an aid for preachers and congregations to read and interpret the Bible—literally or allegorically—and thus to become better Christians. They are the ultimate result of Erasmus’ religious and theological program (the ‘philosophy of Christ’) that was stated in the *Enchiridion* (1503), and labelled as such in the *Paraclesis* (1516), and whose aim it was to help Christians to ameliorate their lives on the basis of the theology of the New Testament, brought to them in a comprehensible way. The paraphrases were an immense success. Printed several times, they were available in every English parish,⁵ and already during Erasmus’ lifetime, they were often translated. We also find traces of them in later commentaries on the New Testament and in sermons. In the *Paraphrases*, Erasmus obviously spoke

3 For the current state of scholarship, see the special issue of *Erasmus Studies* 36.2 (2016) on Erasmus’ *Paraphrases* that includes an exhaustive bibliography to which should be added Jane E. Phillips, “The Shaping of a Gospel: Further Reflections on the Paraphrase on Luke,” in S. Ryle (ed.), *Erasmus and the Republic of Letters* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014) 328–341. In particular Jean-François Cottier, the *ASD* editor of the *Paraphrases on Matthew and Mark*, has contributed greatly to the study of the Erasmian paraphrase.

4 John Bateman, “From Soul to Soul: Persuasion in Erasmus’ Paraphrases on the New Testament”, *Erasmus in English* 15 (1987–1988): 7–16; Christine Christ-von Wedel, *Erasmus of Rotterdam. Advocate of a New Christianity* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013).

5 Gregory Dodds, *Exploiting Erasmus: The Erasmian Legacy and Religious Change in Early Modern England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009).

to the souls of his contemporary readers. What he said and how he said it, is now made available in the elegant *CWE* translations, and in the case of the first part of Luke, in this outstanding volume.

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