

The Open Court

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE

Devoted to the Science of Religion, the Religion of Science, and the
Extension of the Religious Parliament Idea

Founded by EDWARD C. HEGELER.

VOL. XXX. (No. 3)

MARCH, 1916.

NO. 718

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OR

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By **GEORG CANTOR**

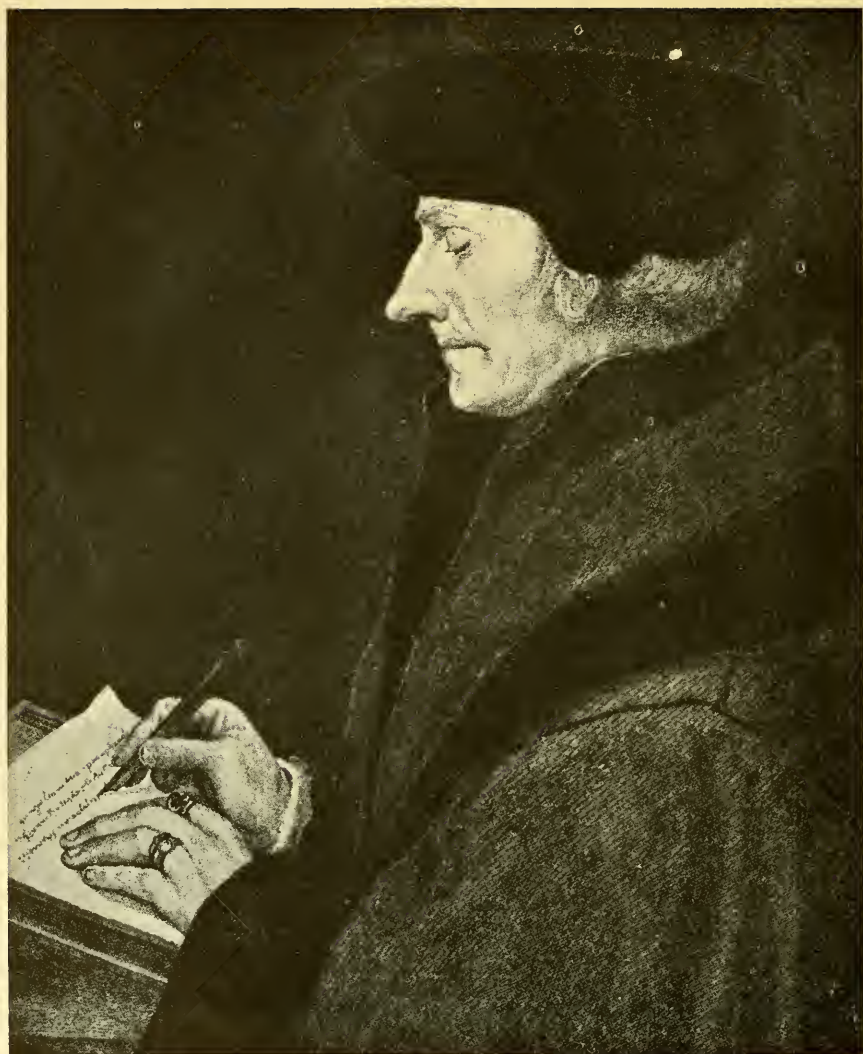
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ERASMUS.
(After a painting by Holbein.)

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THE FOUR-HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE PUBLICATION OF THE FIRST GREEK NEW TESTAMENT.

BY BERNHARD PICK.

INTRODUCTORY.

THESE pages are intended to remind the reader of a work the publication of which, four hundred years ago, was of great consequence. We mean the Greek New Testament edited by Desiderius Erasmus and published by John Froben of Basel. The publication of this work one year before the Reformation was timely, and its sale was so remarkable that within twenty years five editions were issued by Erasmus. His second edition was used by Luther in his confinement at the Wartburg, where he made his German translation, whereas the first three editions formed the basis for William Tyndale's English version. The significance of both these translations need only be suggested.

We are concerned here with the first edition of Erasmus's New Testament, a copy of which in the Library of the Union Theological Seminary was kindly put at my disposal. In examining the text of this edition I confined myself mostly to such readings as are found in the Authorized Version but are objected to by modern critics.

The work of examining the text was no easy task, in spite of the otherwise beautiful print. Leaving aside the ligatures which one usually meets with in old Greek books but to which one gets easily accustomed, the examination is made difficult because the text is printed in a continuous manner without any division.¹ It

¹A versicular division was first introduced by Robert Stephens into his edition of 1551.

is true that the Latin translation accompanying the Greek text has in the margin the number of the chapters in Roman letters. But, considering the haste with which this first edition was prepared, even these numbers are often wanting, and thus a collation becomes difficult, not to say tiresome.

The reason why we have only considered such readings as are omitted by the revisers or objected to by modern critics, is to show how much the text of Erasmus influenced the so-called *textus receptus*, the basis of the Authorized Version. From our collation, for which we also examined five different editions besides the Erasmian text, it will also be seen that modern writers are not at all agreed as yet as to the rejection or retention of a reading. Thus, to the high praise which the late Prof. Philip Schaff (*Introduction to the Revised Greek-English New Testament*, New York, Harper and Bros.) bestowed upon the text of the Greek New Testament edited by Westcott and Hort, when he calls it the oldest and purest text of all editions (*hic habes textum omnium editionum anti-quissimum et purissimum*), we must now add the opinion of another critic, the late F. H. A. Scrivener, who, in his preface to the *Novum Testamentum, textus Stephanici, A. D. 1550* etc. (Cambridge, 1887), calls the work of Westcott and Hort "*splendidum peccatum, non κτήμα εἰς ἀεί,*" i. e., "a splendid failure, not a possession for ever." Erasmus was the first editor of the Greek New Testament. Four hundred years have passed, and, considering the present state of the New Testament text, one cannot yet say that everything has been done. In this opinion I have been confirmed by an examination of Codex D or *Bezae*—an authority, as it seems to me, too much neglected—and I hope on some other occasion to be able to lay the results of this study before the student of the New Testament.

1516-1916.

March the 1st, 1916, is the four-hundredth anniversary of the publication of the first edition of the New Testament in Greek, prepared by the famous scholar Desiderius Erasmus (1467-1536), and published at Basel by John Froben. As we remarked above, it was a most timely publication, just one year before the Reformation, and furnished Luther² and Tyndale the text for their vernacular versions, which became the most powerful levers of the Reformation in Germany and England. At the time that Erasmus undertook to

² *Erasmus peperit ovum, Lutherus exclusit*, i. e., "Erasmus laid the egg which Luther hatched," was the saying of bigoted Catholics.

edit the New Testament in Greek, as well as for centuries before, the Latin translation of the Greek and Hebrew Scriptures and the Apocrypha was the sacred book of the church. This, with many slight variations in the manuscripts, was substantially Jerome's version, and it was upon this that the text subsequently authorized by the Council of Trent (April 8, 1546) was founded. To the monks and theologians of that day it was *the Bible*, as if no originals existed. Preachers, teachers, controversialists argued from its texts as if there were no original to appeal to beyond it. It is not surprising, then, that the earliest book printed was the *Latin Bible*, known as the "Mazarine Bible." That was about the middle of the fifteenth century (1456), and before the close of that century several other editions had appeared, among others a neat one in octavo for the poor man, by John Froben, bearing the date 1491. Nor were the modern languages neglected. Before the end of the fifteenth century there were published, ten years after the "Mazarine Bible," a *German* translation of the Bible, in 1466. Five years later, in 1471, an *Italian* Bible followed. Of other versions we mention:

- 1474(?) *French*, New Testament :
- Bohemian*, New Testament :
- 1477. *Dutch* and *Flemish*, the Old Testament :
- 1478. *Catalan*, the Bible ;
- 1490. *Spanish*, the Liturgical Gospels ;
- 1491. *Slavonic*, the Psalter ;
- 1495. *Portuguese*, Harmony of the Gospels ;
- Croatian* and *Servian*, the Liturgical Gospels and Epistles.

Nor must we omit to mention that the *Psalter* in Ancient Greek was published in 1481, and the first complete *Hebrew* Old Testament in 1488. But how many in those days cared for Greek, still less for Hebrew? Only a few among the learned had a knowledge of these languages, and to these few belonged Erasmus and his friend John Oecolampadius, who assisted him in the preparation of the New Testament.

Before we speak of the New Testament published by Froben in 1516, we must speak of another piece of Biblical work which was the *causa movens* that induced Froben to engage Erasmus to prepare an edition of the Greek New Testament. The work referred to is the famous Complutensian Polyglot or *Biblia Sacra*. Its full title follows: *Polyglotta, complectentia Vetus Testamentum,*

Domini Francisci Ximensis de Cisneros, tituli sancte Balbine, sacrosancte Romane Ecclesie presbyteri Cardinalis, et Hispaniarum primatie ac regnorum Castelle Archicancellarii Archiepiscopi Toletani, etc., etc., 6 vols., large folio. In Complutensi Universitate, 1514-1517.

This splendid Polyglot was executed by the order and at the expense (50,000 ducats, or about \$150,000) of the Spanish Cardinal Francis Ximenes de Cisneros (1437-1517), and is known as the Complutensian Polyglot because printed at Complutum (now Alcala de Henares). The men who assisted the Cardinal in this his Herculean work, which immortalized his name, were Demetrius Dukas of Crete, Achius Antonius Nebrissensis, Lopez de Zuniga (Stunica, or Astunga, known from his controversies with Erasmus), Ferdinand Pintianus, Alphonsus de Zamara, Paulus Coronellus, Johannes de Vergera (the last three converted Jews), Nuñez de Guzman, and others.

The printing of the work was commenced in 1502, in celebration of the birth of Charles V, and completed in 1517, but the work was not published until 1522 when it received the sanction of Pope Leo X.

This now rare work consists of six volumes, large folio. The first four volumes, together with the sixth, were completed at press, July 10, 1517 (the year of the Reformation). The volumes (excepting the sixth) contain the Old Testament text, the Chaldee paraphrase (only to the Pentateuch), the Greek (Septuagint, including the Apocrypha), and Latin. The Hebrew text, which has the vowel points but not the accents, occupies the outside of three columns; the Septuagint, with an interlineary Latin translation, occupies the inside column, indicating that, just as Christ was crucified between two thieves, so the Roman church, represented by Jerome's version, is crucified between the synagogue, represented by the Hebrew text, and the Eastern church, denoted by the Greek version.³ At the lower part of the page are two smaller columns, one containing the Chaldee paraphrase and the other a Latin translation of it.

Turning next to the fifth volume, the printing of which was completed January 10, 1514, we find that it contains the whole New Testament in Greek and Latin (Vulgate) in two columns. A letter

³ Posuimus, tanquam duos hinc et inde latrones, medium autem Jesum, hoc est Romanam ecclesiam collocantes. Haec enim sola supra firmam petram aedificata, reliquis a recta scripturae intelligentia deviantibus, immobilis semper in veritate permansit.

of reference⁴ connects the Greek and Latin texts verbally together, as will be seen from the following specimen of Matt. xxvi. 1:

καὶ β^βἐγένετο ^εὅτε δ^δἔτέλευσεν ^εὁ Ἰησοῦς et ^bfactum est ^ccum ^dconsummas-
^fπάντας ^gτοὺς λόγους ^hτούτους set ^eJesus ^gsermones ^hhos ^fomnes

The volume is preceded by

1. A Greek address to the reader, with a Latin translation ;
2. A Greek epistle of Eusebius ;
3. St. Jerome's Prologue on the four Evangelists addressed to Pope Damasus.

At the end of the volume is the date: *annus MDXIV., diesque X. Januarii.*

The sixth volume contains grammatical and lexical helps. When the last sheet of this magnificent Polyglot was finished in 1517, and a copy was brought to the Cardinal, he raised his eyes to heaven and devoutly offered up his thanks to the Saviour for being spared to see the completion of this good work, which had cost him so much labor and anxiety. Then, turning to those about him, Ximenes said: "Of all the acts which distinguished my administration, there was none, however arduous, better entitled to their congratulation than this." Ximenes died a few months after the completion of his work, November 8, 1517, aged 81.

Which manuscripts of the New Testament were used is still a matter of speculation. Suffice it to say that the Septuagint and the text of the Greek New Testament appeared for the first time in this Polyglot, a copy of which is now among the most treasured possessions of any library fortunate enough to have a copy, the original edition consisting of only six hundred copies.

Since the Complutensian New Testament was the first which was printed, and since we are told that the manuscripts used were "very ancient and correct" (*antiquissima et emendatissima*),⁵ and procured from Rome, for which Leo X is thanked in the preface, an examination of its text would certainly be of interest. Since, however, the late Professor Reuss of Strasburg, in his *Bibliotheca Novi Testamenti Graeci* (1872), has already given a list of the readings peculiar to this Greek Testament (pp. 16-24), the student is referred to this work.

⁴ In the reprint of the New Testament published by P. A. Gratz, Tübingen, 1821, these letters of reference are omitted.

⁵ It is more than certain that Codex B, or *Vaticanus*, which was entered in the earliest Catalogue of the Vatican Library, made in 1475, was not among the manuscripts.

Leaving the Complutensian New Testament, we now come to the work of

Desiderius Erasmus.

As has been stated, the New Testament of the Polyglot was printed, but not published. To anticipate the Cardinal's enterprise, John Froben, the Basel printer, wrote a letter (March 15, 1515) to the famous Desiderius Erasmus (1467-1536), who was then in England, requesting him to prepare an edition of the Greek New Testament. Soon after receiving this news Erasmus was on his way to Basel and commenced his work. He labored with such expedition that within a year the whole, with a Latin translation, was completed and issued (March 1, 1516). Erasmus himself admitted that the edition was "precipitated rather than edited" (*praecipitatum verius quam editum*). The science of textual criticism was not yet born, and the most important manuscripts were not even known. The manuscripts which Erasmus perused were neither very old nor very valuable. The oldest, which contained the whole of the New Testament except the book of Revelation, the so-called *Codex Basileensis* in the university library at Basel, has been assigned to the tenth century, and allowed by the great critics to be of considerable authority. But the others, which included only parts of the canon, were of quite recent date and of comparatively little worth. Among them all there was but one copy of the Apocalypse, and that lacked the last six verses, which, accordingly, Erasmus was obliged to supply from the Latin. This manuscript of the twelfth century was borrowed from Reuchlin, and was lost sight of for a long time. It was, however, found again by the late Prof. Franz Delitzsch in 1861, in the library of the princely house of Oettingen-Wallerstein at Maitringen (Bavaria), as may be seen from his *Handschriftliche Funde*, Parts I and II, 1861 and 1862.

The work which Scrivener refers to as "perhaps the most inaccurate volume ever issued from the press" had nevertheless a very rapid sale. Owing to the fame of the author, the increasing number of students of Greek, the desire to know something of the Scriptures in the original, the friends of Erasmus all bought the book for his sake, or for its own. But his enemies⁶ also bought the book to discover heresies and errors. Considering all the circumstances, and the fact that by an imperial privilege the copyright of the book

⁶ Their animosity may be learned from the fact that they even "perverted his name into *Errasmus* because of his errors, *Arasmus* because he ploughed up old truths and traditions, *Erasmus* because he had made himself an ass by his writings. They even called him Behemoth and Anti-Christ."

was protected for four years, we cannot wonder that the first edition, consisting of twelve hundred copies, was soon exhausted.

The volume before me is in folio, and the size of the original



ERASMUS.

(Reproduced from Emilio Castelar's *La Revolucion Religiosa*.)

title-page is $8\frac{5}{8}$ inches by $4\frac{7}{16}$ inches. The lengthy title reads as follows:

“NOVUM INSTRUMENTUM omne, diligenter ab *Erasmio Rotero-*

damo recognitum et emendatum non solum ad graecam veritatem, verumetiam ad multorum utriusque linguae codicum, eorumque veterum simul et emendatorum fidem, postremo ad probatissimorum autorum citationem, emendationem et interpretationem praecipue, Origenis, Chrysostomi, Cyrilli, Vulgarii, Hieronymi, Cypriani, Ambrosii, Hilarii, Augustini, una cum Annotationibus, quae lectorem doceant, quid qua ratione mutatum sit. Quisquis igitur amas veram Theologiam, lege, cognosce, ac deinde judica. Neque statim offendere, si quid mutatum offenderis, sed expende, num in melius mutatum sit.

“*Apud inclytam Germaniac Basilacam*”

[Here follows Froben's trade-device, two serpents with a dove over their heads.]

“Cum privilegio.

“Maximiliani Caesaris Augusti, ne quis alius in sacra Romani Imperii ditone, intra quattuor annos excudat, aut alibi excusam importet.”

Before going any further, the reader's attention is called to a sufficiently glaring and rather ridiculous blunder, which betrays the great haste with which the work was finished. In the list of the Fathers mentioned on the title-page, whose works had been used in the preparation of the text, a certain Vulgarius is mentioned, a writer no one had ever heard of before. Mr. Drummond, a biographer of Erasmus, explains this thus: “Erasmus had a copy of Theophylact on Matthew, with this title: Τοῦ Θεοφιλεσιᾶτου Ἀρχιεπισκόπου Βουλγαρίας κυρίου Θεοφυλάκτου ἐξήγησις εἰς τὸ κατὰ Ματθαῖον Εὐαγγέλιον; in his haste he took Θεοφυλάκτου for an epithet, while for Βουλγαρίας he must have read Βουλγαρίον, which he converted from the name of a country into the name of a man, and translated “Vulgarius”: and under this name Theophylact was quoted in his notes. To make matters worse, he attributed to Vulgarius a reading which is not to be found in Theophylact, and in one place grossly misconstrued him.”

The verso of the title-page contains a notice of Froben to the reader, from which we learn that John Oecolampadius of Weinsberg, a famous theologian, acquainted with three languages (*insignis theologus, triumque linguarum egregie peritus*) assisted Erasmus in the preparation of the work. Erasmus dedicated his work to Pope Leo X. In his dedication, dated February 1, 1516, in which the author calls himself “*theologorum infimus*,” he reminds the pope of his duty to “make known to the Christians again the

commandments of their Master out of the evangelical and apostolic writings themselves.”

This dedication is followed by a general introduction, consisting of three treatises: 1. *Paraclesis ad lectorem*; 2. *Methodus*; 3. *Apologia*. All three, besides inviting to the serious study of the Scriptures, contain excellent points on how such study, in opposition to the common scholastic manner, can be made fruitful and become the foundation of a new living theology. Thus in his *Paraclesis*⁷ he strenuously opposes those who object to the reading of the Scriptures by the laity; he wishes that the Scriptures might be translated into all tongues, so that even Turks and Saracens, to say nothing of Scotchmen and Irishmen, yea, all little girls (*omnes mutierculae*) might read them, and Christians take from them the subjects of their daily conversation. The letters written by a friend, we keep, kiss, carry about us, and read them over and over again. Yet there are thousands of Christians who do not once in their life read the evangelical and apostolical books. The Mohammedans observe their dogmas; the Jews to this day study their Moses from their childhood; why do not Christians do the same? The Benedictines, Augustinians, Franciscans, strictly observe the rules laid down by men, but can there be anything more sacred than the rules given to all by Christ?

If any one displays the robe of Christ, or the impression of His footsteps on the ground, we are down on our knees, we worship, we cover it with kisses. Yet, though we were to bring to light all the wardrobe and furniture (*supellectilem*) of Christ, there is nothing that can recall and express and represent the Christ more vividly, more truly and more completely than the writings of the Evangelists and Apostles.

In his *Methodus*, or essay on the right method of the study of the Scriptures, Erasmus maintains that the first requisite for their study is a knowledge of Greek, Latin and Hebrew.⁸ He tells us that he himself, though within a year of fifty, returned to the study of Hebrew whenever he had an opportunity. He also inculcated

⁷ An English translation of the *Paraclesis* appears as a preface to certain early editions of Tyndale's English version of the New Testament; thus, in the edition of 1536, also in one of 1549. None of these I have been able to see.

⁸ With the exception of Jerome, and perhaps of Origen, none of the early Christian writers appear to have possessed any knowledge of Hebrew worthy of the name. In the Middle Ages some knowledge of Hebrew was preserved in the church by converted Jews, as for example Paulus Burgensis (died 1435), and even by Christian scholars, of whom the most notable were the Dominican controversialist Raymond Martini (died 1284), and the Franciscan Nicolaus de Lyra (died 1341), whose *Postillae Perpetuae in Universa Biblia* (Rome,

the advantage of having as much general knowledge as possible, especially of the objects named in Scripture, so that the student may not, like some ignorant commentators, make a quadruped of a tree, or a fish of a precious stone (*ex arbore faciant quadrupedem, e gemma piscem*). Nor were poetry and good letters to be despised. Christ clothed all his teachings in parables, and that was poetry (*parabolis omnia pene convestivit Christus, id quod poetis est peculiare*). Paul quoted from the poets (*ipse Paulus poetarum est usus testimoniis*), and there is nothing in his writings to remind one of Aristotle and Averroës. It is difficult for those who are imbued with the scholastic philosophy to appreciate the simplicity of the Scriptures, but if it be maintained that without it one cannot be a theologian, Erasmus could console himself with the example of many famous men, Chrysostom, Jerome, Ambrose, Augustine, Clement, nay, of Peter and Paul, who were utterly ignorant of it, and even condemned it (*quod si quis damnabit absque his non esse theologum, equidem consolabor meipsum tot insignium virorum exemplis, Chrysostomi, Hieronymi, Ambrosii, Augustini, denique Clementis, imo Petri et Pauli, qui ista non solum non calluerunt, verum etiam damnant aliquoties*). Better to be less of a sophist than to be unacquainted with the writings of the Gospel evangelists and Paul. Better not to know some of the teachings of Aristotle, than not to know the commands of Christ. I would rather be a pious theologian with Jerome than a hero with Scotus (*malim cum Hieronymo pius esse theologus quam cum Scoto invictus*). Whoever finds 1471, 5 vols., fol.), largely influenced Luther's interpretation of Scripture, whence the couplet on Luther's exegetical labor by Pflug, Bishop of Naumburg:

"Si Lyra non tyrasset
Lutherus non saltasset."

[If Lyra had not harped on profanation,
Luther had not planned the Reformation.]

Neither the refusal of orthodox Jews to teach those who were not of their faith, nor the bigotry of ignorant churchmen who desired nothing better than the entire suppression of Jewish learning, could damp the ardent desire of those who wished to add a third language to Latin and Greek. The first Christian to compose a Hebrew grammar, *De modo legendi et intellegendi Hebraeum* (Strasburg, 1504), was Conrad Pellicanus (died 1556). A facsimile reprint of this grammar was published by E. Nestle, Tübingen, 1877. Two years after Pellicanus the famous John Reuchlin (1455-1523) published his *Rudimenta linguae hebraicae una cum Lexico* (Phorcae, 1506). Reuchlin taught Hebrew at Heidelberg, Ingolstadt and Stuttgart. Here John Oecolampadius attended his lectures. A pupil of Reuchlin was Johann Böschenstein (1472-1530), also an author of a Hebrew grammar.

Erasmus was not the only one who insisted upon the necessity of a knowledge of Hebrew. In this respect he was of the same opinion as Luther and Melancthon, the "*praeceptor Germaniae*." The student who is interested in that subject will find more particulars in Pick, art. "The Study of the Hebrew Language among Jews and Christians," in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, July, 1884, 1885.

pleasure in scholastic disputations, let him follow that which he has received in the schools. He is a great doctor who teaches nothing but Christ (*abunde magnus doctor est, qui pure docet Christum*).

The *Methodus* was afterwards considerably expanded and printed as a separate work, under the title of *Ratio verae Theologiae* (in *Erasmi Opera*, V, 57 ff.), and was not repeated in the later editions of the New Testament. The *Ratio* was dedicated to Cardinal Archbishop Albrecht of Mainz (1519) in a preface full of complaints about the evil times of violent controversy, which destroyed charity and the peaceful cultivation of learning and practical piety.

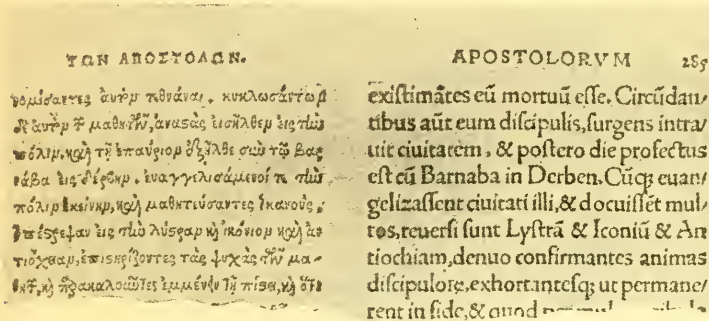
The third part of the introduction is entitled *Apologia* and is intended for those who objected not only to his publication of the Greek Testament but also to his Latin translation. To those who thought that Jerome's version was good enough, he tried to prove that his work was meant for the better understanding. To the cry of his opponents that "solecisms are not offensive to God," Erasmus replied, "true, but neither are they pleasing to Him" (*non offenditur deus soloecismis, at idem non delectatur*). For his translation Erasmus claims not so much elegance of style as lucidity and correctness and a true rendering of the original sources, which, if we except the Gospel of Matthew and the Epistle to the Hebrews, were not written in Latin but in Greek. To those who feared that the authority of the sacred Scriptures might be called in question, if any variations from the received standard should be acknowledged, he replied that for more than a thousand years there had been no complete agreement either in the Greek or in the Latin copy (*jam annos plus mille, neque Latinorum neque Graecorum exemplaria per omnia consensisse*). To the vociferation of some who were ignorant and impudent enough to say that it was an intolerable crime (*facimus esse non ferendum*) for any one to presume to correct the Gospels (*ut quisquam corrigat evangelia*), Erasmus retorted: "Is every fool, then, to be permitted to corrupt the manuscripts of the Gospels, and is it an impiety to restore what has been corrupted?" (*fas est nebuloni cujusvis evangelii codices depravare, et nefas crit quod depravatum est restituere?*).

The introduction is followed by βίαι or *Lives of the Four Evangelists from the Synopsis of Dorotheus the Martyr and Bishop of Tyre* (Greek). In a convenient form these lives and those of other apostles and disciples are found in *Prophetarum vitae fabulosae indices apostolorum discipulorumque Domini Dorotheo, Epi-*

phanio, Hippolyto aliisque vindicata, edited by Prof. Theodor Schermann, Leipsic (B. G. Teubner), 1907.

We now come to the New Testament proper. The Gospels and the Acts occupy pages 1-322; the epistles follow, pages 1-190, each preceded by a Greek hypothesis, i. e., summary; pages 190-224, the Apocalypse, but without an hypothesis; pages 225-675 are taken up by the *Annotationes in Novum Testamentum*; page 676 contains a note of Oecolampadius to the reader; pages 677-678, *errata et corrigenda*. The last page has the colophon: *Basileae in aedibus Joannis Frobenii Hammelburgensis, mense Februario. Anno M. D. XVI. Regnante Imp. Caes. Maximiliano P. E. Augusto.*

Then follows the trade-device of Froben, the two serpents and the dove. The upper and lower parts have the saying of Matt. x. 16



FIRST EDITION BY ERASMUS OF NEW TESTAMENT, 1516.

A portion of Fourteenth Chapter of Acts.

in Greek; on the left is a saying in Latin; on the right a saying in Hebrew.

Habent fata sua libelli. The truth of this saying Erasmus also was to experience. About a year after the first appearance of the New Testament, Edward Lee, chaplain and almoner to Henry VIII, and eventually Archbishop of York, took up arms against this publication. Erasmus, who says of him that "a creature more arrogant, ignorant and venomous the world had never seen," writes, in a letter to Capito: "At last the British viper has broken loose! Edward Lee, the everlasting disgrace of that famous island, has come forth into the light. . . I would describe the monster to you, but I am afraid posterity would not believe that such a beast ever wore the form of humanity."⁹

⁹ Jerome called his ignorant opponents "the two-legged asses" (*bipedes aselli*).

Lee's criticisms were not only textual but also dogmatical. He especially laid stress upon the fact that Erasmus had omitted from his text what is now called the *Comma Johanneum*, i. e., the passage of the three heavenly witnesses in 1 John v. 7. But Erasmus had not found the passage in any of the manuscripts which he had examined, and he doubted whether any such manuscript could be produced containing that passage. To his surprise he learned that there existed such a manuscript. Whether the manuscript now known as *Codex Montfortianus*,¹⁰ and which turned up at this particular juncture, was written under the direction of Lee, we know not. Erasmus, who did not see the *Codex Britannicus*, as he calls it, was easily satisfied; and having on former occasions expressed his willingness to insert the testimony of the three witnesses if a single manuscript could be produced containing it, and shrinking from the clamor that was raised against him on all sides, he inserted the spurious words in his third edition, which appeared in 1522, but did not consider it genuine, and admitted it only from policy, *ne cui foret ansa calumniandi*.

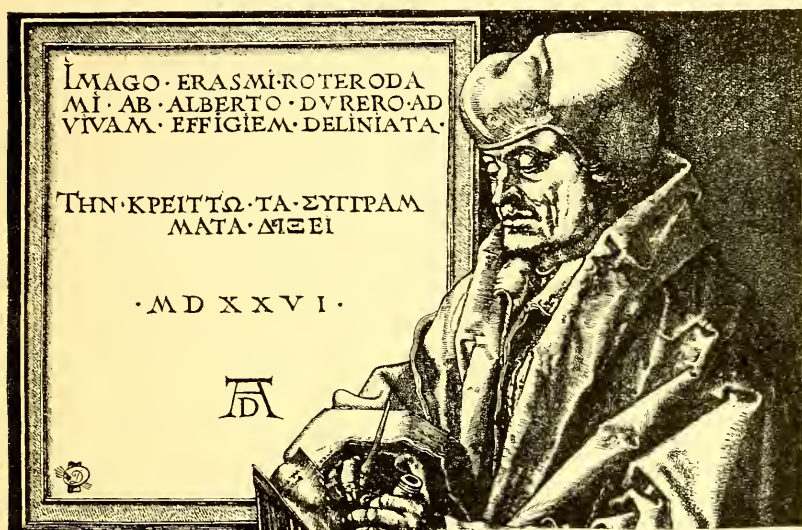
Another antagonist was the Spanish theologian, James Lopez Stunica, whom we mentioned before in connection with the Complutensian Polyglot. He published a series of criticisms in *Annotationes Jacobi Lopidis Stunicae contra Erasmum Roterodamum in defensionem Tralationis Novi Testamenti* (in aedit. Complut. 1519), in the preface of which he treats Erasmus with high disdain, as a man of letters who had gained some reputation; but in a note on Gal. iii he speaks also of him as so "steeped in the beer and butter of his country" (*ut Erasmus butiro et cerevisia patria obrutus somniaverit*) as to be incapable of clear thought. Without entering into the details of this controversy, which turn upon similar points to those advanced by Lee, we will mention that Erasmus replied in *Apologia respondens ad ea quae Jacobus Lompis Stunica taxaverat in prima duntaxat Novi Testamenti aeditione* (Lovan. 1520; in *Erasmi Opera*, IX, 283 ff.).

It may seem strange that Stunica's attack was only published three years after the appearance of the first edition of the Greek Testament. Stunica explains this delay from the fact that the new translation was some time in reaching him. But Erasmus gives a

¹⁰ The *Codex Montfortianus*, which is now deposited in the library of Trinity College, Dublin (Trinity A. 4. 21.), or the "codex apud Anglos reperiens," according to Nestle was probably written by the English Franciscan monk, Roy or Froy, who inserted the passage from the Vulgate. On this codex comp. Schaff, *Companion to the Greek Testament and English Version*, 4th ed., New York, 1883, pp. 136 f.

very different account of the matter. According to him Cardinal Ximenes was highly pleased with his edition of the New Testament, and when Stunica expressed his surprise at the Cardinal's appreciation of a work teeming with errors, the Cardinal replied in the language of Scripture: "Would that all were such prophets! Go thou and do better if thou canst, but disparage not another man's labor" (*Opera*, IX, 284D). This accounts for the delay of the publication till after the Cardinal's death.

It is interesting to learn that sometimes, in the hands of ignorant monks, the attacks upon the New Testament of Erasmus



ERASMUS.

(After an engraving by Dürer.)

assumed a decidedly comic aspect, and Erasmus has not failed to record one or two instances of this in his usual humorous style. Following Mr. Drummond's statement, we are told that "there was, for example, a certain Dr. Standish, Bishop of St. Asaph—St. Ass, Erasmus calls it—who was terribly distressed because Erasmus, following Laurentius Valla, had substituted the masculine word *Sermo* for the neuter *Verbum* in the first chapter of St. John's Gospel! On a certain occasion he was preaching in St. Paul's churchyard, and having begun a sermon on charity, all of a sudden he broke out into a furious attack upon Erasmus, declaring that the Christian religion must be ruined unless all new translations were

Verbum which had been the reading of the church for so many centuries had corrupted the Gospel of St. John by putting *Sermo* in the place of *Verbum* which had been the reading the church for so many centuries. Then he began to appeal to the feelings of his audience, bewailing his own unhappy lot, to think that he who all his life had been accustomed to read, *In principio erat verbum*, must henceforth read, *In principio erat sermo*, and finally he appealed to the mayor, the aldermen, and the whole body of citizens to come to the rescue of Christianity in this its hour of peril. No one, however, took notice of his rodomontade except to laugh at it. It happened the same day that Standish was to dine at the palace, and two of his hearers—one of whom was a bachelor, and profoundly versed in the scholastic philosophy as well as in the modern learning, the other a married man, but of the most heavenly mind (no doubt, as Knight conjectures, Master Richard Pace and Sir Thomas More) were to meet him. They were no sooner seated than one of them remarked how glad he was to find he had been reading the Commentaries of Erasmus. Standish, perceiving that a trap was laid for him to compel him to confess that he had been attacking a book which he had not read, replied bluntly, 'Perhaps I have read as much as I chose to read.' 'I have no doubt you have,' replied the other. 'Pray, may I ask on what arguments or authorities does Erasmus rely, that he has ventured to change the common reading in John's Gospel?' To this question, of course, the Bishop was unable to make any reply. He said he was content with the authority of Augustine, who affirms that *verbum* was a better word than *ratio* as an appellation of the Son of God. 'Yes,' said More, 'than *ratio*; but what has that to do with *sermo*?' 'Why, they are the same thing.' 'Nay,' replied his tormentor, 'they are very different; and it is not very wise of you to attack a man who has rendered such good service to the cause of letters, without having either read the passage you criticize, or made yourself master of the subject.' Some time afterwards, no wiser by his defeat, Standish surprised the court by dropping reverently upon his knees in the presence of the King and Queen and a large assembly of the nobility and learned men. Every one was eager to hear what so eminent a theologian had to say, supposing it must be something of great importance. He began by pronouncing a eulogium, in English, upon the ancestors of the King and Queen, for having ever defended the Catholic church against heretics and schismatics, and he then proceeded to exhort and adjure their Majesties to follow in the footsteps of their progenitors, warning them that most dangerous times were at hand,

and that unless the books of Erasmus could be suppressed, the religion of Christ was ruined. Then, raising his hands and eyes to heaven, he prayed that Christ would condescend to aid his spouse if no one on earth would come to her defense. While he was still on his knees one of his two tormentors on the previous occasion (Sir Thomas More) stepped forward, and, having said how much he admired the pious harangue of the reverend father, begged that, as he had alarmed their Majesties so much, he would now be good enough to point out what it was in the books of Erasmus from which he apprehended such terrible consequences. He replied he would do so at once, and, reckoning on his fingers, proceeded: 'First, Erasmus denies the resurrection. Second, he makes the sacrament of matrimony of no account. Lastly, he is unsound on the Eucharist.' More commended the clearness of his statement, and observed that nothing now remained but that he should prove his assertions. 'Certainly,' replied the other; and, beginning with his thumb, 'First,' said he, 'that he denied the resurrection, I prove thus: Paul, in the Epistle to the Colossians (he meant Corinthians) writes thus: "We shall all rise, but we shall not all be changed" (the reading of the Vulgate); but Erasmus has altered the reading of the church, and from his Greek copies reads as follows: "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." It is clear that he denies the resurrection.' Presently the poor Bishop was led into a still greater absurdity, if that were possible, and said that Jerome had restored the true reading from the Hebrew; till at length the King took pity on his incurable stupidity, and diverted the conversation to some other subject." (*Epistola clxvi*).

three years there was a demand for another edition, and this also

The publication of the New Testament was a success. Within was speedily exhausted, although the two together amounted to 3,300 folio copies. The second edition appeared in the beginning of 1519, and is interesting because it forms the basis of Luther's German translation. A third edition appeared in 1522, and is remarkable because it was the first edition to contain the so-called *comma Johanneum*, i.e., 1 John v. 7, the testimony of the three witnesses. A fourth, and much improved, edition appeared in 1527; and a fifth in 1535, the year before the editor's death.¹¹

Biblical science will ever recognize the merits of Cardinal Ximenes for having planned the Complutensian Polygot, in which the New Testament was printed by the beginning of the year 1514. But to Erasmus belongs the honor of having been the first to edit,

¹¹ The titles of the Erasmian editions are given in Reuss, *Bibliotheca*, p. 26.

print and publish the Christian Scriptures in their original tongue. Imperfect as his text was, because prepared with great haste, it became the forerunner of the so-called *textus receptus*, and readings which modern critics and the revisers reject are found in the Erasmusian text.

The New Testament text is followed by Annotations on the same. The preface is dated 1515; the colophon at the end has the date 1516. The notes betray the scholarly attainments of Erasmus. The Old Testament quotations he gives in the original Hebrew. Which Hebrew text he used we know not. In his day he had the choice of the Soucinian Bible, the first and complete Hebrew Bible published at Soucino in 1488, and Gerson's edition, published at Brescia in 1494, and remarkable for being the one from which Luther's German translation was made.¹² As far as I have been able to examine a number of these quotations, they agree with the latest editions of the Hebrew Bible. The text is everywhere the same, because we have only the so-called masoretic, i. e., traditional text. Even the *Biblia Hebraica*, edited by R. Kittel (3d ed., Leipsic, 1913) is nothing but the masoretic text. Interesting as were the notes on the New Testament, they were by no means confined to questions of textual criticism. There was other matter in them, and the notes were made the vehicle for conveying the opinions of the writer upon the manners of the time and the abuses in the church. He has the boldness to deny the primacy of Peter, and in his note on the famous text, Matt. xvi. 18, "Upon this rock I will build my church," he expresses his surprise that any should have so perverted the meaning as to refer the words exclusively to the Roman Pontiff (*proinde misor esse, qui locum hunc detorqueant ad Romanum pontificem*).

The statement in Acts ix. 43, that Peter lodged "with one Simon a tanner," calls forth the exclamation, "Oh! how great a guest—the very chief of apostles—to lodge with so humble an entertainer! In our days three royal palaces scarce suffice to receive Peter's vicar." (*O quantus hospes et apostolici culminis princeps apud cujusmodi diversatur hospitem? Nunc trium regum palatia vix sufficerent excipiendo Petri vicario.*)

His boldness and freedom of criticism Erasmus shows when, e. g., he states that Luke's style is purer than that of the rest of the Evangelists, owing to his acquaintance with Greek literature (*ob Graecarum peritiam literarum*). He rejected the Pauline origin

¹² The copy of the Hebrew Bible which Luther used is to be found in the Royal Library at Berlin.

of the Epistle to the Hebrews. The epistle, he says, breathes the spirit of Paul, but it is not at all in his style (*stilus ipse et orationis character, qui nihil habet affinitatis cum phrasi Paulina*). He doubts whether the Apocalypse be the work of John the Apostle, and to Chap. I, 4 he remarks: it must be honestly conceded the Greek has no meaning whatever (*ingenue fatendum est Graecum sermonem nihil omnino significare*).

These few specimens may suffice to call attention to this work of Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam, who died July 12, 1536, and was buried in the Protestant cathedral at Basel. From a Protestant point of view we may regret his position against Luther, thereby injuring both his own reputation and the progress of the movement among scholars. But we can never forget the immense debt of gratitude which we owe to the first editor of the Greek New Testament, who enabled Luther and Tyndale to make their translations of the word of life from the original, and to lead men to the very fountain of all that is most valuable and permanent in the Reformation. This edition, though hastily prepared, became the basis of the popularly received text. His exegetical opinions still receive and deserve the attention of the commentators. "To him we also owe the first scholarly editions of the Fathers, especially of Jerome, with whom he was most in sympathy. From these editions the Reformers drew their weapons of patristic controversy with the Romanists, who always appealed to the fathers of the Nicene age rather than to the grandfathers of the apostolic age. . . . He never was a Protestant, and never meant to be one. Division and separation did not enter into his program. From beginning to end he labored for a reformation within the church and within the papacy, not without it. But the new wine burst the old bottles. The reform which he set in motion went beyond him, and left him behind. In some of his opinions, however, he was ahead of his age, and anticipated a more modern stage of Protestantism. He was as much a forerunner of rationalism as of the Reformation" (Schaff).