

Copyright © 2015 Ryan Thomas Vasut

All rights reserved. The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary has permission to reproduce and disseminate this document in any form by any means for purposes chosen by the Seminary, including, without limitation, preservation or instruction.

ERASMUS AS INTERPRETER OF THE SERMON ON
THE MOUNT IN HIS *PARAPHRASE ON MATTHEW*

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Theology

by
Ryan Thomas Vasut
May 2015

APPROVAL SHEET

ERASMUS AS INTERPRETER OF THE SERMON ON
THE MOUNT IN HIS *PARAPHRASE ON MATTHEW*

Ryan Thomas Vasut

Read and Approved by:

Jonathan T. Pennington (Faculty Advisor)

Date _____

To Megan

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	vi
PREFACE.....	vii
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
A Brief Overview of Current Studies	2
Publishing the <i>Paraphrases</i>	5
Encountering the <i>Paraphrases</i>	6
2. ERASMUS’S USE OF THE CHURCH FATHERS	12
Clear Dependence on the Church Fathers	13
Erasmus’s Named Sources	13
Erasmus’s Unnamed Sources	18
Erasmus Molds Sources to Fit Rhetorical Purposes	20
Summary.....	23
3. ERASMUS’S INTRATEXTUAL READING.....	24
Using the Sermon Inside the Sermon	24
At Matthew 5:6.....	25
At Matthew 5:7, 9.....	26
At Matthew 5:23–24.....	27
At Matthew 5:31–32.....	28
At Matthew 7:15–16.....	29
Using Other Matthew in the Sermon	30
Matthew 5:29.....	30

Chapter	Page
Matthew 5:31–32.....	31
Matthew 5:43.....	31
Matthew 6:14–15.....	33
Matthew 7:21–23.....	34
Using the Sermon Outside the Sermon.....	35
Incidental References to the Sermon.....	35
Illustrative References to the Sermon	36
Summary.....	38
4. ERASMUS’S EXEGETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS	39
Passage-level Insights.....	39
Matthew 5:14.....	39
Matthew 7:6–12.....	41
Erasmus’s Structure of the Sermon	43
Distance in Righteousness.....	43
Distance in Motivation	46
Distance in Judgment	47
Summary.....	49
5. CONCLUSION.....	50
BIBLIOGRAPHY	52

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CWE Collected Works of Erasmus (Toronto 1974 –)

FC Fathers of the Church

*NPNF*¹ *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series 1*

PREFACE

After what has certainly been a longer endeavor that should have been, there are many to whom I owe thanks. First among them is my wife, Megan. Her love, endurance, and constant encouragement have sustained me through times where I would have otherwise given up. The amount of time and energy she has graciously allowed me to devote to studies over the past several years has far exceeded that for which I would dare ask. I am also deeply appreciative of Dr. Jonathan Pennington, my supervisor for this thesis. I am certain his influence through classes, conversations, and seminars has shaped me more than I am aware. I am always grateful for his guidance. And last, the guys at the Research Hub of the James P. Boyce Centennial Library have been a constant source of encouragement, accountability, and dialog. I am glad to work with them daily.

Ryan Vasut

Louisville, Kentucky

May 2015

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The *Paraphrases on the New Testament*, by late fifteenth-century humanist scholar Desiderius Erasmus (1466–1563), once enjoyed wide influence and readership. The first installment, *Romans*, appeared in late 1517, winning praise and fame in a matter of months.¹ The remaining *Paraphrases* soon followed. Increasing popularity and scattered release dates brought several printings and even pirated publications.² Their translation into other languages only served to increase Erasmus’s reach as the *Paraphrases* spread across Europe.³ And they remained popular long after his death. In 1547, a royal injunction by England’s Edward VI even required that Erasmus’s *Paraphrases* (at least of the Gospels) be placed at the front of each parish church next to a copy of the Bible.⁴ But despite their popularity in the past, they remain largely neglected in the biblical studies field today—much to our loss.

¹John B. Payne, Albert Rabil, Jr., and Warren S. Smith, Jr., trans., “The *Paraphrases* of Erasmus: Origin and Character,” in *Paraphrases on Romans and Galatians*, by Desiderius Erasmus, CWE 42 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), xiv–xv.

²Mynors traces many of these unsanctioned printings in his chapter on the Latin publications. R.A.B. Mynors, “The Publication of the Latin *Paraphrases*,” in Erasmus, *Paraphrases on Romans and Galatians*, xx–xxix.

³Christine Christ-von Wedel, *Erasmus of Rotterdam: Advocate of a New Christianity* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 97. As Roland Bainton points out, “The *Paraphrases* enjoyed wide popularity in Erasmus’ own day and for some decades after his death. Translations were made into German, French, Bohemian, and English” (“*Paraphrases* of Erasmus,” *Archiv Für Reformationsgeschichte* 57, no. 1–2 [January 1, 1966]: 68). Guy Bedouelle, though, notes the delay and difficulty of getting the *Paraphrases* in French because the University of Paris stood against them. “The ‘*Paraphrases*’ of Erasmus in French,” in *Holy Scripture Speaks: The Production and Reception of Erasmus’ “Paraphrases on the New Testament,”* ed. Hilmar M. Pabel and Mark Vessey (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 279–90.

⁴John Craig, “Forming a Protestant Consciousness? Erasmus’ *Paraphrases* in English Parishes, 1547–1666,” in Pabel and Vessey, *Holy Scripture Speaks*, 315–18. In this essay, Craig investigates the remaining evidence from this time, and he concludes that this did in fact take place—churches did get the *Paraphrases*. Cornelis Augustijn suggests the injunction also required “every clergyman who did not possess a doctor’s degree” to own a copy of the *Paraphrases*. Erasmus: *His Life, Works, and Influence*, trans. J. C. Grayson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 101.

Unboxing these once-popular works could provide interpreters with the same resources many of the sixteenth-century Reformers enjoyed reading. They need only to be dusted off and allowed back on our shelves. This thesis is a step in that direction. A small portion of one paraphrase will be exposed as an example of the content and feel of the *Paraphrases*—that of the Sermon on the Mount in Erasmus’s *Paraphrase on Matthew*. Given the importance of the Sermon throughout church history, it seemed a reasonable place to start.⁵ Specifically, I will demonstrate that Erasmus offers a particularly rich interpretation of the Sermon in his *Paraphrase on Matthew* through his use of the church fathers, through his use of intratextual interpretation, and through readings from “exegetical history.”⁶ After a brief overview of research and an introduction to the *Paraphrases* themselves, Erasmus’s use of the church fathers will be investigated. By exposing representative examples of dependence throughout the Sermon, one will see the breadth, depth, and reshaping of Erasmus’s sources. Then, Erasmus’s various textual connections will be examined as evidence of heavy intratextual interpretation. Finally, a few additional exegetical contributions from the paraphrase of the Sermon will be presented.

A Brief Overview of Current Studies

In 1966, Roland Bainton wrote, “The Paraphrases of Erasmus have never received their due.”⁷ This brief overview will show that rigorous study of the *Paraphrases* is only now leaving infancy. Bainton’s 1966 article highlighted many characteristics of the *Paraphrases* which he illustrated with several examples, but was

⁵For a broad and accessible history of the Sermon’s interpretation, see Jeffrey P. Greenman, Timothy Larsen, and Stephen R. Spencer, eds., *The Sermon on the Mount through the Centuries: From the Early Church to John Paul II* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2007).

⁶Dale C. Allison Jr., *Studies in Matthew: Interpretation Past and Present* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 60. Allison uses this phrase a number of times in his book to refer to exegetical offerings gleaned from prior interpreters.

⁷Bainton, “Paraphrases of Erasmus,” 67.

limited to nine pages. Three years later, J. B. Payne mirrored Bainton's claim when he stated that the *Paraphrases* were "a much neglected portion of the Erasmian corpus."⁸ In the 1970s, Albert Rabil, Jr. made two notable contributions. The first was in his own book, *Erasmus and the New Testament: The Mind of a Christian Humanist*, where he devoted half a chapter to the production of the *Paraphrases*, especially that on Romans.⁹ A few years later he contributed a chapter on the *Paraphrases* to a book broadly examining the Erasmian corpus, though both the arrangement and content significantly overlapped the work in his own book.¹⁰

The 1980s saw the beginning of the trek up a steeper and more dedicated path of study. In 1981, Jacques Chomarat, produced an article examining Erasmus's rhetorical practices in the *Paraphrases* as they compared to Erasmus's *De copia*.¹¹ That article served as a summary to his two volume work (in French) on the same topic published later that year.¹² Then, in 1984, the University of Toronto published their first volume of the *Paraphrases*—Romans and Galatians—in their larger project the *Collected Works of Erasmus*.¹³ Payne and Rabil, joined by Warren S. Smith, Jr., translated that volume as well as authored one of the essays included essays.¹⁴ Then, Friedhelm Krüger published a

⁸John B. Payne, "Toward the Hermeneutics of Erasmus," in *Scrinium Erasmianum*, ed. J. Coppens (Leiden: Brill, 1969), 14. Payne's reference also include Erasmus's *Annotations* in that corpus.

⁹Albert Rabil, Jr., *Erasmus and the New Testament: The Mind of a Christian Humanist* (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1972), 128–139.

¹⁰Albert Rabil, Jr., "Erasmus's 'Paraphrases of the New Testament,'" in *Essays on the Works of Erasmus*, ed. Richard L. DeMolen (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1978), 145–63.

¹¹Jacques Chomarat, "Grammar and Rhetoric in the Paraphrases of the Gospels by Erasmus," *Erasmus of Rotterdam Society Yearbook* 1, no. 1 (1981): 30–68.

¹²Jacques Chomarat, *Grammaire et rhétorique chez Erasme*, 2 vols., *Classiques de l'humanisme* 10 (Paris: Belles lettres, 1981). Bruce Mansfield offers a helpful analysis of Chomarat's work and significance, though it is mixed with that of other authors as well. *Erasmus in the Twentieth Century: Interpretations c 1920-2000* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 151–74.

¹³Erasmus, *Paraphrases on Romans and Galatians*.

¹⁴Payne, Rabil, and Smith, "Origin and Character"; Mynors, "Latin *Paraphrases*." in Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Romans and Galatians*.

book-length work on the paraphrases of the Gospels, in 1986 (in German), that primarily analyzed Erasmus's allegorical practices.¹⁵ After Krüger's work, all of the remaining paraphrases, except that on Luke 1–10, have been published and contain helpful discussion for each volume in the translators' notes.

Since 2000, a number of additional works about or related to the *Paraphrases* have begun to appear. A few are significant for our current study. Pabel and Vessey edited a work entirely devoted to the *Paraphrases* entitled *Holy Scripture Speaks*.¹⁶ The nature and character of the *Paraphrases* are well served by that work, though detailed analysis of the *Paraphrases* remains at a topical level rather than a study of an extended passage. Cottier published a significant essay on the nature and uniqueness of Erasmus's *Paraphrases*, in 2012.¹⁷ The *Paraphrases* received significant attention in Christ-von Wedel's excellent biography of Erasmus.¹⁸ And, most recently, Jane E. Phillips wrote an essay devoted entirely to Erasmus's expansion of Luke 24:27.¹⁹

Study of the *Paraphrases*, while off to a slow start, is now under way. However, there is still a significant void in the field. Many have given their time to writing of the nature of the *Paraphrases*, and some have begun consulting them for topical studies. Few, though, have given voice to specific passages in the *Paraphrases*; even fewer have done so in English.

¹⁵Friedhelm Krüger, *Humanistische Evangelienauslegung: Desiderius Erasmus von Rotterdam als Ausleger der Evangelien in seinen Paraphrasen* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1986).

¹⁶Pabel and Vessey, *Holy Scripture Speaks*.

¹⁷Jean-François Cottier, "Erasmus's *Paraphrases*: A 'New Kind of Commentary'?", in *The Unfolding of Words: Commentary in the Age of Erasmus*, ed. Judith Rice Henderson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 27–46. One should also consult Judith Rice Henderson's "Editor's Addendum: Translating an Erasmian Definition of Paraphrase," in Henderson, *Unfolding of Words*, 46–54.

¹⁸Christ-von Wedel, *Erasmus of Rotterdam*, 97–110.

¹⁹Jane E. Phillips, "The Shaping of a Gospel: Further Reflections on the Paraphrase on Luke," in *Erasmus and the Renaissance Republic of Letters*, ed. Stephen Ryle (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepolis, 2014), 327–41. This is an expansion of her earlier work: "On the Road to Emmaus : Erasmus' Paraphrase of Luke 24:27," *Erasmus Studies* 22, no. 1 (January 1, 2002): 68–80.

Publishing the *Paraphrases*

Between 1517 and 1524, Erasmus paraphrased every book in the New Testament except Revelation. Erasmus took an interest in Paul, and Romans especially, as early as 1499, upon hearing and meeting John Colet during a trip to Oxford.²⁰ Erasmus channeled that interest into creating a new work on Paul—an effort he largely abandoned until the work took a different shape much later. In 1517, that work became the first of the *Paraphrases*—the *Paraphrase on Romans*.²¹ Audiences welcomed the work, and Erasmus rather enjoyed paraphrasing.²² So he continued the effort through other portions of the New Testament. After Romans, many of the latter paraphrases were published in “collected edition[s]” rather than individual works.²³ In 1519, he published Corinthians, Romans and Galatians as a collection, followed by Timothy, Titus, and Philemon together in 1520, and Peter with Jude later that same year. Hebrews (by itself) and then Colossians, Philippians, Thessalonians, James and the Epistles of John were published in 1521. Matthew was published, in 1522. John, Luke and Mark each appeared individually, in 1523. And then Acts, in 1524, brought the endeavor to an end.

But while the published *Paraphrases* were popular, they received varying levels of welcome. John Payne, in an essay exploring Erasmus’s influence on Zwingli and Bullinger, notes that “all of the Reformers read them and made some use of them.” And Zwingli “obtained the *Paraphrases* on the New Testament as soon as they appeared.”²⁴ Christine Christ-von Wedel, also speaking of the Reformers’ use of the

²⁰Payne, Rabil, and Smith, “Origin and Character,” xiii; Rabil, *Erasmus and the New Testament*, 129.

²¹Payne, Rabil, and Smith, “Origin and Character,” xiii–xv.

²²Payne, Rabil, and Smith, “Origin and Character,” xv.

²³More extensive summaries may be found in Rabil, “Erasmus’s *Paraphrases*,” 145–46; Mynors, “Latin *Paraphrases*,” xx–xxix; The chart found in the back of the CWE volumes is also reproduced in Pabel and Vessey, *Holy Scripture Speaks*, xi.

²⁴John B. Payne, “Erasmus’s Influence on Zwingli and Bullinger in the Exegesis of Matthew 11:28-30,” in *Biblical Interpretation in the Era of the Reformation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 61.

Paraphrases, quotes Konrad Pellikan saying he frequently kissed the works as he read them!²⁵ But on the other end of that spectrum, many grew to hate Erasmus's *Paraphrases* in Spain, Italy, and France—especially in Paris.²⁶ In Paris, and basically representing the entire faculty there, the leading and most outspoken opponent was Noël Bédá. What began as a general dislike of Erasmus's work ended in a printed list of every error Erasmus makes in his *Paraphrases* and the personal condemnation of Erasmus by the faculty.²⁷

For better or worse, the content of a paraphrase changed little after Erasmus initially set it in print. Each of the paraphrases received several reprints, so Erasmus had ample opportunity to make changes. The *Paraphrase on Matthew*, for example, was reprinted three times after the initial release, yet received only minor revisions each time.²⁸ The same held true for most of the others as well: an occasional added word, corrected printing errors, and the like. The one prominent exception to this is the *Paraphrase on Romans*, where changes were still slight but relate to theology and may have even “[approximated] the ideas of the Protestant reformers.”²⁹

Encountering the *Paraphrases*

In 1533, after all of the *Paraphrases* had been published, Erasmus's contemporary and friend Juan Luis Vives (1492-1540) identified four basic types of

²⁵Christ-von Wedel, *Erasmus of Rotterdam*, 191.

²⁶Two works especially discuss the attacks on Erasmus from primarily the Catholic side: Erika Rummel, *Erasmus and His Catholic Critics II: 1523–1536*, vol. 2 (Nieuwkoop: De Graaf, 1989); Erika Rummel, ed., *Biblical Humanism and Scholasticism in the Age of Erasmus* (Boston: Brill, 2008).

²⁷Robert D. Sider and Dean Simpson, preface to *Paraphrase on Matthew*, by Desiderius Erasmus, trans. Simpson Dean, CWE 45 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), xiii–xiv; Erika Rummel, “Why Noël Bédá Did Not Like Erasmus' *Paraphrases*,” in Pabel and Vessey, *Holy Scripture Speaks*, 265–78.

²⁸Sider and Simpson, preface to *Paraphrase on Matthew*, x.

²⁹John B. Payne, Albert Rabil, Jr., and Warren S. Smith, Jr., “Translator's Note,” in Erasmus, *Paraphrases on Romans and Galatians*, xxxv. Rabil notes this as well, seeing “forty-three substantive changes” and listing many of them. *Erasmus and the New Testament*, 136–39.

commentary in his work *De ratione dicendi*. Summarizing Vives's forms, Jean Céard writes, "He divides them into four categories, according to the way in which they treat the text. Some expand (dilatant) the text; some condense (contrahunt) it; some explain the words in the same language; finally, some transfer the meaning from one language to another."³⁰ Erasmus's *Paraphrases* fall into the first category—expanding the actual text.³¹ The second category, condensing, would be something like a summary or an abridgment. The third category—"explain[ing] the words in the same language"—feels more familiar today because it is the category for most contemporary commentaries. Here an author breaks from the text (rather than expanding the text) to reflect upon and explain it. This type would include works like Chrysostom's *Homilies on Matthew* and Origen's *Commentary on Matthew*.³² The fourth category would typically be called *translation* today. But while Erasmus's *Paraphrases* fit in one of the category types, they were not common commentaries even for his time.

Erasmus's *Paraphrases* are set at the front end of a renewed method for explaining the biblical text. "In his *Bibliotheca Sancta* (1566), Sixtus of Siena" listed about ten authors he believed used paraphrases before Erasmus.³³ But the majority of these authors wrote well before Erasmus—within the first few hundred years AD—while

³⁰Jean Céard, "Theory and Practices of Commentary in the Renaissance," in Henderson, *Unfolding of Words*, 5. Céard thinks Vives "wrote perhaps the most detailed and enlightened examination of commentary as a genre" of his time. And he points out, Erasmus is partly responsible for Vives' exploration into the nature of commentary. "In 1521-1522, Vives had the opportunity to reflect on the nature and demands of commentary when he undertook, at the request of Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536), the task of commenting on *The City of God*" (4-5).

³¹Céard, "Theory and Practices," 5.

³²Note that Erasmus did actually write in this category as well—with his Annotations. Written for a more learned and scholarly audience, the Annotations began as "predominantly a philological commentary, recording and discussing variant readings and commenting on passages in the Vulgate that were in Erasmus' opinion either obscurely or incorrectly rendered." Erika Rummel, *Erasmus' "Annotations" on the New Testament: From Philologist to Theologian* (Toronto; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1986), vii. After revisions and expansions, their final printing had become "a mixture of textual and literary criticism, theological exegesis, spiritual counsel, and polemical asides" (vii).

³³Bernard Roussel, "Exegetical Fictions? Biblical Paraphrases of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in Pabel and Vessey, *Holy Scripture Speaks*, 59.

only one or two wrote within a few hundred years of Erasmus.³⁴ Also, the similarity between the work of these men and the work of Erasmus varies by author. Erasmus himself says, however, that his work is not entirely original and lists two men who had influenced him: Themistius and Juvencus.³⁵ Themistius's *Paraphrases* of Aristotle seem to be expansions upon Aristotle's text similar in style to what Erasmus would do in his *Paraphrases*.³⁶ Erasmus also notes that Juvencus, a Latin poet, did the same thing with the biblical text that he was now doing, except that Juvencus set his work in verse.³⁷ In a passing comment, Erasmus also mentions that Arator had done something similar with Acts and Aegidius Delphus with the Psalms.³⁸ But they did not write for the same audience or call them *paraphrases*. As Rabil notes in his discussion of the *Paraphrases*, "Erasmus was the only writer in his generation to entitle his works 'paraphrases' instead of 'commentaries.'" ³⁹ After him a number of authors appeared publishing works they

³⁴Roussell, "Exegetical Fictions?," 59.

³⁵Cottier, "Erasmus's *Paraphrases*," 29–30.

³⁶Cottier, "Erasmus's *Paraphrases*," 29. Cottier notes that "the publication in 1481 of the Latin translation of Themistius's *Paraphrases* of Aristotle's *De anima* by Ermolao Barbaro (1453/4-1493)... marked the start of a new approach to Aristotelian studies in which Erasmus did not take part but which could interest his Spanish correspondent [Coronel] (29). Further down the same page he lists two more contemporaries of Erasmus who would provide their own paraphrase to Aristotle's works. One of those men started paraphrasing Aristotle more than a decade before Erasmus began working on Romans (though Cottier does not state when or if that work was published). The other published a couple years after Erasmus published his *Paraphrase* of Romans.

³⁷Cottier, "Erasmus's *Paraphrases*," 30. Carolinne White writes, "Juvencus' poem in four books on the life of Christ [Evangeliorum Libri], . . . was written around the year 330." *Early Christian Latin Poets* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 34. Juvencus had set the four Gospels to verse, a work which became very popular and remained popular beyond his time. She adds, "Juvencus was one of the most widely read poets of the Middle Ages," but then notes the present reality that "little interest has been shown [his work] in modern times" (35). Almost no portion of his work has been translated. White provides a translated portion from Matt 2 and Matt 26 that is worth reading. In a related work, R. P. H. Green, states that Juvencus "was to all appearances the pioneer of extended paraphrase verse." "The 'Evangeliorum Libri' of Juvencus: Exegesis by Stealth?," in *Poetry and Exegesis in Premodern Latin Christianity: The Encounter between Classical and Christian Strategies of Interpretation*, ed. Willemien Otten and Karla Pollmann (Boston: Brill, 2007), 65. Green's article explores the extent of exegesis found in Juvencus' work.

³⁸Cottier, "Erasmus's *Paraphrases*," 30.

³⁹Rabil, "Erasmus's *Paraphrases*," 147. I had originally found something similar to this quote in Cottier, making this citation rather awkward. Cottier writes, "Erasmus was the only writer of his generation to have called his work not 'commentary' but 'paraphrase'" ("Erasmus's *Paraphrases*," 28). But Rabil's work is not cited in the endnotes for that sentence. To give Cottier the benefit of the doubt, his work has been translated into English. Perhaps something was lost in the process, or it happens to be an odd coincidence. I note it here only because I feel I need to credit Rabil; however, most of my readers will

would call paraphrases, similar in style to what Erasmus produced. Roussel, writing about those who composed paraphrases around the time of Erasmus believes Erasmus knew his work was a “novel undertaking.” And early in the chapter he states, “it is possible, nonetheless, to take Erasmus as the ‘inventor,’ at the beginning of the sixteenth century, of a model that was to be claimed by other authors in their turn.”⁴⁰

For Erasmus, the *Paraphrases* are “a type of commentary.”⁴¹ Like a commentary, they explain and bring clarity to the text. But Erasmus explains the text without breaking the text—he does not stop the flow of text to insert side comments about the text. Cottier explains, “The paraphrase consists of a flow of ideas that makes no distinction between narrator and commentator, since the author himself seems to be explaining his text.”⁴² The explanation of the text has become part of the text. In other words, when one of Paul’s letters is explained, it is written as though Paul himself is clarifying what he is writing (as he writes). When Jesus is speaking in the Gospels, he is also the one explaining more about what he is teaching—its meaning.⁴³ Cottier writes, “The essence of the paraphrase is to restore the thought, the *sensus*, of the text by reformulating it but without changing the meaning.”⁴⁴

With this type of expansion of the text, Erasmus tries to keep the original voice of the text, especially noticeable in the Gospels.⁴⁵ Throughout Luke, a good deal of the

likely read Cottier before Rabil.

⁴⁰Roussel, “Exegetical Fictions?,” 59. Roussel’s essay compares the works of four men who wrote on Romans with Erasmus and his work on Romans.

⁴¹Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 3–4.

⁴²Cottier, “Erasmus’s *Paraphrases*,” 31.

⁴³Cottier notes that the nature of these comments only allowed one possible interpretation—a benefit as far as Erasmus was concerned. The paraphraser could not have Paul or another writer listing multiple options for the intended meaning. “Erasmus’s *Paraphrases*,” 32.

⁴⁴Cottier, “Erasmus’s *Paraphrases*,” 32.

⁴⁵Erasmus even seems to complain about this, and he uses the difficulty this presents through the gospels as a reason not to paraphrase them. In his dedicatory letter he writes, “If I were not deterred by the solemn nature of the task, yet the subject-matter was unsympathetic and did not admit of paraphrase; and not solely because in the Gospel different characters appear, so that while the writer adapts his style to

textual expansion appears as additional historical or medical details (even more than in the same stories in other Gospels), because he believed Luke to have been a physician and an historian.⁴⁶ Each of the Gospels are given lengthy introductions, written as though by the Evangelists themselves. They explain their purpose for writing and give various details to fill out their Gospels. Matthew writes out of concern that oral tradition will either corrupt the story or eventually lose credibility. He (Matthew) says, “[T]here is danger, as the story spreads further afield every day, either that it will be changed as it passes through many hands, or that the spoken word will be less credible than a book to some.”⁴⁷ A couple of lines later Matthew summarizes the kind of content included in his work: “I will include in this book the essence of the whole affair—what is enough to lead to salvation: the birth, teaching, miracles, death and resurrection.”⁴⁸ Mark, apparently in reference to Matthew and Luke, writes in his introduction that “some preferred to take the gospel story further back, namely to the birth of Jesus Christ. I was content, for the purpose of brevity, to begin with the preaching of John the Baptist.”⁴⁹ Erasmus gives each character a voice. This includes Jesus as well as individual characters within the shorter miracle stories—though each is seen in varying degrees.⁵⁰

Ultimately, Erasmus wants to provide a clearly explained text written at an accessible level. In the dedicatory letter to his *Paraphrase on Romans*, he explains his

suit them (as he has to), his pen is constrained within very narrow limits and of course is debarred from the freedom allowed to other kinds of commentary.” Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 3.

⁴⁶The voice in Luke is discussed well in Jane E. Phillips, “Sub evangelistae persona: The Speaking Voice in Erasmus’ Paraphrases on Luke,” in Pabel and Vessey, *Holy Scripture Speaks*, 127–50.

⁴⁷Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 32.

⁴⁸Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 32.

⁴⁹Desiderius Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Mark*, trans. Erika Rummel, CWE 49 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 14.

⁵⁰Of course, the emphasis upon “voice” is true for the epistles as well. For an examination of this through Paul (and how Paul is represented), see Robert D. Sider, “Historical Imagination and the Representation of Paul in Erasmus’ Paraphrases on the Pauline Epistles,” in Pabel and Vessey, *Holy Scripture Speaks*, 85–110.

work as an effort to unravel the words of Paul by “bridging gaps, smoothing rough passages, bringing order out of confusion and simplicity out of complication, untying knots, throwing light on dark places, and giving Hebrew turns of speech a Roman dress.”⁵¹ Addressing the readers of his *Paraphrase on Matthew*, Erasmus devotes a good amount of space arguing that laity should be allowed to read and understand the Gospels, since the Gospels were written for all.⁵² He writes, “Indeed, if I have my way, the farmer, the smith, the stone-cutter will read him [Christ], prostitutes and pimps will read him, even the Turks will read him.”⁵³ And so Erasmus writes in such a way to open the text to all readers.⁵⁴

⁵¹Desiderius Erasmus, dedicatory letter to *Paraphrases on Romans and Galatians*, 2.

⁵²Desiderius Erasmus, “To the Pious Reader,” in *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 8.

⁵³Erasmus, “To the Pious Reader,” 10.

⁵⁴See Matthew Reynolds’s recent book on translation for an excellent discussion of paraphrases as a means of opening a text and Erasmus’s work as a paraphrast. *The Poetry of Translation: From Chaucer & Petrarch to Homer & Logue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 73–87.

CHAPTER 2

ERASMUS'S USE OF THE CHURCH FATHERS

Erasmus borrowed heavily from the church fathers when writing his *Paraphrases*. A contributing member of the “patristic renaissance,” Erasmus was simultaneously expanding his *Annotations*—another work heavily citing patristic sources—and publishing his own editions of several of the Fathers while composing the *Paraphrases*.¹ So patristic influence upon the *Paraphrases* is somewhat expected. Indeed, the translators for various volumes of the *Paraphrases* frequently note their influence. John Bateman listed consulting these authors as an intentional stage in the creation of the paraphrases, when he speculated on the steps of Erasmus’s composition method.² And for the *Paraphrase on Matthew*, the editors concluded that “Erasmus’ use . . . of the *Homilies on Matthew* by Chrysostom, and the *Commentary on Matthew* by Jerome is so pervasive and so apparently direct as to suggest that he had these books open before him as he wrote.”³ But how Erasmus used the Fathers in the *Paraphrases* is an underserved conversation.

¹Erika Rummel summarizes Erasmus’s contribution and relates it to his *Annotations*, “Between 1516 and 1536 he published, among others, works of Jerome, Augustine, Cyprian, Hilary, Chrysostom, Irenaeus, and Origen. The fruit of this research can be seen in the *Annotations*. Erasmus made extensive use of patristic writings in his notes, consulting them as witnesses to the text, as glossaries of terms, and as hermeneutic guides.” *Erasmus’ “Annotations” on the New Testament: From Philologist to Theologian* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 53–54. Pages 52–74 of her work address Erasmus’s patristic sources in the *Annotations*. For discussion of Erasmus’s publication of the Fathers, see John C. Olin, “Erasmus and the Church Fathers,” in *Six Essays on Erasmus and a Translation of Erasmus’ Letter to Carondelet, 1523* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1979), 33–49.

²John J. Bateman, “Translator’s Note,” in *Paraphrases on the Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon; the Epistles of Peter and Jude; the Epistles of John; the Epistle to the Hebrews*, by Desiderius Erasmus, CWE 44 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), xv.

³Robert D. Sider and Dean Simpson, preface to *Paraphrase on Matthew*, by Desiderius Erasmus, trans. Simpson Dean, CWE 45 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), xv. Throughout the *Paraphrase*, the translators have done an excellent job footnoting what would seem to be every possible reference to the church fathers. They have also provided snippets of translation for those Fathers in many

Below, Erasmus's use of the church fathers will be demonstrated by exposing representative samples from within the Sermon. Some of Erasmus's sources are easier to identify than others, but none appear simply as clear quotations. Occasionally, sentences and phrases closely resemble those of another author. However, more often than not, Erasmus has adapted his sources to better meet the needs of his paraphrase. By identifying a few of these sources and showing how Erasmus uses them, one will see that Erasmus's *Paraphrase* provides a rich sampling of patristic readings.

Clear Dependence on the Church Fathers

Erasmus provides clear evidence for direct dependence upon and use of the church fathers, and He makes no effort to hide this in the dedicatory letter to the *Paraphrase*. He lists a few sources by name. Scanning the *Paraphrase* largely supports his claimed dependence but also provides evidence of other sources—unnamed sources.

Erasmus's Named Sources

Erasmus readily acknowledges a few of these sources in the *Dedicatory Letter* of his *Paraphrase on Matthew*: "I have mainly followed Origen, the most experienced theologian of all, along with Chrysostom and Jerome, the most generally approved among the orthodox."⁴ And the work of these authors clearly does appear throughout the paraphrase. However, they are not simple quotations. So they are primarily identified through Erasmus's use of a similar explanation or illustration of the text. And while

footnotes. I am grateful for their work and in no sense want to minimize what they have provided. One should keep in mind, though, that the references provided in their footnotes function in many ways: they show possible dependence, similar themes (without necessary dependence), contrasting ideas, and more. Simply skimming the footnotes for references will not provide a list of sources Erasmus is quoting. Moreover, when looking through other volumes of Erasmus's *Paraphrases*, one will quickly see that the footnotes vary greatly in the type, depth, and frequency of content between translators. Most of the references to the Fathers below are also included in the footnotes in some form. I will try to note those instances that are not.

⁴Erasmus, dedicatory letter to *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 6.

Origen gets pride of place in Erasmus's introductory letter, Chrysostom gets pride of place in the actual *Paraphrase*.

Throughout the Sermon on the Mount, one sees and feels Chrysostom's influence more heavily than any other author.⁵ One clear example may be found in Matthew 5:14, where Jesus refers to his disciples as the light of the world and a city that cannot be hidden.⁶ Erasmus borrows Chrysostom's imagery of the disciples as actors performing on the stage of the world for all to see. Erasmus writes: "You will not be able to hide no matter how hard you try. Imagine that you are acting out a play in the theatre of the entire world, so that anxiety might motivate you to be cautious and alert."⁷ Looking back to Chrysostom's *Homilies*, one will see something similar: "Again, by these words He trains them to strictness of life, teaching them to be earnest in their endeavors, as set before the eyes of all men, and contending in the midst of the amphitheatre of the world."⁸

The paraphrase at Matthew 5:14 also shows how Chrysostom's influence may be much more subtle. Both men increase the contrast between Christ's disciples and the sun as the natural light of the world. Chrysostom twice mentions the greater influence the disciples have in comparison to the "sunbeams."⁹ Erasmus also mentions the "single sun"

⁵The total references from the editors' footnotes show 40 references to Chrysostom and 8 to Jerome. Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 83–139. As noted above, these numbers do not necessarily reflect instances of dependence. I include these numbers only as illustrative instances of where the translators thought it helpful to mention another author. As best I can tell—even though the counts themselves are not accurate for dependence—the percentage they represent is about right. This is true for similar notes below.

⁶I will use modern verse references throughout this work. I realize that these modern references were not added to the text until a couple of decades after Erasmus died. For convenience, I have found them necessary.

⁷Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 94.

⁸Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel of Saint Matthew*, in vol. 10 of *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Series 1, ed. Philip Schaff (repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 15.11.5 (10:98).

⁹Chrysostom, *Homilies on Matthew* 15.11.3, 6 (*NPNF*¹ 10:97, 98).

and then extends the metaphor by brining in clouds that may “obscure the sun.”¹⁰ Both single out the importance of “world,” stressing the far-reaching effects of this light. For Chrysostom, “world” is representative “not of one nation, nor of twenty states, but of the whole inhabited earth.”¹¹ And Erasmus points out that the sun shines “on all who dwell upon the earth” as he (twice) notes the disciples’s influence on “the entire world.”¹² While these connections are faint, here they are safely identified because of Erasmus’s more explicit tie with the theater image—a rather unique illustration.¹³

One feels Chrysostom’s influence in the Lord’s Prayer as well. Jesus begins the prayer by addressing God as “our Father” in Matthew 6:9. Both authors use the phrase to say all people have common standing under God. Erasmus writes: “He is called Father so that you might understand that he is merciful and kind. . . You call him ‘yours,’ so that no one might claim anything as his own since whatever one has comes in every case from the benefice of a single being; and in this respect there is equality between kings and servants.”¹⁴ Chrysostom, while keeping Jesus’s original first person personal pronoun, had also stressed commonality between those who are able to call God “Father.” He ended on the same note concerning social status. He wrote, “For He saith not, ‘My Father, which art in Heaven,’ but, ‘our Father,’ offering up his supplications for the body in common . . . [And he] exterminates the inequality of human things, and shows how far the equality reaches between the king and the poor man, if at least in those things which

¹⁰Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 94.

¹¹Chrysostom, *Homilies on Matthew* 15.11.3 (*NPNF¹* 10:97).

¹²Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 94. Simpson also hints at this in a note, though he does not make the “sun connection.” (94 n48).

¹³A third similarity may be that both stressed the impossibility of hiding this light. This will be discussed more in chapter 4.

¹⁴Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 119. Erasmus uses the second person plural “your” here because, in the *Paraphrase* at this point, Jesus is explaining the prayer to his disciples. “Your” prevents Jesus from including himself while identifying the disciples stance before God—including as created beings.

are indispensable, we are all of us fellows.”¹⁵ Given this overlap of ideas, some dependence upon Chrysostom seems required.

Erasmus’s use of Jerome is similar to his use of Chrysostom: some instances are clear while others are less clear but seem likely. Through the Beatitudes, Erasmus carefully expands and explains the pronouncements about those whom Jesus claims are blessed (using Jesus’s own voice of course). When he comes to the ‘peacemakers’ of Matthew 5:9, Erasmus understands them to be people who have first wrought peace within themselves before bringing it to others. He writes, “But in my judgment they are blessed who first have repressed in their own hearts the rebellion of all desires, and then are zealous to repair harmony among others also who are at odds with them.”¹⁶ Jerome made a similar move long before Erasmus: “This refers to those who make peace, first in their own heart, then among dissenting brothers. For what use is it when others are pacified through you, if within your own heart there are wars of vices going on?”¹⁷

As with references to Chrysostom, not all references to Jerome are as clear. In Matthew 7:3–5, Jesus speaks of a hypocrite attempting to remove a speck of sawdust from his brother’s eye while ignoring the plank in his own. Erasmus expands the meaning of “hypocrite” when paraphrasing Matthew 7:5. Pointing out the shortcomings of others serves only to elevate the accuser. He writes, “You hypocrite, you who seek praise for holiness among men, not from your own good deeds, but from other people’s evil deeds, first cast the beam out of your own eye.”¹⁸ At this point, Erasmus has taken the same position as Jerome: the act is done to receive glory. Jerome wrote, “It seems to me that even the one who says to his brother: ‘Let me remove the speck from your eye,’ is doing

¹⁵Chrysostom, *Homilies on Matthew* 19.6.3 (NPNF¹ 10:134).

¹⁶Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 89.

¹⁷Jerome, *Commentary on Matthew*, trans. Thomas P. Scheck, *The Fathers of the Church* 117 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2008), 76.

¹⁸Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 129–30.

this for the sake of glory, that he might be seen to be just. This is why the Lord says to him: ‘Hypocrite, first remove the plank from your own eye.’”¹⁹ Jerome, however, made this observation not in his comments for Matthew 7 but in his comment for Matthew 6:2 with the first appearance of “hypocrite” in Matthew’s gospel.

A more difficult instance of dependence may be found earlier in the Sermon. In Matthew 6:6, Jesus tells the disciples to go into an inner room to pray, rather than praying openly for public notice. Erasmus first understands the inner room to be a disposition within the person rather than a physical location. And the one who can “pray just as energetically, perhaps, indeed even more ardently, if he were alone, prays in a secret closet.”²⁰ Then, in a transition sentence between Matthew 6:6 and 6:7, he writes, “This, too, is something you must avoid while you pray; it is the disposition of the mind that moves God, not the noise from one’s lips, nor does it matter how long, or how sonorous a prayer is, but how eager and sincere the disposition.”²¹ At this point, the editors for the *Paraphrase* lean toward the *Glossa ordinaria* as the heavy influence on Erasmus, citing “not with noisy clamour of words.”²² However, Jerome could just as easily have been a player for influence. Jerome wrote, “We should pray to the Lord with the thoughts of our heart shut in and with our lips compressed. This is what we read that Hannah (Anna) did in the book of Kings. It says: ‘Only her lips alone were moving, but her voice was not heard.’”²³ Because Erasmus has only pulled portions of text or ideas from his sources, it can be difficult to determine from where exactly his inspiration originates.

¹⁹Jerome, *Commentary on Matthew*, 86.

²⁰Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 114.

²¹Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 114–115.

²²Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 115n13.

²³Jerome, *Commentary on Matthew*, 86–87. Jerome’s possible influence is unnoted in footnotes of the *Paraphrase*.

Dependence upon Origen seems surprisingly lacking. There is no clear dependence in the Sermon, of course, since Origen's commentary has been lost through this part of Matthew.²⁴ Still, there is little clear dependence upon Origen anywhere in the *Paraphrase*. The editors for the *Paraphrase* mention Origen in footnotes to seven different passages (in nine footnotes), but nearly all of these are either unclear or could equally show dependence on another author: Chrysostom or Jerome. One likely example is found at Matthew 20:2, where Jesus tells the parable of the vineyard workers. The *Paraphrase* actually has Matthew record something of an introduction and explanation of the parable just before the parable is given. In this introduction, the denarius is interpreted as the "coin of eternal life."²⁵ Origen used a similar expression when he called it the "coin of salvation."²⁶ This reference is as clear as the dependence gets. In a footnote to the *Paraphrase*, Simpson suggests Erasmus's reference to Origen is primarily a rhetorical hat tip.²⁷ But Erasmus appreciated Origen in many respects, and his *Paraphrase on Romans* gave him greater voice throughout.²⁸

Erasmus's Unnamed Sources

While Erasmus has named a few of his sources, there seem to be others he has left unnamed. These are a bit more difficult to determine, not only because they have not clearly been identified by Erasmus, but also because borrowing is typically not as direct

²⁴See Thomas Scheck for details about Erasmus's own work on Origen and the text he produced as compared to that available Patrologia Graeca. "Erasmus's *Edition of Origen*," in *Tradition and the Rule of Faith in the Early Church: Essays in Honor of Joseph T. Lienhard, S.J.*, ed. Ronnie J. Rombs and Alexander Y. Hwang (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 308–36.

²⁵Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 282.

²⁶The translator's provide the translation from Origen in their footnote. This, or similar references in other works, seems to be the only English translation available for Origen's work. Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 282.

²⁷Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 6n17.

²⁸John B. Payne, Albert Rabil, Jr., and Warren S. Smith, Jr., "The *Paraphrases* of Erasmus: Origin and Character," in *Paraphrases on Romans and Galatians*, by Desiderius Erasmus, CWE 42 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), xviii.

as with the named sources. At least two of these sources deserve mention: Augustine and Cyprian.

Augustine is Erasmus's favorite unnamed source both through the Sermon and even throughout the *Paraphrase*.²⁹ The comments from both men at Matthew 5:38 illustrate this well. When Jesus speaks of the law of retribution—an eye for an eye—both Erasmus and Augustine feel compelled to elaborate on the need for such a law because of men's desire for revenge.³⁰ Erasmus notes in the *Paraphrase* here that the law was “allowed our forefathers” because “their hearts were eager for revenge.”³¹ The law was intended to restrain that lust. He writes, “Therefore the Law intended that punishment should not go further than was fair.”³² Augustine came to the same conclusion in his commentary on the Sermon on the Mount. He observes that rarely is one satisfied to return a single blow for a single blow, but the one injured always wants the other to suffer even more in return.³³ Then he writes, “Such a spirit was in great measure restrained by the law, where it was written, ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth;’ by which expressions a certain measure is intended, so that the vengeance should not exceed the injury.”³⁴ Again, the similarity between authors' points toward borrowing: Erasmus likely pulled ideas from Augustine at this verse.

Cyprian may also be an influence on the *Paraphrase* through the Lord's Prayer, but this is difficult to prove with certainty.³⁵ The footnotes through this portion of

²⁹The total references from the editors' footnotes show 15 references to Augustine and 3 to Cyprian. Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 83–139.

³⁰ Neither Jerome nor Chrysostom speak of revenge at this point. Cf. Jerome, *Commentary on Matthew*, 83–84; Chrysostom, *Homilies on Matthew* 18.1.2 (*NPNF¹* 10:123–24).

³¹Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 108.

³²Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 108.

³³Augustine, *Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount*, in vol. 6 of *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Series 1, ed. Philip Schaff (repr. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 24.

³⁴Augustine, Sermon on the Mount 1.19.56 (*NPNF¹* 6:24).

³⁵Sider and Simpson, preface to *Paraphrase on Matthew*, xv.

the *Paraphrase* only note his influence three times, and these are far from direct quotations. The main influence may be through structure. Deferrari, in an introductory note to his translation of Cyprian's work on the Lord's Prayer, describes the work as having three basic parts: the quality of the prayer, the explanation of the prayer, and the "conditions for effective prayer."³⁶ Simpson believes Erasmus's paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer also follows a tripartite pattern, possibly following the precedent (for three parts, not necessarily content) of Cyprian and Augustine.³⁷ Erasmus happens to share themes similar primarily to those found in Cyprian's first part on the quality of the prayer and the third part on conditions for the one praying. But there is no clearly discernable borrowing. The surest claim to Cyprian's influence is actually from the *Annotations*.³⁸ There, Erasmus specifically notes Cyprian, and it seems likely this is why some note Cyprian's influence on the *Paraphrase* at the Lord's Prayer.

Erasmus Molds Sources to Fit Rhetorical Purposes

Erasmus rarely leaves his sources untouched but manipulates them to fit his own rhetorical purposes. As a humanist, Erasmus stressed the importance of grammar and rhetoric for creating good literature. Two of his works in this area are especially relevant for studying the *Paraphrases*: that is, *De copia*, Erasmus's textbook for variety in style and expanding content, and the *Ratio verae theologiae*, where Erasmus's writes on hermeneutical practices and explaining the content of Scripture.³⁹ And the somewhat

³⁶Cyprian, *Saint Cyprian: Treatises*, trans. Roy J. Deferrari, FC 36 (New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc., 1958), 126.

³⁷Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 115–16n19. He identifies Erasmus's structure as a "prayer directed to God" that is "framed by two panels expressing the significance of the thought for the one who prays."

³⁸Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 115–16n19. This is where the editors actually note a specific place for Cyprian's influence on Erasmus. But it has been brought from the *Annotations*.

³⁹Both of these works are now available in English. Betty I. Knott, trans., "*Copia: Foundations of the Abundant Style*," in *Literary and Educational Writings 2: "De Copia" / "De Ratione Studii*," CWE 24 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978), 279–660; Donald Morrison Conroy, "The Ecumenical Theology of Erasmus of Rotterdam: A Study of the *Ratio Verae Theologiae*, Translated into English and Annotated, with a Brief Account of His Ecumenical Writings and Activities within His Lifetime" (PhD

recent “attempt to reconceive the Erasmian textual universe *as a whole*” has shown ample light on the rhetorical nature of the *Paraphrases*.⁴⁰ Space and scope prevent a detailed examination of Erasmus’s rhetorical practices here. But others have well represented this idea elsewhere, and from various vantage points.⁴¹ In any case, an in-depth discussion of rhetorical details is probably best left to comparison in the Latin text. My only intention here is to suggest that the same rhetorical thrust evident throughout the *Paraphrases* has been used not only to expand and adapt the biblical text but also the text of the church fathers as well.

One may see Erasmus’s rhetorical practices and incorporation of his sources by examining a verse from the Lord’s Prayer: “Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt 6:10 NASB). To facilitate the discussion, Erasmus’s paraphrase of this verse is provided below and divided as indicated by letters:

(a) Let Satan’s tyranny be destroyed (b) so that your kingdom may grow ever stronger day by day, (c) a kingdom that endures not by its resources or the protection of its guards, (d) but by modesty, chastity, gentleness, tolerance, faith, and love, (e) so that, once vices and wicked desires have been cast aside, your heavenly virtues may exert their own force among human beings. (f) And just as in heaven all things have been made peaceful (g) and there is no creature that does not obey your commands, (h) so on earth let there at last be no one who does not obey your most holy will, (i) while even now everyone practises [practices] (as far as weakness of human nature allows) what will come to pass to perfection in the life to come.⁴²

diss., University of Pittsburgh, 1974).

⁴⁰Mark Vessey, introduction to *Holy Scripture Speaks: The Production and Reception of Erasmus’ “Paraphrases on the New Testament,”* ed. Hilmar M. Pabel and Mark Vessey (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 5.

⁴¹Three works in English stand out. Jacques Chomarat, “Grammar and Rhetoric in the Paraphrases of the Gospels by Erasmus,” *Erasmus of Rotterdam Society Yearbook* 1, no. 1 (1981): 30–68.; Manfred Hoffmann, *Rhetoric and Theology: The Hermeneutic of Erasmus* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994); Marjorie O’Rourke Boyle, *Erasmus on Language and Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977).

⁴²Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 117. Also, those examining the footnotes closely may have noticed this quote on Matt 6:10 is actually from an earlier page in the *Paraphrase* than the quote from Matt 6:9 (see n. 36 above). Erasmus expands the text of the Lord’s Prayer and then immediately follows it with an explanation of its meaning. The quote from Matt 6:9 is from the explanation paragraph where the quote from Matt 6:10 is from the prayer. This will be discussed further in the third section of this thesis.

Parts (a) through (e) cover the first third of the verse. Erasmus chooses an idea from Jerome in part (a), when he understands the prayer for the kingdom as a prayer to break Satan's power. Jerome had been a bit more hesitant in his commentary, leaving the options for the coming kingdom to mean either in the world or in the individual: "that the devil would cease to reign in the world" or "that sin would not reign in man's mortal body."⁴³ But the nature of a paraphrase allowed Erasmus to choose only a single interpretation. Erasmus has also made a slight shift in Jesus's request: Jesus is now praying for the destruction of Satan's tyranny for the result of the coming and spreading of the kingdom. Erasmus has pushed the request back to the cause, and part (b) then becomes the result or the purpose for the request. Parts (c) and (d) are a brief digression that elaborate the nature and character of the kingdom. And part (e) seems almost like a restatement of (a) through (d) under the guise of an ultimate purpose for this portion of the prayer: that the destructive influence of Satan would be "cast aside" so the "heavenly virtues" of part (d) would grow "among human beings." That idea likely holds ties to Chrysostom, who also wrote of "all wickedness [being] chased out" and the return of virtue.⁴⁴

The last two-thirds of Matthew 6:10 are expanded in parts (f) through (i). Erasmus begins in part (f) by describing the peaceful state of heaven. Part (g) attributes that peace to the complete obedience of heaven's inhabitants to God's will.⁴⁵ In part (h), Jesus entreats God for that same peace on earth though the complete obedience of its inhabitants. Then, in part (i), Erasmus lifts an idea from Chrysostom by adding that men are already striving to live now as they will one day perfectly, though he seems to differ

⁴³Jerome, *Commentary on Matthew*, 87.

⁴⁴ Chrysostom, *Homilies on Matthew*, 19.7.8 (*NPNF*¹ 10:135). Unnoted by the editor.

⁴⁵A very difficult connection, though I believe it a likely one, could be made with Jerome for parts (f) and (g). Jerome stressed that the angels in heaven perfectly obeyed God's will, and that any sin in heaven would nullify the comparison. Jerome, *Commentary on Matthew*, 87–88.

with him on man's ability to carry out that effort. Chrysostom wrote that, even while longing for heaven, Jesus "hath bidden us make the earth a heaven and do and say all things, even while we are continuing in it, as having our conversation there . . . it is possible even while abiding here, to do all, as though already placed on high."⁴⁶

Erasmus uses his rhetorical ability not only to expand and explain the text, but also to adapt and even intertwine the patristic sources. He moves freely between Jerome and Chrysostom. And he uses their ideas as launching points to elaborate on the qualities of the kingdom and results desired from this portion of the prayer.

Summary

The interpreters of the past were dialog partners for Erasmus. He interacted with their work, occasionally expanded upon it, and even disagreed with them from time to time. Erasmus could not credit these authors within the *Paraphrase* itself—doing so would have broken the flow of the text. But far from simply stealing their work for his own, he used their words as aids to further develop the text, imagery, and explanation of Scripture.⁴⁷ Their influence saturates the *Paraphrase*. And by his abundant use and shaping of the church fathers, Erasmus provides readers with a text rich in patristic interpretation.

⁴⁶Chrysostom, *Homilies on Matthew*, 19.7.7 (*NPNF¹* 10:135). Emphasis mine. The editors of the *Paraphrase* provide a translation of Chrysostom only slightly closer to Erasmus's wording: "in the meantime, while living here, to demonstrate a manner of life like that of those above." Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 117, n 27.

⁴⁷For an interesting discussion of plagiarism (not an anachronistic term), see Ari Wesseling, "Erasmus and Plagiarism," in *Erasmus and the Renaissance Republic of Letters*, ed. Stephen Ryle (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepolis, 2014), 203–14.

CHAPTER 3

ERASMUS'S INTRATEXTUAL READING

Erasmus is an intratextual reader. Dale Allison, in a chapter of his *Studies in Matthew*, highlights the intratextual reading habits of biblical interpreters.¹ He loosely identifies intratextuality as the way in which one text has been related to another text within the same canonical book.² Both the author and the reader may make intratextual connections. Those connections may appear in a variety of forms. Of course, the church fathers often made intratextual connections as they sought to explain a passage. And, like a few of his sources, Erasmus is quick pull Scripture from other parts of Matthew to elucidate a portion he is currently paraphrasing. However, unlike his sources, Erasmus straddles the intratextual fence: he reads intratextually, but the nature of a paraphrase also means that he may write intratextually with the voice of the author. His connections are frequent and omnidirectional. At times, they can even feel foisted upon the reader.

Using the Sermon Inside the Sermon

Erasmus moves about freely inside the Sermon making connections. Connected passages are often mutually impacting: the influence may be felt in both directions. A couple passages from the Beatitudes seem to be used more often than other passages. And the Beatitudes as a group weigh heavily upon the Sermon in Erasmus's *Paraphrase*.

¹Dale C. Allison Jr., "Darkness at Noon (Matt. 27:45)," in *Studies in Matthew: Interpretation Past and Present* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 79–105.

²Allison, "Darkness at Noon," 79: "I shall highlight the ways in which readers have related 27:45 to other portions of Matthew (intratextuality)."

At Matthew 5:6

The first solid example in the Sermon appears at Matthew 5:6, where Jesus pronounces as blessed those “who hunger and thirst for righteousness.” Erasmus leads this section with an appeal to physical hunger and thirst—an uncomfortable condition all strive to avoid.³ The need to eat and drink always returns. But he notes the sources for that needed satisfaction “are everywhere present to the godly, who are content with a little and do not desire anything beyond what is necessary, or are not even anxious, for the one who both nourishes the little sparrows and clothes the lilies is undoubtedly the one who supplies our needs.”⁴ Erasmus has brought in Matthew 6:25–33 to explain this idea.⁵ Then he moves to speaking of hungering for righteousness—a craving we should desire, because its object is “always present” and brings eternal life.⁶

By bringing in Matthew 6:25–33 at Matthew 5:6, Erasmus pushes his readers to understand these passages together. He addresses the need for actual food—something that comes to mind when speaking of hunger—by noting that God will provide. Thus they are free to hunger for righteousness. The passages are later brought even closer when Erasmus begins Matthew 6:25 with similar themes such as being “content with little” and “any number of sources” being readily available to meet the physical needs brought by “hunger and nakedness.”⁷ Of course, the passage in Matthew 6 then ends with Jesus’s words about seeking God’s kingdom and his righteousness first—before food and clothing—and then he will provide the physical necessities (v33). These passages, especially, fit well together.

³Desiderius Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, ed. Robert D. Sider, trans. Dean Simpson, CWE 45 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008). 87–88.

⁴Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 88.

⁵Erasmus appears to bring in Matt 10:29 as well, by identifying the birds as sparrows.

⁶Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 88.

⁷Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 123.

At Matthew 5:7, 9

A second instance of this kind of intratextual imposition occurs in Matthew 5:7.⁸ Again, Erasmus leads with the common thought before stating the opposite: those who receive much from others appear blessed. However, it is the merciful—those who share in the “misfortunes” of others—who are truly blessed.⁹ As they extend themselves toward others through such various acts as feeding, clothing, teaching, forgiving, and others besides, they find God extending abundant mercy toward them. Then, following the idea that being merciful results in receiving mercy, he writes, “You have forgiven your neighbor for some small offence; God will forgive all your sins. You have put aside the revenge against your brother that is temporary; God will cancel for you a punishment that has no end.”¹⁰ The overlap with the ending of the Lord’s Prayer (Matt 6:12–15) is clear: forgive and you will be forgiven; do not forgive and you will not receive forgiveness. But he makes a second connection with Matthew 5:21–22 as well with the mention of leaving aside revenge. At those later verses he writes, “[In] the New Law the unrestrained impulse of the heart for revenge is equivalent to murder in the Old.”¹¹ Erasmus makes these ties even more clear by referencing the same passages again when paraphrasing through Matthew 5:9.

At Matthew 5:9, Erasmus again draws from the ending of the Lord’s Prayer and Matthew 5:21–22, but this time in reverse order.¹² He begins with the common desire—casually living a life of “leisure”—before flipping the picture. Those who quench their own inner rebellion and then eagerly seek out opportunities to “repair harmony” are

⁸The connection between Matt 5:7, 9 and Matt 6:12–15 is unnoted by the translators.

⁹Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 88.

¹⁰Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 88.

¹¹Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 98.

¹²I am wont to see a chiasmic structure here with Matt 5:8 as the center, but nothing in Erasmus’s paraphrase there clearly indicates such a structure.

those who are blessed.¹³ This harmony results from “not only not taking vengeance if anyone has injured them, but even of their own accord inviting to peace those by whom they have been injured.”¹⁴ Here Erasmus again imposes Matthew 5:21–22 and even extends slightly into his paraphrase on verses 23–25: seeking reconciliation even if the other person is at fault. The benefit, though, is being “sons of God.” This idea is quickly followed with mention of God’s forgiving sin and the statement that God “recognizes as his sons only those who extend the grace of forgiveness to their brothers in the same way he has offered his grace to everyone.”¹⁵ The overlap with the similar idea found at the end of the Lord’s Prayer seems clear.

Erasmus directs his readers to understand these passages together by the overlay he creates when paraphrasing them. For being merciful, Erasmus speaks of forgiving and not seeking revenge. For being peacemakers, he offers the same ideas. When the reader finally arrives at Matthew 5:21–25 and the Lord’s Prayer (6:9–13), he encounters the familiar language from the Beatitudes that serves as a backdrop. The commands not to be angry with your brother, or not to present an offering while there is yet discord, and even the example prayer become invitations to reflect upon the merciful, peace-seeking nature Jesus requires of a disciple.

At Matthew 5:23–24

Trailing the previous examples, one stumbles upon another example of the Sermon used inside the Sermon at the end of Matthew 5:23–24.¹⁶ Previously, Erasmus looked forward to verses 21–22 back at Matthew 5:8. Then he slightly leaned into verses 23–24 while writing on Matthew 5:9. Here, properly in Matthew 5:24, Erasmus presents

¹³Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 89.

¹⁴Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 89–90.

¹⁵Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 90.

¹⁶The connection between Matt 5:23–24 and 5:43–44 is unnoted by the translators.

a potential objection to reconciliation near the end of the section: what if the person presenting the offering is not the person at fault? Should not the offending person be the one to seek reconciliation?¹⁷ He answers these questions: “He who is commanded to love even his enemy will not be aggrieved to restore friendship, even a friendship broken by the fault of another.”¹⁸ Once again, Erasmus has interjected a later passage—the command to love one’s enemies (Matt 5:43-44)—into this earlier section.¹⁹ References back to verses 23–24 from Matthew 5:43–44 are lacking, though.²⁰ Erasmus makes a simple *a fortiori* type of argument to clarify correct thinking for the situations in question.

At Matthew 5:31–32

When Erasmus paraphrases through the divorce issues of Matthew 5:31–32, he takes a similar approach to that relayed in reconciling brothers just mentioned above. The provisions of the Mosaic law are explained, as well as the fact that divorce prevented worse crimes—“poisoning, for instance, or murder”—that might occur should couples be forced to remain together.²¹ That said, except in the case of unfaithfulness, there should now be no divorce. Erasmus then draws from a couple additional passages to further explain why divorce should not occur. “For a man endowed with gospel gentleness will easily either correct his wife’s behavior or put up with it. But when will one who has

¹⁷Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 100.

¹⁸Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 100.

¹⁹Mark Vessey notes a similar pattern when Erasmus paraphrases James. Noting an instance at James 3:1, he writes, “As he often does, Erasmus already inserts material suggested by what follows.” “The Tongue and the Book: Erasmus’ *Paraphrases on the New Testament* and the Arts of Scripture,” in *Holy Scripture Speaks: The Production and Reception of Erasmus’ Paraphrases on the New Testament*, ed. Hilmar M. Pabel and Mark Vessey (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 40.

²⁰The “sons of your Father” idea from Matt 5:45 would seem to fit well with the “sons of God” idea of Matt 5:9, but Erasmus does not make the jump.

²¹Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 104. The editors note that both Chrysostom and Jerome make similar statements.

peace even with his enemies seek separation from his wife?”²² To begin, Erasmus pushes his reader back to the Beatitudes, and back to Matthew 5:7, 9 especially, with references to gentleness, correction, and peace.²³ But then he follows this reference by, again, looking forward to Matthew 5:38–44.²⁴ He writes that this man does not get “angry when he has been injured” and “tolerates being struck down even by his enemy.” And this ability to turn the other cheek further enables him to “endure” in his marriage.²⁵ As a last comment before moving to the next section, Erasmus briefly notes that Christian spouses will quickly seek reconciliation should either one falter. “Reconciliation” is the key here: Erasmus had previously stressed that idea in the Sermon. So this could be a reference back to the passage on the peacemaker of Matthew 5:9 or the reconciling comments at Matthew 5:21–24. Clearly, reconciliation is dear to Erasmus, and it would not be out of place here. By linking the divorce discussion to all of these other passages within the Sermon, Erasmus pushes his readers to think about divorce through the lenses of mercy, peace, and longsuffering.

At Matthew 7:15–16

A last clear example of Erasmus’s use of the Sermon within the Sermon appears at Matthew 7:15–16. Jesus warns of false prophets who come in disguise but may be identified by their fruit. Erasmus clarifies: false prophets may be recognized by “[observing] their lives and character.”²⁶ In rather Pauline fashion, Erasmus sets out their

²²Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 105.

²³Here I take “correct his wife’s behavior” in the quote above as similar to the merciful act of “teach[ing] the ignorant” in Erasmus’s paraphrase for Matt 5:7. Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 88. Neither phrase sounds particularly pleasing or appropriate in describing a marriage relationship, but that is a topic best left unaddressed in this current work.

²⁴The connection between Matt 5:7, 9 and Matt 5:38–44 is unnoted by the translators.

²⁵Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 105. One should note that Erasmus does link Matt 5:7, 9 to Matt 5:38–45 here, at least at the application level, where he did not at Matt 5:23–24.

²⁶Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 135.

various attributes—a list that includes “arrogant, vindictive, envious,” and others besides. Then, following that negative list, and still in Pauline fashion, Erasmus provides a list of gospel fruit. The entire list rings of Sermon highlights: “a heart that is gentle and not at all striving after revenge; a heart that has contempt for all the pleasures of this world; a heart that has contempt for wealth and hungers and thirsts for gospel godliness . . .”²⁷ Unlike the other intratextual uses above, though, this list is set apart by an opening phrase. He writes, “I have set out what the fruits of the gospel tree are, namely. . . .”²⁸ The list serves both as an example of what believers should see in true disciples as well as a list for which true disciples should strive.

Using Other Matthew in the Sermon

Erasmus also uses other passages from within Matthew in his intratextual reading of the Sermon. Again, these passages influence the reading of the text in the Sermon, but the Sermon also influences their reading in the home contexts.

Matthew 5:29

The paraphrase at Matthew 5:29 is the first instance in the Sermon where one encounters a passage in Matthew that is from outside the Sermon. Erasmus has just written that adultery is extended to lust, and now speaks of the removal of one’s bodily “impediments” in an attempt to restrain sin. But even removing an eye to retain godliness is gain. To help illustrate, Erasmus brings in imagery of the parable of the pearl from Matthew 13:45–46. He writes, “It is gain to acquire the pearl of gospel love though the loss of anything, no matter what.”²⁹ Here Erasmus actually states the result in the positive, something Matthew does not actually record for Jesus’s words. And here the

²⁷Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 135.

²⁸Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 135.

²⁹Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 102.

overlap between passages ends. Matthew 13 receives a single-sentence reference and then disappears from Matthew 5. Later, when Erasmus paraphrases through Matthew 13, the words of self-impairment from Matthew 5 are absent.

Matthew 5:31–32

A few verses later, Erasmus introduces Matthew 19:1–8 into the paraphrase of 5:31–32, combining Jesus’s teachings on divorce. At Matthew 5:31, Erasmus states that the Mosaic law allows divorce “for any reason any reason at all” provided she leaves with the certificate—clearly pulling from the Pharisees’ words at Matthew 19:3.³⁰ He explains divorce was allowed because of hardheartedness, and continues to weave discussion of the Mosaic law through the new, more demanding requirement Jesus pronounces in Matthew 5:32—no divorce save for adultery. Jumping ahead to Matthew 19:1, one reads that Jesus’s teaching in the Sermon actually provides the grounds for the Pharisees’ interrogation: they “[seized] their opportunity from a statement in which he had earlier taught that a man must not divorce his wife.”³¹ Then the tie back to the Sermon is made even more clear at Matthew 19:8 when Jesus says that he does “not invalidate the Law, but [renders] it more absolute”—an idea common through the antithesis.³² The push in both passages remains largely unchanged by the expansion. So this appears to be a simple expansion created from two addresses on the same topic.

Matthew 5:43

Then at Matthew 5:43, another passage from outside the Sermon appears, Matthew 22:36, though it has less impact upon the Sermon than the Sermon does upon it

³⁰Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 104.

³¹Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 269. By combining these two accounts, Erasmus, through the mouth of Jesus, has already explained in the Sermon why Moses permitted divorce. Oddly, then *Paraphrase* has the Pharisees ask Jesus a question to which they had already heard the answer! Erasmus does not address that issue, though.

³²Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 271.

later. Erasmus leads the antithesis at Matthew 5:43 not with a phrase such as “you have heard,” but with a comment about the prominence of the stated idea. He writes, “Take now also this precept that is regarded as the chief one in the Law: ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’”³³ Then he proceeds by extending the requirement to loving even one’s enemies. On the surface, the reference appears to be at odds with Jesus’s reply to the lawyer in Matthew 22:35–40. But there Erasmus understands the second commandment to be such an extension of the first—the stated greatest commandment—that “no one truly keeps it [the first] unless one also keeps the second.”³⁴

Erasmus tightens the connection between the two passages as the reader approaches Matthew 22:35–40. Jesus has “silenced the Sadducees” and the Pharisees regroup to discuss their next effort.³⁵ The one who steps out—a lawyer—asks Jesus for the greatest commandment. But Jesus does not just give him one commandment: he gives the greatest and the second. Presumably, the Pharisees would think they were fulfilling the greatest commandment concerning love for God. Erasmus includes an explanation for Jesus’s bonus answer of loving one’s neighbor: to show that those who claimed they obeyed the Law did not.³⁶ By stacking the commandments, Jesus taught “that no one loves God who is unjust towards his neighbor.”³⁷ And the murderously-motivated effort to trap Jesus was a clear instance of neighbor-hating. This is clear when just a bit later in the story Erasmus identifies Jesus as “their neighbor and one deserving their good will.”³⁸

³³Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 110.

³⁴Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 310.

³⁵Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 310.

³⁶Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 310. Chrysostom, likewise, claimed Jesus’s offer of a second commandment was “intimating to them whence the question had arisen, that it was from hatred.” *Homilies on the Gospel of Saint Matthew*, in vol. 10 of *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Series 1, ed. Philip Schaff, (repr. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 71.1.5 (10:432).

³⁷Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 310.

³⁸Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 311.

The Pharisees also recognize the implications, as Erasmus notes that the addition of the second greatest commandment “silently stung the conscience” of those “instigating a deadly plot.”³⁹ In case the connections back to the Sermon were not obvious, Erasmus includes Matthew 7:12 stated in the negative: the one who loves his neighbor “will do nothing to another person that he does not want done to himself.”⁴⁰ One reading through the *Paraphrase* is pushed to read Matthew 22:35–40 in light of the Sermon, and of course, encouraged to have a righteousness that surpasses that of the Pharisees.

Matthew 6:14–15

Matthew 6:14–15 contains a slight reference to the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant in Matthew 18:23–35, though the connection appears only to be a nod to similar ideas in both places. When Erasmus finishes paraphrasing through the Lord’s Prayer, he doubles back a bit to give added explanation. Toward the end of this explanation, he refers forward to Matthew 18 when he writes, the one who is “not willing to forgive [his] fellow slave” will not be forgiven by God.⁴¹ But added to this, Erasmus brings in talk of neighbors and brothers. Disciples should consider if they are “in harmony with [their] neighbors” before praying, because the “Father will treat you as you treat your neighbor.”⁴² Also, a disciple must be “in agreement with his brother.”⁴³ When one looks ahead at Matthew 18, the neighbor and brother connections are the only links backward to the Lord’s Prayer. After Peter has asked how often he should forgive his brother (Matt 18:21), Erasmus creates a brief introduction to the parable explaining its purpose. In that

³⁹Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 311. This comment appears after Erasmus pads the story with input from Mk 12, but still only applies to Jesus additional commandment.

⁴⁰Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 310.

⁴¹Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 120.

⁴²Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 119.

⁴³Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 119.

introduction, Erasmus twice refers to brothers—not surprising given Peter’s question—but also twice to neighbors. Christians sometimes sin against their neighbors and brothers and need to both pardon and receive pardon from them as God extends it to them.⁴⁴ So the connection between the two passages occurs in material Erasmus has created to expand and explain the text.

Matthew 7:21–23

Lastly at Matthew 7:21–23, Erasmus ties in both Matthew 10:32–33 and 25:31–33. Erasmus has worked his way through the threat of wolves in sheep’s clothing and now moves into judgment for those addressing Christ with “pious-sounding words” while “they really serve very different lords.”⁴⁵ These men may be difficult to spot now, but they will be cut out from the true disciples “[on] the day when rewards are allotted to each according to his merits, and the sheep are separated from the goats”—a clear reference forward to Matthew 25.⁴⁶ Then, just a few sentences later, that group is seen crying out to Jesus, claiming they acknowledged him, and “longing to be acknowledged before God.”⁴⁷ The scene ends with Jesus claiming he had never acknowledged them as he dismisses them from his presence to join the one they were truly serving.⁴⁸ Erasmus has pulled the idea of acknowledgement before men (and before the Father) from Matthew 10:32–33 and set it here in contrast to the profession the false prophets make.

Neither Matthew 25 nor Matthew 10 have a strong backward connection to Matthew 7. The only connection Matthew 25 seems to have back to Matthew 7 is the

⁴⁴Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 267–268. Erasmus actually includes “Christian” anachronistically in his paraphrase here.

⁴⁵Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 136.

⁴⁶Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 137.

⁴⁷Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 137.

⁴⁸Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 137.

theme of judgment. Matthew 10 connects back only slightly better. There, keeping the theme of persecution, Erasmus casts confession as more than simple speech: confession is something that must also show in a person's life.⁴⁹ In Matthew 10, that shows as disciples endure through trials. The same theme—that life is a profession—was developed back in Matthew 7:15–23. One may come “with a sheep's voice,” but fruit identifies who is a “gospel tree.”⁵⁰ The link is weaker than others, but it still seems likely given Erasmus's emphasis on life matching speech.

Using the Sermon Outside the Sermon

Just as other portions of Matthew appear inside the Sermon, portions of the Sermon appear elsewhere in Matthew. Several of these kinds of uses were noted in the previous section. Here, only those appearances as yet unmentioned will be discussed. These remaining references are generally brief-but-clear allusions back to the Sermon while the Sermon includes no clear reference forward to them (else they would have been included in the previous section). They are grouped into two sections based on the impact of the Sermon's reference in its new context. These groupings are admittedly subjective, and a couple references could easily fall in either direction.

Incidental References to the Sermon

Erasmus includes several casual references back to the Sermon through the rest of his *Paraphrase on Matthew*. When the disciples are sent out in Matthew 10, they are told not to gain profit from their efforts and not to pack extra provisions for the trip (10:9–10). Their only concern should be the ministry; “the rest will be freely supplied to you by your heavenly Father”—a reference back to 6:25–34.⁵¹ Moving on in Matthew 10,

⁴⁹Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 176.

⁵⁰Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 134–135.

⁵¹Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 168.

Jesus speaks of the hardships the disciples will face and what true discipleship entails (10:16–39). Then, just before writing of the rewards for those who receive the disciples (10:40–42), Erasmus inserts a bit of transition material. Disciples need not fear isolation, for God will supply them with a new family. And because God will one day bring judgment, the disciples should not seek revenge “but bless [their] persecutors”⁵²—a seeming reference back to Jesus’s command to love and show kindness to one’s enemies back in Matthew 5:44.⁵³

Erasmus also finds Jesus’s encounter with the young ruler of Matthew 19:16–22 a good opportunity to point back to the Sermon. The young man’s question about obtaining eternal life prompts Jesus’s reply that he should keep the commandments (19:1–2).⁵⁴ In the *Paraphrase*, then, the young man asks Jesus which commandments, because “he had heard him teach that the commandments of the law of Moses were not enough to attain the kingdom of heaven.”⁵⁵ A first glance should cause one to think of the Sermon and especially to the antitheses for this teaching. But the link is made even more firm in the *Paraphrase*. Erasmus, back at Matthew 5:20, clearly includes that idea: “if you fulfil [*sic*] whatever the Law prescribes . . . but you add nothing further . . . not even the right of admission [to the kingdom of heaven will] be given.”⁵⁶

Illustrative References to the Sermon

Untroubled by the tone Matthew 7:6 sounds in modern ears, Erasmus shows no hesitancy using the reference to dogs, swine, and pearls elsewhere in Matthew. When

⁵²Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 180.

⁵³Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 110–111.

⁵⁴Chrysostom also refers back to the Sermon from this story, but on the issue of Jesus being called good. He connects Jesus’s comment that no one is good back to the statement that men are evil but know how to give good gifts (Matt 7:11). *Homilies on Matthew*, 387.

⁵⁵Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 276.

⁵⁶Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 97.

Jesus sends the demons into the herd of pigs at the end of Matthew 8, Erasmus understands the demonic request for swine to reveal the community's moral character and resistance to the gospel—further illustrated by their request for Jesus to leave.⁵⁷ Jesus follows his own teaching by obliging them. The *Paraphrase* at Matthew 9:1 reads, “Therefore, refusing to give something holy to dogs or to cast pearls before swine, Jesus boarded a boat and again crossed the sea.”⁵⁸

Then, as the disciples are being sent out in Matthew 10, Erasmus references Matthew 7:6 again. The disciples are told not to pack extra provisions, keep their manners in check, and offer the gospel freely. But if a city refuses to house them in spite of this, they are to exit swiftly, taking not even the “most worthless dust” with them as they leave.⁵⁹ The disciples imitate what Jesus taught and demonstrated. At Matthew 10:13–14 they are reminded that “what is holy must not be given to dogs, and that pearls should not be cast before swine.”⁶⁰ No backward connection is made from Matthew 9 or Matthew 10 at 7:6. But the ideas of Matthew 7:6—that the gospel message should be offered freely on the surface but only in depth to those who earnestly seek it—match well the forward passages in which Erasmus plants them.

Matthew 16 shows another reference to the Sermon. After Jesus and the disciples arrive at the other side of the sea, Jesus warns them of the “leaven of the Pharisees” (Matt 16:6). When the disciples interpret this as a comment about forgetting to bring food, “Jesus [reproaches] them” for their “anxiety about food.” He reminds them, “Did I not teach that the kingdom of God must be sought before everything else, and that

⁵⁷Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 150.

⁵⁸Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 151. The translators wait until this point to note the connection with Matt 7:6, even though the story clearly begins the connection at Matt 8:34.

⁵⁹Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 168–69.

⁶⁰Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 169.

these things are, of their own accord, to be added?”⁶¹ In the *Paraphrase*, then, the disciples have Jesus’s teaching from the Sermon (Matt 6:33) and both instances of Jesus feeding the multitudes as reminders that should have prevented such a concern for food. Indeed, Erasmus’s added expansion from Matthew 6 is proportioned such that in print it receives as much page space as each of the feedings do.

A passing reference to the Sermon is then made at the transfiguration in Matthew 17. When the inner-circle of disciples follow Jesus up the mountain, Moses and Elijah appear speaking with Jesus about his approaching glorious death (so the *Paraphrase* explains).⁶² Among the reasons these two appear, readers discover that their appearance further supports Jesus’s claim that he did not want “to abolish the Law, since Moses stood by him, or the Prophets, since Elijah was there.”⁶³ The language leads straight back to Jesus’s words in Matthew 5:17—he was not abolishing the Law or the Prophets.

Summary

Erasmus frequently created intratextual connections with the Sermon in his *Paraphrase on Matthew*. Those connections came from both within the Sermon and from outside the Sermon. Many times when those connections were made, each passage would influence the other in its own context: one could flip to either of the passages and glimpse the other passage. But each connection brought with it a particular interpretive slant to the text. Erasmus, writing with the voice of the author, can then heavily influence one’s reading of the text.

⁶¹Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 243.

⁶²Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 251.

⁶³Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 251.

CHAPTER 4

ERASMUS'S EXEGETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

In a sense, one could understand the entire discussion above as a collection of readings from exegetical history: both Erasmus's use of the church fathers and his intratextual reading habits provide exegetical contributions on their own. Frequently, the fathers make many connections which current interpreters are either reluctant to make or of which they are simply unaware. Readers may judge them to be incorrect and thus follow a different path, or readers may allow them to expand current interpretive practices. Knowing more options, though, allows more choices. Many today would also benefit from Erasmus's invitation to a hefty intratextual reading of Matthew.

Rather than belabor that already overgrown culmination of exegetical insights, I will only briefly step back to develop insights already hinted at in two passages above. Then, Erasmus's structure of the Sermon will be set forth as a slightly different insight from exegetical history.

Passage-level Insights

Many passages mentioned above deserve more elaboration. Here, space is only provided for two: Matthew 5:14 and Matthew 7:1–12. Each of these will be used to illustrate the kind of passage-level exegetical options Erasmus may provide the modern reader.

Matthew 5:14

Jesus's statement that "a city on a hill cannot be hidden" can be difficult to

understand. R. T. France identifies the phrase as a “separate metaphor” for visibility and then moves on without explaining it.¹ Donald Hagner, after two paragraphs discussing the first half of the verse, gives this phrase a single sentence explanation: “It is as unthinkable that a city set on a hill . . . can be hid as that light would be put under a measuring vessel.”² Rather than explain the phrase, he simply restates it and ties it to the same interpretation he understands for the lamp and basket metaphor (Matt 5:15). John Nolland notes the purpose is difficult to determine, describes the “assertiveness” demonstrated by building a city on a hill, and then says that hiding a city “built for prominence” would be ridiculous.³ Ulrich Luz, after repeatedly noting that the phrase does not fit the location, understands it to mean, “that the city is visible from a distance.”⁴ And Dale Allison does not seem to offer an interpretation.⁵

Erasmus, on the other hand, draws out the significance of the latter half of Matthew 5:14 as a warning.⁶ Early into the paraphrase on this verse, he writes of the sun and its reach throughout the world and connects this image to the life and teaching of the disciples. Erasmus understands the first half of the verse to be just as much a pronouncement from Jesus as a declaration: Jesus does something through his statement.

¹R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 176.

²Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, Word Biblical Commentary 33a (Dallas: Word Books, 1993), 100. The entire sentence is in tact. The ellipsis stands in place of a parenthetical comment Hagner makes to another work.

³John Nolland, *The Gospel Of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 214.

⁴Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1-7: A Commentary*, ed. Helmut Koester, trans. James E. Crouch, Rev. ed., Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 204–207.

⁵W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew* (London: T & T Clark, 2004), 1:475–76.

⁶Chrysostom had also drawn out the purpose of Jesus’s statement, but claimed it was a means of encouragement. War, persecution, or any other means of tribulation would not have the power to stop the proclamation of the message. Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel of Saint Matthew*, in vol. 10 of *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Series 1, ed. Philip Schaff (repr. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 15.11.9 (10:98).

Erasmus makes this clear when he writes, “I have set you in an exalted position so that what you say and what you do will necessarily be spread through the entire world.”⁷ But Erasmus also brings in the idea of clouds blocking out the light of the sun to illustrate the effects of cloudy teaching. So he warns against “folly” and “worldly desires,” because the same elevated position that gives disciples influence completely prevents them from hiding. Like it or not, Jesus’s disciples are always in the theater’s spotlight. That spotlight should motivate careful actions, because of the weighty cost of mistakes.⁸ He writes, “In you a tiny failing will be like a terrible crime.”⁹ Erasmus seems to say the disciples will necessarily be effective in conveying their message, and therefore, should be all the more concerned that their message is correct and pure, both in their life and in their teaching.

Matthew 7:6–12

The transition from Matthew 7:6 to Matthew 7:7 is awkward. How does Jesus’s comment about not casting pearls before swine relate to the promises about asking and receiving? Luz sees Matthew 7:6 as a logion removed from a context completely unknowable to current interpreters. As a result, he says the verse’s “application and its sense in the Matthean context are a complete mystery.”¹⁰ France does not see a clear connection between Matthew 7:6 and the passages on either side of it, but he tentatively groups it with verses 1–5 as a balancing agent.¹¹ He ties Matthew 7:7–11 back to the end of Matthew 6 rather than the early verses of Matthew 7.¹² Hagner does

⁷Desiderius Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, ed. Robert D. Sider, trans. Dean Simpson, CWE 45 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 94.

⁸Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 94.

⁹Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 94.

¹⁰Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 354.

¹¹France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 273.

¹²France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 278.

not fair any better in his interpretive efforts, for he claims both Matthew 7:6 and 7:7–11 are independent units that lack connections to the content on either side.¹³ Nolland at least names a couple options for connecting Matthew 7:6 to what follows: it may be a restricting proverb relieved by the contrasting scenarios that follow, or a proverb that limits the content that follows—describing who will not get what they request.¹⁴ Allison largely fits with the other authors in that he does not relate Matthew 7:7–11 back to 7:6.¹⁵ Later though, he summarizes Alford’s understanding that 7:7–11 shows how disciples “imitate him [God] in his benignity and wisdom.”¹⁶ This last comment is the closest to Erasmus’s own offering.

Erasmus chooses to smooth the transition between Matthew 7:6 and Matthew 7:7–11 by reading each passage in light of the other. He first interprets Matthew 7:6 as a balancing agent in the discussion of 7:1–5. The disciples should display generous kindness to others, but not to the point they reveal “the mystery of gospel wisdom . . . to the worthy and unworthy without distinction.”¹⁷ The items of value in Matthew 7:6 represent what Erasmus calls “the secrets of heavenly teaching.”¹⁸ Because these teachings are valuable and may actually lead the wicked to become more wicked should they reject them, the disciples must discern wisely with whom they share more. As Erasmus moves from Matthew 7:6 to 7:7, he indicates that this practice actually imitates what God himself does. Asking, seeking, and knocking are far from casual activities. In 7:7–11, Erasmus identifies these as “eager” and “insistent” activities.¹⁹ And just as God

¹³Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 171, 173.

¹⁴Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 322.

¹⁵Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:626.

¹⁶Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:678.

¹⁷Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 130.

¹⁸Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 130.

¹⁹Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 131.

expects that zeal from his disciples in order for them to receive their requests from him, so the disciples are to expect it from those with whom they share the gospel teaching. As a person shows increasing interest and progress, the disciples share more. In sum, Erasmus reads these texts as shedding light on each other. Matthew 7:6 balances the generosity pushed for in 7:1–5 while also urging disciples to follow God’s own example of ensuring people really want something, in 7:1–11.

Erasmus’s Structure of the Sermon

Erasmus implies a threefold structure through the center of the Sermon when he explains the differences between Jesus’s disciples and the scribes and Pharisees. The disciples should distance themselves in three areas: righteousness, appearance, and judgments. Indicators for these sections do not come in the form of headings and subheadings but in the form of discourse markers. Erasmus (through the voice of Jesus) uses repeated phrases to bring the meaning of each section across to the reader. The paraphrase of Matthew 5:20, sets the tone for both the structure and the remainder of the Sermon:

To enable you to understand how great a difference there is between Jew and Christian, between a disciple of Moses and one of mine, I say to you unequivocally: if you fulfill whatever the Law prescribes, whatever the Pharisees fulfill (men who are now thought to possess a sort of absolute justice and think so themselves), but you add nothing further of a more perfect kind, so insignificant will you be in this religious profession that in the kingdom of heaven not even the right of admission is to be given.²⁰

Distance in Righteousness

Jesus’s disciples must surpass the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. Erasmus does not see the antitheses of Matthew 5:21–48 as replacing the Mosaic law, but adding to it: now even more is required. The paraphrase at Matthew 5:19 explains that

²⁰Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 97.

these “precepts . . . add to the prescriptions of the Mosaic law.”²¹ The Mosaic Law is not replaced by Jesus’s words, but a protective hedge is erected around its prohibited actions to keep Jesus’s disciples even further away from sin. Not only must they avoid the sin, which the Pharisees seemed capable of doing, they must step back from areas that eventually lead to sin. The requirements are more stringent, an idea Jesus will clarify with examples. Erasmus writes, “So that it may become clearer how much I’m adding to the justice of the Pharisees, and how my justice does not contradict the precepts of the Law but rather supports them, let us consider the matter with a few examples.”²²

The first antithesis concerns anger toward a brother (Matt 5:21–22), and sets the pattern the other examples will follow. The commandment from Moses forbade murder. Erasmus notes that, “one seems to have satisfied the Law as long as one has not killed anyone and has escaped the threats of the Law.”²³ But the new requirement pushes the command further: “Now hear how much more I shall add.”²⁴ The new requirement is a step back even from murder. Now even anger is forbidden, “For being angry is the first step to murder. The angry man, indeed, has not yet completed the murder; nevertheless he has begun already to move in that direction.”²⁵ Again, this in no way replaces the law but pushes people further from transgressing it. “Thus the gospel law, which punishes someone simply for being angry, does not contradict the precept of the Law, ‘You shall not kill,’ but removes and keeps one farther away from the act the Law commands to be punished.”²⁶

²¹Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 96.

²²Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 97–98.

²³Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 98.

²⁴Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 98.

²⁵Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 98.

²⁶Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 99.

The remaining antithesis are handled in a similar fashion. Erasmus identifies these as continued examples in the series by specifically calling the next two further “examples” and identifying the last three with a more generic “again” type connection. Each one pushes the requirement back a step from that which the Mosaic law prohibits. By the Law’s standard, “whoever has stayed away from another man’s wife, content with his own, has been regarded as holy and blameless.”²⁷ But Jesus establishes the boundaries farther away, claiming that even lusting after or enticing another’s wife is a punishable offense: “[W]hat anger is to murder, lust is to adultery.”²⁸ Divorce was not allowed “indiscriminately” under the Law, but Jesus restricts it further by narrowing it only to instances of unfaithfulness. In the paraphrase, Jesus states, “I have not abolished the Law but I have assisted it inasmuch as I want no divorce, except in the case of unfaithfulness.”²⁹ Christian couples (Erasmus’s anachronistic term) “will be reconciled immediately if something happens through human weakness.”³⁰ Forbidding oaths would appear difficult to fit into this pattern (Matt 5:33–37), but Erasmus has no trouble. He identifies the chief concern as perjury: “Among the Jews only perjury is punished; one who cheats his neighbor without committing perjury is not punished by the assembly. But the gospel law does condemn and punish such a person, for in order to protect you more completely from perjury, the gospel law utterly condemns all oath swearing.”³¹ At Matthew 5:38, the concern is revenge that goes beyond proper retribution. Erasmus writes, “The Law intended that punishment should not go further than was fair. Now I do not break this law, I strengthen it, since I teach you that absolutely no vengeance should

²⁷Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 102.

²⁸Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 102.

²⁹Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 105.

³⁰Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 106.

³¹Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 106.

be sought for injuries however grievous.”³² At Matthew 5:42, the Law “demands kindness, but only towards those who are kind and well deserving.”³³ But Jesus demands more from his disciples: “not satisfied merely with kindness shared among friends, I require you, the followers of my teaching, to love your enemies as well.”³⁴

So Erasmus sees a hedge built around the Law. The Law still exists, but the gospel law pushes back the protective barrier. Followers of Jesus are not able to see how close they can get to breaking the Law without falling. Their righteousness must be even greater than that of the scribes and Pharisees. So they are held back from even the things that eventually lead to breaking the Law.

Distance in Motivation

Where Erasmus treats the latter half of Matthew 5 as pushing distance for righteousness, Matthew 6 is push for distance in motivation. Before the first verse of Matthew 6, Erasmus indicates a new section of instruction. He writes, “I have made clear in which respects you must surpass the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees if you want to be my disciples. I will now show what you must avoid when you seem to do things they do.”³⁵ The trouble, however, is not so much in the actions of the Pharisees as in the motives that create the actions. “To help the needy with kindness is a holy thing. To converse with God through pure prayer is a godly thing. Fasting is a devout thing.”³⁶ “Vainglory” is shown to be the “silent disease that actually spoils all the good things the Pharisees do, so that they merit no praise at all before God.”³⁷

³²Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 108–09.

³³Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 110.

³⁴Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 110.

³⁵Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 111.

³⁶Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 111–12.

³⁷Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 111.

But while the examples of Matthew 5 were explained individually as they appeared in the passage, the examples of Matthew 6 are lumped together and explained before the paraphrase of the scriptural text even begins. Erasmus has already listed the godly practices found in the chapter. He has noted where the Pharisees fail. Then he warns the disciples against desiring the praise of men. Erasmus writes, “Therefore, I want you to be careful and wary that when you do some godly deed you do not prefer to do it in public rather than alone—simply to be seen by people, in order to pursue human praise and glory.”³⁸ Only after all of this does he begin paraphrasing the actual text of scripture. The longer, explanatory-type comments that made clear the differences and accompanied the examples of Matthew 5 are largely absent through the rest of Matthew 6.

Distance in Judgment

In Matthew 7:1–12, Erasmus creates a third contrast between Jesus’s disciples and the Pharisees. Before paraphrasing 7:1, he writes, “There is another way in which I want you to be far removed from the conduct of the scribes and Pharisees. Although they forgive themselves . . . nevertheless towards a brother who sins they play the part of most unmerciful judges. . . . But your judgments, if there are any, ought to savour of gospel love. Gospel love pardons easily.”³⁹ Jesus’s concern here is that the disciples not behave as the scribes and Pharisees as they interact with others. They should be kind to others, and remember their own shortcomings. He writes, “Everyone should be a very acute judge of his own wrongdoings, more lenient in the faults of others. . . . And everyone ought first to be physician to himself, before he applies his hand to another.”⁴⁰

³⁸Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 112.

³⁹Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 128.

⁴⁰Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 129.

Individually listed examples are absent here, because for Erasmus, there is only a single main theme for this portion of the Sermon—proper interpersonal conduct. Matthew 7:1–5 is instruction on being kind and fair in judgments. At Matthew 7:6, when Jesus speaks of not casting pearls before swine, he is speaking about sharing the gospel treasures. He says, “One must not thrust the secrets of heavenly teaching upon those who display their contempt for sounder instruction so openly that there seems to be no hope of fruit. . . . [But] it is to the eager, or at least the curable, that the gospel philosophy is to be communicated.”⁴¹ Matthew 7:7–11 is almost parenthetical to 7:6 . The disciples mirror how they share with others off the pattern God sets with them. The disciples do not share or give everything “immediately to everyone” even as the Father does not, “but only to those who eagerly demand” it by earnestly seeking and knocking.⁴² “Your Father is rich and kind, he denies no one, he does not begrudge anyone his riches, but he wants their value to be acknowledged.”⁴³ And just as earthly fathers give good gifts to their children, so the disciples can trust their heavenly Father to give good gifts after they “have stirred his benevolence with [their] ardent and steadfast prayers.”⁴⁴ The golden rule (Matt 7:12), then, serves as a generic statement covering all possible examples of judgment. Erasmus writes, “Moreover, since it would be prolix to lay down rules for every single thing pertaining to social intercourse . . . I will give a general rule.”⁴⁵

Erasmus has created a tripartite structure through the middle of the Sermon. Disciples must distance themselves from the Pharisees in righteousness, motivation, and

⁴¹Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 130–31.

⁴²Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 131.

⁴³Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 131.

⁴⁴Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 132.

⁴⁵Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Matthew*, 132.

judgments. Erasmus is clear in creating his sections. Each starts with a comment removing the disciples from the practices of the Pharisees.

Summary

Erasmus's *Paraphrase* of the Sermon on the Mount may provide an abundance of exegetical readings from the history of interpretation. The nature of the *Paraphrase* requires that Erasmus account for every verse while attempting to explain his way through the text. Occasionally, this means he will cover content that modern commentators have the freedom to skip or gloss over. Above, we also see that Erasmus can contribute on the structural side of interpretation as well. So the *Paraphrases* can offer yet another interpreter's pair of eyes upon the text and provide a rich new depth of discussion.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Erasmus was one of the great Christian interpreters of the sixteenth century. His *Paraphrases on the New Testament* were widely read and translated into several languages. Erasmus brought the text of the New Testament to people in a new way: a new genre. For Erasmus, the *Paraphrases* were a way of opening the text of Scripture and explaining it. By examining the Sermon on the Mount in Erasmus's *Paraphrase on Matthew*, this thesis has attempted to show the rich reading he provides through the church fathers, intratextual readings, and exegetical insights.

Erasmus both borrowed and shaped content from the church fathers throughout his paraphrase of the Sermon. The influence of Chrysostom and Jerome is especially pervasive. He identified them by name in the dedication of the *Paraphrase*.¹ But there are others he frequently used as well: primarily Augustine, and potentially Cyprian. Erasmus provided Origen with an honorable mention, but his influence was quite lacking. Where Erasmus depended upon the church fathers, he still adapted them to meet his particular needs in the *Paraphrase*. He frequently borrowed ideas and phrases from the Fathers, but he also used, expanded, and adapted their work just as he did the text of Scripture. The result is a rich mix of patristic influence. The texts of the church fathers will instantly feel familiar for one who has already read the *Paraphrase on Matthew*.

The nature of the *Paraphrase* afforded Erasmus a unique position as an intratextual interpreter. He was certainly an intratextual reader, but writing with the voice

¹ Desiderius Erasmus, dedicatory letter to *Paraphrase on Matthew*, trans. Dean Simpson, CWE 45 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 6.

of the author allowed Erasmus to create intratextual connections as well. Frequently he moved the reader to other portions of the Sermon and other portions of Matthew by including those passages in new contexts. One quickly realizes the connections are like tentacles stretching out to grab other passages in the Gospel.

Erasmus also provides current interpreters with readings from exegetical history. Examining just a couple passages revealed that Erasmus's *Paraphrases* may speak into interpretive issues modern commentators avoid. The nature of a paraphrase prevented Erasmus from skipping over certain content as he works through the text. He had to account for all the text in his *Paraphrase*. Aside from comments on specific passages, even the structural features Erasmus created within the *Paraphrase* may provide interesting angles for reading and interpretation.

Erasmus's *Paraphrases* largely remain an untapped resource for those in biblical studies. Erasmus's *Paraphrases* were a new type of commentary for their time and they could be so for our time as well. My hope is that many more would pick up his works and read.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Allison, Dale C., Jr. "Darkness at Noon (Matt. 27:45)." In *Studies in Matthew: Interpretation Past and Present*, 79–105. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005.
- . *Studies in Matthew: Interpretation Past and Present*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005.
- Augustijn, Cornelis. *Erasmus: His Life, Works, and Influence*. Translated by J. C. Grayson. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991.
- Augustine. *Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount*. In vol. 6 of *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Series 1. Edited by Philip Schaff. 1886–1889. Repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980.
- Bainton, Roland H. "Paraphrases of Erasmus." *Archiv Für Reformationsgeschichte* 57, no. 1–2 (January 1, 1966): 67–76.
- Bateman, John J. "Translator's Note." In *Paraphrases on the Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon; the Epistles of Peter and Jude; the Epistles of John; the Epistle to the Hebrews*, by Desiderius Erasmus, xiii–xviii. Collected Works of Erasmus 44. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993.
- Bedouelle, Guy. "The 'Paraphrases' of Erasmus in French." In *Holy Scripture Speaks: The Production and Reception of Erasmus' "Paraphrases on the New Testament,"* edited by Hilmar M. Pabel and Mark Vessey, 279–90. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002.
- Boyle, Marjorie O'Rourke. *Erasmus on Language and Method in Theology*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977.
- Céard, Jean. "Theory and Practices of Commentary in the Renaissance." In *The Unfolding of Words: Commentary in the Age of Erasmus*, edited by Judith Rice Henderson, 3–23. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012.
- Chomarat, Jacques. *Grammaire et rhétorique chez Erasme*. 2 vols. Classiques de l'humanisme 10. Paris: Belles lettres, 1981.
- . "Grammar and Rhetoric in the Paraphrases of the Gospels by Erasmus." *Erasmus of Rotterdam Society Yearbook* 1, no. 1 (1981): 30–68.
- Christ-von Wedel, Christine. *Erasmus of Rotterdam: Advocate of a New Christianity*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013.
- Chrysostom. *Homilies on the Gospel of Saint Matthew*. In vol. 10 of *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Series 1, Edited by Philip Schaff. 1886–1889. 14 Repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983.

- Conroy, Donald Morrison. "The Ecumenical Theology of Erasmus of Rotterdam: A Study of the *Ratio Verae Theologiae*, Translated into English and Annotated, with a Brief Account of His Ecumenical Writings and Activities within His Lifetime." PhD diss., University of Pittsburgh, 1974.
- Cottier, Jean-François. "Erasmus's *Paraphrases*: A 'New Kind of Commentary'?" In *The Unfolding of Words: Commentary in the Age of Erasmus*, edited by Judith Rice Henderson, 27–46. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012.
- Craig, John. "Forming a Protestant Consciousness? Erasmus' *Paraphrases* in English Parishes, 1547-1666." In *Holy Scripture Speaks: The Production and Reception of Erasmus' "Paraphrases on the New Testament,"* edited by Hilmar M. Pabel and Mark Vessey, 313–59. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002.
- Cyprian. *Saint Cyprian: Treatises*. Translated by Roy J. Deferrari. The Fathers of the Church 36. New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc., 1958.
- Davies, W. D., and Dale C. Allison. *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*. Vol. 1 T & T Clark, 2004.
- Erasmus, Desiderius. "Dedicatory Letter." In *Paraphrases on Romans and Galatians*, translated by John B. Payne, Albert Rabil, Jr., and Warren S. Smith, Jr., 2–5. Collected Works of Erasmus 42. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984.
- . Dedicatory letter to *Paraphrase on Matthew*, translated by Dean Simpson, 2–6. Collected Works of Erasmus 45. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008.
- . *Paraphrase on Mark*. Translated by Erika Rummel. Collected Works of Erasmus 49. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988.
- . *Paraphrase on Matthew*. Edited by Robert D. Sider. Translated by Dean Simpson. Collected Works of Erasmus 45. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008.
- . *Paraphrases on Romans and Galatians*. Translated by John B. Payne, Albert Rabil, Jr., and Warren S. Smith, Jr. Collected Works of Erasmus 42. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984.
- . "To the Pious Reader." In *Paraphrase on Matthew*, edited by Robert D. Sider, translated by Dean Simpson, 7–28. Collected Works of Erasmus 45. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008.
- France, R. T. *The Gospel of Matthew*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007.
- Green, R. P. H. "The 'Evangeliorum Libri' of Juvenius: Exegesis by Stealth?" In *Poetry and Exegesis in Premodern Latin Christianity: The Encounter between Classical and Christian Strategies of Interpretation*, edited by Willemien Otten and Karla Pollmann, 65–80. Boston: Brill, 2007.
- Greenman, Jeffrey P., Timothy Larsen, and Stephen R. Spencer, eds. *The Sermon on the Mount through the Centuries: From the Early Church to John Paul II*. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2007.

- Hagner, Donald A. *Matthew 1-13*. Word Biblical Commentary 33a. Dallas: Word Books, 1993.
- Henderson, Judith Rice. "Editor's Addendum: Translating an Erasmian Definition of Paraphrase." In *The Unfolding of Words: Commentary in the Age of Erasmus*. Edited by Judith Rice Henderson, 46–54. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012.
- , ed. *The Unfolding of Words: Commentary in the Age of Erasmus*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012.
- Hoffmann, Manfred. *Rhetoric and Theology: The Hermeneutic of Erasmus*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994.
- Jerome. *Commentary on Matthew*. Translated by Thomas P. Scheck. The Fathers of the Church 117. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2008.
- Knott, Betty I., trans. "Copia: Foundations of the Abundant Style." In *Literary and Educational Writings 2: "De Copia" / "De Ratione Studii,"* 279–660. Collected Works of Erasmus 24. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978.
- Krüger, Friedhelm. *Humanistische Evangelienauslegung: Desiderius Erasmus von Rotterdam als Ausleger der Evangelien in seinen Paraphrasen*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1986.
- Luz, Ulrich. *Matthew 1-7: A Commentary*. Edited by Helmut Koester. Translated by James E. Crouch. Hermeneia, 2007.
- Mansfield, Bruce. *Erasmus in the Twentieth Century: Interpretations c 1920-2000*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003.
- Mynors, R.A.B. "The Publication of the Latin *Paraphrases*." In *Paraphrases on Romans and Galatians*, by Desiderius Erasmus, xx–xxix. translated by John B. Payne, Albert Rabil, Jr., and Warren S. Smith, Jr. Collected Works of Erasmus 42. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984.
- Nolland, John. *The Gospel Of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. The New International Greek Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005.
- Olin, John C. "Erasmus and the Church Fathers." In *Six Essays on Erasmus and a Translation of Erasmus' Letter to Carondelet, 1523*, 33–49. New York: Fordham University Press, 1979.
- Pabel, Hilmar M., and Mark Vessey, eds. *Holy Scripture Speaks: The Production and Reception of Erasmus' "Paraphrases on the New Testament."* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002.
- Payne, John B. "Erasmus's Influence on Zwingli and Bullinger in the Exegesis of Matthew 11:28-30." In *Biblical Interpretation in the Era of the Reformation*, 61–81. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996.
- . "Toward the Hermeneutics of Erasmus." In *Scrinium Erasmianum*, edited by J. Coppens, 13–50. Leiden: Brill, 1969.

- Payne, John B., Albert Rabil, Jr., and Warren S. Smith, Jr., trans. "The *Paraphrases* of Erasmus: Origin and Character." In *Paraphrases on Romans and Galatians*, xi–xix. Collected Works of Erasmus 42. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984.
- Payne, John B., Albert Rabil, Jr., and Warren S. Smith, Jr. "Translator's Note." In *Paraphrases on Romans and Galatians*, xxxv–xxxviii. Collected Works of Erasmus 42. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984.
- Phillips, Jane E. "On the Road to Emmaus : Erasmus' Paraphrase of Luke 24:27." *Erasmus Studies* 22, no. 1 (January 1, 2002): 68–80.
- . "Sub evangelistae persona': The Speaking Voice in Erasmus' 'Paraphrases on Luke.'" In *Holy Scripture speaks: the production and reception of Erasmus' "Paraphrases on the New Testament,"* edited by Hilmar M. Pabel and Mark Vessey, 127–50. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002.
- . "The Shaping of a Gospel: Further Reflections on the Paraphrase on Luke." In *Erasmus and the Renaissance Republic of Letters*, edited by Stephen Ryle, 327–41. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepolis, 2014.
- Rabil, Albert, Jr. *Erasmus and the New Testament: The Mind of a Christian Humanist*. San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1972.
- . "Erasmus's 'Paraphrases of the New Testament.'" In *Essays on the Works of Erasmus*, edited by Richard L. DeMolen, 145–63. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1978.
- Reynolds, Matthew. *The Poetry of Translation: From Chaucer & Petrarch to Homer & Logue*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Roussell, Bernard. "Exegetical Fictions? Biblical Paraphrases of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries." In *Holy Scripture Speaks: The Production and Reception of Erasmus' "Paraphrases on the New Testament,"* edited by Hilmar M. Pabel and Mark Vessey, 59–83. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002.
- Rummel, Erika, ed. *Biblical Humanism and Scholasticism in the Age of Erasmus*. Boston: Brill, 2008.
- . *Erasmus and His Catholic Critics II: 1523–1536*. Vol. 2. Nieuwkoop: De Graaf, 1989.
- . *Erasmus' "Annotations" on the New Testament: From Philologist to Theologian*. Toronto; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1986.
- . "Why Noël Béda Did Not Like Erasmus' *Paraphrases*." In *Holy Scripture Speaks: The Production and Reception of Erasmus' "Paraphrases on the New Testament,"* edited by Hilmar M. Pabel and Mark Vessey, 265–78. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002.
- Ryle, Stephen, ed. *Erasmus and the Renaissance Republic of Letters*. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepolis, 2014.

- Scheck, Thomas P. "Erasmus's *Edition of Origen*." In *Tradition and the Rule of Faith in the Early Church: Essays in Honor of Joseph T. Lienhard, S.J.*, edited by Ronnie J. Rombs and Alexander Y. Hwang, 308–36. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2010.
- Sider, Robert D. "Historical Imagination and the Representation of Paul in Erasmus' Paraphrases on the Pauline Epistles." In *Holy Scripture Speaks: The Production and Reception of Erasmus' "Paraphrases on the New Testament,"* edited by Hilmar M. Pabel and Mark Vessey, 85–110. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002.
- Sider, Robert D., and Dean Simpson. Preface to *Paraphrase on Matthew*, by Desiderius Erasmus. Translated by Simpson Dean. Collected Works of Erasmus 45. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008.
- Vessey, Mark. Introduction to *Holy Scripture Speaks: The Production and Reception of Erasmus' "Paraphrases on the New Testament,"* edited by Hilmar M. Pabel and Mark Vessey, 3–25. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002.
- . "The Tongue and the Book: Erasmus' *Paraphrases on the New Testament* and the Arts of Scripture." In *Holy Scripture Speaks: The Production and Reception of Erasmus' "Paraphrases on the New Testament,"* edited by Hilmar M. Pabel and Mark Vessey, 29–58. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002.
- Wesseling, Ari. "Erasmus and Plagiarism." In *Erasmus and the Renaissance Republic of Letters*, edited by Stephen Ryle, 203–14. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepolis, 2014.
- White, Carolinne. *Early Christian Latin Poets*. New York: Routledge, 2000.

ABSTRACT

ERASMUS AS INTERPRETOR OF THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT IN HIS *PARAPHRASE ON MATTHEW*

Ryan Thomas Vasut, Th.M.
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2015
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Jonathan T. Pennington

This thesis examines Erasmus's interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount in his *Paraphrase on Matthew*. The argument is that Erasmus offers a particularly rich reading of the Sermon through his use of the church fathers, his intratextual interpretive habits, and his exegetical insights. Chapter 1 briefly surveys major contributions for the study of the *Paraphrases* and provides a general introduction to the *Paraphrases*. Chapter 2 examines Erasmus's frequent use of the church fathers throughout the Sermon and suggests that he shapes their works to meet his rhetorical needs. Chapter 3 surveys the intratextual connections Erasmus makes within the Sermon itself and between the Sermon and the rest of Matthew. Chapter 4 presents a couple passage-level insights from Erasmus and a discussion of his tripartite structure through the center of the Sermon as reflections from exegetical history. Chapter 5 concludes with a summary of the argument.

VITA

Ryan Thomas Vasut

EDUCATION

B.S., Calvary Bible College, 2004

M.Div., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2006

ORGANIZATIONS

The Association of Christian Librarians

ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT

Associate Librarian, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville,
Kentucky, 2014–