

# Translating Romans 5:12 in the Early 16<sup>th</sup> Century. Franciscus Titelmans's Polemic against Humanists

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**ABSTRACT:** Translating the Bible has never been an easy task, least of all at the times of theological controversy. A New Latin translation by Erasmus of Rotterdam, executed on the eve of the Reformation, met much criticism on philological and theological level. Franciscus Titelmans, a young, Franciscan scholar from Leuven, addressed in his *Collationes quinque* numerous issued regarding the translation of the Epistle to the Romans. This article focuses on Romans 5:12. Titelmans claimed that Erasmus's translation of this verse threatened the dogma of original sin and promoted the resurgence of Pelagianism. The article analyses his arguments showing that although he was not entirely alien to philology, he relied more on the Church Fathers and the authority of the Church in his translation. Philological and logical arguments served only as auxiliary proofs for the meaning that had been established by patristic commentaries. Consequently, this debate mirrors diverse attitudes of both scholars. The Humanist opted for sound philology, even if it resulted in questionable theological statements, the Franciscan for sound theology, even if it led to imperfect philological choices. Although specific arguments of this debate are outdated and hardly relevant to modern-day biblical studies, divergent attitudes of its protagonists are well reflected in current debates, making it worth.

**KEYWORDS:** Vulgate, Epistle to the Romans, original sin, translation of the Bible, biblical Humanism, Erasmus of Rotterdam, Franciscus Titelmans

Publication of Desiderius Erasmus's *Novum Instrumentum* in 1516 revolutionised biblical studies. Not only was the humanist from Rotterdam the first to publish the Greek text of the New Testament but he annotated it with a critical apparatus, explaining textual variations and provided a new Latin translation – purer and more elegant than the old Vulgate.<sup>1</sup> On the one

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- 1 Erasmus's work had a precedent in works of Giannozzo Manetti and Lorenzo Valla and was contemporaneous to Lefèvre and Complutensian Polyglot, yet his publication had a much bigger impact than those. See: A. den Haan, *Giannozzo Manetti's New Testament. Translation Theory and Practice in*

hand his achievement inspired much admiration, on the other it was confronted with severe criticism.<sup>2</sup>

This article aims to present criticism voiced against humanist translations by a young Franciscan lecturer in the Sacred Scripture from Leuven, Franciscus Titelmans.<sup>3</sup> He begun by criticising Erasmus during his lectures and in 1529, despite some opposition from the Humanist's friends, he published his polemic against Erasmus as well as Lorenzo Valla and Jacques Lefèvre under the title: *Collationes Quinque Super Epistolam Sancti Pauli Apostoli ad Romanos*.<sup>4</sup> Titelmans has received relatively little scholarly attention. He is known better as an author of immensely popular philosophical textbooks than as a biblical scholar, although it was the latter to which he devoted most of his energy.<sup>5</sup> As an exegete he has only caught scholars' attention as a critic of humanists and thus has been portrayed as a backward conservative and bitter reactionist.<sup>6</sup> Such views represent anachronistic attempts to understand the history of exegesis in terms of progress from 'unscientific', mystical interpretation to 'scientific', philological approach. Erica Rummel and Paolo Sartori, however, take a much more balanced view of Titelmans. Nonetheless, there remains no detailed study of his argumentation against Erasmus, nor of his numerous biblical commentaries.<sup>7</sup> The relative neglect of Titelmans is symptomatic of a more general bias in historiography of biblical studies. While biblical works of humanists and of protes-

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*Fifteenth-Century Italy* (Leiden: Brill 2016); J.H. Bentley, *Humanists and Holy Writ. New Testament Scholarship in the Renaissance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 1983) 32–111; C. Schönau, *Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples und die Reformation* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagseiner 2017).

- 2 E. Rummel, *Erasmus and His Catholic Critics* (Nieuwkoop: Graaf 1989); E. Rummel (ed.), *Biblical Humanism and Scholasticism in the Age of Erasmus* (Leiden: Brill 2008).
- 3 For his biography see: A. Paquay, *Frans Tittelmans van Hasselt (Franciscus Titelmanus Hasselensis, december 1502 – 12 september 1537). Opzoekingen over zijn leven, zijne werken en zijne familie* (Hasselt: Ceysens 1906).
- 4 F. Titelmans, *Collationes quinque super Epistolam ad Romanos beati Pauli Apostoli* (Antuerpiae: apud Guiljelmum Vorstermannum 1529).
- 5 D.A. Lines, "Teaching physics in Louvain and Bologna: Frans Titelmans and Ulisse Aldrovandi," *Scholarly Knowledge. Textbooks in Early Modern Europe* (eds. E. Campi et al.) (Geneve: Droz 2008) 183–204.
- 6 H. de Vocht, *History of the foundation and the Rise of the Collegium Trilingue Lovaniense, 1517–1550. III. The Full Growth* (Louvain: Bibliothèque de l'Université – Bureaux du Recueil 1954) 144–153; J.H. Bentley, "New Testament Scholarship at Louvain in the Early Sixteenth Century," *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History* 2 (1979) 53–79.
- 7 Rummel, *Erasmus and His Catholic Critics*, 15–22; P. Sartori, "La Controversia Neotestamentaria Tra Frans Titelmans ed Erasmo da Rotterdam (1527–1530 CA.): Linee di Sviluppo e Contenuti," *Humanistica Lovaniensia* 52 (2003) 77–135; P. Sartori, "Frans Titelmans, the Congregation of Montaigu, and Biblical Scholarship," *Biblical Humanism and Scholasticism in the Age of Erasmus* (ed. E. Rummel) (Leiden: Brill 2008) 215–223; P. Sartori, "Divine Inspiration and Biblical Translators: The Vetus Interpres of the Latin New Testament in a Comparison of Erasmus, Petrus Sutor and Frans Titelmans," *Infant Milk or Hardy Nourishment? The Bible for Lay People and Theologians in the Early Modern Period* (Leuven – Paris – Walpole, MA: Peeters 2009) 87–110.

tant reformers have received considerable scholarly attention, those of so-called scholastics and generally catholic exegetes before the council of Trent remain by and large an uncharted territory. Yet by studying only one side of the polemic, one cannot understand its meaning and misses its significance for present-day biblical studies as well.

This article, in all modesty, hopes to contribute to redressing this issue. It presents Titelmans's argumentation analysing the case of Romans 5:12. It was to this verse that the young Franciscan devoted the longest passus in his *Collationes*. Here we shall analyse his methodology of argumentation, which combined scholastic and humanist elements, and try to understand the essence of his disagreement with Erasmus and other humanists. In fact, as we hope to demonstrate, it was not merely about the methodology of biblical translation nor about the principles of exegesis, but about the very nature of the Biblical text.

## 1. Translation of Romans 5:12

The first humanist to have changed the traditional translation of Romans 5:12 was Lefèvre.<sup>8</sup> In his *Pauli epistolae quatuordecim* published in 1512 he offered an alternative translation in a small print alongside the Vulgate version, aiming to help the reader to grasp the Scripture's meaning. Four years later another translation was proposed by Erasmus. Here is the Vulgate text and translations of both humanists:<sup>9</sup>

The Vulgate	Lefevre 1512	Erasmus 1516
—	—	Διὰ τοῦτο, ὡς περ δι' ἑνὸς ἀνθρώπου ἡ ἁμαρτία εἰς τὸν κόσμον εἰσῆλθε, καὶ διὰ τῆς ἁμαρτίας ὁ θάνατος, καὶ οὕτως εἰς πάντας ἀνθρώπους ὁ θάνατος διῆλθεν ἐφ' ᾧ πάντες ἥμαρτον.

<sup>8</sup> Valla commented on 5:6-7 and 5:10-11, however took no issue with 5:12, see: L. Valla, *In Latinam Novi Testamenti interpretationem ex collatione Graecorum exemplarium adnotationes* (Parrhisiis: in aedibus Ascensianis 1505) fol. o4<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> All translations into English, unless otherwise indicated, are by the author.

The Vulgate	Lefevre 1512	Erasmus 1516
<i>Propterea sicut per unum hominem in hunc mundum peccatum intravit et per peccatum mors; et ita in omnes homines mors pertransiit in quo omnes peccaverunt</i>	<i>Propterea sicut per unum hominem peccatum in mundum intravit et per peccatum mors; ita in omnes homines mors pertransiit, in quo omnes peccaverunt</i> <sup>10</sup>	<i>Propterea quemadmodum propter unum hominem peccatum in mundum introiit et per peccatum mors, et sic in omnes homines mors pervasit, quatenus omnes peccavimus</i> <sup>11</sup>
Therefore, as by one man sin entered into this world and by sin death; and so death passed upon all men, in whom all have sinned	Therefore, as by one man sin entered into this world and by sin death, so death passed upon all men, in whom all have sinned	Therefore, as through one man sin entered into this world and by sin death; and so death came upon all men, inasmuch as all have sinned

Apart from slight stylistic changes, the significant alternation introduced by Lefèvre was the omission of the conjunction *et*, which thus modified the entire syntax of the sentence. In fact, the syntax of this sentence is complicated and troubles scholars until this day. It begins with a protasis of a comparative sentence introduced by ὡςπερ (*sicut*; just as) which begs an apodosis introduced with οὕτως (*ita*, so). Yet such an apodosis appears to be missing. Lefèvre simplifies the construction by omitting καὶ (*et*, and), thus transforming the second part of the verse into the apodosis. Among modern scholars a similar solution is proposed by John T. Kirby, who claimed that 5:12 is a “rhetorical syllogism.”<sup>12</sup> The vast majority of exegetes, however, disagree and point out that καὶ οὕτως cannot be understood as introducing an apodosis to the preceding sentence and nowhere in the New Testament it is used in such a sense.<sup>13</sup> Thus, in a grammatical sense this sentence is unfinished, that is, forms an anacoluthon. This had already been suggested by Origen<sup>14</sup> and was eagerly used as an argument by Lefèvre’s critics, as we shall see later.

10 J. Faber (Stapulensis), *Pauli epistolae quatuordecim* ([s.l.]: Henricus Stephanus 1512) fol. I4r.

11 D. Erasmus, “Annotationes in Novum Testamentum,” *Opera Omnia* (ed. J. Le Clerc) (Lugduni Bataavorum: Van der Aa 1705) VI, 583–586. The translation cited above was used in the first four editions of Erasmus’s New Testament; in the final, fifth edition (1535), he corrected *propter* into *per* and *peccavimus* into *peccaverunt*, as a corollary of Titelmans’s critique.

12 J.T. Kirby, “The Syntax of Romans 5.12: a Rhetorical Approach,” *NTS* 33/2 (1987) 284.

13 C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark 1975) I, 272; J.D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8* (WBC 38A; Dallas, TX: Word Books 1988) 273; D.J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI, Eerdmans 1996) 318; R. Jewett, *Romans. A Commentary* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress 2006) 373.

14 Origenes, *Commentarii in Romanos* 5.1 (PG 14, 1005a-b).

The translation that stirred much more controversy was that of Erasmus. A far superior scholar, he not only provided a new translation, but first of all, he took the effort to collate Greek manuscripts in order to present the Greek original text purified from copyists' errors. In spite of some shortcomings this was a ground-breaking achievement.

Erasmus's translation departed in several places from that of the Vulgate. Some changes were mostly stylistic, however at least one significantly altered the meaning of the phrase. Translating Greek ἐφ' ᾧ as *quatenus* rather than *in quo* carried profound theological significance. Since the time of Augustine, the translation *in quo* constituted the crucial proof text for the doctrine of original sin.<sup>15</sup> According to Augustine these words indicated that the sin of Adam corrupted the whole of humanity. All humanity was in Adam's loins just as Levi was in Abraham's (cf. Heb 7:10). Thus, according to Augustine, sin was passed to future generations by natural descent and not merely by imitation, as Pelagius had claimed.

The translation of this expression continues to puzzle modern scholars. Cranfield identified as many as six different possible interpretations of the expression ἐφ' ᾧ.<sup>16</sup> From a grammatical perspective ᾧ can be identified either as masculine (thus referring back to death, or to "one man," or to an implied law) or neuter in a causal or consecutive sense as 'because' or 'so that'. Grammatical ambiguity is paired with theological interpretations. It is unclear, whether πάντες ἡμαρτον (all have sinned) refers to the collective sin of all humanity or to individual transgressions. On a grammatical level most exegetes tend to see this phrase as causal or consecutive.<sup>17</sup> This translation can, however, be matched with both senses of understanding the nature of sin. In fact, Robert Jewett claimed that Paul holds both positions to be equally true and develops a paradoxical argument.<sup>18</sup> This *crux interpretum* hardly needs to be solved here; realising the complexity of the issue, however, will help us to understand the nature of Titelmans's critique of Erasmus's translation.

In the first edition of *Novum Instrumentum* (1516) Erasmus annotated this change only with a brief note. Initially it provoked little interest. This changed, when in 1520 Erasmus's once friend and collaborator, Edward Lee, turned against

15 The first to use the argument was an anonymous commentary on the epistle to the Romans attributed to Ambrose, see: Ambrosius, *Commentarii in epistolam ad Romanos* 5:12 (PL 17, 92c). Augustine used this verse extensively in anti-Pelagian polemics, see for example: Augustinus, *De peccatorum meritis et remissione* 3.8 (PL 44, 113–114).

16 Cranfield, *Romans*, I, 274–275.

17 Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 273; Cranfield, *Romans*, I, 277–279; Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 321. Joseph A. Fitzmyer ("The Consecutive Meaning of ἐφ' ᾧ in Romans 5.12," *NTS* 39 [1993] 321–339) claims there is no support for causal use of this phrase before the 6<sup>th</sup> century after Christ, thus he prefers to translate "so that."

18 Jewett, *Romans*, 376.

him accusing his translation and annotations of serious theological shortcomings.<sup>19</sup> Among other issues he pointed out Romans 5:12 and argued that Erasmus supported Pelagian heresy there. In response, Erasmus expanded his explanatory annotation citing some Church fathers (pseudo-Jerome, John Chrysostom and Origen) as supporting his interpretation. Nonetheless he failed to appease his opponents. Titelmans developed the argumentation of Lee (in fact Erasmus strongly believed both men were merely exponents of ideas of their theological mentor, Jacques Masson<sup>20</sup>) forcing the humanist to produce a lengthy response. In 1530 Erasmus retorted with *Responsio ad Collationes cuiusdam iuvenis gerontodidascali* that is a response to a certain youth, who would teach his elders. His defence of his translation choices was later reproduced in the fifth and final edition of *Novum Testamentum* in 1535.<sup>21</sup> A brief annotation of the 1516 edition became in the heat of debates a theological essay. We shall now analyse in some detail the elements of this debate to uncover what was really at stake in this rather minute exegetical polemic.

## 2. Principal Line of Titelmans's Argumentation

*Collationes Quinque supra epistola ad Romanos* is a rather lengthy and tedious work. It begins with *Prologus Apologeticus*, which sets out the methodological grounds for the defence of the Vulgate translation.<sup>22</sup> Titelmans, deeply offended by the lack of reverence shown by humanists to the old and venerated Latin version, argued that the Vulgate was an outcome of Divine Providence. Although he conceded that it had not been translated by Jerome, who merely had revised it, he held it in the highest esteem and considered it free from mistakes in matters

19 For a detailed study of Lee's objections see: R. Coogan, *Erasmus, Lee and the Correction of the Vulgate. The Shaking of the Foundations* (Geneve: Droz 1992); C. Asso, "Martin Dorp and Edward Lee," *Biblical Humanism and Scholasticism in the Age of Erasmus* (ed. E. Rummel) (Leiden: Brill 2008) 167–196.

20 D. Erasmus, "Responsio ad Collationes cuiusdam iuvenis gerontodidascali," *Opera Omnia* (ed. J. Le Clerc) (Lugduni Batavorum: Van der Aa 1706) IX, 984E. Cf. P. Sartori, "Tracce dell'opera di Jacobus Latomus nel Prologus Apologeticus di Frans Titelmans," *Margarita amicorum* (eds. F. Forner – C.M. Monti – P.G. Schmidt) (Milano: Vita & Pensiero 2005) 1032–1042. Sartori claims that while Titelmans was inspired by his master, he was also an independent thinker who developed ideas of his own.

21 The name *Novum Instrumentum* was used only for the first edition of Erasmus's translation. For the subsequent editions (1519, 1522, 1527 and 1535) he returned to what he considered a less perfect, but traditionally accepted name of *Novum Testamentum*.

22 More on the *Prologus* see: Sartori, "La Controversia Neotestamentaria"; T.K. Mantyk, "Błogosławieństwo Bożego, czyli obrona wartości Wulgaty według Franciszka Tytelmana," *BibAn* 9/3 (2019) 525–546.

pertaining to faith. Indeed, he claimed that its anonymous translator had been inspired by the Holy Spirit. Consequently, the Franciscan set on to defend every iota of the sacred translation against changes introduced by humanists. He took on the letter to the Romans, which he considered the hardest to translate and thus hoped to show on the most difficult example that the old translation was superior to new ones.<sup>23</sup> In all cases he defended the old translation, even if at times he admitted that an alternative proposed by humanists was clearer.<sup>24</sup> He chose a form of five fictitious dialogues against his opponents: Erasmus, Lefèvre and Valla. He first cited excerpts from their works and then he pontificated against their choices and chided them for their mistakes and shortcomings. Despite his numerous appeals to his own humility the text is rather aggressive and offensive and was read as such by Erasmus.<sup>25</sup>

It is, however, a simplification to see Titelmans as simply a bitter conservative opponent of the new learning. Unlike most critics of Erasmian translation he recognised its value and its potential merits for a private study “*in cubiculum*.”<sup>26</sup> Nor was Titelmans completely ignorant of humanist methodology. At the *Pedagogium Porci*, where he studied philosophy, Latin was taught by a humanist, Andreas Barlandus, who was also a lecturer at the *Collegium Trilingue*.<sup>27</sup> In the Franciscan order Titelmans studied under the guidance of Amandus of Zierikzee, an admirer of Erasmus, who was experienced in Greek, Hebrew and even Syriac.<sup>28</sup> The young Franciscan himself boasted to know these languages, however his claim was challenged by others.<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, it is a simplification to see him merely as a scholastic theologian, antagonistic to any novelty. His methodology was more complex and his concerns much deeper than it had occurred to many scholars, as the subsequent analysis shall make apparent.

Discussion of Romans 5:12 forms the last part of the second dialogue in *Collationes* and is the longest passage devoted to a single verse in the entire six

<sup>23</sup> Titelmans, *Collationes*, fol. 4<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>24</sup> Titelmans, *Collationes*, fol. 206<sup>v</sup>–207<sup>r</sup>. Titelmans conceded that in translating Rom 9:28 the proposition of Lefèvre was clearer, however he argued awkwardly that translator had no obligation to render the text in the clearest way possible.

<sup>25</sup> Erasmus, “Responsio ad Collationes,” 965E–966D. Lefèvre did not deign to respond, while Valla had been long dead at that time.

<sup>26</sup> F. Titelmans, “Prologus apologeticus pro veteri et ecclesiastica novi testamenti latina interpretatione,” *Collationes quinque super Epistolam ad Romanos beati Pauli apostoli* (Antuerpiae: apud Guiljelmum Vorstermannum 1529) fol. c 7<sup>v</sup>. Cf. Sartori, “La Controversia Neotestamentaria,” 117–120.

<sup>27</sup> Sartori, “Frans Titelmans,” 219.

<sup>28</sup> B. de Troeyer, “Amandus van Zierikzee,” *Franciscana* 20/1 (1965) 14–19; Paquay, *Frans Tittelmans van Hasselt*, 41.

<sup>29</sup> See the title page of F. Tittelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos* (Antuerpiae: apud Martinum Caesarem 1531). Jan von Campen claimed that Tietlmans was ignorant of Hebrew and hardly schooled in Greek, yet his evaluation was hardly objective. See: Vocht, *Collegium Trilingue*, III, 152.

hundred pages long work.<sup>30</sup> Initial pages are devoted to Lefèvre's translation, but the bulk of the material concerns Erasmus. We shall follow a thematic rather than chronological order in presenting Titelmans's arguments.

The principal argumentation of Titelmans is based on the authority of Church Fathers. First, he used them to counter alternations made by Lefèvre. He relied on the authority of Origen and claimed that Paul's comparison is unfinished and is intended to be supplanted by a reader himself: "so through one man justice entered into the world, and life through justice, and so life spread to all men, in whom all receive life."<sup>31</sup> Thus, Lefèvre was mistaken in assuming that the latter part of the verse is an apodosis to the former. Besides, he added that the interpretation of Origen was more reasonable, because it had constructed a parallelism between the first and the last Adam.

Countering Erasmus, Titelmans used patristic sources even more extensively. He considered all changes introduced by Erasmus to have a Pelagian flavour, especially altering *in quo* into *quatenus*. According to Titelmans, Erasmus changed the theological significance of the passage. In Erasmus's translation it appeared to be about personal transgressions rather than about original sin. That, according to the theologian from Leuven, ran counter the entire tradition of the Catholic Church.<sup>32</sup> This was the key argument of his argumentation: no catholic writer had ever interpreted this passage the way Erasmus had. Only Pelagians read this verse as speaking about individual sins. Titelmans listed Irenaeus of Lyon, Cyprian of Cartago, Reticus of Autun, Olympius of Spain, Hillary of Poitiers, the pope Innocent I and John Chrysostom among those, who had testified to catholic interpretation of this passage.<sup>33</sup> This list of authorities was compiled on the basis of Augustine's *Contra Julianum*, where all of them were cited.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, the bishop of Hippo was the principal witness used by Titelmans.

Titelmans argued that Augustine had established the correct meaning of this verse in his polemics against Pelagians and that there were numerous proofs of that in his writings.<sup>35</sup> He chose to cite *Contra Julianum*, especially book six, as his principal source. In this book Augustine reproached Julian for denying that also children are born in sin. He dwelled upon Pauline analogy between the first and the second Adam. If infants, who cannot sin by their own will, had not sinned in the first Adam, also the second Adam had not died for them. But since Christ

<sup>30</sup> Titelmans, *Collationes*, fol. 112<sup>r</sup>–135<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>31</sup> Origenes, *Commentarii in Romanos* 5.1 (PG 14, 1005b): „ita et per unum hominem iustitia intorivit in hunc mundum, et per iustitiam vita, et sic in omnes homines vita pertransiit, in qua omnes vivificati sunt.” Cf. Titelmans, *Collationes*, fol. 112<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>32</sup> Titelmans, *Collationes*, fol. 117<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>33</sup> Titelmans, *Collationes*, fol. 114<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>34</sup> Augustinus, *Contra Julianum* I.3.5–10 (PL 44, 643–647).

<sup>35</sup> Titelmans, *Collationes*, fol. 117<sup>v</sup>–118<sup>r</sup>.



died for all, hence all must have died in the first Adam.<sup>36</sup> The infants do not die because of their personal sins, but because of original sin. Consequently, one has to interpret Romans 5:12 as *in quo omnes*, which refers to original sin.

Titelmans repeated several times that the interpretation of Augustine was shared by all Catholic Fathers and by the Holy Church itself.<sup>37</sup> Titelmans wrote of a consensus of the Fathers. For him it was evident that all Church Fathers interpreted this passage in the same way as Augustine and only Pelagians dissented. Thus, he admonished Erasmus to follow the lead of the Catholic authorities rather than heretics.<sup>38</sup> For Titelmans, Augustine's interpretation was the Church's interpretation.

He warned Erasmus that since he was guilty of the same distortion of the text's meaning as Pelagians, criticism of Augustine applied to him too. "Do you not see, that in those words you, alongside Julian, are being justly and deservedly castigated by the holy father Augustine, you, who are held equally guilty, or, I do not know, even more gravely."<sup>39</sup> Erasmus could not exonerate himself of guilt, for irrespective of what his intentions had been, his translation, according to Titelmans, gave support to heresies.

Erasmus retorted to criticism of Titelmans and claimed that disagreeing with Augustine was no crime. In his *Responsio* he claimed that many scholastics disagreed with Augustine regarding free will.<sup>40</sup> He also claimed that Augustine had taught about the indispensability of ministering the blood of Christ for infants after baptism, as a necessary means of salvation, however this had not been practiced by the Western Church for ages. "But if here they [Erasmus's critics] do not permit dissent from Augustine far enough to allow that one may interpret this passage of Paul in two ways, why not bestow the same honour on everything Augustine taught and affirmed in this same dispute?," asked Erasmus ironically.<sup>41</sup>

He protested even more vehemently against the charge that only he and Pelagians interpreted this passage in a different sense than original sin.<sup>42</sup> According to Erasmus until the Pelagian controversy many orthodox fathers thought more interpretations of this passage to be permissible. He was not denying the possibility

<sup>36</sup> Titelmans, *Collationes*, fol. 118<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>37</sup> Titelmans, *Collationes*, fol. 118<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>38</sup> Titelmans, *Collationes*, fol. 119<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>39</sup> Titelmans, *Collationes* 118<sup>r</sup>: "In quibus verbis nonne vides etiam te una cum Iuliano iuste et merito obiurgari a sancto patre Augustino, qui eadem in culpa deprehenderis, nescio an etiam graviori."

<sup>40</sup> Erasmus, "Responsio ad Collationes," 988B–C.

<sup>41</sup> Erasmus, "Annotationes," 589B: "Quod si non permittunt hic hactenus ab Augustino dissentire, ut liceat hunc Pauli locum bifariam interpretari, quin idem honoris habetur omnibus quae vir ille docuit et asseveravit in hac ipsa disputatione." English translation after D. Erasmus, *Annotations on Romans* (ed. R.D. Sider) (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1994) 149.

<sup>42</sup> Erasmus, "Responsio ad Collationes," 989A. Erasmus, "Annotationes," 588D. Cf. Titelmans, *Collationes*, fol. 119<sup>r</sup>.

to interpret 5:12 in the sense of original sin, but he argued that before Augustine this had not been the only opinion among orthodox writers.<sup>43</sup> Thus, he challenged Titelmans's principal claim that the interpretation of 5:12 is settled by a consensus of the Fathers. In fact, he pointed out that Ambrose, Origen and Chrysostom had permitted different readings of this passage.

Titelmans was aware of this argument, which had been used earlier in the polemic against Lee, yet considered it false.<sup>44</sup> Therefore, he endeavoured to demonstrate that Erasmus had misinterpreted those fathers, who were in fact in full consonance with Augustine. First, he took on Ambrose. Both he and Erasmus used the name of Ambrose refereeing to a pseudo-epigraphical commentary on the Romans, whose author is now known as Ambrosiaster. Titelmans cites Ambrosiaster to show that he clearly meant *in quo* to refer to Adam and to original sin: “<In him> that is in Adam <all sinned>. He spoke <in him>, when talking about a woman, because he was not referring to sex but to race. It is clear that in Adam all sinned as if in a lump, for he himself was corrupted by sin and those whom he begot were all born under sin.”<sup>45</sup> He added other quotes from the commentary on the Gospel of Luke (an authentically Ambrosian text) all to the same purpose, namely, to show that Ambrose had firmly believed in original sin.<sup>46</sup>

Erasmus, however, did not challenge the fact that Ambrose, as well as Origen and Chrysostom, interpreted 5:12 in the sense of original sin. He claimed, all of them made clear in their subsequent comments that it was also conceivable to interpret differently, understanding sin as being individual.

Titelmans countered that while subsequent verses could be correctly read as speaking of personal sins, in 5:12 Ambrosiaster meant original sin alone.<sup>47</sup> He conceded that 5:14 can be interpreted both ways, depending which reading one chooses. If one read without negation “death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had sinned,” as some codices have it, it suggested individual sin. This was the reading that Ambrosiaster and Origen followed.<sup>48</sup> The majority of fathers, however, read ‘had not sinned’, which, according to Titelmans

43 Erasmus, “Annotationes,” 589B.

44 Titelmans, *Collationes*, fol. 119<sup>r</sup>.

45 Ambrosius, *Commentarii in epistolam ad Romanos* 5:12 (PL 17, 92c): “<In quo> id est in Adam <omnes peccaverunt>. Ideo dixit <in quo> cum de mulier loquantur, quia non ad speciem retulit sed ad genus. Manifestum itaque est in Adam omnes peccasse quasi in massa; ipsa enim per peccatum corruptus quos genuit, omnes nati sunt sub peccato.” Cf. Titelmans, *Collationes*, fol. 117<sup>r</sup>.

46 Titelmans, *Collationes*, fol. 117<sup>r</sup>. Cf. Ambrosius, *Expositio Evangelii secundum Lucam* IV.66 (PL 15, 1632c–d): „Omnes enim in Adam mortui; quia *Per unum hominem in hunc mundum peccatum introivit, et per peccatum mors: et ita in omnes homines pertransivit, in quo omnes peccaverunt*. Illius igitur culpa mors omnium est”; *ibidem* VII.234 (PL 15, 1762b): „Fuit Adam, et in illo fuimus omnes. Periiit Adam, et in illo omnes perierunt.”

47 Titelmans, *Collationes*, fol. 129<sup>v</sup>.

48 Titelmans, *Collationes*, fol. 128<sup>v</sup>; cf. Ambrosius, *Commentarii in epistolam ad Romanos* 5:14 (PL 17, 94). Origenes, *Commentarii in Romanos* 5.1 (PG 14 1016c).

pointed to the situation of infants, who, although they had no opportunity to sin, are nevertheless subjected to death.<sup>49</sup> Thus, with a negation, it was about original sin. Yet, according to the Franciscan, this mattered but a little, since whatever the interpretation of 5:14, in 5:12 all Fathers saw original sin.

Also Origen, according to the scholar from Leuven, interpreted this passage in this way.<sup>50</sup> Nevertheless, the evidence from Origen was inconclusive, as both adversaries agreed, not least because of deficiencies of Rufinus's translation, who, Erasmus claimed, omitted some thoughts of the Alexandrian Father.<sup>51</sup>

There was much more discussion concerning Chrysostom. According to Titelmans, the patriarch of Constantinople clearly interpreted 5:12 in the light of original sin.<sup>52</sup> Erasmus, however claimed, that in comments on 5:13 Chrysostom corrected and qualified what he had said before. True, all share in the misery of Adam, because due to his sin the paradise had been lost to all, yet until the law sin cannot be attributed. Thus, through Adam, death entered into the world, but responsibility for sins is individual. According to Erasmus, Chrysostom thought that all died in Adam, but not all sinned in Adam.<sup>53</sup>

To support such reading of the patriarch of Constantinople, Erasmus brought in a citation from a much later Greek commentary, which by and large copied that of Chrysostom. This was partly to avail the fact, that the copy of Chrysostom that he used was badly copied and missing some fragments.<sup>54</sup> The commentary, translated from Greek in 1477 by Christopher Porsena, librarian to Sixtus IV, was falsely attributed by him to Athanasius, as a deliberate fraud.<sup>55</sup> It became also a source of embarrassment for Erasmus, since in the 1516 edition of the New Testament he referred to the author of this commentary as "Vulgarius," while in fact it was "Bulgarius," meaning Theophylact of Ochrida, an 11<sup>th</sup> century bishop

49 Titelmans, *Collationes*, fol. 129<sup>r</sup>; Titelmans lists Chrysostom, Cyril of Carthage, Irenaeus and Augustine as holding this opinion.

50 Titelmans, *Collationes*, fol. 117<sup>r</sup>; cf. Origenes, *Commentarii in Romanos* 5.1 (PG 14 1009c–1010a): „Si ergo Levi, qui generatione quarta post Abraham nascitur, in lumbis Abrahae fuisse perhibetur, multo magis omnes homines qui in hoc mundo nascuntur, et nati sunt, in lumbis errant Adae, cum adhuc esset in paradiso; et omnes homines cum ipso vel in ipso expulsi sunt de paradiso, cum ipse inde depulsus est; et per ipsum mors, quae ei ex praevaricatione venerat, consequenter et in eos pertransiit qui in lumbis eius habebantur.”

51 Erasmus, "Responsio ad Collationes," 988E. Erasmus, "Annotationes," 586D.

52 Titelmans, *Collationes*, fol. 117<sup>r</sup>: "Ipsa transgressio peccati, totum labefecit mundum, factum album peccati; quia omnis qui facit peccatum, servus est peccati." Cf. Joannes Chrysostomus, *Commentarius in epistolam ad Romanos* 10.1 (PG 60, 474–475).

53 Erasmus, "Annotationes," 588C.

54 Erasmus, "Responsio ad Collationes," 990E.

55 A fraud that Erasmus himself later exposed, see: D. Erasmus, "Responsio ad Collationes cuiusdam iuvenis gerontodidascali," *Controversies* (ed. D.L. Drysdall) (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1993) 203–204.

of the Bulgarians.<sup>56</sup> Erasmus quoted his commentary on 5:12 to show, that Chrysostom had meant individual sins: „For when he [Adam] fell even those who had eaten nothing from the tree became mortal by their wickedness, just as though they themselves were guilty of sin, because he had sinned.”<sup>57</sup> All became mortal by their own individual sins, not by the sin of Adam.

Titelmans challenged this evidence. He accused Erasmus of deliberate mistranslation of Theophylact’s commentary.<sup>58</sup> He claimed that here Erasmus misunderstood the Greek bishop, as he had done in other places too.<sup>59</sup> The Greek pronoun *ἑαυτῷ* can be understood either as a reflexive or personal pronoun.<sup>60</sup> Thus, Theophylact’s phrase could be understood as speaking of ‘their own wickedness’ or ‘his wickedness’. Much to Erasmus’s annoyance, the Franciscan cited Valla, to explain the rules of correct translation of *ἑαυτῷ* and demonstrated that Erasmus had erred.<sup>61</sup> He also used comparative evidence from Theophylact’s commentary on 2 Cor 6:1 where there was an analogous problem of translation.<sup>62</sup> The text of Theophylact should be translated as *illius crimine*, that is, all became mortal because of his [Adam’s] wickedness. Ironically, the contested words were an interpolation of Porsena, and the original text of Theophylact read simply: *γεγόνασιν ἐξ ἐκείνου θνηταὶ* (*facti sunt ex illo mortales*; were made mortal from him).<sup>63</sup> Regardless of this, Titelmans was correct that Erasmus had quoted a mistaken translation. Theophylact, and thus also Chrysostom, clearly spoke of original sin, which supported the Vulgate version.

According to Titelmans, the evidence of Theophylact was vitally important, because he witnessed to the ancient tradition of the Christian East. It belied Erasmus claim that while Augustinian interpretation was prevalent in the West, in the Greek world two readings of 5:12 were acceptable.<sup>64</sup> The Franciscan insisted that all western and eastern Fathers understood this verse to speak of original sin. In fact, he claimed that Augustine based his teaching on Chrysostom, which demonstrated the unity of all Catholic Fathers.<sup>65</sup> What is also significant here, it

56 After Erasmus inspected in 1518 the Greek original of Theophylact, he became aware of his mistake and corrected the name in subsequent editions.

57 Erasmus, “Annotations,” 588D. “Nam eo labente, vel qui de ligno nihil edissent, suo crimine mortales sunt facti, perinde ac si ipsi peccato forent obnoxii, quia ille peccasset.” English translation after: Erasmus, *Annotations on Romans*, 147. Erasmus quotes exactly after 1529 edition of Porsena’s translation cf. Theophylactus, *In omnes Divi Pavli epistolas enarrationes* ([s.l.]: Quentell 1529) fol. xii’.

58 Titelmans, *Collationes*, fol. 119’.

59 Cf. Titelmans, *Collationes*, fol. 45’.

60 Titelmans, *Collationes*, fol. 119’–120’.

61 Titelmans, *Collationes*, fol. 120’. For Erasmus’s outrage see: Erasmus, “Responsio ad Collationes,” 966B.

62 Titelmans, *Collationes*, fol. 120’<sup>v</sup>; cf. Theophylactus, *Enarrationes*, fol. lxxxviii’.

63 Theophylactus, *Comentarius in Epistolam ad Romanos* 5:12 (PG 124, 404c).

64 Titelmans, *Collationes*, fol. 128’.

65 Titelmans, *Collationes*, fol. 122’<sup>v</sup>.

that Titelmans caught Erasmus on his own territory, that is, philology. The Franciscan was not alien to Greek and could make a good use of it.

Both Titelmans and Erasmus mustered more patristic authorities to support their case. Titelmans referred briefly to Sedulius Scotus (called *Hyberniensis* by Titelmans), a 9<sup>th</sup> century Irish grammarian,<sup>66</sup> as well as to Irenaeus of Lyon and Cyril of Cartago.<sup>67</sup> Erasmus on the other hand used as his ace witness a commentary attributed to Jerome. Both he and Titelmans were aware that it was not an authentic work of the great scholar from Stridon. Titelmans did not devote much attention to this *Hieronymiana* (as he calls this work), but Erasmus made scholia of pseudo-Jerome his main witness for the plurality of ancient catholic interpretations of 5:12.<sup>68</sup> Ironically, neither of the polemicists was aware that in fact this commentary had been written by Pelagius himself.<sup>69</sup> Erasmus inadvertently used Pelagius to exculpate himself from accusations of Pelagianism.

Before proceeding it is worth comparing the way in which both scholars used patristic evidence. For Titelmans the Fathers of the Church constituted a uniform mass that gave unfaltering support to Church's dogma. In fact, his starting point was not so much an analysis of the Fathers, as it was the doctrine of the Church. Fathers, who are considered orthodox, by necessity must have conformed to this orthodoxy. Even where there were ambiguities as to what they had meant, as was the case with Ambrose and Origen, ambiguity should be decided in favour of what the Church had always taught. Thus, the Fathers were a coherent corpus of ancient bodyguards of Christian truth. Erasmus, on the contrary, looked at Fathers through a historical prism. According to Christine Christ-von Wedel, this historicity was the most remarkable element of Erasmian theological method.<sup>70</sup> Fathers were not statues cast from bronze, monuments of orthodoxy, but creative thinkers, who continuously developed their ideas and often contradicted each other. Thus, where Titelmans saw uniformity, Erasmus perceived plurality, where the Franciscan wanted to have an unchanging eternal doctrine, Erasmus saw development and change.

Titelmans was shocked by Erasmus's insolence, when the humanist questioned the reasoning of the Fathers. In a series of rhetorical questions, he asserted

<sup>66</sup> Titelmans, *Collationes*, fol. 117<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>67</sup> Titelmans, *Collationes*, fol. 129<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>68</sup> Titelmans referred to this work in other places, for example discussing 5:7, Titelmans, *Collationes*, fol. 110<sup>v</sup>; however, did not bring him up in relation to 5:12. Erasmus on the contrary invoked the authority of this commentary several times: Erasmus, "Responsio ad Collationes," 988F; Erasmus, "Annotationes," 586B–C; 588D. Pseudo Jerome was also the only patristic authority invoked in the earliest version of annotations, see: Erasmus, *Annotations on Romans*, 152, n. 2.

<sup>69</sup> On the authorship of this commentary and numerous interpolations see: A. Souter, *Pelagius's Expositions of Thirteen Epistles of St. Paul. I. Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1922).

<sup>70</sup> C. Christ-von Wedel, *Erasmus of Rotterdam. Advocate of a New Christianity* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 2013) 10; She claimed "Erasmus turned the theologian into a historian" (*ibidem*, 87).

that they had considered every aspect of Paul's letters. "I do not doubt – he concluded – that those men, notable for sanctity and distinguished with learning, moreover entirely free from any passions, considered and examined everything more clearly, closely and exactly than we, little men in comparison even with the least of them, subjected to various passions and by various affected, may succeed to judge or examine."<sup>71</sup> Titelmans asserted that Erasmus and his likes were guilty of arrogance and excessive confidence in their own capacities. They strayed from the path of moderation and intellectual humility, which, expressed in a Latin adage *ne quid nimis*, was for Titelmans the golden rule of all intellectual pursuits.<sup>72</sup>

### 3. Auxiliary Arguments of Titelmans

Titelmans was aware that his argumentation based on patristic sources could fail to persuade all readers. It sufficed to convince a man like himself, who trusted in the wisdom of the Church, however not necessarily those, who doubted her authority and eagerly searched for novelties.<sup>73</sup> Thus, the Franciscan assembled some additional arguments using two very diverse methodologies: humanist and scholastic.

As we have already seen in the case of Theophylact, the lecturer from Leuven was not shy to counter humanists on their own ground. Consequently, he used philology to evaluate changes introduced by Erasmus. Substituting *peccaverunt* with *peccavimus* he found rather trivial, for changing the third person into the first hardly altered the meaning. Even here he suspected that Erasmus might have wanted to emphasise individual's own actions in contrast to the grace of God. Yet, admitting it to be no more than a suspicion, he dropped the matter.<sup>74</sup> Erasmus professed the change to be merely an error.<sup>75</sup> He claimed it must have crept into his translation from an English manuscript, meaning probably *codex*

71 Titelmans, *Collationes*, fol. 124<sup>v</sup>: "Nihil equidem addubito, quin sanctitate conspicui viri illi et eruditione praeclari, insuper et affectibus liberissimi, multo purius, interius, exactiusque omnia perpenderit atque perspexerint, quam nos homunculi illis neque ex infimo conferendi variis affectionibus subditi varieque affecti valeamus sive expendere sive perspicere."

72 Cf. Titelmans, "Prologus apologeticus," fol. c 8<sup>r</sup>: "Semper tamen illud est observandum, ut ne quid nimis."

73 Cf. Titelmans, *Collationes*, fol. 126<sup>r</sup>.

74 Titelmans, *Collationes*, fol. 115<sup>r</sup>.

75 Erasmus, "Responsio ad Collationes," 986E–F.

*Leicestersiensis*, which was one of the codices that he had inspected while in England.<sup>76</sup> In annotations to the text Erasmus used the third person.

Titelmans was much less lenient with other changes. According to him, altering *per* for *propter* was plainly Pelagian in intention. He argued, that *per* signified a true cause, while *propter* pointed towards an occasion rather than cause.<sup>77</sup> According to Pelagians, the sin of Adam was not the true cause of humanity's degeneration, but only gave others an occasion to imitate him and thus incur guilt for individual sins. Analysing the letter to the Romans Titelmans indicated that wherever  $\delta\acute{\iota}\alpha$  was used with accusative it was translated as *propter* (for the sake of), for instance thrice in 4:23-25, while when it was used with genitive it was rendered with *per* (as).<sup>78</sup> He also pointed out that Erasmus himself had always translated  $\delta\acute{\iota}\alpha$  with genitive as *per*, and only in this place he had used *propter*. He had done so, as Titelmans claimed, to strengthen the Pelagian reading of this passage. Although to some this might have appeared a minor issue, the Franciscan professed that he would rather have 10 words changed with no harm to the meaning than have the least of words altered in such a manner as to diminish the truth.<sup>79</sup>

Erasmus considered Titelmans's philological remarks on this point nonsensical. He admitted that *propter* had crept into his translation by mistake, for which he blamed a copyist. In the annotation he used *per* rather than *propter*, which demonstrated that he had had no intention of altering the translation. As to the difference in meaning he considered Titelmans's points "an ignorant fantasy" and cited in his support Psalm 43(44):22, where *propter* was used in a causal sense.<sup>80</sup> Nevertheless, Erasmus had made a mistake and his derogatory response was clearly intended to mask this fact.

Similarly, Titelmans took an issue with substituting *pertransit* with *pervasit*. According to the Franciscan this change also rung Pelagian. Word *pertransire*, he argued, had a quality emphasising contagious nature of the original sin, which has been passed from one generation to another.<sup>81</sup> The same quality was present in the Greek verb  $\delta\iota\eta\lambda\theta\epsilon\iota\nu$ , a compound verb including a preposition  $\delta\acute{\iota}\alpha$ , which corresponds to Latin *per*.<sup>82</sup> The word *pervadere*, however, chosen by Erasmus, lacked this sense of passing from one generation to another, thus it suggested reading this passage in the light of individual sins by imitation.<sup>83</sup>

76 On codices of Erasmus see: E. Rummel, *Erasmus' Annotations on the New Testament. From Philologist to Theologian* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1986) 35–42.

77 Titelmans, *Collationes*, fol. 115<sup>v</sup>.

78 Titelmans, *Collationes*, fol. 115<sup>v</sup>.

79 Titelmans, *Collationes*, fol. 116<sup>r</sup>.

80 Erasmus, "Responsio ad Collationes," 986B. "Indoctum somnium."

81 Titelmans, *Collationes*, fol. 116<sup>r</sup>.

82 Titelmans, *Collationes*, fol. 116<sup>r</sup>.

83 Titelmans, *Collationes*, fol. 116<sup>r</sup>.

Erasmus found this argumentation ludicrous. He claimed there was no real difference in meaning between both verbs. *Pervasit* was, however preferable, because it reflected Greek better. Titelmans demonstrated his poor scholarship by not realising that Latin *pertransit* is composed of two prepositions: *per* and *trans*, while Greek διήλθειν consists only of one.<sup>84</sup> Therefore, albeit the meaning was the same, *pervasit* was to be preferred on stylistic and philological grounds. For Titelmans doctrinal clarity was sufficient to choose a word that imperfectly reflected the original, for Erasmus questions of style were sufficient to choose a word that imperfectly expressed the doctrine.

Interestingly, Titelmans offered no philological argumentation for the main point of contention, namely, *in quo/quatenus*. The controversy on this point was more about theological interpretation than translation itself. On the contrary, Titelmans offered a set of scholastic arguments based on logic. He took as a departure point Erasmus's claim that it was death, not sin, that had passed on all mankind as a consequence of Adam's transgression. He noted that patristic authorities interpret this death in two ways: Ambrose and Theophylact as physical death, while Origen as death of soul.<sup>85</sup> Thus, following Erasmus's interpretation of Paul, one could construct an enthymeme: physical death (or death of soul) came to all, because all sinned with individual sins.

Titelmans explained briefly that an enthymeme is true when both premisses are true and the causal link between them is valid.<sup>86</sup> As he proceeded to demonstrate, this was not the case with Erasmus's interpretation. First of all, the second premiss, namely, that all had sinned by imitation of Adam, was factually not true. Titelmans explained, he did not mean only the Blessed Virgin and Saint John the Baptist, but also an innumerable cohort of children who died before they were capable of sinning. If physical death were a punishment for each individual's own transgressions, infants would not die. Therefore, not only was the second premiss wrong, but also the logical connection between the two was false.<sup>87</sup> The second possibility, death of soul, made the enthymeme even more mistaken. In this case, both premisses were false as was the causal link between them. Death of soul, that is damnation, was not the fate of all, for not all are damned. Nor was it true that every man sinned with a mortal sin. Finally, the causality was mistaken, for the death of soul is a consequence not of every sin, but only of mortal sin.<sup>88</sup>

84 Erasmus, "Responsio ad Collationes," 986D.

85 Titelmans, *Collationes*, fol. 130<sup>r-v</sup>.

86 Titelmans, *Collationes*, fol. 130<sup>v</sup>–131<sup>r</sup>.

87 Titelmans, *Collationes*, fol. 131<sup>r-v</sup>.

88 Titelmans, *Collationes*, fol. 131<sup>v</sup>–132<sup>r</sup>.



All such logical problems were resolved if one accepted that Paul had spoken of original sin in Romans 5:12.<sup>89</sup> It is true that all sinned, unborn children included, because all were in Adam, hidden in his loins. Consequently, all are subjected to physical death. Speaking of death of soul Titelmans noted that one should understand it as remaining in the shadow of death (*mortis umbra*). It is equivalent of being deprived of Gods beatifying vision and is a fate of all, who were not baptised. Even unbaptised children, who suffer no punishment for individual sins, remain in this shadow of death, that is, in what scholastic theologians defined as limbo. Consequently, in Vulgate's translation, regardless whether one understood death to be physical or of soul, both premisses were true and so was causality.<sup>90</sup>

Titelmans triumphed. He admonished Erasmus that departing from the tradition he run into innumerable problems. "Look then, how many dangers would arise, if in your Latin edition, ... departing from the truth of the elders and separating yourself from the fathers, you made a premiss, the veracity of which cannot be duly defended."<sup>91</sup> The Franciscan also explained in parenthesis, why Erasmus and others run into such a threat: "May it be that it [your version] is in accordance with the Latin style of expression, however Paul's writings are interpreted according to the truth of the meaning and read as divine truth and divine scripture."<sup>92</sup> For Titelmans it was not enough to translate according to *latinitatis dictionem*; one had to follow *divina veritas*, which had always resided in the Catholic Church. Philology was not sufficient to comprehend the deepest meaning of the Divine Scripture, which exceeded human understanding.

Erasmus did not think it worthy to respond to such arguments and considered such speculations a waste of time.<sup>93</sup> In fact, he was particularly prejudiced against logic, and deliberately excluded it from disciplines that can be useful for biblical exegesis.<sup>94</sup> It is important to notice, however, that also for Titelmans logical reasoning was not the way to establish the correct meaning of the text. It only served to verify and demonstrate the correct interpretation, which had been established by the authority of the Church.

<sup>89</sup> Titelmans, *Collationes*, fol. 132<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>90</sup> Titelmans, *Collationes*, fol. 132<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>91</sup> Titelmans, *Collationes*, fol. 132<sup>v</sup>: „Vide autem, quanti id periculi foret, si in aeditione tua latina ... a veteri veritate discedens et a patribus te segregans pronunciatum aliquod ponas, cuius veritas rite tueri non possit.”

<sup>92</sup> Titelmans, *Collationes*, fol. 132<sup>v</sup>: „quae licet versio tua sit secundum latinitatis dictionem, Pauli tamen scriptura secundum sententiarum veritatem reputatur et ut divina veritas divinaque scriptura legitur.”

<sup>93</sup> Erasmus, “Responsio ad Collationes,” 992B.

<sup>94</sup> D. Erasmus, “Ratio seu Methodus compendio perveniendi ad veram theologiam,” *Opera Omnia* (ed. J. Le Clerc) (Lugduni Batavorum: Van der Aa 1704) V, 80D.

#### 4. Translation, Reforms and the Church

Countering Titelmans's attack, Erasmus asked, why, if the changes he had introduced to 5:12 were allegedly so heretical, Jan Briart, the dean of Leuven's faculty of theology, had found no fault with them, when he had been asked to give a theological evaluation of *Novum Instrumentum* in 1516.<sup>95</sup> The simplest response would perhaps be, that 1516 was not 1529. What happened in between was a series of reformations in various European cities, starting with Luther's Wittenberg. Nowhere did Titelmans invoke explicitly any of reformers, however his entire argumentation is full of allusions to their activity. He lamented, that while some were docile and followed Church's authority, many did not. "Truly not all have this pious disposition of mind. (...) Of those we may see the majority separating themselves every day from the Church and inventing for themselves new, wickedest dogmas, and eagerly constructing in each town new synagogues of Satan."<sup>96</sup> The Church had a maternal responsibility to win them back to the true faith.<sup>97</sup> Erasmus's greatest sin was, according to the Franciscan, that he undermined the authority of the Church and thwarted her efforts.<sup>98</sup>

Erasmus repeatedly assured that he had never challenged the dogma of original sin, but merely suggested that Romans 5:12 can be interpreted also in a different way. He professed to believe in this dogma due to other scriptural proofs and, above all else, the authority of the Church.<sup>99</sup> Titelmans pointed out to Erasmus that even if he was humble enough to accept the authority of the Church, others were not, and his attack on the Vulgate weakened the authority of the Church, precisely, when it was most needed. In fact, it was the authority of the Church in interpreting the Bible that stood at the centre of their controversy.

Differences in their respective approaches to the Church's authority are well illustrated by their dispute regarding ancient Church councils. Titelmans used, as one of his auxiliary arguments, the authority of an ancient African council, which he did not name or date. He claimed it forebode to interpret Romans 5:12 in any other sense than that of original sin.<sup>100</sup> Erasmus, who identified the council as that of Milev from 416, refused to take her pronouncements as binding. It had merely been a local council, he argued, and such councils had decreed many things that

<sup>95</sup> Erasmus, "Responsio ad Collationes," 985C.

<sup>96</sup> Titelmans, *Collationes*, fol. 126<sup>r</sup>: "Verum non omnibus ea est pietatis affectio. ... Ex his, licet ple-rosque videamus ab Ecclesia per dies singulos segregari, ac nova sibi confingere pessima dogmata, novasque oppidatim synagogas Sathanae certatim erigere."

<sup>97</sup> Cf. Titelmans, *Collationes*, fol. 126<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>98</sup> Titelmans, *Collationes*, fol. 125<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>99</sup> Erasmus, "Responsio ad Collationes," 988A. Erasmus pointed out that the doctrine of original sin can be more plainly demonstrated from Job 14:4-5 and Ps 51(50):7.

<sup>100</sup> Titelmans, *Collationes*, fol. 129<sup>v</sup>.

no medieval catholic theologian held to be true. For example, he invoked Hilary's testimony about the council of Sirmium, which had anathemised all who claimed the Holy Spirit was uncreated God.<sup>101</sup>

This was symptomatic of Erasmus's general approach to theology. It was not the case that he challenged some particular dogmas, as Luther did, but rather that he strived for an undogmatic theology. He loathed hair-splitting doctrinal controversies. Writing to Jean Carondelet he claimed, such issues would be best left until we meet God face to face, while for the time being, theology should be scripturally based and concentrate on moral exhortation.<sup>102</sup> In the history of the Church, he asserted, increase in dogmatic rigidity was usually accompanied with decrease of moral uprightness.<sup>103</sup> Thus, also with the question of the original sin Erasmus preferred to suspend his judgment and considered it as a mystery that is "believed more than understood."<sup>104</sup>

According to Titelmans, this was not the time for such nuances. Old heresies were reappearing, and Erasmus's arguments removed weapons from the hands of defenders of orthodoxy.<sup>105</sup> Erasmus protested vehemently against being linked with heretics, that is protestants, and ridiculed Titelmans by saying that Lutherans were as remote from Pelagians as were scholastics.<sup>106</sup> However, the Franciscan had a point. Andreas Karlstadt, once Luther's closest collaborator, separated from him and rejected infant baptism already in 1523. This sounded Pelagian enough to catholic theologians. Much later, numerous anabaptists used Erasmus's writings to support their claims.<sup>107</sup>

Titelmans's fear of heretics begs a question why did he not turn his pen against them rather than against humanists. The answer, implicit in his writings, is that he considered humanist methodology of biblical interpretation the root of all re-emerging heresies. Such a view was often expressed by his intellectual mentors, such as Noel Bede and Jacques Masson.<sup>108</sup> Titelmans reluctantly conceded that

<sup>101</sup> Erasmus, "Responsio ad Collationes," 989C.

<sup>102</sup> D. Erasmus, "Epistola DCXIII in Hilarium," *Opera Omnia* (ed. J. Le Clerc) (Lugduni Batavorum: Van der Aa 1705) III/1, 694D. Cf. Ironically, the addressee of the letter was a brother of Charles of Carondelet, who was Titelmans's patron.

<sup>103</sup> Erasmus, "Epistola DCXIII in Hilarium," 696E.

<sup>104</sup> Erasmus, "Annotationes," 591C-D: "Quin potius ex ipsa disputationis consequentia diligenter expendamus, quid senserit Paulus, dispicientes quid hic agat, unde coeperit, quorsum tendat, et num consentaneum sit illum statim mysterium hoc gentibus aperire voluisse, quod hodie quoque magis creditur quam intelligitur, nimirum communi sensu reclamante." Cf. Titelmans, *Collationes*, fol. 124r.

<sup>105</sup> Titelmans, *Collationes*, fol. 127v–128r.

<sup>106</sup> Erasmus, "Responsio ad Collationes," 985C.

<sup>107</sup> For instance, Menno Simons, Sebastian Frank and Balthasar Hubmaier; for further reference see Coogan, *Erasmus, Lee and the Correction of the Vulgate*, 50–51.

<sup>108</sup> In the preface to his book against humanists Bede wrote: "The Church will never dispose of Luther as long as the books of Erasmus and Lefèvre circulate. Of the two, Lefèvre has been the more restrained and prudent; but Erasmus piles error upon error, replying impudently at great length." Cited after

Erasmus might not have been a heretic himself, but he was sure that the Humanist paved the way for others to construct all sorts of heresies, by destroying the authority not only of the Church, but above all else, of the Bible.

Titelmans stood firmly in the tradition of the Church and regarded Sacred Scripture as inseparable from the Church. The Bible was not a dead letter, but a life-giving Spirit,<sup>109</sup> a person of Jesus Christ, alive in his Church. As he demonstrated in his *Prologus Apologeticus*, the Scripture and its interpretation in the Church was constantly under careful surveillance of Divine Providence.<sup>110</sup> Thus, it was the Church, guided by the Spirit of God, that was the measure of Scriptural truth. Outside the Church, the Bible ceased to be the Word of God. Such a claim was perfectly in line with the most ancient tradition of Christian theology.<sup>111</sup> The crucial danger that Titelmans perceived in Erasmus was not merely that he had mistranslated this or another passage. The lecturer from Leuven thought that Erasmus's fault was much deeper: he reduced the living Word of God to nothing more than a text, which, just like any other text, could be dissected and interpreted with philological means. Titelmans was not hostile to philology – as it has been demonstrated he tried using it himself – but he was adamant that it should remain subjected to the authority of the community of the Church.

Titelmans realised that Erasmus's approach revolutionised the understanding of the Bible. Erasmus wanted to produce biblically based theology; however, his understanding of the Bible was different from what it had been before. In his approach Bible no longer belonged to the Church but was open to individual interpretations. This was precisely what Titelmans feared. He claimed, that inspired by Erasmus's example, arrogant "know-all," would interpret the Bible as it pleased them, with no reference to the Church's authority.<sup>112</sup> He saw protestant reformations as an example of this. But the fault, according to Titelmans, was Erasmus's: if the Bible was a text like any other, why should not each individual interpret it for himself?

The case of Romans 5:12 demonstrated, according to Titelmans, why the path of Erasmus put the truth in jeopardy. Erasmus repeatedly claimed that all he was

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J.K. Farge, "Noël Beda and the Defense of the Tradition," *Biblical Humanism and Scholasticism in the Age of Erasmus* (ed. E. Rummel) (Leiden: Brill 2008) 158.

<sup>109</sup> Cf. Titelmans, "Prologus apologeticus," fol. d 2<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>110</sup> See especially Titelmans's concept of the migration of the Word of God: Titelmans, "Prologus apologeticus" fol. a 2<sup>v</sup>-a 4<sup>r</sup>; cf. Mantyk, "Migracje," 532–534.

<sup>111</sup> See: Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* 5.20 (PG 7, 1178a); Tertullianus, *De praescriptionibus adversus haereticos* 21 (PL 2, 33a–b); cf. J.C. Paget, "The Interpretation of the Bible in the Second Century," *The New Cambridge History of the Bible* (eds. J.C. Paget – J. Schaper) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2013) I, 565.

<sup>112</sup> Titelmans, "Prologus apologeticus," fol. b 5<sup>v</sup> – b 6<sup>r</sup>: "Nam si res pergat ut coepit et sciolus quisque mox ut graece latinaeque atque Hebraice didicerit vel tenuiter tentare incipiat huiusmodi emendationes, innovationes atque interpretationes, videant intelligentes, quid inde commodi sit consecutura Ecclesia Sancta Dei."

after was to decipher the truth of the Scripture. Yet, in the eyes of the Franciscan, he was overtly confident as to his capacities. He made mistakes, omissions and occasionally misinterpreted his sources (for instance Theophylact), claimed Titelmans. He also used unreliable Greek manuscripts and cited heretics as catholic writers (for instance pseudo-Jerome), which neither he nor Titelmans could have known at the time.<sup>113</sup> Surely, the criticism of Titelmans was exaggerated and sometimes unjust. But it was not completely off the mark. Under the pretence of objectivity of his method, Erasmus somehow arrived at an interpretation of Romans 5:12, which suited perfectly his own anti-dogmatic (original sin), anti-ritualist (baptism of infants), ethically centred theology. An allegedly objective methodology produced results that reflected subjective opinions of the philologists. Titelmans realised it well, when he commented on discrepancies between works of Erasmus and Lefèvre, who both professed to follow closely the Greek text, yet produced diverging translations.<sup>114</sup>

Titelmans sought protection in emphasising the authority of the Church. As we have seen, he tried to present the fathers of the Church as a monolithic body of catholic doctrine. This thought was also taken up at the council of Trent, which spoke of *consensus patrum*.<sup>115</sup> In the very same place, the Council emphasised that it was the Church alone, which had the right and capacity to truthfully interpret the Scripture.<sup>116</sup> It remains to be established by further research, if and how far Titelmans's writings influenced Council's decrees.<sup>117</sup>

Alas, Titelmans and the Council failed to produce a more profound theological justification for the necessity of an ecclesiastical interpretation. Essentially, both relied solely on the argument from authority. Neither Titelmans nor the Council made any explicit references to the ancient concept of the sacramentality of

113 On the unreliability of manuscripts used by Erasmus see: J.K. Elliott, "The Text of the New Testament," *A History of Biblical Interpretation*. II. *The Medieval Through the Reformation Periods* (eds. A. Hauser – D. Watson) (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 2009) 243.

114 Titelmans, "Prologus apologeticus," fol. b 5<sup>v</sup>. Titelmans makes a comment that discrepancies between those, who claim to faithfully translate from Greek original make their work suspect. He clearly referred to a feud between Erasmus and Lefèvre concerning the translation of Heb. 2:7. Lefèvre's translation reflected his Christocentric theology and was criticised by Erasmus for being mistaken on the philological ground, see: D. Erasmus, *Apologia ad Fabrum* ([s.l.]: Frobenius 1518).

115 Decree of the council of Trent *Recipitur vulgata editio*: „ut nemo, suae prudentiae innixus, in rebus fidei et morum, ad aedificationem doctrinae christianae pertinentium, sacram scripturam ad suos sensus contorquens ... contra unanimum consensum patrum ipsam scripturam sacram interpretari audeat"; cited after: A. Baron – H. Pietras (ed.), *Dokumenty Soborów Powszechnych: Tekst łaciński i polski* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM 2007) IV/1, 212.

116 „sancta mater ecclesia, cuius est iudicare de vero sensu et interpretatione scripturarum sanctorum," cited after: Baron – Pietras (ed.) *Dokumenty Soborów Powszechnych*, IV/1, 212.

117 It has been suggested that the wording of the decree was partially derived from Titelmans's "Prologus," see: W. François – A. Gerace, "Trent and the Latin Vulgate: A Louvain Project?," *The Council of Trent. Reform and Controversy in Europe and Beyond (1545–1700)*. I. *Between Trent, Rome and Wittenberg* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2018) 140–141.

the Word of God, although it is implied in Titelmans's thinking.<sup>118</sup> Whether such an omission was a result of his formation in the spirit of *devotio moderna* and nominalist philosophy remains to be studied.

## 5. Conclusions

This article endeavoured to analyse the dispute concerning the translation of Romans 5:12 between Franciscus Titelmans and humanists, especially Erasmus of Rotterdam. It has demonstrated that contrary to a scholarly prejudice, Titelmans's argumentation was not merely scholastic. He employed logical reasoning in his argumentation, but he combined it with elements of philological analysis, specific for humanist methodology. Above all else he relied upon the authority of the Church as expressed in what he believed to be a unanimous testimony of Church Fathers. The Franciscan believed the Bible to be the Word of God, which lived and was authoritatively interpreted only within the community of the Church. Humanists treated the Bible as a text, which revealed its true meaning to a skilled scholar, who possessed sufficient knowledge of languages. In the background to this dispute were germinating reformations in the Church, which Titelmans considered to be a fruit of humanist approach to the Scripture.

The modest scope of this article leaves both the author and the reader with more questions than answers. First, it shows the need for further research in the history of exegesis. Studies on pre-Tridentine Catholic exegesis should shed light on the intellectual background of council's decrees. Secondly, such studies could illuminate some post-Tridentine developments in both Catholic and Protestant theology. For instance, it is intriguing to know, whether Titelmans's firm Augustinism, demonstrated in his debate against Erasmus, could have indirectly influenced subsequent Leuven scholars, especially Baius and Jansenius.<sup>119</sup> Last but not least, understanding changes in early modern approach to the Bible

<sup>118</sup> "The church fathers were convinced of a close (participatory) link between this-worldly sacrament (sacramentum) and otherworldly reality (res). For the church fathers, the hidden presence of the reality was finally revealed at the fullness of time, in the Christ event — along with everything that this event entails: Christ's own person and work; the church's origin; the believers' new, Spirit-filled lives in Christ; and the eschatological renewal of all things in and through Christ. ... To speak of a sacramental hermeneutic, therefore, is to allude to the recognition of the real presence of the new Christ-reality hidden within the outward sacrament of the biblical text" (H. Boersma, *Scripture as Real Presence. Sacramental Exegesis in the Early Church* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic 2017] 27).

<sup>119</sup> Such a possible influence is alluded to by Wim François, who considered Titelmans a founder of Franciscan biblical school at Leuven, see: W. François, "'Augustinian' Bible exegesis in Early Seventeenth Century Leuven: The Case of Jacob Jansonius' Digression on John 12:39-40," *Wading Lambs and Swimming Elephants. The Bible for the Laity and Theologians in the Late Medieval and Early Modern Era* (eds. W. François – A. den Hollander) (Leuven: Peeters 2012) 326–327.

seems indispensable to confront present-day conundrums of biblical exegesis, especially the relation between the historical-critical method and the authority of the Church.

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