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**BIBLICAL SCHOLARSHIP
OF FRANCISCUS TITELMANS**

[Dzieła biblijne Franciszka Titelmansa]

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In memoriam

Roland Prejs OFMCap. (1956-2023)

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Abbreviations

- Allen *Opus epistolarum Desiderii Erasmi Rotterodami*, eds. P.S. Allen, H.M. Allen, H.W. Garrod, 12 vols., Clarendon Press, Oxford 1906-1958.
- ANF *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325*, eds. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson, 10 vols. 1885–1887, reprinted by Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1978-1979.
- ASD *Opera Omnia Desiderii Erasmi. Recognita et Adnotatione Critica Instructa Notisque Illustrata*, 54 vols., North Holland Publishing Company – Elsevier – Brill, Amsterdam – Leiden, 1969-.
- CCCM *Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis*, 374 vols., Brepols, Tournhout, 1966-.
- CCSL *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina*, 231 vols., Brepols, Tournhout, 1953-.
- CSEL *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*, 107 vols., De Gruyter, Berlin, 1866-.
- CWE *Collected Works of Erasmus*, 78 vols. Toronto University Press, Toronto, 1974-.
- Ed. Leonina *Sancti Thomae de Aquino Opera omnia iussu Leonis XIII P. M. edita*, Comissio Leonina, 50 vols., Editori de San Tommaso, Roma 1882-.
- FC *Fontes Christiani*, 136 vols. Herder – Brepols, Freiburg – Tournhout, 1990-.
- FOTC *The Fathers of the Church*, 127 vols. Catholic University of America Press, Washington, 1947-.
- GCS *Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller*, 83 vols., Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften – De Gruyter, Berlin, 1897-.
- LB *Opera Omnia, emendatiora et auctiora, ad optimas editiones praecipue quas ipse Erasmus postremo curavit, summa fide exacta, doctorumque uirorum notis illustrate*, ed. J. LeClerc, 9 vols. Petrus vander Aa, Leiden 1703-1706, reprinted by Georg Olms, Hildesheim 1961-1962.
- LCL *Loeb Classical Library*, 166 vols., William Heinemann – Harvard University Press, London – Cambridge, 1912-.
- MHG SS *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores*, 39 vols., 1826-.
- NPNF *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, eds. P. Schaff and H. Wace, 28 vols., 1886–1889, reprinted by Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1978-1979.

- PG *Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Graeca*, 161 vols. J.P. Migne, Paris 1857-1866.
- PL *Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Latina*, 217 vols., J.P. Migne, Paris 1841-1855.
- SAH Staatsarchiv Haaselt
- SC *Sources chrétiennes*, 636 vols., Cerf, Paris, 1942-.

Introduction

The 16th century was a period of important transitions in Christian theology. Ages-old certainties came to be questioned by various reformers, and long-accepted truths had to be defended by those who remained loyal to the Roman Church. While most attention has rightly been directed towards dogmatic theology, those changes applied also to the Bible, both in terms of its text and interpretation. On the textual level, developments of humanist methodology cast a doubt on the accuracy of the Latin translation of Scriptures known as the Vulgate¹. On the level of interpretation, Reformed theologians (and to a degree humanists as well) challenged traditional exegesis based on multiple senses of Scripture. In both cases questions arose regarding the authority of the Church and the relation between individual and ecclesiastical interpretation. All these changes inadvertently led not only to shifts in exegetical strategies, but also altered ever so slightly the very understanding of what the Bible was.

The aim of this dissertation is to trace these changes on an example of a prolific Catholic exegete, Franciscus Titelmans (1502-1537)². Educated in Leuven, Titelmans joined the Observant Franciscans in 1523 and lectured on the Holy Scriptures in their study house. His lectures were later transformed into printed commentaries covering the Gospels of Matthew and John, all the Apostolic Epistles, and several sapiential books of the Old Testament: the Psalms, Ecclesiastes, Job, and the Song of Solomon. In the course of his scholarly work, he challenged Erasmus of Rotterdam concerning the proper translation and interpretation of the Bible. This dispute resulted in three polemical works. In 1536 Titelmans abandoned academic activity and joined the Capuchin Reform of the Franciscan Order, dying in Italy a year later.

The choice of Titelmans as an object of study is based on several reasons. First, because he was a prolific writer, there exists a solid base of his exegetical texts to examine. Secondly, his texts enjoyed substantial popularity in the 16th century. Judging by the sheer number of publications, we can assert that his commentaries played a significant role in the biblical formation of clergy

¹ The meaning of the term *Vulgate* evolved in the course of time. Before the council of Trent, the term “Vulgate” usually denoted the Septuagint and the *Vetus Latina* translations, which preceded the version ascribed to Jerome. In such a sense the term “Vulgate” was used by Lefèvre and indeed Jerome himself. Tielmans used this term both in relation to the Septuagint and *Vetus Latina* as well as to the translation ascribed to Jerome. In this work, however, for the sake of clarity, we shall use the term “Vulgate” as it became customary since the Council of Trent. Cf. J. Królikowski, *Jak powstała Wulgata i któremu tekstowi Pisma Świętego przysługuje to miano?*, “Tarnowskie Studia Teologiczne”, 2017, vol. 36, no. 1, pp. 5–20.

² The name of the exegete is differently spelled in literature. His first name is often given in modern languages as Francis, Franz, François, Francesco etc. We have opted for the geographically neutral, Latin version of his name, that he also used in his writings: Franciscus. The surname is sometimes spelled with double tt: “Tittelmans”, for an explanation see: A. Paquay, *Frans Tittelmans van Hasselt (Franciscus Tittelmanus Hasselensis): Opzoekingen over zijn leven, zijne werken en zijne familie*, Boek - en steen - drukkerij M. Ceysens, Hasselt 1906, p. 14. In his publications he used a latinised form: “Titelmanus”. We have decided for the most commonly used spelling: “Titelmans”.

and educated laymen of that time. It has been a common error of intellectual history often to concentrate only on exceptional and innovative thinkers, who, however, sometimes were relatively unknown among their contemporaries, precisely because of their originality. The mentality of many educated men was usually shaped more by the mediocre authors of popular textbooks than by the outstanding individuals ahead of their times. Any intellectual history must strive to comprehend texts in the broad context of intellectual discourses from the epoch in which they originated. This insight, proposed by Quentin Skinner in relation to the history of political thought, is applicable also to theology³. Study of lesser-known authors is indispensable in this process, since they often created intellectual landscape in which novel ideas originated.

In this context we must also admit that a reason to choose Titelmans was his relative mediocrity. This adjective is not intended to diminish his intellectual stature, but rather to emphasise the conservative, often compilatory character of his works. This need not be intended as a critique. In fact, Titelmans himself was proud of not being innovative, but of continuing what he saw as the great tradition of the Church. Mediocrity so understood makes him a more “typical” representant of contemporary clergymen than was, for instance, his adversary, Erasmus of Rotterdam.

Another reason that renders Titelmans’ writings interesting is the fact that he reiterated traditional interpretations of the Bible in a changed context. He strove to remain as faithful as possible to what he understood as the tradition of the Church while at the same time confronting new questions arising from humanism and later from reformations. Saying the same thing in a new context is in fact an innovation. Thus, despite his conservatism, Titelmans was also in a way an innovator. This tension present in his works puts into a sharper contrast the contours of pre-modern exegesis as well as the ways in which biblical interpretation evolved during the 16th century.

Contrast between tradition and innovation is something that defines Titelmans as an intellectual. He, alongside many other individuals of his time, was a man torn between his dedication to tradition (something he shared with his mentors such as Jacques Masson and Noël Beda) and new, humanist learning. Unlike his mentors, he was well trained in ancient languages and possessed significant philological expertise. He cannot be easily classified either as a scholastic, although he worked in the context of university, or as a humanist, even though he often used elements of humanist methodology. As a man astride two modes of thinking, he offers us many insights into transitions in biblical scholarship at his time.

Finally, the choice of Titelmans has been motivated by the relative scarcity of works concerning Catholic pre-Tridentine biblical scholarship. In general, the historical study of biblical

³ On Skinner’s methodology see: Q. Skinner, *Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas*, “History and Theory”, 1969, vol. 8, no. 1, pp. 3–53.

exegesis is a young field within the history of ideas. Although the Bible has significantly shaped European thought for the last two millennia, the history of its exegesis became an object of scholarly pursuits only after the Second World War. Since that time there has been great progress in research concerning the history of the Bible. Not all historical eras, however, received the same attention.

In the first place one should mention several multi-author works covering the entire scope of the history of Christian (and Jewish) scriptures. Cambridge University published two multi-volume histories of the Bible. The first, published in three volumes between 1963 and 1970, was a unique achievement in its age and remains a useful witness of the state of research at that time⁴ was published between 2012-2016 and presents in four volumes the present state of research regarding the Bible⁵. It is not limited to questions of interpretation, but discusses the process of transmission of biblical text, physical aspects of the Bible, its translations, and various uses: in art, law, literature, liturgy and so on. Moreover, it endeavours to escape the narrow confines of Latin Christianity and reviews the Bible in eastern Churches, in the Islamic World and in extra-European Christianity.

Another excellent history of the Bible is the one published by Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht⁶. Although it is limited to the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible, it discusses issues of text, theology, and interpretation that are also relevant to the New Testament. Another very useful collection of articles covering two millennia of biblical interpretation is that edited by Alan J. Hauser and Duane F. Watson⁷. It examines the history of exegesis both from the Christian and Jewish perspective. Henning Graf Reventlow authored a four-volume history of biblical interpretation published

⁴ P.R. Ackroyd and C.F. Evans, eds., *The Cambridge History of the Bible: 1 From the Beginnings to Jerome*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1970; G.W.H. Lampe, ed., *The Cambridge History of the Bible: 2 The West from the Fathers to the Reformation*, Cambridge University Press, London 1969; S.L. Greenslade, ed., *The Cambridge History of the Bible: 3 The West from the Reformation to the Present Day*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1963.

⁵ J.C. Paget and J. Schaper, eds., *The New Cambridge History of the Bible: From the Beginnings to 600*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2013; R. Marsden and E.A. Matter, eds., *The New Cambridge History of the Bible: From 600 to 1450*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2012. E. Cameron, ed., *The New Cambridge History of the Bible: From 1450 to 1750*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2016. J. Riches, ed., *The New Cambridge history of the Bible: From 1750 to the Present*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2015.

⁶ M. Sæbø, ed., *Hebrew Bible, Old Testament: the History of its Interpretation. From the Beginnings to the Middle Ages (Until 1300)*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen 1996, vol. I/1. M. Sæbø, ed., *Hebrew Bible, Old Testament: the History of its Interpretation. From the Beginnings to the Middle Ages (Until 1300)*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen 2000, vol. I/2. M. Sæbø, ed., *Hebrew Bible, Old Testament: the History of its Interpretation. From the Renaissance to the Enlightenment*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen 2008, vol. II. M. Sæbø, ed., *Hebrew Bible, Old Testament: the History of its Interpretation. From Modernism to Post-Modernism (The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries)*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen 2013, vol. III/1. M. Sæbø, ed., *Hebrew Bible, Old Testament: the History of its Interpretation. From Modernism to Post-Modernism (The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries)*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen 2015, vol. III/2.

⁷ A.J. Hauser and D.F. Watson, eds., *A History of Biblical Interpretation: The Ancient Period*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 2003. A.J. Hauser and D.F. Watson, eds., *A History of Biblical Interpretation: The Medieval Through the Reformation Periods*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 2009. A.J. Hauser and D.F. Watson, eds., *A History of Biblical Interpretation: The Enlightenment through the Nineteenth Century*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 2017.

originally in German, and now available also in English⁸. The history of the biblical text is well covered by a multivolume series by Brill, of which so far two volumes have been published⁹. Another perspective is taken by *A History of the Bible as Literature* by David Norton¹⁰. Apart from multi-volume histories, there are also some shorter works intended for a more general readership, such as these by J. Pelikan, K. D. Stanglin, and J. Barton¹¹.

Apart from general works on the history of the Bible, there is a vast array of studies concerning various epochs. This, however, does not mean that all periods have been equally well covered. Biblical interpretation in the Patristic era has always been of significant interest to scholars, since exegesis in that period was inseparable from theology in a more general sense. The literature on the subject is vast. It is impossible to give here even an introductory bibliography, so let it suffice to mention Manlio Simonetti¹², Charles Kannengiesser¹³, and Hans Boersma¹⁴, among many others¹⁵.

The history of the Bible in the Middle Ages first received attention with pioneering works of Ceslas Spicq, Beryl Smalley, and Henri de Lubac¹⁶. In recent years there has been an enormous

⁸ H. Reventlow, *Epochen der Bibelauslegung. 1: Vom Alten Testament bis Origenes*, Beck, München 1990. H. Reventlow, *Epochen der Bibelauslegung. 2: Von der Spätantike bis zum Ausgang des Mittelalters*, Beck, München 1994. H. Reventlow, *Epochen der Bibelauslegung. 3: Renaissance, Reformation, Humanismus*, Beck, München 1997. H. Reventlow, *Epochen der Bibelauslegung. 4: Von der Aufklärung bis zum 20. Jahrhundert*, Beck, München 2001. H. Reventlow, *History of biblical interpretation. 1: From the Old Testament to Origen*, Society of Biblical Literature, Atlanta 2009. H. Reventlow, *History of biblical interpretation. 2: From late antiquity to the end of the Middle Ages*, Society of Biblical Literature, Atlanta 2009. H. Reventlow, *History of biblical interpretation. 3: Renaissance, Reformation, humanism*, Society of Biblical Literature, Atlanta 2010. H. Reventlow, *History of biblical interpretation. 4: From the enlightenment to the twentieth century*, Society of Biblical Literature, Atlanta 2010.

⁹ A. Lange and I. Tov, *Textual History of the Bible. 1 (1A, 1B, 1C)*, Brill, Leiden 2016. F. Feder, M. Henze, and M.S. Pajunen, *Textual History of the Bible. 2 (2A, 2B, 2C): Deuterocanonical Scriptures*, Brill, Leiden 2019.

¹⁰ D. Norton, *A History of the Bible as Literature: Volume 1: From Antiquity to 1700*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1993. D. Norton, *A History of the Bible as Literature: Volume 2: From 1700 to the Present Day*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1993.

¹¹ J.J. Pelikan, *Whose Bible is it? A History of the Scriptures Through the Ages*, Viking, New York 2005. K.D. Stanglin, *The Letter and Spirit of Biblical Interpretation: from the Early Church to Modern Practice*, Baker Academic, Grand Rapids 2018; J. Barton, *A History of the Bible: the Book and its Faiths*, Penguin Books, London 2019.

¹² M. Simonetti, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church. An Historical Introduction to Patristic Exegesis*, T&T Clark, Edinburgh 1994.

¹³ C. Kannengiesser, *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: the Bible in Ancient Christianity*, Brill, Leiden 2006. L. DiTommaso and L. Turcescu, eds., *The Reception and Interpretation of the Bible in Late Antiquity: Proceedings of the Montréal Colloquium in Honour of Charles Kannengiesser, 11-13 October 2006*, Brill, Leiden 2008.

¹⁴ H. Boersma, *Scripture as Real Presence: Sacramental Exegesis in the Early Church*, Baker Academic, Grand Rapids 2017.

¹⁵ H. Chadwick, *Antike Schriftauslegung*, De Gruyter, Berlin – New York 1998. K. Froehlich, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church*, Fortress, Philadelphia 1984. M. Fiedrowicz, *Prinzipien der Schriftauslegung in der Alten Kirche*, P. Lang 1998. J. den Boeft and M.L. van Poll-van de Lisdonk, *The Impact of Scripture in Early Christianity*, Brill, Leiden 1999. J.J. O’Keefe and R.R. Reno, *the Man and the Scholar*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore 2005. R.E. Heine, *Reading the Old Testament with the Ancient Church: Exploring the Formation of Early Christian Thought*, Baker Academic, Grand Rapids 2007. E.L. Gallagher, *Hebrew scripture in patristic biblical theory: canon, language, text*, Brill, Leiden 2012. M. Szram and M. Wysocki eds., *The Bible in the Patristic period*, Peeters, Leuven 2021. T. Toom, *Patristic Theories of Biblical Interpretation: the Latin Fathers*, Cambridge University Press, New York 2016.

¹⁶ C. Spicq, *Esquisse d’une histoire de l’exégèse latine au Moyen Age*, Vrin, Paris 1944. B. Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame 1964. H. de Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale: les*

progress in this field; most works, however, concentrate on the Early and High Middle Ages. The late mediaeval exegesis remains still something of an uncharted territory. First, there are some excellent general and introductory works¹⁷. Among works specifically devoted to the Early Middle Ages, one should mention the works of Michael M. Gorman¹⁸, Thomas O’Loughlin¹⁹, and many others²⁰. For the High Middle Ages, we have excellent studies on *Glossa ordinaria*²¹, on the interpretation of the Bible in medieval schools²², with special attention to the contribution of Victorines²³, and on Mendicant exegesis²⁴, particularly on Nicolas of Lyra²⁵. There are also studies

quatre sens de l’écriture., Aubier, Paris 1959, 4 vols. English translation: H. de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis, The Four Senses of Scripture*, Eerdmans 1998-2000, vol. 1-2.

¹⁷ G. Cremscoli and C. Leonardi, eds., *La Bibbia nel Medioevo*, Edizioni dehoniane, Bologna 1996. G. Lobrichon and P. Riché, eds., *Le Moyen Âge et la Bible*, Beauchesne, Paris 1984. J.D. McAuliffe, B. Walfish, and J.W. Goering, eds., *With reverence for the Word: Medieval Scriptural Exegesis in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2003. G. Dahan, *L’exégèse chrétienne de la Bible en Occident médiéval, XIIIe-XIVe siècle*, Cerf, Paris 1999. R.E. Lerner, ed., *Neue Richtungen in der hoch- und spätmittelalterlichen Bibelexegese*, Oldenbourg Wissenschaftsverlag, Berlin, Boston 2009. A. Noblesse-Rocher, *Etudes d’exégèse médiévale: offertes à Gilbert Dahan par ses élèves*, Brepols, Turnhout 2012. F.A. van Liere, *An Introduction to the Medieval Bible*, Cambridge University Press, New York 2014. J. Nelson and D. Kempf, *Reading the Bible in the Middle Ages*, Bloomsbury Academic, London 2015. I.C. Levy, *Introducing Medieval Biblical Interpretation: the Senses of Scripture in Premodern Exegesis*, Baker Academic, Grand Rapids 2018. A useful summary of bibliography see: C. Ocker and K. Madigan, *After Beryl Smalley: Thirty Years of Medieval Exegesis, 1984–2013*, “Journal of the Bible and its reception”, 2015, t.2, no 1, pp. 87–130.

¹⁸ M.M. Gorman, *Biblical Commentaries from the Early Middle Ages*, Sismel, Firenze 2002; M.M. Gorman, *The Study of the Bible in the Early Middle Ages*, Sismel, Firenze 2007.

¹⁹ T. O’Loughlin, *Early Medieval Exegesis in the Latin West: Sources and Forms*, Ashgate, Farnham 2013.

²⁰ C. Chazelle and B.V.N. Edwards, eds., *The Study of the Bible in the Carolingian Era*, Brepols, Turnhout 2003. S. Shimahara and J. Heil, eds., *From Theodulf to Rashi and Beyond: Texts, Techniques, and Transfer in Western European Exegesis (800 – 1100)*, Brill, Leiden 2022.

²¹ M. Dove, *The Glossa ordinaria on the Song of Songs*, Western Michigan University. Medieval Institute Publications, Kalamazoo 2004. L. Smith, *The Glossa ordinaria: the Making of a Medieval Bible Commentary*, Brill, Leiden 2009. M.S. Woodward, *The Glossa ordinaria on Romans.*, Medieval Institute Publications, Kalamazoo 2011. D.A. Salomon, *An Introduction to the Glossa ordinaria as Medieval Hypertext*, University of Wales Press, Cardiff 2012.

²² G.R. Evans, *The language and logic of the Bible: the road to Reformation*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1985. G.R. Evans, *The language and logic of the Bible: the earlier Middle Ages*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1987. B. Smalley, *The Gospels in the Schools c.1100 - c.1280*, Hambledon, London 1985.

²³ R. Berndt, *André de Saint-Victor (+1175): exégète et théologien.*, Brepols, Paris 1991. R. Berndt, *Schrift, Schreiber, Schenker: Studien zur Abtei Sankt Viktor in Paris und den Viktorinern*, Akademie Verlag, Berlin 2014. H. Feiss and J. Mousseau, eds., *A Companion to the Abbey of Saint Victor in Paris*, Brill, Leiden 2018.

²⁴ J.V. Fleming, *From Bonaventure to Bellini: An Essay in Franciscan Exegesis*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1983. J.W. Dixon, *Franciscan Exegesis*, “Theology today (Ephrata, Pa.)”, 1987, vol. 43, no. 4, pp. 503–509. J. McEvoy, *Robert Grosseteste, Exegete and Philosopher*, Variorum, Aldershot 1994. M.M. Mulchahey, *‘First the bow is bent in study...’: Dominican Education Before 1350*, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, Toronto 1998. L.J. Bataillon, G. Dahan, and P.-M. Gy, eds., *Hugues de Saint-Cher (+1263): bibliste et théologien*, Brepols, Turnhout, Belgium 2004. W.J. Courtenay, *Franciscan Learning: University Education And Biblical Exegesis*, [in:] *Defenders and Critics of Franciscan Life*, eds. M.F. Cusato and G. Geltner, Brill, Leiden 2009, pp. 53–64. B. Roest, *Mendicant School Exegesis*, [in:] *Franciscan Learning, Preaching and Mission c. 1220-1650: cum scientia sit donum dei, armatura ad defendendam sanctam fidem catholicam...*, Brill, Leiden 2015, pp. 83–110.

²⁵ P.D. Krey and L. Smith, *Nicholas of Lyra: the senses of scripture*, Brill, Leiden 2000. D.C. Klepper, *The Insight of Unbelievers: Nicholas of Lyra and Christian Reading of Jewish Text in the Later Middle Ages*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia 2007. P.D. Krey, *Nicholas of Lyra: Apocalypse Commentator, Historian, and Critic*, “Franciscan Studies”, 1992, vol. 52, pp. 53–84. A. Geiger, *Nicholas of Lyra’s Literal Commentary on Lamentations and Jewish Exegesis: A Comparative Study*, “Medieval encounters: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim culture in confluence and dialogue”, 2009, vol. 16, no. 1, pp. 1–22.

devoted to individual books of the Bible, for instance to the Song of Solomon²⁶, Job²⁷, and *Corpus Paulinum*²⁸.

Sadly, literature concerning exegesis from the mid-14th century onwards grows thin. The same is true about general histories of biblical exegesis. Sections on the Middle Ages finish with the rise of universities and mendicant exegesis in the 13th and early 14th century, and the thread is usually taken up again with humanist interpretation of the Bible. One could get an impression that in the traditional ambience of university-based theology nothing (significant) happened in biblical exegesis. A notable exception is Courtenay's article in *The New Cambridge History of the Bible*; however, this very author finishes his article with an observation that commentaries from 14th and 15th centuries "are greatly in need of further research"²⁹. The same is true for the 16th-century Catholic biblical exegesis prior to the Council of Trent³⁰.

Contrastingly, there is much literature devoted to humanist and Reformed interpretation of the Bible. There are several general introductions and collections of essays on biblical humanism, among others those of Jeremy Bentley and a more up-to-date volume edited by Erica Rummel³¹. In the 15th century, the most attention has been paid to Lorenzo Valla and Nicolo Manetti, who were pioneers of biblical humanism³². In the beginning of the 16th century, their footsteps were

²⁶ A.W. Astell, *The song of songs in the Middle Ages*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 1990. E.A. Matter, *The voice of my beloved: the Song of Songs in western medieval Christianity*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia 1990. H.W. Matis, *The Song of Songs in the Early Middle Ages*, Brill, Leiden 2019.

²⁷ F.T. Harkins and A. Canty, eds., *A Companion to Job in the Middle Ages*, Brill, Leiden 2017.

²⁸ S.R. Cartwright, ed., *A Companion to St. Paul in the Middle Ages*, Brill, Leiden 2013.

²⁹ W.J. Courtenay, *The Bible in Medieval Universities*, [in:] *The New Cambridge History of the Bible: From 600 to 1450*, eds. R. Marsden and E.A. Matter, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2012, p. 578.

³⁰ The only Catholic exegete who has been more extensively studied is Cajetan, see: M. O'Connor, *Cajetan's Biblical Commentaries: Motive and Method*, Brill, Leiden 2017.

³¹ J.H. Bentley, *Humanists and Holy Writ: New Testament Scholarship in the Renaissance*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1983. R. Griffiths, ed., *The Bible in the Renaissance: Essays on Biblical Commentary and Translation in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, Ashgate, Aldershot 2001. E. Rummel, ed., *Biblical Humanism and Scholasticism in the Age of Erasmus*, Brill, Leiden 2008. J.R. Henderson, ed., *The Unfolding of Words: Commentary in the Age of Erasmus*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 2012.

³² M. Fois, *Il pensiero cristiano di Lorenzo Valla: nel quadro storico-culturale del suo ambiente*, Libreria Editrice dell'Università Gregoriana, Roma 1969. G. Di Napoli, *Lorenzo Valla. Filosofia e religione nell'umanesimo italiano*, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, Roma 1971. S.I. Camporeale, *Lorenzo Valla. Umanesimo e teologia, etc.*, Istituto Nazionale di Studi sul Rinascimento, Firenze 1972. O. Besomi and M. Regoliosi, *Lorenzo Valla e l'umanesimo italiano*, Antenore, Padova 1986. C.S. Celenza, *Renaissance Humanism and the New Testament: Lorenzo Valla's Annotations to the Vulgate*, "Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies", 1994, vol. 24, pp. 33–52; L. Nauta, *In Defense of Common Sense: Lorenzo Valla's Humanist Critique of Scholastic Philosophy*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 2009. S.I. Camporeale, *Christianity, Latinity, and Culture: Two Studies on Lorenzo Valla*, Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden 2013. A. den Haan, *Giannozzo Manetti's New Testament: new evidence on sources, translation process and the use of Valla's Annotations*, "Renaissance studies", 2014, vol. 28, pp. 731–747; A. den Haan, *Giannozzo Manetti's New Testament: Translation Theory and Practice in Fifteenth-Century Italy*, Brill, Leiden 2016. D. Marsh, *Giannozzo Manetti: The Life of a Florentine Humanist*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 2019.

followed by Jacques Lefèvre³³, Spanish editors of the Alcala Polyglote³⁴, and above all else by Erasmus of Rotterdam. There is a plethora of works concerning the Prince of Humanists; we shall mention here general biographies³⁵, works on Erasmus' theology³⁶ and especially on his biblical scholarship and controversies that it caused³⁷. There is an even more extensive literature regarding Biblical interpretation in reformations. There are numerous general works and collections of essays³⁸, works devoted to particular reformers³⁹ and to individual books of the Bible⁴⁰. Catholic exegesis of the post-Tridentine era has been recently studied by several authors, unlike the pre-

³³ H. Heller, *The Evangelicism of Lefèvre d'Étaples: 1525*, "Studies in the Renaissance", 1972, vol. 19, pp. 42–77. G. Bedouelle, *Le Quincuplex Psalterium de Lefèvre d'Étaples: un guide de lecture*, Droz, Genève 1979. P.E. Hughes, *Lefèvre, Pioneer of Ecclesiastical Renewal in France*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 1984. G. Bedouelle, *Attacks on the Biblical Humanism of Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples*, [in:] *Biblical Humanism and Scholasticism in the Age of Erasmus*, ed. E. Rummel, Brill, Leiden 2008, pp. 117–142. C. Schönau, *Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples und die Reformation*, Gütersloher Verlagseiner, Heidelberg 2017.

³⁴ T. Martínez Manzano, *Filología bíblica en la Alcalá del Renacimiento: la Políglota y sus editores*, "Estudios bíblicos", 2021, vol. 79, no. 2, pp. 273–329; Aelius Antonius Nebrissensis, C. Codoñer, and J.A. González Iglesias, *Antonio de Nebrija: Edad media y renacimiento*, Ediciones de la Universidad, Salamanca 1994. C. del V. Rodríguez, *Antonio Nebrija's Biblical Scholarship*, [in:] *Biblical Humanism and Scholasticism in the Age of Erasmus*, ed. E. Rummel, Brill, Leiden 2008, pp. 57–72. E. Van Staaldue-Sulman, *Justifying Christian Aramaism: Editions and Latin Translations of the Targums from the Complutensian to the London Polyglot Bible (1517-1657)*, Brill, Leiden 2017, pp. 11–36. E. Rummel, *Jiménez de Cisneros: on the Threshold of Spain's Golden Age*, Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, Tempe 1999, pp. 53–65.

³⁵ J. Huizinga, *Erasmus*, C. Scribner's sons 1924; C. Augustijn, *Erasmus: His Life, Works, and Influence*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 1991.

³⁶ J.B. Payne, *Erasmus: his theology of the sacraments*, Knox, Richmond 1970. A.G. Dickens and W.R.D. Jones, *Erasmus the Reformer*, Methuen, London 1994. P.G. Bietenholz, *Encounters With a Radical Erasmus: Erasmus' Work as a Source of Radical Thought in Early Modern Europe*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 2009. C. Christ-von Wedel, *Erasmus of Rotterdam: Advocate of a New Christianity*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 2013.

³⁷ H.M. Pabel and M. Vessey, eds., *Holy Scripture Speaks: the Production and Reception of Erasmus' Paraphrases on the New Testament*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 2002. E. Rummel, *Erasmus' Annotations on the New Testament: From Philologist to Theologian*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 1986. E. Rummel, *Erasmus and his Catholic Critics*, B. de Graaf, Nieuwkoop 1989, vols. 1-2. M. Wallraff, S. Seidel Menchi, and K. von Greyerz, eds., *Basel 1516: Erasmus' Edition of the New Testament*, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen 2016. J. Monfasani, *In Defense of Erasmus' Critics*, "Erasmus Studies", 2019, vol. 39, no. 2, pp. 147–183. T. Amalou and A. Vanautgaerden, eds., *Le Nouveau Testament d'Érasme, 1516: regards sur l'Europe des humanistes*, Brepols, Turnhout 2020. C. Asso, *Erasmus e l'interpres. Le polemiche sulla Vulgata del Nuovo Testamento*, [in:] *La Vulgate au XVIe siècle*, eds. G. Dahan and A. Noblesse-Rocher, Brepols, Turnhout 2020, pp. 77–105.

³⁸ D.C. Steinmetz, ed., *The Bible in the Sixteenth Century*, Duke University Press, Durham 1990. A.K. Jenkins and P. Preston, *Biblical Scholarship and the Church: a Sixteenth Century Crisis of Authority*, 2016. R.A. Muller and J.L. Thompson, *Biblical Interpretation in the Era of the Reformation: Essays Presented to David C. Steinmetz in Honor of his Sixtieth Birthday*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 1996. R. Keen, *Reading Certainty: Exegesis and Epistemology on the Threshold of Modernity. Essays Honoring the Scholarship of Susan E. Schreiner*, Brill, Leiden 2023.

³⁹ T. George, *Reading Scripture with the Reformers*, IVP Academic, Downers Grove 2011. On Luther see: H.C. Knuth, *Luther als Schriftausleger: Luthers Schriftprinzip in seiner Bedeutung für die Ökumene*, Martin-Luther-Verl., Erlangen 2010. J.A. Maxfield, *Luther's Lectures on Genesis and the Formation of Evangelical Identity*, Truman State University Press, Kirksville 2008. T.R. Hains, *Martin Luther and the Rule of Faith: Reading God's Word for God's People*, IVP Academic, Downers Grove 2022.. On Calvin see: D.K. McKim, ed., *Calvin and the Bible*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2006. B. Pitkin, *Calvin, the Bible, and history: exegesis and historical reflection in the era of reform*, Oxford University Press, New York 2020.

⁴⁰ I. Backus, *Reformation Readings of the Apocalypse: Geneva, Zurich, and Wittenberg*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2000. K. Ehrensperger and R.W. Holder, *Reformation Readings of Romans*, Clark, London 2008. R.W. Holder, *A companion to Paul in the Reformation*, Brill, Leiden 2009. R.M. Allen and J.A. Linebaugh, *Reformation Readings of Paul: Explorations in History and Exegesis*, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove 2015. S.J. Chester, *Reading Paul with the Reformers: Reconciling Old and New Perspectives*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 2017.

Tridentine one⁴¹. There have also been some important publications concerning the Bible in the vernacular⁴². Naturally this short presentation of bibliography cannot pretend to be at all comprehensive, but it serves to indicate the existence of a gap in studies devoted to pre-Tridentine, traditional, Catholic biblical exegesis. This dissertation, in all humility, seeks to help to redress this issue.

Scholarship regarding Titelmans is also scarce. The best existing biography is over a century old⁴³, while others, being even older, are also more devotional than scholarly⁴⁴. There are short biographical articles on him in major lexicons and encyclopaedias⁴⁵. The best are by De Troeyer and Lohr, which both offer extensive bibliographical guidance⁴⁶. Only three aspects of Titelmans' life have attracted more attention from scholars: his choice of the Capuchin reform, his philosophical textbooks, and, most relevantly from the point of view of this dissertation, his polemic with Erasmus and other humanists.

The final year of the Exegete's life drew some attention of Capuchin historians, such as Mariano d'Alatri⁴⁷. Titelmans' textbook on natural philosophy was a subject of two dissertations, one unpublished⁴⁸, the other published in part⁴⁹. The impact of this work was also studied by D.M. Dos Santos, S.A. Vosters, E.S. Morby and L.A. Lines⁵⁰, while *Compendium dialecticae* was

⁴¹ A. Gerace, *Biblical Scholarship in Louvain in the 'Golden' Sixteenth Century*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen 2019. G. Dahan and A. Noblesse-Rocher, *La Vulgate au XVIe siècle: les travaux sur la traduction latine de la Bible*, Brepols, Turnhout 2020.

⁴² W. François and A. den Hollander, *Infant Milk or Hardy Nourishment? The Bible for Lay People and Theologians in the Early Modern Period*, Peeters, Leuven – Paris – Walpole MA 2009. W. François, ed., *Wading Lambs and Swimming Elephants. The Bible for the Laity and Theologians in the Late Medieval and Early Modern Era*, Peeters, Leuven 2012; E. Ardissino and É. Boillet, eds., *Lay Readings of the Bible in Early Modern Europe*, Brill, Leiden 2020.

⁴³ A. Paquay, *Frans Tittelmans van Hasselt...*, op. cit.

⁴⁴ Gaudentius a Cremona, *Titelmanno il derelitto scrittore cappuccino*, L. F. Cogliati, Milano 1896. C. de Calmpthout, *François Titelmans, de Hasselt. Esquisse biographique*, Jules de Meester, Bruxelles 1903.

⁴⁵ *Franciscus Titelmans* [in:] *Lexicon Capuccinum: promptuarium historico-bibliographicum Ordinis Fratrum Minorum Capuccinorum (1525-1950)*, Bibliotheca Collegii Internationalis S. Laurentii Brundusini, Romae 1951, Col. 638-639. M. Lamberigts, *Titelmans, Frans* [in:] *Lexicon für Theologie und Kirche*, Herder, Freiburg 2001, vol. 10, col. 56. P. Grootens, *Titelmans, Franciscus* [in:] *Enciclopedia Cattolica*, Sansoni, Città del Vaticano 1954, vol. 12, col. 145. E. Amann, *Titelmans, Francois* [in:] *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, eds. E. Amann, E. Mangenot, and A. Vacant, Libraire Letouzey et Ane, Paris 1946, vol. 15/1, col. 1144-1146. K. Sitnik, *Titelmans Francois* [in:] *Encyklopedia Katolicka*, Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, Lublin 2013, vol. 19, col. 808-809.

⁴⁶ B. de Troeyer, *Bio-bibliographia Franciscana Neerlandica saeculi XVI*, B. de Graaf, Nieuwkoop 1969, vol. 1, pp. 87–100. B. de Troeyer, *Bio-bibliographia Franciscana Neerlandica saeculi XVI*, B. de Graaf, Nieuwkoop 1969, vol. 2, pp. 279–365. C.H. Lohr, *Renaissance Latin Aristotle Commentaries: Authors So--Z*, "Renaissance quarterly", 1982, vol. 35, no. 2, pp. 196–198.

⁴⁷ M. D'Alatri, *Francesco Tittelmans o del lavoro manuale*, [in:] *Santi e Santità nell'ordine Capucino*, ed. M. D'Alatri, Postulazione Generale dei Cappuccini, Roma 1980, vol. 1, pp. 7–19.

⁴⁸ J. Vanpaemel, *De dynamica van de Middeleeuwen: Franciscus Tittelmans (1502-1537) en de dynamica aan de Leuvense Universiteit*, Master thesis, Katholieke Universiteit te Leuven. Fakulteit Wijsbegeerte en Letteren, Leuven 1979.

⁴⁹ A. Gergei, *La natura e la conoscenza della natura nel «compendium naturalis philosophiae» di Fr. Titelmans cappuccino: tesi di laurea nella facoltà di filosofia*, [s.ed.], Roma 1947.

⁵⁰ D.M.G. dos Santos, *Francisco Titelmans O. F. M. e as origens do Curso Conimbricense*, "Revista portuguesa de filosofia", 1955, vol. 11, no. 3/4, pp. 468–478. S.A. Vosters, *Lope de Vega y Titelmans*, "Revista de literatura", 1962, vol. 31, pp. 5–33. E.S. Morby, *Franz Titelmans in Lope's Arcadia*, "Modern Language Notes", 1967, vol. 82, no. 2,

analysed by W.J. Ong and A.J. Ashworth, who demonstrated the Franciscan's influence on Petrus Ramus⁵¹. Titelmans' input into renaissance philosophy is mentioned also in Cambridge's *History of Renaissance Philosophy*⁵².

Most often Titelmans has been studied as a background figure for humanists, due to his polemic against Erasmus of Rotterdam. In older scholarship he was presented as a conservative theologian, opposed to any novelty. Henry de Vocht discussed Titelmans in his magisterial work on *Collegium trilingue* in Leuven but had a very negative perspective of him⁵³. According to this author, Titelmans was an opponent of humanism, hostile to everything that Erasmus and his followers stood for. "It was Latomus who instilled into the young man his antagonism of Erasmus and his profound dislike of languages and of Busleyden College"⁵⁴. Biblical scholarship of the Franciscan was without any value, as it merely repeated "easy going and self complacent tradition"⁵⁵. According to de Vocht, Titelmans should have followed the humanist example.

Instead, however, of taking as basis the very wording of the Sacred Books, and deducing its meaning from the terms and the expressions, with the help of linguistic erudition, and of a collation with renderings in various languages, so as to prepare a thoroughly established text, ready to be interpreted by the authentic teaching of the Church, he provided explanatory, mostly mystical even and devotional, comments, taken from the writings of the Fathers and of subsequent authors, based on the traditional exegesis. It thus was a step backwards, compared with the *Novum Instrumentum*, and an unequivocal return from science to tradition⁵⁶.

The last sentence demonstrates clearly that de Vocht was working within a framework of the so called "Whig school of history"⁵⁷. This grand historical narrative saw world's history as a progress from slavery and obscurity to democracy and enlightenment. In the context of intellectual history, it was a progress from theological/magical/mystical to scientific. Just as the "Whig history" perspective was clearly a misguided oversimplification, so were de Vocht's observations

pp. 185–197. D.A. Lines, *Teaching Physics in Louvain and Bologna: Frans Titelmans and Ulisse Aldrovandi*, [in:] *Scholarly Knowledge: Textbooks in Early Modern Europe*, eds. E. Campi et al., Librairie Droz, Geneve 2008, pp. 183–204.

⁵¹ W.J. Ong, *Ramus: Method and the Decay of Dialogue*, Harvard university, Cambridge 1983, pp. 124–125. E.J. Ashworth, *Language and Logic in the Post-medieval Period*, Reidel, Dordrecht 1974.

⁵² C.B. Schmitt, *The Rise of the Philosophical Textbook*, [in:] *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, eds. C.B. Schmitt et al., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2009, pp. 795–796.

⁵³ H. de Vocht, *History of the Foundation and the Rise of the Collegium Trilingue Lovaniense, 1517-1550. Part the Third: The Full Growth*, Bibliothèque de l'Université, Bureaux du Recueil, Louvain 1954, pp. 144–153.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

⁵⁷ The term was introduced by H. Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History*, University of New South Wales Library, Kensington 1981 (1st edition published in 1931). A more up to date perspective on the term see: M. Bentley, *Modernizing England's Past: English Historiography in the Age of Modernism, 1870-1970*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2005. M. Bentley, *The life and thought of Herbert Butterfield: history, science, and God*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2011.

on Titelmans. Besides, much of his evaluation is merely a repetition of negative comments uttered against Titelmans by his opponents⁵⁸. De Vocht gullibly took polemical gibes for reality and failed to critically evaluate his sources.

In spite of the blatant deficiencies of “Whig history”, such a perspective persisted for a long time. Jeremy Bentley was not far from de Vocht’s thought when he identified Valla and Erasmus with the forces of progress, while Titelmans, Lee, and other critics of humanism with those of reactionism⁵⁹. He had few kind words for Titelmans:

Tittelmans’ [sic!] work had nothing to offer to serious scholars. Tittelmans’ approach involved nothing less than the dismantling, destruction, and demolition of the new humanist scholarship. His importance for the history of scholarship is therefore not positive, but negative. He did not show how scholars might more accurately understand early Christian literature. He was not merely a staunch conservative striving to uphold traditional values, but also an obstinate obscurantist, flailing xenophobically at a new type of scholarship that he feared but did not understand⁶⁰.

Bentley’s judgment is as one-sided as it is ornate. Titelmans’ position was much more nuanced, as has been demonstrated by more recent scholarship. Erika Rummel, arguably the greatest expert on biblical humanism, evaluated Titelmans more positively in her work on Erasmus’ critics⁶¹. She recognised that in some cases the Franciscan correctly pointed out mistakes in Erasmus’ *Novum Testamentum*⁶². Similarly, Irena Backus, who wrote on Titelmans’ defence of the canonicity of the Book of Revelations, did not see the Franciscan as a mere hindrance in scientific progress⁶³.

The process of rehabilitation of Titelmans was further advanced by Paulo Sartori. He published a detailed study of Titelmans’ polemic against Erasmus and realised that the lecturer from Leuven was much more positively disposed to the humanist method than most other critics of the Scholar from Rotterdam⁶⁴. In his article on the influence of Montaignu spirituality, on

⁵⁸ Cf. Allen ep. 2260, vol. VIII, p. 334; ep. 2261, vol. VIII, p.342; ep. 2263, vol. VIII, p. 346; ep. 2275, vol. VIII, p.364; ep. 2277, vol. VIII, p. 367; ep. 2299, vol. VIII, p.404; ep. 2300, vol. VIII, p. 406; ep. 2315, vol. VII, p. 435. See also: H. de Vocht, *Collegium Trilingue, part 3...*, op. cit., pp. 150. 174.

⁵⁹ Cf. J.H. Bentley, *Humanists and Holy Writ: New Testament Scholarship in the Renaissance*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1983, pp. 194-195.

⁶⁰ J.H. Bentley, *New Testament Scholarship at Louvain in the Early Sixteenth Century*, "Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History", 1979, no. 2, p. 78.

⁶¹ E. Rummel, *Erasmus and his Catholic Critics*, B. de Graaf, Nieuwkoop 1989, vol. 2, pp. 15–22.

⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 18–19.

⁶³ I. Backus, *The Church Fathers and the Canonicity of the Apocalypse in the Sixteenth Century: Erasmus, Frans Titelmans, and Theodore Beza*, "The Sixteenth Century Journal", 1998, vol. 29, no. 3, pp. 651–666. I. Backus, *Reformation Readings of the Apocalypse: Geneva, Zurich, and Wittenberg*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2000, pp. 11–18.

⁶⁴ P. Sartori, *La Controversia Neotestamentaria Tra Frans Titelmans ed Erasmo da Rotterdam (1527-1530 CA.): Linee di Sviluppo e Contenuti*, "Humanistica Lovaniensia", 2003, vol. 52, p. 119: “Titelmans si dimostra particolarmente originale nel panorama degli oppositori catto lici di Erasmo, poiché sia nella parte iniziale del

Titelmans he went so far as to claim that the Franciscan “was in a sense an Erasmian: he likely studied all three biblical languages, he accepted the philological method defended by Erasmus, and he intended his scholarly contribution for private and not for official use in the Church”⁶⁵. Sartori also demonstrated that although Titelmans was influenced by his intellectual patrons such as Masson and Cousturier, he was nevertheless an original thinker capable of developing his own thought⁶⁶. Thus, Sartori has demonstrated that Titelmans cannot be so easily written off as an insignificant conservative and deserves to be studied in more detail. Sadly, he did not publish anything on other of Titelmans’ biblical works, and these works remain without their scholar.

This dissertation intends to focus on Titelmans’ biblical commentaries, which have so far been hardly studied at all. Unlike most previous studies (with the notable exception of Sartori) that took as a departure point the humanist scholarship of Erasmus and judged Titelmans against this background, we intend to analyse the latter in his own right. We aim to escape the Erasmo-centrism that has plagued research on the intellectual history of the early 16th century and has led to a distorted picture. Conversely, we propose to re-evaluate Titelmans’ polemical works against the background of his own biblical commentaries.

In our research we have pursued the historical methodology of critically evaluating available sources. Given the scarcity of archival and epistolary sources, the brunt of evidence has been born by Titelmans’ published works. We have analysed all his published biblical commentaries, as well as his polemical works. We have employed tools of intertextual and comparative analyses to discover Titelmans’ patristic and mediaeval sources and confront his works with those of his contemporaries. We have also used the non-biblical works of the Franciscan as additional evidence to corroborate our findings. Finally, we have also used theological analysis to elucidate the difference between Titelmans’ and Erasmus’ respective approaches to Scriptures.

We have followed a thematic organisation of material in this dissertation. As a starting point we have chosen a very broad perspective. Given that Titelmans was undoubtedly a conservative

Prologus, che in un intero capitoletto nella seconda metà del testo, egli sottolinea chiara mente alcuni indiscutibili meriti, e non secondari, delle opere composte da Valla, Faber Stapulensis ed Erasmo a proposito del Nuovo Testamento. E' praticamente impossibile trovare un altro oppositore era smiano che sia stato capace di tanto equilibrio nel violento clima delle controversie neotestamentarie”.

⁶⁵ P. Sartori, *Frans Titelmans, the Congregation of Montaigu, and Biblical Scholarship*, [in:] *Biblical Humanism and Scholasticism in the Age of Erasmus*, ed. E. Rummel, Brill, Leiden 2008, p. 220.

⁶⁶ P. Sartori, *La Controversia Neotestamentaria...*, op. cit., p. 133. P. Sartori, *Tracce dell’opera di Jacobus Latomus nel Prologus Apologeticus di Frans Titelmans*, [in:] *Margarita amicorum. Studi di cultura europea per Agostino Sottili*, eds. F. Forner, C.M. Monti, and P.G. Schmidt, V&P, Milano 2005, pp. 1032–1042. See also: P. Sartori, *Tot herstelling van de roem den zoo roemwaardigen Frans Tittelmans’ van Hasselt: Bijdrage uitgaande van het geschild met Erasmus*, “Het Oude Land van Loon”, 2007, vol. 86, pp. 97–134. 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*, [in:] *Infant Milk or Hardy Nourishment? The Bible for Lay People and Theologians in the Early Modern Period*, eds. W. François and A.A. den Hollander, Peeters, Leuven – Paris – Walpole MA 2009, p. 87–110. P. Sartori, *Epistola apologetica pro opere Collationum (1530). Frans Titelmans’ antwoord aan Erasmus over jeugd, ethiek en Waarheid*, Master thesis, KU Leuven. Faculteit Letteren, Leuven 2016.

much preoccupied with tradition, it seemed necessary to analyse in some depth what the tradition that he defended was. In Chapter One we offer a brief survey of the so called “pre-modern” exegesis. We argue that from the very first centuries of Christianity there was an exegetical consensus centred around two principles. First, true Catholic exegesis always oscillated between literal and spiritual, never completely departing from the letter, but at the same time never limiting itself to the literal sense alone. Although Christian theologians differed in recognising two, three, four and more biblical senses, they all agreed that the Scriptures, being both human and divine, had to be understood on two levels: human-literal, and divine-spiritual. Secondly, all interpretation ought to take place within the community of the Church and in the light of her faith. This rule, often known as *analogia fidei*, guided Christian exegesis from the earliest known Church Fathers. According to Hans Boersma, these two principles constituted a sacramental understanding of Scripture in the ancient Church⁶⁷. The literal sense was a sign pointing towards a spiritual meaning. Just as with other sacraments, also the “sacrament of the Word” operated within the community of faith. As we shall argue, this consensus persisted until the early 16th century, when biblical humanism and then reformations (often inadvertently) challenged it. Both movements, even if frequently for different reasons, emphasised the literal sense at the expense of the spiritual and an individual interpretation at the expense of the ecclesiastical one.

In recent years there has been a renewed interest in the pre-modern exegesis, especially among Protestant historians and theologians. It has been initiated by David C. Steinmetz, whose article on pre-critical exegesis tried to show the superiority of reading the Bible according to multiple senses as opposed to limiting oneself to the literal sense based on the authorial intent⁶⁸. It was the next generation of scholars who took up the idea. In the last two decades, there appeared several works that argued for the value of pre-modern exegesis and tried to propose it as a way forward in what seemed to their authors as a stalemate in biblical studies, caused by the preponderance of the historical-critical method⁶⁹.

Another important current in theological thought that should be mentioned here is the Radical Orthodoxy movement. One of its principal arguments is that theology, from the late Middle Ages onwards, gradually lost the notion of sacramentality, which in the long run led to

⁶⁷ H. Boersma, *Scripture as Real Presence: Sacramental Exegesis in the Early Church*, Baker Academic, Grand Rapids 2017, p. 1: “This book is about the church fathers’ sacramental reading of Scripture. The main argument is that they saw the Scriptures as a sacrament and read them accordingly”. See also: K. Bardski, *Biblia Sakramentem Miłości Boga I Kościoła*, “Verbum Vitae”, 2005, vol. 7, pp. 201–214.

⁶⁸ D.C. Steinmetz, *The superiority of pre-critical exegesis*, “Theology Today”, 1980, vol. 37, no. 1, pp. 27–38.

⁶⁹ D.P. Parris, *Reading the Bible with Giants: How 2000 Years of Biblical Interpretation Can Shed New Light on Old Texts*, Paternoster, Milton Keynes 2006. J.L. Thompson, *Reading the Bible with the Dead: What You Can Learn from the History of Exegesis that You Can’t Learn from Exegesis Alone*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 2007. C.A. Carter, *Interpreting Scripture with the Great Tradition: Recovering the Genius of Premodern Exegesis*, Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, Michigan 2018. M. Levering, *Participatory Biblical exegesis: a theology of Biblical interpretation*, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame 2008.

deep secularisation of the Western World⁷⁰. This is a significant insight, since it was precisely the loss of the sacramental understanding of the Bible that led to the transition from pre-critical to modern exegesis. It also formed the background of the polemic between Titelmans and humanists. Naturally, theological and philosophical considerations surrounding both pre-modern exegesis and Radical Orthodoxy are far too complex to be addressed in this dissertation; it is however hoped that the case study of Titelmans and his defence of the traditional exegetical consensus may contribute to a better understanding of the historical process of transformation in biblical studies.

The second chapter introduces a reader to the person of Franciscus Titelmans. Because the sources regarding his life are regrettably scarce, we have endeavoured to present his life in the broader context of his milieu. The first section of this chapter traces his life, dividing it into three periods: from his birth to joining the Franciscans (1502-1523), his career as a lecturer at Leuven (1523-1536), and the last year of his life as a Capuchin friar (1536-1537). The second section of the chapter deals with his works, both those concerning the Bible and others. Finally, the last part of the chapter gives an overview of the sources that Titelmans used for his biblical commentaries. The entire chapter tries to demonstrate that Titelmans was an intellectual torn between his firm allegiance to traditional theology and exegesis and new, humanistic currents of thought. He received a mixed education encompassing both scholastic and humanist elements, and likewise employed both intellectual currents in composing his works.

The third and fourth chapters are devoted to an in-depth analysis of Titelmans' biblical commentaries. In line with pre-modern exegesis, they are divided according to the literal and the spiritual senses. The third chapter concerns itself with elements of literal exegesis in Titelmans' commentaries. First it shows how he understood the literal sense and then analyses various ways of expounding it by the Franciscan. Among other issues it discusses questions of authorship, text criticism, philological analyses, and historical, geographical, and theological explanations. It shows that on the one hand Titelmans followed the traditional way of elucidating the literal sense of Scriptures, but on the other he enriched it with the use of the original languages of the Bible and elements of humanist philology.

Chapter four is devoted to what Titelmans described as the "mystical" sense. Under this term he understood all non-literal senses of the Bible. He occasionally used the traditional distinction on allegorical, moral and anagogical senses; most of the time, however, he limited himself to an allegorical reading of scripture. In the first section of this chapter, we show that Titelmans considered the spiritual reading of the Bible indispensable for the full understanding of the Word

⁷⁰ J.K.A. Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy: Mapping a Post-secular Theology*, Baker, Grand Rapids 2005. B.S. Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation: how a Religious Revolution Secularized Society*, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge 2012, pp. 1–25.

of God. We then proceed to a detailed analysis of two of his commentaries, on the Psalms and on the Song of Solomon, which are the most significant ones from the perspective of the spiritual sense. Finally, we show examples of his allegorical reading of Gospel parables. The chapter demonstrates that Titelmans was very much dependent on former exegetes, but simultaneously updated older interpretations in the light of contemporary events and challenges. It also shows that he followed what Levering has recently called a “participatory exegesis”: a conviction that God speaks through Scriptures now as he spoke in biblical times, giving answers to contemporary issues through his Word. Titelmans undoubtedly considered the Bible to be the Living Word of God that spoke to 16th-century Christians about their present situation. Analysing the mystical sense was a way to understand this message.

It is only with this fundament of Titelmans’ own biblical commentaries that we approach his polemical works directed against Erasmus and other humanists. Such a perspective has enabled us to escape a narrow Erasmo-centric point of view. Titelmans was not merely a negative background to the great Humanist. He tried to propose an alternative approach to Scriptures, one that would integrate elements of humanist learning into the traditional framework of biblical exegesis. We try to demonstrate this by scrutinising three polemical texts of the Franciscan. We begin with his *Prologus apologeticus*, in which he defended the authority of the Vulgate. Then we discuss his *Collationes quinque*, concentrating on an example of Romans 5:12 and the problems regarding its translation. Finally, we look at his work defending the canonicity of the Book of Revelation. In the light of these analyses, we argue that what stood at the centre of the polemic between Titelmans and Erasmus were not so much different approaches to philology but different understandings of the very nature of the Bible. We conclude this chapter by reassessing Titelmans’ relationship with humanism, with evangelical reformations, and with the Catholic Reform⁷¹.

Citations from Titelmans’ works are quoted in Latin, with minor adjustments of spelling for the sake of clarity⁷². Other texts in Latin are either cited in the original, or given in English, whenever a modern translation has been readily available. Transcriptions of Greek and Hebrew words are those of Titelmans, whenever he provided them, otherwise we have followed contemporary standards. The text of the Bible is cited in Latin according to its usage by Titelmans, while English translations are taken from the Douai-Rheims Bible, which reflects very literally the Vulgate⁷³. Citations from languages other than Latin were translated into English. All translations

⁷¹ We tend to use “reformations” in plural, recognising that it was more of a multi-centred phenomenon than a centralised movement. Adjectives “Evangelical” and “Protestant” are sometimes used to differentiate it from the Catholic reform, with full awareness of a partial inadequacy of those terms.

⁷² Diphthongs that were variously written in different editions are always rendered as “ae” and “oe”, long “j” and short “i” are always spelled short, and all abbreviations present in the text are solved.

⁷³ *The Holy Bible faithfully translated into English out of the authentical Latin, diligently conferred with the Hebrew, Greek, & other Editions in diuers languages*, John Cousturier, English Colledge of Dovvay, 1635.

are by the author, unless otherwise indicated. Given the language of the dissertation, the footnotes and bibliography follow “Polish citation style for Humanities and Social Sciences”, adopted for works written in English, with minor adjustments according to *Poradnik doktoranta Wydziału Teologii KUL*⁷⁴. References to patristic and mediaeval works indicate both an internal division of a given text as well as a page number in a modern edition. Whenever possible we made use of the most recent critical editions of ancient and mediaeval works.

⁷⁴ M. Chmielewski, *Poradnik doktoranta Wydziału Teologii KUL*, [s.ed.], Lublin 2007.

Chapter I

The Old Consensus in Biblical Exegesis and a Humanist Challenge to It

In this first chapter, before we proceed to discuss Franciscus Tielmans and his works, we demonstrate a broad context in which his biblical works were born. First we will present an overview of the history of Christian exegesis from Antiquity to the Renaissance. In this last era an ancient understanding of Christian exegesis, which persisted throughout the Middle Ages, was put into question by leading humanists such as Erasmus of Rotterdam. We will analyse this challenge and present a criticism of biblical humanism that came from more conservative theologians.

1.1 Patristic exegesis between Judaism and Gnosis

As an exegete, Tielmans was in many ways a traditionalist. Thus, in order to understand him, we should begin with a brief outline of the patristic-medieval consensus about the Bible, even if such a summary will inevitably be very simplified. In this section we will argue that from antiquity there existed among “Catholic” theologians an “exegetical consensus” based on two pillars: an equilibrium of the literal and spiritual senses and ecclesiastical, communal character of biblical interpretation.

1.1.1 *The origins of Christian exegesis*

The centrality of Scriptures to the Christian faith is so evident that it is often assumed rather than argued for. Thus, it is easy to forget that the first generations of Christians had no Scriptures of their own but used Jewish sacred texts. On the one hand it constituted no difficulty for them, since initially Christianity was seen as a form of Judaism; on the other, it provoked an apologetic interpretation of the Old Testament, to demonstrate that Jewish Scriptures testified to Jesus as the Messiah¹. Such an actualising interpretation of Scriptures was nothing alien to Judaism itself. Throughout its history Judaism constantly reinterpreted its own writings, believing that “the word of our Lord endureth for ever” (Isa. 40,8). Thus, in new circumstances, old prophecies were reinterpreted in accordance with the needs of time. Judaism developed several types of biblical commentaries, which all had an actualising element: Midrash, Halakha, Haggadah, Mishnah,

¹ On the interpretation of the Old Testament in the New see: H. Hübner, *New Testament Interpretation of the Old Testament*, [in:] *Hebrew Bible, Old Testament: the History of its Interpretation. From the Beginnings to the Middle Ages (Until 1300)*, eds. M. Sæbø, C. Brekelmans, and M. Haran, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen 1996, vol. I/1, pp. 332–372. H. Reventlow, *History of biblical interpretation. 1: From the Old Testament to Origen*, Society of Biblical Literature, Atlanta 2009, pp. 47–104.

Targum and so on². The authors of the New Testament also used such techniques to prove that Jesus was the Christ³.

Among the diverse methods of reinterpreting old texts in new contexts, a prominent place was occupied by allegory. This was not solely a Christian or Jewish method. It was commonly used in antiquity to explain seemingly immoral or difficult passages of Hesiod and Homer⁴. This method was used by Philo⁵, a Hellenised Jewish philosopher from Alexandria, as well as the New Testament writers⁶. In the Christian context, it became particularly useful in polemics against Jews. Christian authors argued, against their Jewish opponents, that events and figures from the Old Testaments were *topoi* of Christ and his history. Such a typological allegory was used extensively for instance by Justin Martyr in his “Dialogue with Trypho”⁷. Thus, allegory became a way of making sense of the Old Testament for the first generations of Christians.

Henri de Lubac, in his magisterial study on mediaeval exegesis, warned against a facile attribution of Christian allegory to its pagan precedents⁸. True, there were many similarities. Early Christian theologians, living in a Hellenistic world, naturally shared numerous aspects of allegorical thinking with their pagan counterparts. The root of Christian allegorisation was, however, entirely different.

Pagan – and to a great extent also Jewish – allegories were born out of embarrassment. Sacred texts of great antiquity included stories that did not correspond with an evolved mentality

² P. Grech, *Agli inizi della teologia cristiana*, [in:] *Storia della Teologia. I: Epoca patristica*, eds. A. Di Berardino and B. Studer, Piemme, Casale Monferrato 1993, pp. 27–41. For Mishnah and Midrash see: J. Neusner, *The Hermeneutics of the Law in Rabbinic Judaism: Mishnah, Midrash, Talmuds*, [in:] *Hebrew Bible, Old Testament: the History of its Interpretation. From the Beginnings to the Middle Ages (Until 1300)*, eds. M. Sæbø, C. Brekelmans, and M. Haran, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen 1996, vol. I/1, pp. 303–322. For Targum see: E. Levine, *The Targums: Their Interpretative Character and Their Place in Jewish Text Tradition*, [in:] *Hebrew Bible, Old Testament: the History of its Interpretation. From the Beginnings to the Middle Ages (Until 1300)*, eds. M. Sæbø, C. Brekelmans, and M. Haran, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen 1996, vol. I/1, pp. 323–331.

³ See for instance: E.E. Ellis, *Prophecy and Hermeneutic in Early Christianity: New Testament Essays*, Mohr Siebeck 1978; and W.R. Stegner, *Romans 9:6–29 - a midrash*, “Journal for the Study of the New Testament”, 1984, no. 22, pp. 37–52.

⁴ P. Grech, “Agli inizi della teologia cristiana”, op. cit., pp. 37–39. M. Simonetti, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church. An Historical Introduction to Patristic Exegesis*, T&T Clark, Edinburgh 1994, pp. 4–6. F. Siegert, *Early Jewish Interpretation in a Hellenistic Style*, [in:] *Hebrew Bible, Old Testament: the History of its Interpretation. From the Beginnings to the Middle Ages (Until 1300)*, eds. M. Sæbø, C. Brekelmans, and M. Haran, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen 1996, vol. I/1, pp. 130–140.

⁵ M. Simonetti, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church...*, op. cit., pp. 6–7; P. Grech, “Agli inizi della teologia cristiana”, op. cit., p. 40. C. Kannengiesser, *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: the Bible in Ancient Christianity*, Brill, Leiden 2006, pp. 176–182. M. Niehoff, *Philo and Plutarch on Homer*, [in:] *Homer and the Bible in the Eyes of Ancient Interpreters*, ed. M. Niehoff, Brill, Leiden 2012, pp. 127–153.

⁶ Cf. 1Cor. 10:1-5; Gal. 4:21-26.

⁷ Cf. ANF, vol. I, p. 256: “For the Holy Spirit sometimes brought about that something, which was the type of the future, should be done clearly; sometimes He uttered words about what was to take place, as if it was then taking place, or had taken place. And unless those who read perceive this art, they will not be able to follow the words of the prophets as they ought”. The Greek original: Iustinus Martyr, *Iustini Martyris Apologiae pro Christianis. Iustini Martyris Dialogus cum Tryphone*, 114.1, ed. M. Marcovich, De Gruyter, Berlin 2011.

⁸ H. de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis, The Four Senses of Scripture*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 2000, vol. 2, pp. 9–18.

and caused unease⁹. In order to safeguard these “scriptures”, moralising allegory was employed to soften or reframe these concerning stories. Stoics, for instance, interpreted the Homeric deities as symbols of natural elements (e.g.: Zeus was identified as an ether surrounding the Earth), thus their conflicts were an allegory of the clashes of the forces of nature¹⁰. This approach was to some degree and in numerous variations adopted by Jews living in Hellenised contexts, who had to explain to their neighbours (and likely to themselves as well) how an invisible God could have hands, for instance, or could plant a garden in Eden. Examples of such attempts can be found in the writings of Aristobulus and the letter of Aristeas¹¹, but the most famous example of such Jewish allegorist was Philo of Alexandria¹².

Christian allegory, on the other hand, had nothing to do with such embarrassment. According to de Lubac, it was born of the Christ-event, which called for a reinterpretation of the Jewish scriptures. Christ was the true meaning of the Old Testament, yet He was the hidden meaning, a mystery.

To summarize [...]: the Christian tradition understands that Scripture has two meanings. The most general name for these two meanings is the literal meaning and the spiritual (“pneumatic”) meaning, and these two meanings have the same kind of relationship to each other as do the Old and New Testaments to each other. More exactly, and in all strictness, they constitute, they *are* the Old and New Testaments¹³.

De Lubac continued to emphasise the uniqueness of Christian spiritual reading. True, all religions have hermeneutical frameworks to interpret the hidden meanings of their scriptures, but for Christianity this hermeneutics stood at the very core. Christian allegory was more than merely a reinterpretation of the past or an attempt to avoid embarrassment. It was a discovery of the eternal truth of the Spirit, which gives sense to everything. Thus, according to the French theologian, spiritual, (*vel* allegorical, *vel* mystical) reading stood at the centre of Christian revelation and consequently at the root of Christian exegesis¹⁴.

Allegory was, however, also a potential difficulty. It became a useful tool for the Gnostics to interpret both Testaments in a manner completely contrary to that of the “Great Church”.

⁹ For this reason, Plato wanted Homer banned in his Republic, see: Plato, *Republic*, 377C, eds. C.J. Emlyn-Jones and W. Preddy, 2013, LCL 237, p. 194. Cf. F. Siegert, “Early Jewish Interpretation in a Hellenistic Style”, op. cit., p. 131.

¹⁰ Cf. F. Siegert, “Early Jewish Interpretation in a Hellenistic Style”, op. cit., pp. 133–135.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 141–162.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 178–179. On Philo’s use of allegory see: R. Williamson, *Jews in the Hellenistic World: Philo*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1989, vol. 1, pp. 144–200. F. Calabi, *God’s acting, man’s acting: tradition and philosophy in Philo of Alexandria*, Brill, Leiden 2008. A. Kamesar, *Biblical Interpretation in Philo*, [in:] *The Cambridge companion to Philo*, ed. A. Kamesar, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2009, pp. 65–92. F. Alesse, *Philo of Alexandria and Greek myth: narratives, allegories, and arguments*, Brill, Leiden 2019.

¹³ H. de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis, The Four Senses of Scripture*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 1998, vol. 1, p. 225.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 225–234.

According to Gnostics, the God of the Old Testament was an evil Demiurge, different from the God of Jesus. The Demiurge's material world was evil, and the aim of the soul was to escape materiality. They provided support for their claims with allegorically interpreted passages from both Testaments¹⁵. Indeed, "the Gnostics were masterly in allegorical exegesis and made use of it in various contexts"¹⁶.

The Gnostics, in part for their exegesis, came under attack from "Catholic" theologians. Irenaeus claimed that they twisted and contorted the true meaning of the Bible. He argued that they disregarded the context of their citations, changed the wording, and paired unrelated texts to create such combinations as suited them¹⁷. Similar criticism was voiced by Clement of Alexandria¹⁸. Thus, "Catholic" authors saw a response to what they considered as an excessive use of allegory by the Gnostics in close attention to the text. Just as allegory was a tool against overly literal interpretations by Jews, so was literal reading a Catholic antidote for over-allegorisation by Gnostics¹⁹. Catholic exegesis from its beginning tried to sail between the Scylla of inordinately literal and the Charybdis of too-allegorical interpretation. This, however, begs a question: what was supposed to be the compass to navigate safely through such perilous waters?

Manlio Simonetti complained that no author from the 2nd century A.D. came even close to outlining exegetical principles guiding licit and illicit uses of allegory and literal interpretation.

[Irenaeus] is in fact unable to find a valid hermeneutical principle to oppose the allegorical interpretation of his adversaries, chiefly because he does not really concern himself with determining, even approximately, the relationship between allegorical and literal interpretation²⁰.

The solution was found outside the field of philology, namely in a recourse to the authority of the Church.

Irenaeus realised that the text was not self-interpreting and required some external canon (in its original meaning: a measuring stick) against which one could evaluate competing

¹⁵ Cf. W. Löhr, *Gnostic and Manichaean interpretation*, [in:] *The New Cambridge History of the Bible: From the Beginnings to 600*, eds. J.C. Paget and J. Schaper, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2013, pp. 584–604. Z. Vítková, *Holy or Foolish?: Gnostic Concept(s) of the Authority of the Old Testament*, [in:] *The Process of Authority*, eds. J. Dušek and J. Roskovec, De Gruyter, Berlin 2016, pp. 179–196.

¹⁶ M. Simonetti, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church...*, op. cit., p. 16.

¹⁷ Cf. Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses*, 1.9.4, eds. A. Rousseau and L. Doutreleau, 1979, SC 264, p. 146: "Post deinde dictiones et nomina dispersim posita colligentes, transferunt, sicut praediximus, ex eo quod est secundum naturam in id quod est contra naturam". See also: Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses*, 1.3.6, p. 60; and 1.8.1, pp. 112–116. J.C. Paget, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Second Century*, [in:] *The New Cambridge History of the Bible: From the Beginnings to 600*, eds. J.C. Paget and J. Schaper, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2013, pp. 563–564. M. Simonetti, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church...*, op. cit., pp. 22–23.

¹⁸ Clemens Alexandrinus, *Les Stromates. Stromate*, 7.16.4, ed. A. Le Boulluec, 1997, SC 428, p. 287. English translation: ANF, vol. II, p. 551: "Now all men, having the same judgment, some, following the Word speaking, frame for themselves proofs; while others, giving themselves up to pleasures, wrest Scripture, in accordance with their lusts".

¹⁹ M. Simonetti, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church...*, op. cit., pp. 19–23.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

interpretations. Unlike Gnostics, who professed that such an external rule was to be found in the secret teachings of Jesus, Irenaeus claimed it lay within the apostolic Church. “For if the apostles had known hidden mysteries, which they were in the habit of imparting to ‘the perfect’ apart and privily from the rest, they would have delivered them especially to those to whom they were also committing the Churches themselves”²¹. Thus, it was within the community of the Church, represented by its bishops, that a rule of faith could be found. A modern historian observed that for the Church Fathers “right reading is determined by the context in which that reading is done and not simply by the context of the passage under discussion”²². The meaning was not to be found by philology itself, but, as Irenaeus commented, in order to find the truth, one had to “flee to the Church, and be brought up in her bosom, and be nourished with the Lord’s Scriptures”²³.

A similar solution was proposed by Tertullian:

From this, therefore, do we draw up our rule. Since the Lord Jesus Christ sent the apostles to preach, [our rule is] that no others ought to be received as preachers than those whom Christ appointed; for “no man knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him.” Nor does the Son seem to have revealed Him to any other than the apostles, whom He sent forth to preach—that, of course, which He revealed to them. Now, what that was which they preached—in other words, what it was which Christ revealed to them—can, as I must here likewise prescribe, properly be proved in no other way than by those very churches which the apostles founded in person, by declaring the gospel to them directly themselves, both *vivâ voce*, as the phrase is, and subsequently by their epistles. If, then, these things are so, it is in the same degree manifest that all doctrine which agrees with the apostolic churches—those moulds and original sources of the faith must be reckoned for truth, as undoubtedly containing that which the (said) churches received from the apostles, the apostles from Christ, Christ from God. Whereas all doctrine must be prejudged as false which savours of contrariety to the truth of the churches and apostles of Christ and God²⁴.

²¹ Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses*, 3.3.1, eds. A. Rousseau and L. Doutreleau, 1974, SC 211, p. 30: “Etenim, si recondite mysteria scissent apostoli, quae seorsum et latenter ab reliquis perfectos docebant, his uel maxime traderent ea quibus etiam ipsas Ecclesias committebant”. English translation: ANF, vol. I, p. 415.

²² J.C. Paget, “The Interpretation of the Bible in the Second Century”, op. cit., p. 565.

²³ Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses*, 5.20.2, eds. A. Rousseau, L. Doutreleau, and C. Mercier, 1969, SC 153, p. 258: “confugere autem ad Ecclesiam et ejus sinu educari et dominicis Scripturis enutriti”. English translation: ANF, vol. I, p. 548.

²⁴ Tertullianus, *De praescriptione haereticorum*, 21, ed. R.F. Refoulé, 1954, CCSL 1, p. 202: “Hinc igitur dirigimus praescriptionem: si Dominus Christus Iesus Apostolos misit ad praedicandum, alios non esse recipiendos praedicatores quam Christus instituit, quia nec alius patrem nouit nisi filius et cui filius reuelauit, nec aliis uidetur reuelasse filius quam Apostolis quos misit ad praedicandum utique quod illis reuelauit. Quid autem praedicauerint, id est quid illis Christus reuelauerit et hic praescribam non aliter probari debere nisi per easdem ecclesias quas ipsi Apostoli condiderunt, ipsi eis praedicando tam uiua, quod aiunt, uoce quam per epistulas postea. Si haec ita sunt, constat perinde omnem doctrinam, quae cum illis ecclesiis apostolicis matricibus et originalibus fidei conspiraret, ueritati deputandam, id sine dubio tenentem, quod Ecclesiae ab Apostolis, Apostoli a Christo, Christus a Deo accepit; omnem uero doctrinam de mendacio praeiudicandam quae sapiat contra ueritatem ecclesiarum et apostolorum Christi et Dei”. English translation: ANF, vol. III, p. 252.

Thus, for Tertullian the measure of true scriptural interpretation was not in the field of philology, but theology. This ecclesiological principle enabled the practice of both literal and allegorical interpretations as long as they remained within the confines of orthodoxy. In future generations this rule gained a name of *analogia fidei*, meaning that any biblical interpretation had to be measured against the faith of the Church. Every reading that contradicted this faith was mistaken, while any that respected it were permissible.

The fact that the interpretation was a task of the community implied an existence of exegetical traditions. In fact, we can witness them already in the earliest known Christian writings. For instance, Justin Martyr cited a great number of Old Testament passages in his writings. Skarsaune noted that “It is surprising to observe how extremely seldom Justin picks out ‘new’ quotations that were not already used by his precursors. In other words, Justin is seen to be the transmitter of a tradition in his Old Testament quotations and his Old Testament exegesis”²⁵. Apparently, he believed that proof texts that he used ultimately derived from the Apostles themselves, who gave a correct interpretation of the Bible. The same approach can also be seen in many apostolic fathers, such as Clement²⁶.

1.1.2 Consolidation of early Christian exegesis

As Christian theological reflection developed, exegetical consensus of the first centuries found more precise expressions. The first exegete we know to have come up with a coherent theory of biblical interpretation was Origen²⁷. He worked in the Neoplatonic context of Alexandria and occasionally borrowed from figures such as Philo; nonetheless, he developed a unique Christian understanding of allegory. In many ways Origen’s exegesis was more indebted to Irenaeus than to (neo)Platonists²⁸. His exegesis was fundamental not only for the school of Alexandria, of which he was the most famous representative, but for the whole history of Christian biblical studies. Virtually all subsequent theologians knew him either directly or by mediation and used him much more than they were usually willing to admit. The reason was that the name of the Alexandrian was from the late antiquity linked with a charge of heresy. In the Middle Ages, this was usually

²⁵ O. Skarsaune, *The Development of Scriptural Interpretation in the Second and Third Centuries - except Clement and Origen*, [in:] *Hebrew Bible, Old Testament: the History of its Interpretation. From the Beginnings to the Middle Ages (Until 1300)*, ed. M. Sæbø, C. Brekelmans, and M. Haran, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen 1996, vol. 1/1, p. 391.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 383.

²⁷ On Origen’s exegesis see: K.J. Torjesen, *Hermeneutical Procedure and Theological Structure in Origen’s Exegesis*, De Gruyter, Berlin 1986. G. Dorival and A. Le Boulluec, eds., *Origeniana sexta: Origène et la Bible, = Origeniana sexta: Origen and the Bible*, Leuven University Press, Leuven 1995. E.D. Lauro, *The Soul and Spirit of Scripture within Origen’s Exegesis*, Brill, Leiden 2005. G. Dorival, *Origen*, [in:] *The New Cambridge History of the Bible: From the Beginnings to 600*, eds. J.C. Paget and J. Schaper, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2013, pp. 605–628. P.W. Martens, *Origen and Scripture: the Contours of the Exegetical Life*, Oxford University Press, New York 2012.

²⁸ Cf. H. de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis 1...*, op. cit., p. 154.

enough to send an author to an intellectual limbo. The fact that Origen was influential despite such charges is a paradoxical proof of his enormous influence on Christian exegesis²⁹.

Everywhere in the Latin Middle Ages, we recognize Origen's teaching on Scripture, on the reading of Scripture in the Church, on Scripture's relationship with the profane disciplines, [...] Everywhere we see his hermeneutical principles. Everywhere we see his exegetical influence. Everywhere we recognize his great symbols [...] Numerous themes of medieval spirituality are based on his interpretations³⁰.

What was this super-influential exegetical method? Surprisingly for a modern reader, Origen's hermeneutical theory began with metaphysics. In the third book of his commentary on the Canticle of Solomon, he maintained, in a typically Platonic fashion, that things visible contained patterns of heavenly things. Thus, the unseen manifested itself through the visible. Metaphysics led to hermeneutics: the literal meaning of the Bible bore in itself a hidden spiritual meaning.

Because of certain mystical and hidden things, the people is visibly led forth from the terrestrial Egypt and journeys through the desert, where there was a biting serpent, and a scorpion, and thirst, and where all the other happenings took place that are recorded. All these events, as we have said, have the aspects and likeness of certain hidden things³¹.

Thus, Biblical text was much more than met the eye. This came from the fact that it was not a mere human text, but a divinely inspired message³². It was not always clear that the message was inspired, for some passages were obscure and difficult. Origen claimed we should not be deterred by this:

²⁹ On Origen's reception in the Latin world see: C. Jacob, *The Reception of the Origenist Tradition in Latin Exegesis*, [in:] *Hebrew Bible, Old Testament: the History of its Interpretation. From the Beginnings to the Middle Ages (Until 1300)*, eds. M. Sæbø, C. Brekelmans, and M. Haran, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen 1996, vol. I/1, pp. 682–700.

³⁰ H. de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis...*, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 169–170.

³¹ Origenes, *Commentaire sur le cantique des cantiques*, 13.28, eds. L. Brésard and H. Crouzel, 1992, SC 376, p. 640: "Propter quaedam namque occulta et mystica visibiliter populus educitur de Aegypto ista terrena et iter agit per desertum, ubi serpens mordens et scorpius et sitis, ubi non errat aqua et cetera quae in his gesta referuntur. Quae omnia, ut diximus, occultorum quorundam formas imagines tenent". English translation: Origenes, *The Song of songs: Commentary and homilies*, trans. R.P. Lawson, Newman Press, Westminster 1957, p. 223. Cf. H. Boersma, *Scripture as Real Presence...*, op. cit., p. 21.

³² J.C. Paget, *The Christian Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Alexandrian Tradition*, [in:] *Hebrew Bible, Old Testament: the History of its Interpretation. From the Beginnings to the Middle Ages (Until 1300)*, eds. M. Sæbø, C. Brekelmans, and M. Haran, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen 1996, vol. I/1, p. 511.

For just as providence is not abolished because of our ignorance [...] so neither is the divine character of scripture, which extends through all of it, abolished because our weakness cannot discern in every sentence the hidden splendour of its teachings, concealed under a poor and humble style³³.

The theme of poor style reemerged in Titelmans' polemics with humanists, as we shall see in Chapter Five³⁴. In order to find inspired meaning in often obscure texts, Origen advised progressing through a sequence of senses. Origen sometimes spoke of a three-fold division of senses, which corresponded with the Platonic-Pauline anthropology of *sarks, psyche, pneuma*; and sometimes reduced it into a two-fold sense: literal-spiritual³⁵. The key to exegetical progress was in Scripture itself: one passage helped to understand another. Essentially, the entire Bible was spiritual, nothing in it was superficial, and like an integrated organism, it all spoke with one voice. Indeed, the Bible was much more than merely a text:

[Origen] does not limit himself to thinking of Scripture as a book inspired by the Holy Spirit, but as the divine word he effectively identifies it with Christ (= the Logos), the Word of God: the letter of the sacred text functions, like the human body assumed by Christ (...) Sacred Scripture is the permanent incarnation of the Logos³⁶.

For Origen, and indeed for all Fathers of the Church, the Bible was much more than an inanimate text. It was the Living Word of God. The aim of an exegete was not merely to discover the true meaning of the text in an intellectual manner. Rather, a Christian exegete should be understood as "living out the scripture's content"³⁷. All Scripture was a prophecy that was fulfilled not only in the life of Christ, but also in his Church, that is, also in each believer. "It is Christ and his Church that are prefigured by a variety of types in the Old Testament"³⁸. Thus, Biblical exegesis was never purely a matter of philology. Rather, philology was born out of the faith of the community of believers.

It is, however, a common and a sad misconception that for Origen the literal sense was of little importance. True, Origen was one of the greatest masters of the spiritual reading the Bible, but he was also the author of *Hexapla*, which represented the highest achievement of philological study of the Bible in the entire antiquity³⁹. This work stemmed from the conviction that all Scriptures were inspired; hence, even the slightest grammatical nuance could provide a key to

³³ Origenes, *Traité des principes III*, lib. 4.1.7, eds. H. Crouzel and M. Simonetti, 1980, SC 268, pp. 286–288.

³⁴ Vide infra 5.1.3.5.

³⁵ H. de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis...*, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 142–146.

³⁶ M. Simonetti, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church...*, op. cit., p. 41. Cf. Origenes, *Traité des principes III*, 4.1-3, op. cit., pp. 256–399. Origenes, *Contre Celse*, 6.77, ed. M. Borret, 1969, SC 147, pp. 370–375.

³⁷ J.C. Paget, "The Interpretation of the Bible in the Second Century", op. cit., p. 566.

³⁸ H. Boersma, *Scripture as Real Presence...*, op. cit., p. 36.

³⁹ Cf. M. Simonetti, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church...*, op. cit., p. 41.

profound spiritual understandings⁴⁰. Besides, compiling the Hebrew text of the Old Testament and several Greek translations of it in parallel columns helped to counter the readings of Jews and especially Gnostics, who, as has been highlighted above, manipulated their quotations⁴¹.

Origen's allegorical interpretation was, in the past, often contrasted with the allegedly more literal approach of Antiochene exegetes⁴². If such a difference were true, it would belie the assumption presented above that patristic exegesis was based not upon a philological method, but on theological consensus. More recent scholarship, however, tends to downplay the alleged polar opposition of the theological methods of these two schools. F. M. Young rightly observed that seeing Antiochians as literalists is essentially an anachronistic imposition of modern, historical-critical interests upon its representatives⁴³. True, Antiochenes were critical about an excessive use of allegory, however they cannot be perceived as modern, "scientific" exegetes.

The most radical representative of the so-called Antiochene school was undoubtedly Theodore of Mopsuestia⁴⁴. He "reduced the presence of Christ in the Old Testament to the barest necessary minimum"⁴⁵. He rejected the Christological readings of most psalms, interpreted messianic prophecies as having been already fulfilled in post-exile Israel (e.g. in Zerubbabel), and, perhaps most strikingly, opted for a literal reading of the Song of Songs, as merely a piece of erotic literature⁴⁶. Nevertheless, he occasionally conceded the need for non-literal reading, for example admitting to the typological character of the Exodus⁴⁷. Moreover, Theodore was seen as too extreme in his literalism even by members of his own school and was criticised by Theodoret of Cyrus⁴⁸.

The school of Antioch was not opposed to non-literal interpretations of the Bible; it was critical of allegorising passages that were not allegorical *per se*. "We do not reject all allegories, but neither do we merely accept them all," claimed Eusebius of Emesa, one of the earliest representatives of Syrian exegesis⁴⁹. Antiochian exegetes preferred to speak about *theoria*, meaning by it a deeper, contemplative insight into the meaning of the text, which "recognises a

⁴⁰ J.C. Paget, "The Christian Exegesis", op. cit., pp. 512–513.

⁴¹ On Hexapla see: G. Dorival, "Origen", op. cit., pp. 608–611.

⁴² See: M.F. Wiles, *Theodore of Mopsuestia as Representative of the Antiochene School*, [in:] *The Cambridge History of the Bible: Volume 1, From the Beginnings to Jerome*, eds. P.R. Ackroyd and C.F. Evans, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1970, p. 507. B. Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame 1964, pp. 15–20.

⁴³ F.M. Young, *Traditions of Exegesis*, [in:] *The New Cambridge History of the Bible: From the Beginnings to 600*, eds. J.C. Paget and J. Schaper, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2013, p. 736.

⁴⁴ S. Hidal, *Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Antiochene School with its Prevalent Literal and Historical Method*, [in:] *Hebrew Bible, Old Testament: the History of its Interpretation. From the Beginnings to the Middle Ages (Until 1300)*, eds. M. Sæbø, C. Brekelmans, and M. Haran, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen 1996, vol. I/1, pp. 550–557.

⁴⁵ M. Simonetti, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church...*, op. cit., p. 70.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 70–72. F.M. Young, "Traditions of Exegesis", op. cit., p. 742.

⁴⁷ F.M. Young, "Traditions of Exegesis", op. cit., p. 743.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 742.

⁴⁹ Quoted after: M. Simonetti, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church...*, op. cit., p. 62.

higher level of meaning which overlies the literal, without deleting or weakening it”⁵⁰. Rather than being opposed to each other, both schools, “like ancient exegetes in general, saw the text as *mimesis* (representation); and both sought deeper meaning, but in very different ways”⁵¹.

This understanding of Scriptures was shared by other Fathers, irrespective of whether they called their exegetical method allegory, typology, or *theoria*. No ancient interpreter took the Bible to be merely a text, but all treated it as the living Word.

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 text⁵².

This exegetical consensus about Scripture as the living Word was further developed in subsequent centuries. Here we shall limit ourselves to briefly indicating the contributions of two great figures from the turn of the 4th and the 5th centuries: Jerome and Augustine. The first was especially significant for his reworking of the Latin translation of the Bible, a theme that figured significantly in Titelmans’ debates. Jerome’s work as a translator is characterised by his efforts to maintain as much of the sacred original and its traditional renderings, while at the same time remaining faithful to the philological insights he gained through his work⁵³. He was against excessive literalism and claimed that he translated the meaning that the Scriptures conveyed rather than single words⁵⁴. This was because the Scriptures’ inspiration was not received through an ecstasy, but by the subtle guidance of a conscious human author, who understood what he wrote (even if he was not aware of the full profundity of the mystical senses included in his words). Although Jerome is sometimes credited with giving more emphasis to the literal sense (in which he was becoming increasingly interested as his linguistic studies advanced), he by no means rejected the spiritual. He agreed that both Testaments were essentially identical: “quidquid enim

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 67. Cf. F.M. Young, “Traditions of Exegesis”, op. cit., pp. 737–738. Cf. S. Hidal, “Exegesis of the Old Testament”, op. cit., pp. 548–549.

⁵¹ F.M. Young, “Traditions of Exegesis”, op. cit., p. 744.

⁵² H. Boersma, *Scripture as Real Presence...*, op. cit., p. 27.

⁵³ R. Kieffer, *Jerome: His Exegesis and Hermeneutics*, [in:] *Hebrew Bible, Old Testament: the History of its Interpretation. From the Beginnings to the Middle Ages (Until 1300)*, eds. M. Sæbø, C. Brekelmans, and M. Haran, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen 1996, vol. I/1, p. 672.

⁵⁴ Hieronymus, *Commentarii in VI epistulas Paulinas*, 1.11, ed. G. Raspanti, 2006, CCSL 77A, p. 25: “Nec putemus in uerbis Scripturarum esse Euangelium sed in sensu, non in superficie sed in medulla, non in sermonum foliis sed in radice rationis”. This verse was alluded to in: F. Titelmans, *Prologus apologeticus pro veteri et ecclesiastica novi testamenti latina interpretatione*, [in:] *Collationes quinque super Epistolam ad Romanos beati Pauli apostoli*, Guilielme Vorstermannus, Antuerpiae 1529. f. d2r-v.

in ueteri legimus testamento, hoc idem et in euangelio repperimus et, quod in euangelio fuerit lectitatum, hoc ex ueteris testamenti auctoritate deducitur; nihil dissonum, nihil diuersum est. [...] in ambobus testamentis trinitas praedicatur”⁵⁵. Consequently, the message of the Bible was not only in the letter, but especially above it, in a sense that he called by different names: spiritual, allegorical, mystical, figurated, parabolic, and so on⁵⁶.

Unlike Jerome, whose hermeneutical approach we can reconstruct only from scattered observations, Augustine wrote a theoretical treaty on exegesis: *De doctrina Christiana*. There he discussed in a systematic way many issues related to the Bible: its canon, translation, inspiration, methods of studying, and rules of interpretation. Regarding interpretation, his position was somewhat conflicting: on the one hand he recommended the study of the original languages, on the other, he preferred the Septuagint’s text to *veritas hebraica*⁵⁷. This reflected the tension between the letter and the deeper meaning, concealed beneath words.

Overall, for Augustine the Bible is composed from signs, as he explained at the beginning of book II of *De doctrina*⁵⁸. All these signs effectively convey only one message of love: “non autem praecipit scriptura nisi caritatem nec culpat nisi cupiditatem”⁵⁹. Therefore, any passage that seemed to teach the contrary in its literal meaning had to be interpreted spiritually. Augustine outlined seven rules of interpretation, which had been proposed by a nonconformist Donatist, Tyconius. Although he emphasised that these came from a heretic, he nevertheless found them a useful systematisation of Christian exegesis⁶⁰.

We must, however, emphasise that for Augustine, the importance of the history of exegesis was not solely in his theoretical contribution, but above all in his numerous commentaries, which were largely incorporated into *glossae* and *catenae* and thus exercised enormous influence on all mediaeval theology. Exegesis of the Middle Ages was essentially that of continuity with the patristic “sacramental understanding of the Scripture”, as we shall see in the next section.

⁵⁵ Hieronymus, *Epistulae*, ep. 18A, ed. I. Hilberg, 1910, CSEL 54, p. 83. Cf. R. Kieffer, “The Reception of the Origenist Tradition”, op. cit., p. 671.

⁵⁶ R. Kieffer, “The Reception of the Origenist Tradition”, op. cit., p. 675.

⁵⁷ Cf. Augustinus Hipponensis, *De doctrina christiana libri quatuor*, 2.15, ed. J. Martin, 1962, CCSL 32, pp. 47-48. Augustinus Hipponensis, *De ciuitate Dei*, 18.43, ed. A. Kalb, 1955, CCSL 48. p. 639. See also: D.F. Wright, *Augustine: His Exegesis and Hermeneutics*, [in:] *Hebrew Bible, Old Testament: the History of its Interpretation. From the Beginnings to the Middle Ages (Until 1300)*, eds. M. Sæbø, C. Brekelmans, and M. Haran, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen 1996, vol. I/1, p. 719.

⁵⁸ Augustinus Hipponensis, *De doctrina christiana*, 2.1-3, op. cit., pp. 32-34.

⁵⁹ Augustinus Hipponensis, *De doctrina christiana*, 3.10, op. cit., p. 87.

⁶⁰ Cf. Ibid. 3.30-37, pp. 102-116. See also: D.F. Wright, “The Reception of the Origenist Tradition”, op. cit., pp. 722-726.

1.2. Medieval exegesis: between monastery and university

The Middle Ages are frequently disparaged in respect to biblical exegesis⁶¹. However, contrary to the popular myth that the Bible was rediscovered by Luther, for the entire millennium before him it was the most important object of study and a true pillar of Christendom. In fact, the Middle Ages have been rediscovered for the history of exegesis over the past decades, though much, however, still remains to be done⁶². We cannot hope to give here even a sketchy outline of this period's exegetical output, although we intend to emphasise a few aspects that constitute an important context for Titelmans' biblical scholarship.

1.2.1 Spiritual reading in early medieval monasteries

First, there was a great deal of continuity between patristic and mediaeval exegesis. "Like the church fathers, medieval exegetes believed (...) that the Bible was not only, or even primarily, a text, or an inert artefact to be studied with whatever methods were to hand. Rather, it was first and foremost a living word, a sacred force or energy that enlivens the church"⁶³. Mediaeval interpreters upheld the two pillars of patristic methodology: sacramental and ecclesiastical reading of the Bible. The Bible was the living Word of God, which was understood not only through study but also through practice: liturgy, prayer, and practical charity.

The ideal place to practice such an exegesis was a monastery. Cassiodorus attempted to organise monastic life around the study of the Bible, incorporating secular knowledge of the ancient world⁶⁴. Though his contemporary, Benedict of Nursia, was less concerned with outlining a precise curriculum of study for monks, nevertheless he included a very significant precept in his rule: that the monks should read⁶⁵. The book they read was above all else the Psalter, from which

⁶¹ For examples see F.A. van Liere, *An Introduction to the Medieval Bible*, Cambridge University Press, New York 2014, pp. 2–3.

⁶² Some of the most important works on medieval exegesis include: B. Smalley, *The Study of the Bible...*, op. cit.; H. de Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale: les quatre sens de l'écriture.*, Aubier, Paris 1959, 4 vols.; R. Marsden and E.A. Matter, eds., *The New Cambridge History of the Bible: From 600 to 1450*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2012, vol. 2.; F.A. van Liere, *An Introduction to the Medieval Bible...*, op. cit.

⁶³ M.A. Mayeski, *Early Medieval Exegesis: Gregory I to the Twelfth Century*, [in:] *A History of Biblical Interpretation: The Medieval Through the Reformation Periods*, eds. A.J. Hauser and D.F. Watson, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 2009, p. 87.

⁶⁴ Cf. Cassiodorus, *Cassiodori Senatoris Institutiones*, ed. R.A.B. Mynors, Clarendon, Oxford 1937. On Cassiodorus see: J.J. O'Donnell, *Cassiodorus.*, University of California press, Berkeley 1979. See also: J.J. Contreni, *The Patristic Legacy to c. 1000*, [in:] *New Cambridge History of the Bible: From 600 to 1450*, eds. R. Marsden and E.A. Matter, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2012, pp. 513–515.

⁶⁵ J.J. Contreni, "The Patristic Legacy to c. 1000", op. cit., p. 514. On the Bible in the Benedictine Order see: D. Dumm, *Cherish Christ Above All: The Bible in the Rule of Benedict*, Paulist Press, Mahwah 1996. U. Köpf, *The Institutional Framework of Christian Exegesis in the Middle Ages*, [in:] *Hebrew Bible, Old Testament: the History of its Interpretation. From the Beginnings to the Middle Ages (Until 1300)*, eds. M. Sæbø, C. Brekelmans, and M. Haran, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen 2000, vol. I/2, pp. 150–156. D. Kasprzak, *Monastic Exegesis and the Biblical Typology of Monasticism in the Patristic Period*, "Theological research: a journal of systematic theology", 2014, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 85–103.

most educated people of the Middle Ages learned how to read. Psalms were not only read and sung but also memorised, as were other passages from the Bible. Most biblical commentaries in the early Middle Ages originated in monastic setting and were destined for fellow monks. Their aim was practical rather than academic: to promote morality and advance spiritual life.

Mediaeval biblical scholarship was rather repetitive than innovative. It is, however, wholly anachronistic to judge them against a modern scientific mentality that praises novelty. For them it was authority rather than innovation that mattered. Hence, it is mistaken to attribute the repetitive character of much medieval scholarship to “decadent culture”⁶⁶. Rather, it was a practical expression of the ecclesiastical reading, which at least since the times of Irenaeus became commonly accepted. This is well illustrated by Bede the Venerable in his homily on John 6:1-14. The leftovers after the multiplication of bread were the mysteries of Scriptures that the crowd could not understand or digest. These had been collected by the disciples, who represented “those more able” of understanding the living Word of God. He meant the Apostles, but also their successors in the teaching office. They ought to decipher the meaning, conserve it, and share it with others. Thus, Bede saw his own task as “following in the footsteps of the fathers” and sharing with his contemporaries the results of their work⁶⁷. His approach was universally imitated throughout all Middle Ages. It was the authority of *decrata et insituta patrum* that mattered. Unsurprisingly, most writers vigorously denied there is anything novel in their works, very much unlike modern scholars⁶⁸.

Such a value ascribed to authority influenced the kind of works medieval authors composed. Among the most popular were *catenae* or chains of quotations, called by medieval authors *florilegia*. This name explained the purpose of such collections: they were seen as collections of the most beautiful flowers collected from the meadows of patristic exegesis⁶⁹. One of the earliest

⁶⁶ This term was used by Smalley in relation to late patristic interpreters (Cassiodorus, Gregory the Great, Bede etc.) see: B. Smalley, *The Study of the Bible...*, op. cit., p. 26.

⁶⁷ “*Patrum vestigia sequens*”, see: J.J. Contreni, “The Patristic Legacy to c. 1000”, op. cit., p. 520. On Bede and his exegesis see: C. Leonardi, *Aspects of Old Testament Interpretation in the Church from the Seventh to the Tenth Century*, [in:] *Hebrew Bible, Old Testament: the History of its Interpretation. From the Beginnings to the Middle Ages (Until 1300)*, eds. M. Sæbø, C. Brekelmans, and M. Haran, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen 2000, vol. I/2, pp. 185–188. H. Reventlow, *History of biblical interpretation. 2: From late antiquity to the end of the Middle Ages*, Society of Biblical Literature, Atlanta 2009, pp. 110–118. S. DeGregorio, *The Venerable Bede and Gregory the Great: exegetical connections, spiritual departures*, “Early Medieval Europe”, 2010, vol. 18, no. 1, pp. 43–60. D.M. Train, *The Venerable Bede’s Manuductive Hermeneutics: Lame Readers, Apostolic Teachers, and Temple Exegesis in his ‘Commentary on Acts’*, “Christianity and Literature”, 2014, vol. 63, no. 2, pp. 173–201.

⁶⁸ An interesting interpretation of mediaeval approach to innovation, see: C.S. Lewis, *The Discarded Image*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1964, p. 211: “If you had asked Layamon or Chaucer “Why do you not make up a brand-new story of your own?” I think they might have replied (in effect) “Surely we are not yet reduced to that?” Spin something out of one’s own head when the world teems with so many noble deeds, wholesome examples, pitiful tragedies, strange adventures, and merry jests which have never yet been set forth quite so well as they deserve? The originality which we regard as a sign of wealth might have seemed to them a confession of poverty. Why make things for oneself like the lonely Robinson Crusoe when there is riches all about you to be had for the taking?”

⁶⁹ Cf. F.A. van Liere, *An Introduction to the Medieval Bible...*, op. cit., p. 144.

examples of such a work was *Quaestiones in Vetus Testamentus* of Isidore of Sevilla⁷⁰. Apart from the respect for authority of the Fathers, such collections had also a practical motivation. In a world where books were a rare luxury, having a compilation of numerous useful quotes in one book was an enormous help to monks and priests.

The crowning achievement of the mediaeval tradition of compiling quotations was *Glossa ordinaria*⁷¹. The practice of glossing, that is, adding short explanatory comments to the text, had begun already in the early Middle Ages⁷². *Glossa ordinaria* was a standardised collection of such comments, based on patristic and Carolingian commentaries, and it became extremely popular in the high Middle Ages. It was by no means a uniform work: it came from different centres of learning (Laon and Bec being two of the most important⁷³), was written by various authors (Anselm and Ralf of Laon being among the most prolific⁷⁴), and was composed at different times. It did not cover all of Biblical books, while the gloss on some more popular books had several redactions (e.g. the Psalms). Sometimes there were even several competing glosses, as was the case with the Book of Revelation⁷⁵. In the course of the 12th century, it became the standardised textbook for students at the University of Paris. Its lasting importance is testified by the fact that alongside the Bible itself, the *Glossa ordinaria* was one of the most frequently printed texts in the early days of the printing industry⁷⁶. Certainly, the gloss in one sense petrified interpretation of the Bible. On the other hand, however, it can be seen as an ongoing dialogue with the past. If the Bible was a sacrament of Christ's real presence in His Church, one could not interpret only the text of

⁷⁰ Isidorus Hispalensis, *Mysticorum expositiones sacramentorum seu Quaestiones in Uetus Testamentum*, PL 87, col. 203-424. On Isidore see: C. Leonardi, "Aspects of Old Testament Interpretation", op. cit., pp. 181–185. H. Reventlow, *History of biblical interpretation 2...*, op. cit., pp. 106–110. M.A. Andrés Sanz, *Lectio sanctorum scripturarum y exégesis en las obras de Isidoro de Sevilla*, "Mélanges de la Casa de Velázquez. Nouvelle série", 2019, no. 49–1, pp. 19–39.

⁷¹ On *Glossa ordinaria* see: G.R. Evans, *The language and logic of the Bible: the road to reformation*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1985, pp. 37–47. L. Smith, *The Glossa ordinaria: Making of a Medieval Bible Commentary*, Brill, Leiden 2009.

⁷² Cf. J.J. Contreni, *Glossing the Bible in the Early Middle Ages: Theodore and Hadrian of Canterbury and John Scottus (Eriugena)*, [in:] *The Study of the Bible in the Carolingian Era*, eds. B.V.N. Edwards and C. Chazelle, Brepols, Turnhout 2003, vol. 3, pp. 19–28.

⁷³ On the school of Laon see: M.L. Colish, *Another Look at the School of Laon*, "Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Âge", 1986, col. 53, pp. 7–22. A. Andrée, *Sacra Pagina: Theology and the Bible from the School of Laon to the School of Paris*, [in:] *A Companion to Twelfth-century Schools*, ed. C. Giraud, Brill, Leiden 2020, pp. 272–314; G.R. Evans, *Masters and Disciples: Aspects of Christian Interpretation of the Old Testament in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries*, [in:] *Hebrew Bible, Old Testament: the History of its Interpretation. From the Beginnings to the Middle Ages (Until 1300)*, eds. M. Sæbø, C. Brekelmans, and M. Haran, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen 2000, vol. I/2, pp. 238–241.

⁷⁴ On Anselm of Laon see: G.R. Evans, "Masters and Disciples", op. cit., pp. 247–251.

⁷⁵ B. Smalley, *The Study of the Bible...*, op. cit., pp. 46–66; F.A. van Liere, *An Introduction to the Medieval Bible...*, op. cit., pp. 154–155.

⁷⁶ *Editio princeps: Biblia cum glossa ordinaria*, Adolph Rusch, Strassburg 1481. All subsequent references to this work are given according to this edition, a copy held at the Library of Erfurt University, available online: https://dhb.thulb.uni-jena.de/receive/ufb_cbu_00000254 (accessed 15.05.2023).

the Bible itself but had to take into an account the way in which this Word had been lived (and consequently commented upon) by past generations⁷⁷.

Mediaeval exegesis imitated the patristic one in searching for a spiritual and not only literal sense of Scriptures. While Origen variously ascribed to the Bible two or three senses, from John Cassian it became customary to identify four senses: literal, allegorical, moral, and anagogical. They are most concisely explained in a medieval adage coming from the Dominican friar Augustine of Denmark: “The letter teaches the facts; allegory what you should believe. The moral sense, what you should do, and anagogy what you should hope for”⁷⁸. Such a four-fold division fitted squarely with the four gospels and four doctors of the Church, who were often linked with one particular sense⁷⁹.

We should not, however, lose sight of the fact that the essential distinction was two-fold: literal and non-literal⁸⁰. The moral and anagogical senses were merely developments of allegory and depended on it. Sometimes allegory was developed even further, and some authors distinguished as many as seven senses. Terminology also varied: the allegorical sense was often called mystical or simply spiritual⁸¹. The choice of a particular model depended partly on purposes an author had in mind. According to de Lubac, the threefold division, with the moral sense preceding allegory was preferred by those concerned with spiritual life, the fourfold, “classical”, by those who were more interested in the doctrine⁸². Monastic settings gave preference to the former, while universities, to which we shall now turn, preferred the latter.

⁷⁷ In recent years some theologians, especially Protestants, suggested the need to return to such an approach and consider more seriously past exegesis. See for instance: K.D. Stanglin, *The letter and spirit of biblical interpretation: from the early church to modern practice*, Baker Academic, Grand Rapids 2018, pp. 3–4: “So biblical interpretation ought to be done in community. But there is a part of this community of interpretation that has not yet been mentioned. We usually neglect these members of the community because they are the easiest to ignore. They are easy to ignore because they are dead. And the longer they have been dead, the more we tend to ignore them. The longer they have been dead, the more out of touch they are with our language and our culture and our problems and our addictions and our needs. And I would argue that this is exactly why we need to hear them. [...] To study the history of exegesis is to give a voice to the most marginalized of all; it is, to borrow the famous words of G. K. Chesterton, ‘the democracy of the dead’”. See also: D.P. Parris, *Reading the Bible with Giants...*, op. cit. J.L. Thompson, *Reading the Bible with the Dead...*, op. cit. M. Levering, *Participatory Biblical exegesis...*, op. cit.

⁷⁸ “Littera gesta docet, quid credas allegoria; moralia quid agas, quo tendas anagogia”. Cited after: F.A. van Liere, *An Introduction to the Medieval Bible...*, op. cit., p. 121.

⁷⁹ H. de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis...*, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 3–8.

⁸⁰ H. de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis...*, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 25–27.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 20–22.

⁸² *Ibid.*, pp. 31–33. Cf. G. Dahan, *Genres, Forms and Various Methods in Christian Exegesis of the Middle Ages*, [in:] *Hebrew Bible, Old Testament: the History of its Interpretation. From the Beginnings to the Middle Ages (Until 1300)*, eds. M. Sæbø, C. Brekelmans, and M. Haran, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen 2000, vol. I/2, p. 202.

1.2.2 Literal reading in late medieval schools

Preoccupation with spiritual senses did not mean that the literal was disregarded⁸³. Unlike ancient allegorisation, which disregarded the literal sense of myths, Christian exegesis always combined literal and spiritual. The difference was in emphasis. While the early Middle Ages were decisively more inclined towards spiritual interpretation, from the 12th century on, the literal sense gained more importance.

This shift was partly linked to a change of milieu of Christian exegesis. The ascendancy of schools and later universities, as well as an increased stress on dialectics, led to an evolution in the way exegesis was done. Monastic commentaries were rather liberal in their structure and were founded upon personal meditation. In schools “the commentaries began to have a more organized structure than that found in the monastic exegesis”⁸⁴. Authors tended to progress systematically through the four senses of the Bible and, at least some of them, attached more value than previously to the literal sense⁸⁵.

Particularly important was the school of St. Victor, located in a Parisian monastery of Regular Canons. The school was begun by Hugh of St. Victor, whose historical interests led him to paying greater attention to the letter of the Bible⁸⁶. He was followed by Richard and Andrew; the latter became one of the greatest commentators of the Bible in the Middle Ages⁸⁷. Andrew was inspired by the Jewish exegesis of his time, which itself experienced a revival of literal interpretation, and he followed rabbinic opinions in numerous matters⁸⁸. For example, he shocked his contemporaries, Richard included, by claiming that Isa. 7:14, the classical prophecy concerning

⁸³ G. Dahan, “Genres, Forms and Various Methods”, op. cit., p. 203: “Although the frequency of tropology, notably monastic tropology, characterizes monastic exegesis, the other levels of meaning are not ignored; as in all medieval Christian exegesis, allegory is common, but it is necessary to note that, contrary to accepted ideas, the literal sense is not neglected, because it gives a stable foundation for the spiritual exegesis and because of the considerable attention given to the words themselves by monastic authors”.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 207.

⁸⁵ On exegesis in schools see: J. Chatillon, *La Bible dans les Ecoles du XIIIe siècle*, [in:] *Le Moyen Âge et la Bible*, eds. G. Lobrichon and P. Riché, Beauchesne, Paris 1984, pp. 163–198. G.R. Evans, *The language and logic of the Bible: the earlier Middle Ages*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1987, pp. 27–36.

⁸⁶ On Victorines in general see: R. Berndt, *Schrift, Schreiber, Schenker: Studien zur Abtei Sankt Viktor in Paris und den Viktorinern*, Akademie Verlag, Berlin 2014. H. Feiss and J. Mousseau, eds., *A Companion to the Abbey of Saint Victor in Paris*, Brill, Leiden 2018. On Hugh of St. Victor see: B. Smalley, *The Study of the Bible...*, op. cit., pp. 83–105. H. Reventlow, *History of biblical interpretation 2...*, op. cit., pp. 160–170; F.A. van Liere, *An Introduction to the Medieval Bible...*, op. cit., pp. 127–129; R. Berndt, *The School of St. Victor in Paris*, [in:] *Hebrew Bible, Old Testament: the History of its Interpretation. From the Beginnings to the Middle Ages (Until 1300)*, eds. M. Sæbø, C. Breckelmans, and M. Haran, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen 2000, vol. 1/2, pp. 469–475. F.A. van Liere, *An Introduction to the Medieval Bible...*, op. cit., pp. 127–129. F.A. van Liere, *Following in the Footsteps of Hugh: Exegesis at Saint Victor, 1142-1242*, [in:] *A Companion to the Abbey of Saint Victor in Paris*, eds. H. Feiss and J. Mousseau, Brill, Leiden 2018, pp. 223–243.

⁸⁷ On Richard see: B. Smalley, *The Study of the Bible...*, op. cit., pp. 106–112. R. Berndt, “The School of St. Victor in Paris”, op. cit., pp. 475–479. On Andrew see: B. Smalley, *The Study of the Bible...*, op. cit., pp. 112–195. R. Berndt, *André de Saint-Victor (+1175): exeète et théologien*, Brepols, Paris 1991. R. Berndt, “The School of St. Victor in Paris”, op. cit., pp. 479–484.

⁸⁸ B. Smalley, *The Study of the Bible...*, op. cit., pp. 150–156.

the birth of Jesus, had been already fulfilled in the prophet's time⁸⁹. Andrew was, however, not opposed to the spiritual interpretation. He believed that his literal interpretations laid down foundations and left to others to build an edifice of spiritual senses upon them⁹⁰.

Increased interest in the literal meaning continued after Andrew's death. At universities, which took over from monasteries the role of leading centres of learning, literal exegesis was seen as the sound basis for the spiritual. The fundamental novelty of exegesis at universities was its "scientific" character. The Bible was no longer only a word to meditate; it became also a text to be studied. At universities, theology, understood as a systematic reflection upon faith, was for the first time separated from *pagina sacra*, that is, reflection upon Scriptures⁹¹. Commentary on the Bible was rigorously structured: first there was a *diviso*, that is a division of a text, usually with many subdivisions even of individual verses. It was followed by *expositio*, that is an explanation of individual verses and words. Finally, there were *dubia* and *quaestiones*, that is responses to simple or more complex problems arising from the text. Moreover, the given text was analysed according to Aristotelian categories of four causes (final, material, formal, and *efficiens*).

This more "scientific" approach fortified a concern with the literal sense. Proliferation of material copies of the biblical text led to a multiplication of errors. To amend these, universities produced *correctoria*, which compared different versions (also Hebrew and Greek ones) of verses considered to be corrupt. Especially important for production of *correctoria* were Parisian Dominicans, with Hugh of Saint Cher as their leader⁹². While such efforts to correct the biblical text were not new, they were, however, intensified in the scholastic era. The need to compare the text with the Hebrew original led to a growth of interest in Jewish exegesis, which also developed a new school of literal exegesis in the Middle Ages⁹³. Two exegetes who were especially notable for their use of Jewish exegesis were the above discussed Andrew of Saint Victor and a 14th-century Franciscan, Nicolas of Lyra⁹⁴.

An increased concern with the literal sense was not an end in itself but was seen as a "scientific" base for further spiritual inquiries. Thomas Aquinas asserted that in order to avoid

⁸⁹ Cf. Andreas de Sancto Victore, *Expositio super Isaiam*, 7.14, ed. F.A. van Liere, 2021, CCCM 53C, pp. 65–68. Richardus de Sancto Victore, *De Emmanuele libri duo*, PL 196. col. 601-666.

⁹⁰ B. Smalley, *The Study of the Bible...*, op. cit., p. 172.

⁹¹ G. Dahan, "Genres, Forms and Various Methods", op. cit., p. 212.

⁹² Cf. L.J. Bataillon, G. Dahan, and P.-M. Gy, eds., *Hugues de Saint-Cher (+1263): bibliste et théologien*, Brepols, Turnhout, Belgium 2004. On *correctoria* see: H. a. G. Houghton, *The Latin New Testament: A Guide to its Early History, Texts, and Manuscripts*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2017, pp. 106–108.

⁹³ A. Grossman, *The School of Literal Jewish Exegesis in Northern France*, [in:] *Hebrew Bible, Old Testament: the History of its Interpretation. From the Beginnings to the Middle Ages (Until 1300)*, eds. M. Sæbø, C. Brekelmans, and M. Haran, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen 2000, vol. I/2, pp. 321–371.

⁹⁴ On Andrew see: R. Berndt, *André de Saint-Victor (+1175)...*, op. cit.; F.A. van Liere, "Following in the Footsteps of Hugh: Exegesis at Saint Victor, 1142-1242", op. cit. On Lyra: D.C. Klepper, *The Insight of Unbelievers: Nicholas of Lyra and Christian Reading of Jewish Text in the Later Middle Ages*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia 2007. Lyra was especially notable for having introduced Rashi's exegesis into Christian thought, cf. H. Reventlow, *History of biblical interpretation 2...*, op. cit., pp. 247–259.

possible confusion and error, any spiritual interpretation needed to be founded upon a solid base of literal exegesis of the Scripture⁹⁵. He also recommended an extended understanding of the literal sense, which also included the authorial intention. Other scholastics expressed similar sentiments⁹⁶. Albert the Great frequently criticised misapplication of the spiritual sense but was never opposed to spiritual reading as such⁹⁷. Most authors emphasised the harmony of all senses, for instance Bonaventure, who compared the four senses to a cithara: “Tota Scriptura est quasi una cithara, et inferior chorda per se non facit harmoniam, sed cum aliis”⁹⁸.

Further progress in the understanding of the literal sense was made by Nicolas of Lyra, arguably the greatest exegete of the late Middle Ages⁹⁹. He developed a theory of “a double literal sense”, which essentially included metaphorical and mystical interpretation in the literal sense. For example, his “literal” interpretation of the Song of Solomon did not conceive of it as an erotic poem, because Lyra deemed carnal love an unworthy theme for a canonical book, but rather interpreted it as Solomon’s desire for eternal felicity and the love of God and the Church¹⁰⁰.

Universities were also responsible for the production of numerous study aids for the Bible. One of them was Thomas Aquinas’ *Catena aurea*, a collection of fragments from Greek and Latin sources arranged as a running commentary on Gospels. In order to compile it, the Dominican had requested numerous translations for the Greek language, making available to the westerners many hitherto inaccessible patristic texts. As it shall be demonstrated later, it seems that Titelmans used *Catena aurea* when composing his commentaries. Scholastics composed also *distinctiones*, that is, explanations of different meanings of some Hebrew words.

⁹⁵ Thomas Aquinas, *Questiones de quolibet*, VII.6.a.1, Ed. Leonina, vol. 25, pp. 27-28: “Id quod potest esse occasio erroris debet in sacra scriptura uitari; set ponere alios sensus preter litteralem in scriptura potest esse occasio erroris, quia quilibet posset exponere scripturam secundum hoc quod ipse vellet ad confirmationem sue opinionis”. Cf. M. Olszewski, *Teoria czterech sensów tekstu biblijnego w I kwestii Summy Teologii Tomasza z Akwinu*, “Principia”, 1995, vol. 13–14, pp. 39–55. A. Michalik, *Teoria czterech sensów Pisma Świętego według św. Tomasza z Akwinu*, “Tarnowskie Studia Teologiczne”, 2004, vol. 23, pp. 117–132.

⁹⁶ Bonaventura, *Breuiolium*, prologus, 6 [in:] *Opuscula varia theologica*, ex Typographia Collegii S. Bonaventurae, Ad Claras Aquas (Quaracchi) 1891, Sancti Bonaventurae Opera Omnia V, p. 207: “Unde sicut qui dedignatur prima addiscere elementa ex quibus dictio integratur nunquam potest noscere nec dictionum significatum nec rectam legem constructionum sic qui litteram sacrae scripturae spernit ad spirituales eius intelligentias nunquam assurget”. Albertus Magnus, *Summa theologiae pars prima*, 1.5.4, ed. S.C.A. Borgnet, Ludovicus Vives, Parisii 1895, Opera omnia 31, pp. 26–30.

⁹⁷ Cf. J. Verger, *L’exegese de l’Universite*, [in:] *Le Moyen Âge et la Bible*, eds. G. Lobrichon and P. Riché, Beauchesne, Paris 1984, pp. 207–208. Cf. K. Froehlich, *Christian Interpretation of the Old Testament in the High Middle Ages*, [in:] *Hebrew Bible, Old Testament: the History of its Interpretation. From the Beginnings to the Middle Ages (Until 1300)*, eds. M. Sæbø, C. Brekelmans, and M. Haran, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen 2000, vol. I/2, pp. 534–535: “his exegetical exploration focused deliberately on the literal sense. This did not mean, however, that he rejected the traditional fourfold sense”.

⁹⁸ Bonaventura, *Collationes in Hexaemeron*, 19.7 [in:] *Opuscula varia theologica*, ex Typographia Collegii S. Bonaventurae, Ad Claras Aquas (Quaracchi) 1891, Sancti Bonaventurae Opera Omnia V, p. 421.

⁹⁹ “sicut edificium declinans a fundamento disponitur ad ruinam, ita expositio mistica discrepans a sensu litterali reputanda est indecens et inepta, vel saltem minus decens certis paribus et minus apta, et ideo volentibus proficere in studio scripture necessarium est incipere ab intellectu sensus litteralis”. Cited after: M. Dove, *Literal Senses in the Song of Songs*, [in:] *Nicholas of Lyra: the Senses of Scripture*, eds. P.D. Krey and L. Smith, Brill, Leiden 2000, p. 129.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 130–132.

All these “scientific” approaches should not misguide us into thinking that the scholastic approach to Scriptures was somehow secular. The aim was always spiritual edification. The final objective of the scholastic exegesis was a homily or a sermon, which presented a spiritual message to an audience in a digestible form. *Lectio* and *discussio* were only stages leading to it: “In tribus igitur consistit exercitium sacrae Scripturae: circa lectionem, disputationem et praedicationem”¹⁰¹. More study should bring more piety, at least in theory.

In the late Middle Ages, there was in fact a turn towards a practical piety in biblical studies. On the one hand, commentaries often took on a more pastoral form, somewhere in between speculative scholastic theology and popular sermon literature¹⁰². On the other, there was a development of lay Bible reading, often in the vernacular, especially in Northern Europe. In the Low Countries, it was linked to the movement of *devotio moderna*. The first Dutch translation of the New Testament was produced by John Scutken at Windesheim, a leading *devotio moderna* monastery¹⁰³. These developments found their resonance in Titelmans’ work, as we shall see in subsequent chapters.

As has been demonstrated by this short discussion, medieval exegetes upheld the ancient consensus about Scriptures. They continued to see it in a sacramental way: as the Word of God living within His Church. Their interpretation always oscillated between fully spiritual and exclusively literal, trying to merge philology with theology in order to reach not only the true meaning of the Bible, but to open up its salvific powers to its readers. This consensus was, however, to be challenged.

1.3 Humanist exegesis and its critics

1.3.1 *The New Learning and the Bible*

Humanism brought significant changes to the intellectual life and questioned the established consensus in biblical exegesis. It was by no means a movement opposed to Christianity¹⁰⁴. Quite the contrary: it was because humanists were devout Christians that they took interest in Christian holy Scriptures. Humanism was not a uniform movement. It was not a philosophical school, nor was it limited to a single type of institution, such as for example a university. It was essentially, to

¹⁰¹ Petrus Cantor, *Summa quae dicitur Verbum abbreviatum (textus prior)*, 1, ed. M. Boutry, 2012, CCCM 196A, p. 14. Cf. G. Dahan, “Genres, Forms and Various Methods”, op. cit., p. 225.

¹⁰² Cf. W.J. Courtenay, *The Bible in the Fourteenth Century: Some Observations*, “Church history”, 1985, vol. 54, no. 2, p. 187.

¹⁰³ S. Folkerts and A.E. Oostindiër, *New Bibles and Old Reading Habits around 1522: The Position of the New Testament Translation of the Devotio Moderna among Dutch Printed Bibles*, “Quaerendo”, 2017, vol. 47, no. 3–4, p. 177.

¹⁰⁴ On the historiography of the relationship of renaissance humanism and Christianity see: W. Caferro, *Contesting the Renaissance*, John Wiley & Sons, New York 2010, pp. 185–189.

use a definition from Peter Burke, “the movement to recover, interpret and assimilate the language, literature, learning and values of ancient Greece and Rome; while a humanist is someone actively involved in the movement, whether a professional teacher, churchman, royal councillor, or whatever”¹⁰⁵. Perhaps the most succinct way to characterise the movement is to use its own motto: *ad fontes*. Unsurprisingly, it turned also to the most important *fontes* of Christianity: the Bible.

One of the first humanists to apply his philological skills to the Bible was Gianozzo Manetti. He translated the New Testament from Greek and later the Psalms from Hebrew¹⁰⁶. In 1456 he defended his work in an *Apology*, responding to charges that his work was needless, since the Bible had already been superbly translated by Jerome¹⁰⁷. His work had a little impact, since it remained in manuscript. The same was the case of Lorenzo Valla, whose work was largely unknown, until discovered by Erasmus. Since Valla was one of three scholars targeted by Titelmans in his *Collationes*, he deserves a little discussion.

Lorenzo Valla was born in Rome in 1407, and after private and self-education, he soon distinguished himself as one of the greatest masters of the Latin language¹⁰⁸. His initial works remained within the realm of philology. Perhaps the best-known example of his philological prowess was his work *De falso credita et ementita Constantini donatione declamatio*, in which he demonstrated that the so-called Donation of Constantine was a mediaeval forgery¹⁰⁹. Around the time he published his work on the Donation, he started turning his attention towards philosophical and theological issues as well. As a philosopher he revived the Epicurean tradition and tried to reconcile it with Christianity¹¹⁰. He was critical of scholastic theology, especially that of the 14th century, though he appreciated some aspects of Thomas Aquinas’s work¹¹¹.

Valla’s great contribution to the development of theology was applying the philological method to the text of the Bible. Valla, a recent historian commented, “as a grammarian ... dealt

¹⁰⁵ P. Burke, *The Spread of Italian Humanism*, [in:] *The Impact of Humanism on Western Europe During the Renaissance*, eds. A. Goodman and A. Mackay, Routledge, London 2014, p. 2.

¹⁰⁶ A. den Haan, *Giannozzo Manetti’s New Testament: Translation Theory and Practice in Fifteenth-Century Italy*, Brill, Leiden 2016. On relationship of Manetti’s work with that of Valla see: A. den Haan, *Giannozzo Manetti’s New Testament: new evidence on sources, translation process and the use of Valla’s Annotationes*, “Renaissance studies”, 2014, vol. 28, pp. 740–746.

¹⁰⁷ E.F. Rice, *Saint Jerome in the Renaissance*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore 1985, p. 95.

¹⁰⁸ On Valla see: M. Fois, *Il pensiero cristiano di Lorenzo Valla: nel quadro storico-culturale del suo ambiente*, Libreria Editrice dell’Università Gregoriana, Roma 1969. G. Di Napoli, *Lorenzo Valla. Filosofia e religione nell’umanesimo italiano*, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, Roma 1971. S.I. Camporeale, *Lorenzo Valla. Umanesimo e teologia, etc.*, Istituto Nazionale di Studi sul Rinascimento, Firenze 1972. C.E. Trinkaus, *Lorenzo Valla*, [in:] *Contemporaries of Erasmus: A Biographical Register of the Renaissance and Reformation*, eds. P.G. Bietenholz and T.B. Deutscher, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 1987, vol. 3, pp. 372–373. J. Monfasani, *The Theology of Lorenzo Valla*, [in:] *Humanism and Early Modern Philosophy*, eds. J. Kraye and M.W.F. Stone, Routledge, London 2000, pp. 1–23.

¹⁰⁹ M. Fois, *Il pensiero cristiano di Lorenzo Valla...*, op. cit., pp. 325–331.

¹¹⁰ See: J. Monfasani, “The Theology of Lorenzo Valla”, op. cit., pp. 7–8. W.J. Wright, *Martin Luther’s Understanding of God’s Two Kingdoms: A Response to the Challenge of Skepticism*, Baker Academic, Grand Rapids 2010, p. 65.

¹¹¹ S.I. Camporeale, *Lorenzo Valla. Umanesimo e teologia, etc.*, op. cit., pp. 145–295. Cf. G. Di Napoli, *Lorenzo Valla. Filosofia e religione nell’umanesimo italiano...*, op. cit., pp. 110–122.

with the Vulgate as he would deal with any other ancient text”¹¹². Thus, his approach was wholly secular, but his intentions were not. Far from attacking the Bible, he intended to buttress its authority by re-establishing its authentic text. Valla was convinced of the Bible’s inspired character, as is evident from his numerous remarks, although he never stated it directly¹¹³. He expressed doubts about the authenticity of some biblical passages, such as the story of Bel in Dan. 14, and several books of the New Testament (the Book of Revelation above all); but this was, however, not heterodox at the time. First, such doubts were expressed already by Church Fathers (especially by Jerome), and secondly, there was no dogmatic definition of the canon until the Council of Trent¹¹⁴. Thus, his biblical work was an act of piety rather than of ungodly audacity.

Valla first turned his attention to the Bible in 1434 during his stay in Lombardy¹¹⁵. He continued his works during his stay in Naples, and by 1443 produced the first redaction of his *Collatio Novi Testamenti*¹¹⁶. It has never been published and remained virtually unknown. The arrival of Greek scholars to Italy, in relation to the Council of Florence, stimulated anew his interest in the text of the New Testament. Greeks, such as Cardinal Bessarion, who knew Valla and encouraged his efforts, brought with them some Greek codices of the Bible, which enabled Valla to recommence his work of correcting the Latin text of the Bible against the Greek text¹¹⁷. Valla worked on the second edition of *Collatio* from 1453 until his death in 1457.

His work was a series of annotations to the text of the New Testament with a principle of correcting the Vulgate against the Greek original. The novelty of Valla’s work consisted in two elements: first, the conviction of the superiority of the Greek text over the Latin translation in establishing the correct meaning, and secondly in collating various Greek manuscripts to establish the correct reading. Collating manuscripts was not entirely new. Throughout the Middle Ages, scholars were perfectly aware that any text is susceptible to corruption due to copyists’ negligence. There were remarkable (although sadly little known both at the time and now) efforts in text criticism of the Bible as early as the 6th century (Cassiodorus), continued by subsequent scholars: Theodulf in the 9th century, Nicholas Maniacora, Stephen Harding, and Andrew of St. Victor in the 12th and Roger Bacon in the 13th century, to name but a few¹¹⁸. Many of them did not hesitate to revert to the Hebrew text in order to verify the correct version. Interestingly, however, this was not the case with Greek, which was little known among mediaeval scholars. Besides, mediaeval correctors of the text essentially aimed to purge the Bible of copyists’ mistakes in order to restore

¹¹² C. Christ-von Wedel, *Erasmus of Rotterdam: Advocate of a New Christianity*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 2013, p. 56.

¹¹³ Cf. M. Fois, *Il pensiero cristiano di Lorenzo Valla...*, op. cit., pp. 397–402.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 403–404.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 414.

¹¹⁶ J.H. Bentley, *Humanists and Holy Writ...*, op. cit., p. 34.

¹¹⁷ Cf. M. Fois, *Il pensiero cristiano di Lorenzo Valla...*, op. cit., pp. 418–419.

¹¹⁸ See: F.A. van Liere, *An Introduction to the Medieval Bible...*, op. cit., pp. 98–102.

the original Latin text, attributed to Jerome. What made Valla's work novel was the fact that he wanted to return to the original Greek text of the New Testament, putting at times under suspicion the correctness of the Latin Vulgate.

Some sources Valla used remain unidentified, but we know of at least seven different Greek and four Latin manuscripts that he used¹¹⁹. Valla, sadly, did not name his sources, rendering the task of attribution almost impossible now. Also, his methodological principles did not always conform to modern standards. For instance, he hardly ever used biblical quotations from the Church Fathers to establish the correct reading. Nevertheless, his scholarship was impressive and ground-breaking for his time.

Valla's interest in his annotations was mostly grammatical and philological, though occasionally it touched upon issues of profound theological importance. Perhaps the best example is provided by his comments on Luke 1:28. He challenged the long-established translation of the Angel's greeting to Maria: "Ave gratia plena. Non magis est ave graece quam salve, χαῖρε, cuius significatio eadem est que gaude. Nec duo verba sunt graece plena gratia, sed unum, κεχαριτωμένη, quod si verbum transferatur e verbo, diceretur gratificata, quod videlicet in gratiam recepta est"¹²⁰. This change might seem rather stylistic than theological, since changing *gratia plena* into *gratificata* was by no means intended to challenge Mary's status within the Catholic faith¹²¹. It touched, however, the scholastic distinctions regarding different types of grace, as did Valla's annotation on 1 Cor. 15:10¹²². Yet, most changes he introduced were of a purely grammatical character, such as in Rom. 1:17, where he corrected the present tense *vivit* to the future *vivet* in accordance with Greek ζήσεται¹²³.

For Valla establishing the correct text of the Bible was not merely a philological exercise, but a foundation of true theology. As has been mentioned above, he expressed frequent reservations about the scholastic methodology. He desired instead to return to a more patristic model of theology.

The rejection of the metaphysical and dialectical theology of his contemporaries and the wholehearted advocacy of the patristic theology had a clear meaning for Valla: theology, in his

¹¹⁹ J.H. Bentley, *Humanists and Holy Writ...*, op. cit., pp. 38–39.

¹²⁰ L. Valla, *In Latinam Novi Testamenti interpretationem ex collatione Graecorum exemplarium adnotationes apptime vtilis*, In vico sancti Iacobi sub Leone Argento at in monte diui Hilarii sub Speculo, Paris 1505. f. XVr-v.

¹²¹ Cf. M. Fois, *Il pensiero cristiano di Lorenzo Valla...*, op. cit., p. 432.

¹²² L. Valla, *In Latinam Novi Testamenti interpretationem...*, op. cit. f. XXXIIIr. Cf. J.H. Bentley, *Humanists and Holy Writ...*, op. cit., p. 57.

¹²³ L. Valla, *In Latinam Novi Testamenti interpretationem...*, op. cit. f. XXVIIr.

opinion, should be founded on the Bible, the source and deposit of Revelation, and be expressed in the decorous and learned form of classical culture, as it was the case with the Fathers¹²⁴.

His predecessors could not possibly have arrived at such a theology due to their ignorance of Greek. He criticised, among others, Heimo of Auxerre (whom he falsely identified as Remigius), and Thomas Aquinas, doubting the legend that the latter had been praised by Saint Paul himself for his commentary on the Pauline epistles¹²⁵. Thus, Valla pioneered a new approach to theology, a *theologia rhetorica*, to borrow a phrase from Charles Trinkhaus¹²⁶. It was supposed to be closely based on the correct text of the Scripture. Hence, philology was for Valla the way to do theology.

Valla's work had initially very little impact. His *Collatio* remained in manuscript copies, circulated only among a relatively narrow circle of intellectuals. Some suggest it was the result of rather unpleasant encounters that Valla had had with the inquisition in 1444¹²⁷. Indeed, his work provoked some opposition, with critical comments voiced by fellow humanist Poggio Bracciolini¹²⁸. Valla's work became hugely influential only when it was accidentally discovered by Erasmus of Rotterdam in the monastery of Abbey of Parc, near Leuven, in 1504¹²⁹. Erasmus published it a year later, changing the title to *In Novum Testamentum Adnotationes*, and adding his own preface, in which he praised Valla's achievement. This publication became an impulse for many humanists, in the first place for Erasmus himself, to turn their attention towards the Bible.

Before we proceed to discuss Erasmus' epoch-making achievements in biblical studies, it is of benefit to briefly present another humanist, whose work preceded that of Erasmus, and who alongside him and Valla was targeted in Titelmans' *Collationes*. Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples (Jacobus Faber Stapulensis) was a French humanist born in Picardy before 1460, who distinguished himself by publishing first texts of Aristotle and later of Pseudo-Dionisius the

¹²⁴ G. Di Napoli, *Lorenzo Valla. Filosofia e religione nell'umanesimo italiano...*, op. cit., p. 129: "Il rifiuto della teologia metafisicatrice e dialettica dei contemporanei e la calda proposta della teologia patristica avevano per Valla un chiaro significato: la teologia, a suo giudizio, doveva rifarsi alla sostanza biblica, fonte e deposito del dato rivelato, e alla forma decorosa e dotta della cultura classica, così come era avvenuto coi Padri".

¹²⁵ According to a late mediaeval legend, Paul supposedly appeared to Thomas Aquinas and praised his commentaries as surpassing all hitherto written. Referring to Thomas' commentary on Paul, Valla commented: "Et postea aiunt Paulum sese post confecta commentaria Thomae exhibuisse testificantem a nemine magis quam a Thoma intellectum. Etiamne magis quam a Basilio, Gregorio Nazianzeno, Chrysostomo? Quid Graecos dico? Etiam magis quam ab Hilario, Ambrosio, Hieronymo, Augustino? Peream nisi id conventitium". Quoted after: G. Di Napoli, *Lorenzo Valla. Filosofia e religione nell'umanesimo italiano...*, op. cit., p. 108.

¹²⁶ Cited in J.H. Bentley, *Humanists and Holy Writ...*, op. cit., p. 63.

¹²⁷ See: J. Monfasani, "The Theology of Lorenzo Valla", op. cit., pp. 25–26.

¹²⁸ Cf. S.I. Camporeale, *Poggio Bracciolini contro Lorenzo Valla*, [in:] *Poggio Bracciolini, 1380-1980: nel VI centenario della nascita*, eds. P. Bracciolini, R. Fubini, and Istituto nazionale di studi sul Rinascimento, Sansoni, Firenze 1982, pp. 137–162.

¹²⁹ See: J.H. Bentley, *Humanists and Holy Writ...*, op. cit., p. 116.

Areopagite¹³⁰. Inspired by Erasmus' *Enchiridion* and even more so by Valla's *Adnotationes*, he turned his attention to the Bible. In 1509 he published a critical translation of the Psalms under the title *Quincuplex Psalterium*. Three years later this was followed by the first edition of his commentaries on the Pauline Epistles and the second in 1516¹³¹. Lefèvre's continued interest in Scriptures led him to publish a French translation of the New Testament in 1523 and of the Old in 1530. From 1525 onwards he was intellectually close to evangelical Reformers, criticising the sacrificial character of the Eucharist, the doctrine of the real presence, and the intercession of saints¹³². He died at the court of Queen Margaret of Navarre in 1536.

We shall focus on Lefèvre's commentaries on Paul, on which also Titelmans concentrated his critique. According to both contemporary and modern critics, the Frenchman's work was short of the philological standard established by Valla. Jeremy Bentley accused him of a "lack of an adequate critical faculty"¹³³. His example of this was the inclusion of the apocryphal correspondence of Paul and Seneca in Lefèvre's commentary. Christoph Schönau, however, demonstrated that Lefèvre was aware of the dubious authenticity of these letters, as is clear from his preface to them. Moreover, the table of contents clearly distinguished the apocryphal letters from those, whose canonicity was commonly acknowledged¹³⁴.

Bentley's criticism echoed that of Erasmus. Shortly after the publication of the second edition of Lefèvre's commentary, the humanist from Rotterdam rejoined with an *Apologia ad Fabrum* and complained about this publication to his friends and the author himself¹³⁵. Erasmus criticised the inclusion of the apocryphal correspondence but also reproached Lefèvre for translation mistakes. The most important point of their controversy was the translation of Heb. 2:7, to which Erasmus devoted almost all of his *Apologia*¹³⁶. Erasmus rendered this quotation from Psalm 8 as "fecisti eum paululo inferiorem angelis", while Lefèvre preferred "minuisti eum paulo

¹³⁰ On Lefèvre see: P.E. Hughes, *Lefèvre, pioneer of ecclesiastical renewal in France*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 1984. H. Heller, *Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples*, [in:] *Contemporaries of Erasmus. A Biographical Register of The Renaissance and Reformation*, eds. P.G. Bietenholz and T.B. Deutscher, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 1986, vol. 2, pp. 315–318. C. Schönau, *Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples und die Reformation*, Gütersloher Verlagshaus, Heidelberg 2017, pp. 9–10.

¹³¹ Although the edition has 1515 as the date of publication, it could not have been printed earlier than November 1516, see: C. Schönau, *Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples und die Reformation...*, op. cit., p. 9.

¹³² H. Heller, *The Evangelicism of Lefèvre d'Étaples: 1525*, "Studies in the Renaissance", 1972, vol. 19, pp. 42–77.

¹³³ J.H. Bentley, *Humanists and Holy Writ...*, op. cit., p. 11.

¹³⁴ C. Schönau, *Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples und die Reformation...*, op. cit., p. 88.

¹³⁵ Erasmus complained about Lefèvre to More (Allen, ep. 597; vol. III, pp. 5–6: "Faber amicus haud admodum amice mecum egit") and Budé (Allen, ep. 778; vol. III, pp. 223–230), as well as to Lefèvre himself (Allen, ep. 659; vol. III, pp. 81–82: "nescio quis deus immisit in animum vt, cum nihil esset causae, tam odiosa disputatione me lacesseres"; Allen, ep. 814; vol. III, p. 285).

¹³⁶ D. Erasmus, *Apologia ad Iacobum Fabrum Stapulensem*, ed. A.W. Steenbeek, Elsevier, Amsterdam 1996, ASD IX–3. English translation: D. Erasmus, *Controversies: Apologia ad Fabrum / Appendix de scriptis Clithovei / Dilutio / Responsio ad disputationem de divortio*, ed. G. Bedouelle, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 2016, CWE 83, pp. 3–107.

minus ab deo”¹³⁷. Erasmus’ argumentation was essentially based upon philological grounds and supported with numerous arguments. Lefèvre, on the other hand, followed theological principles to which he subjected his philological choices. It reflected his strong Christocentric convictions. Lefèvre was less concerned with philology and more influenced by a mystical interpretation of the Scripture¹³⁸. Thus, the polemic between the two humanists revealed methodological differences between them, which is all the more important, as it foreshadows some points of disagreement between Titelmans and Erasmus.

The polemic between Erasmus and Lefèvre was not an entirely disinterested, academic discussion. Quite the contrary. It has been rightly emphasised by Schönau that Erasmus had attacked Lefèvre not only out of scholarly love of truth, but above all else, because he had perceived his translation of Pauline letters as a rival to his own¹³⁹. Although both men met in Paris in 1511 and entertained several intimate conversations (according to Erasmus), none informed the other about his work on the Bible translation that both were undertaking at the time. Lefèvre was silent about his first edition of Pauline letters, as was Erasmus about his *Novum Instrumentum*¹⁴⁰. In fact, there was some rivalry between Erasmus and other scholars, especially the group from Alcalá working under auspices of Cardinal Cisneros, to produce the authoritative text of the New Testament. Erasmus likely sped up the date of the publication of his work in order not to be overtaken by the *Complutensian Polyglot*¹⁴¹. He also secured an imperial monopoly on selling the Greek New Testament in the Holy Roman Empire for four years, thus forcing a delay in the publication of the Alcalá Bible until 1522. The *Complutensian Polyglot* was another towering achievement of biblical humanism, but because it only tangentially touched Titelmans’ work, it does not fall within the field of this study¹⁴².

¹³⁷ D. Erasmus, *Annotationes in Nouum Testamentum (pars sexta)*, ed. P.F. van Poll-van de Lisdonk, Brill, Leiden 2014, ASD VI–10, pp. 240–270. In the 1535 edition *paululo* was changed into *paulisper*. J. Faber (Stapulensis), *Pauli epistolae quatuordecim*, Henricus Stephanus, Paris 1512, ff. 56v. 224r.

¹³⁸ For Lefèvre’s interest in mystics see: E.F. Rice, *Jacques Lefevre d’Etaples and the medieval Christian mystics*, [in:] *Florilegium Historiale Essays presented to Wallace K. Ferguson*, eds. J.G. Rowe and W.H. Stockdale, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 1971, pp. 89–124.

¹³⁹ C. Schönau, *Jacques Lefèvre d’Etaples und die Reformation...*, op. cit., p. 92.

¹⁴⁰ Erasmus thought that *instrumentum* was a better name than *testamentum* for the Christian sacred writings. However, due to the long-established popularity of the latter name, from the second edition of 1519 onwards, he called his translation *Novum Testamentum*, see: J.H. Bentley, *Humanists and Holy Writ...*, op. cit., p. 121.

¹⁴¹ Cf. J.K. Elliott, *The Text of the New Testament*, [in:] *A History of Biblical Interpretation: The Medieval Through the Reformation Periods*, eds. A.J. Hauser and D.F. Watson, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 2009, pp. 230–233. See also C. Augustijn, *Erasmus: His Life, Works, and Influence*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 1991, pp. 90–91.

¹⁴² For Complutensian Polyglot see: J.H. Bentley, *Humanists and Holy Writ...*, op. cit., pp. 70–111. also C. del V. Rodriguez, *Antonio Nebrija’s Biblical Scholarship*, [in:] *Biblical Humanism and Scholasticism in the Age of Erasmus*, ed. E. Rummel, Brill, Leiden 2008, pp. 57–72. On the relationship of Erasmus’ to Alcalá scholars see: I. Garcia Pinilla, *Reconsidering the Relationship between the Complutensian Polyglot Bible and Erasmus’ Novum Testamentum*, [in:] *Basel 1516: Erasmus’ Edition of the New Testament*, eds. M. Wallraff, S. Seidel Menchi, and K. von Greyerz, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen 2016, pp. 59–77.

Erasmus only turned his attention to the Holy Scripture when he was already a middle-aged man. Born in Rotterdam in 1466, he soon established himself as one of the greatest arbiters of elegant Latin in his time¹⁴³. He gained fame by the publication of *Adagia* in 1500, a compilation of ancient Greek and Latin proverbs with explanations¹⁴⁴. This was later followed with *Enchiridion militis Christiani* in 1503, which first espoused Erasmus' vision of the reform of Christian life¹⁴⁵. Apart from publications, Erasmus developed a broad network of friendships, especially in England, where he spent several years at the beginning of the 16th century¹⁴⁶.

With the discovery of Valla's *Collatio*, Erasmus took on the study of Sacred Scriptures. He had already taken some interest in them under the influence of his English friend John Colet¹⁴⁷. However, his initial approach to exegesis was purely spiritual. He favoured highly allegorical interpretations in Origen's fashion¹⁴⁸. It was Valla's work which made him realise the importance of philology for the study of the Bible.

Interest in the Bible corresponded well with the erasmian ideal of the reform of Christianity. As most other humanists, Erasmus was a staunch opponent of scholastic theology. He had developed a strong disdain of scholastic theology at the University of Paris, where he was sent in 1495 to stay at the Collegium Montaigu. Montaigu later became an important formative factor for Titelmans¹⁴⁹. Erasmus could not stand the detailed disputes of scholastic masters, whom he scornfully labelled 'scotists'¹⁵⁰. This, combined with his disappointments in religious life, led him

¹⁴³ A very readable, although outdated (1st published in 1924) narrative of Erasmus's life is provided by J. Huizinga, *Erasmus and the Age of Reformation*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2014. For Erasmus' youth see pp. 1-19. On Erasmus' youth in more recent biographies see: R.H. Bainton, *Erasmus of Christendom*, Scribner, New York 1969, pp. 3-26. A. Hyma, *The Youth of Erasmus*, Russell and Russell, New York 1968. R.J. Schoeck, *Erasmus of Europe: the Making of a Humanist 1467-1500*, Barnes and Noble, New York 1990. C. Augustijn, *Erasmus: His Life, Works, and Influence...*, op. cit., pp. 21-29. A.G. Dickens and W.R.D. Jones, *Erasmus the reformer*, Methuen, London 1994, pp. 19-40. For recent bibliography on Erasmus see: E. MacPhail, ed., *A Companion to Erasmus*, Brill, Leiden 2023, pp. 345-357.

¹⁴⁴ On Adages see: R. Kilpatrick, *Proverbial Wisdom: The Adagiorum Chiliades*, [in:] *A Companion to Erasmus*, ed. E. MacPhail, Brill, Leiden 2023, pp. 103-118.

¹⁴⁵ R.J. Schoeck, *Erasmus of Europe: the Prince of Humanists 1501-1536*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 1993, pp. 28-40.

¹⁴⁶ On Erasmus in England see: R.J. Schoeck, *Erasmus in England, 1499-1517. 'Translatio Studii' and the 'Studia Humanitatis'*, "Classical and Modern Literature", 1987, vol. 7, pp. 269-283. E. Rummel, *Fertile Ground. Erasmus's Travels in England*, [in:] *Travel and Translation in the Early Modern Period*, ed. C.G.D. Biase, Brill, Leiden 2006, pp. 45-52. On Erasmus' networks of influence see: R.J. Schoeck, *Erasmus of Europe: the Prince of Humanists...*, op. cit., pp. 247-262.

¹⁴⁷ On Colet see: J.B. Trapp, *John Colet*, [in:] *Contemporaries of Erasmus. A Biographical Register of The Renaissance and Reformation*, eds. P.G. Bietenholz and T.B. Deutscher, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 1985, vol. 1, pp. 324-328. J.B. Gleason, *John Colet*, University of California Press, Berkeley 1989. J. Arnold, *Dean John Colet of St. Paul's: Humanism and Reform in Early Tudor England*, Tauris, London 2007.

¹⁴⁸ J.H. Bentley, *Humanists and Holy Writ...*, op. cit., p. 116.

¹⁴⁹ P. Sartori, "Frans Titelmans", op. cit., pp. 220-221.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. J. Huizinga, *Erasmus and the Age of Reformation...*, op. cit., pp. 21-23. A.G. Dickens and W.R.D. Jones, *Erasmus the reformer...*, op. cit., pp. 93-97. A broader panorama of scholastic-humanist debates see: E. Rummel, *The Humanist-scholastic Debate in the Renaissance & Reformation*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1998. J.H. Overfield, *Humanism and Scholasticism in Late Medieval Germany*, [in:] *Humanism and Scholasticism in Late Medieval Germany*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2019.

to a project of a reform of Christian life. It was a very humanist project, centred around the idea of *ad fontes*. Erasmus believed that a return to a simple, biblical theology of the Church Fathers could promote a more godly, moral life. A true disciple of the *devotio moderna* movement, to which he owed his schooling¹⁵¹, he emphasised inner piety and derided external observances. The discovery of Valla's manuscript made him aware that the return to the sources needed to go further than he had previously envisaged: to the original text of the Bible itself.

Erasmus started studying Greek with a perspective of working on the Bible already in 1500, however it was not until 1511 that he began a systematic work on collating manuscripts¹⁵². He followed Valla's footsteps and developed his method further. The first results of his labour were published in 1516 by Johan Froben of Basel as *Novum Instrumentum*¹⁵³. It consisted of the Greek text of the New Testament, established on the basis of several manuscripts, a new Latin translation by Erasmus, and a set of notes concerning both textual criticism and translation. The work was far from perfect, largely due to the haste in which it was executed.

Erasmus explained his purpose in a preface entitled *Paraclesis*. First, he lamented that although all disciples of philosophical schools know the writings of their founders very well, Christians, who follow a much superior philosopher, are ignorant of his words¹⁵⁴. This, according to Erasmus, was the root of all calamities that troubled the Church of his time. The Bible, he claimed, should be accessible to all in order to transform the lives of all. "This philosophy accommodates itself equally to all. It lowers itself to infants, adjusting to their need... while it

¹⁵¹ R.J. Schoeck, *Erasmus of Europe: the Making of a Humanist...*, op. cit., pp. 42–60.

¹⁵² J.H. Bentley, *Humanists and Holy Writ...*, op. cit., pp. 116–117.

¹⁵³ A. Rabil, *Erasmus and the New Testament: the mind of Christian Humanist*, Trinity University Press, San Antonio 1972, pp. 37–127. E. Rummel, *Erasmus' Annotations on the New Testament: From Philologist to Theologian*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 1986. C.L. Heesakkers, *Erasmus And The Philological Study Of The New Testament*, [in:] *Between Scylla and Charybdis: learned letter writers navigating the reefs of religious and political controversy in early modern Europe*, Brill, Leiden 2010, pp. 35–52. J.K. Elliott, "Novum Testamentum editum est": *The Five-Hundredth Anniversary of Erasmus's New Testament*, "The Bible translator", 2016, vol. 67, no. 1, pp. 9–28. M. Wallraff, S. Seidel Menchi, and K. von Greyerz, eds., *Basel 1516: Erasmus' Edition of the New Testament*, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen 2016. M.H. de Lang, "Fidelius, apertius, significantius": *The New Testament Translated and Edited by Erasmus of Rotterdam, 1516*, "The Bible Translator", 2016, vol. 67, no. 1, pp. 5–8. H.J. de Jonge, *Erasmus' Novum Testamentum of 1519*, "Novum Testamentum", 2019, vol. 61, no. 1, pp. 1–25. R.D. Sider, ed., *The New Testament Scholarship of Erasmus: An Introduction with Erasmus' Prefaces and Ancillary Writings*, University of Toronto Press 2019, CWE 41. T. Amalou and A. Vanautgaerden, eds., *Le Nouveau Testament d'Érasme, 1516: regards sur l'Europe des humanistes*, Brepols, Turnhout 2020. R. Faber, *Erasmus' Novum Instrumentum (1516): Reforming the Bible into the Bible of the Reformation*, [in:] *Renaissance Und Bibelhumanismus*, eds. J.M.J.L.V. Ravenswaay and H.J. Selderhuis, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen 2020, pp. 295–312. J. Bloemendal, *Erasmus and Biblical Scholarship*, [in:] *A Companion to Erasmus*, ed. E. MacPhail, Brill, Leiden 2023, pp. 68–89. On Erasmus' publisher, Johan Froben see: V. Sebastiani, *Johann Froben, Printer of Basel: a Biographical Profile and Catalogue of his Editions*, Brill, Leiden 2018.

¹⁵⁴ Cf. D. Erasmus Roterodamus, *Paraclesis ad lectorem pium*, [in:] *Ausgewählte Werke*, ed. H. Holborn, Beck, München 1964, pp. 139–141. See also LB, vol. 5, col. 138E-139E. English translation: R.D. Sider, *The New Testament Scholarship of Erasmus...*, op. cit., pp. 407–409.

does not fail the lowest, the highest also find it worthy of admiration”¹⁵⁵. Thus, it was his dream to equip every Christian with a simple and understandable version of Scriptures. While his translation into Latin was aimed at an educated reader, he also advocated translations into vernacular, so that even commoners could feed themselves on Christ’s teaching.

And oh, that these books were translated into every tongue of every land so that not only the Scots and the Irish, but Turks and Saracens too could read and get to know them. ... How I wish that the farmer at his plough would chant some passage from these books, that the weaver at his shuttles would sing something from them; that the traveller would relieve the tedium of his journey with stories of this kind¹⁵⁶.

Erasmus believed that sheer knowledge of Scriptures would incite people to a morally upright conduct. His hope was not to provide new arguments in intellectual disputes, but to transform the lives of the readers. “I should prefer to be a godly theologian with Jerome than to be undefeated with Scotus”, claimed Erasmus¹⁵⁷. Thus, the *Novum Instrumentum* was the foremost element of his envisaged project of reform.

Erasmus’ work was truly revolutionary. It was the first publication of the Greek text of the New Testament in the West. But not only this; Erasmus’ new translation of the Bible was to stir much debate, as did his methodology. Erasmus made clear that he considered profound knowledge of languages a primary prerequisite for an exegete¹⁵⁸. Mastery of other disciplines, such as dialectic, rhetoric, arithmetic, music etc. as well as knowledge of the natural world were also

¹⁵⁵ Cf. D. Erasmus Roterodamus, “Paraclesis ad lectorem pium”, op. cit., pp. 141–142: “Haec omnibus ex aequo sese accommodat, submittit se parvulis, ad illorum dulcedinem sese attemperat, [...] At rursus ita non deest infimis, ut summis etiam sit admirabilis”. English translation: R.D. Sider, *The New Testament Scholarship of Erasmus...*, op. cit., pp. 409–410. This argument echoes that of Gregorius Magnus, *Moralia in Iob*, ed by. M. Adriaen, 1979, CCSL 143, p. 6: “Diivinus etenim sermo sicut mysteriis prudentes exercet, sic plerumque superficie simplices refouet. Habet in publico unde paruulos nutriat, seruat in secreto unde mentes sublimium in admiratione suspendat. Quasi quidam quippe est fluuius, ut ita dixerim, planus et altus, in quo et agnus ambulet et elephas natet”.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. D. Erasmus Roterodamus, “Paraclesis ad lectorem pium”, op. cit., p. 142: “Atque, utinam haec in omnes omnium linguas essent transfusa, ut non solum a Scotis et Hibernis, sed a Turcis quoque et Saracenis legi cognoscique possint. [...] Utinam hinc ad stivam aliquid decantet agricola, hinc nonnihil ad radios suos moduletur textor, huiusmodi fabulis itineris taedium levet viator”. English translation: R.D. Sider, *The New Testament Scholarship of Erasmus...*, op. cit., p. 411.

¹⁵⁷ D. Erasmus Roterodamus, *Methodus*, [in:] *Ausgewählte Werke*, ed. H. Holborn, Beck, München 1964, p. 162. “Denique malim cum Hieronymo pius esse theologus quam cum Scoto Invictus”. English translation: R.D. Sider, *The New Testament Scholarship of Erasmus...*, op. cit., p. 453. On Erasmus’ esteem for Jerome see: J.C. Olin, *Erasmus and Saint Jerome. An Appraisal of the Bond*, [in:] *Erasmus of Rotterdam: the Man and the Scholar*, eds. W.T.M. Frijhoff and J. Sperna Weiland, Brill, Leiden 1988, pp. 182–186. H.M. Pabel, *St. Jerome’s Exegetical Authority in Erasmus of Rotterdam’s Annotations on the New Testament*, “Church History and Religious Culture”, 2016, vol. 2016, 96, no. 4, pp. 565–594. Erasmus edited Jerome’s works, see: H.M. Pabel, *Herculean labours: Erasmus and the editing of St. Jerome’s letters in the Renaissance*, Brill, Leiden 2008.

¹⁵⁸ D. Erasmus Roterodamus, “Methodus”, op. cit., p. 151: “prima cura debetur perdiscendis tribus linguis Latinae, Graecae, Hebraicae, quod constet omnem scripturam mysticam hisce proditam esse”. Cf. R.D. Sider, *The New Testament Scholarship of Erasmus...*, op. cit., p. 428.

helpful¹⁵⁹. What is significant, however, is that he did not mention logic, which once again shows his anti-scholastic stand. Theology stems from an attentive reading of the source-text, not from carefully crafted syllogisms. Instead of logic, a theologian should possess an apt grasp of history, so that he might correctly judge the context.

So that the Scriptures might more surely be interpreted correctly, the theologian should not think it enough to have picked out four of five little words, he should consider the context from which the words arise, by whom they are spoken, to whom, the time, the occasion, the words, what has preceded, what follows. For it is from gathering and weighing these things that one grasps the meaning of what is said¹⁶⁰.

According to Christine Christ-Von Wedel, it was precisely this new historical awareness which characterised Erasmus' approach to theology, while scholastic theology consisted of timeless truths deduced in logical manner¹⁶¹.

This sense of historical contingency guided his philology. The text of the Bible did not fall from heaven, but was a human construct, hence it was open to human error. His remarks on the historical context of biblical authors and Church Fathers shocked Johannes Eck and Martin Luther alike, perhaps one of the very few things to unite them at the time¹⁶². For instance, noticing a difference between the original text of Micah and the quotation in Matt. 2:6, Erasmus commented that the Evangelist must have simply erred¹⁶³. Following the example of Valla, Erasmus tried to

¹⁵⁹ D. Erasmus Roterodamus, "Methodus", op. cit., p. 153: "Porro si rara quaedam ingenii felicitas et alba quod dici solet indoles insignem theologum polliceri videbitur, haud mihi displicet, quod placuit et Augustino, ut moderate degustatis elegantioribus disciplinis instruat ac praeparetur, nempe dialectica, rhetorica, arithmetica, musica, astrologia, cum primis autem rerum naturalium cognitione velut animantium, arborum, gemmarum, ad haec locorum, praesertim illorum, quos divinae litterae commemorant". Cf. R.D. Sider, *The New Testament Scholarship of Erasmus...*, op. cit., p. 434.

¹⁶⁰ D. Erasmus Roterodamus, "Methodus", op. cit., p. 158: "Idque quo certius fiat, non sat habeat quattuor aut quinque decerpisse verbula, circumspiciat, unde natum sit quod dicitur, a quo dicatur, cui dicatur, quo tempore, qua occasione, quibus verbis, quid praecesserit, quid consequatur. Quandoquidem ex hisce rebus expensis collectisque deprehenditur, quid sibi velit quod dictum est". English translation: R.D. Sider, *The New Testament Scholarship of Erasmus...*, op. cit., p. 446.

¹⁶¹ C. Christ-von Wedel, *Erasmus of Rotterdam: Advocate of a New Christianity...*, op. cit., pp. 5–10.

¹⁶² Allen, ep. 769, vol. III, pp. 209-212: "Istis enim verbis innuere videris Euangelistas more humano scripsisse; et quod memoriae confisi haec scripserint, quod libros videre neglexerint, quo dita, hoc est o beam causam, lapsi sint". There were many more accusations along these lines in the letter. Moreover, Eck advised Erasmus to show more reverence to Augustine: "Idcirco displicet mihi iudicium tuum, quod de Augustino super Ioanne affers; 'Impudentissimum' asseris 'alterum alteri copariri'". His words bear strong resemblance to Luther's remarks in a letter to Spalatin: M. Luther, *Luther An Spalatin. Wittenberg, 19. Oktober 1516*, [in:] *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe. Briefwechsel*, ed. G. Bebermeyer, Hermann Böhlhaus Nachfolger, Weimar 1930, vol. 1, pp. 70–71. Cf. C. Christ-von Wedel, *Erasmus of Rotterdam: Advocate of a New Christianity...*, op. cit., pp. 5–7. 82-83. On Erasmus' uses of Augustine see: C.B. Brown, *Erasmus Against Augustine and Wittenberg: The Ecclesiastes and the De doctrina christiana*, "Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte", 2013, vol. 104, no. 1, pp. 9-34. A. Visser, *Reading Augustine through Erasmus' Eyes: Humanist Scholarship and Paratextual Guidance in the Wake of the Reformation*, "Erasmus of Rotterdam Society yearbook", 2008, vol. 28, no. 1, pp. 67–90.

¹⁶³ D. Erasmus, *Annotationes in Nouum Testamentum (pars prima)*, ed. P.F. Hovingh, Elsevier, Amsterdam 2003, ASD VI–5, p. 82: "ipsi euangelistae testimonia huiusmodi non e libris depromperint, sed memoriae fidentes, it vt fit, lapsi sint".

extricate the text of the Bible from corruptions that had crept into it in the course of history. Like Valla he collated and compared Greek manuscripts, but he far surpassed the Italian in the scope and depth of his criticism.

Erasmus worked on a much broader collection of manuscripts than Valla. Some of them he obtained in England, including the *Codex Leicestersiensis*, now highly valued by scholars, but little used by the humanist from Rotterdam. Most of his codices came from the collection of John of Ragusa, which was stored at the Dominican library in Basel¹⁶⁴. He also consulted several scholars about manuscripts that he could not inspect personally. For instance, Juan Ginés de Sepulveda, the Vatican librarian, supplied him with notes concerning *Codex Vaticanus*¹⁶⁵. Erasmus, however, was very sceptical about this manuscript, now considered to be one of the most reliable, because he wrongly believed that it had been corrected after the Vulgate¹⁶⁶. In fact, he had a particular bias against manuscripts which supported the Vulgate version. Consequently, in almost all cases he followed manuscripts of the so-called Byzantine family of text, which were only a few centuries old, and are now considered unreliable by biblical scholars¹⁶⁷. It would, however, be unfair to blame Erasmus too much for this, since his was a pioneering effort, and, as Bentley rightly notes, it was not until the 19th century that scholars became aware of various textual families¹⁶⁸.

Erasmus used his manuscripts very ingeniously. Not only was he able to note differences, but he also formulated plausible explanations for text corruptions. He was the first to formulate the now well-established rule of *lectio difficilior*¹⁶⁹, he used extensive patristic citations to establish the most correct reading, and even tried to infer from ancient Latin translations a possible wording of the Greek original¹⁷⁰. Perhaps the most famous case of his textual criticism was the so-called comma Johanneum, a medieval gloss to 1 John 5:7-8. It was considered the key proof-text

¹⁶⁴ For a detailed discussion of manuscripts used by Erasmus see: J.H. Bentley, *Humanists and Holy Writ...*, op. cit., pp. 125–137. E. Rummel, *Erasmus' Annotations on the New Testament: From Philologist to Theologian...*, op. cit., pp. 35–42. P. Andrist, *Structure and History of the Biblical Manuscripts Used by Erasmus for his 1516 Edition*, [in:] *Basel 1516: Erasmus' Edition of the New Testament*, eds. M. Wallraff, S. Seidel Menchi, and K. von Greyerz, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen 2016, pp. 81–124. A.J. Brown, *The Manuscript Sources and Textual Character of Erasmus' 1516 Greek New Testament*, [in:] *Basel 1516: Erasmus' Edition of the New Testament*, eds. M. Wallraff, S. Seidel Menchi, and K. von Greyerz, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen 2016, pp. 125–144.

¹⁶⁵ J.K. Elliott, "The Text of the New Testament", op. cit., p. 244. J. Krans, *Erasmus and Codex Vaticanus: An Overview and an Evaluation*, "Annali di Storia dell'Esegesi", 2020, vol. 37, no. 2, pp. 447–470.

¹⁶⁶ See: J.H. Bentley, *Humanists and Holy Writ...*, op. cit., pp. 137–138. J.K. Elliott, "The Text of the New Testament", op. cit., p. 237.

¹⁶⁷ J.K. Elliott, "The Text of the New Testament", op. cit., p. 243. For the reliability of textual families see: B.M. Metzger and B.D. Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2005, pp. 274–280.

¹⁶⁸ J.H. Bentley, *Humanists and Holy Writ...*, op. cit., p. 137.

¹⁶⁹ *Lectio difficilior* is a now a commonly accepted rule of textual criticism, which states that the more difficult reading of a text (that is, for example, more awkward from a theological perspective) is usually the earlier, because copyists tended to simplify and clarify obscure passages.

¹⁷⁰ An overview of Erasmus's textual criticism see: J.H. Bentley, *Humanists and Holy Writ...*, op. cit., pp. 137–159.

for the doctrine of the Trinity. Erasmus, however, demonstrated it to be a later addition, which stirred much debate and controversy¹⁷¹.

Even more contentious than his alterations to the Greek text was his translation. According to H. J. de Jonge, the new translation was more important for Erasmus than the critical edition of the Greek text¹⁷². Erasmus abhorred the Vulgate for its barbaric style, which he claimed could not have come from Jerome. Yet, his intention was not to translate in Ciceronian Latin. Rather, he preferred a plain style, which would render best the simple Greek of the Apostles. His ideal was “an eloquence which does not simply charm the ears by a pleasure soon to die, but [...] that seizes, transforms, and sends the listener away a much different person from the one it received”¹⁷³. His choices, however, roused much controversy. Like Valla, he rejected *gratia plena* in Luke 1:28, translating *gratiosa*. Even more shocking was his rendering of Greek *logos* (λόγος) in John 1:1 not as *verbum* but *sermo*¹⁷⁴. Equally, his translation of Rom. 5:12 inspired criticism by Catholic and Lutheran readers alike.

Alterations of the original text and the Latin translation were explained in detail in annotations. In the first edition of 1516, those were rather succinct, but they grew in size with every subsequent edition of Erasmus’ New Testament¹⁷⁵. Some annotations became essays in their own right, some of which included much polemic against his critics, and others, mini treatises on theological subjects¹⁷⁶. The New Testament continued to be Erasmus’ main preoccupation for the rest of his life, with corrected and expanded editions published in 1519, 1522, 1527, and 1535¹⁷⁷.

The number of editions is only one of many indications of Erasmus’ work’s popularity and influence¹⁷⁸. Perhaps his dream of a ploughman chanting passages in his translation did not

¹⁷¹ A detailed account of this controversy see: G. McDonald, *Biblical Criticism in Early Modern Europe: Erasmus, the Johannine Comma and Trinitarian Debate*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2016.

¹⁷² Cf. H.J. de Jonge, *Novum Testamentum a Nobis Versum: The Essence of Erasmus’ Edition of The New Testament*, “Journal of theological studies”, 1984, vol. 35, no. 2, pp. 394–413: “My claim can be summed up in one sentence. In judging Greek text in Erasmus’ editions of the New Testament, one realize from the start that it was not intended as a textual edition in its own right, but served to give the reader of the Latin version, which was the main point, the opportunity to find out whether the translation was supported by the Greek”. H.J. de Jonge, *Erasmus’ Translation of the New Testament: Aim and Method*, “The Bible translator”, 2016, vol. 67, no. 1, pp. 29–41.

¹⁷³ D. Erasmus Roterodamus, “Paraclesis ad lectorem pium”, op. cit., p. 139: “[eloquentia] quae non aures tantum mox peritura voluptate deliniat, sed ... quae rapiat, quae transformet, quae multo alium dimittat auditorem quam acceperit”. English translation: R.D. Sider, *The New Testament Scholarship of Erasmus...*, op. cit., p. 406.

¹⁷⁴ Detailed discussion and more examples see: J.H. Bentley, *Humanists and Holy Writ...*, op. cit., pp. 161–172.

¹⁷⁵ On Annotations see: E. Rummel, *Erasmus’ Annotations on the New Testament: From Philologist to Theologian...*, op. cit. M. van Poll-van de Lisdonk, *Die Annotationes in Novum Testamentum im Rhamen von Erasmus’ Werken zur Bibel*, [in:] *Basel 1516: Erasmus’ Edition of the New Testament*, eds. M. Wallraff, S. Seidel Menchi, and K. von Greyerz, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen 2016, pp. 175–186.

¹⁷⁶ See: C. Augustijn, *Erasmus: His Life, Works, and Influence...*, op. cit., p. 98.

¹⁷⁷ On details of differences between these editions see *Ibid.*, p. 93.

¹⁷⁸ V. Sebastiani, *The Impact of Erasmus’ New Testament on the European Market (1516-1527): Considerations Regarding the Production and Distribution of Publishing Success*, [in:] *Basel 1516: Erasmus’ Edition of the New Testament*, eds. M. Wallraff, S. Seidel Menchi, and K. von Greyerz, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen 2016, pp. 225–238. G.G. Kroeker, *Theological and Humanistic Legacies of Erasmus in the Age of Reform*, [in:] *Basel 1516: Erasmus’ Edition of the New Testament*, eds. M. Wallraff, S. Seidel Menchi, and K. von Greyerz, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen

materialise, but a number of humanists, who were shortly to become leading reformers, drew great inspiration from Erasmus' work. Huldrych Zwingli claimed to have learned Greek from Erasmus' *Novum Instrumentum*¹⁷⁹. He came to meet Erasmus in Basel in 1516 and was greatly impressed. In his later biblical works, Zwingli was deeply influenced by Erasmus' translation, as was his successor in Zurich, Heinrich Bullinger¹⁸⁰. Even Luther, who was critical of Erasmus as early as 1516 and later came to call him 'the devil incarnate', was heavily dependent on the Rotterdam Humanist in his translation of the New Testament into German¹⁸¹. Thus, it is no surprise that Catholic critics linked Erasmus' biblical work with Protestant reformations, coining the phrase: "Erasmus laid the egg, and Luther hatched it"¹⁸².

1.3.2 Criticism of biblical humanism

Biblical humanism was not universally endorsed; rather, it was met with severe criticism from various directions. Among critics of Erasmus, Lefèvre, and others was also Titelmans. This section intends to provide the background against which his polemic with humanists can be judged¹⁸³.

Criticism of medieval culture, with its gothic style and scholastic learning, was a recurrent theme of humanist polemicists, from Petrarch on¹⁸⁴. Ulrich von Hutten, in his letter to Willibald Pirckheimer, compared humanist learning to a ray of sun that was soon to pierce through clouds of scholasticism, which so far had obscured it¹⁸⁵. Hutten alluded to one of the key charges brought up by humanists, namely that of obscurity. According to men of letters, scholastics used such a convoluted language that it was impossible to understand their argumentation, even less enjoy the

2016, pp. 255–266. C. Christ-von Wedel, *Die Nachwirkung des Neuen Testaments von Erasmus in den reformatorischen Kirchen*, [in:] *Basel 1516: Erasmus' Edition of the New Testament*, eds. M. Wallraff, S. Seidel Menchi, and K. von Greyerz, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen 2016, pp. 291–310.

¹⁷⁹ See: C. Augustijn, *Erasmus: His Life, Works, and Influence...*, op. cit., p. 94.

¹⁸⁰ C. Christ-von Wedel, *Erasmus of Rotterdam: Advocate of a New Christianity...*, op. cit., p. 89.

¹⁸¹ Luther on Erasmus see: Ibid., p. 77. Erasmus' impact on Luther: D.M. Whitford, *Erasmus Openeth the Way Before Luther*, "Church History and Religious Culture", 2016, vol. 96, no. 4, pp. 516–540. On Luther's translation see: J.L. Flood, *Martin Luther's Bible Translation in its German and European Context*, [in:] *The Bible in the Renaissance: Essays on Biblical Commentary and Translation in the Fifteenth and the Sixteenth Centuries*, ed. R. Griffiths, Ashgate, Aldershot 2001, pp. 45–70. A.C. Gow, *The Contested History of a Book: The German Bible of the Later Middle Ages and Reformation in Legend, Ideology, and Scholarship*, Gorgias Press, Piscataway 2012. M. Leutzsch, *The First Bible Translations into German Based on Erasmus's New Testament: Johannes Lang's and Martin Luther's Versions of the Gospel of Matthew*, "The Bible Translator", 2022, vol. 73, no. 3, pp. 354–375.

¹⁸² E. Rummel, *The Confessionalization of Humanism in Reformation Germany*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2000, p. 18.

¹⁸³ A useful introduction to the topic: E. Rummel, ed., *Biblical Humanism and Scholasticism in the Age of Erasmus*, Brill, Leiden 2008. For a popular introduction in Polish see: A. Bielak, J. Koryl, and M. Ptaszyński, *Biblia i polemiki. Rozmowa Alicji Bielak z Jakubem Korylem oraz Maciejem Ptaszyńskim*, "Ruch biblijny i liturgiczny", 2020, vol. 73, no. 3, pp. 243–278.

¹⁸⁴ See Erika Rummel, *Introduction*, [in:] *Biblical Humanism and Scholasticism in the Age of Erasmus*, ed. E. Rummel, Brill, Leiden 2008, p. 1.

¹⁸⁵ See: S. Kivistö, *The Concept of Obscurity in Humanist Polemics of the Early Sixteenth Century*, [in:] *Acta Conventus Neo-Latini Bonnensis. Proceedings of the Twelfth International Congress of Neo-Latin Studies (Bonn 2003)*, ed. R. Schnur, Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, Tempe 2006, p. 429.

reading of it. For example, Leonardo Bruni claimed that the plain Greek of Aristotle had been so contorted by scholastic translation, that few but specialists could comprehend it¹⁸⁶. The same charge, as we have seen above, applied to the Bible.

For their part, scholastics responded that humanists lacked the necessary training and competence to debate issues of philosophy and theology. In other words, they were guilty of trespassing and “putting a sickle in another man’s crops”¹⁸⁷. According to professional, university theologians, humanists, whom they scornfully called mere grammarians, should not meddle in the field of philosophy and even less in theology, where they were clearly deficient in skill.

An example of such a polemic was the “Reuchlin affair”¹⁸⁸. It began when Cologne Dominicans inspired a converted Jew, Johannes Pfefferkorn, to attack Johannes Reuchlin, a humanist renowned for his Hebraic scholarship. This led to several years of polemic in print, aligning on the one side scholastic theologians, and on the other humanists. The latter group included Erasmus himself, who, although rather sceptical of the value of Hebrew writings, thought it necessary to defend Reuchlin, since the entire *studia humanitatis* were at stake in this debate¹⁸⁹.

Debates ignited by *Novum Instrumentum* were in some sense a continuation of this feud. On the other hand, however, a clear-cut division between two camps is an oversimplification. It is largely a construct of the whiggish historiography to see in humanists the forces of progress, while in scholastics, reactionary conservatism. The more complex nature of this debate is evident already in the very first episode of the dispute over Erasmus’ translation. The first attack on him came from a young theologian from Leuven, Martin Dorp, who was about to be admitted to the doctoral degree¹⁹⁰. To have a scholastic theologian attack a humanist would be conventional enough, but the reality was that Dorp “was Erasmus’ disciple, his editorial collaborator, and indeed his friend”¹⁹¹. Dorp objected to the *Novum Instrumentum* before its publication, addressing his illustrious friend in 1515 to advise moderation in what he considered an overtly revolutionary approach and protesting against Erasmus’ attacks on theologians. Dorp, himself a theologian, took offense in the portrayal of his profession in the “Praise of Folly” and admonished its author to

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 436.

¹⁸⁷ E. Rummel, *The Confessionalization of Humanism in Reformation Germany...*, op. cit., p. 11.

¹⁸⁸ For a detailed account of the affair see D. Ménager, *Erasmus, the Intellectuals, and the Reuchlin Affair*, [in:] *Biblical Humanism and Scholasticism in the Age of Erasmus*, ed. E. Rummel, Brill, Leiden 2008, pp. 39–54.

¹⁸⁹ C. Augustijn, *Erasmus: His Life, Works, and Influence...*, op. cit., pp. 110–111.

¹⁹⁰ On Dorp see: G. Marc’Hadour, «Thomas More Convertit Martin Dorp a L’humanisme Erasmién», [in:] *Thomas More 1477-1977. Colloque international tenu en novembre 1977*, ed. A. Gerlo, Éditions de l’Université de Bruxelles, Bruxelles 1980, p. 13-27. H. Heilen, *Martin Van Dorp (1485-1525)*, “Moreana (Angers)”, 1988, vol. 25, no. 97, pp. 67–71. E. Rummel, *Erasmus and his Catholic Critics*, B. de Graaf, Nieuwkoop 1989, vol. 1, pp. 1–14. C. Asso, *Martin Dorp and Edward Lee*, [in:] *Biblical Humanism and Scholasticism in the Age of Erasmus*, ed. E. Rummel, Brill, Leiden 2008, pp. 167–196. D. Verbeke, *Maarten van Dorp (1485-1525) and the Teaching of Logic at the University of Leuven*, “Humanistica Lovaniensia. Journal of Neo-Latin Studies”, 2013, vol. 62, pp. 225–246. C. Geudens and D. Verbeke, *Tussen scholastiek en humanisme: Maarten van Dorp, Desiderius Erasmus en Thomas More*, “De Boekenwereld: Tijdschrift voor Boek en Prent”, 2016, vol. 32, no. 2, pp. 14–21.

¹⁹¹ C. Asso, “Martin Dorp and Edward Lee”, op. cit., p. 168.

show greater respect to academic theology. He also feared that Erasmus' biblical project would cause more harm than good. He addressed his friend's query:

what harm will that do? My dear Erasmus, it will do a great deal. For a great many people will discuss the integrity of the Scriptures and many will have doubts about it, if the presence of the least scrap of falsehood in them becomes known, I will not say from your work but simply from some man they have heard holding forth. Then we shall see what Augustine writes in a letter to Jerome: "If falsehoods were admitted into Holy Scripture even to serve a useful purpose, what authority can they still retain?"¹⁹²

Erasmus responded to Dorp's criticism without bitterness. Thanks to the mediation of Thomas More, who was a friend of both, the controversy came to an end with the two men reconciled¹⁹³.

The significance of Dorp's criticism is manifold. First, it shows that one cannot so easily distinguish between humanists and scholastics, since Dorp was clearly both. Wim François called Dorp a man with torn loyalties¹⁹⁴. On the one hand, he felt the need to defend his own faculty of theology; on the other, he was a devoted follower of the new learning. The latter fact is well illustrated by his *Oratio Paulina*, an opening lecture of a course on the Epistles of Paul that Dorp delivered on 6 July 1516¹⁹⁵. He emphasized the need for the study of languages as well as the need for corrections to the Vulgate. Why there was such a change in the young theologian's stance is not a question to be addressed here, but this shift demonstrates how fluid were the lines dividing humanists and scholastics.

Dorp's criticism also revealed the crucial point of disagreement between Erasmus and his critics. It concerned the very method of theology and the source of truth. Was theological truth a product of a dialogue between the text, philosophy, tradition, and history – all within the community of the Church – or did it simply spring out from a masterly philological analysis by an individual scholar?

Erasmus's work was recognized as a potential threat to theology as well by another early critic, Edward Lee¹⁹⁶. Like Dorp, Lee cannot be simply identified as a scholastic. While he

¹⁹² Allen, ep. 304, vol. II, p. 15: "et hoc quid officiet? Officiet mehercle, Erasme. Nam de sacrarum litterarum integritate disputabunt plurimi, ambigent multi, si vel tantillum in iis esse falsi, non dico ex tua opera didicerint, sed narrantem duntaxat quempiam audierint; et fiet ad Hieronimum scribit Augustinus: Si ad scripturas sacras admissa fuerint vel officiosa mendacia, quid in eis remanebit autoritatis?". English translation: D. Erasmus Roterodamus, *The correspondence of Erasmus. Letters 298 to 445*, ed. J.K. McConica, University of Toronto, Toronto 1976, CWE 3, p. 22.

¹⁹³ C. Asso, "Martin Dorp and Edward Lee", op. cit., p. 173.

¹⁹⁴ W. François, *Maarten van Dorp, the Oratio Paulina (1516/1519), and the Biblical-Humanist Voice among the Louvain Theologians*, "Lias", 2012, vol. 39, no. 2, p. 192.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 164–180.

¹⁹⁶ R. Coogan, *The Pharisee Against the Hellenist: Edward Lee Versus Erasmus*, "Renaissance Quarterly", 1986, vol. 39, no. 3, pp. 476–506. E. Rummel, *Erasmus and his Catholic Critics...*, op. cit., pp. 95–120. R. Coogan, *Erasmus, Lee and the Correction of the Vulgate: The Shaking of the Foundations*, Librairie E. Droz, Geneve 1992, p. 13.

obtained a Bachelor of Divinity at Cambridge, and much later a Doctorate in Theology at Oxford, he was also proficient in Greek and Hebrew, and, after his arrival at Leuven in 1517, he was welcomed by Erasmus as a collaborator in revising the biblical text for the second edition of the New Testament¹⁹⁷. It is impossible to say whether the notes on the text that Lee prepared were initially intended to help Erasmus, or whether they were from the outset intended as an attack. What is clear, is that in a little time their collaboration turned into a bitter dispute¹⁹⁸. Both antagonists mustered numerous men to their support. Erasmus recruited some of his English and German friends, including Lee's family friend Thomas More, and the German knight Ulrich von Hutten, who threatened Lee with an argument of force, should he not yield to the force of arguments¹⁹⁹. Lee on his side sought support among religious orders as well as at the Paris faculty of theology and among Spanish humanists²⁰⁰.

The question remains: why did an attack from a relatively insignificant figure trouble the great Erasmus so much? According to Robert Coogan, Lee was the first to see how Erasmus' method threatened the entire edifice of Christendom²⁰¹. Not only did his method threaten scholastic theology, but it undermined the very foundations of the faith. Edward Lee "predicted assaults not only on the sacrosanct authority of the Fathers, on the doctrine of original sin, and on the sacramental system but even on the Nicean and Chalcedonian confessions"²⁰². Indeed, Edward Lee realised that it was not merely a matter of a particular wording of the sacred text, but the very understanding of theology that was at stake. Those elements of criticism would resurface with Titelmans. It was not missed by Erasmus himself, who deridingly accused Titelmans of merely repeating Lee's arguments.

The humanist leanings of Dorp and Lee were not universal for Erasmus' critics. In fact, Jacques Masson (Jacobus Latomus) and Noël Beda were both unwavering opponents of all new learning²⁰³. They were also very influential for Titelmans; thus, they deserve to be treated with more detail here. Both Masson and Beda were educated in Paris, at the Collège de Montaigu. Masson arrived at Leuven in 1500 and was involved in establishing the Standonckhuis there, an offspring of Montaigu, at which Titelmans later studied²⁰⁴. In 1519 Masson became a Doctor of Theology at Leuven. Shortly before, he published "*De trium linguarum et studii theologici ratione*

¹⁹⁷ C. Asso, "Martin Dorp and Edward Lee", op. cit., pp. 174–176.

¹⁹⁸ For a chronological outline of the dispute see: R. Coogan, *Erasmus, Lee and the Correction of the Vulgate...*, op. cit., pp. 20–23.

¹⁹⁹ C. Asso, "Martin Dorp and Edward Lee", op. cit., pp. 178–185.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., pp. 186–188.

²⁰¹ R. Coogan, *Erasmus, Lee and the Correction of the Vulgate...*, op. cit., p. 13.

²⁰² Ibid. p. 13.

²⁰³ For Masson see: E. Rummel, *Erasmus and his Catholic Critics...*, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 63–94. For Beda: E. Rummel, *Erasmus and his Catholic Critics...*, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 29–59.

²⁰⁴ M. Gielis, *Leuven Theologians as Opponents of Erasmus and of Humanistic Theology*, [in:] *Biblical Humanism and Scholasticism in the Age of Erasmus*, ed. E. Rummel, Brill, Leiden 2008, p. 201.

dialogus” aimed at Petrus Mosellanus, a Leipzig humanist²⁰⁵. Mosellanus took up Erasmus’ project of biblical theology and expressed it in more radical terms. Masson, himself ignorant of Greek and Hebrew, claimed that knowledge of ancient languages was useless for a theologian. He claimed that the Revelation was not through the means of words, but concepts, thus a philological study of words could not bring the knowledge of God. Rather, one should concentrate on logic and philosophy to understand God’s message²⁰⁶. Thus, he stood firmly on the scholastic ground against the project of biblical theology as advocated by Erasmus. That this attack was aimed also at Erasmus was not missed by the great humanist, who responded with an *Apologia*²⁰⁷.

Masson was active as a polemist throughout his entire career, but the objects of his vitriol in his later years were the Protestant reformers. For Masson, reformers were a continuation of erasmian theology. In 1525 Masson published a text, criticising writings of two reformers: Oecolampadius and Beatus Rhenanus, both close friends and collaborators of Erasmus²⁰⁸. He also published several treatises against Luther, Melanchthon, and Tyndale²⁰⁹. What is significant is that he perceived reformations as a natural consequence of Erasmus’ biblical theology. This element of linking reformers and humanists in polemics concerning new biblical translations played an important role also in Titelmans’ work.

Noël Beda, Masson’s colleague from the Collège de Montaigu, was also active in fighting both humanists and reformers. A native of Picardy, he obtained his doctorate in 1508 in Paris. From 1504 to 1514 he was the principal of the Collège de Montaigu and from 1520, the syndic of the Faculty of Theology in Paris²¹⁰. He was thus one of the most influential men at the Parisian university, strongly determined to use his influence to advance ecclesiastical reform and purity of faith. His idea of reform was, however, much different from that of Luther and Erasmus.

A basic element in Beda’s understanding of religion and the Church was the promise of Jesus to his apostles that God’s Spirit would be an active, indwelling presence in the Church and the world. For

²⁰⁵ J. Latomus, *De trium linguarum et studii theologici ratione dialogus*, Michael Hillenius Hoochstratanus, Antuerpiae 1519. On Mosellanus see: W. François, *The Plea by the Humanist Petrus Mosellanus for a Knowledge of the Three Biblical Languages. A Louvain Perspective*, “Revue d’histoire ecclésiastique”, 2003, vol. 98, no. 3–4, pp. 438–481. On his debate with Masson: W. François, *Ad divinarum rerum cognitionem: Petrus Mosellanus and Jacobus Latomus on Biblical or Scholastic Theology*, “Renaissance and Reformation”, 2005, vol. 29, no. 2–3, pp. 13–47.

²⁰⁶ Cf. M. Gielis, “Leuven Theologians as Opponents”, op. cit., pp. 202–203.

²⁰⁷ D. Erasmus Roterodamus, *Apologia rejiciens quorundam suspiciones ac rumores, natos ex dialogo figurato, qui Jacobo Latomo sacrae theologiae licentiatu inscribitur*, LB, vol. 9, col. 79B-106E. English translation: D. Erasmus, *Controversies: Epistola ad Doprium / Apologia contra Latomi dialogum / Apologia pro declamatione matrimonii / Acata Academiae Lovaniensis contra Lutherum / Axiomata Erasmi pro causa Lutheri / Consilium cuiusdam / Manifesta mendacia*, ed. J.K. Sowards, *Collected Works of Erasmus*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 1993, CWE 71, pp. 31–84.

²⁰⁸ Cf. J. Latomus, *De confessione secreta*, M[ichael] H[illenius], Antuerpiae 1525. For a discussion see: M. Gielis, “Leuven Theologians as Opponents”, op. cit., p. 206.

²⁰⁹ On his debate with Luther see: A. Vind, *Latomus and Luther: the Debate: Is Every Good Deed a Sin?*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen 2019.

²¹⁰ J.K. Farge, *Noël Beda and the Defense of the Tradition*, [in:] *Biblical Humanism and Scholasticism in the Age of Erasmus*, ed. E. Rummel, Brill, Leiden 2008, p. 143.

Beda this implied a close connection between history and salvation—a continuity of dogma, moral teaching, liturgical rites, and popular devotions as expressions of religious reality that must be professed, defended, and passed on from one generation to the next. It was in the name of that living tradition that Beda fought his battles against humanism and the Lutheran Reformation²¹¹.

According to Beda, the true reform of the Church should concentrate on returning to the austerity of life and moral righteousness, and not on changing the doctrine or theological methodology. It is however unfair to simply write Beda off as a ‘reactionary’. In fact, the movement initiated by Standonck, whom Beda succeeded at Montaigu, was a movement of reform. Augustine Renaudet claimed that it brought an intellectual revival in which both scholastics and humanists participated²¹².

It was in the name of such a conservative reform that Beda led his ceaseless feud against Erasmus, Luther, and their acolytes. His first direct criticism of Erasmus came with a censure by the Faculty of Theology of Paris of new translations of the Bible by Erasmus and Lefèvre in 1523²¹³. It was, however, much earlier that Beda had begun attacking humanist biblical scholarship indirectly. Erasmus accused him of supplying Lee with ideas, while Beda himself admitted having helped Pierre Cousturier (Petrus Sutor) to write his attack on Erasmus²¹⁴. He was adamant in claiming that non-professionals had no right to publicly teach, comment on, or translate the books of the Bible.

Cousturier was a close friend and collaborator of Beda²¹⁵. Although he obtained a doctorate in theology in Paris in 1510, he rejected an academic career and entered the Carthusians. Like Beda, Cousturier believed that the reform of the Church was to be brought about by personal conversion and reform of morals. He also shared Beda’s views on humanism, which he attacked in his 1525 treatise *De tralatione Bibliae*²¹⁶. He was perhaps the most severe of all critics of the new learning, rejecting any need for new biblical translations. To translate the Bible, one needed not only to be a theologian, but indeed a saint, like Jerome. “If someone is a believer it does not immediately follow that he is a theologian”²¹⁷. The Vulgate, having been approved by the Church, was sufficient for all her needs. Besides, the Ciceronian style of new translations would be too

²¹¹ Ibid., p. 147.

²¹² A. Renaudet, *Préréforme et humanisme à Paris pendant les premières guerres d’Italie (1494-1517)*, H. Champion, Paris 1916, p. 697. Cf. J.K. Farge, “Noël Beda and the Defense of the Tradition”, op. cit., p. 146.

²¹³ J.K. Farge, “Noël Beda and the Defense of the Tradition”, op. cit., p. 154.

²¹⁴ Ibid., p. 152.

²¹⁵ For Sutor see: E. Rummel, *Erasmus and his Catholic Critics...*, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 61–72. J.K. Farge, *Pierre Cousturier*, [in:] *Contemporaries of Erasmus. A Biographical Register of The Renaissance and Reformation*, eds. P.G. Bietenholz and T.B. Deutscher, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 1985, vol. 1, pp. 352–353.

²¹⁶ P. Sutor, *De tralatione bibliae, et nouarum reprobatione interpretationum*, Ioannes Paruus, Paris 1525.

²¹⁷ G. Bedouelle, *Attacks on the Biblical Humanism of Jacques Lefèvre d’Etaples*, [in:] *Biblical Humanism and Scholasticism in the Age of Erasmus*, ed. E. Rummel, Brill, Leiden 2008, p. 133.

subtle for the majority of poorly educated clergy²¹⁸. Cousturier targeted both Latin and vernacular translations of the Bible, the latter directed primarily at Lefèvre. While Lefèvre ignored these attacks, Erasmus responded with an apologia and two other texts²¹⁹. Cousturier's argumentation had some influence on Titelamans²²⁰.

The list of Erasmus' and humanists' critics is much longer than can be examined here. One could enumerate preachers from the mendicant orders, such as Nicholas Baechem, a Carmelite, and Vincentius Theoderici, a Dominican, both from Leuven²²¹. There was a strong opposition against Erasmus in Spain, including Diego López de Zúñiga (Jacobus Lopis Stunica), a great philologist himself, who had been involved in the work on the Alcala Bible²²². In Italy, Erasmus was criticised by humanists such as Alberto Pio and Agostino Steuco²²³. They, however, had little direct influence on Titelmans.

This brief analysis of some of Erasmus' critics is sufficient to show the main points of dissent between him and his opponents. Erasmus aspired to a purely biblical theology, founded upon philological study. He substituted philology for philosophy as the *ancilla theologiae*. Moreover, his approach was highly anti-dogmatic. Although Erasmus never directly attacked any Catholic dogma, he frequently expressed his disregard for fixed definitions of the Church's magisterium²²⁴. His philological theology was individualistic. It was not a communal product of the Church, but a result of the scholar's own competence. It was also very practical in its aims. Erasmus paid no attention to rituals but concentrated completely on the moral expression of the Christian life. Conversion was an inner transformation of the believer, which had little to do with sacramental grace (which inflamed his Catholic opponents) and was mostly an effect of the believer's intellectual and ascetic effort, not of a grace freely given (which infuriated Luther).

²¹⁸ This criticism was perhaps unfair, for Erasmus was not aiming to translate in the Ciceronian style, as has been emphasised above.

²¹⁹ D. Erasmus, *Apologia adversus debacchationes Petri Sutoris*, ed. J. Céard, 2018, ASD IX–9. D. Erasmus, *Appendix respondens ad quaedam Antapologiae Petri Sutoris*, ed. J. Céard, 2018, ASD IX–9. (see also: LB, vol. 9, col. 737–834). Cf. J.K. Farge, "Pierre Cousturier", op. cit., p. 352.

²²⁰ P. Sartori, *La Controversia Neotestamentaria...*, op. cit., pp. 99–103.

²²¹ E. Rummel, *Erasmus and his Catholic Critics...*, op. cit., pp. 121–144.

²²² J.H. Bentley, *Humanists and Holy Writ...*, op. cit., pp. 207–211. R.H. Graham, *Erasmus and Stunica: a Chapter in the History of New Testament Scholarship*, "Erasmus of Rotterdam Society Yearbook", 1990, vol. 10, pp. 9–60. F. Lisi, *La polémica entre Erasmo y los humanistas españoles sobre su edición del Nuevo Testamento*, "Sborník Národního muzea v Praze: Řada C: Literární historie", 2012, vol. 57, no. 3, pp. 89–94.

²²³ N.H. Minnich, *Alberto Pio's Defense of Scholastic Theology*, [in:] *Biblical Humanism and Scholasticism in the Age of Erasmus*, ed. E. Rummel, Brill, Leiden 2008, pp. 277–296. N.H. Minnich, *Recent Works on the Controversy between Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam and Alberto Pio of Carpi*, "Erasmus Studies", 2016, vol. 36, no. 1, pp. 53–58. S. Álvarez Turienzo, *Agustín Steuco y Erasmo de Rotterdam: Dis interpretaciones filosóficas del cristianismo*, "Religión y cultura", 1985, t.31, no 147–149, pp. 741–766. R.K. Delph, *Emending and Defending the Vulgate Old Testament: Agostino Steuco's Quarrel with Erasmus*, [in:] *Biblical Humanism and Scholasticism in the Age of Erasmus*, ed. E. Rummel, Brill, Leiden 2008, pp. 297–318.

²²⁴ R. Coogan, *Erasmus, Lee and the Correction of the Vulgate...*, op. cit., pp. 46–50.

Erasmus' interpretation of theology was thus a breach with the ancient understanding of Scripture, presented earlier. First, it violated the ecclesiastical principle of exegesis, making it an individual, purely intellectual exercise. Secondly, it destabilized the fine balance between literal and spiritual exegesis, shifting the scales strongly in favour of the former. Most importantly, Erasmus lost the sacramental understanding of the Scripture. To him, the living Word of God became identical with the letter of the text. This was perceived as dangerous even by Luther himself. In a letter to Georg Spalatin in 1516 Luther lamented that Erasmus followed Jerome so much (that is, the historical-philological exegesis) that there was no place for Augustine in his thought (that is, for the more dogmatic, speculative theology)²²⁵. In other words, erasmian *sola lettera* could be seen as more extreme than the *sola scriptura* of Luther. Luther's response was essentially that of emphasising the role of the Holy Spirit, mystically guiding each believer in his interpretation of the text. As the Colloquy of Marburg of 1529 demonstrated, either the Holy Ghost fancied to guide believers in different directions, or they were not all equally attentive to the Spirit's whisper²²⁶. It can be argued that Catholic critics did not regard Erasmus's theological method as mistaken, but as gravely incomplete. At least a number of them knew Greek and Hebrew and used philological methods in text analysis. They did not, however, limit themselves only to such methods, nor did they take the Patristic era as the only reference point for their theology.

In the following chapters, we shall analyse how far this is true of Franciscus Titelmans. On the one hand, he was critical of humanist methodology; on the other he tried to integrate some elements of it into the framework of "old-style" exegesis. Such an approach was born of his education that contained a mixture of scholastic and humanist elements. To understand better his background, we shall now turn to analyse his life and work.

²²⁵ M. Luther, "Luther An Spalatin. Wittenberg, 19. Oktober 1516", op. cit., p. 70: "Ego sane in hoc dissentire ab Erasmo non dubito, quod Augustino in scripturis interpretandis tantum posthabeo Hieronymum, quantum ipse Augustinum in omnibus Hieronymo posthabet".

²²⁶ On Marburg Colloquy and Protestant disputations about the Eucharist see: L.P. Wandel, *The Eucharist in the Reformation: Incarnation and Liturgy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2006; E. Chung-Kim, *Inventing authority: the use of the Church Fathers in Reformation debates over the Eucharist*, Baylor University Press, Waco 2011; L.P. Wandel, ed., *A Companion to the Eucharist in the Reformation*, Brill, Boston 2014.

Chapter II

Life and Works of Franciscus Titelmans

No man works in a vacuum. On the contrary, life context in all its aspects: social, economic, religious, intellectual and so on, all influence a writer, whether he is aware of it or not. This context also helps us to understand what past authors really meant. In this chapter we intend to present Titelmans' life and works in their broad context. We shall begin with his life, then progress to his works and finish with a presentation of his sources.

2.1 Life of Franciscus Titelmans

To understand a work, one needs to study its author too. We begin thus with an outline of Titelmans' life. What follows does not pretend to be a comprehensive biography, but merely a sketch presenting crucial aspects of his short but fruitful life. First we examine the sources that are sadly scarce, then we discuss his life, dividing it for three phases: his early life up to 1523, his life and work as an Observant Franciscan and lecturer in the Holy Writ until 1536, and his final year of life, which he spent in Italy as a Capuchin friar.

2.1.1 Sources

Sources for the life of Franciscus Titelmans are relatively few. Archival sources are very scarce. The city archives of Hasselt shed some light on his family origins, but surviving archival sources reveal hardly anything else concerning Titelmans. The second group of sources are Titelmans' own writings, which give some scattered biographical information about their author. Moreover, there are references to him in the correspondence of his contemporaries, especially Erasmus of Rotterdam, but also Jan Campensis.

The richest font of information are narrative sources, Observant, and especially early Capuchin chronicles. Titelmans is shortly mentioned in Franciscus Gonzaga's history of the order, which also gives some precious information regarding the friary in Leuven¹. The most precious source is *Historia Ordinis Fratrum Minorum Capuccinorum* of Bernardino da Colpetrazzo (1514-1594), a Capuchin, who personally knew Titelmans². He unsurprisingly concentrated on

¹ F. Gonzaga, *De origine seraphicae religionis Franciscanae eiusque progressibus, de regularis Observantiae institutione, forma administrativis ac legibus, admirabilique eius propagatione*, Dominicus Basa, Romae 1587, pp. 991–997.

² Bernardinus a Colpetrazzo, *Historia Ordinis Fratrum Minorum Capuccinorum (1525-1593)*, ed. Melchior a Pobladura, Institutum Historicum Ordinis Fratrum Minorum Capuccinorum, Assisi 1939-1941, vols. 1–3, Monumenta Historica Ordinis Minorum Capuccinorum 2–4.

Titelmans' final year of life, which he lived as a Capuchin. Although his information is somewhat hagiographical at times, his closeness to the Flemish Capuchin makes him a fairly reliable source of information. It seems that he was a source for other Capuchin Chronicles, especially these of Matthias Bellintani da Salo and Paolo Vitelleschi da Foligno³. Chronicle of Zaccharia Boverius also used Bernardino as a source, but it also supplanted many original materials of dubious veracity⁴. Given the scarcity of source material, the life of Titelmans shall be presented in the broader context of his times, which should help to conjecture some biographical data about him.

2.1.2 Early years and education of Franciscus Titelmans 1502-1523

Franciscus Titelmans was born in Hasselt around 1502 to Art (Arnold) Titelmans and his wife Heylken. Various authors located his date of birth between 1502 and 1508⁵, but his own testimony suggests it was 1502. At the end of the commentary on the Song of Solomon, he wrote: "Finis commentariorum in Canticum Canticorum, per Fratrem Franciscum Titelmannum Hassellensem [...] anno aetatis suae XXXII. anno autem ab incarnatione Domini 1534. Penultima Decembris"⁶. In the Commentary on Matthew's Gospel he wrote "Finit Elucidatio in Euangelium secundum Matthaëum, per F. Franciscum Titmannum Hassellensem ex Dei gratia elaborate, anno Domini 1533. Anno autem aetatis suae 30"⁷. The two notes were written a year apart, but they indicate a two-year difference of the author's age. Paquay tried to resolve this apparent contradiction by taking into account that in the 16th-century Brabant, the New Year began on Christmas day. According to him, Titelmans was born between the 25th and the 30th of December 1502. The note on Matthew must have been written after Christmas 1532 but before Titelmans' birthday, thus, he would not have yet completed his 31st birthday, as he wrote his note (hence *anno aetatis suae* 30). The note in the *Canticum* was, on the other hand, written on the 30th of December, after Titelmans' birthday, thus he gave his age as 32⁸. Such a solution is possible, but also somewhat hypothetical. For convenience, however, we shall accept 1502 as Titelmans' birth year.

The names of his parents are known from the testament of his older brother, Peter, an inquisitor of Flanders, dean of the Ronse chapter and canon at Kortrijk, who posthumously

³ Matthias a Salò, *Historia Capuccina*, ed. Melchior a Pobladura, Institutum Historicum Ordinis Fratrum Minorum Capuccinorum, Roma 1950, Monumenta Historica Ordinis Minorum Capuccinorum 5. Paulus a Foligno, *Origo et progressus Ordinis Fratrum Minorum Capuccinorum*, ed. Melchior a Pobladura, Institutum Historicum Ordinis Fratrum Minorum Capuccinorum, Roma 1955, Monumenta Historica Ordinis Minorum Capuccinorum 7.

⁴ Z. Boverio, *Annali dell'Ordine de Frati Minori Cappuccini*, Domenico Tarino, Torino 1641.

⁵ A.L. Mire, *Elogia Belgica sive Illustrium Belgii scriptorum, qui nostra patrumque memoria, vel Ecclesiam Dei propugnarunt, vel disciplinas illustrarunt, vitae breviter commemoratae*, David Martinius, Antuerpiae 1609, p. 63. Mire claimed that Titelmans died in 1553 in the 46th year of his life.

⁶ F. Titelmans, *Doctiss[imi] Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum Salomonis*, In aedibus Ioan. Steelsii, Antuerpiae 1547, f. 194v.

⁷ F. Titelmans, *Paraphrastica elucidatio in Iesu Christi Euangelium secundum Matthaëum, additis annotationibus in loca difficiliora*, in officina Ioan. Steelsii, Antwerpiae 1545, f. 288v.

⁸ A. Paquay, *Frans Tittelmans van Hasselt...*, op. cit., pp. 27–28.

published Franciscus' works⁹. His testament, dated on the 9th of August 1570, claimed that his parents were Art (Arnold) Titelmans and Heylken or Heiliff van Musel or van Muysel¹⁰. A division of property after his parents' death, executed on the 11th of July 1515, revealed that there were five heirs, of which Peter was the penultimate (born 1501) and Franciscus the youngest¹¹. Paquay made also some discoveries regarding his more distant relatives, mentioned in documents from Hasselt¹².

The family was of a middle-class urban standing with some moderate wealth, as we know from the information regarding the abovementioned property division in 1515. According to Paquay, Titelmans received his primary education in a school of Saint Quinten Parish in Hasselt¹³. Yet Titelmans' youth was far from fortunate. Around 1505 his father died, and his mother followed in 1515, leaving a less than 13-year-old boy an orphan¹⁴. His material situation was not optimal, as he himself alluded in his Commentary on Ecclesiastes. Commenting on Eccles. 2:21, he asserted that it was better for parents to leave to their children a modest inheritance and a good moral upbringing, than vast riches that corrupted souls. He finished his deliberations with a personal note:

Ego sane qui hos per dei gratiam commentarios indignus descripsi, quantum ad me attinent, coram deo loquens in veritate protestor, meis parentibus per quos in hanc lucem deo volente sum aeditus, longe ampliores me et debere et agere gratias, pro illo (vt ita loquar) paruulo modico, quod mihi hinc abscedentes reliquerunt vix corporis necessitati sufficiens, quam si longe maiorem ad me transmisissent haereditatem, lata praedia, aut regna amplissima¹⁵.

Fortunately, he found help. He was cared for by Charles de Carondelet, who became for Titelmans a father-figure, as is testified by his fond remarks about his patron in the dedicatory letter to *Summa Mysteriorum Christianae Fidei*.

⁹ J. van de Wiele, *De inquisitierechtbank van Pieter Titelmans in de zestiende eeuw in Vlaanderen*, "Bijdragen en Mededelingen Betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden", 1982, vol. 97, pp. 19–63. P. Beuzart, *Pierre Titelmans et l'inquisition En Flandre (1554-1567)*, "Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire du Protestantisme Français (1903-)", 1914, vol. 63, no. 3, pp. 224–242. H. de Vocht, *François et Pierre Titelmans*, Académie royale des sciences, des lettres et des beaux-arts de Belgique, Bruxelles 1930, col. 341-359. J. Van de Wiele, *Itinerarium van inquisiteur Pieter Titelmans en zijn medewerkers (1547-1566)*, "Bulletin de la Commission royale d'histoire. Académie royale de Belgique", 1985, vol. 151, no. 1, pp. 61–152. A. Cambier, *Pieter Titelmans, Groot-Inkwisiteur, Deken van Ronse in Vlaanderen*, "Annalen van de Geschied- en oudheidkundige Kring van Ronse en het Tenement van Inde", 1984, vol. 33, pp. 19–28.

¹⁰ *Heeren Mr Peter Tittelmans Trestament* [in:] *Registers van testamenten en van akten van huwelijkse voorwaarden, naar Luiks an Loons recht, 1509-1628*, SAH, Regg. 2118, f. 7r

¹¹ "Gichtboeken", *registers van akten van overdracht naar Luiks recht, 1414-1796*, SAH, Regg. 1882, f. 444v. This document was published by Paquay, see: A. Paquay, *Frans Tittelmans van Hasselt...*, op. cit., pp. 120-121

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 148–188.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 29–30.

¹⁵ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Ecclesiasten Salomonis, cum annotationibus ex Hebraeo et aeditione Graeca singula capita*, Hieronymus et Dionysius de Marnef, Paris 1549. ff. k3v-k4r.

Nam, quod ad me attinet, talia tantaque sunt illa olim in me impensa tua beneficia, vt merito animum gratum et beneficiorum memorem erga te semper habere, atque in tempore pro mea virili demonstrare cogar, si foedam ingratitude notam velim effugere. Tu siquidem me puerulum ad Louaniense studium accedentem, vtroque parente orbatum, ac studio necessariis subsidiis destitutum, liberaliter in tuam curam suscepisti, et quasi in filium aliqua ex parte adoptasti, quae necessaria erant corpori sufficienter suppeditans, quaeque studiorum profectui opportuna, copiose subministrans: vt iure optimo non aliter quam patrem te debeam appellare, agnoscere et reuereri¹⁶.

Titelmans continued to praise his patron, acknowledging that he supported also other young students¹⁷. Carondelet belonged to the famous Burgundian noble family, and his father Jean de Carondelet was the chancellor of Burgundy from 1480¹⁸. Two brothers of Charles, Jean and Ferry, were patrons of Erasmus of Rotterdam and both rose to significant ecclesiastical positions¹⁹. Information on Charles de Carondelet's life is regrettably scarce. He was a lord of Potteles, a castellan of Ath, and a governor of Anguien²⁰.

It was thanks to him that Titelmans arrived in Leuven, probably before 1517, and completed his secondary education at the Standonckhuis²¹. Titelmans mentioned the College of Standonck in the aforementioned dedicatory letter to Charles de Carondelet:

Experitur tuum erga sancta studia fauorem, ea quae apud nos est Louanii pauperum Standonicorum, humilis quidem et hominibus despecta, Deo tamen (vt confido) bene grata, et ecclesiae non inutilis congregatio, in qua iam ab annis pluribus pauperes aliquot tuis sumptibus alis, ad sacra artium atque Theologiae studia²².

Standonckhuis, named after its founder, belonged to the Congregation of Montaigu and was of fundamental importance for Titelmans' intellectual formation²³.

¹⁶ F. Titelmans, *Summa Mysteriorum Christianae Fidei. Ex Autoritate divinarum scripturarum veteris et noui Testamenti congesta, atque in pias contemplationum formulas commode digesta, ita vt in eis Christifidelium simul et mentes in Veritatis cognitione vtiliter illuminari et affectus in Dei amorem valeant suauiter inflammari*, Theobaldus Paganus, Paris 1547, f. b1r-v. The dedicatory letter is missing in the Dutch version of this book.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, ff. b1v-b2v.

¹⁸ J.C. Olin, *Jean (I) de Carondelet*, [in:] *Contemporaries of Erasmus. A Biographical Register of The Renaissance and Reformation*, eds. P.G. Bietenholz and T.B. Deutscher, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 1985, vol. 1, p. 272.

¹⁹ J.C. Olin, *Jean (II) de Carondelet*, [in:] *Contemporaries of Erasmus. A Biographical Register of The Renaissance and Reformation*, eds. P.G. Bietenholz and T.B. Deutscher, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 1985, vol. 1, pp. 272–273. P.G. Bietenholz, *Ferry de Carondelet*, [in:] *Contemporaries of Erasmus. A Biographical Register of The Renaissance and Reformation*, eds. P.G. Bietenholz and T.B. Deutscher, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 1985, vol. 1, pp. 271–272.

²⁰ Now Enghien in Belgium. A. Paquay, *Frans Tittelmans van Hasselt...*, op. cit., p. 29.

²¹ "Gichtboeken", *registers van akten van overdracht naar Loons recht, 1427-1796*, SAH, Regg. 1965, ff. 67v; 108v; 124r.

²² F. Titelmans, *Summa Mysteriorum Christianae Fidei...*, op. cit., f. b2r.

²³ P. Sartori, "Frans Titelmans", op. cit., p. 220.

The Congregation of Montaigu originated in Paris and was linked with the person of Jan Standonck²⁴. A native of Mechelen, he was educated in a school of the Brethren of the Common Life in Gouda. The Brethren of the Common Life was a quasi-religious congregation (without perpetual vows) founded by Gerard Groote in the 14th century, rooted in the *devotio moderna* spirituality. It combined an ascetic lifestyle with manual labour and emphasis on learning²⁵. According to Albert Hyma, the Brethren were a seedbed for Renaissance and reformations, a source of a specifically northern humanism and indeed the turning point in world history²⁶. Although this claim is highly disputed, it is noteworthy that a great number of protagonists of Renaissance and reformations were graduates of such schools, Erasmus and Luther included²⁷.

Jan Standonck imbibed there a deep sense of piety and a strict discipline, which he followed his entire life. He went on to study arts at Leuven, graduating in 1469, after which he followed his studies in Paris²⁸. There he embarked on a remarkable career, which was strongly linked with the Collège de Montaigu²⁹. It was founded in the 14th century, however fallen into decay in the second half of the 15th century³⁰. Standonck joined the College at the request of its principal, Amâtre Chetart, in 1477 in order to help with its reform. In 1483, after the death of Chetart, Standonck succeeded in his place. He instilled in the College the spirit of *devotio moderna*, with strict discipline and deep piety. He was not merely a skilled administrator, but a true religious reformer and in 1495 imposed on the College a rule that transformed it into a religious congregation, modeled on that of Windesheim³¹.

The lifestyle of Standonck's college was very ascetic:

Rest and leisure were forbidden. Spare time had to be filled with pious meditations. Sleep hours were limited and broken by the night office, in compliance with the Carthusian tradition. It was necessary

²⁴ On Standonck see: A. Renaudet, *Humanisme et Renaissance: Dante, Pétrarque, Standonck, Érasme, Lefèvre d'Étaples, Marguerite de Navarre, Rabelais, Guichardin, Giordano Bruno*, Librairie E. Droz, Genève 1958, pp. 114–161.

²⁵ Cf. J.V. Engen, *Sisters and Brothers of the Common Life: The Devotio Moderna and the World of the Later Middle Ages*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia 2013, pp. 144–146.

²⁶ A. Hyma, *The Christian Renaissance: A History of the 'Devotio Moderna'*, Archon Books, Hamden 1965, pp. 6–7: “this ‘New Devotion,’ or Christian Renaissance, between 1380 and 1520, absorbed the wisdom of the ancients, the essence of Christ's teachings, the mystic religion of the fathers and the saints of medieval Europe, as well as the learning of the Italian humanists; [...] assimilated all these ingredients and presented them in a new dress to the old world and the new”.

²⁷ For criticism of Hyma's theses see: R.R. Post, *The Modern Devotion: Confrontation with Reformation and Humanism*, Brill, Leiden 1968.

²⁸ Cf. J.K. Farge, *Jan Standonck*, [in:] *Contemporaries of Erasmus: A Biographical Register of the Renaissance and Reformation*, eds. P.G. Bietenholz and T.B. Deutscher, University of Toronto Press 1987, vol. 3, p. 281.

²⁹ For the history of this College see: M. Godet, *La Congregation de Montaigu (1490-1580)*, Librairie Ancienne Honore Champion, Paris 1912.

³⁰ On the foundation of the College and controversies concerning the date of it see: W.J. Courtenay, *The Collège de Montaigu Before Standonck*, [in:] *Special Issue: the College de Montaigu at the University of Paris. Aspects of its Institutional and Intellectual History (14th-18th Century)*, ed. Paul.J.J.M. Bakker, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2008, pp. 54–75.

³¹ P. Sartori, “Frans Titelmans”, op. cit., pp. 215–216.

for the members to mortify themselves through menial works in the household. The diet never changed during the year: for the main meal small portions of fish and vegetables, the cheapest ones possible, one or two eggs, and a little cheese. The harshest element in the routine was the severe discipline³².

The strict discipline of the house did not please Erasmus, who stayed there briefly in 1495-1496. He criticised Standonck's strict discipline in his work *Ἰχθυοφαγία*:

In eo collegio tum regnabat Ioannes Standoneus, vir in quo non damnasset affectum, sed iudicium omnino desiderasses. Etenim quod ipse memor adolescentiae, quam cum extrema paupertate transegerat, rationem habebat pauperum, vehementer probari debet. [...] Caeterum quod rem aggressus est cubitu tam duro, victu tam aspero parcoque, vigiliis ac laboribus tam grauibus, vt intra annum prima experientia multos iuuenes felici indole praeditos ac spem amplissimam prae se ferentes, alios neci dederit, alios caecitati, alios dementiae, nonnullos et leprae, quorum aliquot ipse noui, certe nullus omnium non periclitatus est, quis non intelligat esse crudelitatem in proximum?³³

Although one should scale down Erasmus' criticism, considering his dislike of monastic life and his rhetorical zest, there is no denying that Standonck favoured an ascetic lifestyle. In order to preserve the spirit of austerity, Standonck entrusted the Congregation to the surveillance of the Carthusians, subjecting it to the authority of the prior of Vauvert Charterhouse (near Paris). Carthusians were renowned for their immutability, the only order that was never in need of a reform³⁴. It is worth noting that from 1517 to 1519 the prior of Vauvert was Pierre Cousturier, a fierce opponent of the new learning, whom we have already discussed above.

In 1499 Standonck had to abandon France after he entered into a conflict with king Louis XII³⁵. He entrusted the College to Noël Beda, the future critic of Erasmus, and moved to Cambrai, where he founded a College of Montaigu, subordinate to the motherhouse of Paris. Later, with a help of the Brethren of the Common Life from Deventer, he set up similar houses in Valenciennes and Mechelen. Finally, he founded one in Leuven, where the dean of Sint Pieter's Church, Adriaan Florensz Boeyens, the future pope Adrian VI, passed to him one of the schools in the town³⁶. Having obtained a royal pardon, he commended the Leuven College to the care of his disciple Jacques Masson and returned to Paris, where he died in 1504³⁷.

³² Ibid., p. 217.

³³ D. Erasmus, *Ἰχθυοφαγία*, [in:] *Colloquia*, eds. L.-E. Halkin, F. Bierlaire, and R. Hoven, North-Holland Publishing Company, Amsterdam 1972, ASD I-3, p. 531.

³⁴ P. Sartori, "Frans Titelmans", op. cit., pp. 216-217.

³⁵ Cf. J.K. Farge, "Jan Standonck", op. cit., p. 282.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 282.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 282.

Initially the College of Montaigu in Leuven followed very strictly the rule of the motherhouse. After the death of the founder, his successor, Beda, offered filial colleges more autonomy. As a corollary, the College in Leuven altered its rule, mollifying its austerity and, more importantly, opening itself to humanism. While the house in Paris remained very conservative in theology and highly critical of the new learning, as expressed by Sutor's *De tralatione Bibliae*, in Leuven there was a mixture of scholastic and humanist elements. Latin classes at *Pedagogium Porci*, twinned with College de Montaigu, were taught by Adrianus Barlandus, Leuven's leading humanist and, from 1518, the first lector at the newly established (with Erasmus's involvement) *Collegium Trilingue*³⁸. Most likely Barlandus also taught Franciscus Titelmans. Hence, Titelmans received at Montaigu a mixture of scholastic and humanist education. He inherited the ideals of deep personal piety of *devotio moderna*, but also some openness to new currents in European learning. According to Paolo Sartori, this education was an embodiment of Masson's ideal of moderation, which Titelmans interiorized as his own³⁹.

Titelmans started studying philosophy at *Pedagogium Porci* in 1519. The university of Leuven had four *pedagogia*, with original names: Lily, Pig, Falcon, and Castle. Like in Paris, these were much like boarding schools, teaching arts and philosophy to prepare for subsequent studies in law and theology⁴⁰. Members of Standonckhuis took classes at *Pedagogium Porci*, and Titelmans was no exception. He was an exceptionally good student, finishing the course in philosophy in 1521 as *primus in artibus* out of 142 or 162 students (the academic records give both numbers without explaining the origin of the difference)⁴¹. In recognition of his abilities, he was immediately offered a teaching post at "the Pig", which he held for two years, continuing to live at the College of Montaigu. During his years at Standonckhuis he formed a strong attachment with Jacques Masson, who most certainly stayed in the house at the time of Titelmans' studies⁴². Titelmans recorded his mentor in a dedicatory letter addressed to Charles de Carondelet:

³⁸ H. de Vocht, *History of the Foundation and the Rise of the Collegium Trilingue Lovaniense, 1517-1550. Part the First: The Foundation*, Bibliothèque de l'Université, Bureaux du Recueil, Louvain 1951, p. 219. C.G. van Leijenhorst, *Adrianus Cornelii Barlandus*, [in:] *Contemporaries of Erasmus. A Biographical Register of The Renaissance and Reformation*, eds. P.G. Bietenholz and T.B. Deutscher, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 1985, vol. 1, pp. 95–96.

³⁹ P. Sartori, "Frans Titelmans", op. cit., pp. 219–220.

⁴⁰ E. Maesschalk, *Foundation and Evolution of Colleges at Louvain in the Late Middle Ages*, [in:] *I collegi universitari in Europa tra il XIV e il XVIII secolo: atti del Convegno di studi della Commissione internazionale per la storia delle università: Siena-Bologna, 16-19 maggio 1988*, eds. D. Maffei and H. de Ridder-Symoens, Giuffrè, Milano 1991, p. 159.

⁴¹ J.F. Van de Velde, *Catalogus omnium primorum in generali et solemnibus philosophiae et artium promotione ab origine famosissimae universitatis Lovaniensis scilicet ab anno 1426. usque ad hunc annum inclusive, adjectis nominibus, patria et Poedagogiis, in quibus studuerunt, item vitae statu, quem, post peractum Philosophiae studium, amplexi sunt*, P.J. Hanicq, Mechliniae 1824, p. 24.

⁴² M. Gielis, *Scholastiek en humanisme: de kritiek van de Leuvense theoloog Jacobus Latomus op de Erasmiaanse theologiehervorming*, Tilburg University Press, Tilburg 1994, pp. 59–62.

Cuiusmodi viros cum tibi plurimos familiari studeas societate adiungere, prae caeteris tamen familiarissimum tibi ante annos multos fecisti, atque etiam modo omni studio in amici officio retinere non desinis, illud omnis honestatis perlucidum speculum, et sacrae eruditionis vere admirandum spectaculum, dominum Iacobum Latomum, Louaniensis nostrae Academiae dignissimum Theologum. Cuius viri consiliis, aliisque compluribus beneficiis olim in me adolescentulum copiose collatis, tantum ego quoque debeo, vt merito illum donec viuam, patris semper loco habere, et patris affectu reuereri debeam⁴³.

Masson's conservative approach to theology no doubt had great influence on the young scholar. Erasmus went so far as to claim that Titelmans was nothing more than a propaganda tube for ideas suggested to him by the older theologian⁴⁴. This was certainly an exaggeration. Paolo Sartori has demonstrated that although Titelmans shared with Masson an attachment to the principle of moderation, expressed by both authors through an ancient adage *ne quid nimis*, the young scholar was more than a mere passive receptor of his mentor's ideas. Comparative analysis of both authors' works regarding biblical translation show that Titelmans displayed much independence of thought and was much more than a mere imitator⁴⁵.

2.1.3 Franciscus Titelmans as an Observant Franciscan 1523-1536

Although Titelmans was clearly attached to the Congregation of Montaigu, he did not stay there, but in 1523 joined the Observant branch of the Franciscan Order. Shortly before he was allegedly ordained a priest for the bishopric of Liege⁴⁶. The Observants were a reform of the Order of Friars Minor born in Italy in the second part of the 14th century⁴⁷. Although initially they adopted an anti-intellectualist stand, in the 15th century they reconciled their ascetic ideal with educational and pastoral needs of burgeoning towns⁴⁸. This was true also about their presence in the Low

⁴³ F. Titelmans and A. de Zierikzee, *Chronica compendiosissima ab exordio mundi vsque ad annum Domini Millesimum quingentesimum trigesimum quartum: per venerandum patrem P. Amandum Zierxeensem, ordinis fratrum Minorum, regularis obseruantiae, virum in Diuinis et humnais rebus peritissimum. Eiusdem tractatus de septuaginta hebdomadibus Danielis. Adiectae sunt epistolae duae Christiani regis Aethiopiae, Dauidis, ad Clementem septimum, Rhomanum pontificem anno Domini 1533 destinatae, cum articulis quibusdam de fide et moribus Aethiopum Christianorum. Aliae quoque tres epistolae, ex noua maria Oceani Hispania ad nos transmissae, de fructu mirabili illic surgentis nouae Ecclesiae, ex quibus animus Christianus merito debeat laetari*, Simon Cocus, Antuerpiae 1534, f. b3r.

⁴⁴ D. Erasmus, *Responsio ad Collationes cuiusdam iuuenis gerontodidascali*, *LB*, vol. 9, col. 965E. Cf. D. Erasmus, *Responsio ad Collationes cuiusdam iuuenis gerontodidascali*, [in:] *Controversies*, ed. D.L. Drysdall, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 1993, *CWE* 73, p. 138.

⁴⁵ P. Sartori, "Tracce dell'opera di Iacobus Latomus nel Prologus apologeticus di Frans Titelmans", op. cit., p. 1040.

⁴⁶ F. Gistelinck et al., *De Minderbroeders en de Oude Leuvense universiteit*, Bibliotheek van de Faculteit der Godgeleerdheid, Leuven 1989, p. 46.

⁴⁷ On the origins of the Observant movement see: M.J.P. Robson, *The Franciscans in the Middle Ages*, Boydell Press, Woodbridge 2006, pp. 181–191. On the development of Observancy: J.D. Mixson and B. Roest, eds., *A Companion to Observant reform in the Late Middle Ages and Beyond*, Brill, Leiden 2015.

⁴⁸ B. Roest, *Franciscans Between Observance And Reformation: The Low Countries (Ca. 1400-1600)*, "Franciscan Studies", 2005, vol. 63, p. 413.

Countries, starting from the reform of the Franciscan house in St. Omer in 1408⁴⁹. In 1447 they already had their own vicar within the Franciscan Order⁵⁰. As an Observant, Titelmans studied theology in the study house of the Franciscans, which in 1447 was incorporated into the Faculty of Theology in Leuven⁵¹. The theology course was based on Scotus and essentially scholastic in its format, though it was not without elements of the new learning⁵².

Among Titelmans' masters was Amandus of Zierikzee, a former provincial minister of Observant Franciscans and an acclaimed Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic scholar⁵³. Amandus' interest was mostly in history and in the Bible. He wrote commentaries on Genesis, Ecclesiastes, and Job, which were regrettably lost after 1789. He also wrote a chronicle of the world, which was posthumously edited and supplemented by Titelmans⁵⁴. According to a letter from Martin Dorp to Erasmus, Amandus was an admirer of Erasmus' work and his keen supporter⁵⁵. Titelmans must have learned Greek and Hebrew from him, for he claimed such a knowledge in his commentaries on Ecclesiastes and the Psalms. He allegedly even knew some Aramaic (Chaldean, as it was called at the time). Other teachers of Titelmans included Martinus van der Keele⁵⁶, a Franciscan lecturer in systematic theology; and Johannes a Myrica, a secular priest, dean of Sint Pieter's Church and doctor of both laws. Titelmans published a panegyric devoted to the latter, showing his indebtedness to him⁵⁷. In *Epistola apologetica* he also mentioned Matthias Weynsen as a master,

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 414. For the general history of the Observants in the Low Countries see: J.A. De Kok, *Acht eeuwen Minderbroeders in Nederland: een oriëntatie*, Verloren, Hilversum 2007, pp. 93–112.

⁵⁰ Until the division of the Franciscan Order in 1517, the Observants had their own superiors and full autonomy, while formally remaining one order with the Conventuals.

⁵¹ J.A. De Kok, *Acht eeuwen Minderbroeders in Nederland...*, op. cit., p. 110.

⁵² A. Paquay, *Frans Tittelmans van Hasselt...*, op. cit., p. 40. On observant attitude to studies see: B. Roest, *A History of Franciscan Education (c. 1210-1517)*, Brill, Leiden 2000, pp. 158–172.

⁵³ F. Gonzaga, *De origine seraphicae religionis...*, op. cit., p. 992: "Amandus de Zireeckzea, Louaniensis conuentus Lector eximius, postea Minister prouincialis, qui et multum laborauit pro huius Prouinciae reformatione. Edidit siquidem Chronicorum totius orbis libros ab origine mundi ad sua vsque tempora. Scripsit item in psalmum 118. et in 78. Danielis Prophetiae hebdomadas. Trium linguarum tametsi esset peritissimus, ab humilitatis tamen semitis, vsque ad vitae finem, ne minimum deuiavit. Ministerii cursu laudabiliter peracto, Lectoris denuo officium non minus humiliter, quam obedienter amplexus est, in quo vfque ad mortem nullis gaudens priuilegiis perseuerauit. Sepultus est in medio chori sub pulpito, vbi cantatur Epistola, anno Dominicae incarnationis 1525". See also C.F. Gunderson, *Amandus of Zierikzee*, [in:] *Contemporaries of Erasmus. A Biographical Register of The Renaissance and Reformation*, eds. P.G. Bietenholz and T.B. Deutscher, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 1985, vol. 1, p. 39. B. de Troeyer, *Amandus van Zierikzee*, "Franciscana", 1965, vol. 20, no. 1, pp. 14–19.

⁵⁴ F. Titelmans and A. de Zierikzee, *Chronica compendiosissima...*, op. cit. Vide infra 2.3.3

⁵⁵ Allen, ep. 1044, vol. IV, pp. 126-127: "Non desunt passim eximii viri religiosi qui te, vti par est, summis in coelum efferent laudibus. [...] Alter est Gardianus Mechliniensis, vir cordatus, rerum experientissimus, idem eximie doctus. Proximus Amandus, Grece Hebraiceque doctus, quem nosti, opinor. Ii sic fauent tuis sanctis laboribus vt ne suis quidem magis queant".

⁵⁶ F. Gonzaga, *De origine seraphicae religionis...*, op. cit., p. 992: "P. Martinus Vander Keele a Turnuth sacrae Theologiae etiam Lector admodum insignis fuit, ac concionator zelo dei feruens auditors suos verbo et exemplo sueae sanctae conuersationis ad meliorem vitam contemplatiuam cogens. Scripsit opuscula de 7. donis Spiritus sancti; de vita quoque contemplatiua sed sermon vernaculo. De numeris autem myfticis scripsit sermon Latino exactissime, vt videre est in bibliotheca nostra Louaniensi. Sepultus est iuxta scholam anno Dominicae incarnationis 1540". See also: B. Roest, *Franciscans Between Observance And Reformation: The Low Countries (Ca. 1400-1600)...*, op. cit., p. 421.

⁵⁷ Vide infra 2.3.3.

under whose instruction he spent 18 months, however it is unclear whether he meant instruction in Franciscan life or in theology⁵⁸.

Knowledge of ancient languages would rank Titelmans among the leading humanists in Leuven at that time. However, his alleged linguistic proficiency was disputed. Erasmus, in a letter to Peter Mexia, wrote disparagingly about his young adversary⁵⁹:

Est Louanii quidam Ttielmannus eiusdem Ordini, iuuenis isto vestrato paulo doctior in sacris litteris, atque etiam modestior [than Carvajal, a Spanish Franciscan mentioned earlier⁶⁰], tametsi prodigiose gloriae et petulantissimae loquacitatis; [...] Is annotauit in Annotationes Vale, Fabri et meas in Ep. ad Romanos, sed in me proprie stringit calamum. Respondi paucis absque ipsius nomine, sine conuiciis, nisi quod indicaui iuuenem nec Grece nec Latine peritum, nec instructum lectione diuersorum autorum, non esse parem ei prouinciae. [...] Ille statim quasi voto potitus, multo libellos parturire cepit, plenos indoctissimae loquacitatis. Ridetur a doctis omnibus. Ipse suorum fratrum applausu contentus est⁶¹.

Similar reservations about Titelmans' intellectual and especially linguistic competence were expressed in other of Erasmus' letters, as well as in those written to him⁶². Another man to cast doubt on Titelmans' knowledge of ancient languages was Jan Campensis⁶³. He wrote to Jan Dantiscus (Dantyszek):

Uni Francisco Titelmanno, iuueni imberbi, qui ante annos aliquot scripsit contra Erasmum, Jacobum Fabrum et Laurentium Vallensem, quos ipse conatus est docere graece, qui vixdum legere posset graece! Idem hoc anno edidit commentarios in Psalmos, opus tam grande ut asino oneri esse possit, cum privilegio Imperatoris, in quo opere et Hebraicam et Chaldaicam linguam se scire

⁵⁸ F. Titelmans, *Epistola Apologetica Fratris Francisci Ttielmanni Hasselensis pro opere Collationum ad veteris Ecclesiasticae interpretationis Novi Testamenti defensionem aedito, as Desyderium Erasmum Rotterdamum, sacrae Theologiae professorem*, Guilielmus Vorstermannus, Antuerpiae 1530, ff. e1r-v. On Weynsen see: B. de Troeyer, *Matthias Weynsen*, "Franciscana", 1965, vol. 20, no. 1, pp. 19–25. M.A. Nauwelaerts, *Matthias Weynsen*, [in:] *Contemporaries of Erasmus: A Biographical Register of the Renaissance and Reformation*, eds. P.G. Bietenholz and T.B. Deutscher, University of Toronto Press 1987, vol. 3, p. 441.

⁵⁹ On Mexia see: T.B. Deutscher, *Pero Mexia*, [in:] *Contemporaries of Erasmus. A Biographical Register of The Renaissance and Reformation*, eds. P.G. Bietenholz and T.B. Deutscher, University of Toronto Press 1986, vol. 2, pp. 439–440.

⁶⁰ On Carvajal see: W.B. Jones and T.B. Deutscher, *Louis de Carvahal*, [in:] *Contemporaries of Erasmus. A Biographical Register of The Renaissance and Reformation*, eds. P.G. Bietenholz and T.B. Deutscher, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 1985, vol. 1, pp. 275–276.

⁶¹ Allen, ep. 2300, vol. VIII, pp. 406–407.

⁶² See for instance Allen, ep. 1994, vol. VII, pp. 396–398; ep. 2261, vol VIII, pp. 339–342; ep. 2263, vol. VIII, pp. 343–346.

⁶³ On Campensis see: P.G. Bietenholz, *Jan van Campen*, [in:] *Contemporaries of Erasmus. A Biographical Register of The Renaissance and Reformation*, eds. P.G. Bietenholz and T.B. Deutscher, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 1985, vol. 1, pp. 255–256. K.H. Burmeister, *Johannes Campensis und Sebastian Münster. Ihre Stellung in der Geschichte der hebräischen Studien*, "Ephemerides theologicae Lovanienses", 1970, vol. 46, pp. 441–460.

iactat, cum mihi ipse confessus sit, se nunquam cepisse Hebraicae, multo etiam minus Chaldaicae, linguae operam dare⁶⁴!

We should, however, be very careful to uncritically accept such statements. Erasmus wrote about Titelmans in the midst of their bitter polemic. The Prince of Humanists was known never to take any criticism lightly, and he habitually scolded his opponents with caustic words. Jan Campensis also bore a personal grudge against Titelmans. He wrote a paraphrase of all Psalms simultaneously with Titelmans, yet he failed to obtain a permission to publish it, for which he blamed the Franciscan⁶⁵. Hence, it is difficult to consider him objective.

According to the testimony of Capuchin chronicles, Titelmans possessed unrivalled prowess in languages. Zaccaria Boverius wrote of him: “He was most skilled in Hebrew, Chaldean, and Greek. The last one he mastered to such an extent, that it is possible to say, that although he knew all the words of the Latin language, he nevertheless spoke with more ease in Greek than in Latin”⁶⁶. This testimony, although based on earlier documents, was nonetheless written a century after Titelmans’ death, rendering it limited credibility.

Analyses of Titelmans’ biblical commentaries demonstrate that he was much more competent than his critics were ready to acknowledge, but less than Boverius would like his readers to believe. His Latin style was elegant and clear, even if his works were indeed verbose (a charge that few renaissance authors could escape). He also demonstrated himself at ease with Greek, which he often cited in the original and explained grammatical and etymological nuances. His competence in Hebrew was less clear. Most of his comments on this language were based on Latin translations by Jerome and other scholars. Only occasionally he explained grammatical or lexical issues of the Hebrew text of the Bible. One can also observe a tendency to venture more into Hebrew in his later works, which suggests that his competence in Hebrew developed over the course of time. As to Aramaic, there is no evidence of his competence in this language, for all his comments in this matter were based on Latin translations of targums. Thus, he possessed, if any,

⁶⁴ Cited after: H. de Vocht, *Collegium Trilingue, part 3...*, op. cit., p. 152. On Dantiscus see: Z. Nowak, *Jan Dantyszczek: portret renesansowego humanisty*, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, Wrocław 1982. I. Guenther, *Johannes Dantiscus*, [in:] *Contemporaries of Erasmus. A Biographical Register of The Renaissance and Reformation*, eds. P.G. Bietenholz and T.B. Deutscher, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 1985, vol. 1, p. 377. J. Axer, *Ioannes Dantiscus. Diplomat, Husband, Father, Bishop of Warmia: The Limits of (Dis)Loyalty*, [in:] *Kulturgeschichte Preußens königlich polnischen Anteils in der Frühen Neuzeit*, eds. S. Beckmann and K. Garber, De Gruyter, Berlin 2011, pp. 227–236. On Dantiscus’ relationship with Campensis see: H. de Vocht, *John Dantiscus and his Netherlandish friends as revealed by their correspondence 1522-1546*, Librairie universitaire, Louvain 1961, pp. 66-72.

⁶⁵ For the story of Campensis troubles with his publication see: H. de Vocht, *Collegium Trilingue, part 3...*, op. cit., pp. 169–178.

⁶⁶ Z. Boverio, *Annali dell’Ordine...*, op. cit., p. 374: “Era molto versato nell’ebrea, nella caldea, e nella greca, l’ultima delle quali possiedeua così perfettamente, che se bene potesse dirsi, ch’ei sapesse tutti i vocaboli della lingua latina, fauellaua nondimeno più facilmente nel greco idioma, che nel latino”.

only a rudimentary knowledge of it. Examples of his philological skills shall be discussed in the third chapter.

In the Franciscan study house in Leuven, Titelmans was charged with lecturing in philosophy and in Holy Scriptures⁶⁷. The first subject is hardly surprising, considering that he had already lectured in philosophy for two years at “the Pig”. The reason why he was entrusted with lecturing also in Scripture was probably due to the death of Amandus of Zierikzee around 1525⁶⁸. Importantly, almost all the books of Titelmans identify him as “sacrarum scripturarum apud Lovaniense praelector”, also those that were not on the Bible itself⁶⁹. Titelmans took to his new tasks with much diligence and started lecturing daily on the Bible in the Franciscan friary. Although the lectures were in the Franciscan study house, they were open to the public and attracted much attention also outside Leuven. Allegedly, his lectures were so popular that they lured to Leuven students not only from the entire Low Countries, but also from Germany⁷⁰. According to Arblaster he was also involved in preparing and correcting the Vorsterman Dutch Bible, but there is, however, no clear evidence for that⁷¹.

Among his students there was Joannes Mahieu, later a bishop of Deventer, who, interestingly, was a great admirer of Erasmus⁷². Mahieu came as *primus in artibus* in 1524 and followed his older colleague’s footsteps, joining the Observant Franciscans⁷³, where he listened to Titelmans’ lectures. He also published a reworking of Titelmans’ commentary on Psalms in 1553⁷⁴.

The content of Titelmans’ lectures can be approximated through his printed works. Most of his books were based on his lectures, although obviously we cannot assume that they reflect their content a hundred percent. Titelmans lectured in philosophy for most of his career, starting in 1521. Presumably, he taught the same courses for his entire career, as philosophy constituted an obligatory entry requirement for further studies. Both compendia that he published stemmed from

⁶⁷ A. Paquay, *Frans Tittelmans van Hasselt...*, op. cit., p. 42.

⁶⁸ This is the date Paquay gives: Ibid., p. 41. C.F. Gunderson, “Amandus of Zierikzee”, op. cit. p. 39, gives dates 1524 or 1534. B. de Troeyer, *Amandus van Zierikzee...*, op. cit., p. 14. claimed that the letter date arose from the posthumous publication of *Chronica* in 1534 and argued for 1524 or 1525.

⁶⁹ Vide infra 2.2.3.

⁷⁰ A. Paquay, *Frans Tittelmans van Hasselt...*, op. cit., p. 46.

⁷¹ P. Arblaster, *‘Totius Mundi Emporium’: Antwerp as a Centre for Vernacular Bible Translations, 1523 - 1545*, [in:] *The Low Countries as a Crossroads of Religious Beliefs*, eds. A.-J. Gelderblom, J.L. de Jong, and M. van Vaeck, Brill, Leiden 2004, p. 24. On Vorsterman Bible see: W. François and S. Corbellini, *Shaping Religious Reading Cultures in the Early Modern Netherlands: The “Glossed Bibles” of Jacob van Liesvelt and Willem Vorsterman (1532–1534ff.)*, “Journal of Early Modern Christianity”, 2019, vol. 6, no. 2, pp. 147–184. B. Tops, *The Quest for the Early Modern Bible Reader: The Dutch Vorsterman Bible (1533–1534), its Readers and Users*, “Journal of Early Modern Christianity”, 2019, vol. 6, no. 2, pp. 185–222.

⁷² See: J.A. De Kok, *Acht eeuwen Minderbroeders in Nederland...*, op. cit., p. 207. On Mahusius see: B. de Troeyer, *Jan Mahusius, “Franciscana”*, 1965, vol. 20, no. 3, pp. 107–140.

⁷³ J.F. Van de Velde, *Catalogus omnium primorum...*, op. cit., p. 25.

⁷⁴ B. de Troeyer, *Jan Mahusius...*, op. cit., p. 115.

his lectures, as he himself explained⁷⁵. In *Epistola nuncupatoria* to *Compendium naturalis philosophiae*, he clarified that he had written this work for the benefit of his Franciscans students⁷⁶. In the same place, he expressed a wish to compose a similar compendium on logic: “quod nunc in physica disciplina egimus, fortisan et in dialecticis aliquando tentabimus”⁷⁷. Indeed, he accomplished this task three years later.

It is more difficult to reconstruct exactly the chronology of his lectures on the Holy Scriptures, which most likely changed a subject every year. Information provided in his published books allows us to approximate their order. We need to start in the middle. In *Epistola dedicatoria* addressed to Cardinal Quiñones, at the beginning of his commentary on the book of Ecclesiastes, Titelmans explained that he published it four years after he lectured publically on it:

Commentarios nostros in Ecclesiasten Salomonis, post publicam coram auditoribus nostris praelectionem, ante annos ferme quatuor elaboratos, atque (vt dici solet) ad vmbilicum vsque perductos, cum post diligens eruditorum virorum examen, amicorum precibus diu sollicitatus ac tandem deuictus, de tenebris in lucem prodire consensissem⁷⁸.

This confirms that Titelmans’ publications were founded upon prior lecture courses. The letter is dated on the 10th of June 1536, therefore Titelmans must have given public lectures on Ecclesiastes in 1532. It also shows that there was some time gap between lectures and publication, which Titelmans attributed to corrections and examination of his works by learned men. It is very likely that lectures consisted mostly of a paraphrase of biblical books, while philological annotations were elaborated afterwards, which took time. This is suggested by the fact, that in his posthumously published commentaries annotations are left unfinished.

Taking a clue from the information above, we can safely deduce that the first subject of Titelmans lectures were the Apostolic Epistles, as his commentary on them was published in 1528⁷⁹. Assuming that Titelmans started lecturing on Holy Scriptures in 1525 or 1526, these lectures probably occupied him until around 1527. The much shorter time gap between lectures and publication is easily explained by the absence of annotations in this commentary.

Afterwards he probably moved to lecturing on the authority of the Vulgate, which constituted the essence of his polemic with Erasmus. Given that his arguments against Erasmus were based on the Letter to the Romans, it is also possible that he combined polemical elements with an exposition of the Apostolic Epistles. The fact that he discussed the authority of the Vulgate

⁷⁵ Vide infra 2.2.3.

⁷⁶ F. Tittelmans, *Compendium naturalis philosophiae: libri duodecim de consideratione rerum naturalium, earum[ue] ad suu[m] creatorem reductione*, Ioannes Roigny, Paris 1543, f. AA4r.

⁷⁷ Ibid., f. AA5r.

⁷⁸ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Ecclesiasten Salomonis...*, op. cit., f. a3r.

⁷⁹ Vide infra 2.2.1.

in his lectures is confirmed by Erasmus, who in a letter to Mercurino Arborio di Gattinara⁸⁰, sent from Basel on the 29th of April 1527, asserted that in Leuven there was “franciscanus quidam, qui in publicis praelectionibus subinde perstringit nomen meum”⁸¹. The same is confirmed by a letter sent to Titelmans himself, on the 18th of May, in which Erasmus once again protested against adverse comments made by the Franciscan in his public lectures. While we cannot know exactly how far Titelmans’ lectures corresponded with the content of *Collationes quinque*, it is, however, safe to presume that he tried some of its arguments on his students prior to the publication of this polemical work in 1529.

The next subject of his lectures must have been the Book of Psalms, the commentary on which was published in May 1531. It is not unreasonable to presume that Titelmans lectured on the Psalms between 1527 and 1528. In *Epistola apologetica*, Titelmans claimed that the text for publication had already been complete in the summer of 1529⁸². This testimony is corroborated in his book on the authority of the Apocalypse, published in 1530. There Titelmans wrote of the commentary on the Psalms as having been already finished: “Superioribus diebus, Eruditissime Erasme, cum post absolutam ex Dei gratia enarrationem libri Psalmorum, ad sacratissimam illam Apocalypsim beati Ioannis Apostoli et Euangelistae transitum meditare, fratribus atque amicis multiplici id ratione suadentibus”⁸³. He went on to explain that unfortunately, due to numerous attacks on the canonicity of this book, before commenting its content, he had to defend its authority. It is difficult to say whether the discussion of the Apocalypse’s canonicity was also a subject of Titelmans’ lectures. There is also no indication whether he ever commented on its content, for no commentary on it was ever published.

We have some more information on Titelmans’ lectures in the following years. At the end of the commentary on Matthew’s Gospel there is information that he accomplished this work in 1533⁸⁴. Given that it was not published until 1545 and even so the annotations were incomplete, we must assume that 1533 is a date when Titelmans finished lecturing on Matthew, and not the date when he concluded the manuscript for print. Presumably the same logic should be applied to a note at the end of the commentary on Song of Solomon: “Finis commentariorum in Canticum

⁸⁰ On Gattinara see: J.M. Headly, *Mercurino Arborio di Gattinara*, [in:] *Contemporaries of Erasmus. A Biographical Register of The Renaissance and Reformation*, edd. P.G. Bietenholz and T.B. Deutscher, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 1986, vol. 2, pp. 76–80.

⁸¹ Allen, ep. 1815, vol. VII, pp. 53-54.

⁸² F. Titelmans, *Epistola Apologetica...*, op. cit., f. b1v: “quem hac aestate proxima Dei gratia, ad eiusdem gloriam, enarrando absoluimus”. *Epistola* was published in January 1530, and dispatched to Erasmus probably in December 1529, thus *aestate proxima* meant summer of 1529.

⁸³ F. Titelmans, *Libri duo de autoritate libri Apocalypsis Beati Ioannis Apostoli, in quibus ex antiquissimorum authorum assertionibus, scripturae huius dignitas et autoritas comprobatur, aduersus eos qui nostra hac tempestate siue falsis assertionibus siue non bonis dubitationibus, Canonicae et Diuinae huius scripturae autoritati derogantur*, Michael Hillenius, Antuerpiae 1530, f. a2r. Cf. Allen, ep. 2417, vol. IX, pp. 99-102.

⁸⁴ F. Titelmans, *Paraphrastica elucidatio in Matthaeeum...*, op. cit., f. 288v.

Canticorum, per Fratrem Franciscum Titelmanum Hassellensem, ordinis Fratrum Minorum, in conuentu Louaniensi Fratribus in lectionis officio seruientem, anno aetatis suae XXXII. anno autem ab incarnatione Domini 1534. penultima Decembris”⁸⁵. Irrespective of whether Titelmans dated according to Nativity style (according to which a New Year began on the 25th of December) or not, it seems clear that the sequence of his lectures around 1532-1534 was the following: Ecclesiastes – Matthew – Song of Solomon.

It is tempting to assume that the two subsequent years that Titelmans spent in Leuven were devoted to the Gospel of John and the Book of Job, commentaries on which were also published after his death. Given that the commentary on Ecclesiastes was printed only four years after lectures, it is very doubtful whether lectures delivered in 1535-1536 would be anywhere close to a publishable shape. As there is a gap between lectures on the Psalms, finished before 1529 and those on Ecclesiastes, delivered around 1532, it is not unreasonable to assume that Titelmans lectured on Job and/or on John’s Gospel in those years. Without more detailed information, however, this is merely a guess.

During Titelmans’ time at Leuven, the most prominent event was his dispute against Erasmus that took place between 1527-1530. The most complete account of this polemic has been presented by Paolo Sartori⁸⁶. We shall discuss in detail the theological content of this dispute in Chapter Five. Here we limit ourselves to presenting a chronology of the conflict.

As has been indicated in Chapter One, Erasmus’ biblical scholarship was an object of critique from the very publication. The Montaigu circle was active among Erasmus’s opponents; so were many Franciscans. Titelmans entered the stage in 1527, when the word of his critical comments regarding Erasmus’ work reached the Humanist in Basel. As indicated above, the scholar from Rotterdam mentioned Titelmans in a letter to a friend and shortly after wrote to the youngster himself. Indirectly, this is a proof of the popularity of Titelmans’ lectures, for not only the word of it reached Erasmus in Basel, but also, he considered it worthy to respond to his new opponent.

The letter of Erasmus to Titelmans was an exercise not in argumentation but rather intimidation. Although the Humanist addressed Titelmans as an “honoured brother in Christ” and assured that he was no enemy of the Franciscan Order, nevertheless he admonished his younger counterpart to cease vilifying his name in public lectures. “Ego, nisi Christum haberem prae oculis, et si te fortassis non possum laedare, possem ordinem tuum laedare magis quam credas” warned Erasmus menacingly⁸⁷. Titelmans was not intimidated. He responded with a letter in which he

⁸⁵ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum...*, op. cit., f. 194v.

⁸⁶ P. Sartori, *La Controversia Neotestamentaria...*, op. cit. pp. 77-135.

⁸⁷ Allen, ep.1823, vol. VII, p. 70.

cleared himself from all accusations of malicious intentions and slander⁸⁸. At the same time, he admitted to having criticised Erasmus' translation and annotations on the New Testament, as well as those of his predecessors, Valla and Lefèvre. Titelmans wrote that he objected to the way in which humanists undermined the authority of the old translation. Erasmus, claimed the Franciscan, should take no offence at this, for he himself spared criticism to no one, the saints included. "Certe candidi animi non est aliis negare quod tibi permiseris, cumque omnium omnia seuere diiudicaueris ac aliorum nihil dissimulaueris, nolle tua ab villo vel modestia attingi"⁸⁹. Such remarks hardly served to appease the sensitive ego of the great Humanist.

The debate escalated in May 1529 with the publication of Titelmans' attack on Valla, Lefèvre, and Erasmus entitled *Collationes quinque super epistolam ad Romans Beati Pauli Apostoli*. Erasmus knew that Titelmans was preparing its publication and probably tried to prevent it. Conradus Goclenius⁹⁰, one of Erasmus' closest friends in Leuven, informed him in a letter from the 7th of October 1528 that "Franciscanus iam agit Antuerpiae vt pariat suos foetus, dissuadentibus theologorum – quod compertum habeo – coryphaeis. Sed hic tibi metuendus non est"⁹¹. Nevertheless, when the book was published, Erasmus seemed to be concerned.

The old Humanist was deeply touched by the attack by the young scholar and responded scornfully with a *Responsio ad Collationes cuiusdam iuuenis gerontodidascali*⁹². The very name he called Titelmans, *iuuenis gerontodidascalos* – a youth who would teach his elders – showed that he was offended not only by the content of the book, but also by the fact that he was criticised by a man, who only a few years ago was a pupil⁹³. He contested Titelmans' skill in languages and accused him of being merely a mouthpiece for Masson's ideas⁹⁴. He also took offence at the image of Christ trampling over a lion and a dragon at the end of *Collationes*. "An putat nos nescire quid sibi velit ille Laureatus, calcans leonem et draconem?"⁹⁵. He explained the meaning of this image in his letter to John Botzheim sent from Freiburg on the 13th of August 1529⁹⁶: "Lutetiae Petrus Cornuensis, cuius est illud μάλα θπυλλλούμενον ἐν τοῖς Φραγκισκιδῶν ἔθνεσιν 'Conculcabis leonem et draconem', leonem Lutherum, draconem Erasmus"⁹⁷. He continued that this image

⁸⁸ Allen, ep. 1837a, vol. VIII, pp. [LIII-LV].

⁸⁹ Allen, ep. 1837a, vol. VIII, p. [LV].

⁹⁰ On Goclenius see: G. Tournoy-Thoen, *Conradus Goclenius*, [in:] *Contemporaries of Erasmus. A Biographical Register of The Renaissance and Reformation*, eds. P.G. Bietenholz and T.B. Deutscher, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 1986, vol. 2, pp. 109–111.

⁹¹ Allen, ep. 2063, vol. VII p. 518.

⁹² D. Erasmus, "Responsio ad Collationes", col. 965E-1016C. English translation: D. Erasmus, "Responsio ad Collationes cuiusdam iuuenis gerontodidascali", op. cit. pp. 135-263.

⁹³ Cf. D. Erasmus, "Responsio ad Collationes", op. cit., col. 965E.

⁹⁴ D. Erasmus, "Responsio ad Collationes", op. cit., col. 965E-F.

⁹⁵ Ibid. col. 966A.

⁹⁶ On Botzheim see: H.-C. Rublack, *Johann von Botzheim*, [in:] *Contemporaries of Erasmus. A Biographical Register of The Renaissance and Reformation*, eds. P.G. Bietenholz and T.B. Deutscher, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 1985, vol. 1, pp. 177–178.

⁹⁷ Allen, ep. 2205, vol. VIII, p. 256.

could better be applied to the mendicant orders, which were full of dragons, basilisk, and other viperous creatures. After these rather asperous remarks he offered his response to some of Titelmans' arguments, which we shall discuss in chapter five.

Titelmans responded with equal brusqueness. His *Epistola Apologetica per opera Collationum ad Desyderorium Erasmus Roterodamum* was published in 1530 and responded to some accusations of Erasmus⁹⁸. For instance, Titelmans rejected Erasmus' suggestion that the image at the end of his books was a jab at the Humanist.

Paucis igitur accipe synceram ueritatem, ut uanam ponas suspicionem. Leo et Draco, idem diabolus est, qui partier et leo et draco est, quemadmodum illo scribit beatus Augustinus in Homelia illa cantatissima, quae de Martiribus legitur in haec uerba: Scriptum est (inquit) de diabolo, quia leo et draco est: Leo propter impetum, Draco occulte insidiatur⁹⁹.

He also transformed the offensive epithet *gerontodidascalos* into *gerontomastis* (a whip on old men) and applied it to his opponent. Erasmus was a whip on old authorities, whom he attacked unjustly¹⁰⁰.

Tu uero ab inicio pene quo calamum ad scribendum applicare coepisti, plurima non solum ueterum doctorum dicta aut scripta, uerumetiam totius Ecclesiae antiquissimo usu ac longissimi obseruatione probate dogmata, et ritus sacros uellicare non desisti, quemadmodum titi et in collationibus nostris partim ostendimus¹⁰¹.

He also called Erasmus *paedodidascalos*, that is a teacher of young men¹⁰². Moreover, he provided numerous biblical and patristic examples of instances, when the old were mistaken and the young correct¹⁰³.

In addition to his *Epistola*, Titelmans composed a book on the authority of the Book of Revelation, in which he also attacked Erasmus. It shall be discussed in detail in chapter 5.3. This final work was ignored by Erasmus and the dispute came to a quiet end. The last letter in which Erasmus mentioned his young opponent was the one he sent to Jacopo Sadoletto, sent on the 7th of March 1531, in which the Franciscan is mentioned alongside Alberto Pio, Carvajal, and other

⁹⁸ F. Titelmans, *Epistola Apologetica...*, op. cit.

⁹⁹ Ibid. f. b4r. The homily was in reality that of Caesarius of Arles: Caesarius Arelatensis, *Sermones ex integro a Caesario compositi uel ex aliis fontibus hausti*, sermo 69.2, ed. G. Morin, 1953, CCSL 103, p. 291: "sed dictus diabolus leo et draco: leo propter impetum, draco propter insidias; leo aperte irascitur, draco occulte insidiatur". These words were ascribed to Augustine in *Biblia cum glossa ordinaria. Pars II*, Adolph Rusch, Strassburg 1481, f. 287r and in Petrus Lombardus, *Commentarium in Psalmos*, 90.13, PL 191, col. 853.

¹⁰⁰ F. Titelmans, *Epistola Apologetica...*, op. cit., f. c8r.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., f. c8v.

¹⁰² Ibid., f. d2r.

¹⁰³ Ibid., ff. c2r-c7v.

Erasmus' critics¹⁰⁴. Titelmans did not mention Erasmus in any of his subsequent works, though he frequently alluded to humanists and reformers in his biblical commentaries¹⁰⁵.

2.1.4 Capuchin reform and the last year of Titelmans' life 1536-1537

Considering Titelmans' significant successes as a scholar, his decision to abandon the academic life and join the new-born Capuchin reform of the Franciscan Order must have come as a surprise to many. The Franciscan Order was constantly bustling with an idea of a reform, understood as a return to stricter poverty, contemplative prayer, and itinerant preaching¹⁰⁶. Some attempts at reform led to heresy, while others succeeded, for example the Observant branch, of which Titelmans was a member¹⁰⁷. By the early 16th century, however, this reform was also considered by many to have departed from the original ideal, and thus was in need of being reformed.

The papal bulla *Ite vos* from the 29th of May 1517 reorganised the structure of the Franciscan Order, making the Observant branch completely independent from the Conventuals and unifying various scions of the Observant family¹⁰⁸. This, however, did not halt the reforming zeal among the sons of Saint Francis. It was in this atmosphere that in 1525 an Observant Franciscan, Matteo di Basccio secured for himself a papal privilege to live the life of a wandering preacher. Soon he was joined by Lodovico and Rafaele di Fossombrone, and, after some struggle, they secured a bull *Religionis zelus*, issued on the 3rd of July 1528¹⁰⁹. It officially sanctioned a new reform of the Franciscan Order that soon gained the name of Capuchins¹¹⁰. Even though all three of the founding fathers left the movement within a decade, it continued to grow under the prudent leadership of Bernardino d'Asti¹¹¹.

¹⁰⁴ Allen, ep. 2443, vol. IX, pp. 157-168.

¹⁰⁵ See for instance: F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Ecclesiasten Salomonis...*, op. cit., f. o6v. F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos iuxta veritatem vulgatae et ecclesiae vsitatae aeditionis latinae, quae et ipsa integra illibataque exaduerso opponitur: Psalmis singulis singula argumenta ante se monstrantibus, totam Psalmi virtutem atque materiam quasi per modum epitomatis summam complectentia: post elucidationem vero adiunctis prolixioribus Annotationibus, quae Commentariorum locum habent. Adiuncta est elucidatio canticorum, quae Ecclesiasticus vsus appellat ferialia. Subsequuntur deinde Annotationes ex Hebraeo atque chaldaeo, in quibus quicquid ex veritate Hebraica occurrit difficultatis, tractant et exponitur*, Martinus Caesar, Antwerpiae 1531, f. 90r.

¹⁰⁶ D. Nimmo, *Reform and Division in the Medieval Franciscan Order: From Saint Francis to the Foundation of the Capuchins*, Capuchin historical institute, Rome 1987.

¹⁰⁷ See: Ibid., pp. 109–138; 240–278; 353–414. Cf. D. Burr, *The Spiritual Franciscans: from Protest to Persecution in the Century after Saint Francis*, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park 2001.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. D. Nimmo, *Reform and division in the medieval Franciscan order...*, op. cit., pp. 640–642. The text of the bulla see: L. Wadding, *Annales Minorum seu trium Ordinum a S. Francisco institutorum*, ed. J.M. Fonseca ab Evora, Ad Claras Aquas (Quaracchi) 1933, vol. 16, pp. 49–55.

¹⁰⁹ Clemens VII, bulla *Religionis Zelus* [in:] *Bullarium Ordinis FF. Minorum S. P. Francisci Capucinatorum*, ed. Michaela a Tugio, Joannis Zempel, Romae 1740, vol. 1, pp. 3–4.

¹¹⁰ For the history of the beginnings of the reform see: M. D'Alatri, *I Cappuccini, storia di una famiglia francescana*, Istituto Storico dei Cappuccini, Roma 1994, pp. 11–28.

¹¹¹ Cf. Melchior a Pobladura, *Historia generalis Ordinis Fratrum Minorum Capucinatorum. Pars prima 1525-1619*, Institutum historicum OFMCap., Romae 1947, pp. 44–48. *Bernardinus ab Asti* [in:] *Lexicon Capuccinum...*, op. cit., col. 200.

The new reform has often been seen in Franciscan historiography as a reaction against the worldliness and intellectualism of the Italian Renaissance. Indeed, the first ordinations of the new reform, written in Albacina in 1529, rang a strongly anti-intellectual tone. They forbade preachers from taking more than three books with them when they went preaching and limited studies to strictly spiritual matters¹¹². “Again, no one should undertake any study, other than reading some lectures from Holy Scriptures and some pious and spiritual book, which attract to the love of Christ and to embracing his cross”¹¹³. Similarly, the first constitutions, drawn in 1535-1536, admonished brothers not to read or study anything indecent or futile.

Useless books of the gentiles that sooner make a man a pagan than a Christian ... should not be kept in our places. ... Students ought not to seek knowledge that puffs up, but the illuminating and inflammatory love of Christ, that builds up the soul. They should never immerse themselves in literary studies to such a degree that for this reason they would neglect the holy study of prayer. ... Instead, for the sake of the greater possession of the Spirit of Christ, both the lecturers as well as students should make the effort to give more importance to spiritual than to literary studies. In doing so, they would gain all the greater profit the more they concentrate on the spirit than on the letter; for without the spirit, it is impossible to acquire the true understanding, moreover, the letter alone blinds and kills¹¹⁴.

At the same time, however, it is worth noting that the reform attracted many well-educated Observant brothers, such as Bernardino d’Asti, Bernardino Occhino¹¹⁵, and Giovanni da Fano¹¹⁶. Further, the first patrons of the Reform, Caterina Cybo and Vittoria Colonna, were both members of the Italian evangelical movement, seeking to reconcile Luther’s doctrine of justification with Catholicism¹¹⁷. Interestingly, early Capuchin chronicles boisterously called Titelmans a “humanista”¹¹⁸. Thus, rather than simply seeing the Capuchin Reform as an anti-intellectual

¹¹² C. Cargnoni, ed., *I Cappuccini: fonti documentarie e narrative del primo secolo (1525-1619)*, Edizioni Frate Indovino, Perugia 1988, vol. 1, p. 198.

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 201: “Item che niuno presume ponere studio, eccetto leggere acuna lezione delle sacre Scritture e qualche libretto devoto e spirituale, che tirinio all’amor di Cristo e ad abbracciar la sua croce”.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 427–428: “Li libri inutile de’ gentili, li quali più presto fanno l’omo pagano che cristiano [...] non se tenghino ne li nostri lochi. [...] E non cerchino li studenti di acquistare la inflativa scienza, ma la illuminativa e infiamante carità de Cristo, la quale edifica l’anima. Né mai se immergino tanto nel studio litterale, che per esso abiano a pretermettere el studio sacro de la orazione [...] Ma per meglio potere avere el spirito di Cristo, si sforzaranno, tanto li lectori quanto li studenti, a dar maggiore opera al spirituale studio che al litterale, e, così facendo, tanto maggiore profecto si ritrovarano a far nel studio quanto che più daranno opera al spirito che alla littera; però che senza el spirito non si acquista el vero senso, anzi la semplice littera, la quale excecata e occide”.

¹¹⁵ M. Camaioni, *Il Vangelo e l’Anticristo: Bernardino Ochino tra francescanesimo ed eresia (1487-1547)*, Società editrice Il mulino, Bologna 2018.

¹¹⁶ See: *Ioannes a Fano* [in:] *Lexicon Capuccinum...*, op. cit., col. 833-834.

¹¹⁷ On the relationship between Colonna and Occhino see: E. Campi, *Vittoria Colonna and Bernardino Ochino*, [in:] *A companion to Vittoria Colonna*, eds. A. Brundin, T. Crivelli, and M.S. Sapegno, Brill, Leiden 2016, pp. 371–398.

¹¹⁸ Bernardinus a Colpetrazzo, *Historia Ordinis Fratrum Minorum Capuccinorum (1525-1593)*, ed. Melchior a Pobladura, Collegio S. Lorenzo da Brindisi dei Frati Minori Cappuccini, Assisi 1940, vol. 2, Monumenta Historica Ordinis Minorum Capuccinorum 3, p. 171.

reaction against humanism, one could just as well see it as an outcome of humanism and its call to return to the sources. It was not simply reactionary; it was a proper reform movement. Unlike Erasmus, who believed that knowledge could bring the renewal of Christendom, and unlike Luther, who sought the only path to true reform in purifying the theology, the Capuchin Reform was a renewal through personal conversion and austerity. Similar to both of them, however, the Capuchins emphasised the importance of the Scriptures in Christian life. In many ways it was similar to what Standonck had done in Paris. Sadly, there remain few critical historical works on the origins of the Capuchin Reform.

It is in this light that we must try to understand Titelmans' decision to abandon his intellectual pursuits and assume a life of simplicity and poverty. It is difficult to say whether his decision to join the Capuchins stemmed more from his dissatisfaction with the level of religious life of Flemish Observants or more from his inner tension between the professed simplicity of life and his intellectual pursuits and academic obligations. De Troeyer argued for the latter solution¹¹⁹. First, he claimed that the Leuven friary was exemplary in its observance of the Rule, as testified by Franciscus Gonzaga in 1587, who based his opinion on that of Cardinal Quiñones, who visited Leuven in 1521¹²⁰. De Troeyer added that Titelmans seemed to have been troubled by the tension between studies and austerity throughout his life. His decision to join the Friars Minor ran counter to his rapidly developing academic career, as it was not obvious when he entered the Order that his superiors would allow him to continue teaching. When they did, he was happy to do it out of obedience and not for vainglory. Yet the tension continued, as indicated by a comment concluding his edition of *Chronica*: "Indocti sine bibliis coelum coecis aperiunt. / Nos cum bibliothecis nostris in infernum et mergimur et mergimus"¹²¹. Such a tension was not uncommon in Christian history, and Titelmans' comment rings a similar tone as those made by his slightly younger and more famous namesake, Francis Xavier. Such a tension is also hinted by the fact that he abandoned all intellectual activities once he became a Capuchin. On the other hand, his intention to return to his fatherland in order to reform his Franciscan province indicates that he was not entirely satisfied with the quality of the Franciscan life at Leuven¹²².

¹¹⁹ B. de Troeyer, *Bio-bibliographia Franciscana...*, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 91–93.

¹²⁰ F. Gonzaga, *De origine seraphicae religionis...*, op. cit., pp. 991–992: "Nec sane suppressum oportuit dictum reuerendissimi patris Francisci Angelorum nostri olim Ordinis generalis Ministri, ac tandem sanctae Romanae Ecclesiae Cardinalis, qui, lustrates Prouinciis plurimis, ad suos reuersus istud praebebat de hoc conuentu testimonium: *Lapides conuentus Lovaniensis sancti sunt, et nescio quam sanctitatem redolent*. Tantam ibi (dum visitaret) reppererat pietatem, et humilitatem, tantam religionem, tantum spiritus feruorem, tantam concordiam vt instar aciei ordinatissimae, omnibus intrantibus admirabilis hic locus redderetur, ac intuentes etiamnum in stuporem raperet, atque compungeret".

¹²¹ F. Titelmans and A. de Zierikzee, *Chronica compendiosissima...*, op. cit., f. 127r.

¹²² Bernardinus a Colpetrazzo, *Historia Ordinis Historia Ordinis...*, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 282. Bernardinus a Colpetrazzo, *Historia Ordinis...*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 177.

Seen from another perspective, Titelmans' decision was not a negation of his earlier efforts, but their practical embodiment. It concurred with the spirituality of *devotio moderna*, of Standonck and of Cousturier, who took a very similar move 26 years earlier, becoming a Carthusian. Rather than just commenting on the Gospels, Titelmans chose to live it out. In a way, his life as a Capuchin was his last book, a very practical commentary on how he understood the Christian faith.

Titelmans left Leuven after the 10th of June 1536, the date when, while still at Leuven, he signed a dedicatory letter to Cardinal Quiñones attached to his commentary on Ecclesiastes¹²³. He was accompanied by two brethren, Leonard, a priest, and Martin, a lay brother¹²⁴. They went first to Paris, where they were joined by another Observant, Francis da Solteri di Puglia, and proceeded to Rome, reaching it in September¹²⁵. According to Boverius, he arrived precisely at the beginning of the general chapter, and, in recognition of the fame of his learning and piety, he was immediately granted participation with full voting rights¹²⁶. Though this was probably more of a rhetorical exaggeration, nonetheless Titelmans was received in the new Reform, largely thanks to a hiatus between papal prohibitions on receiving brothers from the Observant branch of the Order¹²⁷.

He was immediately confronted with the very tension that he perhaps tried to escape, as he was offered by the general vicar, Bernardino d'Asti, a position of a lector in Milan¹²⁸. Had he accepted, he would effectively continue what he had been doing in Leuven. Nevertheless, he refused and instead joined the Roman house of Capuchins, where he served the sick in the hospital of San Giacomo near Porta del Popolo.

The last period of his life is the one on which we are best informed. The life of Titelmans as a Capuchin friar is reported by several Capuchin chronicles, of which the one by Bernardino Croli da Colpetrazzo (1514-1594) is especially important. Its author knew Titelmans personally, so information that he provided is relatively reliable, even if somewhat hagiographical. Other chronicles seem to be mostly derived from Bernardino's testimony.

Titelmans spent most of his brief time as a Capuchin working in a hospital "doing the most vile chores that there were, that is removing excrements of poor sick and keeping clean dirty places. He washed bedsheets, brought meals, swept floors, and performed other services with so

¹²³ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Ecclesiasten Salomonis...*, op. cit., f. 15v. Cardinal Quiñones was the protector of the Friars Minor at the time.

¹²⁴ Bernardinus a Colpetrazzo, *Historia Ordinis...*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 172. Cf. Matthias a Salò, *Historia Capuccina...*, op. cit., p. 181. Biography of Martinus see: Bernardinus a Colpetrazzo, *Historia Ordinis...*, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 438–439. Matthias a Salò, *Historia Capuccina...*, op. cit., pp. 185–186.

¹²⁵ Cf. Matthias a Salò, *Historia Capuccina...*, op. cit., p. 181.

¹²⁶ Z. Boverio, *Annali dell'Ordine...*, op. cit., p. 376. He mistakenly dated Titelmans' arrival in Rome for 1535.

¹²⁷ One such a prohibition was lifted in 1535, another came into place in 1537, cf. Melchior a Pobladura, *Historia generalis Ordinis Fratrum Minorum Capuccinorum. Pars prima 1525-1619...*, op. cit., p. 82. Paul III, bulla *Dudum Siquidem* [in:] *Bullarium Ordinis...*, op. cit., pp. 22–23.

¹²⁸ Z. Boverio, *Annali dell'Ordine...*, op. cit., pp. 376–377.

much zeal and care that he seemed to be a new Saint Francis”¹²⁹. Besides, he led a life of prayer and asceticism in perfect poverty. He insisted that brothers should work with their own hands, as recommended by the Rule of Saint Francis, and by many other fathers of monastic life, such as Basil the Great, Benedict of Nursia, and Bernard of Clairvaux, whose examples he cited to encourage brothers to do so¹³⁰. He himself learned the art of producing wicker baskets and produced them even when elevated to the provincial’s office¹³¹.

He abandoned almost entirely all intellectual pursuits. Even though he spoke little Italian, he tried not to use Latin in order not to betray his exceptional learning¹³². Many admired such a choice:

Many fathers from across the Alps, who knew him as a much-honoured member of the Order, visited him. When they saw him now without any books, acting as a simple friar, barefoot and clothed in a habit of coarse cloth they marvelled a lot. He served with so much love towards those poor sick. They asked him with much admiration: My Father, how was it possible that you have left all studies? The Servant of God replied to them: I took the exercise taught to me by the Seraphic Father Saint Francis. And I want you to know that I have swapped my Augustines, my Jeromes and Chrysostoms for them [the sick]; my library is this: to serve these poor, which was so much recommended to us by our Lord God. Books teach you how to act well and doing what they teach is a completion of the reading. One does not go to paradise for having known or having read, but for having done the things that these books teach¹³³.

Yet, he could not abandon cerebral work as much as he might have wished. At the insistence of his brothers, he composed “a little book of most beautiful prayers”, which was sadly lost¹³⁴. He also gave talks about the observation of the Rule, a task imposed on him by Bernardino d’Asti. His talents were quickly recognised and utilised by the Order. In May 1537, at the first provincial chapter of the Roman Province (the new reform was divided into nine provinces in 1536),

¹²⁹ Bernardinus a Colpetrazzo, *Historia Ordinis...*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 173: “facendo il piú vile offitio che vi fosse, che era di portar’ via gli escrementi de’ poveri infermi et tener’ netti i luoghi immondi. Lavava le pezze, portava da mangiare, spazzava et altri servitij, con tanto fervore et sollecitudine che pareva un altro San Francesco”.

¹³⁰ Ibid., vol. 2, p. 174. Cf. Matthias a Salò, *Historia Capuccina...*, op. cit., p. 182.

¹³¹ Bernardinus a Colpetrazzo, *Historia Ordinis...*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 175. Cf. Matthias a Salò, *Historia Capuccina...*, op. cit., p. 183.

¹³² Bernardinus a Colpetrazzo, *Historia Ordinis...*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 173. Cf. Matthias a Salò, *Historia Capuccina...*, op. cit., p. 181.

¹³³ Bernardinus a Colpetrazzo, *Historia Ordinis...*, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 281: “il qucoale diede tanta admiratione che fu visitato da molti padri oltramontani che l’havevan’ conosciuto nella Religione tanto honorato, e hora le vedevano essersi privo di libri, come un’ semplice fraticello, scalzo e vestito d’un habbito d’arbascio. Serviva con tant’amore a quei poveri infermi e con molta admiratione gli dicevano : O Padre mio, e come l’havete potuto fare di lasciare affatto lo studio? Gli rispondeva il servo di Dio: Io ho preso quell’esercitio che m’insegnò il Serafico Padre San Francesco. E sappiate che i miei Agustini, i miei Gironimi, Grisostomi, gl’ho commutati in questi; questi sono le mie librerie: servire a questi poverini tanto dal Signor Idio a noi raccomandati. I libri c’insegnano ad operar’ bene, e il far’ quel’ che c’insegnano è complemento della lettione. Non per haver’ saputo e per haver letto se va in paradiso, ma per haver’ fatto quel che c’insegnano i libri”.

¹³⁴ Bernardinus a Colpetrazzo, *Historia Ordinis...*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 173. Vide infra 2.2.4.

Titelmans was elected the provincial vicar, that is, the superior of the province¹³⁵. From that moment on, he devoted his time to visiting friaries to ensure the high standards of spiritual life imposed on friars in Capuchin Constitutions.

According to the Chronicles, Titelmans did not intend to sojourn long in Italy. He wanted to transplant the Reform to his fatherland, even though at the time Capuchins were prohibited from settling beyond the Alps¹³⁶. He also allegedly desired to go as a missionary to the New World, a desire partly confirmed by his remarks at the end of the *Chronica*¹³⁷. He was to have no such an opportunity. On the feast day of Mary's Assumption, he arrived at the friary in Anticoli (Fiuggi), where he suddenly fell ill. After 28 days of illness, he passed away on the 12th of September 1537 in the 36th year of life¹³⁸. His disease and death, according to Capuchin chronicles, resulted from his strenuous work and severe ascetic practices.

Capuchin hagiographers presented his death as far from ordinary. At the time of his death, his friend, Bernardino the Spaniard, had a vision of a procession of saints concluded by Titelmans himself¹³⁹. The cadaver emitted pleasant odours, and when it was inspected four years after death, it displayed no signs of decay¹⁴⁰. The aforementioned Bernardino healed a woman suffering from an outflow of blood with a piece of Titelmans' habit – a miracle clearly stylised on a Gospel story (Mark 5:25-33)¹⁴¹. Boverius reported some other miracles post-mortem¹⁴², however the beatification process never made much progress, even though in 1773 the Apostolic See gave permission to open it¹⁴³.

For the early generations of Capuchins, Titelmans became something of a hero. They took pride not only in his humility and austerity but equally in his great learning, which contrasted sharply with his virtues. Commenting on Titelmans' polemic with Erasmus, about which he was most certainly ill-informed, Bernardino da Colpetrazzo stated: "In his time he was regarded the most learned man in all of Christendom. He disputed with Erasmus and prevailed over him. This very Erasmus said that in the entire Christian world there was no other man he would rather debate than Titelmans"¹⁴⁴. Nothing could be more remote from Erasmus' true sentiments. Titelmans was

¹³⁵ Ibid., p. 175. Until 1619, when the Capuchin reform was given full autonomy, provincial and general superiors used the title of *vicarius*, for they formally were subjected to ministers of the Conventuals.

¹³⁶ Ibid., p. 177. Cf. Paul III, bulla *Dudum siquidem* [in:] *Bullarium Ordinis...*, op. cit., pp. 22–23.

¹³⁷ Z. Boverio, *Annali dell'Ordine...*, op. cit., p. 383. Boverius claimed that Titelmans dreamed of a martyr's death. Cf. F. Titelmans and A. de Zierikzee, *Chronica compendiosissima...*, op. cit., f. 127r.

¹³⁸ Bernardinus a Colpetrazzo, *Historia Ordinis...*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 177.

¹³⁹ Cf. Ibid., vol. 2, pp. 177–178.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. Ibid., vol. 2, p. 178. Matthias a Salò, *Historia Capuccina...*, op. cit., p. 184.

¹⁴¹ Bernardinus a Colpetrazzo, *Historia Ordinis...*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 178.

¹⁴² Z. Boverio, *Annali dell'Ordine...*, op. cit., pp. 391–393.

¹⁴³ C. Cargnoni, S. Gieben, and P. Maranesi, *Sulle orme dei santi: il santorale cappuccino: santi, beati, venerabili, servi di Dio*, Istituto Storico dei Cappuccini Postulazione Generale, Roma 2000, p. 286.

¹⁴⁴ Bernardinus a Colpetrazzo, *Historia Ordinis...*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 176: "Suo tempore era riputato il primo dotto della cristianità. Disputò con Erasmo et lo vinse. Il quale Erasmo diceva non esser' nella cristianità huomo per lui, se non il Titelmano".

also frequently mentioned as one of the learned who entered the Reform¹⁴⁵. His figure was also used to cover up the scandal caused by the apostasy of Bernardino Occhino, the Order's second general superior. Allegedly Titelmans recognised a heretic in him, even though he died four years prior to Occhino's defection to the Protestant camp¹⁴⁶. Titelmans was also listed alongside Bernardino d'Asti and Francesco di Jessi as a member of a Capuchin team selected to debate with critics of the Capuchin Reform¹⁴⁷.

This short biographical sketch has shown that Titelmans was a significant figure in his times. He was a man of considerable education that incorporated both scholastic and humanist elements, and of no negligible sanctity of life. Because he exercised influence on others through his public lectures and multiple publications both in philosophy and in theology, we shall now turn to explore his written works in more detail.

2.2 Works of Franciscus Titelmans

Franciscus Titelmans was a very prolific writer, active in numerous fields. Despite his early death, he left twenty published works, of which more than a half concerned the Bible. We shall discuss his printed output in three sections. We begin with presenting his seven biblical commentaries, three published in his lifetime and four posthumously, then we discuss his polemical works, directed against humanists, especially *contra* Erasmus of Rotterdam. In the final part we shall briefly describe his other works, philosophical and historical, that fall outside the scope of this dissertation, yet constitute an important context for his biblical scholarship.

2.2.1 Biblical commentaries published in the author's lifetime

Although they have been the least studied by modern scholars, biblical commentaries constitute the biggest and arguably the most important category of Titelmans' publications. In his lifetime, Titelmans published works on the Apostolic Epistles, the Psalms, and the Book of Ecclesiastes. Four further commentaries were published after his death by his older brother: on the Gospels of Matthew and John, on the Book of Job, and on the Song of Solomon. We shall present them in the chronological order of publication.

¹⁴⁵ Marius a Mercato Saraceno, *Relationes de origine Ordinis Minorum Capuccinorum*, ed. Melchior a Pobladura, Collegio S. Lorenzo da Brindisi dei Minori Cappuccini, Assisi 1937, Monumenta Historica Ordinis Minorum Capuccinorum 1, pp. 19. 82. 426.

¹⁴⁶ Matthias a Salò, *Historia Capuccina...*, op. cit., p. 43. Paulus a Foligno, *Origo et progressus...*, op. cit., pp. 266–267.

¹⁴⁷ Marius a Mercato Saraceno, *Relationes de origine...*, op. cit., p. 434. Bernardinus a Colpetrazzo, *Historia Ordinis...*, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 422–424. Matthias a Salò, *Historia Capuccina...*, op. cit., pp. 37–38. Paulus a Foligno, *Origo et progressus...*, op. cit., p. 354.

The first work published by Titelmans was *Elucidatio in omnes epistolas apostolicas*, which left printing presses in 1528. The full title ran:

Elucidatio in omnes epistolas apostolicas, quatuordecim Paulinas et Canonicas septem, vna cum textu ad marginem adiecto, et ita commode distributo, vt vnaquaeque textus particula suae elucidatione exaduerso respondeat, iuxta veritatem veteris et vulgatae aeditionis, additis argumentis, quae et Epitomatum vice esse possint, totam Epistolarum substantiam, iuxta ordinem singulorum Capitum, summatim complectentibus, Per fratrem Franciscum Titelmannum Hassellensem, ordinis Fratrum Minorum, sacrarum scripturarum apud Louaniense Praelectorem: ex ipsa authoris recognitione, iam denuo typis excusa¹⁴⁸.

As the title clearly articulated, the volume contained commentary on all twenty-one epistles of the New Testament. In the 1529 edition, it contained 248 folios in octavo, with continuous foliation from a1r to Hh8v. It was a work of a conservative. Not only did Titelmans use the text of the Vulgate as his base, but also attributed the letter to the Hebrews to Saint Paul, although this had been challenged by humanists. Titelmans' commentary contained no philological notes on the text, no attempts at correcting or clarifying the Vulgate, even though the author was clearly familiar with translations of Lefevre and Erasmus, as his polemical texts clearly demonstrated.

The commentary, called *elucidatio*, was limited to a fairly superficial paraphrase of the inspired text. The text of the Vulgate was printed on the margins, with division of verses numbered with letters of the Latin alphabet. The corresponding paraphrase was printed alongside it. The paraphrase did not include any theological discussion of verses made controversial by Luther and other reformers, such as for instance Rom. 3:28, into which Luther famously added the word “only” to qualify salvation by faith¹⁴⁹. Yet, Titelmans seemed completely unconcerned with questions regarding justification by faith alone and paraphrased this verse very simply: “Stat enim fixa sententia: posse hominem iustificari ex fide Christi, sine operibus legis”¹⁵⁰. No attempt to refute Luther's interpretation of this verse or remind the reader about the indispensability of deeds as an outward manifestation of faith. The same is true about the entire commentary.

¹⁴⁸ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes epistolas apostolicas, quatuordecim Paulinas et Canonicas septem, vna cum textu ad marginem adiecto, et ita commode distributo, vt vnaquaeque textus particular suae elucidatione exaduerso respondeat, iuxta veritatem veteris et vulgatae aeditionis, additis argumentis, quae et Epitomatum vice esse possint, totam Epistolarum substantiam, iuxta ordinem singulorum Capitum, summatim complectentibus*, Michael Hillenus, Antwerpiae 1529, f. a1r. References to Titelmans' works are given to first editions, or the earliest that we had at our disposal.

¹⁴⁹ M. Luther, *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe. Die Deutsche Bibel*, ed. G. Bebermeyer, Hermann Böhlhaus Nachfolger, Weimar 1931, vol. 7, p. 39, Röm 3:28: “So halten wir es nu, Das der Mensch Gerecht werde, on des Gesetzes Werke, alleine duch den glauben”. On Luther's translation as a commentary see: G.A. Jansen, *Embedded Commentary in Luther's Translation of Romans 3*, [in:] *The Unfolding of Words: Commentary in the Age of Erasmus*, ed. J.R. Henderson, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 2012, pp. 118–139.

¹⁵⁰ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes epistolas apostolicas...*, op. cit., f. b6r.

The work was structured according to the canonical order of the epistles in the New Testament. Commentary on each letter was preceded by *argumentum elucidatorium*, that is, a brief summary of the content of the letter. In these prefaces Titelmans also included some conventional information about authors and addressees. For instance, he identified the author of James' letter with the first bishop of Jerusalem and added that he wrote for those who had converted from Judaism¹⁵¹. He showed not the slightest concern with defending the canonicity of this letter, which Luther had attacked, calling it "the straw epistle"¹⁵².

Apart from printers' prefaces in different editions, the work was preceded by *Psalmus nuncupatorius altissimo omnium bonorum largitori Deo, ad operis dedicationem*. In this psalm Titelmans recognised that among all of the goods that come from God, the Scriptures were of special value: "Peculiarem autem donum et eximium dedisti nobis scripturas sanctas: in eruditionem et stabilimentum salutaris fidei nostrae"¹⁵³. He continued to explain that the meaning of Scriptures was obscured in order to confound learned men of haughty heart: "Humilibus tamen non negas introitum, qui exaudis humiles: clauem donas eis per quam ingrediantur in illas. Spiritus tuus sanctus ipse est clavis intelligentiae scripturarum tuarum, quoniam et ipse est calamus. Calamus fuit scribentium eas: et clavis est idem ipse legentium eas"¹⁵⁴. The theme of the Spirit as the key for Scriptures was recurrent in Titelmans' biblical scholarship and summarised his exegetical approach, as shall be demonstrated in this dissertation. Unlike most of his later works, the *Elucidatio* did not include an analytical index.

Erasmus accused the Franciscans of encouraging Titelmans to write the elucidations in order to replace his own paraphrases:

Nil mirum tamen si juveni imponit affectus gloria, illud mirum viros Seraphicos sodalem suum protrudere in hoc proscenium, ut hoc laudis suo asserant Ordini. Siquidem hoc variis modis agunt, ut meas Lucubrationes exutiant de minibus studiosorum. Jam hic pro meis Paraphrasibus suas substituerat elucidationes¹⁵⁵.

It is difficult to judge whether that was truly Titelmans' ambition or whether Erasmus was simply bitter, as he often was. Even a cursory comparison shows that Titelmans could have been

¹⁵¹ Ibid., f. Cc4r.

¹⁵² M. Luther, *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe. Die Deutsche Bibel*, ed. G. Bebermeyer, Hermann Böhlhaus Nachfolger, Weimar 1929, vol. 6, p. 10: "Darumb ist sanct Jacobs Epistel eyn rechte stroern Epistel [...] denn sie doch keyn Euangelisch art an yhr hat". M. Luther, *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe. Die Deutsche Bibel...*, op. cit., p. 386: "Darumb will ich yhn nicht haben ynn mayner Bibel". For a modern reflection on the issue see: M. Foord, *The "Epistle of Straw": Reflections on Luther and the Epistle of James*, "Themelios. An International Journal for Students of Theological and Religious Studies", 2020, vol. 45, no. 2, pp. 291–298.

¹⁵³ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes epistolas apostolicas...*, op. cit., f. a2v

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., f. a2v.

¹⁵⁵ D. Erasmus, "Responsio ad Collationes", op. cit., col. 966D.

inspired by Erasmus. His work emulated that of Erasmus in its structure, presenting first a summary of the content of a given letter, called *argumentum*, and then proceeding to a paraphrase proper¹⁵⁶. A more detailed study would, however, be necessary to substantiate this hypothesis.

It must also be underscored that paraphrase was a typically humanist genre. Although there were ancient precedents, Erasmus can be considered a reinventor of this literary genre¹⁵⁷. Bernard Roussel has shown that this genre, although it was based on a philological study of the biblical text, was very subjective and was in fact a fictionalisation of the Bible. His study of four imitators of Erasmus, Titelmans included, showed that each of them had done that through their own particular confessional optic. This was certainly true of Titelmans, especially in his following commentaries.

The history of publications of the *Elucidatio* testifies to its popularity. It was first printed in 1528 by Michael Hillen in Antwerp. The first edition, in two printings, was bought up swiftly, as testified in the second edition from the 13th of April 1529: “Primam illam aeditionem, quam ante pauculos menses dedimus, sic adamabant, sic rapiebant, sic etiam num illam manibus terunt studiosi, vt iterum nobis ad incudem reuocanda fuerit”¹⁵⁸. According to de Troeyer, there were nineteen editions of this work¹⁵⁹:

No.	Place	Publisher	Date
1	Antwerp	Michael Hillen von Hoochstraten	1528 (A)
2	Antwerp	Michael Hillen von Hoochstraten	1528 (B)
3	Antwerp	Michael Hillen von Hoochstraten	1529
4	Antwerp	Michael Hillen von Hoochstraten	1532
5	Paris	Joannes Parvus	1532
6	Antwerp	Jan Steels	1540
7	Alcala	Joannes May Flander for Bartholomaeusa Robles	1543 (?)
8	Paris	Jacobus Kerver	1543
9	Paris	Jacobus Regnault	1543
10	Paris	Joannes Roigny	1543

¹⁵⁶ See for instance Erasmus’s paraphrase on the Romans D. Erasmus, *In epistolam Pauli ad Romanos paraphrasis*, LB, vol. 7, col. 771–832.

¹⁵⁷ B. Roussel, *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*, eds. H.M. Pabel and M. Vessey, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 2002, p. 59. J.-F. Cottier, *Erasmus’s Paraphrases: A ‘New Kind of Commentary’?*, [in:] *The Unfolding of Words: Commentary in the Age of Erasmus*, ed. J.R. Henderson, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 2012, pp. 27–45. J.-F. Cottier, *Four Paraphrases and a Gospel or How to Rewrite Without Repeating Yourself*, “Erasmus Studies”, 2016, vol. 36, no. 2, pp. 131–147. J.R. Henderson, *Editor’s Addendum. Translating an Erasmian Definition of Paraphrase*, [in:] *The Unfolding of Words: Commentary in the Age of Erasmus*, ed. J.R. Henderson, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 2012, pp. 47–54. J. Bloemendal, *Erasmus and His Paraphrases on the New Testament: What Kind of Enterprise?*, “Erasmus Studies”, 2020, vol. 40, no. 1, pp. 34–54.

¹⁵⁸ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes epistolas apostolicas...*, op. cit., f. alv.

¹⁵⁹ B. de Troeyer, *Bio-bibliographia Franciscana...*, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 94.

11	Paris	Editor not known	1543
12	Paris	Joannes Poucher	1543
13	Lyon	Stephanus Rufinus & Joannes Ausultus for Guilielmus Rovilius	1546
14	Lyon	Stephanus Rufinus & Joannes Ausultus for Guilielmus Rovilius	1547
15	Venice	As signum Spei	1547
16	Paris	Joannes de Roigny	1551
17	Paris	Joannes de Roigny	1553
18	Lyon	Joannes Ausultus for Guilielmus Rovilius	1553
19	Lyon	Joannes Ausultus for Guilielmus Rovilius	1554

As this list clearly demonstrates, the first work of Titelmans was popular until the mid-16th century, especially in the Low Countries (5 editions) and France (12 editions), though less so in Spain and Italy.

The second and by far the longest biblical commentary of Titelmans concerned the Psalms. The full title read:

Elucidatio in omnes psalmos iuxta veritatem vulgatae et ecclesiae vsitatae aeditionis Latinae, quae et ipsa integra illibataque exaduerso opponitur: Psalmis singulis singula argumenta ante se monstrantibus, totam Psalmi virtutem atque materiam quasi per modum epitomatis summatim complectentia: post elucidationem vero adiunctis prolixioribus Annotationibus, quae Commentariorum locum habent. Adiuncta est Elucidatio canticorum, quae Ecclesiasticus vsus appellat ferialia. Subsequuntur deinde Annotationes ex Hebraeo atque Chaldaeo, in quibus quicquid ex veritate Hebraica occurrit difficultatis, tractant et exponitur. Per Fratrem Franciscum Titelmannum Hassellensem, ordinis Fratrum Minorum, sanctarum scripturarum apud Louanienses praelectorem¹⁶⁰.

The first edition of 1531 contained 464 folios in octavo. There were separate foliations for introductory material, the *elucidatio* itself, and *Annotationes ex hebraeo*. As the title indicated, it contained a commentary on the entire Book of Psalms, as well as on Old Testament canticles used in liturgy: *Canticus Esariae* (Isa. 12:1-6), *Canticus Ezechiae* (Isa. 38:10-20), *Canticus Annae, matris Samuelis* (1Sam. 2:1-10), *Canticus filiorum Israel* (Ex. 15:1b-19), *Canticus Abacuk* (Hab.

¹⁶⁰ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. +1r.

3:2-19), *Canticus Moysi* (Deut. 32:1-43), *Canticus trium puerorum hebraeorum* (Dan. 3:57-88a)¹⁶¹.

Titelmans' commentaries on the Psalms were much more complex and detailed than those on the New Testament Epistles. Each Psalm was preceded by an *argumentum* that was more than merely a summary of its content. In most cases the Franciscan explained in this section whether he chose to interpret a Psalm according to a literal or mystical sense and why. He also indicated which verses ought to be read as if uttered by Christ, or by the Church, or by an individual soul. Moreover, he commented on the Psalms' titles and other information that preceded some of them. For instance, in the *argumentum* of Ps. 17(18), he explained that according to the title it concerned events described in 1 Sam¹⁶². Next, Titelmans explained the structure of the Psalm. He finished with an observation of how to interpret it:

Hunc Psalmum plerosque fidelium totum ad Christum applicare gratias agentem patri, pro sua suorumque mirabili liberatione et mirifica exaltatione: alios ad Ecclesiam, pro liberatione a grauissimis periculis et persecutionibus. Quas intelligentias nequamquam reprehendimus, neque abiiciendas censemus: imo in annotationibus post hunc Psalmum adiiciendis, monstrabimus (vel figuraliter) vtranque. Quia tamen difficile est, singula omnino ad Christi personam aut Ecclesiae adaptare, facilius autem ipsi personae Dauid, iccirco hunc in nostra Elucidatione faciemus loquentem, Deoque suo liberatori (quod et titulus patenter indicat) gratias agentem. Nos vero illum audientes tam feruenti spiritu Dei beneficia praedicantem, Deumque liberatorem mirifice efferentem, discamus ab eo, quemadmodum pro acceptis beneficiis nos quoque saluatori nostro grati esse debeamus¹⁶³.

Titelmans accepted the plurality of senses of Scriptures and interpreted according to them. Very often interpretations proposed in annotations were different from those in *elucidatio*, yet he hardly ever rejected any interpretation, even if they seemed mutually exclusive.

Argumentum was followed by *elucidatio*. Here, just like in the previous commentary, the text of the Vulgate was presented in the margins and accompanied by Titelmans' paraphrase. Those paraphrases were often also interpretations, indicating mystical sense of given verses. For instance, Ps. 18(19):6a – *in sole posuit tabernaculum suum* – was paraphrased by Titelmans with the following words:

Inter omnia autem magnalia Dei, quae coeli illi annunciarunt, hoc veluti caput est atque praecipuum, quod Deus in sole posuit tabernaculum suum: id est, mansionem atque habitationem suam posuit in

¹⁶¹ Ibid., ff. 370r-393v.

¹⁶² Titelmans followed Septuagint numeration of the Psalms. We added in brackets also the Hebrew numbering to avoid possible confusion.

¹⁶³ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 44v.

Christo homine, (qui sic in medio totius Ecclesiae constitutus illuminat omnem hominem venientem in hunc mundum, quomodo sol in medio firmamenti, mundum totum illuminat) quando ipsi Diuinitati complacuit humanam sibi in Christo vnire naturam, ita vt in homine Christo tota Diuinitatis plenitudo inhabitaret corporaliter¹⁶⁴.

Far from being a mere rephrasing of biblical words, Titelmans' paraphrase offered a Christological interpretation of the Psalm, which was further developed in subsequent verses. *Elucidatio* was in almost all cases followed by *annotationes*. In this section the Franciscan commented selected verses, which required further clarification. These explanations were usually either philological or theological and shall be explored in more detail in the next two chapters. Just like a paraphrase, the *annotationes* were a typically humanist genre. It is significant that Titelmans, despite his conservative leanings, in all his biblical works, chose very modern modes of expression. There were hardly any traces of the scholastic style in his writings.

At the end of the commentary there stood yet another set of annotations, this time designated as *ex Hebraeo atque Chaldaeo*. Here Titelmans discussed some philological issues stemming from the Hebrew text of the Psalter. He intentionally omitted them in the main part of his commentary, in order not to burden his readers with overly complex philological considerations and with a variety of readings¹⁶⁵. Yet, if one looked into these annotations with a hope of finding philological analyses akin to modern ones, or indeed similar to those of Erasmus, one could be disappointed. Although Titelmans explained textual variants in Hebrew and occasionally cited the Hebrew text in original, his main aim was to demonstrate that *hebraica veritas* was perfectly consonant with the Vulgate. He reassured the reader of this harmony in a short preface to these annotations:

Nemo cum in sequentibus multum subinde diuersam inuenerit hebraicam lectionem a nostra vulgata latina, conturbari debet vel offendi, sic vt de lectione nostra vulgata sinistre iudicet, aut quasi suspectm et non veram aspernetur. Non paruae enim temeritatis neque vulgatae foret audaciae, ea quae tantis retroactis saeculis a maioribus nostris, tam Graecis quam Latinis, habita fuere in summa autoritate, tam leui ratione contemnere aut vilipendere¹⁶⁶.

He proceeded to explain that discrepancies were more in words than in sense. They arose either from superficial reading and ceased when one gave more consideration to the deeper sense, or from frequent ambiguities (*polysima*) of Hebrew words that gave rise to contradictory translations.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., f. 45r.

¹⁶⁵ He expressed that clearly in *Epistola ad lecotrem*: Ibid., f. +6v: "quas ob hoc in partem vnam separauimus, vt non simplicioribus ingeniis (quibus ista forsane curae non erunt) multitudo versionum et interpretationum diuerditas pareret confusionem".

¹⁶⁶ F. Titelmans, *Annotationes ex Hebraeo atque Chaldaeo in omnes Psalmos, quibus quid in vnoquoque Psalmo distet originalis lectio Hebraeo a nostra vulgata Latina demonstratur, Diuersorum quoque ex Hebraeo interpretum, varie versiones explanantur*, Simon Cocus, Antwerpiae 1531, f. AA1v.

The commentary on the Psalms was preceded by three short texts. The first was *Psalmus nuncupatorius beato Patri luminum, a quo omnis est sapientia et intelligentia, quem cecinit illi seruus operarius, die quo finiebat laborem operis huius et coram Domino offerens, ait*. Apart from laudatory phrases praising God's grace, it also offered some basic guidelines about the mystical sense of Psalms¹⁶⁷. It was followed by a dedicatory letter to the Emperor, Charles V: *Clementissimo et christianissimo imperatori Carolo eius nominee quinto, Hispaniarum Regi etc. Frater Franciscus Titelmannus Hasselensis, ordinis Fratrum minorum, Gratiam et pacem, et contra hostes Ecclesiae plenam de coelo victoriam*¹⁶⁸. It compared the Emperor to King David and wished him an equally swift victory over all his enemies, as was the case with the Judean monarch. Titelmans identified the enemies with the Turks but also with heretics at home, whom he compared to Jebusites (cf. 2Sam. 5:6). He complimented the Emperor for his efforts to remove them from the land. Finally, there was an introductory letter to the reader, in which Titelmans further outlined some of his exegetical principles and explained the structure of the book. The introductory material was completed with an alphabetical index, which identified theological themes explained in the commentary. It is very detailed and occupies 12 folios. It also contains an alphabetical list of the first verses of the Psalms.

The commentary on the Psalms surpassed the previous one in popularity, with 25 known editions¹⁶⁹:

No.	Place	Publisher	Date
1	Antwerp	Martinus de Keyser	1531 (A)
2	Antwerp	Martinus de Keyser	1531 (B)
3	Antwerp	Antonius Goinus	1540
4	Paris	J. Lodoicus Tiletanus for Joannes Roigny	1540
5	Cologne	Melchior Novesianus	1544
6	Paris	Johannes Maheu for Audoenus Parvus	1545
7	Paris	Johannes Maheu for Poncetus le Preux	1545
8	Paris	Johannes Maheu for Joannes Foucherius	1545
9	Paris	Johannes Maheu for Joannes Mace	1545
10	Paris and Lyon	Johannes Maheu for Mathurin de Puys	1545
11	Paris	Audoenus Parvus	1548

¹⁶⁷ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., ff.+2r-+3r.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., ff. +4r-+5r.

¹⁶⁹ B. de Troeyer, *Bio-bibliographia Franciscana...*, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 96. Editions nos. 10 and 25 are not listed in de Troeyer.

12	Paris	Joannes Foucherius	1548
13	Lyon	Philib. Rolletius et Barthol. Fraenus for Gulielmus Rovillius	1548
14	Paris	Joannes Langlois for Joannes de Roigny	1551
15	Paris	Joannes Savetier for Audoenus Parvus	1552
16	Paris	Joannes Savetier for Wed. Mauritius a Porta	1552
17	Paris	Joannes Langlois for Joannes de Roigny	1553
18	Lyon	Gulielmus Rovillius	1556
19	Antwerp	Wed. et Erfgen. J. Steels	1567
20	Venice	Joann. Antonius Farreus et Bretanus	1572
21	Antwerp	Philippus Nutius	1573
22	Lyon	Gulielmus Rovillius	1573
23	Venice	Gaspar Bindonus	1587
24	Lyon	Gulielmus Rovillius	1588
25	Paris (for sale in Antwerp)	Henricus van Dunwalt	1689

In addition, there were several separate printings of *Annotationes ex Hebraeo*:

No.	Place	Publisher	Date
1	Antwerp	Simon Cock	1531
2	Lyon	Gulielmus Rovillius (?)	1575 (?)

Moreover, there were two editions of Titelmans' commentary, reworked by his pupil Johannes Mahusius, under the title *Psalterium Davidicum*¹⁷⁰:

No.	Place	Publisher	Date
1	Antwerp	Jan Steels	1553
2	Antwerp	Wed. and Erfgen. Jan Steels	1573

Unlike other commentaries, the one on the book on Psalms retained its popularity also after the Council of Trent, with several editions in three different countries after the conclusion of the Council, and the last one as late as 1689.

The final biblical commentary published by Titelmans during his lifetime concerned the Book of Ecclesiastes. The full title read: "Commentarii in Ecclesiasten Salomonis, cum annotationibus ex Hebraeo et aeditione Graeca singula capita. Per fratrem Franciscum

¹⁷⁰ This edition included only *argumentum* and *elucidatio* of each psalm, omitting *annotationes*. Nor did it include *Annotationes ex Hebraeo*. There were also some changes in accompanying material, most significantly with an addition of a large section of *Loci communes*.

Titelmannum Hassellensem ordinis fratrum Minorum”¹⁷¹. It contained 165 numbered folios in octavo, plus 16 unnumbered folios containing introductory material.

The character of this book differed from the two previous ones. It contained no paraphrase of the biblical text; instead, there was an elaborate commentary on it. In this commentary Titelmans strove to explicate the literal sense of Ecclesiastes, for, as he clarified in the preface, he left to others to expound upon the spiritual meaning of the Book¹⁷². In this commentary Titelmans used theology, philosophy, poetry, natural sciences as well as philology to clarify Kohelet’s sense. For instance, the opening verse was explained with references to logic, parallel places in the Bible, Cicero’s rhetoric, and philosophical considerations regarding the goodness of creation¹⁷³.

More complex philological remarks were relegated to *Annotationes ex Hebraeo et aeditione antiqua*, which followed the commentary on each chapter. Titelmans explained such an editorial choice in the preface:

quas quidem annotatiunculas non ipsi commentariorum corpori inserendas duximus, sed ex industria separatim, post singulos singulorum capitum commentarios, quasi appendicio more, potius iudicauimus adiiciendas, ne tam multiplex illa varietas et perplexa saepius e varietate eiuscemodi nascens difficultas, confusionem potius gigneret quam aedificationem legentibus, si in ipso commentariorum corpore fuissent suis quaeque locis interiecta¹⁷⁴.

Clarity of message was more important for Titelmans than philological accuracy. It is impossible not to see in his comment an allusion to humanists, whose philological analyses created confusion for simple souls and obscured rather than illuminated the true message of Scriptures.

The commentary itself was preceded by three texts. First there is a prayer of Saint Francis: “Laus Dei pro sua magnificentia et gloria, quas vir Dei Franciscus ex sacris literis congestas, in feruore spiritus ipsi saepius per diem atque per noctem recitare solebat, easdemque fratres suos frequentare docebat”¹⁷⁵. It was followed by a dedicatory letter to Cardinal Quiñones, the protector of the order:

Reuerendissimo in Christo patri ac domino D. Francisco Quignonio, tituli sanctae crucis in Hierusalem presbitero Cardinali, totiusque ordinu Fratrum Minorum gubernatori, protectori et

¹⁷¹ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Ecclesiasten Salomonis...*, op. cit., f. a1r.

¹⁷² Ibid., ff. d1v-d2r.

¹⁷³ Ibid., ff. d3r-e3r.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., f. d1r.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., f. a2r-v. Cf. C. Paolazzi, ed., *Francisci Assisiensis scripta*, Editiones Collegii S. Bonaventura ad Claras Aquas, Grottaferrata 2009, pp. 60–65.

correctori uigilantissimo; Frater Franciscus Titelmannus Hassellensis, eiusdem ordinis indignus professor, post deuota pedum oscula, uilis mancipii humilia offert obsequia¹⁷⁶.

In this letter Titelmans admitted that he had never met the Cardinal in person, and thus a dedication to such a great person might be considered as self-promotion on his part. Yet, he explained, in spite of a lack of personal acquaintance with the patron, he was grateful for Cardinal's work for the Church and the Order, which he praised in the letter¹⁷⁷. Hence, although his work was small and humble, he did not hesitate to offer it to such a prominent patron¹⁷⁸.

Finally, there was *Praefatio auctoris ad lectorem*. Here the Franciscan briefly explained the authorship of the Book, which was undisputedly Solomon's, and the Book's principal message, which was consonant with all the rest of the Bible, due to a single principal author – the Holy Ghost. He also commented on the diversity of textual versions of the book, stemming from various Latin and Greek translations of the Hebrew text, and, a rare thing for Titelmans, he listed some of his sources. The work had eight editions, mostly in France:

No.	Place	Publisher	Date
1	Antwerp	Simon Cocus	1536
2	Paris	Joannes David for Audoenus Pravus	1549
3	Paris	Joannes David for Hieron. et Dionysia de Marnef	1549
4	Paris	Petrus Galterius	1552
5	Paris	Wed. Gulielmus le Bret	1552
6	Paris	Stephanus Guiot	1552
7	Paris	Audoenus Pravus	1552
8	Lyon	Gulielmus Rovillius	1555

Unlike the commentary on the Psalms, it did not have any publications after the conclusion of the Council of Trent.

2.2.2 Biblical commentaries of Titelmans published posthumously

Four commentaries of Titelmans' were published after his death by his older brother Peter Titelmans. As attested in the preface to the commentary on Ecclesiastes, the younger of Titelmans' brothers thought of publishing them already in 1536, but his premature death prevented this¹⁷⁹. Only the commentary on the Song of Solomon seems to have been finished; all others appear incomplete. It is impossible to say whether the older of the brothers intervened in any way with

¹⁷⁶ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Ecclesiasten Salomonis...*, op. cit., f. a3r.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, ff. a3v-b4r.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, ff. b4v-b6r.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, f. d2v.

the text of commentaries, but it seems unlikely, for their style is identical with commentaries published in Franciscus' lifetime.

Although the commentary on the Song of Solomon was the most complete, it was also the last to be published. First Peter Titelmans published the commentaries on the Gospels of Matthew and John. They were first printed separately, but in subsequent editions they were usually put together. The first one to leave printing presses was the commentary on John: *Elucidatio paraphrastica, in sanctum Christi Euangelium secundum Ioannem, cum Annotationibus in aliquot Capita. Per fratrem Franciscum Titelmannum, Hassellensem, ordinis fratrum Minorum*. It contained 187 numbered folios of commentary, plus 10 unnumbered of introductory material.

In this commentary Titelmans reverted to the mode of exposition already used in commentary on the Psalms. Each chapter was first explained by means of a paraphrastic elucidation, with the Vulgate text on margins, and followed by philological annotations. Paraphrases run through the entire text, but the annotations for chapters 14 to 21 are missing. This suggests that Titelmans first worked on paraphrases, which perhaps corresponded minutely with his lectures, and only then elaborated philological annotations. The annotations on chapter six were supplemented with a long polemical excursus against Protestant reformers: *De sacramentali Eucharistia, ex Patrum sententia, aduersus Haeticorum temeritatem*, in which the Franciscan defended the sacrificial character of the Eucharist¹⁸⁰.

The publisher of this work, Simon Cocus, obtained an imperial privilege for the monopoly on printing Titelmans' commentary for three years¹⁸¹. This was printed at the beginning of the book, alongside an authorisation by Ruard Tappart, a dean of Sint Pieter's Church in Leuven. This was an interesting feature, predating the decision of the Council of Trent, that any publication of the Bible or a commentary on it should receive an ecclesiastical approval¹⁸². Tappart's "imprimatur" read: "Elucidatio Paraphrastica Patris Francisci Titelmanni in Ioannem cum annotationibus erudite est et ad pietatem ac religionem promouendam plurimum conducit. Nec vllum in lectione eius est peruersi dogmatis periculum et ita cum multo legentium fructu imprimi potest et legi"¹⁸³. It would have certainly pleased Titelmans, who often spoke of the need of

¹⁸⁰ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio paraphrastica, in sanctum Christi Euangelium secundum Ioannem, cum Annotationibus in aliquot Capita*, Simon Coquus, Antwerpiae 1543, ff. i1r-i6r.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, f. a1v.

¹⁸² Concilium Tridentinum, Sessio IV (sub Paulo III) die 8. aprilis 1546, *Insuper eadem*, [in:] A. Baron and H. Pietras, eds., *Dokumenty Soborów Powszechnych: Tekst łaciński i polski*, Wydawnictwo WAM, Kraków 2004, vol. 4, p. 214: "decernit et statuit, ut posthac sacra scriptura, potissimum vero haec ipsa vetus et vulgata editio quam emendatissime imprimatur, nullique liceat imprimere vel imprimi facere quosvis libros de rebus sacris sine nomine auctoris, neque illos in futurum vendere aut etiam apud se retinere, nisi primum examinati probatique fuerint ab ordinario, sub poena anathematis et pecuniae in canone concilii novissimi Lateranensis apposita [...] Ipsa vero huiusmodi librorum probatio in scriptis detur atque ideo in fronte libri, vel scripti vel impressi, authentice appareat. Idque totum, hoc est et probatio et examen, gratis fiat, ut probanda probentur, et reprobentur improbanda".

¹⁸³ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio paraphrastica in Ioannem...*, op. cit., f. a1v.

obedience towards the Church and emphasised that he himself acted from its mandate. He also accused humanists of the lack of it.

The authorisation was followed by a long *Psalmus nuncupatorius ad honorem Ioannis Apostoli et Evangelistae. Pro operis sequentis nuncupatione, cum iubilio omnipotenti Dei decantatus, septem scandens gradibus*¹⁸⁴. It was a eulogy of Saint John, presenting his life and praising his Gospel as the most spiritual. It also praised previous commentaries on John, written by Fathers, of whom Titelmans considered himself an unworthy imitator. Introductory material was completed by a letter of Peter Titelmans to Ruard Tappart. Here, the older brother of the author explained his intention to publish remaining works of his sibling:

Id sum me in votis fuit: vt et reliqua adhuc opuscula quae nescio vbinam terrarum latitabant, in publicum prodirent quod tamen ilico praestare non potui, eo quem hospite ignoto seruabantur. Cui rei causa fuit: partim tui Titelmanni mors prematura: partim ipsa tam magna loci intercapendo. Non tamen sine magno animi maerore huc usque latuerunt. Auxit hunc dolorem cotidiana Typographorum importuna sollicitatio, quae mihi adeo fuit molesta: vt quidnam agerem, animus dubitaret. Cupiebam enim votis eorum facere satis, nec licuit. Ad huius molestiae cumulum accessit, quod vel deieranti non crederent, penes me non esse quod petebant: mihi veluti haereditario successu, quicquid reliquum esset laborum Titelmanni vendicantes.

He followed with his dedication of this edition to the aforementioned Ruard Tappart and promised publication of commentaries on Matthew, Job, and Song of Solomon.

The Commentary on John was published separately only twice, but enjoyed more publications when twinned with the commentary on Matthew.

No.	Place	Publisher	Date
1	Antwerp	Simon Cock	1543
2	Lyon	Matthias Bonhomme	1556

The commentary on the Gospel of Matthew was the next work of Titelmans that came to light thanks to his older brother. It was published in 1545 by Simon Cock for Jan Steels in Antwerp, and it was its only self-standing edition. The title read: *Paraphrastica elucidatio in Iesu Christi Euangelium secundum Matthaeum, additis annotationibus in loca difficiliora, Authore D. Francisco Titelmanno Hassellen[sis] ord[ine] Fr[atrum] Minorum. Aeditio prima*¹⁸⁵. It contained 290 numbered folios in octavo plus 9 unnumbered ones at the beginning.

The commentary followed the same pattern as the commentary on John. Each chapter was first paraphrased in *elucidatio paraphrastica*, with the Vulgate text in margins, and followed by

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., ff. a2r-a8v.

¹⁸⁵ F. Titelmans, *Paraphrastica elucidatio in Matthaeum...*, op. cit., f. a1r.

annotations. Like the commentary on John, it was not complete. It did not contain annotations on chapters 13-14 as well as 26-28. The annotations differed in quality. Those on John 1 were very elaborate and occupied eleven folios, while for instance those on chapter two were limited to slightly more than one folio, and those on chapter three were even shorter¹⁸⁶. This was deliberate and explained by Titelmans towards the end of the annotations on chapter one. He warned the reader not to expect prolific annotations to the rest of chapters, for the scope of his commentary was to provide a simple enchiridion for those less learned. Yet, he allowed himself to write longer annotations for the first chapter in order to show that brevity of annotations on other chapters was not due to the lack of research:

Quod autem in vno hoc capitulo factum est, ideo factum est, vt intelligas, lector benigne, non sine diligenti discussione praeuia Elucidationes istas paraphrasticas esse conscriptas, etiam in illis capitibus vbi nullas inueneris annotationes huiusmodi additas. Labor enim qui in perlegendo authores diuersos, sententiasque varias diuersorum conferendo, et graeca latinis componendo, caeteraque huiusmodi expendendo, ante conscriptionem opusculi huius praecessit, vt ingenue quod verum est fatear, sufficere vtique poterat ad iusti commentarii compositionem, si non breuitas nobis magis fuisset in animo: et si non alia fuissent ab eo proposito iuste retrahentia¹⁸⁷.

Regrettably, he did not name what precise sources he had studied in preparation for this commentary. Annotations were enriched by *latior explanatio* of eight Gospel parables: *de sapiente et stulto aedificatore* (7:24-27), *de Spiritu immundo* (12:43-45), *de rege rationem ponente* (18:23-35), *de laborantibus in vinea* (20:1-16), *de vinea et malis agricolis* (21:33-40), *de nuptiis regiiis* (22:2-14), *de decem virginibus* (25:1-13), *de seruis qui pecuniam acceperunt Domini sui* (25:14-30), which we discuss in detail in Chapter Four¹⁸⁸.

As was the case with the commentary on John, the one on Matthew contained an authorisation by Ruard Tappert and an imperial privilege for a three-year monopoly. The privilege was dated January 1544, exactly one year before the publication date, which gives us an indication of the length of the production process¹⁸⁹. A dedicatory epistle of Peter Titelmans, which followed the privilege, was dated 10th October 1544¹⁹⁰. This letter was addressed to George of Austria, the new prince-bishop of Liege¹⁹¹. The older of brothers praised his predecessors: John of Hornes, Erard de la Marck, and Corneille of Berghes, who defended the Church of Liege from external

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., ff. 5r-16v; 22r-23r; 27v-28r.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., ff. 16v-17r.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., ff. 65v-66v; 120v-121r; 169r-170v; 191v-193v; 207r-209r; 219r-222v; 257r-262v.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., ff. a1v; 289r.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., f. a6v.

¹⁹¹ On George see: I. Guenther, *George of Austria*, [in:] *Contemporaries of Erasmus. A Biographical Register of The Renaissance and Reformation*, eds. P.G. Bietenholz and T.B. Deutscher, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 1986, vol. 2, p. 86.

enemies (the French) and internal heretics¹⁹². Peter Titelmans praised the new bishop for his work in two previous dioceses, Brixen in Tirol and Valencia in Spain and dedicated to him the work of his deceased brother¹⁹³. After the dedicatory letter came a table of contents of Matthew's Gospel and an alphabetical acrostic poem summarising the content of each chapter¹⁹⁴.

As it has already been mentioned, both commentaries on Gospels were printed together several times:

No.	Place	Publisher	Date
1	Paris	Joannes Maheu for Poncetus le Preux	1545
2	Paris	Joannes Maheu for Joannes Foucherius	1545
3	Paris	Joannes Maheu for Audoenus Parvus	1545
4	Paris	Joannes Maheu for Joannes Mace	1546
5	Paris	Joannes Maheu for Mathurinus Du Puys	1546
6	Lyon	Stephanus Rufinus and Joannes Ausultus for Gulielmus Rovillius	1547
7	Lyon	Matthias Bonhomme for Gulielmus Rovillius	1556

Like most other biblical commentaries of Titelmans, also these ceased to be published around the middle of the 16th century.

The third commentary published posthumously was that on the Book of Job. The full title read: *Paraphrastica elucidatio in librum D. Iob, adiectis annotationibus in loca difficiliora, Authore F. Francisco Titelmanno Hassellensi Ord[in]e Fratrum Minorum*¹⁹⁵. It was printed in octavo on 275 numbered folios, plus 20 not numbered.

The commentary followed the established pattern of Titelmans' works: *elucidatio* and then *annotationes*. In contrast to the commentary on Matthew, here the annotations were quite elaborate, although covered only chapters 1-3 and 12-21, while *elucidatio* covered the entire book. Most probably this was not intentional, and the work is simply unfinished because of the author's premature death. The commentary was preceded by a very interesting introductory essay entitled: *Solutiones quorundam dubiorum circa librum Iob, an vera fuerit historia, et cuius generis, aut quo tempore Iob ipse extiterit, quis etiam author fuerit libri, aut quo tempore scriptus, et qua potissimum intentione inter sacra volumina annotatus, quae commode ante enarrationem libri*

¹⁹² F. Titelmans, *Paraphrastica elucidatio in Matthaem...*, op. cit., ff. a2v-a3r. Cf. L.-E. Halkin, *Erard de la Marck*, [in:] *Contemporaries of Erasmus. A Biographical Register of The Renaissance and Reformation*, eds. P.G. Bietenholz and T.B. Deutscher, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 1986, vol. 2, pp. 382–385. L.-E. Halkin, *Réforme protestante et réforme catholique au Diocèse de Liège. Histoire religieuse des règnes de Corneille de Berghes et de Georges d'Autriche, princes-évêques de Liège (1538-1557)*, Faculté de philosophie et lettres, Liège 1936. P. Harsin, *La principauté de Liège à la fin du règne de Louis de Bourbon et sous celui de Jean de Hornes (1477-1505)*, Sciences et lettres, Liège 1957.

¹⁹³ F. Titelmans, *Paraphrastica elucidatio in Matthaem...*, op. cit., f. a6r-v.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, ff. a7r-a8v.

¹⁹⁵ F. Titelmans, *Paraphrastica elucidatio in librum D. Iob, adiectis annotationibus in loca difficiliora*, Benedictus Proeuost, Lutetiae 1547, f. a1r.

*praemittenda videbantur*¹⁹⁶. As the title explained, it concerned matters that modern philology often calls “high criticism” regarding authorship, time of composition, literary genre and so on¹⁹⁷.

Once again there was a dedicatory letter of Peter Titelmans attached to the commentary. This time it was dedicated to Arnold Streeters, the abbot of Premonstratensian abbey of Tongerlo¹⁹⁸. Peter Titelmans explained that although there were excellent commentaries on Job, especially that of Gregory the Great, nevertheless the wealth of Scriptures was inexhaustible, and his younger brother managed to collect some meanings skipped over by his predecessors, just as Ruth the Moabitess gleaned the ears of grain after the reapers in Boaz’s field (cf. Ruth 2:3)¹⁹⁹. He also praised his patron for his piety and learning, demonstrated by the fact that he had invited Cornelius Jansen of Hulst to lecture in the Holy Writ at Tongerlo²⁰⁰.

The Commentary on Job enjoyed seven editions within a short scope of time:

No.	Place	Publisher	Date
1	Antwerp	Jan Steels	1547
2	Paris	Benedictus Proevost for Audoenus Parvus	1547
3	Paris	Benedictus Proevost for Joannes Roigny	1547
4	Paris	Audoenus Parvus	1550
5	Paris	Hieronimus & Dionysia de Marnef	1550
6	Lyon	Joannes Ausultus for Gulielmus Rovillius	1553
7	Lyon	Joannes Ausultus for Gulielmus Rovillius	1554

The last commentary of Titelmans published by his brother concerned the Song of Solomon: *Doctiss[imi] Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum Salomonis, authore F. Francisco Titelmanno Hasselen[sis] ord[in]e Minorum, nunc recens in lucem aediti*²⁰¹. It contained 195 numbered folios in octavo, plus eight without folio number.

The exposition differed from all previous commentaries, for there was no division on *elucidatio* and *annotationes*, but a continuous commentary on the entire text. It explained both the literal and mystical senses and used a broad repertoire of exegetical tools. Unlike other works published post-mortem, this one seems to have been completed by the author, unless he intended to add philological annotations, similarly as in most other commentaries, that in the present form are entirely absent. Yet, in the present form of the work nothing suggests such an intention.

¹⁹⁶ F. Titelmans, *Paraphrastica elucidatio in librum D. Iob, adiectis annotationibus in loca difficiliora*, In aedibus Ioan. Steelsii, Antuerpiae 1547, f. a7v.

¹⁹⁷ Vide infra 3.2.1.

¹⁹⁸ H. De Ridder-Symoens, *Streeters (Streters) Arnold, (ook gen. Arnoldus de Dyest), Norbertijner Abt.*, [in:] *Nationaal biografisch woordenboek*, Paleis der Academiën, Bruxelles 1972, vol. 5, pp. 854–858.

¹⁹⁹ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Antuerpiae)*..., op. cit., ff. a2v-a3r.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., f. a4v. On Cornelius Jansen’s biblical scholarship see: A. Gerace, *Biblical Scholarship in Louvain in the ‘Golden’ Sixteenth Century*..., op. cit., pp. 129–148.

²⁰¹ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum*..., op. cit., f. a1r.

Before the commentary itself there is a prologue of Titelmans in which he discussed the authorship of the book (undisputedly Solomon's), its purpose, literary genre, and some principles of his exegesis²⁰². He noted that the language of the Song was most unusual for Holy Scriptures and seemed to be merely an erotic poem. Yet he cautioned the reader not to take such a superficial approach and explained how it should be read spiritually. On first pages of the commentary itself, he explained that it had a form of a drama with four characters: the Groom, the Bride, Groom's friends, and Bride's maids²⁰³. "Quatuor his personis, tota ista spiritualis comoedia, et (si ita loqui fas sit) fabula sacra, id est, actio diuina peragitur, quemadmodum in sequentibus suo loco particulatim monstrabitur"²⁰⁴.

The work was dedicated to Pedro de Soto, a Dominican confessor of Emperor Charles V, but the dedication was not written by Peter Titelmans but instead by Johannes Steels, the publisher. Alongside the usual eulogies, it also emphasised utility of Titelmans' work for the community of the Church: "Ea semper nostri institute fuit ratio [...] quam in excudendis bonorum authorum lucubrationibus, hactenus obseruauimus, vt non tam priuato commodo, quam Catholicae nostrae religioni, publicaeque studiosorum vtilitati consulere videremur"²⁰⁵. It corresponded very aptly with Titelmans' own insistence that exegesis should not be for private glory, but for the sake of the Church. Like his other posthumous works, this commentary also had the authorisation of Ruard Tapper (now obligatory in the light of decrees of the Council of Trent) and an imperial privilege, given in 1546, which included also three previously published works²⁰⁶.

The commentary on the Song of Solomon had eight editions, which with one exception coincided with those of the commentary on Job.

No.	Place	Publisher	Date
1	Antwerp	Jan Steels	1547
2	Paris	Benedictus Proevost for Audoenus Parvus	1547
3	Paris	Benedictus Proevost for Joannes Roigny	1547
4	Paris	Audoenus Parvus	1550
5	Paris	Hieronymus & Dionysia de Marnef	1550
6	Paris	Wed. Mauricius a Porta	1550
7	Lyon	Joannes Ausultus for Gulielmus Rovillius	1553
8	Lyon	Joannes Ausultus for Gulielmus Rovillius	1554

²⁰² Ibid., ff. a3v-a7v.

²⁰³ Ibid., ff. 1r-2r.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., f. 2r.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., f. a2r.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., f. 195r-v.

Like all Titelmans' commentaries, bar the one on the Psalms, also this one ceased to be published in the beginning of the second half of the century.

2.2.3 Polemical works of Franciscus Titelmans

Although the polemical works of Titelmans concerned the Bible, we will discuss them separately, since they differed significantly in style from his essentially non-polemical commentaries. All three polemical opera of the Franciscan were written in the context of his feud with Erasmus of Rotterdam, the outline of which has been presented above. The content of these works will be examined in Chapter Five; here we shall limit ourselves to a brief presentation of the books themselves.

The first and the most important of the polemical works was a polemic on the translation of the Letter to the Romans. The full title runs:

Collationes quinque super Epistolam ad Romanos beati Pauli Apostoli, quibus loca eius Epistolae difficiliora, ea potissimum quae ex Graecis aliquid habere uidentur difficultatis diligentissime tractantur atque explicantur, ita ut etiam a graece nescientibus facile capi valeat emphasis graecarum dictionum, simul et Ecclesiastica noui Testamenti latina aeditio rationabiliter defenditur. Idque ex autoritate ueterum interpretum, caeterorumque prabatissimorum patrum, latinorum pariter atque graecorum. Per Fratrem Franciscum Titelmanum Hassellensem, ordinis Fratrum minorum, sanctarum scripturarum apud Louanienses Praelectorem²⁰⁷.

The only edition was published in octavo by Guilielmus Vorsterman in Antwerp in May 1529. The first part of the work, entitled *Prologus apologeticus pro veteri et ecclesiastica noui testament latina interpretatione*, occupied 35 folios, numbered from a2v to e4r. It discussed the history of biblical translations from Hebrew to Greek and then to Latin, principles of biblical translation, and questions of inspiration and of the Latin style of the Bible. The main part of the book occupied 310 folios. It contained five fictitious dialogues between Titelmans and three humanists: Lorenzo Valla, Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples, and Erasmus of Rotterdam. Titelmans used excerpts from their works in which they differed from the Vulgate translation and responded to their arguments, always defending the traditional version. In addition, at the beginning and end of each dialogue, Titelmans provided a little narrative element in which he put invented words into his interlocutors' mouths. It was probably intentionally provocative. For instance, at the end of the

²⁰⁷ F. Titelmans, *Collationes quinque super Epistolam ad Romanos beati Pauli Apostoli, quibus loca eius Epistolae difficiliora, ea potissimum quae ex Graecis aliquid habere uidentur difficultatis diligentissime tractantur atque explicantur, ita ut etiam a graece nescientibus facile capi valeat emphasis graecarum dictionum, simul et Ecclesiastica noui Testamenti latina aeditio rationabiliter defenditur. Idque ex autoritate ueterum interpretum, caeterorumque prabatissimorum patrum, latinorum pariter atque graecorum*, Guilielmus Vorstermannus, Antuerpiae 1529, f. a1r.

first dialogue, “Erasmus” proposed to meet the next day, forgetting that it was the feast of the Ascension of the Lord. He was corrected by “Lefèvre”, but the impression was that the Humanist from Rotterdam disregarded Catholic feasts and rituals²⁰⁸. Erasmus did not miss that point and took offense²⁰⁹. At the beginning of the third dialogue, Titelmans rejoiced that “Erasmus” accepted fraternal corrections as any good Christian should, without offense and in benign spirit²¹⁰. Nothing was further from reality, and it is difficult to understand such remarks as anything other than rhetorical irony in which the intended meaning is contrary to the superficial one. The same seems to apply to vastly exaggerated flatteries and compliments exchanged between the four characters.

The first dialogue covers the first chapter of the Letter to the Romans; the second, chapters two to five; the third, six to eight; the fourth, nine to eleven; and the last, from chapter twelve to the end. Each dialogue is concluded with a laudatory psalm composed by Titelmans. To facilitate reading, there is also a table of contents, called *catalogus locorum*, enumerating all the verses of Paul’s epistle that came under discussion in the five dialogues.

Titelmans’ second polemical work was a response to Erasmus’ rejoinder to *Collationes quinque*. It was *Epistola apologetica Fratris Francisci Titelmanii Hassellensis, pro opera Collationum, ad ueteris Ecclesiasticae interpretationis noui Testamenti defensionem aeditio, ad Desyderium Erasmum Roteradamum sacrae Thologiae professorem*²¹¹. Written in December 1529, it was published in January 1530 by Guilielmus Vorsterman. It contained 39 folios in octavo. The content of the letter has already been discussed in 2.1.2.

The final polemical work of Titelmans was devoted to the Book of Revelation. The title page read:

Libri duo de autoritate libri Apocalypsis Beati Ioannis Apostoli, in quibus ex antiquissimorum authorum assertionibus, scripturae huius dignitas et autoritas comprobatur, aduersus eos qui nostra hac tempestate siue falsis assertionibus siue non bonis dubitationibus, Canonicae et Diuinae huius scripturae autoritati derogant. Per Fratrem Franciscum Titelmanum Hassellensem, ordinis Fratrum Minorum, sanctarum scripturarum apud Louanienses Praelectorem²¹².

It was published by Michael Hillen in Antwerp in 1530 on 80 folios in octavo and has never been republished.

The prologue of the work clearly indicated its polemical character. Titelmans confessed that he intended to write commentaries on the Book of Revelation, once he would have finished with

²⁰⁸ Ibid., f. 54v.

²⁰⁹ Cf. D. Erasmus, “Responsio ad Collationes”, op. cit., col. 1016B.

²¹⁰ F. Titelmans, *Collationes quinque...*, op. cit., f. 137r-v.

²¹¹ F. Titelmans, *Epistola Apologetica...*, op. cit., f. a1r.

²¹² F. Titelmans, *Libri duo de autoritate libri Apocalypsis...*, op. cit., f. a1r.

the Commentary on the Psalms (published a year after), yet before he had to defend the very authority of the New Testament's last book.

Hac nostra tempestate improbi quidam erronei, qui iudicio sanctae Ecclesiae relicto loquuntur quaecunque ipsis visa fuerint, et mente corrupti blasphemant quaecunque non intellexerint, multis modis libro huic detrahere conspiciantur, et fidem omnem abrogare: qui etiam libris aeditis non ueriti sunt asserere, librum hunc neque Apostolicum esse neque Propheticum, imo neque Apostolicum neque spiritu sancto dignum uideri²¹³.

Among those critics Titelmans enumerated especially Erasmus, whose exaggerated criticism was so persuasively written that it threatened to deceive many simple souls²¹⁴. He asserted, however, that criticism of the Apocalypse's authority was mistaken, based mostly on half-truths, imprecise citations, misunderstood patristic evidence, and so on²¹⁵. Titelmans declared he would send his work to Erasmus, since he did not want to criticise him behind his back, as Erasmus was used to doing²¹⁶. Moreover, he printed the entire section from Erasmus' *Annotationes*, which he intended to refute²¹⁷.

In the first book of *Libri duo*, the Franciscan strove to demonstrate the canonicity of the Apocalypse and John the Evangelist's authorship. The second was a refutation of Erasmus' arguments one by one. Both involved minute discussions of patristic authorities and, alongside other polemical works, will be analysed in Chapter Five of the present dissertation.

2.2.4 Other works of Franciscus Titelmans

Being a Renaissance man in more than merely a chronological sense, Titelmans published broadly also on non-biblical topics. He wrote on logic, on natural philosophy (an early modern term akin what is now known as science), theology, liturgy, and world history. We shall now briefly present his works in their chronological order of publication.

In 1528 Titelmans published a triple treatise on the Eucharist, entitled:

Tractatus de expositione mysteriorum Missae. Sacri Canonis Missae Expositio. Tractatus Sanctarum meditationum pro cordis in deo constabilitatione. Per Fratrem Franciscum Titelmannum Hassellensem, ordinis fratrum Minorum, sanctarum scripturarum apud Louanienses Praelectorem.

²¹³ Ibid., f. a2r.

²¹⁴ Ibid., ff. a2v-a3r.

²¹⁵ Ibid., f. a4r.

²¹⁶ Ibid., f. a3v.

²¹⁷ Ibid., ff. a5v-a7v.

The publication was in Antwerp, by Guilielmus Vorsterman, dated for the 3rd of October 1528²¹⁸. It contained 146 folios in octavo. As the publisher indicated in his introductory words, it was three in one: “Imo in vno opera, tria simul, non minus pia quam erudite, damus opuscula, quorum titulus, praecedens tibi pagina demonstrat: Christianis omnibus, potissimum autem Christi sacerdotibus, multo vtilissima”²¹⁹. The first work was an allegorical explanation of the liturgy. This genre, initiated by Amalarius of Metz, was very popular throughout the Middle Ages²²⁰.

The second text, a commentary on the Mass’ Canon, was an amalgamate. Titelmans printed in its entirety a commentary on the Canon by Odon of Cambrai, a Benedictine monk and a bishop, who died in 1113²²¹, to which he added his own commentary. The choice of the medieval text was significant, for Odon’s work was among the last pre-scholastic commentaries on the Canon²²². It used patristic language to explain the Mass’ sacrifice and was free from the heavy terminology of mediaeval scholasticism. It could be seen as an attempt to return to an older theology of the Mass, perfectly Catholic, but not encumbered with scholastic jargon that was under attack from humanists and reformers alike²²³.

The last component was a series of meditations for each day of the week. Titelmans explained that feeble human nature was easily deceived by the devil, especially if the mind was left idle. Therefore, it was necessary to occupy oneself with pious thought all the time. His meditations were intended to assist with that²²⁴. Thus, for example, on Mondays he advised to marvel on the work of creation, while on Tuesdays, to bring before mind’s eyes the Last Judgment and so on²²⁵.

²¹⁸ F. Titelmans, *Tractatus de expositione mysteriorum Missae. Sacri Canonis Missae Expositio. Tractatus Sanctarum meditationum pro cordis in deo constabillitione*, Hieronymus Gormontius, Paris 1536, f. a1r.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, f. a1v.

²²⁰ On Amalarius see: A. Cabaniss, *Amalarius of Metz.*, North-Holland Publishing Company, Amsterdam 1954.

²²¹ For the life of Odon see: Herimannus, *Liber de restauratione monasteri Sancti Martini Tornacensis*, [in:] *MGH SS 14*, pp. 266–360; R.B.C. Huygens, ed., *Herimannus Abbas. Liber de Restauratione Ecclesie Sancti Martini Tornacensis*, 2010, CCCM 236. Amandus de Castello, *De Odonis episcopi Cameracensis vita vel moribus*, [in:] *MGH SS 15*, pp. 942–945. On Odon’s philosophy see: I.M. Resnick, *Odo of Tournai, the Phoenix, and the Problem of Universals*, “*Journal of the History of Philosophy*”, 1997, vol. 34, pp. 355–374. Odo of Tournai, *On Original Sin and A Disputation with the Jew, Leo, Concerning the Advent of Christ, the Son of God: Two Theological Treatises*, ed. I.M. Resnick, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia 2017.

²²² Cf. M.M. Schaefer, *Twelfth Century Latin Commentaries on the Mass: The Relationship of the Priest to Christ and to the People*, “*Studia Liturgica*”, 1982, vol. 15, no. 2, pp. 76–86.

²²³ Erasmus criticism of the scholastic language of the mass: D. Erasmus, *Moriae encomium id est stultitiae laus*, ed. C.H. Miller, 1979, ASD IV–3, p. 150: “Ac pie quidem illi [apostoli] consecrabant synaxim, et tamen rogati de termino a quo et termino ad quem, de transsubstantiatione, de modo quo corpus iem sit in diuersis locis, de differentia qua corpus Christi est in coelo, qua fuit in cruce, qua in sacramento synaxeos, quo puncto fiat transsubstantiatio, cum oratio per qua mea fit, vt quantitas dsicreat sit in fluxu, no pari (sicut opinior) respondissent acumine, quo Scotidiae disserunt haec ac definiunt”. For Luther see: M. Luther, *Martin Luther’s The church held captive in Babylon: a prelude: a new translation with introduction and notes*, ed. D. Janz, Oxford University Press, New York 2019, p. 90: “Cur non explosa ista curiositate, in verbis Christi simpliciter haeremus, parati ignorare, quicquid ibi fiat, contentique verum corpus Christi, virtute verborum illic adesse? An est necesse, modos operationis divinae omnino comprehendere?”.

²²⁴ F. Titelmans, *Tractatus de expositione mysteriorum Missae...*, op. cit., f. o5r-v.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, ff. o7r-p5v.

The work enjoyed substantial popularity. According to de Troeyer, it had 15 Latin editions in Antwerp, Leuven, Paris, and Lyon between 1528 and 1574. In addition, there were translations into Italian, published in Venice in 1548 and 1559, and into French, published in Paris in 1544²²⁶.

Some editions of the *Tractatus* also included two other *opuscula* of Titelmans, which were, however, originally published separately. Those were:

Liber de Sacrosancta et superbenedicta Trinitate. In quo Ecclesiasticum officium quod in illius solennitate legit Romana Ecclesia, clare lucideque explanatur: simul et quicquid de illa fide tenendum est, facili compendio succincte exponitur. Per Fratrem Franciscum Titelmannum Hassellensem, sacrarum scripturarum apud Louanienses Praelectorem.

Eiusdem oratio de praematura morte bonorum²²⁷.

They were published in Antwerp by Michale Hillenius in January 1530. This pamphlet contained 39 folios in octavo. The first part of the work was a commentary on texts used in the liturgy of the hours for the feast of the Holy Trinity. Liturgical texts were composed by John of Peckham, a Franciscan, Saint Bonaventure's disciple, and later an archbishop of Canterbury²²⁸. Titelmans commented on the office starting from antiphons, through *invitatorium*, *responsoria* and finally hymns²²⁹. He explained biblical allusions included in them and their theological significance. He attached to the commentary a short biography of John of Peckham, entitled: *De Ioanne Pechano, huius officii ecclesiastici de Sancta Trinitate authore, ex antiquis et fide dignis historiis*²³⁰.

The second opusculum was *Oratio Fratris Francisci Titelmanni Hassellensis, de praematura morte bonorum, Louanii habita Anno 1527. Pro morte hominis Dei, M. Ioannis a Myrica, sacrorum Canonum atque Legum Doctoris eximii, et sancti Euangelii secundum conuersionem integerrimi professoris*²³¹. It was Titelmans' tribute to his own teacher of the canon law. Hillenius' edition was the only self-standing one, but both texts were published six times together with *Tractatus de expositione Mysteriorum Missae*²³².

In November of 1530, Titelmans published a work that was to become one of his two bestsellers: *Libri duodecim de Consyderatione rerum naturalium, earumque ad suum creatorem*

²²⁶ B. de Troeyer, *Bio-bibliographia Franciscana...*, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 94.

²²⁷ F. Titelmans, *Liber de Sacrosancta et superbenedicta Trinitate. In quo Ecclesiasticum officium quod in illius solennitate legit Romana Ecclesia, clare lucideque explanatur: simul et quicquid de illa fide tenendum est, facili compendio succincte exponitur*, Michael Hillenius Hoochstratanus, Antuerpiae 1530.

²²⁸ On Peckham see: G.J. Etzkorn, *John Peckham, O.F.M.: A Career of Controversy*, [in:] *Monks, Nuns and Friars in Medieval Society*, eds. E.B. King, J.T. Schaefer, and W.B. Wadley, University of the South, Sewanee 1989, pp. 71–82.

²²⁹ F. Titelmans, *Liber de Sacrosancta et superbenedicta Trinitate...*, op. cit., ff. a3v-d4v.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, ff. d5r-d7r.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, ff. d7v – e7r.

²³² B. de Troeyer, *Bio-bibliographia Franciscana...*, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 95–96.

reductione. Per Fratrem Franciscum Titelmannum Hassellensem, ordinis fratrum Minorum, sacrarum scripturarum apud Louanienses Praelectorem, known also as *Compendium Naturalis Philosophiae*²³³. It was first published in Antwerp by Simon Cocus in 1530 and had 36 subsequent editions, the last one in 1658²³⁴.

The work was a handbook of Aristotelian natural philosophy, based mostly on his *Physica*, but also *Prava naturalia*, *De anima*, and *Nichomachean Ethics*. The first four books gave the foundation of Aristotle's understanding of nature, while the following eight expounded on its various aspects. The first book spoke of *principiis rerum naturalium*, the second of their causes, the third about *motu et accidentibus eius*, fourth *de infinito, loco, vacuo et tempore*. Book five was devoted to *generatione et corruptione*, sixth to meteorology. Book seven was on the sky and the world, while books eight to twelve on different aspects of the soul: its powers, internal and external senses, intellect, appetite, and free will.

His approach to natural philosophy can be characterised by an adherence to tradition with some openness to novelty. In the spirit of Saint Thomas Aquinas, he considered that sacred knowledge (theology) and profane one (philosophy) could neither be completely separated (nominalist tendency) nor united (mystical tendency). They were complementary, which stemmed from the unity of intellect. Titelmans presented a very traditional, terracentric world view, which he felt no need to argue for, since it was asserted in the Biblical Revelation²³⁵. Such an approach was akin to nominalists, such as Nicole Oresme²³⁶. Nevertheless, scholastic reasoning was almost entirely absent from Titelmans' compendium. Johan Vanpaemel has also demonstrated that he knew very well most recent works in the field and used them, whenever they did not contradict Thomism²³⁷. According to Vanpaemel Titelmans could be described as a progressive Thomist²³⁸.

Where did the popularity of Titelmans' handbook come from? First it was due to its relative simplicity and synthetic character. The author explained in his preface the purpose of his work:

Sic enim simplicium fratrum conditioni iudicavi vtilius, vtpote quibus bona diei noctisque pars diuinis hymnis decantandis sacris peragendis mysteriis, et circa proximos exercendis hierarchicis actibus, foret impendenda: ita vt ad Philosophiae studia minimum temporis superesset, neque vacaret eorum qui plenius illa tractarunt prolixos et difficiles commentarios euoluere²³⁹.

²³³ F. Titelmans, *Libri duodecim de Consyderatione rerum naturalium, earumque ad suum creatorem reductione*, Simon Coquus, Antwerpiae 1530.

²³⁴ B. de Troeyer, *Bio-bibliographia Franciscana...*, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 95.

²³⁵ F. Tittelmans, *Compendium naturalis philosophiae...*, op. cit., f 90v.

²³⁶ An outline of Oresme's thought see: M. Clagett, *Nicole Oresme and Medieval Scientific Thought*, "Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society", 1964, vol. 108, no. 4, pp. 298–309.

²³⁷ J. Vanpaemel, "De dynamica van de Middeleeuwen", op. cit., p. 118.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.118-119.

²³⁹ F. Tittelmans, *Compendium naturalis philosophiae...*, op. cit., f. AA4r.

Thus, it gave the essence of Aristotelian physics in an easily digestible form. Moreover, it used an up-to-date language, especially making use of the recent translations of Aristotle executed by John Argyropoulos (+1487), and was inspired by renaissance studies on the Philosopher, such as those of Lefèvre d'Étaples²⁴⁰. Hence, Titelmans proved himself open to novelties brought by humanist scholarship. But it was not just this. Titelmans' approach was quite unique in combining Aristotelian philosophy with deeply Christian devotion. He expressed his deep conviction that knowledge of the world helped to know God: “Neque enim dubium est, quin creaturarum visibilium et rerum naturalium recta cognitio plurimum omnino habeat momenti, ad omnipotentis dei pleniorum cognitionem”²⁴¹. He developed this argument in reference to the first chapter of the Letter to the Romans, anticipating the dogmatic statements of the 1st Vatican Council²⁴². He also soaked his commentary in the Bible, providing numerous citations and examples from Scriptures. As we shall see in Chapter Three, the same was true in the opposite direction: he frequently used knowledge of the world to elucidate the Word of God. David Lines commented that “all of this gives a unique flavor to Titelmans's compendium: it breathes an unusual combination of (systematized) Aristotelian doctrine, Scotist theory, and Bonaventuran spirit”²⁴³.

It was probably due to these qualities that the *Compendium* became very influential. Lines observed that “Titelmans' peculiar way of systematizing and spiritualizing Aristotle must have lent his work an aura of originality that was recognized by his contemporaries. And, in the aftermath of the Council of Trent his works must have represented a model of how one could combine Christian teachings with the study of philosophy”²⁴⁴. Indeed, the *Compendium* had an impact on much of post-Tridentine teaching. D. M. Gomes de Santos has demonstrated that Titelmans' work stood at the origin of the Jesuit syllabus known as *Cursus Conimbricensis*²⁴⁵; while Japanese scholars R. Hiraoka and A. Watanabe proved that Titelmans' *Compendium* was among the main sources for *De sphaera* of another Jesuit, Pedro Gomez²⁴⁶. Moreover, it was very widespread not only in Franciscan and other religious study houses, but also secular universities,

²⁴⁰ D.A. Lines, “Teaching Physics in Louvain and Bologna: Frans Titelmans and Ulisse Aldrovandi”, op. cit., p. 192. C.B. Schmitt, “The Rise of the Philosophical Textbook”, op. cit., p. 795. On Argyropoulos see: J.E. Seigel, *The Teaching of Argyropoulos and the Rhetoric of the First Humanists*, [in:] *Action and Conviction in Early Modern Europe: Essays in Honor of E.H. Harbison*, eds. T.K. Rabb and J.E. Seigel, Princeton University Press 2015, pp. 237–260.

²⁴¹ F. Tittelmans, *Compendium naturalis philosophiae...*, op. cit., f. BB8r.

²⁴² Concilium Vaticanum I, Sessio III, 24. Aprilis 1870, *Constitutio dogmatica de fide Catholica*, 2.20 [in:] A. Baron and H. Pietras, *Dokumenty Soborów Powszechnych...*, op. cit., vol. 4, p. 894: “Eadem sancta mater ecclesia tenet et docet, Deum, rerum omnium principium et finem, naturali humanae rationis lumine e rebus creatis certo cognosci posse; invisibilia enim ipsius, a creatura mundi, per ea quae facta sunt, intellecta, conspiciuntur”.

²⁴³ D.A. Lines, “Teaching Physics in Louvain and Bologna: Frans Titelmans and Ulisse Aldrovandi”, op. cit., p. 190.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 192.

²⁴⁵ D.M.G. dos Santos, *Francisco Titelmans O. F. M. e as origens do Curso Conimbricense...*, op. cit., pp. 468-478.

²⁴⁶ R. Hiraoka and A. Watanabe, *A Jesuit Cosmological Textbook in 'Christian Century' Japan: De sphaera of Pedro Gomez (Part II)*, “SCIAMVS”, 2015, vol. 16, pp. 129–134. See also: F. Verwilghen, *De werken van Frans Titelmans, O.F.M. in Japan (1556)*, “Franciscana”, 1961, vol. 16, pp. 113–119.

as indicated by the case of Ulisse Aldrovandi²⁴⁷. Titelmans' work had some impact also outside the academic world. His compendium was a great influence on a Spanish poet Lope de Vega²⁴⁸, and his manual was also mentioned in a 17th-century play of James Shirley²⁴⁹. Another testimony of its popularity was an abbreviation to around 30 pages done by an anonymous editor and published several times from 1545 onwards under the title: *Compendium Physicae ed libros Aristotelis*. Curiously it had attached to it a little treatise on minerals, plants, and animals, derived from Albertus Magnus, Pliny and other sources²⁵⁰.

In 1532 Titelmans published his only work in vernacular, which, however, existed also in a Latin version. The title in vernacular ran:

Den Schat den kersten gheloofs. Een costelijck enn deuoet hantboecxlien, ghetoghen uit die heylige scriftuere, uit den ouden enn nieuwen testament, in hem besluptende enn seer opelije verclarende die principael articulen van onse heylighen kersten ghelooue. Ghemaect ende uitghegeuen van broeder Francisco Titelmanno van Hasselt, leser der heyligher scriftueren tot Louen int conuent der Minrebroederen. Gheuisiteert enn gheexamineert bi vele gheleerde mannen inder Godheyt, ende by den inquisiteur des kersten Gheloofs gheapprobeert, tot den ghemeynen profiit van allen kersten menschen²⁵¹.

The Latin title was slightly different:

Summa Mysteriorum Christianae Fidei. Ex Autoritate divinarum scripturarum veteris et noui Testamenti congesta, atque in pias contemplationum formulas commode digesta, ita vt in eis Christifidelium simul et mentes in Veritatis cognitione vtiliter illuminari et affectus in Dei amorem valeant suauiter inflammari. Per Fratrem Franciscum Titelmannum Hassellensem, ordinis fratrum Minorum, sanctarum scripturarum apud Louanienses Praelectorem²⁵².

It is noteworthy that the title in the vernacular emphasised so strongly the orthodoxy of the work and an ecclesiastical approval for it – something missing not only in the Latin title but also in all of Titelmans' Latin works. Perhaps it is an indirect testimony of a wide circulation of Protestant literature in vernacular, which cast doubt on any theological text that was not in Latin. There were three editions in Dutch as well as eleven in Latin. Moreover, the work was also

²⁴⁷ D.A. Lines, "Teaching Physics in Louvain and Bologna: Frans Titelmans and Ulisse Aldrovandi", op. cit., p. 194.

²⁴⁸ E.S. Morby, *Franz Titelmans in Lope's Arcadia...*, op. cit., pp. 185-197

²⁴⁹ J. Shirley, *Changes: or, Love in a maze. A comedie*, Act 4, William Cooke, London 1632, p. 47: "I a Philosopher? / I studied *Titelman* sometimes i'th College, / As others did".

²⁵⁰ B. de Troeyer, *Bio-bibliographia Franciscana...*, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 95., D.A. Lines, "Teaching Physics in Louvain and Bologna: Frans Titelmans and Ulisse Aldrovandi", op. cit., p. 197.

²⁵¹ F. Titelmans, *Den Schat den kersten gheloofs. Een costelijck enn deuoet hantboecxlien, ghetoghen uit die heylige scriftuere, uit den ouden enn nieuwen testament, in hem besluptende enn seer opelije verclarende die principael articulen van onse heylighen kersten ghelooue.*, Simon Coquus 1532, f. a1r.

²⁵² F. Titelmans, *Summa Mysteriorum Christianae Fidei...*, op. cit., f. a1r.

translated into Spanish and published in Salamanca in 1555. It was a catechetical work explaining the essential dogmas of the Christian faith in 33 “contemplations”. Paul Arblaster noted that Titelmans’ “works of vernacular instruction contain numerous precise biblical references, mostly to the Gospels, Paul’s Epistles and the Psalms, encouraging lay readers to turn to the scriptural wellsprings of Catholic teachings and practices” and “can only be characterized as evangelical”²⁵³. It is a bit curious why Arblaster used a plural number, for no other vernacular work of Titelmans is known (bar translations executed after his death). He might have referred to the work of Thomas of Herentals, Titelmans’ confrere, *Den Speghel des kersten levens*, that Titelmans edited and published after the author’s death in 1530.

Titelmans also edited and substituted with comments (*scholia*) a work of a medieval monk, Arnaud, abbot of Bonneval:

De Septem verbis Domini in cruce tractatus pius iuxta et eruditus Domini Arnoldi Carnotensis Abbatis Bonaeuallis, familiaris amici diui Bernardi, cum scholiis Fratris Francisci Titelmanni Hassellensis, quibus loca quaedam obscuriora explicantur.

Opus eruditum et plane mellifluum nunquam antehac typis excusum.

Eiusdem sermo de laudibus Virginis Matris²⁵⁴.

It was published by Martinus de Keyser in Antwerp in 1532. Titelmans’ contribution here was a short biography of the author, a dedicatory letter to John Robbins, dean of Mechelen, and a fairly long commentary, explaining the philological, theological, and biblical aspects of the mediaeval work.

In 1533 Titelmans published his other bestseller, *Compendium Dialecticae*. The full title was:

Dialecticae Considerationis Libri sex, summam Organi Aristotelici, hoc est, totius Dialectices ab Aristotele tractatae complectentes. Autore F[ratre] Francisco Titelmanno Hassellense, ordinis fratrum Minorum, sanctarum scripturarum apud Louanienses praelectore²⁵⁵.

²⁵³ P. Arblaster, “‘Totius Mundi Emporium’: Antwerp as a Centre for Vernacular Bible Translations, 1523 - 1545”, op. cit., p. 24.

²⁵⁴ F. Titelmans, *De Septem verbis Domini in cruce tractatus pius iuxta et eruditus Domini Arnoldi Carnotensis Abbatis Bonaeuallis, familiaris amici diui Bernardi, cum scholiis Fratris Francisci Titelmanni Hassellensis, quibus loca quaedam obscuriora explicantur. Opus eruditum et plane mellifluum nunquam antehac typis excusum. Eiusdem sermo de laudibus Virginis Matris*, Martinus Caesar, Antuerpiae 1532, f. a1r.

²⁵⁵ F. Tittelmans, *Dialecticae Considerationis Libri sex, summam Organi Aristotelici, hoc est, totius Dialectices ab Aristotele tractatae complectentes*, Ioannes Soter, Salingiaci 1539.

It was first published by Simon Cock in Antwerp in 1533 and had 44 editions until 1621. Similarly like the other philosophical compendium, also this became one of the most popular textbooks in the 16th-century Europe²⁵⁶.

At the beginning of this work Titelmans attached *Prologus Apologeticus pro Dialecticae caeterarumque liberalium artium tuenda dignitate*²⁵⁷. He started by referring to Augustine's *De ciuitate Dei* testimony, according to which Julian the Apostate banned Christians from teaching liberal arts²⁵⁸. This was a typical practice of the enemies of faith, observed the Franciscan, and in his own days they also acted the same way:

Imitant uero illud strenue apostatae exemplum, et Philistaeorum figuram adimplent, impudentes haeretici, praecipue uero haeticorum magistri: quos experientia docet, et liberales artes omnes, et scholas in quibus eiusmodi traduntur, summo odio persequi, maledictisque et blasphemis incessere, non alio haud dubie praetextu quam fecerat ille, sed nec dissimili animo. [...] Prae caeteris uero Dialecticam odio irreconciliabili persequuntur²⁵⁹.

Although Titelmans did not name anyone, he clearly had in mind various humanists, who for a long time had been critical of scholastic learning and especially of logic. Humanists, who considered scholastics' logic as extremely contorted and unintelligible, lambasted it in numerous texts: some more learned (Erasmus' *Encomium Moriae*), others more Rabelaisian (*Epistulae obscurorum virorum*)²⁶⁰. Titelmans disagreed. He compiled a dossier of opinions of famous men, both Christian and pagan, in favour of *dialectica* and attached it to his *Prologus*²⁶¹. He also wrote an exhortation to the young, to encourage them to study liberal arts and especially *dialectica*²⁶². In the *Compendium* itself there was significantly less spiritual material than in the previous one, largely due to the nature of the subject, however there was the same degree of lucid and synthetic exposition of material.

The last work we need to discuss here was not written but only edited by Titelmans. It was:

²⁵⁶ C. Geudens, *Some Notes on the Northern European Reception of Frans Titelmans' 'De consideratione dialectica' (1533)*, [in:] *Early Modern Universities and the Sciences*, ed. V. Feola, FrancoAngeli, Milano 2020, pp. 83–116.

²⁵⁷ F. Tittelmans, *De Consideratione Dialectica...*, op. cit., ff. a3r- a5r.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., ff. a3r. Augustinus Hipponensis, *De ciuitate Dei...*, 18.52, op. cit. p. 651: "Deinde quid respondent etiam de Iuliano, quem non numerant in decem? An ipse non est ecclesiam persecutus, qui Christianos liberales litteras docere ac discere uetuit?"

²⁵⁹ F. Tittelmans, *De Consideratione Dialectica...*, op. cit., f. a4r.

²⁶⁰ D. Erasmus, *Moriae encomium id est stultitiae laus...*, op. cit. On *Epistulae obscurorum virorum* see: S. Kivistö, *Creating anti-eloquence: epistolae obscurorum virorum and the humanist polemics on style*, Societas scientiarum Fennica, Helsinki 2002.

²⁶¹ F. Tittelmans, *De Consideratione Dialectica...*, op. cit., ff. a5r-c1r.

²⁶² Ibid., ff. c1r-c2v.

Chronica compendiosissima ab exordio mundi vsque ad annum Domini Millesimum quingentesimum trigesimum quartum: per venerandum patrem F. Amandum Zierxeensem, ordinis fratrum Minorum, regularis obseruantiae, virum in Diuinis et humnais rebus peritissimum.

Eiusdem tractatus de septuaginta hebdomadibus Danielis.

Adiectae sunt epistolae duae Christiani regis Aethiopiae, Daudis, ad Clementem septimum, Rhomanum pontificem anno Domini 1533 destinatae, cum articulis quibusdam de fide et moribus Aethiopum Christianorum. Aliae quoque tres epistolae, ex noua maria Oceani Hispania ad nos transmissae, de fructu mirabili illic surgentis nouae Ecclesiae, ex quibus animus Christianus merito debeat laetari²⁶³.

Amandus did not finish his work due to his death around 1525²⁶⁴. Titelmans, who took over from him the duties of a lector in Holy Scriptures devoted himself also to the completion of his master's work. He explained that in *Epistola nuncupatoria*, addressed to Matthias Weynsen, the provincial minister of observant Franciscans in Lower Germany²⁶⁵. In this letter he praised Amandus' learning and virtues, listed some of his works preserved in the Leuven convent of friars and explained that he took care of the edition of the *Chronica*²⁶⁶. He also explained that Amandus' work fell into the field of chronology, not history, for it strove to harmonise different calendars throughout history. Indeed, that was the content of the work, which started literally with Adam and Eve and followed world history to the present, with a special place given to the Low Countries.

A set of letters attached to the work was certainly Titelmans' initiative, for they were all written after Amandus' death. The first was a letter sent by Dawit II, emperor of Ethiopia²⁶⁷, to Pope Clement VII, via Portuguese missionary Francisco Álvares²⁶⁸. The letter was printed in its entirety²⁶⁹, with an introduction and commentary by Titelmans, as well as an essay *De fide et religione, moribusque et caeremonis praedicti Aethiopiae regis et subditorum eius*, also composed by him²⁷⁰. Moreover, there were three letters sent from the New World by Franciscan missionaries to their confreres in Europe, written between 1529-1531²⁷¹. These missionaries were: Martin of

²⁶³ F. Titelmans and A. de Zierikzee, *Chronica compendiosissima...*, op. cit., f. a1r.

²⁶⁴ Vide supra 2.1.3.

²⁶⁵ F. Titelmans and A. de Zierikzee, *Chronica compendiosissima...*, op. cit., ff. a1v-a4r.

²⁶⁶ F. Titelmans and A. de Zierikzee, *Chronica compendiosissima...*, op. cit., f. a3r-v.

²⁶⁷ On Dawit II see: R.K. Molvaer, *The Tragedy of Emperor Libne-Dingil of Ethiopia (1508-1540)*, "Northeast African studies", 1998, vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 23-46.

²⁶⁸ On Álvares and his work see: F. Álvares, *The prester John of the Indies: a true relation of the lands of the prester John, being the narrative of the Portuguese embassy to Ethiopia in 1520 written by father Francisco Álvares*, eds. C.F. Beckingham and G.W.B. Huntingford, trans. Stanley of Alderley, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1961.

²⁶⁹ F. Titelmans and A. de Zierikzee, *Chronica compendiosissima...*, op. cit. ff. 113r-116r.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., ff. 117r-122r.

²⁷¹ Ibid., ff. 122r-127r.

Valencia, Peter de Gante alias de Mura, and Juan de Zumárraga the bishop of Mexico-Tenochtitlan (called by Titelmans Temixtitan)²⁷².

The *Chronica* of Amandus – Titelmans was published only once in its entirety, in Antwerp in May 1534 by Simon Cock. The part concerning Ethiopians, however, was reprinted four times between 1535 and 1552.

According to the Capuchin chronicles, Titelmans wrote also some short devotional and polemical treatises that existed only in manuscript form and were lost due to friars' lack of care. Bernardino da Colpetrazzo wrote: "As he stayed in Rome for some years he wrote several small works, vary beautiful ones, especially against heretics. These, for the negligence of friars, were partly lost, but others made it to print"²⁷³. It seems that he confused works written by Titelmans in Leuven with those he might have composed in Rome. That he wrote something in Rome is confirmed by Bernardino later, where he asserted that Titelmans wrote "a little book of beautiful prayers"²⁷⁴. Perhaps the testimony of Matthias de Salò is more precise here:

And at the request of the aforementioned General [Minister] he started to write on theology but was stopped by death. Nevertheless, he wrote a beautiful book against heretics, which was sadly lost together with some of his other writings, because friars dispatched it from one place to another through a certain layman. He, through lack of care, left them in a cellar where they got destroyed. Fra Francesco da Canobio, when he was in Milan, wrote to Titelmans' brother, asking him to dispatch his writings, if he had any. He gladly agreed and sent a lot of them on a mule. However, the Provincial, Fra Amadeo, had scruples to pay the muleteer, and thus they were lost, to the great grief of Fra Francesco Canobio²⁷⁵.

In the light of these testimonies, it seems likely that Titelmans wrote some devotional texts for his brethren, which however did not survive. The whole story shows a tension in the early Capuchin community between learning and poverty. Some, like Canobio, were interested in preserving intellectual heritage of a confrere, others, like Amadeo, were too much concerned about

²⁷² On Zumarraga see: A.M. Carreño, *Don Fray Juan de Zumárraga Pioneer of European Culture in America*, "The Americas", 1949, vol. 6, no. 1, pp. 56–71. J.G. Icazbalceta, *Fray Juan de Zumárraga*, Espasa, Calpe 1952. See also: V. Lillo Castañ and L.C. Plaza, *Dos epístolas latinas de fray Juan de Zumárraga y Juan Bernal Díaz de Luco sobre la evangelización del Nuevo Mundo*, "Translat Library", 2021, vol. 3, no. 1, pp. 1-35.

²⁷³ Bernardinus a Colpetrazzo, *Historia Ordinis...*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 172: "Et dimorando in Roma alcuni anni fece molte operette, molto belle, et massimamente contra gli heretici, le quali per negligenza de' Frati una parte andorno [sic!] male, et alcune furono date alla stampa".

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 172: "un libretto piccolo di bellissime orationi".

²⁷⁵ Matthias a Salò, *Historia Capuccina...*, op. cit., pp. 184–185: "Et ad istanza del sudetto Generale havea cominciato a scrivere sopra la theologia, ma prevenuto dalla morte non lo compì, anzi havendo scritto un bel libro contra gli heretici miseramente si perdè con altri suoi scritti, perché mandandoli da un luogo all'altro i Frati per man di un secolare, egli trascurato li lasciò in una cantina ove sà infradaron. F. Francesco da Canobio stando a Milano scrisse in Fiandra ad un fratello del Titelmanno che sà havea suoi scritti glieli mandasseò il che egli volentieri fece, mandandogliene molti su un mulo. Ma il Provinciale F. Amadeo si fe conscientia di pagare il mulettieri e si persero con grandissimo dolore di esso F. Francesco Cannobio [sic]".

related costs. Fortunately, the lost writings dispatched by Peter Titelmans were likely the biblical commentaries he published between 1543-1547. Lucas Wadding claimed that Titelmans had written a commentary on Mark's Gospel, published in Antwerp in 1543, but to all likelihood, he confused it with a commentary on Matthew, since no other trace of such a book exists²⁷⁶.

2.3 Sources of Titelmans' exegetical works

In this last section, before we move on to detailed analyses of the content of Titelmans' biblical works, we want to give an overarching view on his use of sources. The task is not an easy one, for he rarely named them. A comprehensive study of the matter would require another dissertation, thus, we shall limit ourselves here to giving some examples, which, however, should help us to understand the resources he used in composing his works.

In some of his commentaries, Titelmans named the material on which he founded his own elucidations. For instance, in the commentary on Ecclesiastes, he named two ancient commentaries that were his essential reference points. He explained that he had to use them, for there were great textual differences between the Hebrew original, various Greek translations, and the Vulgate²⁷⁷. The first of his sources was a short commentary by Gregory of Caesarea (Thaumaturgos), *Metaphrasis eis ton Ekklesiasten tou Solomontos*, older than Jerome's work and praised by him²⁷⁸. Titelmans lamented that the only copy he had was a translation into Latin executed by Oecolampadius, a heretical follower of Berengar's errors (as the Franciscan described him). His consolation was that the translation was done while Oecolampadius was a novice at the Brigittine monastery in Altomünster near Augsburg, hence still a faithful Catholic²⁷⁹. The other was a commentary of Olympiodorus, "vir non minus humanae philosophiae, quam diuinae scientiae peritus, et in scripturis sacris egregie instructus"²⁸⁰. He referred to a deacon of the Alexandrian Church, not to be confused with Neoplatonist philosopher active in the same city in the 5th and 6th centuries²⁸¹. Titelmans observed that both commentators not only differed in the commentary, but also followed different Greek texts of the book. According to him, the Vulgate

²⁷⁶ L. Wadding, *Scriptores Ordinis Minorum quibus accessit syllabus illorum qui es eodem ordine pro fide Christi fortiter occubuerunt*, Attilio Nardecchia, Romae 1906, p. 94.

²⁷⁷ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Ecclesiasten Salomonis...*, op. cit., f. c6r.

²⁷⁸ Modern translation of Gregory's work: Gregory Thaumaturgos, *Life and Works*, trans. M. Slusser, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington 2010, pp. 127–146. Cf. J. Jarick, *Gregory Thaumaturgos' Paraphrase of Ecclesiastes*, "Ancient Near Eastern studies", 1989, vol. 27, pp. 37–57.

²⁷⁹ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Ecclesiasten Salomonis...*, op. cit., f. c6v. On Oecolampadius see: D. Poythress, *Reformer of Basel: the Life, Thought, and Influence of Johannes Oecolampadius*, Reformation Heritage Books, Grand Rapids 2011.

²⁸⁰ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Ecclesiasten Salomonis...*, op. cit., f. c6r.

²⁸¹ Olympiodor von Alexandria, *Kommentar zu Hiob*, ed. U. Hagedorn, De Gruyter, Berlin 1984. On the philosopher see: M. Griffin, *Olympiodorus of Alexandria*, [in:] *Brill's Companion to the Reception of Plato in Antiquity*, eds. H. Tarrant et al., Brill, Leiden 2018, pp. 555–568.

of Jerome was a middle way between the Hebrew original and the text of the Septuagint²⁸². Given the variety of texts, Titelmans continuously referred to both above named commentaries throughout his commentary.

In his commentary on Job, unlike in Ecclesiastes, he did not name his sources in the preface. Yet throughout the book he constantly referred by name to four authors, who were clearly his principal material. The most obvious reference point was Gregory the Great's *Moralia in Job*²⁸³. This monumental work had an enormous impact on the entire mediaeval exegesis and no commentary on Job in the Christian West could be executed without a reference to it. Given that Titelmans chose to interpret Job according to the letter, he used relatively little of the ancient pope's spiritual interpretation, but it remained among his sources²⁸⁴. He also cited frequently Origen, who wrote twenty-two homilies on Job²⁸⁵. His work was translated by Hilary of Poitiers but has been lost²⁸⁶. Some of Origen's work, however, was preserved in various catenae, and we can assume that Titelmans used one of these²⁸⁷. Moreover, he used Chrysostom's commentary, which he also probably knew through mediaeval catenae²⁸⁸. Finally, he frequently referred to a commentary of Philip, an *auditor* of Jerome²⁸⁹. The text of his commentary was printed in 1527 and thus was available to the Franciscan²⁹⁰.

Like his work on Job, Titelmans did not list his sources in his commentary on John, but continuously referred to four authors. The oldest of these was the commentary of Chrysostom, in fact a series of eighty-eight homilies delivered by the Patriarch of Constantinople between 387-394²⁹¹. The text of Chrysostom was an inspiration for Theophylact of Ohrid, an 11th-century Bulgarian bishop, who was known in the West at least since Thomas Aquinas had included

²⁸² F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Ecclesiasten Salomonis...*, op. cit., f. c7v.

²⁸³ Gregorius Magnus, *Moralia in Iob*, ed. M. Adriaen, Brepols, Turnholti 1979, CCSL 143-143A-143B. Cf. K. Greschat, *Die Moralia in Iob Gregors des Grossen: ein christologisch-ekklesiologischer Kommentar*, Mohr, Tübingen 2005.

²⁸⁴ Invoked for instance in F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Lutetiae)...*, op. cit., ff. b2v, c3r, c7v, c8r, d1r, d2r, d4r, d8v, e1v, p4r, q6r.

²⁸⁵ Cf. Origenes, *Ex Origene selecta in Iob*, PG 12, col. 1031-1049. [Pseudo Origenes], *Commentarius Anonymi in Iob*, PG 17, col. 371-522. The latter work was frequently attributed to Origen.

²⁸⁶ Cf. Hieronymus, *Epistulae*, ep. 33, op. cit., p. 255; Hieronymus, *De viris Illustribus*, [in:] *Hieronymus liber De viris illustribus. Gennadius liber De viris inlustribus. Der sogenannte Sophronius*, 100, ed. E.C. Richardson, Hinrichs, Leipzig 1896, p. 47: "Hilarius, urbis pictauiorum aquitanicae episcopus, [...] scripsit, [...] tractatus in Iob, quos de graeco Origenis ad sensum transtulit".

²⁸⁷ On mediaeval catenae on Job see: U. Hagedorn, *Die älteren griechischen Katenen zum Buch Hiob: Bd I: Einleitung, Prologe und Epiloge, Fragmente zu Hiob 1,1 - 8,22*, De Gruyter, Berlin 2014, pp. 3-137.

²⁸⁸ Cf. Joannes Chrysostomus, *Commentaire sur Job I*, eds. H. Sorlin and L. Neyrand, 1988, SC 346. On the transition via mediaeval catenae see *ibid.*, pp. 14-16.

²⁸⁹ On Philipus see: M. Józwiak, *Komentarz do historii Hioba Filipa Prezbitera a epitoma tego dzieła. Przyczynek do badań porównawczych nad tymi tekstami*, "Vox Patrum", 2014, vol. 62, pp. 185-195. M. Józwiak, *Komentarz do historii Hioba" Filipa Prezbitera*, TUM, Wrocław 2015.

²⁹⁰ On the history of the text see: M.P. Ciccarese, *Una esegesi 'double face'. Introduzione all'Expositio in Iob de presbitero Filippo*, "Annali di storia dell'esegesi", 1992, vol. 9, no. 2, pp. 483-492.

²⁹¹ Joannes Chrysostomus, *Commentary on saint John, the apostle and evangelist*, trans. T.A. Goggin, FOTC, Catholic University of America Press, New York 1957. The Greek text in: PG 59, col. 23-482.

excerpts from his works in *Catena Aurea*. The commentaries of Theophylact were translated in the mid-15th century by Christopher Porsena, the librarian of Sixtus IV. Porsena was guilty of deliberately attributing this work to Athanasius, which led to a series of misattributed publications²⁹². The third Greek father that Titelmans frequently cited was Cyril of Alexandria, the Patriarch famous for his role at the Council of Ephesus²⁹³. His *Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint John* was written before the Council and, having been published in Latin in 1508 and again in 1524, was easily accessible to Titelmans²⁹⁴. Finally, Titelmans frequently used Augustine's *In Iohannis euangelium tractatus*, a series of homilies written by the bishop of Hippo around 416²⁹⁵. It was known widely in the Middle Ages, especially through the means of Aquinas' *Catena Aurea*, in which it was cited abundantly.

Regrettably, in most commentaries of Titelmans, it is very difficult to identify the sources that he used. He made no secret of the fact that he based his writings on existing works. On the contrary, he was proud of it:

Non quasi aspernantes aut paruifacientes aliorum vetera, noua nostra superbi cudimus: vestigia potius adoramus illorum, qui priores laborauerunt in agro, quorum nos indigni simus calciamenta vel portare vel soluere.

Illi laborauerunt ac sudauerunt priores in opere Domini, et nos in eorum labores ingredimur: pondus dici et estus in se ferentes, facilem nobis et suauem suis reddidere sudoribus laborem residuum.

Aurum et argentum, coccum, byssum, et purpuram, omnemque preciosum lapidem, apertis thesauris suis principes viri illi obtulerunt in aedificationem et ornatum tabernaculi: ego plebeius et semipaganus quod habeo, mente deuota offero, pilos caprarum exigui precii.

Illi de eo quo abundabant, multa et magna in dominicum gazophilacium misere munera: ego pauper et inops, egenus et mendicus, qui ad portas diuitum stipem mendico exiguum aera minuta duo offero libenter, confero gaudenter, victum meum omnem et vniuersam substantiam²⁹⁶.

²⁹² Cf. D. Erasmus, "Responso ad Collationes cuiusdam iuuenis gerontodidascali", op. cit., pp. 203–204.

²⁹³ On Cyril see: N. Russell, *Cyril of Alexandria*, Routledge, London 2000.

²⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 96. The 1508 edition, translated by George Trapezountios, lacked books 5-8. In the edition of 1524 Jodocus Clitoveus added excerpts from Chrysostom and Augustine to fill this gap. An English translation of Cyril's work see: Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on John*, ed. J.C. Elowsky, trans. D.R. Maxwell, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove 2013.

²⁹⁵ Augustinus Hipponensis, *In Iohannis euangelium tractatus*, ed. R. Willems, 1954, CCSL 36. English translation see: A. Augustinus, *St. Augustine Tractates on the Gospel of John 1-10*, trans. J.W. Rettig, Catholic University of America Press, Washington 1988. A. Augustinus, *St. Augustine Tractates on the Gospel of John 11-27*, trans. J.W. Rettig, Catholic University of America Press, Washington 1988. A. Augustinus, *St. Augustine Tractates on the Gospel of John 112-124; Tractates on the First Epistle of John*, trans. J.W. Rettig, Catholic University of America Press, Washington 1995. A. Augustinus, *St. Augustine Tractates on the Gospel of John 28-54*, trans. J.W. Rettig, Catholic University of America Press, Washington 1993. A. Augustinus, *St. Augustine tractates on the Gospel of John 55-111*, trans. J.W. Rettig, Catholic University of America Press, Washington 1994.

²⁹⁶ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio paraphrastica in Ioannem...*, op. cit., f. a8r.

Obviously, one should not take all of Titelmans' rhetorical phrases as literally true, but this passage demonstrates that Titelmans shared the ancient and mediaeval mentality, which considered antiquity as authoritative and was suspect of novelty. The fact that he was proud to base his work on that of his predecessors did not, however, mean that he was always meticulous to name them. He made this clear in the dedicatory letter to Emperor Charles V preceding his commentary on Psalms:

Mouit haec multiplex vtilitas patrum qui nostra praecesserunt saecula non paucos, tam Graecos quam Latinos, vt in Psalmos ederent iustos commentaries: nonnulli in aliquot tantum selectiores, alii in vniuersos; quorum tantum est numerus, vt propter multitudinem vix liceat, propter fastidium non sit operae precium, eos nominatim recensere. Nihilominud et mihi visum fuit omnium nouissimo, post praecedentium patrum labores in hoc ipsum opus ingredi, et Ruth Moabitidis exemplo, metentium in agro isto dominico gressus insequendo, spicas quae forte metentium subterfugissent manus, aut etiam de industria ex patrisfamilias voluntate fuissent relictas, colligere, vbicunque clementis in me patrisfamilias comperissem gratiam²⁹⁷.

Titelmans acknowledged the use of numerous sources, yet he did not name them. In fact, this was typical of his works, where references to ancient and mediaeval authorities were introduced with expressions such as *aliqui*, *antiqui doctores*, *catholici doctores*, *aliqui recentiores* and the like. While in some instances, we identified authors whom Titelmans could have had in mind, and indicated them in discussion of given passages in the following chapters, a full list of authorities he cited would require another work. In what follows we concentrate primarily on the authors that he named in his works.

2.3.1 Ancient sources

Antiquity was in itself authoritative. In his commentaries, Titelmans named several ancient authors: pagan, Jewish and Christian.

The most frequently cited pagan author was Virgil. This is hardly surprising, given the high respect he enjoyed in Christian Middle Ages²⁹⁸. For Titelmans he was an example of the highest human eloquence. In a comment on Ps. 11(12):7, he presented Virgil as the most sublime of human authors, yet incomparable with the Word of God²⁹⁹. Similarly commenting on Job 1:14, Titelmans praised elegant brevity of biblical expression comparing it to *Aeneid*³⁰⁰. Virgil's works provided also examples illustrating some biblical expressions. In a comment on Job 2:9, Titelmans gave the

²⁹⁷ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 6v.

²⁹⁸ Cf. H. de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis...*, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 38–39.

²⁹⁹ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 28v.

³⁰⁰ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Lutetiae)...*, op. cit., f. b6v.

Aeneid as an example of vengeance³⁰¹, on Job 16:20, an example of earth being a witness of crimes³⁰², while on Job 1:3 he cited *Georgics* to demonstrate the value of rural life³⁰³. Commenting Song 2:11 he cited a passage from *Eclogae* to describe the beauty of spring³⁰⁴, and again (Song 6:10) to demonstrate some qualities of pomegranate³⁰⁵. In a comment on John 6:44, a citation from Virgil – “Trahit sua quemque voluptas” – was an argument for free will, a truth negated by recent heretics³⁰⁶. Virgil was also used to settle grammatical matters, for instance in Matt. 22:10 and in Ps. 50(51):16³⁰⁷.

Virgil was not the only ancient poet cited by Titelmans. He also quoted Ovid’s *Remedia amoris* commenting on Song 2:15 and Eccles. 5:3³⁰⁸. Both times a citation was an aphorism used to support biblical arguments. In a similar way, he used citations from Juvenal and Terentius in his commentary on Ecclesiastes. In Eccles. 5:9, which speaks of a greedy man, Titelmans added proverbial wisdom from Satires: “Crescit amor nummi, quantum ipsa pecunia crevit”³⁰⁹. In Eccles. 1:10 he cited Terentius’s *Eunuchus*: “Nihil est dictum quod non dictum sit prius” to support Kohelet’s claim: “nihil novi sub soli”³¹⁰. Terentius is also cited in a comment on Job 19:4³¹¹. These citations show that Titelmans had some knowledge of classical ancient poetry and occasionally used it.

Apart from poets, he also cited some ancient philosophers, although less frequently. The most frequently invoked was Aristotle, the Philosopher of the scholastics. In Eccles. 1:10 Titelmans added his opinion to that of Terentius, asserting that “Necessarium esse vt infinities

³⁰¹ Ibid. f. d2v; cf. Virgil, *Aeneid*, 2.670, ed. G.P. Goold, trans. H. Rushton Fairchough, 1916, LCL 63, p. 360.

³⁰² F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Lutetiae)*..., op. cit., f. n6r. Cf. Virgil, *Aeneid*, 3.49ff, op. cit., p. 374.

³⁰³ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Lutetiae)*..., op. cit., f. a7v. Titelmans cited Virgil, *Georgics*, 2.458, ed. G.P. Goold, trans. H. Rushton Fairchough, 1916, LCL 63, p. 168: “O fortunatos nimium sua si bona norint, agricolas”.

³⁰⁴ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum*..., op. cit., f. 53v. Virgil, *Eclogae*, 3.56, ed. G.P. Goold, trans. H. Rushton Fairchough, 1916, LCL 63, p. 40: “nunc frondent silvae, nunc formosissimus annus”.

³⁰⁵ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum*..., op. cit., f. 138r. Virgil, *Eclogae*, 1.80, op. cit. p. 30: “Sunt nobis mitia poma”.

³⁰⁶ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio paraphrastica in Ioannem*..., op. cit., f. h8r. Virgil, *Eclogae*, 2.65, op. cit. p. 34. The heretic was clearly Luther. On the debate regarding free will see: R. Torzini, *I labirinti del libero arbitrio: la discussione tra Erasmo e Lutero*, Olschki, Firenze 2000. G.O. Forde and S.D. Paulson, *The Captivation of the Will: Luther vs. Erasmus on Freedom and Bondage*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 2005. D. Erasmus Roterodamus and M. Luther, *The battle over free will*, ed. C.H. Miller, Hackett, Indianapolis 2012. G.G. Kroeker, *Erasmus and Luther: Free Will and Tradition*, [in:] *A Companion to Erasmus*, ed. E. MacPhail, Brill, Leiden 2023, pp. 90–102.

³⁰⁷ F. Titelmans, *Paraphrastica elucidatio in Matthaem*..., op. cit., f. 223r. F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos*..., op. cit., f. 132r.

³⁰⁸ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum*..., op. cit., f. 59v: “Principiis obsta; sero medicina paratur”. Ovid, *Remedia amoris*, 91, trans. J.H. Mozley, 1929, LCL 232, p. 184. F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Ecclesiasten Salomonis*..., op. cit., f. p8v: “Qui non est hodie, cras minus aptus erit”. Ovid, *Remedia amoris*, 94, op. cit., p. 184.

³⁰⁹ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Ecclesiasten Salomonis*..., op. cit., f. q8r. Juvenal, *Satires*, 14.139, ed. S. Morton Braund, 2004, LCL 91, p. 468.

³¹⁰ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Ecclesiasten Salomonis*..., op. cit., f. f6v. Cf. Terence, *The Eunuch*, Prologus, 41, ed. J. Barsby, 2001, LCL 22, p. 318: “nullum sit iam dictum quod non dictum sit prius”.

³¹¹ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Lutetiae)*..., op. cit., f. p1v: “Mihi peccauit, si quid peccauit”. Terence, *Adelphoe*, 1.5.115-116, ed. J. Barsby, 2001, LCL 23, p. 262: “si quid peccat, Demea, mihi peccat.”

eadem recurrent opiniones, mundi aeternitate supposita”³¹². In an annotation on Job 2:3, he used Aristotle’s definition of “frustra”³¹³, while on Ps. 72(73):5 he invoked the Philosopher’s authority to show that the practice of virtues was difficult in itself³¹⁴. In a comment on Song 6:11, he teamed up Aristotle with “Dicta Catonis” and Boethius to argue that strong emotions cloud the mind³¹⁵. Plato on the other hand was cited less frequently. In Job 15:19 Titelmans alluded very clearly to Plato’s Republic: “consonat huic obeservationi illa celeberrimi Philosophi sententia, beatas tum demum fore respublicas, si in eis aut philosophi regnent, aut reges philosophentur”³¹⁶. He also invoked Plato in the discussion of style in his polemic with Erasmus³¹⁷. Commenting on Job 1:21, he cited Seneca and Boethius, to support Job’s claim that we die naked, just as we were born³¹⁸. Moreover, he used Cicero as an example of paradoxical thinking³¹⁹.

Ancient pagan authors were used by Titelmans also as authorities regarding the knowledge of the world. Here the place of pride was occupied by Pliny the Elder and his *Historia Naturalis*. In an annotation on John 12:3 he invoked Pliny’s authority to defend the use of *nardum* in neutrum³²⁰. In the commentary on the Song of Solomon, Pliny is referenced several times. For instance, in a note on 1:2 and again on 1:11, Pliny is invoked as an authority on the ancient art of

³¹² F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Ecclesiasten Salomonis...*, op. cit., f. f6r. Aristotel, *Meteorologica*, 1.3, ed. H.D.P. Lee, 1952, LCL 397, p. 12 (Bekker 339b).

³¹³ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Lutetiae)...*, op. cit., f. c7v. Aristotle, *Physics*, 2.6, trans. P.H. Wicksteed and F.M. Cornford, 1929, LCL 228, p. 160 (Bekker 197b): “frustra est quod est ad finem quem non consequitur”. Titelmans probably cited after: Thomas Aquinas *Quaestiones disputatae de malo*, 5.1, Ed. Leonina 23, p. 129.

³¹⁴ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 182r.

³¹⁵ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum...*, op. cit., f. 139r. *Dicta Catonis*, 2.4, trans. J. Wight Duff and A. M. Duff, 1935, LCL 434, p. 604: “impeditd ira animum, ne possis cernere verum”. Boethius, *Philosophiae consolatio*, 1.7, ed. L. Bieler, 1984, CCSL 94, pp. 16-17: “Gaudia pelle, Pelle timorem Spemque fugato”. On the bases of information provided by Titelmans it was impossible to assess which citation from Aristotle he had in mind.

³¹⁶ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Lutetiae)...*, op. cit., f. m6v.

³¹⁷ F. Titelmans, „Prologus apologeticus”, op. cit., f. d4v.

³¹⁸ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Lutetiae)...*, op. cit., ff. c2r-v. Seneca the Younger, *Epistulae*, ep. 8.9-10, trans. R.M. Gummere, 1917, LCL 75, p. 42: “Alienum est omne, quicquid optando evenit [...] Non est tuum, fortuna quod fecit tuum. [...] Dari bonum quod potuit, auferri potest”. Boethius, *Philosophiae consolatio*, 2.2.2-7, op. cit., p. 19: “Quid tu homo ream me cotidianis agis querelis? Quam tibi fecimus iniuriam? Quae tua tibidetraximus bona? Quovis iudice de opum dignitatumque mecum possessione contende. Et si cuiusquam mortalium proprium quid horum esse monstraveris, ego iam tua fuisse quae repetis, sponte concedam. Cum te matris utero natura produxit, nudum rebus omnibus inopemque suscepi, meis opibus fovi et quod te nunc inpatientem nostri facit, favore prona indulgentius educavi, omnium quae mei iuris sunt affluentia et splendore circumdedi. Nunc mihi retrahere manum libet. Habes gratiam velut usus alienis, non habes ius querelae tamquam prorsus tua perdideris. Quid igitur ingemiscis? Nulla tibi a nobis est allata violentia. Opes honores ceteraque talium mei sunt iuris. Dominam famulae cognoscunt; mecum veniunt, me abeunte discedunt. Audacter adfirmem, si tua forent quae amissa conquereris nullo modo perdidisses”.

³¹⁹ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Ecclesiasten Salomonis...*, op. cit., f. d6r. Cf. Cicero, *Tusculanarum disputationum*, 4.54, trans. J.E. King, 1945, LCL 141, p. 386.

³²⁰ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio paraphrastica in Ioannem...*, op. cit., f. r4r. Cf. Pliny the Elder, *Historia naturalis*, 21.16, trans. W.H.S. Jones, 1969, LCL 392, vol. 6, p. 183.

perfume making³²¹, on 5:11 an authority on aromatic trees³²², while in 7:13 on mandrake³²³. In Job 1:15 Pliny is cited as a source on Arabic nations, alongside Strabo, an ancient geographer³²⁴. The latter is also invoked in commentaries on Ps. 77(78):12 and Ps. 136(137):1 as an authority on the geography of Egypt and Mesopotamia³²⁵. Joseph Flavius is also cited as an expert on the Palestine's geography³²⁶. Besides geography, ancients were also a source of knowledge about history. Commenting on Job 3:22, Titelmans cited Herodotus to provide an example of riches buried in a grave, alongside another example from Jerome and a contemporary discovery of the tomb of Julia Augusta in Rome³²⁷. In the commentary on Ecclesiastes, he cited a story of King Cyrus, who was allegedly brought up as a pauper; this story was also derived from the Father of Historians³²⁸.

Besides pagan authors Titelmans cited Philo of Alexandria, a Jewish philosopher. Philo testified to the greatness of the Alexandrian school of thought (Ps. 67(68):32), while in a comment on Job 2:9, Titelmans cited his conviction that Job's wife was Jacob's daughter³²⁹.

Unsurprisingly, Titelmans frequently cited different Church Fathers. The most frequently cited one was Jerome, whom Titelmans believed to be the authority behind the Vulgate. Titelmans repeatedly cited Jerome's translations of sapiential books from the Hebrew as well as his grammatical, cultural, and geographical observations³³⁰. He held Jerome in the highest esteem, as shall be demonstrated in Chapter Five, in the context of the debates about biblical translation. Titelmans also frequently invoked other great exegetes of the ancient Church: Origen,

³²¹ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum...*, op. cit., ff. 6v. 30v. Pliny the Elder, *Historia naturalis*, 12.26, trans. H. Rackham, 1968, LCL 370, vol. 4, p. 30: "De folio nardi plura dici par est ut principali in unguentis. frutex est gravi et crassa radice sed brevi ac nigra fragilique, quamvis pingui, situm redolente, ut cypiros, aspero sapore, folio parvo densoque. Cacumina in aristas se spargunt, ideo gemina dote nardi spicas ac folia celebrant".

³²² F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum...*, op. cit. f. 118v. Pliny the Elder, *Historia naturalis*, 12.62, op. cit., vol. 4, p. 78.

³²³ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum...*, op. cit., 159v and 162v. Pliny the Elder, *Historia naturalis*, 25.94, trans. W.H.S. Jones, 1980, LCL 393, vol. 7, p. 240.

³²⁴ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Lutetiae)...*, op. cit., ff. b6v-b7r. Pliny the Elder, *Historia naturalis*, 6.32, trans. H. Rackham, 1942, LCL 352, vol. 2, pp. 444-446. Strabo, *Geographicon*, 16.4.19, trans. H.L. Jones, 1930, LCL 241, vol. 7, pp. 347-349.

³²⁵ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 200r. Strabo, *Geographicon*, 17.20, trans. by. H.L. Jones, 1932, LCL 267, vol. 8, pp. 196-198. Also Ptolemy was mentioned there. F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 346r. Strabo, *Geographicon...*, 16.21, op. cit., vol. 8, p. 228.

³²⁶ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum...*, op. cit., f. 93v.

³²⁷ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Lutetiae)...*, op. cit., f. e8r. Hieronymus, *In Hieremiam prophetam libri VI*, lib. 2, ed. S. Reiter, 1960, CCSL 74, p. 85. Herodotus, *Istoriai*, 1.187, trans. A.D. Godley, 1926, LCL 117, p. 234.

³²⁸ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Ecclesiasten Salomonis...*, op. cit., f. n8v and p8v. Herodotus, *Istoriai*, 1.108ff, op. cit., pp. 138ff.

³²⁹ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Lutetiae)...*, op. cit., f. d2v. F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 165r.

³³⁰ On Jerome's life see: S. Rebenich, *Jerome*, Routledge, London 2002. On his exegesis, see: E. Birnbaum and L. Schwienhorst-Schönberger, eds., *Hieronymus als Exeget und Theologe: interdisziplinäre Zugänge zum Kohelethkommentar des Hieronymus*, Peeters, Leuven 2014. A. Fürst, *Hieronymus: Askese und Wissenschaft in der Spätantike*, Herder, Freiburg 2016, pp. 83-144. É. Ayroulet and A. Canellis, eds., *L'exégèse de saint Jérôme*, Publications de l'Université de Saint-Étienne, Saint-Étienne 2018. On reception of Jerome in Renaissance see: E.F. Rice, *Saint Jerome in the Renaissance...*, op. cit. H.M. Pabel, *Herculean labours...*, op. cit.

Chrysostom, Augustine, Cyril of Alexandria, and Gregory the Great. This has already been indicated above and shall become even more evident by specific examples in the following chapters. Less frequently he invoked the authority of Ambrose³³¹, Cassianus³³², Hilary of Poitiers, and Basil the Great³³³. He also cited Boethius several times, as has already been indicated.

Apart from well-known Fathers, Titelmans cited also some lesser-known ancient Christian authors. In his commentary on Ecclesiastes, the Franciscan frequently cited Salonijs of Geneva's commentary on this book³³⁴. This commentary, known in the Middle Ages mostly through Honorius Augustodunensis, was printed for the first time in Hagenau in 1532, thus could have been available to Titelmans³³⁵. In his commentary on Job, he cited the *Ethnica* of Stephanus of Byzantium, a 6th-century Greek grammarian³³⁶. This geographical encyclopaedia of ancient Greece was printed in Venice in 1502 by Aldus Manutius³³⁷.

2.3.2 Mediaeval sources

Mediaeval authors were significantly less cited by Titelmans, at least explicitly. As shall be demonstrated in the following chapter, Titelmans seemed to have used extensively a mediaeval catenae of citations, for instance Thomas Aquinas' *Catena Aurea*, without, however, acknowledging it openly. He also certainly used the *Glossa ordinaria*, as will be demonstrated in the next chapter.

Explicit references to mediaeval theologians are rarer than references to antique Fathers. For instance, Nicholas Lyra, a fellow Franciscan and the greatest exegete of the late Middle Ages, is rarely mentioned by name³³⁸. He is referred to a couple of times in the commentary on Job, always in a catena of ancient and mediaeval authorities, alongside Aquinas and Bonaventure³³⁹. The famous general of the Franciscan Order is barely more cited, usually also alongside other

³³¹ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Lutetiae)*..., op. cit., f. h8r-v. F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum*..., op. cit., f. 55v. Ambrosius Mediolanensis, *Expositio euangelii secundum Lucam*, 8.88, ed. M. Adriaen, 1957, CCSL 14, p. 331.

³³² F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Lutetiae)*..., op. cit., f. c8v. Iohannes Cassianus, *Collationes*, 7.12, PL 49, col. 681-682.

³³³ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio paraphrastica in Ioannem*..., op. cit., f. b2v. Hilarius Pictaviensis, *De trinitate*, 2.4, ed. P. Smulders, 1979, CCSL 62, pp. 39-40. Basil was most likely cited after Thomas Aquinas, *Catena aurea in quatuor evangelia*, In Iohannem 1,1, ed. A. Guarienti, Marietti, Torino 1953, p. 326.

³³⁴ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Ecclesiasten Salomonis*..., op. cit., ff. g7r, h5r, o5v, q4r, t4r.

³³⁵ Cf. W. Ramsay, *Salonius*, [in:] *A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology*, ed. W. Smith, J. Murray, London 1890, vol. 3, p. 700. On Honorius see: V.I.J. Flint, *Honorius Augustodunensis of Regensburg*, Variorum, Aldershot 1995.

³³⁶ On Stephanus and his work see: M. Billerbeck and A. Neumann-Hartmann, *Stephanos von Byzanz: Grammatiker und Lexikograph*, De Gruyter, Berlin 2021.

³³⁷ Stephanus Byzantinus, *Peri poleōn: De uribus*, Aldus Romanus, Venetiis 1502. Cf. A. Meineke, ed., *Stephani Byzantii Ethnicorum quae supersunt*, G. Reimeri, Berlin 1849, (reprinted in 2021 by De Gruyter).

³³⁸ On Lyra's exegesis see: P.D. Krey and L. Smith, *Nicholas of Lyra*..., op. cit. D.C. Klepper, *The Insight of Unbelievers*..., op. cit.

³³⁹ See for instance F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Lutetiae)*..., op. cit., f. p4r.

authors³⁴⁰. Somewhat ironically, Titelmans cited more frequently the Angelic Doctor than his fellow Franciscans. For example, several times he cited liturgical texts for the feast of Corpus Domini: in comment to Ps. 4:8, to Ps. 109(110):4 and to Ps. 126(127):3³⁴¹.

Although Franciscan exegetes do not figure prominently in Titelmans' commentaries, he showed himself a true Minorite by frequently referring to the Order's Founder³⁴². At the beginning of his commentary on Ecclesiastes, he put a prayer composed by Saint Francis: *Laudes Dei pro sua magnificentia et gloria, quas uir dei Franciscus ex sacris literis congestas, in feruore spiritus ipsi saepius per diem atque per noctem recitare solebat, easdemque fratres suos frequentare docebat*³⁴³. Another reference to Saint Francis' writings is found in the commentary on Ps. 91(90):6. There Titelmans used *Oratio super Pater Noster* by Francis, which spoke of preservation from quadruple temptation: "occultam vel manifestam, subitem ver importunam"³⁴⁴. It is interesting that he characterised Francis as a man little experienced in worldly knowledge, but full of divine. This corresponded with the ideals that he defended in the polemic against Erasmus³⁴⁵. Because of his humility Francis was also very fecund, as Titelmans observed in a comment on Song 4:2:

illi qui longe minori vel nulla videbantur gratia pollere inter homines, coram Dei iudicio videbuntur plurimos habere filios, praeter suam et aliorum existimationem. In quem sensum, humilis ille seruus Dei beatus Franciscus, versiculum illum ex cantico Annae 'Donec sterilis peperit plurimos', et quae multos habebat filios infirmata est secundum mysticam interpretationem coram fratribus, ad terrorem superbientium et consolationem humilium, solet enarrare: 'Sterilis, inquit, est frater pauperculus, qui generandi in Ecclesia filios officium non habuit. Hic pariet in iudicio plurimos: quia quos nunc priuatis orationibus conuertit ad Christum, suae gloriae tunc iudex asscribet. Quae multos habet filios infirmabitur: quia praedicator vanus et loquax, qui multis nunc quasi sua virtute genitis gaudet, cognoscat tunc se nil proprii habere in eis'³⁴⁶.

³⁴⁰ Ibid., f. c3r. For an overview of Bonaventure's exegesis see: J.G. Bougerol, *Bonaventure as Exegete*, [in:] *A Companion to Bonaventure*, eds. J. Goff, J.M. Hammond, and J.W. Hellman, Brill, Leiden 2014, pp. 167–187.

³⁴¹ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., ff. 9r; 297v; 334r.

³⁴² On Titelmans' use of Franciscan spiritual tradition see: T.K. Mantyk, *Franciscan Elements in "Prologus apologeticus" of Franciscus Titelmans*, "Collectanea Franciscana", 2021, vol. 91, no. 1-2, pp. 119-139.

³⁴³ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Ecclesiasten Salomonis...*, op. cit., f. 2r Cf. C. Paolazzi, *Francisci Assisiensis scripta...*, op. cit., pp. 60–65.

³⁴⁴ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 242r. Cf. C. Paolazzi, *Francisci Assisiensis scripta...*, op. cit., p. 58.

³⁴⁵ Vide infra 5.1.3.5.

³⁴⁶ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Cantorum...*, op. cit., f. 86v.

The words of Saint Francis cited by Titelmans were reported by Bonaventure's *Legenda Maior*, the official biography of the Saint from Assisi³⁴⁷. Titelmans also alluded to Francis' life and words in other places in his commentaries³⁴⁸.

Among early mediaeval authors, Titelmans mentioned several times the Venerable Bede. In the commentary on John 11:16, the Franciscan cited the Englishman's favourable opinion on Thomas the Apostle and a little later his judgment on Mary, Lazarus' sister, both derived likely from *Catena Aurea*³⁴⁹. *Catena* was probably also the source of the opinion of Alcuin, whom Titelmans quoted in the same place³⁵⁰. In the commentary on John, he also cited Rupert of Deutz, a Benedictine Abbot, who claimed that heavens were opened by the passion of Christ³⁵¹. In commentary on Ps. 8:4 he cited John of Peckham and Ludolphus the Carthusian³⁵². He also cited Bernard of Clairvaux' sermons³⁵³, and the Sentences of Peter Lombard³⁵⁴. Most of the times, however, when Titelmans used mediaeval authors, he did so without any acknowledgment or referred to them in a general way, as *alcuni* or *recentiores*, often distancing himself from their opinions³⁵⁵.

Another group of mediaeval authorities were Jewish and Arab authors. Titelmans mentioned by name only one Arab writer, Alfraganus, a famous astronomer, whom he cited as an authority on celestial bodies³⁵⁶. Jewish writers were cited more often as authorities on the Old Testament. In a comment on Song 6:11 Titelmans cited an opinion of Rashi, whom he called Rabbi Salomon,

³⁴⁷ Bonaventura de Balneoregio, *Legenda maior s. Francisci*, 8.2.3-5, [in:] *Fontes Franciscani*, eds. E. Menestò and S. Brufani, Edizioni Porziuncola, Assisi 1995, p. 843

³⁴⁸ See for instance: F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 2r; 239v: "Deus meus et mea omnia"; 358r.

³⁴⁹ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio paraphrastica in Ioannem...*, op. cit., f. q1r. Cf. Beda, cited in Thomas Aquinas, *Catena aurea in quatuor evangelia*, in *Iohannem* 11.3, op. cit., p. 484. See also F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio paraphrastica in Ioannem...*, op. cit., f. m4r.

³⁵⁰ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio paraphrastica in Ioannem...*, op. cit., f. q3r. Thomas Aquinas, *Catena aurea in quatuor evangelia*, in *Iohannem* 11,7, op. cit., p. 487.

³⁵¹ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio paraphrastica in Ioannem...*, op. cit., f. b6r. Cf. Rupertus Tuitiensis, *Commentaria in euangelium sancti Iohannis*, lib. 2, ed. R. Haacke, 1969, CCCM 9, p. 95. On Rupert see: J.H. Van Engen, *Rupert of Deutz*, University of California press, Berkeley 1983.

³⁵² F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 17r-v. Titelmans referred to Peckham's liturgical texts for the feast on the Trinity that he edited. For John Peckham see: G.J. Etzkorn, "John Peckham, O.F.M.: A Career of Controversy", op. cit., pp. 71-82. Reference to Ludolphus concerns: Ludolfus Carthusiensis, *In Psalterium expositio*, Berthold Rembolt, Parrhisiis 1514, f. XIIIr. Ludolphus was known especially for his *Vita Christi*, cf. C.A. Conway, *The Vita Christi of Ludolph of Saxony and late medieval devotion centred on the incarnation: a descriptive analysis*, Universitat Salzburg. Institut für Englische Sprache und Literatur, Salzburg 1976.

³⁵³ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 219r. Cf. Bernardus Claraevallensis, *Sermones in adnuntiatione dominica*, sermo 1.5, [in:] *Sancti Bernardi Opera*, eds. H. Rochais and J. Leclercq, Ed. Cistercienses, Romae 1968, vol. 5, p. 16.

³⁵⁴ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 296v. Cf. Petrus Lombardus, *Sententiarum libri quatuor*, 3.2.1.1, PL 192, col. 759.

³⁵⁵ See for instance: F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio paraphrastica in Ioannem...*, op. cit., f. m6r.

³⁵⁶ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 344v. On Alfraganus, know also as Al-Farghani, see: B. Abdulkhalimov, *Aḥmad Al-Farghānī And His 'Compendium Of Astronomy'*, "Journal of Islamic studies", 1999, vol. 10, no. 2, pp. 142-158. On the Latin translations of his work see: F.J. Carmody, *Arabic Astronomical and Astrological Sciences in Latin Translation*, University of California Press, Berkeley 1955, pp. 113-116.

regarding the meaning of the name Aminadab³⁵⁷. He also cited Rabbi Moses, that is Nahmanides³⁵⁸. In a note on Ps. 84(85):12 Titelmans claimed that even the Jewish rabbis read this verse in a messianic sense³⁵⁹. Commenting Job 2:9 he cited Nahmanides' opinion but did not concord with it, since it did not fit the context³⁶⁰. Titelmans also used unspecified Jewish sources when explicating the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew³⁶¹.

2.3.3. Contemporary sources

Finally, we shall give a brief look at some contemporary or near-contemporary authorities that Titelmans cited. First of all, it must be noted that many ancient sources would not have been available to Titelmans, if it was not for the enormous work of many humanists publishing and translating ancient texts. Titelmans' relationship with humanism was not a straightforward one, as we shall explore in more depth in Chapter Five, but he did not hesitate to use results of humanists works, even if he did not like their authors. It has already been mentioned above that he used Oecolampadius' translation of Gregory Thaumaturgos commentary on Ecclesiastes, even though the interpreter was one of the leaders of Swiss reformation. Moreover, he frequently used works of Erasmus, although he did not admit that openly. For instance, many of his annotations on the Gospels of Matthew and John make use of Erasmus's *Novum Testamentum*, although he never acknowledged his debt³⁶². He was however more open about his use of authors whose catholicity was not under doubt.

Among the most cited authors was Felix Pratensis, a Jewish convert, whose translation of the Psalms from Hebrew Titelmans cited throughout his commentary on the Psalter³⁶³. Felix's translation of the Psalms was published in 1515, three years before the author's conversion to Christianity, yet from the perspective of Titelmans, it must have seemed Catholic enough³⁶⁴. Another Jewish convert cited by the Franciscan was Paul of Burgos, whose additions to Lyra's

³⁵⁷ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum...*, op. cit., 139v. On Rashi and his exegesis see: A. Grossman, *Rashi: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization*, The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, Oxford 2012. M.Z. Cohen, *Rashi, Biblical Interpretation, and Latin Learning in Medieval Europe: a New Perspective on an Exegetical Revolution*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2021.

³⁵⁸ On Nahmanides see: N. David, *The Theology of Nahmanides Systematically Presented*, Brown Judaic Studies, Providence 2020. M. Halbertal, *Nahmanides: Law and Mysticism*, Yale University Press, New Haven 2021.

³⁵⁹ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 22r.

³⁶⁰ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Lutetiae)...*, op. cit., f. d3r.

³⁶¹ F. Titelmans, *Paraphrastica elucidatio in Matthaeum...*, op. cit., f. 6v.

³⁶² Vide infra 3.3.

³⁶³ On Felix see: P. Kahle, *Felix Pratensis — à Prato, Felix. Der Herausgeber der Ersten Rabbinerbibel, Venedig 1516/7*, "Die Welt des Orients", 1947, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 32–36. P.F. Grendler, *Italian Biblical Humanism and the Papacy 1515-1535*, [in:] *Biblical Humanism and Scholasticism in the Age of Erasmus*, ed. E. Rummel, Brill, Leiden 2008, pp. 228–233. M. Engammare, *Humanism, Hebraism and Scriptural Hermeneutics*, [in:] *A Companion to Peter Martyr Vermigli*, eds. T. Kirby, E. Campi, and F.A. James III, Brill, Leiden 2009, pp. 165–167.

³⁶⁴ *Psalterium ex hebreo diligentissime ad verbum fere tralatatum*, trans. Felix Pratensis, Petrus Lichtenstein Coloniensis, Venetiis 1515.

Postilla were published several times in the second half of the 15th century³⁶⁵. He also cited a new Latin translation of the Bible executed by a Dominican, Santes Pagninus, published in 1527, which followed very literally the Hebrew original³⁶⁶. In addition, Titelmans made an extensive use of Agostino Giustiniani's works, although he never mentioned his name. In his commentary on the Psalms, he used Giustiniani's translation of Aramaic targums, which they both called *Paraphrasis Chaldaea*³⁶⁷. Besides, as shall be demonstrated in the next chapter, he consulted Giustiniani's translation of the book of Job³⁶⁸. Moreover, he cited more than once Niccolo Perotti, the archbishop of Siponto and a famous grammarian³⁶⁹. Titelmans invoked his *Cornu Copiae* in *Annotationes on Psalmos* and in the commentary on Job³⁷⁰. The Franciscan also used the Hebrew expertise of Johannes Reuchlin (openly so) and Sebastian Münster (tacitly)³⁷¹. It is a little surprising that he mentioned only once his own master, Amandus of Zierksee³⁷². Amandus wrote commentaries on Job and Ecclesiastes, and it is likely that those were used by his student in

³⁶⁵ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Lutetiae)*..., op. cit., f. e4v. Paul of Burgos was best known for his *Additiones ad Postillam* of Nicholas of Lyra (printed 22 times prior to 1500, together with Lyra's *Postilla*, to which it became a standard addition). For a complete list of early editions see: www.gesamtkatalogderwiegendrucke.de. More on Paul's life and work see: B. Netanyahu, *The Origins of the Inquisition*, Random House, New York 1995, pp. 168–206. Y. Yisraeli, *A Christianized Sephardic Critique of Rashi's Peshat in Pablo de Santa Maria's Additiones ad Postillam Nicolai de Lyra*, [in:] *Medieval Exegesis and Religious Difference: Commentary, Conflict, and Community in the Premodern Mediterranean*, ed. R. Szpiech, Fordham University Press 2015, pp. 128–141.

³⁶⁶ F. Titelmans, *Paraphrastica elucidatio in librum D. Iob*..., op. cit., f. p3r. On Pagninus and his work see: I. Backus and F.M. Higman, eds., *Santi Pagnini traduttore de la Bible*, [in:] *Théorie et pratique de l'exégèse*, Droz, Genève 1990, pp. 191–198. F.D. Reboiras, *Sante Pagnini. Isagoga ad sacras literas, eiusdem Isagoga ad mysticos sacrae Scripturae sensus (1536)*, [in:] *Handbuch der Bibelhermeneutiken: Von Origenes bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. O. Wischemeyer, De Gruyter, Berlin 2016, pp. 499–506. E. Attia, *Aux Origines Du "Thesaurus Linguae Sanctae De Sante Pagnini (Lyon, 1529)*, "Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance", 2017, vol. 79, no. 2, pp. 343–363. M. Engammare, *Sante Pagnini, traducteur ad litteram et exégète secundum allegoriam de l'écriture (1520-1536)*, [in:] *Philologie et subjectivité*, ed. D. de Courcelles, Publications de l'École nationale des chartes, Paris 2018, pp. 41–52.

³⁶⁷ *Psalterium Hebraeum, Graecum, Arabicum et Chaldaeum, cum tribus latinis interpretationibus et glossis*, trans. A. Giustiniani, Petrus Paulus Porrus, [Genuae] 1516. On Giustiniani see: P.F. Grendler, "Italian Biblical Humanism and the Papacy 1515-1535", op. cit., pp. 233–240. M. Engammare, "Humanism, Hebraism and scriptural hermeneutics", op. cit., pp. 167–169.

³⁶⁸ *Liber beati Job nuper hebraice veritati*, trans. A. Giustiniani, Egidius Gourmantus, Coloniae 1520.

³⁶⁹ On Perotti see: S. Prete, *L'umanista Niccolo Perotti*, Istituto Internazionale di Studi Piceni, Sassoferrato 1980. N. Perotto, *Studi sul Cornu copiae di Niccolò Perotti*, ed. F. Stok, Ed. ETS, Pisa 2002.

³⁷⁰ F. Titelmans, *Annotationes ex Hebraeo*..., op. cit., f. XXVIr. F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Lutetiae)*..., op. cit., f. b7r.

³⁷¹ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos*..., op. cit., f. 17r. Johannes Reuchlin was the most renowned expert on Hebrew in the early 16th century Europe, and an object of the greatest print-based controversy prior to reformations. On his biography see: F. Posset, *Johann Reuchlin (1455-1522): a Theological Biography*, De Gruyter, Berlin 2015. On the controversy see: E. Rummel, *The Case Against Johann Reuchlin: Religious and Social Controversy in Sixteenth-century Germany*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 2002. D. Ménager, "Erasmus, the Intellectuals, and the Reuchlin Affair", op. cit., pp. 39-54. D.H. Price, *Johannes Reuchlin and the Campaign to Destroy Jewish Books*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2011. D. O'Callaghan, *The Preservation of Jewish Religious Books in Sixteenth-century Germany: Johannes Reuchlin's Augenspiegel*, Brill, Leiden 2013. Sebastian Münster was a Franciscan turned protestant; he studied Hebrew under Konrad Pelikan's direction and became a professor of Hebrew in Basel. Titelmans' use of his commentary on the Song of Solomon has been demonstrated by M. Engammare, *Le Cantique des cantiques à la Renaissance: étude et bibliographie*, Droz, Genève 1993, pp. 212–213. For a biography of Münster see: K.H. Burmeister, *Sebastian Münster: Versuch eines biographischen Gesamtbildes*, Helbing und Lichtenhahn, Basel 1963.

³⁷² F. Titelmans, *Paraphrastica elucidatio in Matthaem*..., op. cit., f. 8v.

producing his own works. Given that Amandus' commentaries were lost after 1789, it is impossible to verify if and how far this hypothesis is true³⁷³.

Last but not least, Titelmans mentioned among his sources some oral and epistolary witness. He derived some information about the Middle East, which he included in his commentaries on Job and the Song of Solomon, from an unnamed traveller or travellers³⁷⁴. In his book on the Song, he also mentioned letters from America, printed at the end of *Chronica*³⁷⁵.

This very short survey of sources is by no means extensive. It does, however, indicate that Titelmans followed his own advice that a scholar should use both old and new sources. He was largely conservative in his work, following patristic lines of exegesis that he knew mostly from mediaeval catenae. At the same time, he used contemporary translations and compendia, even those composed by Protestants (for instance Sebastian Münster). His use of Erasmus, Felix Pratensis, Santes Pagninus, and Agostino Giustiniani shows that he was not opposed to new translations of the Bible as such, as long as they were not used to challenge the authority of the Vulgate and of the Church. We shall explore this issue in Chapter Five, but beforehand we shall turn to analysing Titelmans' biblical works.

³⁷³ B. de Troeyer, *Amandus van Zierikzee...*, op. cit., p. 18.

³⁷⁴ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Lutetiae)*..., op. cit., f. b1v. F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum*..., op. cit., ff. 34r; 71v.

³⁷⁵ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum*..., op. cit., 135r. F. Titelmans and A. de Zierikzee, *Chronica compendiosissima*..., op. cit., ff. 122r-127r.

Chapter III

The Literal Sense of Scripture in Titelmans' Scholarship

According to pre-modern exegetical consensus, the true meaning of Scriptures always resided somewhere between the literal and the spiritual sense, as we have demonstrated in Chapter One. In Chapter Two, it has been shown that Titelmans considered fidelity to tradition to be of great value, yet he was no alien to the humanist learning. In this and the following chapter, we shall scrutinise in detail Titelmans' exegesis, dividing it into two sections: literal and spiritual. This will enable us to re-evaluate in Chapter Five his polemical works from the perspective of his exegetical output. We shall begin with a discussion of the scope of the literal exegesis in Titelmans' writings, then peruse various aspects of philological inquiry in his work, examine his use of various other branches of knowledge, and conclude with a discussion of theological themes stemming from literal exegesis.

3.1 The scope of the literal sense in Titelmans' exegesis

As it has been emphasised in Chapter One, Christian exegetes had an ambiguous attitude towards the literal sense. They always remembered that the letter without the spirit killed. Still, this pertained above all to Jewish literal interpretation and not to the literal sense as such¹. All Fathers agreed that rejecting the historical sense, which was synonymous to the literal, would have reduced the Bible to merely a myth. The historical *vel* literal sense was a “foundation” for all exegesis, as Origen, Augustine, Gregory the Great and many other Christian exegetes claimed². Early mediaeval authors often treated literal readings only superficially, and rushed to explain the mystical sense, not because they considered the former to be of no importance, but because the letter was either easy to understand or had already been explained by others³. We can detect an increased preoccupation with the literal sense in the later Middle Ages and, as we shall see, it was partly shared by Titelmans.

The literal sense of Scripture was considered its most elementary meaning and as such applicable to all biblical passages. There were some exceptions to this, for as Origen claimed,

¹ Cf. H. de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis...*, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 50–51.

² Origenes, *In Genesim homiliae*, 2.1, PG 12, col. 163-164. Augustinus Hipponensis, *Sermo 2, par. 7*. [in:] C. Weidmann, *Et potest hoc iubere Deus? Abraham und Isaak in den Predigten des Augustinus. Mit einer Neuedition von Augustinus, Sermo 2, “Augustiniana”*, 2019, vol. 69, no. 1, p. 78. Gregorius Magnus, *Moralia in Iob*, ed. M. Adriaen, 1979, CCSL 143. p. 4.

³ Cf. H. de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis...*, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 58; 74.

some biblical passages could not be understood according to the letter⁴. The most famous example of a biblical book that could not be understood historically was the Song of Solomon. Isidore of Seville argued that it was to be taken only spiritually, and he was by no means original⁵. Virtually all Christian exegetes agreed with him. Titelmans thought likewise and suggested that the same was true of some other passages, such as the first chapters of the Book of Genesis as well as the beginning and the end of Ezekiel⁶. Yet, as we shall see further, in his explication of the Song of Solomon he also included many elements of literal exegesis, for the true spiritual sense had to be founded upon a correct understanding of words. The literal sense could not be the end of exegesis but had to be its first step, in order to arrive at the spiritual kernel. Thus, even if not all passages had a historical sense, all had to be first read according to the letter.

Even though according to Titelmans the spiritual sense was by far superior, he devoted much space to the literal meaning as well. In the preface to his commentary on Ecclesiastes, Titelmans explained why it was both useful and necessary to comment extensively on the literal sense. It was useful because the content of the book was serious and beneficial for common people if explained rightly. Necessary, because it was not easily understood without learning.

Necessitas vero, propter difficultates multas et perplexitatum inuoluta, quibus non paucis in locis obscuritatem non paruum simplicibus lectoribus liber iste ingerit, et quasi tenebras caecutientibus oculis offundit, quos quidem nodos nimium inuolutos penitus dissoluere, et implicitos nimis ad plenum explicare, non parui fuerit negotii, neque ad eam rem brevis paraphrasis sufficere posse videbatur angustia⁷.

Moreover, Titelmans continued, difficulties inherent in the Hebrew text were further aggravated by the multiplicity of translations. The text of the Septuagint was frequently different from the Hebrew original, while many Greek Fathers cited it in different variants than that of the Seventy⁸. The Latin text of Jerome oscillated, according to the Franciscan, between the Greek and Hebrew readings, occasionally paraphrasing the Hebrew meaning⁹. The matter was additionally complicated by some patristic citations that followed neither the Vulgate, nor the Septuagint. Thus, Titelmans declared that he would present all differing versions and explain how to understand the literal sense conveyed by them¹⁰.

⁴ Origenes, *Commentaria in Evangelium secundum Matthaeum*, 15.2, PG 13, col. 1255-1258. Cf. H. de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis...*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 56.

⁵ Isidorus Hispalensis, *Differentiis rerum sive Differentiae theologicae vel spirituales: (Liber differentiarum II)*, 40, ed. M.A. Andrés Sanz, 2006, CCSL 111A, p. 101: "Tertium genus est quod tantum spiritaliter accipitur, sicut de Canticis Cantorum". Cf. H. de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis...*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 57.

⁶ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Cantorum...*, op. cit., f. 4r.

⁷ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Ecclesiasten Salomonis...*, op. cit., ff. c5v-c6r.

⁸ *Ibid.*, f. c6r.

⁹ *Ibid.*, f. c7r.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, ff. c8v-d1r.

The two senses coexisted in most passages, and one did not exclude the other. The choice whether to emphasise one or the other depended not only on the passage in question but also on the intended reader. In the preface to *Ecclesiastes* Titelmans observed that he intended to comment on the entire book according to the literal sense for the benefit of unexperienced readers. He acknowledged that while there were also numerous layers of spiritual meaning to this book, however, he chose to stick to the literal in order not to disrupt the exposition of the book's principal meaning with too many digressions and speculations¹¹. Beginners should focus on Kohelet's fundamental admonition, namely, to despise the goods of this world and earthly pursuits and to concentrate on true piety and fear of God¹². An experienced reader would not be harmed by the omission of a spiritual elucidation:

iis qui vel modicum ingenii et exercitatos aliquantulum in diuinis libris habent sensus, non admodum difficile est, bene intellecto et clare apprehenso literalis sensu, originario et (vt ita dicam) fundamentario, supraedificare sensus mysticos, allegoricos et anagogicos, iuxta quod ipsorum desiderauerit spiritus¹³.

A distinction on content for novices and for experts in the Christian path was introduced already by Saint Paul in the letter to Corinthians and was quite commonplace ever since¹⁴. What is, however, significant for us in this example is that Titelmans emphasised the necessity of the literal sense as a fundament and base for constructing spiritual senses. In addition, his observation that the primary sense of *Ecclesiastes* is literal shows that he considered some texts more appropriate for spiritual interpretation than others. None of this was original in the context of pre-modern exegesis, but it is nevertheless important to individuate some passages that Titelmans thought more apt for a literal than for spiritual explication.

Let us begin with the commentary that we have already cited several times. Titelmans explained that he intended to interpret the entire book of Kohelet according to the letter. At the beginning of the third chapter of *Ecclesiastes*, commenting on words "Omnia tempus habent et suis spatiis transeunt vniuersa sub caelo. Tempus nascendi et tempus moriendi etc." he observed that "veteres expositores mysticis explanationibus rebus Iudaicis nituntur accommodare"¹⁵. He did not name those old commentators and provided too little information for us to identify precisely whom we might have had in mind. However, there was no shortage of ancient commentators who

¹¹ Ibid., f d1v.

¹² Ibid., f. d2r.

¹³ Ibid., f d2r.

¹⁴ Cf. 1Cor 3:2 "I gave you milk to drink, not meat". Origen claimed that "meat" was the typological interpretation of the Old Testament see: Origen, *On I Corinthians*, 1.12,17-23 [in:] C. Jenkins, *Origen on I Corinthians*, "The Journal of Theological Studies", 1908, vol. 9, no. 34, p. 242.

¹⁵ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Ecclesiasten Salomonis...*, op. cit., f. 13r.

interpreted this passage allegorically. Gregory of Elvira referred the time of birth and death to the Lord's Nativity and Passion¹⁶, Cyril of Jerusalem saw it as a figure of baptism¹⁷, while Gregory of Nyssa linked weeping with the body and rejoicing with the soul¹⁸. Most likely Titelmans meant Jerome, who considered these words an allegory of Israel's history¹⁹. Jerome's commentary was cited in *Glossa Ordinaria*, and thus was certainly known to Titelmans²⁰. Regardless of whether the Franciscan had any of these authors in mind, he rejected such spiritual readings and proposed instead a much simpler solution: "sed iuxta literalem sensum simpliciter accipienda putamus, ad ostendendum per particularia multa, vnum generale propositum, videlicet omnia suum tempus constitutum et determinatum habere et nihil esse in rebus humanis perpetuum"²¹. He did not consider spiritual interpretations of this passage incorrect but remained faithful to the scope of his work that he had outlined in the preface.

He took a similar approach in his commentary on the Book of Job. In the very introduction to this book, he criticised the opinion that it was merely an allegorical tale: "Fueruntque nonnulli potissimum Iudaei eius sententiae, vt dicerent totum hunc librum non vllius rei gestae historiam esse narrationem, sed parabolicam tantum similitudinem, in qua perfectum patientiae exemplum monstraretur hominibus"²². Thus, according to these commentators, the book had no literal-historical meaning, only literal-parabola²³. Titelmans thought such an allegorisation was wrong and contrary to the Church's teaching. He provided several arguments for the historicity of Job. First, unlike gospel parables that always spoke of a "certain man", Job was introduced with a name, land of origin, and a precise census of his property²⁴. His friends were also named. In addition, Job was mentioned in other biblical books: Ezekiel, Tobit and the Epistle of James²⁵. Finally, liturgical practices of the Church – its feasts and churches dedicated to Saint Job – testified to his

¹⁶ Gregorius Illiberitanus, *Fragmenta expositionis in Ecclesiasten*, frag. 1, ed. V. Buhart, 1967, CCSL 69, p. 263.

¹⁷ Cyrillus Hierosolymitanus, *Catéchèses mystagogiques*, 2.4, ed. A. Piédagnel, 1966, SC 126, pp. 110–112.

¹⁸ Gregorius Nyssenus, *Homélies sur l'Ecclésiaste*, 6.9, ed. P.J. Alexander, 1996, SC 416, pp. 330–334.

¹⁹ Hieronymus, *Commentarius in Ecclesiasten*, 3.2, ed. M. Adriaen, 1959, CCSL 72, p. 273: "hebraei omne hoc, quod de contrarietate temporum scriptum est, usque ad illum locum, in quo ait: tempus belli et tempus pacis, super israel intellegunt".

²⁰ *Biblia cum glossa ordinaria. Pars III*, Adolph Rusch, Strassburg 1481, f. 23r-v.

²¹ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Ecclesiasten Salomonis...*, op. cit., f. i3r.

²² F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Antuerpiae)...*, op. cit., f. a7v.

²³ The opinion of *nonnulli Iudaei* is reported by Nicholas Lyra, *Textus biblie cum glosa ordinaria Nicolai de lyra postilla moralitatibus eiusdem Pauli burgensis additionibus matthie thoring replicis tertia pars*, [Johannes Froben], [Basel] 1506, vol. 3, f. 4r: "utrum illud quod in hoc libro est tractatum fuit parabola ve res gestae. Ad quod dixerunt aliqui iudei quod est parabola, et quod Moyses scripserit librum istum; vt haberet in hoc qui apud hebreos dicitur bababathra, et ad declarandum conditionem virtutis patientiae, eius retributionem finxit hominem nomine Job, multipliciter flagellatum, amicis tamen qui ad ipsum venerant mutantibus ad oppositum scilicet ad ostendendum eum iniquum et per peccatis praeteritis deo merito flagellatum". Cf. Dionysius Cartusianus, *Enarratio in librum Iob*, art. 2, [in:] *Opera omnia in unum corpus digesta*, Typis Cartusiae S. M. de Pratis, Monstrolii 1897, vol. 4, p. 296: "Lyra etiam refert fuisse quosdam Iudaeos, dicentes quod istud sit tantum".

²⁴ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Antuerpiae)...*, op. cit., f. a7v.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, f. a8v. Cf. Ezek. 14:14; Tob. 2:12.15 (Vulgate); James 5:11.

historicity²⁶. This last argument is significant, because it shows that for Titelmans the praxis of the Church was authoritative in the process of biblical interpretation.

Thus, for Titelmans the Book of Job had a historical sense. It did not, however, exclude the veracity of a spiritual meaning. The book was very poetical, the Franciscan recognised, quoting Jerome's observations from the prologue to this book²⁷. A poetic style did not exclude historical content, however, even if it also conveyed also spiritual meaning.

Not every spiritual reading of Job was accepted by Titelmans. He observed that Origen and Chrysostom interpreted Job's self-baring (Job 1:20) allegorically, as a preparation for subsequent struggles against demons²⁸. Those were beautiful speculations, observed the Franciscan, but he interpreted Job's actions literally, as an expression of the profound grief of the Patriarch²⁹. Similarly in Job 15:27 (*operuit faciem eius crassitudo*) Titelmans observed: "Latini tamen interpretes ista omnia ad mysticum sensum conantur pertrahere"³⁰. He preferred to see it as a rhetorical figure, a poetic description of a wicked man³¹.

Likewise, in the commentary on the Psalms Titelmans chose to interpret some of them in the literal while others in the spiritual sense. As a rule, he considered the Psalms as allegories of the salvation history. David, as a chosen prophet, saw in visions the life, death, and resurrection of the Christ and even the history of the Church, and praised these wonderful truths in his poetic psalms³². Thus, Titelmans read most psalms in Christological and ecclesiological keys, as we shall demonstrate in the next chapter. Some psalms, however, could be read literally, and the Franciscan occasionally opted for such a reading.

In fact, many psalms could be usefully read in both ways. Annotating Ps. 63(64) Titelmans observed: "Totum istum Psalmum aptissime sancti patres applicant Christo Domino aduersus quem tantis conatibus totque consiliis agentes Iudaei [...] Nos in Elucidatione expositionem

²⁶ Ibid., f. a8v.

²⁷ Ibid., ff. a8v-b1r: "Obliquus enim etiam apud hebreos totus liber fertur et lubricus, et quod greci rhetores vocant schematismenos, dum qui aliud loquitur, aliud agit". Titelmans in his quote corrected the Greek word into *eschematismenon* and added an explanation: "id est, figuratum, sive plenis figurae". Jerome's prologue was printed in: *Biblia cum glossa ordinaria. Pars II*, Adolph Rusch, Strassburg 1481, f. 187r. Cf. Hieronymus, *Prologus in libro Iob*, [in:] *Biblia sacra iuxta vulgatam versionem*, eds. R. Weber and R. Gryson, Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, Stuttgart 2007, 5th ed., p. 731.

²⁸ [Pseudo Origenes], *Commentarius Anonymi in Iob*, PG 17, pp. 435–436. In times of Titelmans this text was considered to have been written by Origen. Joannes Chrysostomus, *Commentaire sur Job I*, 1.21, eds. H. Sorlin and L. Neyrand, 1988, SC 346, pp. 136–138.

²⁹ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Lutetiae)*..., op. cit., f. c1v.

³⁰ It is difficult to identify whom he meant. Gregory referred these words to spiritual blindness: "Faciem ergo crassitudo operit, quia desiderata terrenarum rerum abundantia oculos mentis premit, et hoc quod in eis esse honorabile debuit, ante dei oculos foedat, quia curis multiplicibus aggrauat". Gregorius Magnus, *Moralia in Iob*, 12.44, op. cit., p. 659.

³¹ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Lutetiae)*..., op. cit., f. m8r.

³² F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos*..., op. cit., f. a2r-v.

vtcunque generalem dedimus, vt siue Christo proprie, siue iusto cuilibet generali applicatione”³³. The prayer of a persecuted man could be thus applied likewise to the suffering Christ as to any believer undergoing any form of tribulation. Similarly, he observed that Ps. 17(18) was read by many as Christ’s thanksgiving for his liberation from death, or as words of the Church, saved from persecution³⁴. Yet he did not want to follow such a reading because “dificile est, singula omnino ad Christi personam aut Ecclesiae adaptare, facilius autem ipsi personae Daud, iccirco hunc in nostra Elucidatione faciemus loquentem”³⁵. Verses from 9 to 19 (7 to 17 in modern Bibles) were difficult to accommodate to Christological or ecclesiological senses but fit perfectly the historical circumstances of David’s life³⁶. They could also be extended to any believer in his personal tribulations. Titelmans did not reproach spiritual interpretations of this psalm, but considered a literal reading more apt.

He applied a similar argumentation to Ps. 37(38), adding, however, a new argument. Just like with Ps. 17, also here, the Christological reading did not correspond well with every single verse of the Psalm³⁷. But there was another reason to read it literally: the liturgy of the Church. Ps. 37 was included among the seven penitential psalms of the Church. Such a usage suggested that it ought to be read as words of penitence, and not as typological prefiguration of Christ’s Passion.

Interestingly, in the case of Ps. 138(139) Titelmans argued the exact opposite. He observed that numerous Latin interpreters applied this psalm to Christ’s resurrection, because its first verse was used as an introitus for the Mass on Easter³⁸; but he did not want to follow. “Diximus [...] non esse necessarium, siquando versiculo aliquo Ecclesiastica consuetudo vtatur ad talem aut talem sensum, vt ob hoc cogamur, ad eum sensum Psalmum totum pertrahere”.³⁹ He recognised that the Church was free to use given verses in whichever way it pleased her, yet he opted to

³³ Ibid., f. 151v. For Fathers, who applied this Psalm to Christ, see for instance: Cassiodorus, *Expositio psalmorum*, 63.1, ed. M. Adriaen, 1958, CCSL 97, p. 555: “Tituli huius uerba (sicut saepe dictum est) absolute referuntur ad dominum christum, qui per totum psalmum locuturus est”. Petrus Lombardus, *Commentarium in Psalmos*, 63 introductio, op. cit., col. 575: “Et est psalmus iste dirigens nos in finem, id est in Christum, attribuitur David, id est Christo, qui hic loquitur, adjuncta sibi voce corporis”.

³⁴ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 40v. Cf. *Biblia cum glossa ordinaria. Pars II...*, op. cit., f. 237r: “Dicit hoc Christus et ecclesia, id est totus Christus”. For spiritual interpretations see also: Eusebius Caesariensis, *Commentaria in Psalmos*, PG 23, col. 169. Augustinus Hipponensis, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 17,2, ed. E. Dekkers and J. Fraipont, 1956, CCSL 38, p. 94: “dicit ergo hic Christus et ecclesia, id est, totus Christus, caput et corpus: diligam te, Domine, uirtus mea”.

³⁵ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 40v.

³⁶ Ibid., f. 44r.

³⁷ Ibid., f. 89r.

³⁸ Ibid., f. 350v. Cf. Augustinus Hipponensis, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 138.4, ed. E. Dekkers and J. Fraipont, 1956, CCSL 40, p. 1992: “sedit ergo Dominus in passione, surrexit in resurrectione”. Prosper Aquitanus, *Expositio psalmorum a centesimo usque ad centesimum quinquagesimum*, 138, ed. P. Callens, 1972, CCSL 68A, p. 168. Petrus Lombardus, *Commentarium in Psalmos*, 138.1, op. cit., col. 1212.

³⁹ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 350v.

interpret the psalm more literally. “Tu cognovisti sessionem meam et resurrectionem meam” (Ps. 138:1) meant for him that God knows all human activity and rest⁴⁰.

Another psalm usually applied to Christ, which Titelmans, however, preferred to read literally, was Ps. 87(88). Christological reading was proposed by Cyril of Jerusalem, Chrysostom and many others⁴¹. The Franciscan acknowledged the validity of such an interpretation but preferred to read the psalm as a prayer of an individual in tribulation: “Nos tamen in Elucidatione ita omnia temperauimus, vt vnique grauitur tribulato possit apta esse forma clamandi ad dominum, ita tamen, vt Christum clamantem nequaquam excludamus”⁴². In an annotation to verse 4 he explained why he considered literal reading more convenient. The words: “Factus sum sicut homo sine adiutorio, inter mortuos liber” (Ps. 87:4) could be applied to Christ in several ways. They could signify Christ’s solitude in his suffering; they could emphasise his free will in offering himself to the Passion or could be applied to his resurrection: he alone was “free” among the dead. This last interpretation was suggested in *Glossa ordinaria*⁴³. Titelmans, however, observed that such a reading did not correspond well with the Hebrew original, where the word “liber” belonged to the subsequent verse:

Verum ista intelligentia non videtur quadrare, nisi cum ad Christum Psalmus peculiariter applicatur. Et si Hebraeam respiciamus lectionem, obsistit huic quoque intelligentiae, quod illud inter mortuos liber ita distinguatur, vt sit principium versus sequentis, vt videatur non connectendum cum praecedentibus, ac proinde sensum praedictum non satis commode posse haberi. [...] Cum vero generaliter applicare voluerimus Psalmum, accipienda est altera illarum expositionum [...] quae etiam originali lectioni Hebraicae magis consonant⁴⁴.

Thus, Titelmans argued that allegorical reading must correspond to the original text. Where the allegory did not fit the text well, it was better to interpret literally.

Another example of such an approach can be found in Ps. 136(137). Scandalous verse “Beatus, qui tenebit et allidet paruulos tuos ad petram” was interpreted by some authors, whom Titelmans did not name, in a mystical sense, substituting *suos* for *tuos*⁴⁵. The sense was: blessed

⁴⁰ Ibid., f. 350v.

⁴¹ Cf. Cyrilius Hierosolymitanus, *Catecheses*, 14.8, PG 33, col. 834A. Ioannes Chrysostomus, *Contra Iudaeos et Gentiles quod Christus sit Deus, liber unus*, 4, PG 48, col. 312.

⁴² F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 226r.

⁴³ Cf. *Biblia cum glossa ordinaria. Pars II...*, op. cit., f. 283v.

⁴⁴ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 228r.

⁴⁵ This interpretation was very popular in the Middle Ages, see: *Biblia cum glossa ordinaria. Pars II...*, op. cit., f. 318r. J. Wyclif, *De veritate sacrae scripturae*, 6, ed. R. Buddensieg, Trübner, London 1906, vol. 1, p. 128. Bonaventura, *Collationes de septem donis Spiritus sancti*, 6.22, [in:] *Opuscula varia theologica*, ex Typographia Collegii S. Bonaventurae, Ad Claras Aquas (Quaracchi) 1891, Sancti Bonaventurae Opera Omnia V, p. 488. Bernardus Claraevallensis, *Sententiae*, 3.107, [in:] *Sancti Bernardi Opera*, eds. H. Rochais, G. Hendrix, and J. Leclercq, Ed. Cistercienses, Romae 1957, vol. 6,2, p. 173. *Decretum magistri Gratiani*, 2,33,3, de penitencia, dist. 3, can. 37 [in:] E. Friedberg, ed., *Corpus iuris canonici*, Tauchnitz, Lipsiae 1879, p. 1223.

is he, who dashes his own vices (=children) against Christ (=the rock). Titelmans objected, pointing out that there were no bases for the variant *suos*, which was clearly a copyist mistake. The second person was confirmed by Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, and good Latin codices. Rather, observed the Franciscan, it ought to be read as a proclamation of the future punishment on Babylon, similarly as in the thirteenth chapter of Isaiah⁴⁶.

The same methodology was used by Titelmans in his Gospel commentaries. For instance, in Matt. 22:4 (*tauri mei et altilia mea occisa sunt*) some commentators thought that slaughtered bulls stood for ancient prophets⁴⁷. Titelmans found it incongruent with subsequent words proclaiming that the wedding feast was ready⁴⁸. In John 11:9 Titelmans cited the spiritual interpretation of Augustine and Chrysostom. The bishop of Hippo interpreted Jesus' rhetorical question: "nonne duodecim sunt horae diei?" as referring to Christ and the 12 apostles⁴⁹. Chrysostom, on the other hand, saw here an allusion to the hour of the Lord. Titelmans, however, chose to follow neither. He attributed to the saying a proverbial character, which emphasised the changeability of human heart⁵⁰.

Thus, Titelmans was careful not to overapply the spiritual sense. The literal sense was to be preferred when allegorical reading violated the wording of the original text. This shows that Titelmans shared to a degree the sentiments of humanists, who endeavoured to stay close to the text and gave preference to Hebrew/Greek over Latin. Although the latter is not entirely true of Titelmans, it cannot be said that he was completely insensitive to the original languages of the Bible. In addition, a literal reading could be more beneficial for inexperienced readers and could occasionally be dictated by the practice of Church.

3.2. "Higher" and "Lower" criticisms in Titelmans' literal exegesis

We shall now explore how Titelmans applied so-called "higher" and "lower" criticism in his commentaries. "Higher" or historical criticism concerns elements external to a text: its authorship, time and place of composition, literary genre and so on. "Lower" or textual criticism is based on the internal evidence from the text and strives to establish its original reading by means of a comparison between various codices and a selection of the correct reading from a variety of versions.

⁴⁶ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 346v.

⁴⁷ Such an interpretation is present in *Biblia cum glossa ordinaria. Pars IV*, Adolph Rusch, Strassburg 1481, f. 954v: "Thauri. Quia prius prophete, et post apostoli ab infidelibus passi sunt".

⁴⁸ F. Titelmans, *Paraphrastica elucidatio in Matthaum...*, op. cit., ff. 222v-223r.

⁴⁹ Augustinus Hipponensis, *In Iohannis euangelium tractatus*, 49.8, ed. R. Willems, 1954, CCSL 36, p. 424: "Si ego sum, inquit, dies, et uos horae, numquid horae diei consilium dant? Horae diem sequuntur, non dies horas".

⁵⁰ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio paraphrastica in Ioannem...*, op. cit., f. p8r.

3.2.1. “Higher” criticism

The longest and the most complex discussion among Titelmans’ writings regarding the authorship of any biblical book can be found in his treatise on the Apocalypse⁵¹. He defended there the canonicity of the book and John’s authorship. Since, however, this work had a highly polemical character, it shall be discussed in Chapter Five⁵².

In other commentaries, Titelmans devoted limited space to such discussions. In his commentary on the Psalms, he ascribed the authorship to David, in accordance with the biblical text and all the tradition⁵³. There were, however, some exceptions. For instance, Ps. 131(132), which spoke of the dedication of the temple in Jerusalem, seemed to have come from Solomon. The Franciscan considered this possible, nevertheless, he suggested that this psalm could have been written by David and passed to his son, just as he bequeathed him materials for the construction of the temple⁵⁴. The title of Ps. 87(88) was more problematic: “Canticum Psalmi, filiorum Core in finem per maeleth, ad respondendum, intellectus Eman Israelitae”. Eman Israelita could be identified here as the author of the psalm, since his name stands in genitive, while sons of Core, in dative, should be understood as the singers. Titelmans identified Eman with one of Solomon’s cantors, mentioned in 1Kings 5:11 and in 1Chron. 6:18⁵⁵. It seemed likely to the Franciscan that he could have composed the psalm, as was also the opinion of Jerome⁵⁶. He noted, however, that some considered that Eman was no more than the head singer, and the authorship belonged to David alone. “Quorum quid verius sit iudicare ad nostrum haudquaue spectat officium”, concluded Titelmans, without resolving the issue⁵⁷.

Another difficulty was presented by Ps. 71(72). This psalm in its first verse identifies Solomon as the author, but it concludes with words: “defecerunt Psalmi Dauid filii Iesse”, suggesting David’s authorship. Jerome believed it to be written by Solomon; Augustine and Cassiodorus, by David⁵⁸. According to Titelmans, the initial *Salomoni* could be understood as *pro*

⁵¹ F. Titelmans, *Libri duo de autoritate libri Apocalypsis...*, op. cit., passim.

⁵² Vide infra 5.3.

⁵³ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. a2r.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, f. 338v.

⁵⁵ F. Titelmans, *Annotationes ex Hebraeo...*, op. cit., f. XXVIIIv.

⁵⁶ Hieronymus, *Alia praefatio in libro psalmodum*, [in:] *Biblia sacra iuxta vulgatam versionem*, eds. R. Weber and R. Gryson, Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, Stuttgart 2007, 5th ed., p. 768.

⁵⁷ F. Titelmans, *Annotationes ex Hebraeo...*, op. cit., f. XXVIIIv. Many mediaeval exegetes interpreted names of sons of Cora and of Eman in a spiritual way, see for instance: Petrus Lombardus, *Commentarium in Psalmos*, 87 intorductio, op. cit., col. 809-811.

⁵⁸ Augustinus Hipponensis, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 72.1, eds. E. Dekkers and J. Fraipont, 1956, CCSL 39, p. 986. Augustine claimed that it was Christ, the New David, who sings God’s praises. Cassiodorus, *Expositio psalmodum*, 72.1, ed. M. Adriaen, 1958, CCSL 98, p. 659: “Dum in titulis superioribus dauid tantum uideatur ascriptus, hic addidit filii iesse; scilicet ut illum dauid patrem salomonis intellegere debeamus; quod ad personam exprimendam prophetae competenter adiectum est”. Cf. Dionysius Cartusianus, *Commentaria in psalmos omnes Dauidicos commentaria in secundam quinquagenam psalterii*, art. 39, [in:] *Dionysii Cartusiani opera omnia*, Typis Cartusiae S. M. de Pratis,

Salomone, indicating the donee, not the author. Why, however, does the psalm speak of the end of David's psalms, given that there were nearly eighty more in the Psalter, many of them explicitly attributed to David? The easiest response was that the immediately following psalms were ascribed to Asaph and the sons of Core⁵⁹. But Titelmans suggested also, that this could have been the last psalm written by David in his life, even if it was later placed in the middle of the Psalter. Finally, he offered a spiritual interpretation, hinting that the Messiah, of which the psalm spoke, was the end (fulfilment) of all the Psalms (cf. Rom. 10:4)⁶⁰.

The authorship of the sapiential books was no controversy for Titelmans. That the Book of Ecclesiastes was written by Solomon was doubted neither by Latin nor Greek Christians; nor was it contested by the Jews⁶¹. Solomon was also the author of the Proverbs and the Canticum. Titelmans followed Origen's interpretation that the three works of Solomon corresponded to three stages of spiritual development (and three branches of knowledge, but that was not taken up by the Franciscan)⁶². The Proverbs concerned themselves with ethics and gave a basis for the moral life. Ecclesiastes spoke of the vanity of the created world and taught how to detach oneself from excessive love of things; thus, it corresponded with physics. The Canticum concerned itself with the mystical and taught the deepest love of God⁶³.

Much more difficult a case was constituted by the Book of Job. Titelmans discussed matters of date, authorship and a general character of this work at great length in his introductory essay *Sollutiones quorundam dubiorum circa librum Iob*⁶⁴. His point of departure was again Origen. According to the Alexandrian, the book had originally been written in Syriac and then translated into Hebrew⁶⁵. Titelmans observed that such an assumption was not based on the text itself but was deduced from the identification of Job with Iobab, son of Zara, grandson of Esau (Gen.

Monstrolii 1897, vol. 6, p. 205: "Hieronymus autem dicit hunc psalmum a Salomone intitulatum, tanquam ab auctore, ita quod Salomon edidit psalmum praesentem. Augustinus vero et Cassiodorus (quorum positioni magis consentiendum videtur) dicunt hunc psalmum, sicut et omnes alios, a David conscriptum. Omnes quoque magni catholici que doctores, videlicet Hieronymus, Augustinus, Cassiodorus, Hugo, exponunt hunc psalmum de Christo ad litteram; et est sensus tituli: In Salomonem, id est, psalmus iste tendit et ducit nos in Christum, per Salomonem figuratum".

⁵⁹ Thus also Glossa after Jerome: *Biblia cum glossa ordinaria. Pars II...*, op. cit., f. 272v. Cf. Hieronymus, *Commentarioli in psalmos*, 72, ed. G. Morin, 1959, CCSL 72, p. 217: "etiam hoc diligentius observandum, quod defecerunt hymni Dauid filii Iesse ad finem septuagesimi primi psalmi pertineat: id uero quod sequitur, psalmus Asaph, initium sit sequentis".

⁶⁰ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 177r. A similar interpretation can be found in Dionysius Cartusianus, "Commentaria in psalmos omnes Dauidicos commentaria in secundam quinquagenam psalterii", art. 40, op. cit., vol. 6, p. 212. Another allegorical interpretation see: Petrus Lombardus, *Commentarium in Psalmos*, 72, introductio, op. cit., col. 669.

⁶¹ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Ecclesiasten Salomonis...*, op. cit., f. b7v.

⁶² Origenes, *Commentaire sur le cantique des cantiques I*, prologus, 3.5-7, eds. L. Brésard and H. Crouzel, 1991, SC 375, p. 132.

⁶³ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum...*, op. cit., f. 1r-2v.

⁶⁴ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Antuerpiae)...*, op. cit., ff. a7v-c4r.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, ff. b1v-b2r. Origen's opinion was derived from a work attributed to him: [Pseudo Origenes], *Commentarius Anonymi in Iob...*, op. cit., col. 373.

36:33). Such an identification was also confirmed by a note, present in some ancient Greek and Latin codices, which was, however, absent from the Hebrew text. For this reason, Jerome rejected it. Titelmans, on the other hand, who himself found in Aalst a codex containing such an addition, regarded it as a valid argument. After all, the stories of Bel or Susanna were also missing from the Hebrew Bible, but nonetheless were considered canonical⁶⁶.

The opinion of Jerome, based on Hebrew sources, was that Job was a descendant of Nachor, Abraham's brother⁶⁷. Titelmans discredited it on the basis of chronology. If it had been true, Job would have been younger than Eliu, who is introduced in Job 32:4 as a youngster⁶⁸. This, according to Titelmans, showed that Hebrew opinions could not overrule the unanimous consent of ancient Latin and Greek fathers⁶⁹. He suggested that Jews' hatred towards Edomites led the former to falsify the genealogy of Job⁷⁰.

This, however, presented another problem. The opinion of the Jews that Titelmans tried to discredit was accepted by Jerome, which prompted him to assert that he had no intention to diminish the authority of the Church Father.

Absit enim a nobis vt in re tam incerta, maxime aduersus Hieronymi iudicium quicquam definiendo statuamus. Hoc tantum volumus, non sic per omnia statim Hebraeorum quamlibet doctorum nuda assertioni esse adhaerendum, maxime vbi est aliorum antiquorum in contrarium vetus et diu probate sententia. Neque enim existimandum est, antiquos patres sententias illas in fidem et auctoritatem temere suscepisse, quas tanta religiositate posteris commendarunt⁷¹.

Thus, on the one hand he tried to uphold the authority of Jerome, though on the other, he opposed his view. The same was true of Gregory the Great. The pope assumed that Job lived in the times of Judges, which Titelmans found most unlikely⁷². Both cases are very interesting, for they demonstrate that Titelmans was well aware that even Fathers could err in some matters. This contrasts with an argument that he used in his polemics against Erasmus, where he emphasised the unanimity of the Catholic Fathers in the matters of faith. It seems that Titelmans was open to exploring historical discrepancies of patristic opinions, as long as no dogma was at stake. Here, disagreement with some Fathers bothered him but a little because the matter was minor. The authorship of the book was of secondary importance, as long as one accepted its inspired character:

⁶⁶ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Lutetiae)*..., op. cit., f. i1r.

⁶⁷ Ibid., f. i1r. Cf. Hieronymus, *Liber quaestionum hebraicarum in Genesim*, ed. P. de Lagarde, 1959, CCSL 72, p. 27: "Primogenitus Nachor fratris Abraham de Melcha uxore eius filia Aran natus est Hus: de cuius stirpe Iob descendit, sicut scriptum est in exordio uoluminis eius uir fuit in terra Hus Iob nomine".

⁶⁸ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Lutetiae)*..., op. cit., f. i2r-v.

⁶⁹ Ibid., f. i2v.

⁷⁰ Ibid., f. i3r.

⁷¹ Ibid., f. i3r.

⁷² Ibid., ff. i4v-i5r.

Quae quaestio tametsi fortisan non admodum necessaria videatur quum praecipius libri author esse cognoscatur spiritus sanctus, quo inspirante scripta est omnis canonica scriptura, neque admodum curae esset debet (iuxta Graegorii sententiam) vbi scriptor cognoscitur, calamum quo scriptum est inquirere⁷³.

Having made such a disclaimer, Titelmans offered a hypothesis regarding the authorship, which he derived from Origen⁷⁴. The original Syriac text could not have been complete and included probably only dialogues, written down by Job or one of his friends. None of them could know what had been spoken in heaven. Only Moses, who translated the book into Hebrew, could have possessed such a knowledge through a direct revelation, thus it can be assumed that it was he who added the narrative parts of the book⁷⁵. The authority of Moses made Jews include the book of Job in their canon, even though it spoke of a foreigner. The authorship was not of primary importance, nevertheless the sanctity of the *calamus* added to the authority of the book⁷⁶. As we have seen, however, it was not a fundamental matter, given that one accepted the canonicity of biblical text.

3.2.2. "Lower" criticism

It was not enough to acknowledge the canonicity of the text. It was also important to ask: what text? Titelmans was aware of difficulties related to the transmission of the text and numerous errors that inevitably crept in during the process of translation and copying. Such awareness was commonplace. From the earliest days of Christianity efforts were undertaken to revise and correct the text of Scriptures⁷⁷. A great change came with Lorenzo Valla and Erasmus and their followers, who claimed that the text of the Vulgate ought to be corrected against the Greek (and Hebrew) originals. Titelmans vehemently opposed such an idea, as we shall explore in more detail in Chapter Five. He considered the Latin text reliable but realised that occasionally it included some mistakes⁷⁸. Indeed, he acknowledged as much in his debate with Erasmus⁷⁹. Thus, in comparison

⁷³ Ibid., f. i6r. Cf. Gregorius Magnus, *Moralia in Iob*, praefatio 1, op. cit., pp. 8-9: "Si magni cuiusdam uiri susceptis epistolis legeremus uerba sed quo calamo fuissent scripta quaeremus, ridiculum profecto esset non epistolarum auctorem scire sensum que cognoscere, sed quali calamo earum uerba impressa fuerint indagare. Cum ergo rem cognoscimus, eius que rei Spiritum Sanctum auctorem tenemus, quia scriptorem quaerimus, quid aliud agimus, nisi legentes litteras, de calamo percontamur?"

⁷⁴ [Pseudo Origenes], *Commentarius Anonymi in Iob...*, op. cit., pp. 373-374.

⁷⁵ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Lutetiae)...*, op. cit., ff. i5v-i6v.

⁷⁶ Ibid., f. i5v.

⁷⁷ F.A. van Liere, *An Introduction to the Medieval Bible...*, op. cit., pp. 93-102.

⁷⁸ For the text of the Septuagint Titelmans certainly consulted the 1526 edition from Strassburg, while for the New Testament various editions of Erasmus' *Novum Instrumentum* as well as Lefèvre's editions of Pauline epistles. For the Hebrew text he certainly consulted *Psalterium Hebraeum, Graecum, Arabicum et Chaldaeum, cum tribus latinis interpretationibus et glossis*, trans. A. Giustiniani, Petrus Paulus Porrus, [Genuae] 1516; and annotations of Münster on the Song. Cf. M. Engammare, *Le Cantique des cantiques à la Renaissance: étude et bibliographie*, Droz, Genève 1993, p. 212. Further research is required to identify all textual sources of Titelmans.

⁷⁹ F. Titelmans, *Prologus apologeticus...*, op. cit., ff. a6v; b5v; c5r-c7v.

to humanists, he paid relatively little attention to textual criticism, yet he too occasionally ventured into that field. Below we shall discuss some examples of textual criticism in his works.

In Ps. 112(113):2 Titelmans observed that in the phrase: “ex hoc nunc et vsque in saeculum” *hoc* was redundant⁸⁰. He thought it crept into the Latin text as an attempt to render Greek article τοῦ. He showed his attentiveness to Greek also in other places. In Ps. 70(71):15 he explained variant readings between the Gallican and Roman Psalters by a reference to Greek. The Gallican Psalter read *non cognoui literaturam* while the Roman *non cognoui negociationem vel negociationes*. Titelmans explained that the difference originated from the similarity between two Greek words: *pragmatias* (*negociaciones*) and *gramatias* (*litaraura*)⁸¹. This similarity of two Greek words led to different variants in Greek manuscripts, from which two Latin versions were translated.

He employed a similar argumentation in regard to Ps. 86(87):5⁸². The Vulgate read *Nunquid Sion, dicet homo, et homo natus est in ea*, which differed greatly from Greek, which read *Mater Sion, dicet homo* (μήτηρ Σιών, ἐρεῖ ἄνθρωπος). He observed that the variant *mater Sion* was also present in the Roman Psalter and in Augustine⁸³. Translations from Hebrew, both by Jerome and by Felix Pratensis read *ad Sion dicet vir*⁸⁴. Titelmans explained the odd reading in the Gallican Psalter by the similarity of Greek words for “mother” (μήτηρ) and “surely not” (μητι), which led to a copyist’s mistake⁸⁵. Interestingly, Titelmans was convinced that despite an obvious error, which he explained quite persuasively, all three versions conveyed the same meaning, namely that all peoples find spiritual regeneration in the Church, which is the true Zion⁸⁶. As we shall see, it was a typical practice of Titelmans to harmonise divergent versions on the spiritual level.

In the case above, Titelmans relied on Latin translations of the Hebrew Psalter, however in subsequent commentaries he occasionally used Hebrew to correct the Vulgate⁸⁷. In Job 20:26 he observed that some Latin codices had *in oculis eius*⁸⁸. “In occultis enim est legendum, siue in

⁸⁰ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 303r.

⁸¹ Ibid., f. 174r.

⁸² F. Titelmans, *Annotationes ex Hebraeo...*, op. cit., f. XXVIIv.

⁸³ Augustinus Hipponensis, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 86.7, op. cit., p. 1204. Glossa noted the alternative reading of Augustine.

⁸⁴ *Psalterium ex hebreo diligentissime ad verbum fere tralatum*, trans. Felix Pratensis, Petrus Lichtenstein Coloniensis, Venetiis 1515, f. 41r.

⁸⁵ F. Titelmans, *Annotationes ex Hebraeo...*, op. cit., f. XXVIIIr.

⁸⁶ Ibid., f. XXVIIIr.

⁸⁷ Perhaps a testimony to his increased competence in the Hebrew language.

⁸⁸ Such a variant was found in codices: Amiatinus, Cavensis, Toletanus and Legionensis, see: *Biblia sacra iuxta vulgatam versionem*, eds. R. Weber and R. Gryson, Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, Stuttgart 2007, 5th ed., p. 748. It is also found in some ancient and mediaeval commentators, for instance: Iulianus Aeculanensis, *Expositio libri Iob*, 20, ed. L. de Conick, 1977, CCSL 88, p. 57. Bruno Astensis, *Expositio in librum Iob*, 20, PL 164, col. 622. Petrus Iohannis Olivi, *Postilla super Iob*, 20, ed. A. Boureau, 2015, CCCM 275, p. 305. I. Hus, *Dicta de tempore magistro Iohanni Hus (dubium an perperam) attributa*, ed. J. Zachova, 2011, CCCM 239, p. 453.

latibulis, vt ex Hebraeo patet”, he asserted⁸⁹. In Job 19:24 (*stylo ferreo et plumbi lamina, vel celte sculpantur in silice?*) first he discussed *plumbi lamina*, which from Hebrew could be understood either as a writing stylus or a matter on which one wrote⁹⁰. Then he proceeded to criticise a version found in many Latin codices: *vel celte sculpantur*⁹¹. “Non enim celte legendum est, vt barbari quidam authores adinuenerunt, dicentes nomen celtis vel celtes significare instrumentum quo vtuntur sculptores lapidum a celando nomen afferentes deductum”⁹². He claimed that the variant *celte* was absent in commentaries of both ancients (he listed Jerome, Philip and Gregory⁹³) and moderns (Bonaventure, Thomas Aquinas⁹⁴, and Lyra⁹⁵ called as witnesses). Nor was it to be found in Greek and Hebrew, neither of which made any mention of a sculptor’s tool. Instead, Titelmans insisted, Hebrew word *lead* (לֵד) meaning *adusque*, should be translated here as *certe*⁹⁶.

Hebrew and Greek were both used to correct some errors in the Song of Solomon. In Song 5:11 the Vulgate read: *comae eius sicut elatae palmarum nigrae quasi corvus*⁹⁷. Titelmans offered a literal translation from Hebrew: “Cincinnati eius crispis, vel crispantes, nigri quasi coruus”⁹⁸. Thus, the word *palmarum* seemed redundant:

Videtur igitur superuacanea dictio, palmarum, quae forte ex glossa interlineari aliqua per indoctos scribas (vt plerisque huiusmodi euenit) in textum ipsum est inuecta. Est praeterea aduertendus hoc in loco alter error Latinorum interpretum, qui existimauerunt per elates istas palmarum, intellegi ramos magis erectos [...] putantes insuper, elates idem esse quod eleuatas, et in altum extensas. Verum hi ex ignorantia graeci idiomatis, hac sane in parte hallucinantur. [...] Singularem enim numero

⁸⁹ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Lutetiae)*..., op. cit., f. q8r. Cf. Gregorius Magnus, *Moralia in Iob*, 15.28, op. cit., p. 769.

⁹⁰ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Lutetiae)*..., op. cit., f. p4r.

⁹¹ This reading is present in: Hieronymus, *Contra Iohannem*, 30, ed. J.L. Feiertag, 1999, CCSL 79A, p. 54. Bruno Astensis, *Expositio in librum Iob*, 19, op. cit., col. 618. It is given as a variant in *Biblia cum glossa ordinaria. Pars II*..., op. cit., f. 206r. It was also used in *Vulgata Sixto-Clementina* of 1592, 1593 and 1598, Cf. *Biblia sacra iuxta vulgatam versionem*..., eds. R. Weber and R. Gryson, op. cit., p. 747.

⁹² F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Lutetiae)*..., op. cit., f. p4r. Cf. Dionysius Cartusianus, “Enarratio in librum Iob”, art. 43, op. cit., vol. 4, p. 555: “Asserit que Albertus, quod celte sit nomen indeclinabile, designans instrumentum caementarii, quo lapides sculpuntur durissimi. Porro in Mammotractu Bibliae legitur, quod celte sit ablativus, et declinetur, celtis, celtis, celti; significet que ferreum instrumentum conueniens ad sculpendum”.

⁹³ Gregorius Magnus, *Moralia in Iob*, 14.53, op. cit., p. 736.

⁹⁴ Thomas de Aquino, *In Iob (expositio super Iob ad litteram)*, 19, 1965, ed. Leonina 26, p. 116.

⁹⁵ Cf. Nicholas Lyra, *Biblia cum postilla Nicolai de Lyra tertia pars*..., op. cit., f. 41v.

⁹⁶ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Lutetiae)*..., op. cit., f. p4v.

⁹⁷ Such a reading is present in: *Biblia cum glossa ordinaria. Pars III*..., op. cit., f. 33v; as well as in numerous commentaries, e.g.: Beda Venerabilis, *In Cantica canticorum libri sex*, ed. D. Hurst, 1983, CCSL 119B, p. 284. Petrus Joannis Olivi, *Expositio in Canticum canticorum*, 52, ed. J. Schlageter, Ed. Collegii S. Bonaventurae ad Claras Aquas, Grottaferrata 1999, Collectio oliviana 2, p. 236.

⁹⁸ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum*..., op. cit., f. 118r. Cf. *Biblia. Habes in hoc libro prudens lector Viriusq[ue] Instrumenti nouam translatione[m] aeditam*, trans. Sanctus Pagninus, Antoine Du Ry pour Jacques Giunta, Lyon 1528, f. 215v.

ἐλατὴ elate dicunt, quemadmodum pentecoste, genere foeminino. Est autem species arboris aromaticae, cuius meminit et Plinius⁹⁹.

Thus, there is no mention of a palm tree in the text, the groom is instead compared to an aromatic tree.

Titelmans also corrected some proper names in the Canticum. In Song 2:17 the mountains of *Bether* were mistakenly rendered as *Bethel* in many Latin codices¹⁰⁰. The Franciscan observed that the name *Bethel* was much better known to copyist, since this name appeared also in the Gospels. *Bether* instead was a hapax legomena¹⁰¹. Nevertheless, he thought that both readings conveyed valid spiritual sense. *Bethel* means *domus Dei*. In the mystical sense particular churches were mountains and houses of God. Mountains of *Bether* on the other hand means “monticulos abinuicem diuisos”, which signifies the holiness of churches, separated from sinners¹⁰². Thus, philological correction was of minor importance since both variants conveyed a valid spiritual meaning.

Another mistaken proper name was found in Song 6:13 (7:1 in the Septuagint). Many codices had *Sunamitis* in place of *Sulamitis*¹⁰³. Titelmans noted that both Hebrew *Sulamith* (שׁוּלַמִּיִּת) and Greek *Sulamitis* (Σουλαμίτις) had a letter ‘l’ not ‘n’. He explained the error by reference to 1Kings 1:3 and 2Kings 4:12 where the name *Sunamitis* appeared¹⁰⁴. He further explained that the name *Sulamitis* is either the female form of Solomon or a derivative from Salem, the other name of Jerusalem¹⁰⁵.

⁹⁹ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Cantorum...*, op. cit., f. 118r-v. Pliny the Elder, *Historia naturalis*, 12.28-29, op. cit., vol. 4, p. 34.

¹⁰⁰ Only a few codices had *Bether*, see: *Biblia sacra iuxta vulgatam versionem...*, eds. R. Weber and R. Gryson, op. cit., p. 998. Varian *Bethel* was present also in numerous patristic texts, for instance: Origenes, *Origenis in Canticum Cantorum homiliae II*, 2.12, ed. W.A. Baehrens, 1925, GCS 33, p. 57. Rupertus Tuitiensis, *Commentaria in Canticum canticorum*, 2, ed. R. Haacke, 1974, CCCM 26, p. 55. Bernardus Claraevallensis, *Sermones super Cantica Cantorum*, 73.7, [in:] *Sancti Bernardi Opera*, eds. H. Rochais, J. Leclercq, and C.H. Talbot, Ed. Cistercienses, Romae 1958, vol. 2, p. 237. Variant *Bether* is testified by: Bruno Astensis, *Expositio in Cantica Cantorum*, 2 (prosa), PL 164, col. 1250. Bonaventura, *Collationes in Hexaemeron*, 21.26, [in:] *Opuscula varia theologica*, ex Typographia Collegii S. Bonaventurae, Ad Claras Aquas (Quaracchi) 1891, Sancti Bonaventurae Opera Omnia V, p. 435. Dionysius Cartusianus, “Enarratio in librum Iob”, art. 32, op. cit., p. 502.

¹⁰¹ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Cantorum...*, op. cit., ff. 62r-v.

¹⁰² Ibid., f. 62v. Lyra also gave two versions, explaining *bathar* as “montes partitionis vel separationis scilicet dei a populo”, Nicholas Lyra, *Biblia cum postilla Nicolai de Lyra tertia pars...*, op. cit., f. 359r.

¹⁰³ *Sunamits* was present, among other codices, in Alcuin’s revision, see: *Biblia sacra iuxta vulgatam versionem...*, eds. R. Weber and R. Gryson, op. cit., p. 1000. It is also testified by: *Biblia cum glossa ordinaria. Pars III...*, op. cit., f. 34v. Iohannes de Forda, *Super extremam partem Cantici canticorum sermones CXX*, 62, eds. E. Mikkers and H. Costello, 1970, CCCM 17, p. 435. Bernardus Claraevallensis, “Sermones super Cantica Cantorum”, 82.7, op. cit., p. 297. Beda Venerabilis, *In Cantica canticorum libri sex...*, op. cit., p. 315. Variant *Sulamitis*: Bruno Astensis, *Expositio in librum Iob...*, 6 (prosa), op. cit., col. 1276. Bonaventura, *Commentarius in evangelium S. Lucae*, 1.56.103, ex Typographia Collegii S. Bonaventurae, Ad Claras Aquas (Quaracchi) 1895, Sancti Bonaventurae Opera Omnia VII, p. 34.

¹⁰⁴ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Cantorum...*, op. cit., f. 142r.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., ff. 142r-v.

An analogous problem was present in the Gospel of John. In John 1:28 the text mentioned that John the Baptist was active in *Bethania*, across the river Jordan. Titelmans noted that ancient Greek codices as well as commentaries of Chrysostom and of Theophylactus, who copied from the Patriarch's writings, all had Bethabara¹⁰⁶. Jerome had *Bethaiba*. *Bethania* was also the name of the village where Lazarus and his sisters lived, thus, could have been mistakenly inserted here by a copyist, analogically as in the cases above. The Franciscan did not, however, follow this argumentation this time. The place of baptism was certainly different from Lazarus' home; Titelmans, however, suggested that perhaps there were two places with the same name, *Bethania*, just as there were two Canas¹⁰⁷.

Thus, Titelmans was not shy to use his competence in Greek and Hebrew to correct mistakes in the Vulgate. Yet, he employed his text-critical skills very rarely. Even when he corrected obvious mistakes in the Latin text, he was still content to harmonise the correct and the mistaken versions on the spiritual level, trying to find a common denominator for divergent variants. As we shall see in more depth in chapter five, the reliability of the text was, according to Titelmans, based more on the tradition of the Church than on philological scholarship. Like humanists, he made use of original texts of the Bible; but in contrast to them he considered spiritual meaning of the text, as passed down by centuries of exegesis, as more authoritative and significant than textual variants. Yet it is worth bearing in mind that the examples provided above show that his was not completely opposed to a moderate application of some philological tools.

3.3. Philological comments

After establishing the authorship and the text, one could progress to start explaining it. The first task of the literal exegesis was to elucidate the meaning of the text. Already from the late antiquity, it was accepted that one should make use of all branches of knowledge, including the pagan one, in order to understand the biblical text better. Augustine, in his exegetical treatise *De doctrina christiana*, explained that all human learning could be useful for a biblical scholar, if applied with humility of heart. First and foremost, he commanded the knowledge of languages:

The great remedy for ignorance of proper signs is knowledge of languages. And men who speak the Latin tongue, of whom are those I have undertaken to instruct, need two other languages for the

¹⁰⁶ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio paraphrastica in Ioannem...*, op. cit., f. b5r. This argument was probably derived from D. Erasmus, *Annotationes in Nouum Testamentum (pars secunda)*, ed. P.F. Hovingh, Elsevier, Amsterdam 2003, ASD VI-6, p. 58.

¹⁰⁷ Hieronymus, *Liber de situ et nominibus locorum hebraicorum*, PL 23, col 887.

knowledge of Scripture, Hebrew and Greek, that they may have recourse to the original texts if the endless diversity of the Latin translators throw them into doubt¹⁰⁸.

The bishop of Hippo continued to explain how one could avoid mistakes in translation and understand even obscure passages. However, the knowledge of languages, even though indispensable, was not always sufficient to understand everything correctly. “Ignorance of things, too, renders figurative expressions obscure, as when we do not know the nature of the animals, or minerals, or plants, which are frequently referred to in Scripture by way of comparison”¹⁰⁹. Consequently, one ought to study all human knowledge. Caution was needed: some human knowledge was superstitious, and this element was to be avoided, but some was based on truth, and as such led closer to God¹¹⁰. Some human knowledge was superfluous, but some was necessary¹¹¹. Among the disciplines particularly useful for a deeper understanding of scriptures Augustine listed history¹¹², natural sciences¹¹³, arts of construction, healing and such like¹¹⁴, and dialectics¹¹⁵. All such knowledge could be useful, if used with a discrimination and moderation:

Accordingly, I think that it is well to warn studious and able young men, who fear God and are seeking for happiness of life, not to venture heedlessly upon the pursuit of the branches of learning

¹⁰⁸ Augustinus Hipponensis, *De doctrina christiana libri quatuor*, 2.11, ed. J. Martin, 1962, CCSL 32, p. 42: “contra ignota signa propria magnum remedium est linguarum cognitio. Et latinae quidem linguae homines, quos nunc instruendos suscepimus, duabus aliis ad scripturarum diuinarum cognitionem opus habent, hebraea scilicet et graeca, ut ad exemplaria praecedentia recurratur, si quam dubitationem attulerit latinorum interpretum infinita uarietas” English translation NPNF, vol. I.2, p. 1219.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 2.16, p. 49: “rerum autem ignorantia facit obscuras figuratas locutiones, cum ignoramus uel animantium uel lapidum uel herbarum naturas aliarum ue rerum, quae plerumque in scripturis similitudinis alicuius gratia ponuntur”. English translation: NPNF, vol. I.2, p. 1226.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 2.18, p. 53: “immo uero quisquis bonus uerus que Christianus est, Domini sui esse intellegat, ubicumque inuenerit ueritatem, quam conferens et agnoscens etiam in litteris sacris superstitiosa figmenta repudiet doleat que homines atque caueat, qui cognoscentes Deum, non ut deum glorificauerunt, aut gratias egerunt, sed euanuerunt in cogitationibus suis et obscuratum est insipiens cor eorum”. Ibid., lib. 2, cap. 19: “Sed ut totum istum locum nam est maxime necessarius diligentius explicemus, duo sunt genera doctrinarum, quae in gentilibus etiam moribus exercentur. Unum earum rerum, quas instituerunt homines, alterum earum, quas animaduernerunt iam peractas aut diuinitus institutas. Illud quod est secundum institutiones hominum, partim superstitiosum est, partim non est”.

¹¹¹ Augustinus Hipponensis, *De doctrina christiana*, 2.25, op. cit., pp. 60-61.

¹¹² Ibid., 2.28, p. 62: “quicquid igitur de ordine temporum transactorum indicat ea quae appellatur historia, plurimum nos adiuuat ad libros sanctos intellegendos, etiamsi praeter Ecclesiam puerili eruditione discatur”.

¹¹³ Ibid., 2.29, pp. 63-64: “Est etiam narratio demonstrationi similis, qua non praeterita, sed praesentia indicantur ignaris. In quo genere sunt quaecumque de locorum situ naturis que animalium, lignorum, herbarum, lapidum aliorum ue corporum scripta sunt. De quo genere superius egimus eam que cognitionem ualere ad aenigmata scripturarum soluenda docuimus: non ut pro quibusdam signis adhibeantur, tamquam ad remedia uel machinamenta superstitutionis alicuius; nam et illud genus iam distinctum ab hoc licito et libero separauimus”.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 2.30, p. 65: “Artium etiam ceterarum, quibus aliquid fabricatur uel quod remaneat post operationem artificis ab illo effectum, sicut domus et scamnum et uas aliquod atque alia huiusmodi, uel quae ministerium quoddam exhibent operanti Deo sicut medicina et agricultura et gubernatio, uel quarum omnis effectus est actio sicut saltationum et cursionum et luctaminum: harum ergo cunctarum artium de praeteritis experimenta faciunt etiam futura conici; nam nullus earum artifex membra mouet in operando, nisi praeteritorum memoriam cum futurorum expectatione contexit”.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 2. 31, pp. 65-66: “Sed disputationis disciplina ad omnia genera quaestionum, quae in litteris sanctis sunt, penetranda et dissoluenda, plurimum ualet; tantum ibi cauenda est libido rixandi et puerilis quaedam ostentatio decipiendi aduersarium”.

that are in vogue beyond the pale of the Church of Christ, as if these could secure for them the happiness they seek; but soberly and carefully to discriminate among them. [...] And in regard to all these we must hold by the maxim, “Not too much of anything;” especially in the case of those which, pertaining as they do to the senses, are subject to the relations of space and time¹¹⁶.

One should not fear even pagan knowledge, for anything that is true, comes from God. Augustine famously compared pagan literature to the spoils that Hebrews took from Egypt, in order to demonstrate that an exegete should not hesitate to take profit from pagan books:

For, as the Egyptians had not only the idols and heavy burdens which the people of Israel hated and fled from, but also vessels and ornaments of gold and silver, and garments, which the same people when going out of Egypt appropriated to themselves, designing them for a better use, not doing this on their own authority, but by the command of God, the Egyptians themselves, in their ignorance, providing them with things which they themselves were not making a good use of; in the same way all branches of heathen learning have not only false and superstitious fancies and heavy burdens of unnecessary toil, which every one of us, when going out under the leadership of Christ from the fellowship of the heathen, ought to abhor and avoid; but they contain also liberal instruction which is better adapted to the use of the truth, and some most excellent precepts of morality; and some truths in regard even to the worship of the One God are found among them¹¹⁷.

Thus, according to the Father of the Church, all knowledge was useful for the better understanding of Scriptures, provided that a scholar was always guided by charity, as the highest principle of Christian life and exegesis.

Augustinian methodology was universally accepted throughout the Middle Ages and into the Renaissance. Erasmus invoked the authority of the bishop of Hippo, when in his *Methodus*, he recommended the same approach:

I am not averse to something Augustine also welcomed, that such natural abilities be furnished and equipped through a modest acquaintance with the more liberal disciplines, namely, dialectic, rhetoric, arithmetic, music, astrology; above all, however, through a knowledge of the objects of nature, for

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 2. 39, p. 72: “quam ob rem uidetur mihi studiosis et ingeniosis adulescentibus et timentibus deum beatam que uitam quaerentibus salubriter praecipere, ut nullas doctrinas, quae praeter ecclesiam Christi exercentur tamquam ad beatam uitam capessendam secure sequi audeant, sed eas sobrie diligenter que diiudicent [...] in quibus omnibus tenendum est: ne quid nimis et maxime in his, quae ad corporis sensus pertinentia uoluntur temporibus et continentur locis”. English translation NPNF, vol. I.2, p. 1255.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 2. 40, pp. 73-74: “Sicut enim Aegyptii non tantum idola habebant et onera grauiora, quae populus Israel detestaretur et fugeret, sed etiam uasa atque ornamenta de auro et argento et uestem, quae ille populus exiens de Aegypto sibi potius tamquam ad usum meliorem clanculo uindicauit, non auctoritate propria, sed praecepto Dei ipsis Aegyptiis nescienter commodantibus ea, quibus non bene utebantur, sic doctrinae omnes gentilium non solum simulata et superstitiosa figmenta graues que sarcinas superuacanei laboris habent, quae unusquisque nostrum duce Christo de societate gentilium exiens debet abominari atque uitare, sed etiam liberales disciplinas usui ueritatis aptiores et quaedam morum praecepta utilissima continent de que ipso uno deo colendo nonnulla uera inueniuntur apud eo”. English translation NPNF, vol. I.2, p. 1257.

example, animals, trees, jewels, and, in addition, places – especially such as divine literature mentions. [...] often the understanding of the mystery hangs upon the very nature of the thing¹¹⁸.

It shows that from the late antiquity until times of Titelmans explaining the literal sense by the knowledge of languages and all other disciplines was a universally accepted practice. We shall now demonstrate how Titelmans used that in practice, starting with philological tools, that correspond to *trivium*, then proceeding to other disciplines that loosely correspond to *quadrivium*, and eventually showing how Titelmans used theology to explain the literal sense.

3.3.1 Words and their meanings

Titelmans often explained to his readers foreign words and obscure concepts from Scriptures. In the beginning of the Book of Ecclesiastes he explained its title:

Ecclesiastes Graece, Latine dicitur concionator. Formatur enim ab ecclesia Ecclesiastes, sicut concionator a concione accipiendo concionem pro congregato in vnum populo, coram quo sermo habetur. Vnde Ecclesiastes dicitur, qui coram ecclesia siue concione auto congregatione populi loquitur¹¹⁹.

He also explained some ambiguous Hebrew words. Hebrew word *debar* used in Eccles. 1:8 (*haddebarim* – הַדְּבָרִים) could mean both “word” and “thing”¹²⁰. Thus, some, like the Septuagint and Jerome in his commentary, translated the Hebrew as “all speech is difficult” (πάντες οἱ λόγοι ἔγκοποι), while others preferred “all things are difficult”. The second part could be understood either in a general sense, or in a cognitive one: “difficult to understand”¹²¹. Similarly, the Hebrew word *reuth* was ambiguous. In Eccles. 1:14 (*Vidi cuncta quae fiunt sub sole, et ecce universa vanitas et afflictio spiritus*) *ruah* (רוּחַ) could mean both wind and spirit. Vanity was as useless as

¹¹⁸ D. Erasmus Roterodamus, *Methodus*, [in:] *Ausgewählte Werke*, ed. H. Holborn, Beck, München 1964, pp. 153–154: “Haud mihi displicet, quod placuit Augustino, ut moderate degustatis elegantioribus disciplinis instruat ac praeparetur, nempe dialectica, rhetorica, arithmetica, musica, astrologia, cum primis autem rerum naturalium cognitione velut animantium, arborum, gemmarum, ad haec locorum, praesertim illorum, quos divinae litterae commemorant. [...] Atqui non raro ex ipsa rei proprietate pendet intellectus mysterii”. English translation: Erasmus of Rotterdam, *The Methodus of Erasmus of Rotterdam*, [in:] *The New Testament Scholarship of Erasmus: An Introduction with Erasmus’ Prefaces and Ancillary Writings*, trans. R.D. Sider, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 2019, CWE 41, pp. 433–434.

¹¹⁹ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Ecclesiasten Salomonis...*, op. cit., f. d3r. Cf. Gregorius Magnus, *Dialogues*, 4.4.1, ed. A. de Vogüé, 1979, SC265, p. 26: “Salomonis liber, in quo haec scripta sunt, ecclesiastes appellatus est, ecclesiastes autem proprie concionator dicitur. In concione uero sententia promitur, per quam tumultuosa turbae seditio conprimatur, et cum multi diuersa sentiunt, per concionantis rationem ad unam sententiam perducuntur”. Gregorius cited in *Biblia cum glossa ordinaria. Pars III...*, op. cit., f. 21r.

¹²⁰ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Ecclesiasten Salomonis...*, op. cit., f. h1r.

¹²¹ Cf. Bonaventura, *Commentarius in librum Ecclesiastae*, 1.8, [in:] *Comentarii in Sacram Scripturam*, ex Typographia Collegii S. Bonaventurae, Ad Claras Aquas (Quaracchi) 1893, Sancti Bonaventurae Opera Omnia VI, p. 15.

grazing the wind. Titelmans observed that in his commentaries Jerome had translated as “electio spiritus” but in the Vulgate as “afflictio spiritus”¹²².

Titelmans tried also to explain the nuances of meaning of some significant words. In the first verse of Job, he explained that the Hebrew word *issah* used there meant a man as a hero and was different from *adam* – a man in general, and *enos* – an evil man¹²³. In Ps. 85(86):5 he tried to explain in more detail a series of adjectives attributed to God¹²⁴. *Suavis* was a translation of Greek *chrestos* (χρηστός), which Titelmans rendered literally as *benignus*, and of Hebrew *tof* (טוֹף), which he translated as *bonum*. The second epithet was a rendering of Greek *epiikes* (ἐπιεικής) that is *modestus* and *mitis*. He gave an example that the term *virtus epiiciae* was used in legal contexts to denote lenient application of laws. It corresponded in meaning with *salach* (סָלַח) used in the Hebrew original, since this verb meant *dimittere* or *propitiari*. He also provided examples from Jerome’s translation from Hebrew, from Felix’s translation¹²⁵ and from the Chaldean paraphrasis¹²⁶. Thus, he used original languages to elucidate the shades of meaning of some significant words.

Original languages were also useful to explain ambiguous words. *Rahab* in Ps. 86(87):4 (*Memor ero Rahab et Babylonis, scientium me*) could have at least three different meanings¹²⁷. It could be the proper name of the prostitute from Jericho (Jos. 2), and thus, according to Titelmans, be a symbol of all repentant sinners¹²⁸. According to experts in Hebrew, that Titelmans did not name¹²⁹, it usually meant Egypt, which was asserted also by the Chaldean translation¹³⁰. Finally, Jerome translated it as “haughtiness” (*superbia*). According to Titelmans, arrogance was very often associated with Egypt, thus Jerome’s translation was harmonious with the Hebrew meaning.

Titelmans also explained terms that were no longer intelligible to Bible readers because of different social and cultural context. In the account of the miracle of Cana (John 2:8), he explained who *Architriclinus* was, starting with the word *triclinium*.

¹²² F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Ecclesiasten Salomonis...*, op. cit., f. h1v.

¹²³ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Lutetiae)...*, op. cit., f. a5v.

¹²⁴ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 222r-v.

¹²⁵ *Psalterium ex hebreo...*, trans. Felix Pratensis, op. cit., f. 40v.

¹²⁶ Titelmans cited A. Giustiniani’s translation from targums, cf. *Psalterium Hebraeum, Graecum, Arabicum et Chaldaeum...*, trans. A. Giustiniani, op. cit., f. p5r.

¹²⁷ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 225r-v.

¹²⁸ Cf. Ambrosius Mediolanensis, *Explanatio psalmorum XII*, 35.23.1, ed. M. Petschenig, 1999, CSEL 64, p. 66. Hieronymus, *Tractatus in Librum Psalmorum*, 86.4, [in:] *Opera homiletica*, ed. G. Morin, 1958, CCSL 78, p. 112: “quicumque peccator est, securus sit: Dominus memor fuit Raab. [...] Raab illius meretricis, quae suscipit exploratores Iesu, quae erat in Hiericho, quo uenerat Iesus, misit duos exploratores.”

¹²⁹ This argument was likely derived from: Nicholas Lyra, *Biblia cum postilla Nicolai de Lyra tertia pars...*, op. cit., f. 215v: “Sciendum quod secundum Hebreos et etiam beatum Hieronymum in translatione iuxta Hebreum hoc nomen Raab quod hic ponitur: non est nomen proprium illius mulieris que recepit nuncios Iosue et abscondit (Iosue secundo). Sed est nomen appellatiuum et significat superbiam, uel superbam, per quod designatur gens Egypti, que tempore Moysi per superbiam fuit ualde rebellis deo, ut habetur in Exodus”.

¹³⁰ *Psalterium Hebraeum, Graecum, Arabicum et Chaldaeum...*, trans. A. Giustiniani, op. cit., f. 56r.

Triclinium locus est in quo discumbitur, dictum a tribus lectis τρεῖς treis enim Graeci tres dicunt et κλίνεν clinen lectum. Tres enim mensas in conuiuio apponere veteres solebant et accumbendo coenare. Hinc architriclinus dicitur, qui triclinio praeest: sicut archimagirus dicitur, qui coquina praeest¹³¹.

A little further he expounded that the Latin term *nummularios* (moneychangers) came from Greek *colybitas* and *cermatistas*¹³². He claimed, invoking Theophylactus as an authority, that κόλυβος (*colibus*) meant a small coin, equivalent of Roman *nummum*¹³³. Similarly, κέρμα (*cerma*) meant a small coin. Thus, the term *nummularius* was to be understood as the one who changed large nominals into small coins.

Titelmans also explained some concepts related to the Jewish religion. In a comment to John 7:2 he explained the feast of tabernacles (*festa scenophegiorum*)¹³⁴. In Greek it is *scenopegia* (σκηνοπηγία), the “h” being added by the Latins. It came from the noun *scenos* (σκῆνος) – a tent – and a verb *pegnyimi* (πήγνυμι), which meant “to fasten” or “to fix”. He explained that the name was used in plural, the same as bacchanalia. In an annotation to Matt. 2:23 he explained the term *Nazaraeus* that was attributed to Jesus¹³⁵. He said, that if it was written with a letter *zain*, it meant separated, consecrated to Go – thus, the Nazarenes of the Old Testament. If, however, the word was spelled with the letter *tzadick* (sic!), it meant a flower or a bud¹³⁶. Titelmans found both meanings very apt for their spiritual significance. This example shows that he was not incompetent in the original languages of the Bible but was more interested in exploring spiritual meanings than in philological inquiry.

¹³¹ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio paraphrastica in Ioannem...*, op. cit., f. c4r. Cf. Bonaventura, *Commentarius in Evangelium Ioannis*, [in:] *Comentarii in Sacram Scripturam*, ex Typographia Collegii S. Bonaventurae, Ad Claras Aquas (Quaracchi) 1893, Sancti Bonaventurae Opera Omnia VI, p. 270: “Triclinium, id est, tres ordines discumbentium, altitudine distantes; inde architriclinus, quia praeerat convivio ordinis trium mensarum; vel architriclinus, princeps trium camerarum; vel generaliter, qui praeest servientibus, ut dicit Chrysostomus”. D. Erasmus, *Annotationes in Nouum Testamentum (pars secunda)...*, op. cit., p. 70. Neither Bonaventura nor Erasmus explained the etymology.

¹³² F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio paraphrastica in Ioannem...*, op. cit., ff. c4v-c5r. Cf. D. Erasmus, *Annotationes in Nouum Testamentum (pars secunda)...*, op. cit., p. 70. Erasmus spoke only of *cerma*.

¹³³ Theophylactus, *Commentarius in Joannis Evangelium*, PG 123, col. 1198. Theophylactus’ authority was also cited by Thomas Aquinas, *Catena aurea in quatuor evangelia*, in Marcum 11.3, ed. A. Guarienti, Marietti, Torino 1953, p. 519: “Theophylactus. Nummularios vocat campsores nummorum: nummus enim genus aeris minuti est”.

¹³⁴ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio paraphrastica in Ioannem...*, op. cit., f. k6v. Titelmans’ explanation was likely derived from D. Erasmus, *Annotationes in Nouum Testamentum (pars secunda)...*, op. cit., p. 96.

¹³⁵ F. Titelmans, *Paraphrastica elucidatio in Matthaem...*, op. cit., f. 23r. Thomas Aquinas, *Catena aurea in quatuor evangelia*, in Matthaem 2.11, op. cit., p. 44. Erasmus offered a more complex philological discussion in D. Erasmus, *Annotationes in Nouum Testamentum (pars prima)*, ed. P.F. Hovingh, Elsevier, Amsterdam 2003, ASD VI–5, pp. 108–110.

¹³⁶ Both meanings were known to mediaeval exegetes, eg: Petrus Comestor, *Historia scholastica*, 7, PL 198, col. 1220: “Nazaraeus sonat sanctus, vel florens, vel germinans.” Cf. *Biblia cum glossa ordinaria. Pars IV...*, op. cit., f. 923v. Titelmans added philological explanations of two meanings.

His explanation of word *racha* in Matt. 5:22 was based on ancient sources cited in Aquinas' *Catena Aurea*¹³⁷. The word could mean *vanus* or *inanis* (Jerome), but more likely it was a particle expressing contempt, without any particular meaning (Chrysostom), just like the Latin *heu*¹³⁸. Also in Matt. 9:9 Titelmans followed Thomas in asserting that *teolonio* is to be understood as a place where the taxes were collected, not as the tax itself¹³⁹. He expanded, however, the philological explanation. First, he noted that some authors wrote erroneously *teloneum* for *telonium*¹⁴⁰. He cited the Greek original (ἐπὶ τὸ τελόνιον) to demonstrate the correct spelling and explained that it was a derivative of the word *telos* (τέλος), that is tax. He also explained the meaning of *apostolus*, deriving it from Greek *apostello* (ἀποστέλλω), that is to send, or to dispatch¹⁴¹.

In Matt. 21:9 he elucidated the Hebrew exclamation *osanna* in the following way:

Osanna canimus vel dicimus vel clamamus filio Dauid. Vocem autem Hebraicam osanna, vulgo non perfecte iuxta Hebraicam orthographiam exprimimus quemadmodum nec Graeci, qui scribunt ὡς ἄννα, hos anna, cum Hebraei scribant hosiah na. Verbum enim, hosiah, significat salua vel saluifica. Nam autem, interiectio est blandientis, pro qua nos vtimur quaeso vel obsecro, vel (comice) amabo¹⁴².

All the examples above show that Titelmans used original languages to clarify the meaning of some biblical words and more obscure concepts. He relied to a degree on mediaeval and renaissance sources, including Erasmus' *Annotationes*, but also added some philological expertise in Hebrew and especially in Greek, with which he was clearly more at ease.

He also used references to original languages to clarify words that could not be perfectly translated into Latin. Ps. 8:3 read: *ex ore infantium et lactentium perfecisti laudem*. This phrasing presented a problem for Titelmans since he had earlier identified children with apostles¹⁴³. The apostles had wisdom that no one could oppose (cf. Luke 21) while children are not wise. The succour came from philology. The Greek word *nipion* (νέπιον) meant an adolescent more than an

¹³⁷ F. Titelmans, *Paraphrastica elucidatio in Matthaem...*, op. cit., f. 48r.

¹³⁸ Thomas Aquinas, *Catena aurea in quatuor evangelia*, in Matthaem 5.13, op. cit., p. 84: "Probabilis autem est non esse vocem significantem aliquid, sed indignantis animi motum exprimentem. Has autem voces grammatici interiectiones vocant, velut cum dicitur a dolente: heu. Chrysostomus in matth. Vel racha est verbum contemptus et parvipensionis. [...] Hieronymus. Vel racha Hebraeum verbum est, et dicitur chenos, idest inanis aut vacuus, quem nos possumus vulgata iniuria absque cerebro nuncupare". Erasmus mentioned both explanations cited by Titelmans adding also some others: D. Erasmus, *Annotationes in Nouum Testamentum (pars prima)...*, op. cit., pp. 138–140.

¹³⁹ F. Titelmans, *Paraphrastica elucidatio in Matthaem...*, op. cit., f. 84r. Thomas Aquinas, *Catena aurea in quatuor evangelia*, in Matthaem 9.2, op. cit., p. 151: "Dicit autem sedentem in telonio, idest in domo ubi vectigalia congregantur. Erat enim telonarius dictus a telon Graece, quod est vectigal".

¹⁴⁰ See for example: Jacobus de Voragine, *Jacobi a Voragine Legenda aurea*, ed. J.G.T. Graesse, Zeller, Osnabrück 1969, p. 626.

¹⁴¹ F. Titelmans, *Paraphrastica elucidatio in Matthaem...*, op. cit., f. 98v. Cf. D. Erasmus, *Annotationes in Nouum Testamentum (pars prima)...*, op. cit., p. 186.

¹⁴² F. Titelmans, *Paraphrastica elucidatio in Matthaem...*, op. cit., f. 210r. This explanation could have been derived from D. Erasmus, *Annotationes in Nouum Testamentum (pars prima)...*, op. cit., pp. 280–282.

¹⁴³ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., ff. 16v-17r. Such an identification was customary: *Biblia cum glossa ordinaria. Pars II...*, op. cit., f. 233r. Petrus Lombardus, *Commentarium in Psalmos*, 8.3, op. cit., col. 124.

infant. The Hebrew likewise. Titelmans invoked the authority of Reuchlin's *Rudimenta hebraicae* to show that the word *vllim* (וְלִילִים) meant *paruulum* or *iuuenem*, and not an infant¹⁴⁴. Thus, it should be understood as referring to humility of the apostles, not to their inexperience. If somebody was not persuaded by a philological argument, Titelmans proposed another, noting that the text could be understood as speaking of apostles before the Pentecost, when they had still been unwise.

Ps. 31(32):6 spoke of *tempus inveniendi*, which Titelmans linked to 2Cor. 6:2 on the basis of the Hebrew text. He invoked translations by Jerome and Felix to demonstrate that it should be understood as the time opportune for conversion¹⁴⁵. In the case of Ps. 67(68) Latin needed two words to translate Greek *chionothisontae* (χιονωθήσονται): *niue dealbabuntur*. Titelmans made a reference to the vernacular giving an example of a words in “*sermo teutonicus*” (Flemish version of Low German): *sneeuuivit*, which expressed the same concept¹⁴⁶.

Translation of some words had profound theological consequences. Greek *metanoite* (μετανοείτε), traditionally translated as *poenitentiam agite* (Matt. 3:2; 4:17) had been criticised by Erasmus and later by Luther. Erasmus claimed that the Greek expression was incorrectly considered to mean external acts of penitence, while the true meaning was an inner conversion of heart¹⁴⁷. He proposed the translation: *resipiscite* or *ad mentem redite*. Luther, however, claimed that this translation obscured the theological meaning of repentance: it was not about external confession, but about internal conversion. He wrote to Spalatin in 1518:

ausus sum putare eos falsos esse, qui operibus poenitentiae tantum tribuerunt, ut poenitentiae vix reliquum nobis foecerint praeter frigidam quasdam satisfactionem et laboriosissimam confessionem, latino scilicet vocabulo abducti, quod poenitentiam agere actionem magis sonet quam mutationem affectus et graeco illi “Metanoim” nullo modo satisfacit¹⁴⁸.

Titelmans was certainly aware of the problem, for he was well acquainted with Erasmus' New Testament. In fact, he suggested that *metanoite* could be translated as *redite ad mentem*, but added immediately: “idem significat poenitere, vel poenitentiam agere”¹⁴⁹. Thus, Titelmans neither acknowledged that he used Erasmus' translation, nor did he enter into the theological discussion associated with this term and pretended that both translations meant the same.

¹⁴⁴ Cf. J. Reuchlin, *De rudimentis Hebraicis*, Thomae Anselmi, [s.l.] 1506, p. 378.

¹⁴⁵ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 72r. Cf. *Psalterium ex hebreo...*, trans. Felix Pratensis, op. cit., f. 17r.

¹⁴⁶ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 162v.

¹⁴⁷ D. Erasmus, *Annotationes in Nouum Testamentum (pars prima)...*, op. cit., pp. 110–112.

¹⁴⁸ M. Luther, *Resolutiones disputationum de indulgentiarum virtute. 1518*, [in:] *Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe. 1 Band*, Hermann Böhlau, Weimar 1883, p. 526. Luther criticised external understanding of penitence already in his famous 95 theses, although there he still used a translation “penitentiam agite”, see: M. Luther, *Disputatio pro declaratione virtutis indulgentiarum. 1517*, [in:] *Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe. 1 Band*, Hermann Böhlau, Weimar 1883, p. 233.

¹⁴⁹ F. Titelmans, *Paraphrastica elucidatio in Matthaem...*, op. cit., f. 27v.

He also used Erasmus' annotations in Matt. 6:7; again, without acknowledging it. He explained that the word *battologisite* (βαπτολογήσητε), to speak too much, came from a certain poet, name of Batto, infamous for his loquacity¹⁵⁰. This was an explanation provided also by Erasmus in his annotations, on the basis of Ovidius¹⁵¹. Not a very good philology from either of them, since the word is most probably onomatopoeic¹⁵².

Titelmans also referred occasionally to ancient poets to explicate some difficult words. In Ps. 50(51):16 he argued that *exultabit* should be understood as “exultando laudabit or cantabit”¹⁵³. He used an example from Vergil, who wrote in Aeneid: *nec vox hominem sonat*¹⁵⁴. *Sonat* here should be taken to mean *sonando*, just as in the case of the psalm. He also reproached those, who corrected *exultabit* into *exaltabit*¹⁵⁵. Greek *agalliasetae* (ἀγαλλιάσεται) clearly meant *exulto*, while *exalto* corresponded to Greek *hyprosi* (ὑψώσει). Interestingly, he made no reference to the Hebrew original, but used instead the authority of Jerome's and Felix's translations from that language¹⁵⁶. This is perhaps another testimony to Titelmans' poor knowledge of Hebrew at that stage (before 1531).

Commentaries written subsequently show his greater competence in that language. In the commentary on Job 13:15 (*etiamsi occideret me in ipso sperabo*) he wrote:

Pro eo quod nos legimus, in ipso, hebraicus textus habet dictionem la נל quae plerunque negatione est. Vnde nonnulli Hebraeorum per negationem legunt: Etiamsi occiderit me, non sperabo? Quod tamen si legatur per interrogationem, vt expectetur responsio affirmatiua, eundem sensum habet cum nostra vulgate lectione, in hunc modum: Etiamsi me deus occiderit, putatis quod non sperabo in eo? putatis quod spem meam proiciam? Vtique sperabo in Deo, sicut et nunc spero. Alii vero la נל pro lo וי positum dicunt, quod valet, in eo. Sic enim nonnunquam apud Hebraeos pro isto illud ponitur, vau mutato in Aleph. Atque huius sententiae fuit Hieronymus, qui in ipso vertit, sine negatione¹⁵⁷.

Thus, as the examples provided above demonstrate, Titelmans was not opposed to a moderate use of original languages. As his linguistic competence grew, he increasingly used Greek and Hebrew to elucidate difficult and ambiguous words. Yet philology always played only an auxiliary role for him. It could be used to clarify the text, without, however, challenging its theological meaning.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid. f. 59r.

¹⁵¹ D. Erasmus, *Annotationes in Nouum Testamentum (pars prima)*..., op. cit., pp. 152–153.

¹⁵² G. Kittel, ed., *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, Kohlhammer, Stuttgart 1933, vol. 1, p. 598.

¹⁵³ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos*..., op. cit., f. 132r.

¹⁵⁴ Virgil, *Aeneid*, 1.327, op. cit., p. 284.

¹⁵⁵ Variant *exaltabit* present in few manuscripts, see: *Biblia sacra iuxta vulgatam versionem*..., eds. R. Weber and R. Gryson, op. cit., p. 832.

¹⁵⁶ *Psalterium ex hebreo*..., trans. Felix Pratensis, op. cit., f. 26r.

¹⁵⁷ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Lutetiae)*..., op. cit., f. i2r-v.

3.3.2. Grammatica

It was not enough to clarify the meaning of words; the literal sense had also to explain their relations. For that an exegete had to make an ample use of the first of the disciplines taught in the *trivium: grammatica*. Titelmans frequently commented on grammatical issues present not only in the Latin language, but also in Greek and occasionally in Hebrew.

The first task of grammatical analysis was to establish the correct form of words in respect to gender, number, and case. For instance, in Ps. 39(40):6 in the phrase *multiplicati sunt super numerum* it was not clear what exactly was multiplied. Titelmans observed that the Greek word *eplithynthisan* (ἐπληθύνθησαν) was gender insensitive and could be paired with any¹⁵⁸. Thus, some paired it with *miracula* and translated as neutral, others with *cogitationes* and translated as feminine. The Franciscan observed that in old Latin codices, it was often translated as masculine, with an assumed object *fideles*, as he explained in *elucidatio*¹⁵⁹. In Greek this was grammatically possible, and although it did not seem to be the best solution, such a translation should not be rejected because of its antiquity. Titelmans admonished his readers: “Neque enim temere cuiuslibet iudicio arbitramur esse commutanda aut innouanda, quae sunt plurimorum saeculorum vsu confirmata, nisi vbi vel ratio vel autoritas id fieri debere manifeste edoceat”¹⁶⁰. Thus, grammatical considerations were in themselves insufficient, and one should also consider the authority of an interpretative tradition.

Not only gender, but also number could sometimes be a difficulty. For instance, in the first verse of Ps. 124(125) there was an abrupt change of the grammatical number: *qui confidunt in Domino, quasi mons Sion, non commouebit in aeternum qui habitat in Hierusalem*. Titelmans explained that this could be understood in three different ways¹⁶¹. Firstly, one could add a verb “to be” in the following way: “qui confidunt in Domino, quasi mons Sion erunt. Non commouebit etc.”¹⁶². Moreover, one could also link the last part with the penultimate: “eos qui in Domino confidunt non esse commouendos in aeternum, sicut mons Sion qui in Hierusalem habitat (id est, situs, firmatus, siue stabilitus est) commoueri non potest”¹⁶³. Finally, one could also link the last

¹⁵⁸ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 95r.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., f. 94r. Cf. Augustinus Hipponensis, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 39.10, op. cit. p. 433: “multiplicati sunt super numerum. Est numerus, sunt super numerum. Numerus certus est, pertinens ad illam caelestem Ierusalem. Nouit enim Dominus, qui sunt eius, Christianos timentes, Christianos fideles, Christianos praecepta seruantes, Dei vias ambulantes, a peccatis abstinentes, si ceciderint confitentes; ipsi ad numerum pertinent”. Cited also in: Petrus Lombardus, *Commentarium in Psalmos*, 39.8, op. cit., col. 401.

¹⁶⁰ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 95v.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., ff. 331v-332r.

¹⁶² Ibid., f. 332r. Cf. Petrus Lombardus, *Commentarium in Psalmos*, 124.1, op. cit., col. 1151.

¹⁶³ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 332r.

phrase with the first: “qui confidunt in Domino, qui habitat in Hierusalem, non commouebit in aeternum, sicut mons Sion, qui firmus et stabilis moueri non potest”¹⁶⁴.

He did not, however, consider this disagreement in numbers as a mistake, but rather as a peculiar feature of the biblical style. “Neque vero nouum est in scripturis, subitem fieri numeri mutationem, quemadmodum etiam personae aut generis non raro solet fieri subita commutatio”¹⁶⁵. For instance, in Song 1:4 the bride says: *trahe me post te curremus*. *Trahe* is singular, but *curremus*, plural. Titelmans explained that singular referred to the Church, which is one, and the plural to its many members. It could also signify mutual help of sister churches within one Catholic Church¹⁶⁶. Similarly in Song 5:15 (*species eius ut Libani, electus ut cedri*) Titelmans pointed out that *Libani* is genitive singular, while *cedri* nominative plural (as it was clear in both Greek and Hebrew)¹⁶⁷. The singular *Libanus* emphasised uniqueness of Christ the Groom, while plural *cedri* his superiority over all creation¹⁶⁸. Sometimes a singular noun had a plural meaning. This was the case of Job 19:19 (*et quem maxime diligebam, auersatus est me*)¹⁶⁹. The Septuagint translated it as plural, as did Santes Pagninus from Hebrew¹⁷⁰. The plural number corresponded better with the story of Job, but also with its Christological interpretation. In all three examples above, issues relating to the grammatical number were resolved by means of spiritual interpretations, showing once again that for Titelmans, philology was only auxiliary to theology.

In some instances the confusion regarded a grammatical case. In Song 8:12 (*mille tui, pacifice, et dua centi, his qui custodiunt fructus eius*) Titelmans claimed that many commentators misunderstood this verse. “Locus iste a plerisque Latinis interpretatibus valde torquetur in sensus varios, parum aptos et originali lectioni Hebraicae atque Graecae parum conuenientes”¹⁷¹. Many read *pacifici*, as nominative plural, which denoted an ignorance of both Greek and Hebrew texts¹⁷². In Hebrew, observed the Franciscan, there stood Solomon’s proper name, which meant *pacificus*, and it was in dative. Similarly, the Greek text also was in the dative: χίλιοι τῷ σολομῶν, that is,

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., f. 332r

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., f. 332r.

¹⁶⁶ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum...*, op. cit., f. 10r-v.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., f. 123v.

¹⁶⁸ Cf. Petrus Joannis Oliui, *Expositio in Canticum canticorum*, 5, op. cit., p. 242: “‘Species eius ut Libani’ id est: sic est omnium virtutum virentibus et vernantibus herbis et arboribus ac rivis ac fontibus adornatus, sicut est mons ‘Libani’. Sic etiam est immensus et solidus et excelsus et niveo candore nitescens sicut mons ‘Libani’. ‘Electus ut cedri’, id est: super omnes sanctos et creaturas praevalens sicut cedrus ceteris arboribus est altior”.

¹⁶⁹ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Lutetiae)...*, op. cit., f. p3r.

¹⁷⁰ *Biblia...*, trans. Sanctus Pagninus, op. cit., f. 180r.

¹⁷¹ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum...*, op. cit., f. 188v.

¹⁷² Cf. Beda Venerabilis, *In Cantica canticorum libri sex*, 5.8, op. cit., p. 355: “Item quia pacifici appellantur ab eo quod pacem facere soleant sicut pacati sunt qui pacis iura custodiunt pacifici sunt sanctis argentei quos pro ueritate tribuunt qui ad uisionem perpetuae pacis quae supernae ciuitatis ac matris omnium nostrum nouae Hierusalem uocabulo consuevit exprimi iter illis aperiunt patrimonia que pauperibus Christi dispergere quam ipsi possidere maluerunt”.

“*mille tibi, o Salomon, vel o pacifice*”¹⁷³. He commented that this could be also rendered into Latin with vocative or genitive, the second case presupposing a verb *sunt* or *debentur*.

In Ps. 121(122):4 (*illuc enim ascenderunt tribus tribus Domini, testimonium Israel*) Titelmans observed that the word “Israel” should be translated in dative, since the Hebrew text had a letter *lamed* that indicated such a case¹⁷⁴. Thus, the phrase *testimonium Israel* was to be read as a parenthesis. Similarly in Ps. 134(135):7 (*fulgura in pluuiam fecit*), the Hebrew particle *lamed* before word *pluuiae* could mean “*pluuiae, vel ad pluuiam, vel pro pluuiam*”, with a temporal sense: after the terror of lightnings came fertilising rain¹⁷⁵. Felix also translated in this way, putting “rain” in the ablative¹⁷⁶. Interestingly, Titelmans wrote as if there were cases in Hebrew, which is obviously not the case. Most likely he tried to make the issue intelligible for his readers, who were only familiar with the Latin grammar.

In some instances, Titelmans demonstrated a more profound understanding of historical grammar. In Matt. 10:4 he clarified that *Scariotis* was not a genitive of place, thus Judas of Scariot, but a nominative. He argued:

Nam Graece est ὁ ἰουδας ἰσχαριότης. Solet autem ηἰ in longum apud Latinos in e mutari, quod Graecis vocabulis vtuntur Latini, vt vbi per duo η longa Graeci dicunt προφητῆς prophitis, nos dicamus prophetes, utroque η longo in e longum mutato. [...] Addunt quoque Graeci iota in principio, dicentes Iscariotes, sed Latini omittunt primam literam¹⁷⁷.

He had a sufficient grasp of Latin and Greek grammar to understand that the Vulgate’s translation was occasionally awkward and contorted, but he was nevertheless unwilling to concede that the Vulgate contained grammatical errors. Indeed, he often tried to defend the Vulgate’s grammatical mistakes. In his comment on Matt. 22:10 (*impletae sunt nuptiae discumbentium*) he evidently used Erasmus’ *Annotationes* but twisted its argument in a completely opposite direction. Erasmus claimed that translating this verse “*interpres dormitans Graecum genitiuum reliquit*”¹⁷⁸. Titelmans agreed that usually the verb *implere* would be accompanied by ablative *discumbentibus*¹⁷⁹. Erasmus cited a verse from Aeneid, where *implere* was accompanied by the genitive: “*implentur veteris Bacchi*”¹⁸⁰, commenting ironically that it was most unlikely that the old translator tried to imitate the Poet. Titelmans, however, ignored the irony and quoted the very same verse, doubtlessly derived from Erasmus’ work, arguing that it did in fact demonstrated the

¹⁷³ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum...*, op. cit., f. 189r.

¹⁷⁴ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 329v.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., f. 343r.

¹⁷⁶ *Psalterium ex hebreo...*, trans. Felix Pratensis, op. cit., f. 58v.

¹⁷⁷ F. Titelmans, *Paraphrastica elucidatio in Matthaeum...*, op. cit., ff. 98v-99r.

¹⁷⁸ D. Erasmus, *Annotationes in Nouum Testamentum (pars prima)...*, op. cit., p. 292.

¹⁷⁹ F. Titelmans, *Paraphrastica elucidatio in Matthaeum...*, op. cit., f. 223r.

¹⁸⁰ Virgil, *Aeneid*, 1.215, op. cit., p. 276.

Vulgate's correctness. In other words, Titelmans took evidence provided by Erasmus, but used it to defend rather than to correct the Vulgate. While the Humanist could not have read Titelmans' commentary on Matthew, it nevertheless was this kind of abuse of his work that aggravated him¹⁸¹.

Grammatical issues could have a profound theological significance. Titelmans devoted some discussion to an old *crux interpretatorum* of John 8:25 – *Principium, qui et loquor vobis*¹⁸². He said that if *principium* was read as nominative the sense was “I am the beginning”, and he invoked Ambrose as an authority for such a variant¹⁸³. Yet, he observed, in Greek it stood in accusative: *tin archin* (την ἀρχήν). Augustine resolved it saying it must be linked with an assumed verb ‘to believe’ with a sense: *principium me credite*¹⁸⁴. Others, said the Franciscan, took *principium* in an adverbial sense: *principium, ille ego sum qui et loquor vobis*. This interpretation was, however, difficult to accept, since in Greek the praenomen was not masculine *hos* (ὃς) but neutral *hoti* (ὅτι), which could also have an adverbial sense: *quia*. Thus, Bede the Venerable read: *principium, quia loquor vobis*¹⁸⁵. Chrysostom, on the other hand, emphasised that this phrase signified that the listeners were not worthy to hear Jesus' words¹⁸⁶. Titelmans invoked numerous authorities, all of whom, bar Ambrose, were cited also in Aquinas' *Catena Aurea*, which was likely his source here¹⁸⁷. The Franciscan concluded conservatively: “nobis in Elucidatione visum est, sensum Latinorum authorum, Augustini atque Ambrosii, quo Christus se appellat rerum omnium principium, Diuinitatemque simul et humanitatem breuissimo verbo insinuat”¹⁸⁸. Thus, although he was aware of philological difficulties, he chose the solution which was the soundest on the theological level, even if it was the least sound on the philological.

Apart from clarifying the morphology, that is, the word forms, one had also to elucidate the syntax, that is, their mutual connections. Here Titelmans was not shy to use his competence in Greek and Hebrew when he considered it necessary. In Ps. 50(51):18 (*Quoniam si voluisses sacrificium, dedissem utique; holocaustis non delectaberis*) he considered whether the adverb *utique* should better be linked with the preceding verb (*utique dedissem*) or with the following one

¹⁸¹ Cf. D. Erasmus, *Responsio ad Collationes cuiusdam iuuenis gerontodidascali*, LB, vol. 9, col. 966B: “Saepe Fabrum docet, quod ex meis hausit Annotationibus, imo nonnunquam me docet, quod ex mei scriptis didicit”.

¹⁸² F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio paraphrastica in Ioannem...*, op. cit., ff. m3v-m4v.

¹⁸³ Cf. Ambrosius Mediolanensis, *Exameron*, 1.4.15, ed. C. Schenkl, 1902, CSEL 32, p. 13: “Est etiam initium mysticum, ut illud est: Ego sum primus et nouissimus, initium et finis et illud in euangelio praecipue, quod interrogatus dominus quis esset respondit: Initium quod et loquor uobis. Qui uere et secundum diuinitatem est initium omnium, quia nemo ante ipsum, et finis, quia nemo ultra ipsum est”.

¹⁸⁴ Cf. Augustinus Hipponensis, *In Iohannis euangelium tractatus*, 38.11, op. cit., p. 344: “cum ergo dicerent Iudaei: tu quis es? Ille qui sciebat esse ibi quosdam credituros, et ideo dixisse: tu quis es, ut scirent quid illum credere deberent, respondit: principium; non tamquam diceret: principium sum; sed tamquam diceret: principium me credite”. Augustine was cited in Thomas Aquinas, *Catena aurea in quatuor euangelia*, in Iohannem 8.6, op. cit., p. 451; and in *Biblia cum glossa ordinaria. Pars IV...*, op. cit., f. 1043r.

¹⁸⁵ Cited in Thomas Aquinas, *Catena aurea in quatuor euangelia*, in Iohannem 8.6op. cit., p. 451.

¹⁸⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*, in Iohannem 8.6, p. 451.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, in Iohannem 8.6, p. 451.

¹⁸⁸ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio paraphrastica in Ioannem...*, op. cit., f. m4v.

(*utique non delectaberis*)¹⁸⁹. The Greek text clearly had the first meaning, which was also testified, according to the Franciscan, by Augustine¹⁹⁰. Many Latin texts, however, had the second¹⁹¹. In the Hebrew original the adverb was absent, thus the problem did not arise. For Titelmans, however, it was the Latin text that was authoritative, not the Hebrew one.

Similarly in an annotation on Ps. 126(127):4, he argued there were two ways one could understand the words: *ecce haereditas domini filii, merces fructus ventris*¹⁹². One could understand them as parallel, with *fructus* understood as nominative; hence *fili* were identical with *merces* and *fructus*: those who through water and spirit were regenerated into the life of grace. It was, however, also possible to read *merces est fructus* and interpret it as Christ, the fruit of the virginal womb. According to Titelmans this was the sense of Thomas Aquinas' antiphon to the vespers of Corpus Christi: "Fructus ventris virginalis, est haereditas sanctorum, adimplens bonorum desiderium"¹⁹³. Hebrew gave no clue here as to the correct understanding, for both translations from Hebrew were acceptable. In Greek, however, *fructus* stood in genitive, which, according to Titelmans, rendered the first interpretation more apt. Characteristically, he did not choose between them, but left both as a possibility.

Syntax could be the difference between orthodoxy and heresy. In John 1:3 the reading: "sine ipso factum est nihil. Quod factum est in ipso vita erat", common among the Latins, was considered as heretical by some Greek Fathers. Chrysostom and Theophylactus considered such a variant heterodox, supporting Macedonian heresy, as if the Holy Spirit (that is the life that was in Christ) had been created¹⁹⁴. Titelmans, however, argued, that the Latin variant could be understood in an orthodox sense. He summoned Augustine as an authority and also, more significantly, Cyril of Alexandria, who, he claimed, was more authoritative since he was more ancient than any of the above cited¹⁹⁵. According to Cyril, *ipso* did not refer to *verbum* but to *quod factum est*. The sense, Titelmans explained, was that Logos was the life in all creatures. He also invoked the authority of Hilary of Poitiers and again of Theophylactus. He argued, however, that he could not discuss these

¹⁸⁹ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 132r.

¹⁹⁰ Cf. Augustinus Hipponensis, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 50.21, op. cit., p. 614.

¹⁹¹ Cf. Thomas de Aquino, *In Psalmos reportatio*, 50.8, [in:] *Sancti Thomae Aquinatis Opera omnia*, Typis Petri Fiaccadori, Parmae 1863, vol. 14, p. 349.

¹⁹² F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 334r.

¹⁹³ Cf. Bonaventura, *Sancti Bonaventurae Sermones dominicales*, 12.12, ed. J.-G. Bougerol, Collegium S. Bonaventurae Grottaferrata, Roma 1977, p. 217: "Christus est fructus ventris virginalis datus in hereditatem perpetuam et mercedem deliciosam dilectis filiis dei post istam vitam".

¹⁹⁴ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio paraphrastica in Ioannem...*, op. cit., f. b2v. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Catena aurea in quatuor evangelia...*, in *Iohannem 1.7*, op. cit., p. 332: "Chrysostomus in Ioannem. Vel aliter. Non apponemus finale punctum, ubi dicitur sine ipso factum est nihil, secundum haereticos. Illi enim volentes spiritum sanctum creatum dicere, aiunt quod factum est in ipso, vita erat".

¹⁹⁵ Titelmans was evidently wrong, as Cyril post-dated both Augustine and Chrysostom.

authors in detail for the brevity of space. Worth noting that also here we can discern that Titelmans used Erasmus' *Annotationes* and very likely also Aquinas' *Catena Aurea*¹⁹⁶.

There are numerous other examples of Titelmans' grammatical clarifications, however those examples suffice to demonstrate that he was keen to use original languages, whenever it seemed needed. Nevertheless, it was the authority of Church Fathers and of the Vulgate which in most cases took the upper hand, even if philological evidence suggested otherwise.

3.3.3. *Rhetorica*

It was not enough to explicate the meaning of words and their grammatical relations. It was also necessary to heed their rhetorical sense. Titelmans was aware of it and frequently commented on rhetorical aspects of biblical text.

At the beginning of his commentary on Ecclesiastes, he explained that the expression *vanitas vanitatum* signifies the greatest possible vanity, just as Mary is called *virgine virginum* and Christ *rex regum*¹⁹⁷. Further, in Eccles. 4:2 he explained that Kohelet's praise of the dead was a rhetorical figure, akin to that of 1 Macc. 2:13 and Luke 23:29 and expressing profound grief and tribulation¹⁹⁸. Annotating Ps. 130(131) Titelmans explained the sense of rhetorical questions in psalms. The phrase *si non humiliter sentiebam, sed exalta animam meam* (Ps. 130:2) emphasised the humility of the psalmist, in a similar way as rhetorical questions in psalms 88, 94 and 136¹⁹⁹. Numbers also had their rhetorical sense. In Job 19:3 Titelmans asserted that ten had a rhetorical sense, indicating the profundity of confusion²⁰⁰. Similarly in John 9:57 fifty years of age were a rhetorical number to indicate Jesus' relative youth, not a reference to his actual age²⁰¹.

A very significant rhetorical explanation can be found in Job 13:23. Titelmans commented the verse: *Quantas habeo iniquitates et peccata, scelera mea et delicta* with the following words:

¹⁹⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *Catena aurea in quatuor evangelia*, in Iohannem 1.3, op. cit., pp. 332–333; D. Erasmus, *Annotationes in Nouum Testamentum (pars secunda)*..., op. cit., pp. 40–42.

¹⁹⁷ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Ecclesiasten Salomonis*..., op. cit., f. d5r.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, f. n2r.

¹⁹⁹ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos*..., op. cit., f. 338r.

²⁰⁰ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Lutetiae)*..., op. cit., f. p1r.

²⁰¹ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio paraphrastica in Ioannem*..., op. cit., f. m6r.

Quidam curiose ista distingunt (sic!), iniquitatem peculiariter ad deum, peccatum ad seipsum, scelus ad proximum, delictum in omissione intelligentes²⁰². Alii quoque distinguunt aliter²⁰³. Nobis huiusmodi coaceruatione non aliud quam exaggeratio quadam orationis videtur significari: quasi dicat: Necessae est admodum multa et magna peccata, iniquitates, scelera et delicta me habere, si ita res habeat, vt asserunt isti amici mei, quod pro meis peccatis tam grauiter affligat²⁰⁴.

Such distinctions were typical for the scholastic exegesis, but Titelmans distanced himself from them. Instead, he emphasised the rhetorical significance of the commented phrase, which was much more in line with the humanist approach to textual analysis. He showed here his sensitivity to the literary qualities of biblical text, refusing to treat it as a collection of theological statements.

Titelmans was also attentive to poetic devices in Scriptures. In Ps. 77(78):12 he noted that parallelisms were a characteristic feature of the Hebraic poetry: “Primum illud est in hoc Psalmo aduerrentum, quod frequens admodum est eiusdem in eodem versu repetitio, ita vt pars secunda expositio sit partis prioris, quod licet in aliis Psalmis frequens sit”²⁰⁵. He illustrated the case with several examples from the same psalm: verses 1, 5, 10, and 27.

Titelmans frequently identified standard rhetorical figures and provided classical names for them. The most frequent was the hyperbola. According to Lausberg, “Hyperbole is an extreme, literally implausible onomastic surpassing of the *verbum proprium*”²⁰⁶. In Eccles. 1:10 Titelmans identified the phrase *nihil sub sole nouum* as a hyperbole²⁰⁷. This is notable, for in mediaeval exegesis this adage was often taken literally. The unchangeability of the Universe was attested also by the ancients, of whom Titelmans cited Aristotle and Terentius²⁰⁸. Bonaventure in his commentary discussed this statement in relation to prophecies of Jeremiah and the Book of Revelation, which both predicted new things created by God²⁰⁹. Yet it was self-evident to him that in the normal course of action there is no novelty under the sun. Titelmans, however, could not accept it so easily as previous generations. He wrote “Non enim negare possumus, quin interdum

²⁰² Cf. Dionysius Cartusianus, “Enarratio in librum Iob”, art. 31, op. cit., p. 494: “Quaedam peccata fiunt in proximum, quae hic designantur per iniquitates; quaedam in se ipsum, ut vitia gustus et tactus, quae ipsius peccantis personae et corpori maxime nocent, quae jam per peccata notantur; quaedam fiunt directe in Deum, quae sunt contra tria praecepta primae tabulae, ut sunt infidelitas, blasphemia, sacrilegium, odium Dei: et ista vocantur scelera, quasi accusatione dignissima. Rursus, praecepta divina duplicia sunt, scilicet affirmativa: et contra haec sunt peccata omissionis, quae hic dicuntur delicta, quasi derelicta, quia in eis homo omittit et negligit quod Deus fieri iubet”.

²⁰³ Cf. Alexander de Hales, *Summa theologica*, II/2, inquisitio 3, tract. 2.1, q. 1, c. 2, no. 314 Collegium S. Bonaventurae, Clarae Aquae 1924, p. 321: “Delicta enim dicuntur, quando via aequitatis scienter derelinquitur; ignorantiae vero peccata, quae ignoranter fecit vel antequam crederet”.

²⁰⁴ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Lutetiae)*..., op. cit., f. 12v.

²⁰⁵ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos*..., op. cit., f. 200r.

²⁰⁶ H. Lausberg, *Handbook of Literary Rhetoric: a Foundation for Literary Study*, §579, Brill, Leiden 1998, p. 263.

²⁰⁷ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Ecclesiasten Salomonis*..., op. cit., f. f7r.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., f. f6v; Terence, *The Eunuch*, prologue, verse 41, op. cit., p. 318: “nihil est dictum quod non dictum sit prius”. Cf. Aristotel, *Meteorologica*, 1.3 op. cit., p. 12, (Bekker 339b).

²⁰⁹ Bonaventura, “Commentarius in librum Ecclesiastae”, c. 1, quaestiones, op. cit., p. 17.

noui aliquid appareat aut contingat, cuiusmodi priora secula non viderunt. Alioqui, nonne quotidie ars humana adinuenit aliqua, quae apud maiores nunquam fuere inuenta?”²¹⁰. He did not specify what novelty he had in mind, but we can assume that he could be thinking about new geographical discoveries, which, especially since 1492, shook the certainty of world’s immutability. In a way it also reflected renaissance optimism and faith in mankind, capable of achieving new things and surpassing the ancients. Titelmans mollified the tenor of his assertion stating that many a time an alleged novelty is not really so new and is considered as such only because we are ignorant of the knowledge and achievements of past generations. For instance, we know next to nothing of the 1656 years that passed from Adam to Noe²¹¹. Nevertheless, he could not accept Kohelet’s adage for its face value and thus had to interpret it as a hyperbole.

He identified hyperbole in many other places of scriptures. In Eccles. 6:3 he considered a man who beget a hundred children to be such a figure of speech²¹². Similarly in Ps. 68(69):5 enemies more numerous than the hairs on the head were to be understood in the same way²¹³. He recognised this figure many a times in Jesus’ sayings in Matthew’s Gospel: in 6:3, 6:17, 10:30 and 24:2²¹⁴ as well as in Job 20:6 and 20:27²¹⁵.

In the twentieth chapter of Job, verse eight, he also identified a hypallage, a figure of speech in which a syntactic relationship between two terms is interchanged or a modifier is attributed to another object²¹⁶. For instance: “to fit one’s head into a hat” in place of “to fit a hat on one’s head” is a hypallage, as well as an expression “happy islands”, which denotes people who happily live on them. Thus, *neque vltra eum intuebitur locus eius* could mean simply that he will no longer recognise his own place²¹⁷. He claimed that also Song 3:4 should be understood as hypallage²¹⁸. Yet here the reasons were not philological, but theological. *Introducā illum in domum matris meae* was surely meant to be understood literally by the Song’s author. For Titelmans, however, it presented a theological problem, for it was the Christ who introduced the Church into heavenly chambers, and all believers into the chambers of the Mother Church, not the other way around. Thus, he had to impose on this verse a poetic reading to salvage its spiritual interpretation.

Rhetoric helped Titelmans explain difficult expressions from Job 1:5 and 2:9. Why did Job make an expiation for the fact that his sons had blessed the Lord, and why did his wife encourage

²¹⁰ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Ecclesiasten Salomonis...*, op. cit., f. f7r.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, f. g1r.

²¹² *Ibid.*, f. s5r.

²¹³ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 168r.

²¹⁴ F. Titelmans, *Paraphrastica elucidatio in Matthaem...*, op. cit., ff. 58r; 60r; 101r; 248r.

²¹⁵ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Lutetiae)...*, op. cit., ff. q4r; q8v.

²¹⁶ Cf. H. Lausberg, *Handbuch der Literarischen Rhetorik. Eine Grundlegung der Literaturwissenschaft*, §1246, Franz Steiner, Stuttgart 1990, p. 915.

²¹⁷ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Lutetiae)...*, op. cit., f. q4v.

²¹⁸ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum...*, op. cit., f. 66v.

him to bless God after all his tribulations? Titelmans observed that “recentiores quidam nimium scrupulosi, siue potius superstitiosi” tried to explain the first case literally: sons of Job blessed the Lord for the opportunity to sin²¹⁹. The Franciscan claimed that in both cases it was a rhetorical figure of antiphrasis²²⁰. This rhetorical figure, akin to irony, meant the opposite of what was being stated²²¹. The observation of Titelmans was in no way novel, for it can be found already in Gregory the Great²²². Also, the figure of speech was identified as antiphrasis before him, for instance, by Dionysius the Carthusian²²³.

Titelmans named many more rhetorical figures. In Ps. 15(16):10 the body stands for the entire human person²²⁴. This is a synecdoche, a figure of speech which takes a part for the whole, or the whole for a part²²⁵. A synecdoche, which uses proper names is called antonomasia, and Titelmans identified such a figure in Song 8:11, where *vir* stood for Christ²²⁶. In Job 19:12 he found an example of hypotyposis, that is a vivid, picturesque description²²⁷; while in Job 12:13 of epagoge, that is *inductio*²²⁸. In John 11:3 the message from Martha and Maria is identified as *micrologia*: “parum dicunt et amplius postulant”²²⁹. They informed Jesus about Lazarus’ illness, silently asking that he came to heal him. They did not, however, express this desire openly, since their trust in Christ was so great that no explicit plea was needed. Finally, in Job 16:18 there is a prosopopeia, that is a personification²³⁰. Earth is taken as Job’s witness, as if it were a person. Titelmans proposed two ways of understanding this figure of speech: either the earth is a witness of Job’s suffering (like in the case of Abel in Gen. 4:10), or the earth is called to witness whether Job had committed any crimes. Although he acknowledged that both were possible according to

²¹⁹ Such an explanation was proposed by Thomas Aquinas, who, however, proposed also an alternative, namely that *benedixerint* meant *maledixerint*. Thomas de Aquino, *In Iob (expositio super Iob ad litteram)*..., 1, op. cit., p. 7: “Quod quidem dupliciter intelligi potest. Uno modo ut totum intelligatur coniunctim: quamvis enim benedicere Deum sit bonum, tamen benedicere Deum de hoc quod homo peccavit significat voluntatem in peccatis quiescentem, et quantum ad hoc vituperatur, sicut in Zacharia dicitur contra quosdam: pasce pecora occisionis, quae qui possederant occidebant et non dolebant et vendebant ea dicentes: benedictus dominus. Divites facti sumus. Alio modo ut intelligatur divisim, et sic per hoc quod dicitur benedixerint, intelligitur maledixerint: crimen enim blasphemiae tam horribile est ut pia ora ipsum nominare proprio nomine reformident, sed ipsum per contrarium significant”.

²²⁰ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Lutetiae)*..., op. cit., ff. b2r, d2v.

²²¹ H. Lausberg *Handbook of Literary Rhetoric*..., §585, op. cit., pp. 267–268. Cf. Beda Venerabilis, *De schematibus et tropis*, 2.186, ed. C.B. Kendall, 1975, CCSL 123A, p. 162: “Antifrasis est unius uerbi ironia, ut: ‘amice, ad quod uenisti?’”.

²²² Gregorius Magnus, *Moralia in Iob*, 1.23, op. cit., p. 24.

²²³ Dionysius Cartusianus, “Enarratio in librum Iob”, art. 4, op. cit., p. 305: “Denique, in Scripturis frequenter maledictio Dei, per ejus benedictionem per antiphrasim designatur”.

²²⁴ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos*..., op. cit., f. 37v.

²²⁵ H. Lausberg, *Handbook of Literary Rhetoric*..., §572–577, op. cit., pp. 260–262.

²²⁶ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum*..., op. cit., f. 185v; H. Lausberg, *Handbook of Literary Rhetoric*..., §581, op. cit., pp. 265–266.

²²⁷ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Lutetiae)*..., op. cit., f. p2v. Hypotyposis was known also as *evidentia*, cf. H. Lausberg, *Handbook of Literary Rhetoric*..., §810, op. cit., p. 359.

²²⁸ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Lutetiae)*..., op. cit. f. k4r. Cf. H. Lausberg, *Handbook of Literary Rhetoric*..., §419, op. cit., pp. 198–199.

²²⁹ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio paraphrastica in Ioannem*..., op. cit., f. p7v.

²³⁰ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Lutetiae)*..., op. cit., f. n5v. Cf. H. Lausberg, *Handbook of Literary Rhetoric*..., §826, op. cit., pp. 369–370.

the original text, he chose the first one, since it was more consonant with Job's sanctity²³¹. He also found a classical parallel to such an interpretation in Vergil's *Aeneid*²³². This list of rhetorical figures identified by Titelmans shows that he was well acquainted with the classical rhetoric and displayed his humanist education by using Greek names of various figures of speech. However, as seen in the last example as well as in that of Song 3:4 analysed earlier, it was always theology, not philology, that determined the final interpretation of Scriptures.

3.3.4. *Logica*

In the *trivium*, after grammar and rhetoric came logic. Traditionally logic was considered a useful tool in biblical analysis. It was especially used by scholastic exegetes, who had a great predilection towards the most minute divisions of the text. Not rarely such divisions imposed on a text a logical structure that in reality was absent from it. Humanism, generally speaking, had great reservations about the usefulness of logic as a tool for philological analyses. For instance, Erasmus excluded logic from the long list of disciplines that were useful for an exegete²³³.

Titelmans used logic in his commentaries, albeit to a very limited extent. This was, however, certainly not due to his incompetence in that field. As an author of the 16th-century bestselling textbook on dialectics, he was certainly very well versed in syllogisms. Rather, his limited application of logic shows his intellectual affinity with humanist tendencies. Before analysing the rare occurrences of logic in his commentaries, it is worth noting what is absent from them. In no place did Titelmans engage in complex divisions of text and very rarely in distinctions of meaning that were typical for the scholastic exegetical method. A rare example of the latter one can be found in Ps. 142(143):4. Titelmans noted that an expression *mortuos saeculi* could mean sinners of the world, or those who died in the distant past, as if before centuries (thus Jerome in the Psalter "iuxta Hebraicum"); it could also mean those who were in hell, dead for eternity, or those who were dead to this world²³⁴.

Occasionally Titelmans considered matters of causality. In Ps. 138(139):4 Titelmans referred the reader to his own work on natural philosophy, where he discussed various causes²³⁵. Among efficient causes there were those that had effects also after the cause ceased (a son lives after father's death) and those, that produced effect only as long as they lasted (when the source of light is switched off, the light ceases). God was the cause of everything, asserted the Franciscan, in both senses: he gave origin to everything, and without him, nothing would have existed at all.

²³¹ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Lutetiae)*..., op. cit., f. n6r: "magis viro sancto conueniens".

²³² Cf. Virgil, *Aeneid*, 3.31, op. cit., p. 374.

²³³ D. Erasmus Roterodamus, „Methodus”, op. cit., pp. 153–154.

²³⁴ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos*..., op. cit., f. 360r.

²³⁵ F. Tittelmans, *Compendium naturalis philosophiae*..., op. cit., ff. 18v-19v.

He found this truth expressed in the words of the psalmist: *tu formasti me et posuisti super me manum tuam*. The first part corresponded to the initial cause, the second to the permanent one²³⁶. Yet, Titelmans acknowledged that this verse could also be interpreted differently: as an expression of God's providence, or his castigations for the purification of his children²³⁷.

Titelmans used logic also in Eccles. 2:11. He claimed that Solomon's dissatisfaction with his own works and deeds came from an error of proportion. Human being, having an eternal soul, cannot be fully satisfied with what is only temporal²³⁸. In the Gospel of Matthew, discussing the case of a woman married subsequently to seven brothers, who was presented by the Sadducees to Jesus, he quoted a logical rule that "possibili nullum sequitur inconveniens"²³⁹, that is, nothing impossible follows from a possible premise. In other words, even if the case of a woman married to seven brothers was not real, it was not absurd, because not impossible²⁴⁰.

Another example of the use of logic in exegesis is found in a note on Ps. 8:6. The interpretative issue regarded the words: *minuisti eum paulominus ab angelis*. Previous verses of this psalm spoke generally of mankind, but Saint Paul applied this verse specifically to Christ (Heb. 2:6). Titelmans asserted that such a change from species to a person was called in logic "suppositione simplici ad personalem"²⁴¹. It did not make sense to read verse 5 in Christological sense, thus, unless the entire psalm was to be interpreted literally about the mankind (against the Letter to the Hebrews), one had to accept such a logical transition. Hence, Titelmans used logic, much like grammar and rhetoric, in service of theological meaning, which was for him paramount.

Nevertheless, he was not too fond of the scholastic practice of reading the Bible as if it were a disputation. He expressed it clearly in the introduction to his commentary on the Book of Job. He observed that many of his predecessors, whom he identified as "postillatores"²⁴², read the book of Job as a philosophical discussion:

Posteriores nonnulli, totam libri huius intentionem in hoc dicunt versari, vt per rationes probabiles ostendantur res humanae diuina prouidentia regi²⁴³, non obstante eo quod frequenter inter homines accidit, vt boni in praesenti vita patiantur mala et mali econtrario accipiant bona. [...] Atque hi totam

²³⁶ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 350v.

²³⁷ Ibid., f. 351r.

²³⁸ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Ecclesiasten Salomonis...*, op. cit., f. i2r.

²³⁹ Cf. Alexander de Hales, *Summa theologica*, I/1, inquisitio 1, tract. 4, q. 2,2, c. 1, no. 140, op. cit., p. 218.

²⁴⁰ F. Titelmans, *Paraphrastica elucidatio in Matthaem...*, op. cit., f. 224v.

²⁴¹ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., 17v. Cf. Henricus Gandavensis, *Syncategoremata Henrico de Gandavo adscripta*, eds. H.A.G. Braakhuis, G.J. Etzkorn, and G.A. Wilson, Leuven University Press, Leuven 2010, p. 10.

²⁴² F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Antuerpiae)*..., op. cit., f. c4r.

²⁴³ This was a citation from: Thomas de Aquino, *In Iob (expositio super Iob ad litteram)*..., op. cit. p. 3: "et ideo post legem datam et prophetas, in numero Hagiographorum, idest librorum per spiritum Dei sapienter ad eruditionem hominum conscriptorum, primus ponitur liber Iob, cuius tota intentio circa hoc versatur *ut per probabiles rationes ostendatur res humanas diuina prouidentia regi*. Proceditur autem in hoc libro ad propositum ostendendum ex suppositione quod res naturales diuina prouidentia gubernentur".

huius libri seriem, quasi in quaestione huiusmodi concludunt. Vtrum sicut res naturales a Deo gubernantur, sic etiam res humanae regantur diuina prouidentia. [...] Alii magis particularem formant quaestionem, quasi ex occasione et praesuppositione huius historiae in hunc modum: Vtrum quum Dei erga res humanas prouidentia consistat, quid est quod homo innocens et a peccato mundus, sine culpa in praesenti vita grauibus affligatur malis?²⁴⁴ [...] Ita quidem posteriores, quidam scholastico more librum istum tractandum et exponendum putant et praecipuam istam esse libri huius intentionem, talis quaestionis absolvere determinationem²⁴⁵.

He did not share their sentiment. He observed that ancient Church Fathers understood this book's subject very differently. They saw it as an exceptional example of patience and perseverance in suffering. According to Origen this book was of great help to Moses in his sufferings, when he was exiled from Egypt. The Church read it as a book of consolation, using it in times of penitence. Thus, the Franciscan distanced himself from the opinion of mediaeval interpreters.

Ex quibus omnibus videtur huius libri praecipua intentio non esse, iuxta horum antiquorum sententiam, vt dissoluatur quaestio aliqua de diuina prouidentia, cuius quaestionis ipsi ne semel quidem meminerint, sed vt exemplum memorabile perfectae patientiae accipiant in eo homines, atque etiam vt typum et figuram passionis et resurrectionis Christi Domini nostri in eo discerent contemplari [...] Nobis magis arridet praedicta antiquorum sententia²⁴⁶.

This criticism of scholastic theologians is very significant. Although Titelmans was very conservative, he nevertheless shared with humanist a degree of dislike for scholastic exegesis, which relied more on philosophy than on philology. He took as a reference point patristic exegesis, more attentive to literary and rhetorical qualities of the text. In a way, this marks him as a humanist in a very broad meaning of this word, striving to return *ad fontes* and distancing himself from mediaeval scholasticism.

3.3.5 Etymologies

Another philological tool much used in the Middle Ages were etymological analyses. Titelmans was not too fond of these and applied them rarely. In his commentary on the Song of Solomon, he explicitly distanced himself from such inquiries. In Song 4:8 he observed that some ascribed significance to names of the three mountains mentioned there, but he did not consider it important:

²⁴⁴ Here Titelmans seems to be referring to; Nicholas Lyra, *Biblia cum postilla Nicolai de Lyra tertia pars...*, op. cit., f. 4r.

²⁴⁵ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Antuerpiae)*..., op. cit., f. c2r-v.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, f. c4r.

Nolumus impraesentiarum curiosius nominum istorum, Amana, Sanir et Hermon, etymologias et significationes perquirere. Quantum enim ad propositum attinet, satis fuerit intelligere, quod per montes istos a Libano distinctos, eosque gloria et dignitate inferiores, aliae intelligantur nationes a Iudaica distinctae. Nos tamen quae ab aliis hoc loco plurimis verbis copiose dicuntur, ex etymologicis interpretationibus horum nominum nequaquam damnamus²⁴⁷.

Thus, with his typical moderation, he did not condemn such pursuits, yet made it clear that he considered them futile. This was a small but notable departure from mediaeval exegesis, which often construed complex allegorical interpretations on dubious etymologies²⁴⁸. Titelmans displayed here a more humanist mindset, concerning himself with the meaning of the entire passage rather than taking hints from etymology. It did not prevent him, however, from ascribing to the entire passage spiritual significance: Liban stood for Israel, from whom salvation had taken a start, the other mountains representing pagan nations, to whom salvation had been extended²⁴⁹.

Despite his reservations, in Song 6:11 he used the etymology of the name Aminadab to construct two spiritual explanations. He claimed that Aminadab could be a proper name or could be two Hebrew words meaning: “my willing people” (although “my” was superfluous, according to Rashi)²⁵⁰. According to the first interpretation, Aminadab, who was one of the leaders of Judah, and who first stepped into the Red Sea, symbolised the entire people of Israel²⁵¹. They, always looking backwards towards ancient miracles, failed to accept the Gospel²⁵². If, however, the name was understood as “willing people”, it signified the New Israel, those, who accepted the good news²⁵³. Aminadab’s quadriga could in this case be understood as the Four Evangelists²⁵⁴.

²⁴⁷ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Cantorum...*, op. cit., f. 95r. Examples of such etymologies: Hieronymus (pseudo), *Expositio sancti Hieronimi presbiteri in libro Cantici cantorum (expositio brevis i)*, 7.18, eds. B. de Vregile and L. Neyrand, 1986, CCSL 19, p. 344: “Interpretatur autem Amana me cum in hebraea uel syra lingua: per quod docuit illam animam coronari quae cum Christo effecta fuerit unum [...] Sanir interpretatur ‘leua nouitatem’ uel ‘dens lucernae’”. Gaufridus Autissiodorensis, *Expositio in cantica cantorum*, ed. F. Gastaldelli, Storia e letteratura, Roma 1974, Temi e testi 19-20, p. 231: “Si legitur Sanir, interpretatur nocturna avis vel foetor”. Dionysius Cartusianus, *Enarratio in Canticum Cantorum Salomonis*, art. 13.4, [in:] *Opera omnia in unum corpus digesta*, Typis Cartusiae S. M. de Pratis, Monstrolii 1898, vol. 7, p. 378: “Amana, inquietudo seu turbulentia interpretatur. [...] Sanir vero, interpretatur foetor [...] Porro Hermon dicitur anathema”.

²⁴⁸ A famous example is the interpretation of the name of the Hebrew feast of Pascha, as if derivative from the Greek πάσχω, “I suffer”. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Super Euangelium S. Iohannis lectura*, 13.1, ed. R. Cai, Marietti, Torino 1952, p. 323: “Hic notandum est, quod hoc nomen Pascha quidam dicunt esse Graecum, ita quod dicatur a passione, quasi inde festum istud vocetur Pascha, quia tunc celebratur passio dominica”.

²⁴⁹ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Cantorum...*, op. cit., f. 94r-v.

²⁵⁰ Ibid., f. 139v. Such an etymology present in numerous patristic and mediaeval sources, see: *Biblia cum glossa ordinaria. Pars III...*, op. cit., f. 34v.

²⁵¹ This rabbinic story can be found for instance in Nicholas Lyra, *Biblia cum postilla Nicolai de Lyra tertia pars...*, op. cit., f. 365r.

²⁵² F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Cantorum...*, op. cit., ff. 139r-140v.

²⁵³ Thus also many ancient commentators, for instance Beda Venerabilis, *In Cantica cantorum libri sex...*, 4.6, op. cit., p. 314.

²⁵⁴ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Cantorum...*, op. cit., f. 141r. Thus also *Biblia cum glossa ordinaria. Pars III...*, op. cit., f. 34v: “propter euangelicam predicationem per quattuor mundi partes uelociter discurrentem et quattuor rotis fidei innitentem, unde et a quattuor personis scriptum fuit sed illi quattuor equi eodem spiritu unum currum ad bellum trahunt”.

Most of the time etymologies that Titelmans offered were rather simple and conventional. In Matt. 1:21 he explained that the name Jesus meant “the saviour”²⁵⁵. In John 1:41-42 he explained that the Hebrew term *Messiah* was equivalent to the Greek “Christ” and meant “the anointed one”, while Peter’s new name was *Cephas* in Greek. He also explained the old name of the Apostle: the name Simon came from the word obedience, and he was the son of a dove (Iona) or the son of divine grace (Iohanna), according to two variants of his father’s name²⁵⁶. None of these explanations were at all original.

He presented a more complex explanation of the name Job:

Vocabulum istud, quod apud Hebraeos quatuor literis Aleph, iod, vau et Beth scribitur, quidam Hebraeorum dicunt significare eiulantem [...] deriuatum existimantes a verbo habab, quod significat eiulavit. Quidam subtiliorem adinuenire quaerunt etymologiam, a nomine Aob, quod significat magum, aut sapientem. Literam autem Iod (quae est vna ex literis nomins tetragramati) interiectam dicunt, vt significetur sapientia non quaelibet, id est, non humana, non prophana aut diabolica [...] sed diuina. Vnde Aiob, diuine sapientem significare volunt²⁵⁷.

Name Job was interpreted as “a grieving one” at least since Gregory the Great (although he translated as *dolens*)²⁵⁸. Unlike his mediaeval predecessors, Titelmans did not link this interpretation with any spiritual allegory, neither to Christ, nor to Saint Francis²⁵⁹. For the other etymology he provided, linking the name of Job to the holy Tetragram, he offered an analogical example from Jerome’s interpretation of the name Abraham²⁶⁰.

He demonstrated his philological acumen also in the discussion of the name of the Sabeans, the tribe, that attacked Job’s flocks (Job 1:15). First, he observed that the Septuagint had “predators” (αἰχμαλωτεύοντες) in the place of a proper name “Sabeans”, both here and in Joel 3:8²⁶¹. He explained this discrepancy by the similarity of Hebrew words *sabath* (to enslave,

²⁵⁵ F. Titelmans, *Paraphrastica elucidatio in Matthaem...*, op. cit., ff. a3v-4r. Cf. *Biblia cum glossa ordinaria. Pars IV...*, op. cit., f. 922r.

²⁵⁶ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio paraphrastica in Ioannem...*, op. cit., ff. a8r-v. Cf. Beda Venerabilis, *Homiliarum euangelii libri duo*, 1.16, ed. D Hurst, 1955, CCSL 122, p. 115: “Tu es simon filius iohanna: tu es oboediens Filius gratiae Dei”. Alcuinus, *Commentaria in sancti Iohannis Euangelium*, PL 100, col. 760: “Tu es Simon filius Jona. Jona lingua nostra dicitur columba”. Both interpretations present in *Biblia cum glossa ordinaria. Pars IV...*, op. cit., f. 1034r.

²⁵⁷ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Lutetiae)...*, op. cit., f. a6v.

²⁵⁸ Gregorius Magnus, *Moralia in Iob*, 1.11, op. cit. p. 31: “Iob namque ut diximus, interpretatur dolens”.

²⁵⁹ Dionysius Cartusianus, “Enarratio in librum Iob”, art. 5, op. cit., p. 318: “Nomine Job: quod interpretatur dolens, id est Christus, cuius tota in hoc mundo vita doloribus plena fuit”. Bonaventura, *Sermones de diversis*, 2.57.4, ed. J.-G. Bougerol, Les éditions franciscaines, Paris 1993, p. 752: “Iob interpretatur dolens, et bene significat beatum Franciscum, quia vita eius plena dolore fuit; semper in lacrymis, deflens peccata propria vel aliena”.

²⁶⁰ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Lutetiae)...*, op. cit., f. a6v. Cf. Hieronymus, *Liber quaestionum hebraicarum in Genesim*, 26, op. cit., p. 21: “ dicunt autem Hebraei quod ex nomine suo Deus, quod apud illos tetragrammum est, he literam Abrahae et Sarae addiderit: dicebatur enim primum Abram, quod interpretatur pater excelsus, et postea uocatus est Abraham, quod transfertur pater multarum: nam quod sequitur, gentium, non habetur in nomine, sed subauditur”.

²⁶¹ Joel 4:8 in modern Bibles.

capture) and *saba*, which meant “Sabeans”²⁶². Titelmans proceeded to clarify that the name of the tribe was derived from the place, just as Gauls came from Gaul. He listed several ancient authorities, who all attested that Sabia was a part of Arabia, called also in Greek “the fortunate Arabia”. It was famous for its incense and mentioned in numerous ancient and modern sources: Vergil²⁶³, Pliny the Elder²⁶⁴, Strabo²⁶⁵, Stephanus of Byzantium, and Nicolo Perotti. Titelmans criticised the etymology provided by the last one, who derived the name Sabeans from the Greek σεβεῖν (σεβομαι), meaning “to venerate”. This was absurd, commented Titelmans, for Sabeans was a Hebrew word. “Quemadmodum enim ridiculum foret, Graecarum dictionum etymologias ex Latinis petere, sic non videbitur conueniens, Hebraicorum nominum ex Graecis etymologias assignare”²⁶⁶. He concluded his discussion with an observation that Arabs were indeed looters, as testified by Pliny and by contemporary pilgrims to the Holy Land, whom Titelmans interviewed²⁶⁷.

As we hope to have demonstrated with the few examples presented above, Titelmans was cautious not to construct allegorical interpretations based on unsound etymologies. He had a much better command of the biblical languages than most mediaeval authors, and although he followed their footsteps, he occasionally distanced himself from their etymological explanations. Yet occasionally he did use etymology to present the spiritual sense of a passage.

3.4. Knowledge of the world

Not only philology, but also knowledge of the world, in the broadest possible sense, was needed to understand correctly the biblical text. Just as *quadrivium* followed *trivium* in mediaeval academic curriculum, so also specific disciplines came to an aid when linguistic analyses were insufficient. Still, the sciences of *quadrivium*: arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy, had less importance here than history, geography, and the knowledge of nature. In this section we shall briefly explore how Titelmans utilised various forms of knowledge to elucidate the Bible.

3.4.1 History

According to Augustine, history was among the most important branches of knowledge for an exegete²⁶⁸. Titelmans occasionally referred to world history in relation to the Bible and explained ancient customs and habits that were no longer clear.

²⁶² F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Lutetiae)*..., op. cit., f. b6v.

²⁶³ Virgil, *Georgics*, 1.57, op. cit., p. 102.

²⁶⁴ Pliny the Elder, *Historia naturalis*, 6.28, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 421-422.

²⁶⁵ Strabo, *Geographicon*, 16.4.19, op. cit., vol. 7, pp. 348-349.

²⁶⁶ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Lutetiae)*..., op. cit., f. b7r.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, f. b7v.

²⁶⁸ Augustinus Hipponensis, *De doctrina christiana*, 2.28, op. cit., p. 62: “quicquid igitur de ordine temporum transactorum indicat ea quae appellatur historia, plurimum nos adiuuat ad libros sanctos intellegendos, etiamsi praeter ecclesiam puerili eruditione discatur”.

Ps. 71(72):7 spoke of great peace at the time of the Messiah. Titelmans observed that it coincided with the historical reality of *pax romana*²⁶⁹. Nevertheless, he claimed the psalm did not predict terrestrial peace under the Roman rule, but spoke of heavenly peace, brought by Christ's redeeming mission. The Franciscan argued that the Roman peace begun at the end of the reign of Julius Caesar, long before the birth of Christ, and dissolved shortly after Jesus' death and resurrection. Besides, it was never fully stable, unlike the perfect peace of the Christian faith.

Commenting on Song 4:15 (*fons hortorum puteus aquarum viventium quae fluunt impetu de Libano*), Titelmans, before explaining the mystical sense, gave a long description of the castle of *Laudaleon*, built by Alexander the Great, and rebuilt by Baldwin, the king of Jerusalem²⁷⁰. The castle was famous for its springs that gave rise to torrents powerful enough to set six large mills in motion. Titelmans used this as an example of the impetus of the waters of Lebanon.

History could also illustrate some aspects of the spiritual sense. Titelmans interpreted Song 7:12 as a model of evangelisation. He took this verse as an occasion to make a historical digression: through the ages Christ accompanied the Church in the mission of preaching the Gospel. This was true also of the most recent times. Titelmans wrote:

Nostris vero temporibus, exempla recentissima et preclarissima laetaents audimus: quomodo videlicet ab annis paucis, imperante Carolo quinto Hispaniarum rege, per Hispanicis nauigationes, gentes plurime omnibus hactenus topographis astronomis et cosmographis incognita, versus occidentem sub aquinoctiali fere circulo habitantes, ad praedicationem Christianorum quorundam simplicium fratrum, maxime Minorum atque Praedicatorum, Christi fidem cum sacro baptisate maxima deuotione et alacritate susceperunt, vsque ad plurima hominum millia. Indiesque multiplicari illic et proficere tam numero quam merito sancta catholicam Ecclesiam, fide dignorum hominum relatione et scriptis asseritur, [...] Praterea, iam proxime praeterito anno, id est, anno ab incarnatione Domini 1533 alia nauigatione gentes aliae non pauca inuentae referentur prioribus illis [...] longe magis barbara et a nobis tam corporis statura et colore, quam ingenii qualitate multo amplius differentes: quarum aliquot iam regna Carolo imperatori, per Hispanorum industriam et virtutem subacta narrantur, licet hactenus de fidei seminatione nihil ad nos sit quantum ad gentes istas perlatum²⁷¹.

Thus, the truth of the Bible found its confirmation in the past events as well as in contemporary ones. The Bible was never out of date.

Titelmans also explained some historical customs that were no longer understandable. In Song 1:4 he explained that the tents of Cedar were black due to their constant exposition to the

²⁶⁹ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 178r.

²⁷⁰ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum...*, op. cit., f. 100v. The castle was probably that of Byblos.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, f. 157r-v.

sun and the dust of the desert²⁷². In a comment on Song 1:10, he clarified that, according to Jerome's letters, *murenulas aureas* were ornamental pendants in a form of a fish, worn by ancient women²⁷³. Two verses later he explained why the Groom is compared to a bundle of myrrh: "Solent mulierculae ex herbis odoriferis paruos sibi fasciculos colligare, quos in sinu inter vbera reponant, vt hinc gratus continuo odor ex aromaticis illis herbis et flosculis spiret atque fragret"²⁷⁴. Thus, such a comparison emphasised the affect and vicinity of lovers.

Titelmans devoted more space to explain some Jewish habits. In Ps. 70(71):22 he clarified that *vasum psalteri* was a string instrument that accompanied the singing of the Psalms²⁷⁵. In Ps. 15(16):6 he explained the habit of dividing the land by drawing lots²⁷⁶. In Song 4:4 he described in detail the fortifications erected by David, to which the Bride's neck was compared. In the commentary on the Gospel of John, he explained some details regarding Jewish festivities. In John 7:14 he clarified that the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles lasted for seven days, thus *die festo mediante* was the fourth day of celebrations²⁷⁷. In John 10:22 he explained, that *encoenia* came from the Greek word *coenon* (καίνων), which meant *nouum*. Thus, the feast was that of the rededication of the Temple. Given the temporal indication "in winter", it could be no other than the commemoration of the dedication of the temple by Maccabees, in the month of *kislev*. Possible alternatives were excluded, because Solomon dedicated the Temple in autumn (month of *Bethanim* (sic!) identical with *Tishrei*) while the rededication of the Temple after the Babylonian exile took place in the month of *Adar*, at the beginning of spring²⁷⁸.

In Matt. 22:16 Titelmans objected to the common identification of Herodians with Herod's soldiers²⁷⁹. "Quorundam tamen sententia est satis verisimilis per Herodianos significari peculiarem quondam sectam, quae opposite fuerit sectae Iudae Galilaei, cuius [...] mentionem facit Gamaliel"²⁸⁰. Thus, they were a political group in favour of cooperation with Romans, unlike the zealots. They took their name from King Herod, who was foremost among the Jews collaborating

²⁷² Ibid., f. 14v.

²⁷³ Ibid. f. 29v. Cf. Hieronymus, *Epistulae*, ep. 24.3, ed. I. Hilberg, 1910, CSEL 54, p. 215: "et quia paene oblitus sum, quod in principio debui dicere, cum primum hoc propositum arripuit, aurum colli sui, quam murenulam uulguis uocat, quod scilicet metallo in uirgulas lentescence quaedam ordinis flexuosi catena contextitur, absque parentibus uendidit et tunicam fusciolem, quam a matre inpetrare non poterat, pio induta negotiationis auspicio se repente domino consecrauit, ut intellegeret uniuersa cognatio non posse ei aliud extorqueri, quae iam saeculum damnasset in uestibus".

²⁷⁴ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum...*, op. cit., f. 31v.

²⁷⁵ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 174v. Cf. *Biblia cum glossa ordinaria. Pars II...*, op. cit., f. 272r.

²⁷⁶ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 37r.

²⁷⁷ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio paraphrastica in Ioannem...*, op. cit., ff. k7v-k8r. He cited Augustine as an authority: Augustinus Hipponensis, *In Iohannis euangelium tractatus*, 28.3, op. cit. p. 278.

²⁷⁸ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio paraphrastica in Ioannem...*, op. cit., ff. o6v-o7r.

²⁷⁹ Thus e.g. *Biblia cum glossa ordinaria. Pars IV...*, op. cit., f. 955.

²⁸⁰ F. Titelmans, *Paraphrastica elucidatio in Matthaeum...*, op. cit., f. 223v. This was very likely based on the opinion of Theophylactus, who claimed that Herodians were a group that considered Herod to be the Christ, see Theophylactus, *Commentarius in Matthaevi Evangelium*, PG 123, col. 388. Theophylactus was cited also by Erasmus in D. Erasmus, *Annotationes in Nouum Testamentum (pars prima)...*, op. cit., p. 293.

with Roman occupants. Thus, Titelmans demonstrated that he had a fair grasp of historical realities of Palestine at the time of Jesus. At the end of the discussion, however, he made a characteristic disclaimer that although his opinion was much more probable, the other one could not be entirely dismissed²⁸¹.

3.4.2. Geography

Titelmans sought also to provide geographical information. In Ps. 71(72):8 he gave several options to explain the extent of Messiah's rule (*et dominabitur a mari usque ad mare et a flumine usque ad terminos terrae*)²⁸². Some claimed that it indicated the entire Mediterranean, all the way to Cadiz, others limited this to the area between the Red Sea and the Sea of Galilee²⁸³. The third option was from the Dead Sea to the Mediterranean²⁸⁴. The second part of the verse could mean from the Euphrates, or Nile or Jordan to the end of the Earth²⁸⁵. Whichever option was true, the Franciscan concluded, the meaning was clear: the rule of the Messiah will cover all of Israel (the first part of the verse) and the entire Earth. In Ps. 136(137):1 (*super flumina Babylonis ibi sedimus et flevimus cum recordaremur Sion*) he pondered which rivers the psalmist had in mind²⁸⁶. The psalmist could refer to a rest over some riverbank during the journey to Mesopotamia, or to rivers of Babylon itself, of which, according to Strabo, the biggest were Euphrates and Tigris²⁸⁷.

Titelmans invoked the authority of Strabo also to correct an erroneous interpretation of Ps. 77(78):44 (*et convertit in sanguine flumina et hymbres eorum*)²⁸⁸. Neither *hymbres*, nor *aquas pluuiiales* (a reading of *Psalterium romanum*) seemed appropriate, since, according to Strabo, Egypt was irrigated by waters on Nile, not by rains²⁸⁹. Hebrew had *rivos* here, which made more sense. Yet, the Franciscan added, small rivers of Egypt could seem like mere streams of rain in comparison with the size of Nile, thus the Latin translation could be salvaged.

He also devoted some attention to locate places mentioned by biblical authors. In an annotation to Job 1:1 he observed that there were two men name of Hus, from whom the land of Job took its name. Regardless of which of them was the eponym, the land laid south of Israel, thus

²⁸¹ F. Titelmans, *Paraphrastica elucidatio in Matthaem...*, op. cit., f. 224r.

²⁸² F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 178v.

²⁸³ According to Augustine *mare* stood here for the ocean that surrounded the Earth: Augustinus Hipponensis, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 71.11, op. cit., p. 980.

²⁸⁴ This explanation, more accurate for the actual kingdom of Solomon, was invoked in polemical sense by Petrus Venerabilis (Cluniacensis), *Aduersus Iudeorum inueteratam duritiem*, 2, ed. Y. Friedman, 1985, CCCM 58, pp. 36-37.

²⁸⁵ Cassiodorus and Augustine interpreted this statement in sacramental terms: from Jordan, that is from the moment of baptism of Christ and through the entire Earth by the means of individual baptisms: Augustinus Hipponensis, *Enarrationes in Psalmo*, 71.11, op. cit., p. 980. Cassiodorus, *Expositio psalmodum*, 71.8, op. cit., p. 653. Euphrat: suggested by Bruno Astensis, *Expositio in Psalmos*, 71, PL 16, col. 970.

²⁸⁶ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., ff. 345v-346r.

²⁸⁷ Cf. Strabo, *Geographicon*, 16.1.21, op. cit. p. 228.

²⁸⁸ F. Titelmans, *Annotationes ex Hebraeo...*, op. cit., f. XXVI-r.

²⁸⁹ Strabo, *Geographicon*, 17.1.3, op. cit., vol. 8, p. 6.

in pagan lands²⁹⁰. In a comment on John 2:1, he cited Jerome, who distinguished two towns named Cana, one in Ephraim, the other in Asser.²⁹¹ Titelmans explained that it was the latter where the famous wedding feast took place²⁹². Two chapters later he considered which mountain had the Samaritan woman referred to. Cyril claimed it was the mount Gerizim²⁹³, while Theophylactus identified it with the mountain where Abraham sacrificed his son Isaac²⁹⁴. Titelmans was more inclined towards the former, since Moriah, the mountain of Abraham's sacrifice, was identical with the Temple Mount²⁹⁵.

3.4.3. Nature

Another key to Scriptures was in the book of nature. It was a dangerous book. Titelmans observed that Solomon, who excelled above everyone in his knowledge of nature, in his mature years failed nevertheless to worship God and turned towards idols. Similarly, philosophers and mages, who amassed great knowledge about creation, did not recognise its Creator²⁹⁶. Yet, Titelmans continued:

Non est tamen hoc ex loco colligendum, simpliciter malam et damnandam rem esse, rerum naturalium et creaturarum considerationem, si et modum et ordinem debitum habeat. Modum quidem, vt non nimium apponatur sollicitudinis, vt que superba curiositas absit, quae plerumque talium rerum perquisitioni se admiscet. Ordinem vero, vt non nisi ad creatoris gloriam creaturae consideratio dirigatur²⁹⁷.

Hence, the study of nature could lead to its Creator, if pursued with humility and right intention.

Titelmans clearly did not flinch from exploring natural sciences in order to elucidate the Bible. He had some experience in the study of nature as an author of the bestselling textbook on this matter. Indeed, in his biblical commentaries he frequently referred to *De consideratione rerum naturalium*. For instance, in Eccles. 1:7 he discussed the origin of rivers²⁹⁸. He started with an opinion of Aristotle that rivers took origin from underground reservoirs of water, an opinion which

²⁹⁰ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Lutetiae)*..., op. cit., f. a5v.

²⁹¹ Hieronymus, *Liber de situ et nominibus locorum hebraicorum*..., op. cit., col. 886C-887A. Cited by D. Erasmus, *Annotationes in Nouum Testamentum (pars secunda)*..., op. cit., p. 68.

²⁹² F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio paraphrastica in Ioannem*..., op. cit., f. b2r.

²⁹³ Cf. Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on John*, ed. J.C. Elowsky, trans. D.R. Maxwell, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove 2013, p. 123.

²⁹⁴ Cf. Theophylactus, *Commentarius in Joannis Evangelium*..., op. cit., col. 1235.

²⁹⁵ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio paraphrastica in Ioannem*..., op. cit., f. e4r-v.

²⁹⁶ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Ecclesiasten Salomonis*..., op. cit., f. g3r.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, f. g3v.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, f. flr. The problem was discussed also for instance by Dionysius Cartusianus, *Enarratio in librum Ecclesiastae*, art. 1.1, [in:] *Opera omnia in unum corpus digesta*, Typis Cartusiae S. M. de Pratis, Monstrolii 1898, vol. 7, p. 216, who found a similar solution as Titelmans.

he discussed more fully in *De consideratione* and judged probable²⁹⁹. It seemed to stand in a contradiction with Kohelet's wisdom, who suggested that rivers took their origin from the sea. Titelmans commented that Ecclesiastes "non solum in diuinis rebus verumetiam in humanis plus fidei deberi videtur, quam Aristoteli, licet Philosophorum naturalium principi"³⁰⁰. Yet, very typically for himself, Titelmans sought to reconcile both authorities. After all, there could be diverse origins of diverse rivers. Ecclesiastes did not claim that all rivers took their origin from the sea, so both he and the Philosopher could be right³⁰¹. He directed the reader to *De consideratione* also in his discussion of Eccles. 5:6, concerning dreams³⁰². In his commentary he gave some examples of prophetic dreams but warned that such are rare. For a fuller discussion he recommended a look at the tenth book of his popular work³⁰³.

Understanding the nature was often crucial in order to comprehend the metaphors and similes used by biblical authors and to decipher correctly the mystical sense hidden in them. In Song 4:16 Titelmans explained that the northern wind brought chill and drought, while the southern brought warmth and humidity³⁰⁴. With this knowledge it was clear why the Bride invoked the southern wind as a symbol of her affection. In Song 1:2 Titelmans explored the natural qualities of oil³⁰⁵. First, he explained that the text spoke of an aromatic oil, that is, one mixed with some pleasant spices. There existed numerous types of such ointments: nard, myrrh, and others, as testified by Pliny. Such an oil, continued the Franciscan, had numerous uses: could increase the attractiveness of a woman using it, could augment strength (hence it was used by athletes), refreshed a body tired after a journey and had some healing qualities³⁰⁶. Each of these characteristics could be interpreted spiritually and applied to Christ³⁰⁷. Hence, explaining natural qualities opened the way to spiritual interpretations.

The meaning of the mandrakes in Song 7:14 was much less clear to Titelmans³⁰⁸. Other than here, it only appeared in Gen. 30:14-16. Ruben collected it and gave it to his mother Lea, who traded it to Rachel for the right to spend a night with Jacob. Allegedly, mandrake had medical qualities, curing infertility. Titelmans quoted a long passage from Augustine, who, however, dismissed such an idea. The bishop of Hippo confessed frankly that he did not understand why

²⁹⁹ F. Tittelmans, *Compendium naturalis philosophiae...*, op. cit., ff. 78v-79r.

³⁰⁰ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Ecclesiasten Salomonis...*, op. cit., f. f1v.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, ff. f1v-f2r.

³⁰² *Ibid.*, ff. q4v-q5r.

³⁰³ Cf. F. Tittelmans, *Compendium naturalis philosophiae...*, op. cit., ff. 176r-177v.

³⁰⁴ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum...*, op. cit., f. 101v

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, f. 6v

³⁰⁶ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum...*, op. cit., ff. 6v-7r.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, f. 7v.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, ff. 158v-162r.

Rachel desired the fruit of mandrake so much, “unless it was for its rarity and its sweet smell”³⁰⁹. Titelmans proceeded to cite another authority, that of Pliny’s *Historiae naturalis*³¹⁰. Pliny ascribed to mandrake palliative powers and claimed it effective against vipers’ venom. The most useful clue was provided by information that fruits of mandrake grew close to the earth, which for the Franciscan was a symbol of humility. Departing from this fact, he developed a typological identification of mandrake with Christ – humble, yet the most rare fruit with a salvific smell, desired by contemplative souls (symbolised by Rachel).

Another rather problematic verse of the Song was 1:13, which spoke of the Groom as *botrus cypri*. Once again, it was not at all clear what the author had in mind. Titelmans observed that *botri* meant a cluster of grapes, thus pertained to a vine, not to a cypress tree³¹¹. The Franciscan proposed that *cyprius* could stand here for the isle of this name, famous for its excellent wines (according to Pliny)³¹². Thus, the Groom was compared to the wine of Engaddi, which was as good as that of Cyprus. This was also grammatically sound, for the isle of Cyprus was feminine. The Hebrew, however, had here the word *copher* (הַכֶּפֶר), which denoted an aromatic plant, not a cluster of grapes³¹³. Some claimed that it was the same plant, which the Latins called *camphora*. Origen explained it as blossoming clusters, which seemed congruent with the Greek version³¹⁴. Yet, the aromatic plant of which the Hebrew original spoke had no flowers, thus it made little sense. Somewhat exasperated, the Exegete complained: “Denique et sensus non vsqueadeo commodus videtur. Quis enim intelligit, quid sit botrus floritionis? Cum enim floret vinea, nondum botros habet, sed praeparantur primum et disponi incipiunt ad proferendos botros palmites. Quum vero botros habet, iam longe transiit floritio”³¹⁵. To complicate the matter even further, Titelmans noted that some Latin commentators claimed it meant a balsam tree³¹⁶. He confessed frankly that he knew not on what bases they made this claim and considered it unsound on both philological and natural grounds. Nobody called a balsam tree *cyprius*, nor did a balsam tree have grapes. Titelmans

³⁰⁹ Augustinus Hipponensis, *Contra Faustum*, 22.56, ed. J. Zycha, 1891, CSEL 25, p. 651: “De hoc autem pomi genere opinari quosdam scio, quod acceptum in escam sterilibus feminis fecunditatem parit; ac per hoc putant omni modo instituisse Rachel, ut hoc a filio sororis acciperet cupiditate pariendi: quod ego non arbitrarer, nec si tunc concepisset. Nunc uero cum post liae duos alios ab illa nocte partus Dominus eam prole donauerit, nihil est, cur de mandragora tale aliquid suspicemur, quale in nulla femina experti sumus. Dicam ergo quid sentiam: dicent hinc forte meliora doctiores. Cum enim haec mala ipse uidissem et propter istum ipsum sacrae lectionis locum id mihi obtigisse gratularer - rara enim res est - naturam eorum diligenter, quantum potui, perscrutatus sum, non aliqua a communi sensu remotiore scientia, quae docet uirtutes radicum et potestates herbarum, sed quantum mihi et cuilibet homini renuntiabat uisus et olfactus et gustus. Proinde rem conperi pulchram et suaueolentem, sapore autem insipido; et ideo cur eam mulier tantopere concupiuerit, ignorare me fateor, nisi forte propter pomi raritatem et odoris iucunditatem”. English translation NPNF, vol. I/4, p. 503.

³¹⁰ Pliny the Elder, *Historia naturalis*, 25.94, op. cit., vol. 7, p. 240.

³¹¹ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum...*, op. cit., f. 32v.

³¹² Cf. Pliny the Elder, *Historia naturalis*, 14.9, op. cit., p. 236.

³¹³ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum...*, op. cit., f. 33r.

³¹⁴ Origenes, *Commentaire sur le cantique I*, 2.11.1-3, op. cit., p. 456.

³¹⁵ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum...*, op. cit., f. 33v.

³¹⁶ So for instance *Biblia cum glossa ordinaria. Pars III...*, op. cit., f. 29v.

concluded this lengthy discussion with a rather resigned tone: “Vt vero tandem rem istam concludamus, neque nimium diu de lana caprina digladiemur, illud pro praesentis loci generali intellectu satis est, per botrum cypri botrum aliquem insignem et praestantem valde, siue ratione odoris siue ratione liquoris, hic esse intellegendum”³¹⁷.

Some natural explanations could lead to spiritual interpretations that are surprising for a modern reader. In Ps. 21:6 the author compared himself to a worm. A comparison seems obvious: worm is a despised animal and thus was the author of the psalm in the eyes of his persecutors. Titelmans developed this interpretation, adding that no one takes pity on worms and kills them without a flinch. In the very same way the Jews had no pity on Jesus³¹⁸. Yet, he continued to add another natural quality of worms:

Quemadmodum enim vermibus patrem non habet, cuius cum matre concubitu generetur, sed in ligno vel in terra, ex putrefactione vel occulta virtute interna (quae ex influxu venit corporis coelestis) concipitur et generatur, ita Christus Dominus non ex virili semine, neque ex commixtione, sed ex influxu superno et obumbratione spiritus sancti conceptus fuit, in vtero virginis superbenedictae Mariae, quasi in medio ligni castissimi et ab omni sorde purissimi; aut quasi in medio terrae pinguissimae et per gratiam spiritus sancti foecundissimae³¹⁹.

He claimed to have based this interpretation on patristic authorities, but he did not name his source³²⁰. Thus, explaining natural qualities of animals on the level of literal sense, could lead to unexpected allegorical interpretations, hardly intended by the human author of Scriptures.

In other cases, both literal explanations and spiritual interpretations seem less extravagant. In Ps. 83(84):4 Titelmans observed that sparrows construct their nests high above the ground. Consequently, we are also invited to look up, towards our heavenly home³²¹. In Song 2:9 the Groom is compared to a mountain goat and to a young hart. Goats climb into elevated places, unattainable for human beings and can descend very quickly. Thus Jesus, is present in unreachable heights of divine glory, but at the fullness of time descended quickly on earth³²². The deer on the other hand is a delicate and beautiful animal, thus rightly symbolises the Saviour. A fox of Song 2:15 has altogether different qualities:

³¹⁷ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum...*, op. cit., f. 34v. NB the expression “de lana caprina” is taken from Erasmus’ Adages: D. Erasmus, *Adagiorum Chilias Prima*, 1.3.53, eds. M.L. van Poll-van de Lisdonk, M. Mann Philips, and Chr. Robinson, Elsevier, Amsterdam 1993, ASD II-1, p. 366.

³¹⁸ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 53r.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*, f. 53r.

³²⁰ Such an interpretation can be found for instance in Augustinus Hipponensis, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 21.II.7, op. cit., p. 125; and in *Biblia cum glossa ordinaria. Pars II...*, op. cit., f. 240r.

³²¹ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 215v.

³²² F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum...*, op. cit., f. 49r.

Vulpes enim animal est astutum et dolosum, non rectum habens neque aspectum neque incessum, quod cum terram simpliciter videtur aspicere, quasi nihil cogitans mali, interim ex obliquo transuersis oculis in praedam visus aciem defigit, commodum expectans tempus explendae malitiae³²³.

Consequently, “iuxta consonam omnium fere sanctorum ennarationem”, a fox stands for a heretic, a hidden foe, humble on the outside, rotten on the inside³²⁴. As we can see from some of the examples presented above, Titelmans used natural explanations to provide sound bases for spiritual explanations.

3.4.4. *Cosmos*

Explaining nature was not limited to the sublunar world but concerned also celestial bodies. Commenting Ps. 135(136):7 Titelmans disclosed an advanced knowledge of the cosmos³²⁵. “Luminaria magna” that God created, are the sun and the moon. Titelmans observed, however, that according to astronomers, especially Alfraganus, the moon is smaller than stars, and even smaller than the Earth³²⁶. The sun was also smaller than many stars. Why then were they called great lights? The psalmist spoke from a human perspective, judging from which the sun and the moon not only seemed to be larger in size than other stars, but above all played a much more important role. For more details, Titelmans directed the reader to *De consideratione*³²⁷.

In a comment on Eccles. 1:5-6 Titelmans devoted much space to describe the movement of the sun. First, he described its circular motion around the Earth, which meant that while one hemisphere was in darkness the other received light³²⁸. Thus, sun’s motion was continuous. He also discussed the annual motion of the sun, passing through 12 zodiacs and affecting seasons³²⁹. Both issues were explored at much more length in *De consideratione*, to which he once again directed his readers³³⁰. This literal exposition was important for the spiritual meaning. The sun was a symbol of Christ, the sun of justice³³¹. Titelmans also pondered why Kohelet called the sun a spirit. He suggested it was because of its regenerative powers, as Aristotle underlined. Thus, also

³²³ Ibid., f. 58v.

³²⁴ Ibid., f. 58v. Cf. Augustinus Hipponensis, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 80.14, op. cit., p. 1128: “uulpes insidiosos, maxime que haereticos significant; dolosos, fraudulentos, cauernosis anfractibus latentes et decipientes, odore etiam tetro putentes”. *Biblia cum glossa ordinaria. Pars III...*, op. cit., f. 31r.

³²⁵ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 344v.

³²⁶ Cf. Alfraganus, *Elementa astronomica*, ed. J. Golius, Johannes Jansonius a Waasberge, & vidua Elizei Weyerstraet, Amstelodami 1669, p. 83.

³²⁷ F. Tittelmans, *Compendium naturalis philosophiae...*, op. cit., ff. 120r-121r.

³²⁸ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Ecclesiasten Salomonis...*, op. cit., f. e5v.

³²⁹ Ibid., f. e7r.

³³⁰ F. Tittelmans, *Compendium naturalis philosophiae...*, op. cit., ff. 96r-d97v;101v-102v.

³³¹ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Ecclesiasten Salomonis...*, op. cit., f. e6r.

poets called the sun the father of gods³³². Hence, in a metaphorical sense, the sun was the spirit of the world. Others, Titelmans observed, gave other explanations: Olympiodorus claimed the sun was called a spirit because of its swiftness, while Gregory of Nyssa thought that here spirit meant wind³³³.

In Song 6:9 Titelmans described in detail the phases of the moon³³⁴. The imperfect and changeable light of the moon was its own fault, not that of the Sun:

Sol enim, quantum ex sese, potens est totum ipsum lunae globum suo lumine collustrare, cum longe infra lunam totum aerem latissimum suo lumine impleat, atque etiam coelos Ipsos vsque ad firmamentum (iuxta Physicorum et Theologorum probabiliorem sententiam) collustret. Verum nimia opacitas atque densitas quae in luna est, impedimentum praestat soli, et quasi obsistit, ne eius possit lumine penetrari³³⁵.

Titelmans found an important spiritual meaning in these physical observations: Christ, the sun, could illuminate everyone with His grace, but not all were disposed to benefit from it³³⁶. He developed various mystical meanings of the sun and the moon even further, as we shall explore in more detail in the next chapter. Here it suffices to note once again, that literal exposition was important for Titelmans as a fundament for spiritual interpretations.

3.5. Examples and illustrations

Apart from explaining the literal sense with the use of philology and knowledge of the world, Titelmans strove to illustrate biblical truths with practical examples. Most of them came from the Bible itself, according to the exegetical rule, that the Bible explained the Bible (to which we shall return in the next part of this chapter). Here we shall present some cases of such illustrations, beginning with biblical examples and then presenting those coming from mythology, literature and, general life-experience.

³³² Titelmans named none of them. See for instance: Martianus Capella, *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii*, 2.26, ed. J. Willis, Teubner, Leipzig 1983, p. 39. Joannes Buridanus, *Le Traité de l'âme de Jean Buridan (De prima lectura)*, 2.6.2, ed. B. Patar, Institut supérieur de philosophie, Louvain 1991, Philosophes médiévaux 29, p. 122, (Bekker 427a17): "Per patrem deorum et virorum intelligitur sol: sol enim dicitur pater virorum, nam homo generat hominem et sol".

³³³ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Ecclesiasten Salomonis...*, op. cit., f. e8v. Cf. Olympiodorus Alexandrinus, *Commentarius in Ecclesiasten*, PG 93, col. 483. Gregorius Nyssenus, *Homélies sur l'Ecclésiaste*, 1.7, op. cit., p. 124.

³³⁴ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum...*, op. cit., f. 134r.

³³⁵ Ibid., f. 135v.

³³⁶ Ibid., f. 136r.

3.5.1. Biblical

Biblical stories frequently provided a perfect illustration of general moral truths expressed by biblical text. Titelmans used examples from historical books of the Bible to illustrate the proverbial wisdom of Ecclesiastes, Psalms and Job. In Eccles. 2:18-19 Solomon was discouraged, because he realised that there was no guarantee that his heir would be competent to administer well his inheritance. The Bible shows, Titelmans immediately commented, that such doubts were well grounded. In fact, Solomon's son, Rehoboam, was the most foolish of all men, and lost his father's inheritance. The Franciscan summarised the events told in 1Kings, chapters 12 and 14 to illustrate this point³³⁷. In Job 12:17, the main protagonist of the book claimed that God brings counsellors to a foolish end. Titelmans gave a biblical illustration to demonstrate: in 2Sam. 16 and 17 we read about Achitophel, whose advice was valued as if it were an oracle of God, yet who met the saddest end³³⁸. The next verse of Job, speaking of kings being brought into slavery, was illustrated by Titelmans with examples of kings Sedecias and Manasses (cf. 2Kings 25:7 and 2Chron. 33:11).

Titelmans illustrated in an analogous way also moral truths from the Bible. Ps. 40:2 proclaimed that a just one, who cares for the destitute, shall himself experience God's providential care in an hour of need. The Franciscan illustrated this aphorism with the case of Tobias, whose merciful deeds were rewarded manifold³³⁹. There were also examples of injustice. Eccles. 5:12 spoke of goods that brought evil upon their owners. Titelmans found an illustration of this precept in the figure of Naboth (2Kings 21:1-16), murdered because of his vineyard by the greedy wife of king Ahab³⁴⁰. Naboth's death was a judicial murder, an example of a perverted action of corrupt judges. Ecclesiastes spoke of such judges also in 5:7, and Titelmans thought it apt to illustrate this verse with the example of Pilate. Even though the Roman procurator was convinced of Jesus' innocence, he condemned the Messiah to death, because of his fear of Caesar³⁴¹. Yet, the end of a sinner was grim, as Ecclesiastes assured in 2:26. A malefactor amassed goods only to be deprived of them by his unexpected death. Titelmans invoked on this occasion the parable of a rich man, that Jesus told in Luke 12:16-20³⁴².

Ps. 112(113):7-9 expressed a general rule that God took care of the needy, who relied on him. God lifted the afflicted up and gave offspring to barren women. Titelmans found numerous examples of this rule. The first kings of Israel, both Saul and David, were of humble origin, yet

³³⁷ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Ecclesiasten Salomonis...*, op. cit., ff. k1r-v.

³³⁸ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Lutetiae)...*, op. cit., f. k4v.

³³⁹ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 97v.

³⁴⁰ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Ecclesiasten Salomonis...*, op. cit., f. r6v.

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*, f. q6r.

³⁴² *Ibid.*, f. k7v.

they were elevated to the highest honours. The same was true of the apostles, made princes of the Church despite their humble origins³⁴³. Words about barren women could also be interpreted literally and illustrated with biblical examples of Anna and Elisabeth. Yet, in both cases Titelmans claimed that there was a spiritual meaning to those words as well, and it was of a much greater importance³⁴⁴. Similarly, in Ps. 44(45):3, the beauty praised by the psalmist could be taken literally and applied to Christ and to his Mother.

Verisimile enim est, Christvm hominem sicut corpus optime compositum, siue (vt dicere solent) complexionatum et proportionatum assumpserat, ita et colorem et formam et totam corporis habitudinem, electissima accepisse. [...] Nam et beatam virginem, nostri sponsi huius speciose matrem, ferunt pulcherrimam secundum corpus et speciosissimam extitisse³⁴⁵.

Another example of great beauty was Absalom, David's son. Yet, the true beauty was spiritual, asserted the Franciscan, and bodily beauty was but a sign of mystical things represented by it. All these examples show that Titelmans' literal exegesis was deeply steeped in a biblical mentality. The Bible explained the Bible, and Titelmans found in it a reservoir of examples illustrating all sorts of truths. Examples of such a procedure could be multiplied, but let it suffice to finish with a reference to Ps. 81(82):3-4, where an admonition to judge the poor with justice was illustrated by Titelmans with no less than 15 biblical quotes and references³⁴⁶.

3.5.2. Other

Although the Bible was privileged as the source of illustrations for Scriptures, Titelmans also used examples from literature, mythology, and everyday life experience. In Eccles. 4:4 the biblical author complained about envy of men. Titelmans observed that all greatness invokes jealousy and illustrated this fact with an example of the Christ, who was envied by the Pharisees. He added another example from mythology. He invoked the figure of Momus, who was pleased in nothing and found defect even in Venus herself³⁴⁷. Besides, there were many examples of such jealousy among writers, both ancient and modern. He gave two examples from antiquity – Julian the Apostate and Porphyrius – but merely alluded to contemporary writers. A subtle reference to some humanists and reformers, we might presume.

In order to illustrate Eccles. 4:14 (*Quod de carcere catenisque interdum quis egrediatur ad regnum; et alius, natus in regno, inopia consumatur*) Titelmans found biblical as well as historical

³⁴³ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 303v.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, f. 304r.

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, f. 110r.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, f. 210r-v.

³⁴⁷ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Ecclesiasten Salomonis...*, op. cit., f. n3r-v. Titelmans probably derived the story of Momus from D. Erasmus, *Adagiorum Chilias Prima*, 1.4.39, op. cit. p. 440.

examples of the change of fortune. Among paupers elevated to kingship there was David, but also Cyrus, the Persian king. The lecturer from Leuven mentioned that although Cyrus had been raised as a pauper, he nonetheless had received all kingdoms from the hand of God (cf. Ezra 1:2). The source for the story of Cyrus was however not the Bible, which is laconic about his fate, but Herodotus³⁴⁸. Titelmans mentioned also that we find many such stories among ancient Romans but did not name any particular example. Commenting on Eccles. 1:8, he illustrated Kohelet's wisdom: "the eye is not filled with seeing", with an example of Apollonius of Tyne, a mage and philosopher, who had travelled the entire known world, yet was not satisfied³⁴⁹. In Job 1:20 he praised Job's restraint in grief and compared him to Stoic and peripatetic philosophers of antiquity. The former advised *apatheia*, that is, complete indifference to emotions. The latter were not against emotions, as long as these were practiced with moderation. Titelmans took side of the Peripatetics, claiming that their philosophy was closer to scriptural wisdom, of which Job was a representative³⁵⁰.

Moreover, Titelmans made numerous references to various mythological subjects in his prologue to the Song of Solomon, in which he emphasised the sacred character of this book:

Procul hinc, procul este prophani, Sacer est locus, extra me ite. Non hic vobis canitur, non Veneris ista sunt carmina, non sunt hic Adonidis horti, quos quaeritis. Vobis canat vestra Venus, ad vestras abite syrenes, quae vos in Syrtim trahant atque Charybdim. Vos vestra Circaea ebibite pocula, quibus in beluarum monstra transformemini³⁵¹.

Thus, he displayed some acquaintance with mythological themes, yet set the classical culture in stark opposition to the sacred nature of the Bible. This did not, however, mean that Titelmans was opposed to classical culture as such.; rather, it was a rhetorical device, to underline the non-erotic character of the Song.

3.6 Theology

The goal of literal exegesis was not only to elucidate the meaning of words by the means of philology and general knowledge, but also to comment on the theological meaning of the letter. Thus, it involved confronting difficulties and apparent contradictions in the text. We shall now see some ways in which Titelmans explored the literal sense on the theological level.

³⁴⁸ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Ecclesiasten Salomonis...*, op. cit., f. n8v. Herodotus, *Istoriai*, 1.95ff, op. cit., pp. 124ff.

³⁴⁹ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Ecclesiasten Salomonis...*, op. cit., f. f5r. Titelmans identified Jerome as his source for this story: Hieronymus, *Epistulae*, ep. 53.1, op. cit., p. 444.

³⁵⁰ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Lutetiae)...*, op. cit., f. b8v.

³⁵¹ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum...*, op. cit., f. a7v.

3.6.1. General difficulties

The first step of a theological discussion of a text involved solving general difficulties arising from it. Some biblical texts seemed to contradict general knowledge of the word or other scriptural verses. Since the Bible was never wrong, such discrepancies suggested a mistaken interpretation. It was thus necessary to propose a reading of given verse that would be congruent with other biblical passages and general knowledge. In scholastic exegesis this took a form of *quaestio*, in which first the problem was presented, then arguments pro and contra were discussed, finally arriving at a conclusion with a solution to arguments contrary to it. Each stage of reasoning was introduced with technical phrases such as *videtur quod non*³⁵². Although Titelmans occasionally discussed textual difficulties that arose from the Biblical text, he never followed the structure of scholastic disputations. Rather, his discussions were less rigid and more open in form. In fact, he demonstrated a moderate aversion to excessively complex scholastic discussions. For instance, in Ps. 68(69):22 he observed that this verse had been used by evangelists in passion narratives. There was, however, some discrepancy in these accounts. The psalm spoke of food, while in Gospels, Jesus was offered to drink gall mixed with vinegar. He was aware of the difficulty but did not consider it important:

Sed quomodo dici potest, quod in escam dederunt illi fel, cum dicat Matthaeus, quod acetum mixtum felle dabant illi, non manducare, sed bibere? Fortisan ideo, quia fel crassius est quam acetum, et per se magis cibi quam potus vice esse videtur. Sed neque opus est tam exacte verba pensitare, vbi sententia manifesta habetur³⁵³.

Thus, on the one hand he realised the problem, on the other did not want to enter into hair-splitting discussions, typical for some scholastic literature, when the meaning was clear.

Some difficulties that Titelmans discussed originated from the contrast between the text of the Bible and the general knowledge of the world. In Song 1:1 he observed that it was “minime conueniens aut decorum” to speak of man’s breasts, as if he were a woman. He explained that it was not uncommon for the infatuated to talk nonsense, which, however, expressed their deep affection³⁵⁴. Commenting on Job 1:3 he wondered whether the number of camels owned by Job – three thousand – was not exaggerated³⁵⁵. Surely, he did not need that many! Titelmans explained that just as peasants in his time raised stallions for sale, so did Job with his camels. He continued

³⁵² On the rise of *quaestio* in relations to the Bible see: G.R. Evans, *The language and logic of the Bible: the earlier Middle Ages*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1987, pp. 125–163.

³⁵³ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 169v.

³⁵⁴ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum...*, op. cit., f. 3r.

³⁵⁵ Gregory the Great saw in the number three a reference to the Trinity and developed a spiritual interpretation of it. Gregory Magnus, *Moralia in Iob*, 1.28, op. cit., p. 46.

to give biblical examples of how camels were used for long-distance transportation and translated the Greek name *dromos* (δρόμος) as “swift”³⁵⁶. In Job 12:7 Titelmans raised a question, how a rational man could learn from irrational beasts. He observed that this could not be taken literally, yet a man could learn from meditating on some examples provided by animal behaviour. For instance, the book of Proverbs (6:6) recommended a lazy man to contemplate the behaviour of an ant to learn industriousness from her³⁵⁷.

Another type of difficulties stemmed from imprecision of expressions or the lack of information in the text. In Job 16:14 the expression *effudit in terra viscera mea* suggested that Job’s affliction consisted not only of leprosy but also some disease of inner organs³⁵⁸. Yet Titelmans thought it could also be read figuratively, as an expression of the enormity of Job’s suffering³⁵⁹. In relation to the John 5:4, there rose a question as to the timing and frequency of a miraculous activity of an angel, who moved the water in the pond of Bethsaida and caused the recovery of the first sick person to enter the water. Titelmans quoted the opinion of Cyril, who suggested that it took place annually on the Pentecost day, as a figure of baptism and Holy Spirit’s sanctifying action³⁶⁰. But Chrysostom claimed it was much rarer and often many years passed with no such a motion of water³⁶¹. It occurred at an opportune moment, at the Lord’s good pleasure. Titelmans found Cyril’s opinion improbable but concluded that it was difficult to say anything definitive in that matter³⁶². In Matt. 1:17 Titelmans discussed two ways of counting threefold 14 generations that constituted Jesus’ genealogy³⁶³. In Matt. 11:16-17 he considered what kind of game children were playing, concluding that Jesus’ words should be understood generally, as referring to children’s games that imitated adult life³⁶⁴.

Sometimes the text of the Bible seemed a little contradictory. Commenting on Job 2:9 Titelmans pondered why Satan did not kill Job’s wife³⁶⁵. After all, given that the demon had a permission to afflict any damage to Job’s body, family, and property, leaving the wife unscathed seemed inconsistent. He offered two responses, both derived from the Church Fathers. One was more theological. Satan could not kill Job’s wife, for through marriage the two were one body, thus God’s licence to harm Job’s family and property did not extend to his wife. Titelmans’ asserted that the Demon would have killed the wife, if he could, for such a loss would be the most

³⁵⁶ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Lutetiae)*..., op. cit., f. a7v.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, f. k3v.

³⁵⁸ Titelmans cited here Philippus Presbyter, *In historiam Iob commentariorum libri tres*, Adamus Petrus, Basileae 1527, pp. 65–66.

³⁵⁹ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Lutetiae)*..., op. cit., f. n5r.

³⁶⁰ Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on John*..., op. cit., p. 138.

³⁶¹ Ioannes Chrysostomus, *Homiliae LXXXVIII in Ioannem*..., 36.2, PG 59, col. 203.

³⁶² F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio paraphrastica in Ioannem*..., op. cit., ff. f6r-f7r.

³⁶³ F. Titelmans, *Paraphrastica elucidatio in Matthaëum*..., op. cit., ff. 8v-9r.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, f. 111v.

³⁶⁵ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Lutetiae)*..., op. cit., ff. d1v-d2v.

painful one to Job, a good husband. An alternative explanation was more psychological. Satan left Job's wife alive, so that she might tempt him into despair, just as Eve had successfully tempted Adam³⁶⁶. This solution was offered by Gregory the Great, while both were accepted by Origen³⁶⁷. Finally, the Franciscan added a less plausible explanation. Some, for instance Philo of Alexandria, claimed that Job's wife was Dino, the daughter of Jacob. Thus, Satan was not permitted to harm here, because of God's love for her father.

Job 19:17 also seemed to contradict what has been stated earlier in this book. In chapter nineteen, suffering Job entreated his children, who, according to chapter one, had already been dead. Titelmans noted this contradiction and proposed several ways to resolve it³⁶⁸. First, he suggested that children could mean grandchildren, which was a solution popular among mediaeval authors³⁶⁹. He did not, however, mention another solution suggested by scholastics, namely, that Job had more children than those mentioned in chapter one³⁷⁰. On the other hand, he cited a solution based on the Septuagint, which read "sons of my concubine" (υιοὺς παλλακίδων μου)³⁷¹. Titelmans observed that Job could have had such secondary sons, just as Abraham and other patriarchs had them. He also offered a solution based on the Hebrew text: the letter *lamed* placed before the word *labeni* (לִבְנֵי) could be translated as *ad filios* or *propter filios*³⁷². In that case it would mean for the sake of the future children, those who will be born after the end of Job's tribulations. Finally, he offered two other solutions, that seem to be his own: sons could mean here beloved servants, who were like sons to Job, or his disciples, since also Paul called his followers children. Thus, as we see in this example, Titelmans combined common-sense explanations largely borrowed from previous generations with explanations that stemmed from analyses of Greek and Hebrew texts of the Bible.

Many contradictions arose from discrepancies between various biblical texts, especially Old Testament prophecies and their fulfilment in the Gospels. For instance, Ps. 71(72):7 promised

³⁶⁶ Cf. Thomas de Aquino, *In Iob (expositio super Iob ad litteram)*, 2.147, op. cit., p. 17: "dixit autem illi uxor sua, quam solam Diabolus reliquerat ut per eam viri iusti mentem pulsaret qui per feminam primum hominem deiecerat". See also: Petrus Iohannis Olivi, *Postilla super Iob*, 2. op. cit., p. 45: "Nota quod diabolus hanc scienter reliquerat, cum iuxta licentiam sibi a Deo datam posset eam sicut et filios occidisse. Quod facit, primo quia est ualde apta ad uirum seducendum siue molliendo per blandicias indebitas, sicut patuit in Eua, siue concitando ad impacienciam et iram, sicut patet in Gezabel que incitauit Achab contra Naboth et in uxore Thobie, que conata fuit incitare Thobiam ad impatientiam contra Deum". Dionysius Cartusianus, "Enarratio in librum Iob", art. 7, op. cit., p. 334.

³⁶⁷ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Lutetiae)*..., op. cit., f. d2r. Gregorius Magnus, *Moralia in Iob*, 3.8, op. cit., pp. 121-122. [Pseudo Origenes], *Commentarius Anonymi in Iob*..., op. cit., col. 476ff.

³⁶⁸ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Lutetiae)*..., op. cit. ff. p2v-p3r.

³⁶⁹ Cf. Thomas de Aquino, *In Iob (expositio super Iob ad litteram)*, 19, op. cit., p. 115. Petrus Iohannis Olivi, *Postilla super Iob*..., 19, op. cit., p. 289, p. 289. Nicholas Lyra, *Biblia cum postilla Nicolai de Lyra tertia pars*..., op. cit., f. 41r. Dionysius Cartusianus, "Enarratio in librum Iob", art. 43, op. cit., p. 553.

³⁷⁰ Suggested by: Thomas de Aquino, *In Iob (expositio super Iob ad litteram)*, 19.163, op. cit., p. 115; and Petrus Iohannis Olivi, *Postilla super Iob*, 19, op. cit., p. 289.

³⁷¹ Cf. Iulianus Aeclanensis, *Expositio libri Iob*, 19, op. cit., p. 53.

³⁷² F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Lutetiae)*..., op. cit., f. p3r.

peace in the days of the Messiah, yet Jesus proclaimed in Matt. 10:34 that he had come to bring not peace, but the sword. Titelmans resolved this contradiction claiming that both texts spoke of different sorts of peace: “Sed manifestum est, aliam esse pacem quae abundanter in diebus Messiae exorta est, ab ea quam idem se dicit auferre. Haec enim, temporalis est et pax mundi. Illa uero pax est cordis, pax coelestis, pax Dei”³⁷³. A similar problem was present in Ps. 68(69):11-12 (*Et operui in ieiunio animam meam, et factum est in opprobrium mihi. Et posui vestimentum meum cilicium; et factus sum illis in parabolam*). Titelmans read it Christologically, yet nowhere in the Gospels was there any mention of Christ wearing a haircloth as his garment nor about his fasts for his persecutors, as the psalm seemed to prophesize. His solution was that haircloth and fasts were a figure symbolising humility and the inner tribulation of Christ³⁷⁴.

Sometimes the difficulty arose from the struggle to identify texts that New Testament claimed to quote. John 6:45 proclaimed: *est scriptum in Prophetis: Erunt omnes docibiles dei*. Titelmans noted that this was not a literal citation from any of the Prophets but an allusion to many prophetic texts³⁷⁵. In particular, as tested by Jerome, the words of Jesus referred here to Isa. 54:13³⁷⁶. “Praeter hunc vero nemo veterum eorum qui in hunc librum Commentarios aedidere [sic], neque Graecorum neque Latinorum particularem aliquem locum designauit, ad quem Dominus alluserit, sed tantum generali sermone apud Prophetas scriptum id esse affirmant”³⁷⁷. An analogous problem was present in John 7:38 (*qui credit in me sicut dixit scriptura flumina de ventre eius fluent aquae vivae*). These words, as Titelmans observed, do not appear in any place of the Bible³⁷⁸. He followed an explanation provided by Chrysostom, namely that Scriptures generally advocate to believe in Jesus³⁷⁹. An alternative explanation was found in Jerome: he claimed that these words were absent from the Septuagint but present in the Hebrew text. Regrettably, he did not specify where³⁸⁰. Some commentators thought he meant Prov. 5:16, Titelmans however observed that the text of Proverbs was identical in Hebrew and the Septuagint

³⁷³ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 178r.

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, f. 169r-v.

³⁷⁵ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio paraphrastica in Ioannem...*, op. cit., f. h8r.

³⁷⁶ Hieronymus, *Commentariorum in Esaiam*, XV.54.11-14, ed. M. Adriaen, 1963, CCSL 73A. p. 613.

³⁷⁷ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio paraphrastica in Ioannem...*, op. cit., f. h8v. Glossa suggested it was a quote from Joel. *Biblia cum glossa ordinaria. Pars IV...*, op. cit., f. 1041v: “prophetis dicit pluraliter, quia omnes prophetae vno et eodem spiritu repleti, licet diuersa prophetarent, tamen ad idem tendebant: quapropter cum quouis eorum omnes alii concordabant, sicut cum Ioele, qui dicit: et erunt omnes docibiles Dei.” Reported also by Thomas Aquinas, *Catena aurea in quatuor euangelia*, in Iohannem 6.6, op. cit., p. 424. It is likely, that Titelmans used Thomas’ *Catena* for the subsequent discussion of the meaning of this prophecy. Erasmus cited Jerome’s solution in D. Erasmus, *Annotationes in Nouum Testamentum (pars secunda)...*, op. cit., p. 92.

³⁷⁸ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio paraphrastica in Ioannem...*, op. cit., ff. k8v-11r.

³⁷⁹ Ioannes Chrysostomus, *Homiliae LXXXVIII in Ioannem*, 51.1, op. cit., col. 283ff.

³⁸⁰ Hieronymus, *Prologus in libro Paralipomenon*, [in:] *Biblia sacra iuxta vulgatam versionem*, eds. R. Weber and R. Gryson, Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, Stuttgart 2007, 5th ed., p. 546: “ubi scriptum est? Septuaginta non habent, apocrypha nescit ecclesia; ad Hebraeos igitur reuertendum est, unde et Dominus loquitur et discipuli exempla praesumunt”.

and rather different from the words cited in the Gospel³⁸¹. Thus, observing also that Augustine offered no solution at all, the Franciscan was content to settle for the first explanation³⁸². This entire discussion was evidently derived from Erasmus' *Annotationes*, which cite the very same authorities in the same order³⁸³.

3.5.2 Theological difficulties

Apart from general difficulties there were some difficulties on a theological level. In some places the Bible apparently contradicted either itself or the established dogmas of the Church. Titelmans strove to elucidate such passages, explaining the literal meaning in a way that did not threaten theological truths. One should bear in mind that for pre-modern exegetes the literal sense was much broader than it is commonly understood currently and included some dogmatic statements that were not explicitly present in the text but were traditionally inferred from it.

The stakes were occasionally very high indeed. Song 3:4 (*Paululum cum pertransissem eos, inveni quem diligit anima mea*) seemed to put in doubt the divinity of Christ. The Groom, who was the figure of the Messiah, seemed, according to this verse, only a little superior to his companions, that is, angels³⁸⁴. Titelmans asked how this could be so, since Christ infinitely exceeded all creation. His solution was that either one should simply read that Christ was superior to his companions and disregard the adverb *paululum*, or else one should understand the adverb in a temporal sense: once the Bride passed by the companions she found the Groom, much sooner than she had expected to do so³⁸⁵.

A similar problem was presented by Ps. 131(132):17. It proclaimed: *paravi lucernam Christo meo*. This was conventionally interpreted to mean John the Baptist, who preceded Christ³⁸⁶. Yet, Titelmans wondered, could the Baptist be called a lamp, given that it was Christ

³⁸¹ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio paraphrastica in Ioannem...*, op. cit., f. k8v. Recent commentators referred most likely to Thomas Aquinas, *Catena aurea in quatuor evangelia*, in *Iohannem* 7.7, op. cit., p. 439: "Vel hoc testimonium de proverbiiis sumptum est, ubi scilicet dicitur: deriventur fontes tui foris, et in plateis aquas tuas divide". The same explanation given by Dionysius Cartusianus, *Enarratio in evangelium secundum Iohannem*, art. 20.7, [in:] *Opera omnia in unum corpus digesta*, Typis Cartusiae S. M. de Pratis, Monstrolii 1901, vol. 12, ca, p. 419: "Sicut dicit Scriptura, in Proverbiis, quantum ad sensum, non quantum ad formam verborum". The idea was present also before: Heiricus Autissiodorensis, *Homiliae per circulum anni*, 57.54, ed. R. Quadro, 1992, CCCM 116A, p. 547: "Qui credit in me, sicut dicit scriptura proverborum Salomonis, flumina de uentre eius fluent aquae uiuae".

³⁸² F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio paraphrastica in Ioannem...*, op. cit., f. 11r. Cf. Augustinus Hipponensis, *In Iohannis euangelium tractatus*, 32.2, op. cit., p. 301.

³⁸³ D. Erasmus, *Annotationes in Nouum Testamentum (pars secunda)...*, op. cit., p. 100.

³⁸⁴ Cf. F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum...*, op. cit., f. 67r.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, f. 69r. Temporal understanding was also suggested by *Biblia cum glossa ordinaria. Pars III...*, op. cit., f. 31r. Beda the Venerable saw in this adverb a reference to Christ's humility: Beda Venerabilis, *In Cantica canticorum libri sex*, 6.200, op. cit., p. 364: "Quos cum paululum pertransimus inuenimus quem diligimus quia redemptor noster etsi humilitate homo inter homines diuinitate tamen super homines fuit".

³⁸⁶ See for instance Augustine: Augustinus Hipponensis, *Enarrationes in Psalmo*, 131.27, op. cit. p. 1925: "Quae est lucerna? Iam nostis Domini uerba de Iohanne: ille erat lucerna ardens et lucens". See also Alcuinus: "Ioannes enim erat lucerna illuminatus a Christo luce, ardens fide et dilectione, lucens verbo et actione: qui praemissus est, ut

himself that was the light? Would that not make them equal? He resolved the question by observing that the light of Christ was hidden by his self-humiliation in the Incarnation, while John was like a lamp illuminating human ignorance, but only in a temporal sense. Like a candle, John gave dim light; and like a candle, he burnt out in time.

Sometimes the difficulty was created by contrasting interpretations proposed by past generations. John 11:33 was by no means clear. It said that Jesus *infremuit spiritu et turbavit se ipsum*. This expression of Jesus' grief was traditionally interpreted as a sign of his humanity. According to Augustine, Christ allowed himself to show his grief in order to instruct us about his own humanity³⁸⁷. Yet, Titelmans noted, Chrysostom read differently. The Greek Father read *increpavit* or *arguit* instead of *infremuit* and commented that the divinity of Christ reproached his humanity for having displayed an excess of emotions³⁸⁸. Theophylactus was even more scandalous for he suggested that here *spiritus* signified the Holy Ghost³⁸⁹. The Franciscan expressed a doubt whether the Bulgarian bishop's words had been correctly translated. He observed that the difficulty arose from the translation of the Greek phrase *to pneumati* (τῷ πνεύματι). Because the Greek language had no ablative, the dative often took an instrumental function. Thus, one could translate that Christ reproached by the means of spirit. If, however, one took it as dative, it signified the object, that is the excess of grief expressed by Jesus. The second reading conformed with Chrysostom's interpretation, and Titelmans left the argument here, without deciding which interpretation was the better³⁹⁰.

In Matt. 8:19 he went further and challenged the traditional interpretation. The established reading was that the scribe who came to Jesus was dishonest: "Vulgata est doctorum sententia, hunc Scribam malo et doloso animo Christum accessisse. Dicunt enim hoc ipsum quaesisse a domino, quod post Simon Magus a Petro in apostolicis Actibus describitur quaesisse [sic!]"³⁹¹. Thus, according to them, the answer of Jesus was a harsh rebuke. Titelmans was not persuaded by the traditional reading:

inimicos Christi confunderet, secundum illud: paravi lucernam Christo meo: inimicos eius induam confusion", cited in Thomas Aquinas, *Catena aurea in quatuor evangelia*, in Iohannem 5.9, op. cit., p. 409.

³⁸⁷ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio paraphrastica in Ioannem...*, op. cit., f. q1v. Cf. Augustinus Hipponensis, *In Iohannis euangelium tractatus*, 49.18, op. cit., pp. 428–429. Thomas Aquinas, *Catena aurea in quatuor evangelia*, in Iohannem 11.6, op. cit., p. 486. See also *Biblia cum glossa ordinaria. Pars IV...*, op. cit., f. 1046v.

³⁸⁸ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio paraphrastica in Ioannem...*, op. cit., f. q2r. Ioannes Chrysostomus, *Homiliae LXXXVIII in Ioannem...*, 63, op. cit., col. 350.

³⁸⁹ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio paraphrastica in Ioannem...*, op. cit., f. q2v. Cf. Theophylactus, *Commentarius in Joannis Evangelium*, PG 124, col. 100C-D.

³⁹⁰ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio paraphrastica in Ioannem...*, op. cit., f. q3r.

³⁹¹ F. Titelmans, *Paraphrastica elucidatio in Matthaem...*, op. cit., f. 74v. Cf. Hieronymus, *Commentariorum in euangelium Matthaei*, 1.1150, eds. D. Hurst and M. Adriaen, 1969, CCSL 77, p. 51: "Ostenditur autem nobis, et ob hoc Scribam repudiatum, quod signorum videns magnitudinem sequi voluerit salvatorem, ut lucra ex operum miraculis quaereret; hoc idem desiderans quod et Simon magus a Petro emere voluerat". Cited in Thomas Aquinas, *Catena aurea in quatuor evangelia*, in Matthaem 8.6, op. cit., p. 142.

Nos vt huic sententiae plurium partum nequaquam refregamur, ita nec omnino assentimur; maxime cum in textu omnino nihil possit assignari, quod non eadem facilitate possit in bonam partem atque in malam interpretari. Et quanquam ipsum professionis nomen odiosum aliquid prima facie sonet [...] non est tamen necesse, omnes Scribas fuisse malos et dolosos; quemadmodum nec omnes Pharisei [...] mali erant³⁹².

Following such an interpretation one should understand Jesus' response as a benevolent warning, making the scribe aware of the numerous challenges of apostolic life. The whole passage is significant, for Titelmans often emphasised the authority of fathers and their unanimity, yet here he dared to challenge their interpretation. No surprise then, that he mollified the extent of his disagreement, stating at the end of the discussion: "Hanc sententiam superius textum elucidantes indicauimus, sic tamen, vt nemini praeiudicatum velimus"³⁹³.

Difficulties concerned not only the person of Jesus, but even more so the person of his mother. Although she was rarely mentioned on the pages of the Gospels, some biblical remarks seemed to put into doubt the Marian dogmas of the Church. John 7:3 spoke of Jesus' brothers, thus questioning Mary's perpetual virginity. Titelmans cited two patristic solutions of the problem: according to Chrysostom, Jesus' brothers were sons of Joseph from his previous union, while Augustine saw in them relatives of Mary³⁹⁴. Titelmans favoured Augustine's opinion, since it was more flattering to Joseph, the virginal spouse of the virginal mother³⁹⁵. Besides, it was commonly accepted in the Western Church. Nevertheless, he observed that the opinion of Chrysostom was also within the confines of orthodoxy. A similar issue was raised by him in commentary to Matt. 1:25. Here the problem was constituted by an adverb *donec*, which could be interpreted that Joseph remained continent until Jesus' birth, but not thereafter. The same seemed to be suggested by the subsequent adjective *primogenitus*, which implied further offspring. Titelmans observed that such unorthodox claims had been made by an ancient heretic Heluidius³⁹⁶. The Franciscan defended the dogma by presenting several cases from the Old Testament where *donec* was used in such a sense

³⁹² F. Titelmans, *Paraphrastica elucidatio in Matthaeum...*, op. cit., ff. 74v-75r.

³⁹³ *Ibid.*, f. 75r.

³⁹⁴ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio paraphrastica in Ioannem...*, op. cit., ff. k6v-k7r. Augustinus Hipponensis, *In Iohannis euangelium tractatus*, 28.3, op. cit., p. 278: "consanguinei uirginis mariae, fratres domini dicebantur. Erat enim consuetudinis scripturarum, appellare fratres quoslibet consanguineos et cognationis propinquos, [...] nam Abraham et Lot fratres sunt dicti, cum esset Abraham patruus Lot; et Laban et Iacob fratres sunt dicti, cum esset Laban auunculus Iacob. [...] sicut enim in sepulcro ubi positum est corpus Domini, nec antea nec postea mortuus iacuit, sic uterus Mariae nec antea nec postea quidquam mortale concepit". It was cited by Thomas Aquinas, *Catena aurea in quatuor euangelia*, in Iohannem 7.1, op. cit., p. 192. Aquinas was likely Titelman's source. Ioannes Chrysostomus, *Homiliae XC in Matthaeum*, 5, PG 57, col 58.

³⁹⁵ Similarly Dionysius Cartusianus, "Enarratio in euangelium secundum Iohannem", art. 19.7, op. cit., p. 408: "Non enim erant, secundum Bedam, filii Ioseph ex alia conjugate: qui creditur uirgo mansisse, ut purissimae ac pudicissimae uirginis esset custos atque minister condignus. Sed erant cognati Domini Jesu".

³⁹⁶ F. Titelmans, *Paraphrastica elucidatio in Matthaeum...*, op. cit., f. 15r.

that it did not imply a cessation of an action³⁹⁷. He also observed that *primogenitus* did not necessarily imply further offspring, for on the Passover night the Angel of God killed firstborn sons of Egyptians, even if these were the only children³⁹⁸.

Another fragment that seemed to diminish Mary's holiness was the episode of the miracle of Cana in the second chapter of John. There Jesus uttered a provocative question: *quid mihi et tibi est mulier?* This was apparently scandalous, as it suggested that Jesus wanted nothing to do with his mother. Titelmans suggested two ways of resolving this difficulty. The first, based on Augustine, suggested that Jesus had nothing to do with Mary as God, for his divinity was not derived from her³⁹⁹. The other explanation was: what both of us have to do with the fact, that there is no more wine? This interpretation was favoured by Chrysostom, Theophylactus and Cyril⁴⁰⁰. The first of them even reproached Mary for seeking earthly glory in her Son's miracles. Titelmans commented that such an accusation was mistaken, given that Mary was free from all sins. Yet, he did not condemn the patriarch of Constantinople, displaying some awareness of the historical development of dogmas:

Neque tamen ob hoc Chrysostomum ipsum damnamus, qui ea suis dixit temporibus, quando matris Dei dignitas nondum plene Ecclesiae innotuit: quae si nunc dicantur impietatis notam non effugient, postquam vniuerso fidelium coetui per latissima orbis terrarum spacia, spiritus sancti haud dubie operatione, certius persuasa est diuersa sententia, et Deipare matris sanctitas plenius reuelata innotuit⁴⁰¹.

Although Chrysostom was without blame in his immature theological opinion, it was important to correct him, lest unlearned readers take his words as the truth of faith. The entire passage is significant, for in his polemics with Erasmus Titelmans often refused to see dogmas in their historical development and tried to present the teaching of the Church as an unchangeable monolith. Yet, as is demonstrated by examples above, he was ready to acknowledge the historical

³⁹⁷ Ibid., ff. 15v-16r. Titelmans' argumentation is based on Hieronymus, *Aduersus Heluidium de Mariae uirginitate perpetua*, 5, PL 23, col. 198ff.

³⁹⁸ F. Titelmans, *Paraphrastica elucidatio in Matthaem...*, op. cit., f. 16v. Also here he followed Hieronymus, *Aduersus Heluidium de Mariae uirginitate perpetua*, 9, op. cit., col. 201ff.

³⁹⁹ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio paraphrastica in Ioannem...*, op. cit., f. c2v. Augustine cited in: Thomas Aquinas, *Catena aurea in quatuor euangelia*, in Iohannem 2.1, op. cit., p. 358: "Ut ergo distingueret inter Deum et hominem, quia secundum hominem minor et subditus erat, secundum autem Deum supra omnes erat, dixit quid mihi et tibi est, mulier?". Augustinus Hipponensis, *De fide et symbolo*, 4.8, ed. J. Zycha, 1900, CSEL 41, p. 12.

⁴⁰⁰ Chrysostom's opinion also cited by: Thomas Aquinas, *Catena aurea in quatuor euangelia*, in Iohannem 2.1, op. cit., p. 358: "Chrysostomus in Ioannem. Sed et propter aliam causam, ut non suspecta essent miracula quae fiebant (ab his enim qui indigebant, rogari oportuerat, non a matre), voluit ostendere quoniam omnia decenti tempore operatur, non simul omnia faciens: quia confusio quaedam esset; et ideo sequitur nondum venit hora mea; id est, nondum cognitus sum his qui adsunt". Cf. Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on John...*, op. cit., p. 90. Theophylactus, *Commentarius in Joannis Euangelium...*, op. cit., col. 1189A. Cf. Dionysius Cartusianus, "Enarratio in euangelium secundum Iohannem", art. 7.2, op. cit., p. 313: "Quid mihi et tibi est, mulier? id est, quid ad nos duos, qui pauperes sumus, et temporalium rerum sollicitudinem non habemus, in tantum pertinet providere istis de vino?".

⁴⁰¹ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio paraphrastica in Ioannem...*, op. cit., f. c3r-v.

conditionality of theological opinions, as long as it served to support the Church and her dogmas, rather than to challenge them.

Sometimes, in a truly scholastic spirit, Titelmans used philosophical argumentation to respond to theological questions. For instance, in his commentary on Ecclesiastes, he reflected upon two difficulties: how could the creation be called vain, if God himself had called it good (Eccles. 1:2), and how could the works of God last, given that everything passes away (Eccles. 3:14)? In both cases the brunt of the answer rested on philosophical speculation. *Omnia vanitas*, remarked Kohelet, yet in Gen. 1 God called his creation good, observed the Franciscan⁴⁰². Only God is fully good and has in himself every perfection. Creatures are called good inasmuch as they participate in the goodness of God, but they have no perfection in themselves. Thus, Ecclesiastes rightly called all creation vanity because it is incapable of satisfying the human heart. Being created in God's image and likeness, a human being desires the utmost good, that is, God himself, and all creation is vanity, incapable of fulfilling his longing⁴⁰³. Similarly, Titelmans used philosophical reasoning to defend the permanence of divine works. First, he introduced a distinction between primary and secondary causes. Only the works that God executed solely via primary causes, that is, without a human intermediary, are truly divine works: angels, celestial spheres, rational souls. What has been created without secondary causes cannot be destroyed. Thus, Ecclesiastes was right to say that everything was vain, meaning things created by secondary causes, and that God's works were eternal, meaning those created without any mediation of secondary causes⁴⁰⁴. Thus, although Titelmans often distanced himself from scholastic theologians, he also occasionally used philosophical reasoning typical to them.

Moreover, he sporadically employed typically scholastic vocabulary. In the commentary to Ps. 1:5, he used the word *videtur*, characteristic for a scholastic *quaestio*: "Ideo non resurgunt impii in iudicio. Videtur contrarium huic versui, quod Apostolus habet decimoquinto capite Epistolae ad Corinthios: Omnes quidem resurgemus, sed non omnes immutabimur (1Cor 15:51)"⁴⁰⁵. Titelmans resolved this difficulty very simply, claiming that the psalmist spoke of a sinner, who will rise to eternal death and will not be transformed like the believers⁴⁰⁶. In Ps. 68(69):29 (*deleantur de libro viventium et cum iustis non scribantur*), he used the very term *quaestio*: "De hoc libro si [...] hic passus exponat, quaestio suborbitur, quomodo possit deleri aliquis de libro vitae: cum fieri non possit, vt qui semel praedestinatus est a praedestinatione cadat, vtque is, quem

⁴⁰² F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Ecclesiasten Salomonis...*, op. cit., f. d7v. The same question was raised by Jerome, but his response was biblical, not philosophical: Hieronymus, *Commentarius in Ecclesiasten*, 1.2, op. cit. p. 252.

⁴⁰³ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Ecclesiasten Salomonis...*, op. cit., ff. d8r-e3r.

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, ff. l8r-m2v.

⁴⁰⁵ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 2r.

⁴⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, f. 2r-v.

Deus ab aeterno praevidit saluandum, salutem non consequatur”⁴⁰⁷. He resolved this question with two possibilities: either that deleting a name from the book of the living means in fact that such a name has never been inscribed in it⁴⁰⁸, or that it was to be read in reference to Jews as the chosen nations. While all of them can still be saved as individuals, the nation was removed from God’s book, and they no longer can claim to be the chosen nation⁴⁰⁹. Interestingly, in the entire discussion Titelmans saw no difficulty with the term predestination that was to become very important in Reformed theology.

Anti-Jewish sentiment was present also in a *quaestio* that Titelmans raised regarding Job. In Job 3:1 Job seemed to sin with blasphemy: *post haec aperit Iob os suum, et maledixit diei suo*.

Malitiosi Hebraeorum Rabini ex impatientia verba ista procedere ac blasphemiam sapere impudenter asseuerant. Item et alia multa ipsius beat Iob verba in sequenti disputatione, quae a catholicis viris pie exponuntur, impii isti in sensum peruersum interpretantur, quasi Iob nimia passione perturbatus, quae non decet falsitatis dogmata prae impatientia protulerit, vt solent nonnunquam homines ex passionis impetu effundere contraria, iis quae ante passionem sentiebant⁴¹⁰.

He found this interpretation nonsensical, since the Bible declared that Job did not sin in all his tribulation (Job 1:22), and God himself asserted towards the end of the Book that Job spoke truly (Job 42:7-8). Therefore, the Franciscan stated: “Horum autem Iudaeorum improbam sententiam et impiam interpretationem catholicorum virorum nemo sequitur”⁴¹¹. Yet, it remained to be explained how those apparently blasphemous words were to be interpreted. Gregory the Great took resort in a spiritual explanation, seeing in Job a figure of Christ⁴¹². Titelmans, however, thought that it was possible to defend the literal sense of this utterance. He cited Origen and Chrysostom, who both emphasised that Job cursed an immaterial, substance-less thing – that is, his day – in order not to damn any of God’s creatures⁴¹³. In other words, it was a rhetorical device. His words were not useless, as Gregory suggested, since they were an expression of his immense grief⁴¹⁴. They also served to break an uneasy silence between Job and his friends. For more

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid., f. 170r.

⁴⁰⁸ Cf. Petrus Lombardus, *Commentarium in Psalmos*, 68.33, op. cit., col.: 639: “Non sic ergo accipiendum est, tanquam in hoc libro scribat aliquem Deus, quem postea delet; sed ita accipiendum est; de libro viventium deleantur, secundum spem illorum, quia scriptos se putant, id est constat etiam ipsis, non illos ibi esse scriptos”.

⁴⁰⁹ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 170r-v.

⁴¹⁰ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Lutetiae)...*, op. cit., f. d7r.

⁴¹¹ Ibid., f. d7v.

⁴¹² Ibid., f. d8v. Cf. Gregorius Magnus, *Moralia in Iob*, 4.1, op. cit., pp. 163-166.

⁴¹³ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Lutetiae)...*, op. cit., f. e1r. [Pseudo Origenes], *Commentarius Anonymi in Iob...*, op. cit. col. 511. Joannes Chrysostomus, *Commentaire sur Job I*, 3.1, op. cit., pp. 198-200.

⁴¹⁴ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Lutetiae)...*, op. cit., ff. e1v-e2v. Gregorius Magnus, *Moralia in Iob*, 4 praefatio, op. cit., p. 159.

arguments, Titelmans directed his readers to Paul of Burgos' *Scrutinium scripturarum*, a 15th-century polemical treatise against Jewish interpretation of scriptures⁴¹⁵.

Hence, as presented above, Titelmans sought to resolve difficulties arising from the biblical text according to the literal sense, using the authority of Church Fathers and philosophical arguments. Whenever ancient authorities seemed to contradict each other, he dared to criticise their interpretations, though he also sought not to undermine their authority as such. In the following two sections, we shall explore how Titelmans used two ancient rules of biblical interpretation to resolve apparent contradictions in the text, namely: *analogia scripturae* and *analogia fidei*.

3.5.3. *Analogia scripturae*

The rule of scriptures was an established exegetical method already in pre-Christian times. Jewish rabbis developed several ways of interpreting scriptures according to scriptures, such as midrash, and authors of the New Testament used these tools to different extent. Thus, it comes as no surprise that *analogia scripturae* was soon adopted by Christian exegetes as a privileged way of elucidating obscure biblical texts. In this aspect too, Titelmans stood faithfully in the tradition and occasionally used the rule of scripture in his commentaries.

In Ps. 15(16):7 he pondered over the meaning of *increpauerunt me renes mei*. He observed that it could refer to long night vigils, which exhausted the flesh, but also subdued it to the spirit⁴¹⁶. Using the rule of scriptures, he noted that the Bible often spoke of kidneys as a symbol of affects and thought, and a locus of conscience (cf. Ps. 7:10), hence also here it could mean pious affects that inspire holy men. Others, Titelmans claimed, suggested that *renes* could mean relatives, in a spiritual sense Jews, who were relatives of Christ. Such an interpretation can be found for instance in Aquinas' works⁴¹⁷. Yet he dismissed such a suggestion, since there was no biblical analogy for *renes* ever being used in the sense of relatives⁴¹⁸. Consequently, scriptural usage was for Titelmans a probe to verify the correct sense.

In Ps. 39(40):8 (*in capite libri scriptum est de me*) Titelmans used biblical texts to explain what book the Psalmist had in mind.

Manifestum est ex vsu scripturarum sanctarum, esse librum quendam vitae apud Deum, dicente Moysse, cum zelaret pro remissione culpae quam patrauit durae ceruicis populus: Aut dimitte eis hanc noxam, aut dele me de libro quem scripsisti (Exo. 32). Et in Psalmis orat Propheta sanctus: Deleantur

⁴¹⁵ Cf. Paulus de Sancta Maria, Episcopus Burgensis, *Scrutinium scripturarum*, Philippus Iunta, Burgis 1591, pp. 477–480.

⁴¹⁶ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 37r.

⁴¹⁷ Thomas de Aquino, "In Psalmos reportatio", 15.6, op. cit., p. 189.

⁴¹⁸ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 37v.

de libro viuentium, et cum iustis non scirbantur (Psal. 68). Imo et ipse Dominus in Euangelio, cum ad gaudendum et exultandum suos hortaretur, gaudii causam proponit inscriptionem libri (Luc. 10)⁴¹⁹.

Therefore, Titelmans thought that the Bible interpreted itself and the key to understand it was within it. Yet, he also noted others proposed an alternative solution, a much simpler one: the Psalmist had in mind the first psalm of the Psalter⁴²⁰.

In the commentary on Job he demonstrated thrice (1:11; 2:5; 19:21) that *tangere* was an equivalent of *nocere* or *affligere* in biblical idiom. For instance, observed Titelmans, in Ps. 104(105):15 God admonished: *nolite tangere christos meos* – that is, do them no harm – and similarly in Zech. 2:8⁴²¹. In Job 20:17 he provided six parallel places from psalms, the Revelation and the Gospel of John to show that water should be understood here as divine grace and spiritual gifts⁴²². In Eccles. 2:9 he brought up fifteen scriptural citations to demonstrate that wisdom, to which Kohelet referred in this verse was the human one, not divine⁴²³. Such examples could be multiplied, but these presented above suffice to demonstrate that Titelmans followed the tradition of *analogia scripturae* as hermeneutical tool.

3.5.4. *Analogia fidei*

As we have already noted in Chapter One, *analogia fidei* was one of the key hermeneutical tools of catholic theologians from the very beginning⁴²⁴. The true meaning of the biblical text was always consonant with the rule of faith passed by the Apostles to the Church. Titelmans was faithful to this hermeneutical heritage and often applied *analogia fidei* to resolve textual difficulties. He often favoured translations that were more theologically sound, even if they were philologically imperfect. He even justified a rather liberal paraphrases of the original text in Latin translations if such paraphrases supported the Catholic doctrine.

In his annotations on Job 19:25 (*scio enim, quod redemptor meus viuit et in novissimo die de terra surrecturus sum*), Titelmans realised that the text of the Vulgate was rather remote from the Hebrew original as well as from the translation of the Seventy. Nonetheless, he considered such a departure an improvement:

⁴¹⁹ Ibid., f. 95v. Text in brackets is on the margins.

⁴²⁰ Thus for instance: Augustinus Hipponensis, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 39.14, op. cit. p. 436. Dionysius Cartusianus, “Commentaria in psalmos omnes Daudicos commentaria in secundam quinquagenam psalterii”, art. 78, op. cit., p. 654. On the other hand Ambrosius read about the beginig of the Genesis: Ambrosius Mediolanensis, *Explanatio psalmorum XII*, 39.11, op. cit., p. 218.

⁴²¹ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Lutetiae)*..., op. cit., ff. b4v; c5v; p3v.

⁴²² Ibid., ff. q5r-v.

⁴²³ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Ecclesiasten Salomonis*..., op. cit., ff. h7v-i1r.

⁴²⁴ Vide supra 1.1.1.

Hunc locum, in quo dogma catholicum de mortuorum resurrectione iuxta Hieronymianam interpretationem luculentissime astruitur, longe aliter totum legere videtur aeditio antiqua, aliter item ex Hebraeo interpretes alii legunt. In qua varietate, licet nulla inueniatur lectio, siue Graeca siue Latina, quae tam aperte dogmatis catholici integritatem explicet ac nostra (quod nihil dubium est fidei interpretis magni Hieronymi esse tribuedum, qui sicut fidei Christianae mysteria nouit exactius et plenius credidit, ita et exprimere clarius potuit, iuxta quod idem ipse alicubi ait: Quae melius intelligimus, melius et proferimus) in omnibus tamen lectionibus, qui Christiana fuerint pietate, facile resurrectionis sufficientem et claram satis inuenient assertionem⁴²⁵.

According to Titelmans the truth about the resurrection of the dead was present in the original text in a hidden form. It was Jerome's genius and sanctity that led him to express truths of Catholic faith more explicitly without, however, violating the original meaning. He proceeded to demonstrate it by analysing the text of the ancient Greek version and the Hebrew one. We present his translations of Job 19:25-27 below⁴²⁶:

The Vulgate according to Titelmans	Titelmans' translation from Greek and the original text	Titelmans' translation from Hebrew
Scio enim quod redemptor meus uiuit ⁴²⁷ . Et in nouissimo die de terra surrecturus sum. Et rursum circumdabor pelle mea, et in carne mea videbo Deum. Quem visurus sum ego ipse, et oculi mei conspecturi sunt, et non alius. Reposita est haec spes mea, in sinu meo.	Scio enim, quod aeternus sit qui me soluere habet, aut soluturus est, super terram, suscitare pellem meam, vel suscitabitur pellis mea, quae ista perfert. A Domino enim haec mihi consummate sunt, quae ego mihi ipsi persuasi, quae oculus meus vidit et non alius. Omnia autem haec mihi consummate sunt in sinu.	1 st translation Ego noui redemptorem meum uiuum, et nouissimum, qui super terram aut super puluere surget. 2 nd translation: Scio redemptorem meum vivum, qui nouissimum super puluere surget (he translated only verse 25 from Hebrew)
	οἶδα γὰρ ὅτι ἀένναός ἐστιν ὁ ἐκλύειν με μέλλων ἐπὶ γῆς, ἀναστήσει δὲ τὸ δέρμα μου τὸ ἀναντλοῦν ταῦτα παρὰ	(Titelmans provided no Hebrew text from which he translated)

⁴²⁵ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Lutetiae)*..., op. cit., f. p4v.

⁴²⁶ Ibid., ff. o8r-v; p5r-6r.

⁴²⁷ Variant *uiuit* is testified in *Vulgata Sixto-Clementina*, although most codices read *vivat*. The same applies to *sum/sim* in the following verse, see: *Biblia sacra iuxta vulgatam versionem*..., eds. R. Weber and R. Gryson, op. cit., p. 747.

	<p>γὰρ Κυρίου ταῦτά μοι συνετελέσθη, ἃ ἐγὼ ἐμαντῶ συνεπίσταμαι, ἃ ὁ ὀφθαλμός μου ἐώρακε καὶ οὐκ ἄλλος, πάντα δέ μοι συντετέλεσθαι ἐν κόλπῳ.</p>	
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First, he commented on the Greek text. The correct meaning, according to him, was that God who is eternal and saved Job from misfortune in the past, will also rise him up after death and bestow him with immortality. Job will rejoice in the very same skin in which he now suffers. This truth, he observed, was not accessible to all: “non autem ista capiunt qui a Deo sunt alieni et diuinam instructionem non habent, vel etiam contemnunt, qui de resurrectione nihil vel scire vel audire volunt”⁴²⁸. The Hebrew text also pointed to the same truth. The first part of the 25th verse referred, according to the Lovanian lecturer, to the eternity of Christ, who in the book of Revelation described himself as the first and the last. The second part of the verse alluded to the resurrection, first of Christ, then of the entire mankind. The first was the efficient cause of the second. If one accepted the second translation, *nouissimum* could mean the fullness of time and the hour of Jesus, thus his death and resurrection, or the time of his second coming⁴²⁹. In all cases, the truth of the Catholic doctrine was already present in Hebrew and Greek texts, but fully exposed by Jerome. For Titelmans it was theology that guided exegesis, not the other way around.

An analogous case was presented in Job 20:18. Here, once again, the Vulgate differed significantly from the Hebrew and Greek versions. The Latin translation provided the foundation for interpreting this verse dogmatically, as a proof text about the eternal damnation of the wicked. According to Titelmans this truth had already been present in an implied form in the Hebrew and Greek texts, but was fully understood and exposed only by Jerome⁴³⁰.

Sciendum etiam est, beatum Hieronymum data opera paraphrastice hunc locum reddidisse, ad exprimendum apertius catholici dogmatis firmamentum: id quod et alias non paucis in locis fecisse comprobatur, quemadmodum nominatim in proximum caput annotauimus tractantes locum illum de resurrectione: Scio quod redemptor meus viuit. Quae quidem diligentia et obseruatio ad eo in viro sancto non est vituperanda, vt etiam laudi sit tribuenda: et fidei suae hinc magnum ille meretur preconium, quod ea quae secundum verborum tenorem arida aliqua intelligentia potuissent eludi verius quam exponi, maturo consilio decreuerit immutatione modica verborum, iuxta magis dignam

⁴²⁸ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Lutetiae)*..., op. cit., f. p5r.

⁴²⁹ Ibid., ff. p5v-p6r.

⁴³⁰ Such an understanding was already present in Gregorius Magnus, *Moralia in Iob*, 15.17, op. cit. p. 762; and prevailed throughout the Middle Ages, see for instance: Thomas de Aquino, *In Iob (expositio super Iob ad litteram)*, 20, op. cit., p. 120. Dionysius Cartusianus, “Enarratio in librum Iob”, art. 45, op. cit., p. 567.

sententiam, quam Christianus ipse et orthodoxus in verbis illis intelligebat, clarius exponere. Neque enim ideo interpretis negligit aut minus praestat officium, si eadem opera et sententiam exprimat et claritatem orationi adiiciat. [...] id quod habet textus Hebraicus, vere sententiam istam continent et significat, quam clarius expressit Hieronymus⁴³¹.

Jerome's translation protected readers from negating the eternal punishment (a heresy attributed to Origen) and clearly expressed the dogma. Some *iudaizantes* adhered too closely to the Hebrew text, producing a sterile reading: a malefactor will not rejoice in the fruits of his actions⁴³². But the true meaning of the Hebrew text is that which is expressed in the Vulgate. Once again Titelmans provided his translations of Hebrew and Greek texts to demonstrate that the dogmatic truth could be found in each of them⁴³³:

The Vulgate according to Titelmans	Titelmans' translation from Greek	Titelmans' translation from Hebrew ⁴³⁴
Luet quae fecit omnia, nec tamen consumetur. Iuxta multitudinem adinventionum suarum, sic et sustinebit.	In vanum et frustra laboravit, divitias ex quibus non gustabit, sicut caro nervosa (vel sicut herba exasperans) incomestibilis, impotabilis.	Reddet laborem et non deglutiet, secundum substantiam sic reddet et non laetabitur.
	εἰς κενὰ καὶ μάταια ἐκοπίασε, πλοῦτον ἐξ οὗ οὐ γεύσεται, ὡσπερ στρίφνος ἀμάσητος, ἀκατάποτος·	(Titelmans provided no Hebrew text from which he translated)

Similarly, as in the previous case, Titelmans argued that the Vulgate corresponded to the true meaning of Greek and Hebrew texts. He begun with the Hebrew text. *Reddet laborem* indicated punishment, since *labor* often meant suffering, thus, to give suffering back equalled being punished. *Non deglutiet* suggested that this punishment of hell will have no end. *Non laetabitur* corresponded with *sustinebit*, for there was nothing to rejoice in the punishment that a sinner will suffer. Thus, according to the Franciscan, the meaning of apparently rather different

⁴³¹ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Lutetiae)*..., op. cit., f. q6v.

⁴³² A reading based on the Hebrew text was presented by Lyra alongside the Vulgate, see Nicholas Lyra, *Biblia cum postilla Nicolai de Lyra tertia pars*..., op. cit., f. 43r.

⁴³³ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Lutetiae)*..., op. cit., ff. q1r-v; q7r-q8r.

⁴³⁴ Cf. *Biblia*..., trans. Sanctus Pagninus, op. cit., f. 180v: "Restituet laborem aliorum, et non deglutiet, in substantia permutationis eius non exultabit". *Liber beati Job nuper hebraice veritati*, trans. A. Giustiniani, Egidius Gourmantus, Coloniae 1520, f. d3r: "Reddet laborem et non deglutiet illum ut fuerit substantia, sic vicissim restituet et non letabitur".

texts was the same⁴³⁵. While he had more difficulty with the Greek translation, he nonetheless claimed that its meaning could be squared with that of the Vulgate, if one assumed that it was meant to be ironic. Hence, sinner’s “riches” were his evil deeds, and his vane labour will only bring him punishment⁴³⁶.

It is also worth observing that translations from Greek and Hebrew are most likely Titelmans’ own. He knew works of Santes Pagnino and Agostino Giustiniani, which he cited explicitly elsewhere in his commentaries, and he clearly consulted their translations. Yet his own translation differed somewhat from those proposed by them:

	Job 19:25	Job 20:18
The Vulgate	Scio enim quod redemptor meus viuit. Et in novissimo die de terra surrecturus sum.	Luet quae fecit omnia, nec tamen consumetur. Iuxta multitudinem adinventionum suarum, sic et sustinebit.
Santes Pagnino ⁴³⁷	<u>Ego noui redemptorem meum viuum et nouissimum qui super terram SURGET.</u>	Restituet laborem aliorum, ET NON DEGLUTIET, in substantia permutationis eius non exultabit.
A. Giustiniani ⁴³⁸	Et ego enim scio quod redemptor meus viuit, et quod nouissimus <u>super puluere SURGET.</u>	<u>Reddet laborem</u> ET NON DEGLUTIET illum ut fuerit substantia, sic vicissim restituet <u>et non laetabitur.</u>
Titelmans	1 st translation <u>Ego noui redemptorem meum viuum, et nouissimum, qui super terram aut super puluere SURGET.</u> 2 nd translation: Scio redemptorem meum vivum, qui novissimum <u>super puluere SURGET.</u>	<u>Reddet laborem</u> ET NON DEGLUTIET, secundum substantiam sic reddet <u>et non laetabitur.</u>

Consequently, Titelmans achieved a peculiar effect: on the one hand he informed the reader of discrepancies between the Hebrew text and the Vulgate, on the other, he assured him that there was no difference in meaning. Titelmans the philologist brought to the fore the literal meaning of the original text (and of the Greek translation) and demonstrated that the Vulgate was very far

⁴³⁵ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Lutetiae)*..., op. cit. ff. q7r-v.

⁴³⁶ Ibid. ff. q7v-q8r.

⁴³⁷ *Biblia*..., trans. Sanctus Pagninus, op. cit., f. 180r-v.

⁴³⁸ *Liber beati Iob*..., trans. A. Giustiniani, op. cit., ff. d2v-d3r.

from it. Titelmans the theologian reconciled these meanings, violating all sound philology. It was the latter who always had the last word.

Such a use of theology to establish the meaning of obscure passages was commonly made by Titelmans also in other commentaries. In Ps. 32(33):12 he acknowledged that *eius* in the phrase *beatus gens cuius est dominus Deus eius* seemed redundant from the perspective of a good Latin style. Yet, he argued, it served to emphasise an important theological point of distinguishing believers from idolaters. He concluded: “Quanquam autem in vtroque horum secundum rem eadem sententia indicetur, maiorem tamen emphasim habet illa posterior eloquutio, cum sua sententia: atque ob hoc magis oblectat pios animos, tametsi forsitan minus sit grata linguis disertis et delicatis auribus. Sancta enim scriptura, mentium non aurium delicias spectat”⁴³⁹.

In *Annotationes ex Habraeo atque Chaldaeo*, accompanying his commentary on the Psalms, he demonstrated numerous places where the Vulgate differed from the Hebrew text. Yet, in virtually all those instances he argued that despite different wording, the theological sense was identical. For example, in Ps. 77(78):25 he observed that *panis angelorum* was the Vulgate’s rendering of the Hebrew word *albirim* (אַבִּירִים), which Jerome translated from Hebrew as *panis fortium vel robustorum*⁴⁴⁰. For Titelmans both translations harmonised. Manna was the symbol of the Eucharist, the celestial bread that gave strength. He also observed that others translated as *panis nubium* or *panis regum*. All these variants were indicated by Felix Pratensis in his translation⁴⁴¹. In Ps. 84(85):9 Titelmans noted, that while the Vulgate spoke of converting to one’s heart, Hebrew spoke of not turning towards folly. The Hebrew reading was confirmed by translations of Jerome and Felix as well as by the Aramaic text⁴⁴². The Franciscan was not too concerned about this difference. Instead of trying to choose a correct reading on philological grounds, he preferred to propose an allegorical reading. The Old Covenant, the Synagogue, turned to folly, while the New one, the Church, to its heart⁴⁴³.

In John 6:11 (*Accepit ergo Jesus panes, et cum gratias egisset, distribuit discumbentibus, similiter et ex piscibus quantum volebant*) Titelmans noted that there was a difference between Greek codices. Some read in plural: ἤθελον (*volebant*), meaning that Jesus gave as many fish to the crowd as they wanted, other in singular: ἤθελεν (*volebat*) meaning, that Jesus gave as much as he wanted. He noted that no ancient Greek father confirmed the singular reading, while

⁴³⁹ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., ff. 74v.

⁴⁴⁰ F. Titelmans, *Annotationes ex Hebraeo...*, op. cit., f. XXVv.

⁴⁴¹ *Psalterium ex hebreo...*, trans. Felix Pratensis, op. cit., f. 37v.

⁴⁴² Hieronymus, *Liber Psalmorum iuxta hebraicum translatus* [in:] *Biblia sacra iuxta vulgatam versionem...*, eds. R. Weber and R. Gryson, op. cit., p. 877: “ut non convertantur ad stultitiam”. Likewise: *Psalterium ex hebreo...*, trans., Felix Pratensis, op. cit., f. 40v. *Psalterium Hebraeum, Graecum, Arabicum et Chaldaeum...*, trans. A. Giustiniani, op. cit., f. p4r: “ut non conuertentur ad insipientiam”.

⁴⁴³ F. Titelmans, *Annotationes ex Hebraeo...*, op. cit., f. XXVIIv.

Augustine's reading, *quantum sufficiebat*, was ambiguous⁴⁴⁴. The crucial argument for him was, however, that the plural reading magnified the excellence of the miracle, thus was more appropriate⁴⁴⁵. In the Matt. 5:4-5, he noted a difference in the order of beatitudes. Some Greek codices placed the mourning at the second place, before the meek. Instead of entering into a philological discussion, Titelmans commented simply that the Latin order was better, for the meek fitted better with the first blessing, about *pauperes spiritu*⁴⁴⁶.

This chapter has demonstrated that Titelmans paid much attention to the literal sense of the Bible, because like his predecessors he considered it an important foundation for the spiritual sense. In order to elucidate the literal sense, he used all means available: philology, philosophy, history, geography, sciences, and theology. He had a fair grasp of Greek and Hebrew, which differentiated him from most of his mediaeval predecessors and from many Catholic critics of Erasmus. He was ready to use the original languages of the Bible to establish the correct reading, elucidate obscure passages, and propose solutions to various difficulties arising from the text. Occasionally he even ventured to criticise his predecessors, both patristic and mediaeval. The use of philology had, however, a very clear limit for him: the Catholic dogma. Whenever differences between the three languages had any theological significance, Titelmans firmly adhered to the Vulgate. On the one hand, this was simply a continuation of patristic and mediaeval exegetical tradition, on the other, it was an innovation. Mediaeval authors were usually ignorant of textual differences between the three biblical languages; Titelmans, no. Not only was he aware of such differences, but he also possessed enough philological expertise that he could attempt to improve the Vulgate. Yet he did not. The reason was that for him the meaning did not reside in the text, but in the way it was received by the community of faith. It was the Church who through faith discovered the true salvific message hidden in Scriptures. The Vulgate, as an official ecclesiastical translation, was an expression of this hermeneutical process. Titelmans the philologist felt entitled to correct the Vulgate on the basis of Greek and Hebrew, whenever no theological meaning was involved. Greek and Hebrew readings often provided for him useful additional angles from which to analyse the Biblical message. Nevertheless, the philologist had no right to meddle with the theological content of the Bible. He had no competence in this field, for the true meaning of the Bible was deeper than words. It was mystical. We shall now proceed to analyse how Titelmans analysed this deeper sense of Scriptures.

⁴⁴⁴ Plural reading is testified in Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on John...*, op. cit., pp. 185–186. Theophylactus, *Commentarius in Joannis Evangelium...*, op. cit., col. 1288. Augustinus Hipponensis, *In Iohannis euangelium tractatus*, 24.2, op. cit., p. 246. All these sources cited also in D. Erasmus, *Annotationes in Nouum Testamentum (pars secunda)...*, op. cit., pp. 88–89; likely the source that Titelmans used.

⁴⁴⁵ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio paraphrastica in Ioannem...*, op. cit., f. h6v.

⁴⁴⁶ F. Titelmans, *Paraphrastica elucidatio in Matthaeum...*, op. cit., f. 47v.

Chapter IV

Mystical sense of Scripture in Titelmans' scholarship

The previous chapter demonstrated how Titelmans used various exegetical tools to establish the literal sense of scriptures. Such a procedure, however, was but a prolegomenon before expounding the spiritual sense. The literal sense was the fundament, but it was the spiritual meaning that constituted the heart of the Bible. In this chapter we shall concentrate on the spiritual, or mystical, as Titelmans preferred to call them, senses of the Scripture¹. Most of the inquiry shall be centred on four of Titelmans' commentaries: on the Psalms, the Song of Solomon and the Gospels of Matthew and John, since in Job and Ecclesiastes Titelmans self-consciously chose to leave the mystical interpretation aside, while the commentary on the apostolic Epistles is little but a paraphrase. Before analysing particular cases of spiritual readings of the Bible, we shall first look at how Titelmans understood the mystical sense in general.

4.1 The superiority of the spiritual senses

4.1.1 *The unity of both Testaments*

Although spiritual reading of Christian Scriptures had some points in common with pagan allegorisations of mythology, Henri de Lubac has persuasively argued that it had its own unique character. As it has been presented in Chapter One Christian allegory originated from the reinterpretation of ancient Jewish writings in the light of the Christ event². Thus, the relationship between the Old and New Testaments was at the very core of the spiritual reading of the Bible. "The New Testament lies hidden in the Old and the Old is unveiled in the New", explained a patristic axiom³.

Titelmans stood firmly in this tradition of spiritual exegesis and in his commentaries emphasised several times this crucial interplay of both Testaments. According to the Franciscan, the Old Testament was in reality written not so much for Jews, as for Christians. Commenting on

¹ On the spiritual sense of Scriptures see: H. de Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale: les quatre sens de l'Écriture*, Aubier 1964, pp. 83–125. S. Szymik, *Sensy biblijne. Podział, charakterystyka, kontrowersje*, "The Biblical Annals", 2000, vol. 47, no. 1, pp. 5–25. K. Bardski, *Słowo oczyma gołębiczy. Metodologia symbolicznoalegorycznej interpretacji Biblii oraz jej teologiczne i duszpasterskie zastosowanie*, Wydawnictwo Archidiecezji Warszawskiej, Warszawa 2006. K. Bardski, *Alegoryczno-symboliczna interpretacja Biblii*, Petrus, Kraków 2016.

² Vide supra 1.1.1.

³ Augustinus Hipponensis, *Quaestionum in heptateuchum libri septem*, 2.73, ed. I. Fraipont, 1958, CCSL 33, p. 106: "et in Vetere Nouum lateat et in Nouo Vetus pateat". Cf. Concilium Vaticanum II, *Constitutio Dogmatica de Divina Revelatione Dei Verbum*, 16: "Deus igitur librorum utriusque Testamenti inspirator et auctor, ita sapienter disposuit, ut Novum in Vetere lateret et in Novo Vetus pateret". *Catechismus Catholicae Ecclesiae* 129: "Secundum adagium antiquum, Novum Testamentum in Vetere est occultum, dum Vetus est in Novo detectum: ita fit ut 'in Vetere Novum lateat et in Novo Vetus pateat'".

Ps. 77(78):6 (*ut cognoscat generatio altera*) he observed that although the literal sense was that Jews were supposed to teach subsequent generations about God's wondrous deeds, the true *generatio altera* were Christians. "Pro hac autem generatione scripta sunt gesta omnia veteris testamenti, quemadmodum aperte testatur Paulus Aposotolus, dicens: Quaecumque enim scirpta sunt, propter nostrum doctrinam scripta sunt (Rom 15[:4])"⁴. He followed with a citation from 1Cor 10:11 "omnia in figura contingebant illis (patribus videlicet antiquae generationis) scripta sunt autem ad correptionem nostram, in quos fines saeculorum nouissima"⁵. Importantly this quote came from one of the fundamental texts for the Christian doctrine of spiritual reading of the Bible. Titelmans noted also that Felix translated *generatio nouissima*. This translation showed even more clearly that what was truly meant was the people of the last hour, that is Christians⁶. He expressed the same thought in his paraphrase of the ultimate verse of Ps. 21(22):

Generatio ventura, populus nouus fidelis Ecclesiae, qui surget post meam resurrectionem euangelizabitur tibi Domino Deo suo, praedicationem et annunciationem salutis accipiet per Apostolos, vt credat in Dominum Deum suum [...] annunciabunt sancti Apostoli mei, viri plane coelestes, populo illi nouo (quod adhuc est nasciturus, quod est per Apostolicam predicationem in baptisate et fide generandus) iusticiam dei, iusticiam veram quam coram deo iustificat, quam est ex fide in patrem et filium eius: illi (inquam) populo, quem tu pater ab aeterno predestinati et preordinasti facere in tempore suo et quem item perficies aptabilisque tibi in tempore definito, regeneraturus illum tibi ex aqua et spiritu sancto, vt fiat tibi in populum electum et peculiarem, in Ecclesiam sanctam, in qua inhabites et modo per dulcedinem tuae gratie et in futuro secundum plenitudinem gloriae tuae sempiternae⁷.

According to Titelmans the Old Testament itself demonstrated that its true addressees were Christians. Thus, it was not the literal sense that mattered, but the hidden, figurative meaning, pointing towards Christ and his Church. It is also important to note here that in both comments above Titelmans emphasised the role of the Church. The Scriptures were entrusted to the community of believers, not to individuals – an argument that he will use extensively in polemics against humanists. None of this was original. A similar reading of Ps. 77 was proposed by Augustine in his *Enarrationes* and repeated by many authors in the Middle Ages⁸.

⁴ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 199v.

⁵ Ibid., f. 199v.

⁶ Ibid., f. 199v. Cf. *Psalterium ex hebreo...*, trans. Felix Pratensis, op. cit., f. 37r.

⁷ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 52v. Cf. Thomas de Aquino, "In Psalmos reportatio", 21.27, op. cit., p. 224: "Quibus annunciabitur: populo qui nascetur, spirituali generatione: joan. 3: nisi quis renatus fuerit etc".

⁸ Augustinus Hipponensis, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 77.8, op. cit., p. 1072: "Haec uerba indicant duos quodammodo populos: alterum ad Vetus, alterum ad Nouum Testamentum pertinentem". Cf. Petrus Lombardus, *Commentarium in Psalmos*, 77.7, op. cit., col. 726: "Filius sunt novus populus Novi Testamenti, qui mandata novit, et fecit, quod quasi

The Old Testament found its fulfilment in the New. Titelmans, as many before him, saw this truth in John's prologue: *accepimus gratiam pro gratia* (John 1:16)⁹.

per verbum hoc incarnatum accepimus gratiam testamenti noui, longe prestantiorem, loco testamenti veteris: quae et ipsa non parua erat gratia, sed comparatione ad gratiam noui testamenti [...] non sit nisi figura ad rem figuratam, signum ad rem signatam, vmbra ad veritatem, seruitus ad libertatem, imperfectum ad perfectum¹⁰.

The same truth was expressed in Matt. 5:17. Jesus came to fulfil the Old Testament, which was but a sketch of the true doctrine. Titelmans paraphrased Jesus words from the Sermon on the Mount in the following way:

Quemadmodum enim pictor cum imaginem prius figuraliter tantum rudi carbone deliniatam, postmodum accuratiori artis opera reddit absolutam, non destruere dicitur imaginem, tametsi illas rudiores et imperfectas linearum protractiones perfectioribus occultet, sed absoluere eam atque perficere dicitur, sic neque ego legis destructor debeo appellari, qui eius veni imperfectum absoluere, perfectumque reddere¹¹.

Although there was nothing new in the idea, the image of Christ as a painter perfecting an existing sketch of the Old Law seems to be Titelmans' invention. The sketch exists for the sake of the final version. In the same way the Old Testament was written with Christ in mind: "Non enim verum est Christum vel sic agere vel sic pati voluisse, ad eum finem vt scripturam impleret. Non enim ideo sic agere vel sic pati voluit, quia sic scriptum fuerat aut praedictum: sed e contrario magis ideo sic scripta fuerant, quoniam sic futura erant"¹². Christ was not obliged to fulfil the Scripture; rather the Scripture was written with a prior knowledge of his life and actions.

Consequently, both Testaments spoke with one voice. In the Prologue to the commentary on Ecclesiastes, Titelmans emphasised that the contempt of the world preached by Kohelet harmonised perfectly with life and the teachings of the apostles expressed in the New Testament. He concluded:

exponendo subdit. Ad hoc acceperunt, ut generatio altera, scilicet de gentibus collecta, cognoscat spiritualiter quod ipsi patres non noverunt. Et sunt idem filii et generatio altera, scilicet populus gratiae et cognoscentes".

⁹ Cf. Augustinus Hipponensis, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 81.1, op. cit., p. 1136: "in eodem mox euangelio diceretur quod accepimus gratiam pro gratia, id est, pro Testamenti Veteris promissionibus, Testamenti Noui promissiones". Thomas Aquinas, *Catena aurea in quatuor euangelia*, in Iohannem 1.17, op. cit., p. 341: "Chrysostomus in Iohannem. Vel accepimus gratiam pro gratia; id est, pro veteri novam. Sicut enim est iustitia et iustitia, adoptio et adoptio, circumcisio et circumcisio, ita gratia et gratia; sed illa quidem ut typus, haec vero ut veritas".

¹⁰ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio paraphrastica in Iohannem...*, op. cit., ff. a3v-a4r.

¹¹ F. Titelmans, *Paraphrastica elucidatio in Matthaem...*, op. cit., f. 40r.

¹² F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 131r.

Qua quidem in re pulchra quaedam et peramoena piis mentibus se se offert consideratio, circa istum tam suauem paginae veteris ad paginam nouam concentum, tamque apertam et manifestissimam vtriusque scripturae consonantiam. Vt vel hinc manifeste pateat cuilibet non obtenebratos habenti mentis oculos, ab vno eodemque authore, nempe diuino spiritu, vtramque similiter profectam, illam quidem tempore priorem, hanc vero dignitate et perfectione praeuentem¹³.

4.1.2 *Inspiration of Scriptures*

The unity of the Testaments originated above all else from their common author, the Holy Spirit¹⁴. Titelmans affirmed this truth of faith many times. For instance, in the first chapter of Matthew he commented on the citation from Isaiah stating that God was “omnis diuinae scripturae primario author” who spoke through the prophet “vt per calamum scribae et instrumentum loquentis in eo diuini spiritus”¹⁵. Although there was nothing new in this assertion, it gained a new context at the time of Titelmans. Biblical citations in the New Testament came under close scrutiny by humanists. Erasmus famously claimed that the author of the Matthew’s Gospel erred because he quoted prophet Micah from memory (Matt. 2:6)¹⁶. Although Titelmans did not discuss Erasmus’ observations in his commentary, underlining the divine authorship of the entire Bible served as an indirect response: it did not matter whether the citation was verbatim, what mattered was that it was inspired.

Titelmans asserted his belief in divine inspiration also in the prologue to the commentary on the Psalms. He began with two classical scriptural citations about inspiration of Scriptures (2Tim. 3:16 and 2Pet. 1:21) and added eight other biblical passages that spoke about the aid of the Spirit for believers. Therefore, all Scripture, having Holy Ghost as its author, was useful for instruction in everything that pertained to human salvation¹⁷. Not only was the text of the Scripture inspired, but also its translations, as he argued against Erasmus¹⁸. From the faith in inspiration followed Titelmans’ esteem for the Word of God. It surpassed all human wisdom:

Haec ergo humani ingenii eloquia, quanquam elaboratissima, tamen casta non sunt, multa mendaciorum figmenta continentia, vanitates plurimas proponentia lectoribus, elaborata etiam pleraque ad humanam gloriam, siue ad vulgi plausum, siue ad captandum principum fauorem. Eloquia autem Domini, etiam ex tempore (subito impellente spiritu) a viris Deo plenis vel dicta vel

¹³ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Ecclesiasten Salomonis...*, op. cit., ff. b8v-c1r.

¹⁴ Some elements of this and following sections have been published as: T. K. Mantyk, *Reading the Psalms in Times of Crisis. Franciscus Titelmans’s Relecture of the Psalms in the Context of Humanism and Reformations*, [in:] *The Church in the Face of Crises and Challenges over the Centuries. Selected Issues from the History of the Church*, eds. M. Nabožny and M. Wysocki, Vanderhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen, 2023, pp. 23-34.

¹⁵ F. Titelmans, *Paraphrastica elucidatio in Matthaum...*, op. cit., f. 4v.

¹⁶ D. Erasmus, *Annotationes in Nouum Testamentum (pars prima)...*, op. cit., p. 98.

¹⁷ Cf. F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. +5r.

¹⁸ Vide infra 5.1.3.3.

scripta, purissima castissima atque mundissima sunt nulla figmenta nulla mendacia, nullas vanitates, sed verbum vitae continentia: non ad humanam gloriam, siue cuiuscunque mortalium captandos fauores, dicta aut scripta, sed in simplici veritate, ad multiplicem fidelium vtilitatem¹⁹.

A contrast between human writings with God's wisdom was probably intended here as a disguised criticism of humanists. Titelmans expressed such sentiments explicitly in his polemic with Erasmus, as we shall see in the next chapter.

4.1.3 *Two keys to Spiritual reading: Christ and Church*

The Bible was inspired by the Spirit but was centred on the Son. For Titelmans it was clear that the Christ was the key to all Scriptures. He asserted that in *Psalmus Nuncupatorius*, preceding his commentary on the Psalms:

Verumtamen sub inuolucro sermonum et obscuritate verborum velata erant omnia: nondum enim tempus aduenerat, quo in mundum proferri debebant illa Dei occulta condilia.

Non valebant neque sapientes intellectu comprehendere quae cecinerat ille: mysteriorum ignorantia et sermonis obscuritas foras pepulerunt legentes atque canentes ab intelligentia.

Ita quidem clausus erat liber, firmata erant libri signacula: donec veniret quae seipsam patefaceret veritas, et adimpleret quae ille cecinerat omnia.

Expectabatur enim agnus ille occidendus, qui faceret victoriam: qui clausum aperiret librum, et solueret signacula eius.

Clauem David ipse habet, veniensque in nostra eam detulit secum: adimplendo in se omnia quae ille Prophetante spiritu descripserat, manifestam fecit intelligentiam.

Quomodo claustra fortia aperiri nequeunt, nisi clauis seris propria: sic non poterat absque clauis ista in huius libri quisquam penetrare intelligentiam.

Qui clauem istam vel ignorant vel abiiciunt, manifeste vanos se comprobant: si libri huius claustra reserare tentauerint²⁰.

This was an exposition of the classical Christian understanding of the Old Testament, discussed in the first chapter. What was, however, new in Titelmans' times was the context. In the early 16th century, rejecting the key of David, that is the Messiah, could be referred less to Jews and other non-believers, and more to those, who, albeit professing faith in Christ, endeavoured to explain Scriptures without Him, solely by philological expertise. Titelmans tried to uphold the tradition of spiritual reading, which looked to theology and doctrine as methodological keys for exegesis.

¹⁹ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 28v.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, f. +2v.

Throughout his commentaries he frequently alluded to those who tried to read Scriptures in human wisdom alone and criticised them. We shall see that in detail in the next chapter.

Christ was the key for spiritual understanding, but this key was deposited in the community of faith, the Church. Titelmans often emphasised the need for an ecclesiastical reading of the Bible. He asserted that he wrote his own commentaries “ex obedientiae sacrae mandato apostolica”²¹. Without an ecclesiastical approval any commentary would be merely an exercise in vain glory.

In his comment on Christ’s parable of the sheepfold in John 10, he cited interpretations of Augustine and Chrysostom²². Jesus himself claimed that he was the door, and the sheepfold was universally interpreted as the Church. The bishop of Hippo followed Jesus’ explication and expanded on it²³. Chrysostom, however, and Theophylactus after him, asserted that the door was the Scripture, through which Jesus was known, and the doorkeeper was either Moses or the Holy Spirit²⁴. Titelmans found this interpretation agreeable yet did not expand on it. The words of the Greek Father were “sacramentis grauida et spiritualibus sensibus fecunda”²⁵, too profound for the limited scope of the Franciscan’s commentary. The Scriptures were the entrance to the Church, but likewise, they were only understood correctly through this very Church.

A practical example of Titelmans’ conviction that the Bible was the book of the Church was his use of liturgy as an interpretative tool. Many a time his spiritual interpretations were guided by liturgical usage of biblical passages. For instance, in Ps. 8:4 he took an antiphon from the liturgical office to suggest that fingers of God, with which he formed heavens, could be understood as the Holy Trinity²⁶. A similar thought can be found also in Thomas Aquinas, who, however, used as an inspiration a parallel text from Isaiah (Isa. 40:12), not a liturgical antiphon²⁷. In Ps. 15:5 the chalice could be interpreted as suffering, as was typical for the Old Testament, claimed Titelmans. Yet, he thought that it was “germanior et vsui Ecclesiastico conformior” to interpret it as referring to priesthood, since this verse was used in the liturgy of sacred orders²⁸.

²¹ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Ecclesiasten Salomonis...*, op. cit., f. c5r.

²² F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio paraphrastica in Ioannem...*, op. cit., f. o4v.

²³ Cf. Augustinus Hipponensis, *In Iohannis euangelium tractatus*, 45.5, op. cit., p. 390. Thomas Aquinas, *Catena aurea in quatuor euangelia...*, in Iohannem 10.1, op. cit., p. 471.

²⁴ Ioannes Chrysostomus, *Homiliae LXXXVIII in Ioannem*, 59, op. cit., col. 323-324. Theophylactus, *Commentarius in Joannis Euangelium...*, op. cit., col. 65. Both cited in *Catena Aurea*, which likely served as Titelmans’ source: Thomas Aquinas, *Catena aurea in quatuor euangelia*, in Iohannem 10.1, op. cit., p. 471: “Ostium autem Scripturas vocavit; hae enim Dei cognitionem aperiunt, hae oves custodiunt, et lupos supervenire non permittunt, haereticis introitum praeccludentes Qui ergo non Scripturis utitur, sed aliunde ascendit, hoc est aliam sibi et non legitimam viam facit, hic fur est [...] Chrysostomus. Nihil prohibet ostiarius vocare Moysen: ille enim est cui eloquia Dei credita sunt. Theophylactus. Vel spiritus sanctus est ostiarius, per quem Scripturae reseratae nobis indicant Christum”.

²⁵ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio paraphrastica in Ioannem...*, op. cit., f. o4v.

²⁶ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 17r.

²⁷ Thomas de Aquino, “In Psalmos reportatio”, 8.3, op. cit., p. 168: “Tres digiti tres personae; quasi dicat, opera totius Trinitatis vel spiritus sancti”.

²⁸ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 36v.

Ps. 37(38) was better read literally rather than allegorically, because it was used by the Church as one of the seven penitential psalms²⁹. Similarly, Ps. 129(130) should be understood as a prayer for the dead, for this was suggested by the liturgical use of this psalm. Such an understanding did not, however, exclude also a more general reading³⁰. At the end of his annotations on Ps. 44(45), which he interpreted Christologically, Titelmans added that it could also be understood as a praise of consecrated virgins. This was suggested by the liturgical use of this psalm and the next by the Church. The Franciscan noted that a pious soul could easily follow such an interpretation on her own, therefore he felt no need to expand on it³¹.

Liturgy suggested also a dogmatic reading of some verses of the Psalter. Words of Ps. 71(72):6 (*descendet vt pluuia in vellus*) were best understood, according to Titelmans, as speaking about the Incarnation of the Word in the womb of the Virgin. This was suggested by the antiphon for the Feast of the Circumcision³². In Ps. 50(51):13 Titelmans observed that Greek had *higemonicos* (ἡγεμονικὸς) for *principali*, which could also mean *regius* or *ducalis*. Such an understanding, he claimed, was confirmed by translations by Jerome and Felix³³ and present also in the liturgical hymn *Veni Sancte Spiritus*, which spoke of the Holy Spirit's royal dignity. Besides, Titelmans used liturgical texts about Eucharist to suggest such an understanding of several verses of the Psalter³⁴.

Interestingly, sometimes Titelmans refused to take the cue from liturgical usage. In his commentary on Ps. 138(139) he noted that its first verse served as an antiphon for the feast of the resurrection. Yet, he did not follow this interpretation. “Cui interpretatione vt non obsistimus, ita in Elucidatione nostra non accedimus, sed generali applicatione Psalmum totum, Dei omniscientiae, omnipraesentiae, atque omnipotentiae applicamus, consyderantes in eo mirabilem Dei erga vniuersa scientiam, praesentiam et prouidentiam”³⁵. This was not to say that the Church erred in her interpretation. On the contrary: “Illam enim dedimus libertatem Ecclesiastico vsui, vt ex scripturis particulas accommodatas sibi possit assumere, suoque proposito applicare, etiam si principalis scripturae talis intentio illuc non tendat”³⁶. He expressed a similar thought in annotations to Ps. 115(116):4. “Nam id Ecclesiastico vsui frequens est, verbis illis quae in scripturis inueniuntur, pro deuotione fidelium in sensum aliquem pium vti, qui tamen non est ex

²⁹ Ibid., f. 89r.

³⁰ Ibid., f. 337r.

³¹ Ibid., f. 113r.

³² Ibid., f. 178r.

³³ Jerome translated from Hebrew as “spiritu potenti”: *Biblia sacra iuxta vulgatam versionem...*, eds. R. Weber and R. Gryson, op. cit., p. 833. Felix translated as “spiritu minificus vel liberal”, *Psalterium ex hebreo...*, trans., Felix Pratensis, op. cit., f. 26r.

³⁴ See for instance: F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., ff. 9r; 297v; 334r.

³⁵ Ibid., f. 350r.

³⁶ Ibid., f. 350r.

praecipua intentione loci unde verba illa sunt desumpta”³⁷. It was very significant indeed. The correct meaning of a text was found not only in the text itself, but in the act of reading within the community of the Church. It did not matter whether the meaning that the Church applied to a given text was intended by its human author and whether it fitted the context. Because the Church was inspired by the principal author of the Bible, the Holy Ghost, she understood the spiritual sense correctly, even if it was not apparent in the exact wording. Conversely, although Titelmans made no such observations, in such a perspective Lutheran *sola scriptura* made no sense, since the meaning was not in the Scripture itself, but in the inspired act of reading withing the Church.

Correct understanding required also personal sanctity. In the prologue to the Song of Solomon Titelmans compared the Song to the Eucharist. Just as before receiving the Body of Christ a believer must carefully examine his conscience, least he brings harm upon himself by sacrilegious communion (cf. 1Cor. 11:27-29), so also one should do likewise before reading the Song.

Quemadmodum enim illa sacrament manducans et bibens indigne, iudicium sibi manducat et bibit, non diiudicans corpus et sanguinem Domini, id est, panem et vinum consecrationis a cibo et potu prophano non discernens, ita qui haec sancta diuinaque carmina legit auditve indigne, iudicium sibi legit et audit: non diiudicans sacra Dei cantica a prophanis carnalium hominum cantiunculis³⁸.

Truthful understanding was thus linked with personal sanctity, with a correct moral disposition. It did not, however, depend on the intellectual capacities of the reader. Alluding to a famous saying of Gregory the Great Titelmans asserted that the Scripture adjusted itself to the level of the reader³⁹. In his commentary on Job he explained that the anthropomorphisation of God and Satan in the first chapter of this book was done for the sake of our limited capacity to comprehend celestial matters. The inspired Word spoke of the heavens as if they were on earth so that we could understand.

Non haec ita corporaliter gesta esse intelligendum est, tametsi quasi corporaliter gesta describantur, sed humano more, et quasi prouerbiali siue parabolico sermone (vt ait Origenes) ista scribuntur, eo modo quo ab hominibus capi possunt. Sic enim scriptura sacra nostræ se infirmitati attemperat, vt cum balbutientibus quasi balbutire videatur⁴⁰.

³⁷ Ibid., f. 309r.

³⁸ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum...*, op. cit., f. a7r.

³⁹ Cf. Gregorius Magnus, *Moralia in Iob*, ad Leandrum 173, op. cit., p. 6: “Diuinus etenim sermo [...] Quasi quidam quippe est fluuius, ut ita dixerim, planus et altus in quo et agnus ambulet et elephas natet”.

⁴⁰ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in librum D. Iob (Lutetiae)...*, op. cit., f. b3r.

The Scripture prattled and babbled with infants but was more erudite than the most learned. Thus, as Titelmans argued at length in his polemic with Erasmus, it was humility, not learning, that led to the correct understanding of the Scripture's mysteries.

4.1.4 Dangers of literal reading

Those who attempted to understand scriptures outside the Church, without necessary humility, erred. Regrettably, Titelmans observed, there was no shortage of such arrogant exegetes in his times.

At vero hac nostra tempestate, longem secus quidam faciunt et docent improbi homines, euangelicorum titulo sese venditantes, qui damnanda arrogantia, et scelerata praesumptione sibi prouinciam assumunt docendi quae nunquam didicerunt, sola linguae volubilitate et infatigabili loquacitate instructi, caeterum neque quid loquantur, neque de quibus doceant (iuxta Pauli Apostoli verbum) intelligentes, quos non domini spiritus ad docendum mittit, sed praesumptionis spiritus ad loquendum exagitat⁴¹.

It is not clear whether “men calling themselves evangelical” meant here humanists or reformers, but it is clear that Titelmans thought that sheer philological prowess was insufficient to understand Scriptures⁴². A reading resting exclusively on philological analysis was by necessity only literal and thus missed the kernel, which resided in the spiritual sense. He contrasted the philological arrogance of contemporary *stultos* with Jerome. The Stridonite did not always translate verbatim, but sometimes took liberty to depart from the letter in order to render the spirit of the text⁴³. The next chapter shall explore such issues in more depth; here it is enough to note that for Titelmans, a literal reading which excluded the spirit was no less than heretical.

A literal reading alone was indeed diabolical. In his annotations to Ps. 90(91):11 he noted that this verse had been cited by the Demon in the temptation of Christ (Matt. 4:6).

Sed peruerse ille hanc scripturam citauit, et scripturae se prauum interpretem atque applicatorem ostendit, pluribus de causis. Primum quidem, ratione prauae intentionis: quoniam ad malum scripturae vsum quaerebat, videlicet vt ad vanam gloriam (iuxta sanctorum Theologorum sententiam) Christum hominem alliceret, aut etiam Dei faceret tentatorem. Secundo, quia non secundum spirituales sensum, vt debuit, scripturam accommodauit: cum debeat haec scriptura non secundum verborum superficiem intelligi, de custodia et gestatione manuum corporali, sed potius de secura angelorum protectione atque custodia, qua angeli electis superintendunt, ex mandato Dei.

⁴¹ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Ecclesiasten Salomonis...*, op. cit., f. 111r-v.

⁴² On Titelmans view of humanist and reformers vide infra 5.4.1 and 5.4.2.

⁴³ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Ecclesiasten Salomonis...*, op. cit., f. c7v.

Manifestissimum enim est, non debere corporaliter ista intelligi, vel ex eo quod nullae sunt angelis corporeae manus⁴⁴.

Hence, the Devil failed as an exegete, precisely because he interpreted only literally. The Franciscan also invoked a patristic opinion, that Demon applied specifically to the Son of God, what the Psalm intended generally about all believers, and therefore he erred⁴⁵. Moreover, Titelmans continued, the Devil took the verse out of its context. No surprise, commented the Franciscan, for the following verse prophesied his own demise (*super aspidem et basiliscum calcabis conculcabis leonem et draconem*)⁴⁶. Not only was the Bible to be interpreted spiritually, but it was also to be taken in its integrity. The Devil, father of all heresies, was imitated by his sons, who cited the Bible just like he did⁴⁷:

Quemadmodum haeretici hac in parte suum patrem, mendacii omnis parentem, mendaces filii insequentes, scripturas citare sunt soliti: desumentes ex eis particulas aliquas, quae secundum aliquam apparentiam pro illorum erroribus facere videntur, dissimulantes et nolentes attendere quae antecedunt et quae consequuntur, ne eliciant rectam sententiam et veritatem inueniant. Est enim his proprium, truncate scripturas adducere: et veritatem, si quando citent, proponunt dimidiam⁴⁸.

Interestingly, Titelmans allowed the Church to take single verses out of their context and bestow a new meaning on them but denied this right to heretics. Although it seems like a double standard it was perfectly coherent within his system. The Church could take sentences out of immediate context because they were still interpreted within the broader context of the entire faith and in the context of the inspired community of readers.

Literal reading was the trap into which the Jews fell. Their lack of faith led them to a mistaken interpretation of their Scriptures:

Fiat mensa eorum coram ipsis in laqueum. Hanc mensam, alii interpretantur scripturam sacram, quae est mensa refectiois animarum: quoniam non in solo pane viuit homo, sed in omni verbo quod procedit de ore Dei. Facta est autem haec mensa Iudaeis in laqueum, quando per infidelitatem suam, iusto Dei iudicio excaecati, literae tantum inhaerentes, perdiderunt veritatem: et inde sibi sumere iam conantur fomenta, atque adiumenta sui erroris, vnde si credere voluissent, salutarem accipissent

⁴⁴ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 243r. This argument seems to be an original thought of Titelmans.

⁴⁵ Cf. Origenes, *In Lucam homiliae*, 31.4, ed. H.-J. Sieben, 1991, FC 4, p. 316. Cited in catena aurea: Thomas Aquinas, *Catena aurea in quatuor evangelia*, in Matthaicum 4.3, op. cit., p. 64.

⁴⁶ Chrysostom cited in Thomas Aquinas, *Catena aurea in quatuor evangelia*, in Matthaicum 4.4, op. cit., p. 61. See also: Hieronymus, *Commentariorum in euangelium Matthaei*, 1.353, op. cit., p. 21.

⁴⁷ Cf. Hieronymus, *Tractatum in psalmos series altera*, 90, [in:] *Opera homiletica*, ed. G. Morin, 1958, CCSL 78, pp. 355–446.

⁴⁸ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 243r.

veritatis cognitionem: sicque laqueus illis factus est scriptura sacra, quo irretiti teneantur in infidelitate atque peruersitate sua, donec ad retributionem finalis damnationis perueniant⁴⁹.

Thus, Jewish interpretation was of little value, for it was merely according to the letter, not according to the spirit. In fact, very often the literal sense, referring to Jewish practices, was of no interest, according to Titelmans. He asserted this openly in annotations on Ps. 83(84): “Quidam vero hebraeorum expositores, omnia ista quod secundum spiritualem sensum pulcherrima sunt, ad literam trahentes, exponent ea de corporali ascensu Iudeorum ad tabernaculum domini, ad festa domini celebranda; quorum niumium steriles expositiones non solum non insequi sed nec comemorare libet”⁵⁰. It was much better to read this psalm spiritually, referring to the longing for heavenly chambers⁵¹.

According to Titelmans even if some passages seemed to be perfectly clear according to the literal sense, one should never forget that all Divine Word was *parabola et enigma*⁵². For instance, Ps. 77(78), although it seemed to be a mere narrative of historical events, was at the same time a parable on divine providence⁵³. Thus, no word of the Scripture could be fully understood through the literal sense alone.

There was nothing new in Titelmans’ criticism of Jewish literal reading. As it has been demonstrated in Chapter One Christian exegesis was born precisely from a polemic against the Jewish reading of the Old Testament and largely in opposition to it. Arguments against Jewish interpretation were repeated by all subsequent generations. For centuries, however, it was mostly a purely academic point. Although there was a continuous presence of Jewish minorities among Christians, they never presented a serious challenge to Christian exegesis. Some controversy arose in the 12th century over works of Andrew of St. Victor, who often relied on rabbinic interpretations⁵⁴. In Titelmans’ times such remarks were hardly directed against Jews, whose presence was marginal, and more against some Christian exegetes, who ascribed significant value to Hebraic learning. A most famous example is constituted by debates surrounding Johannes Reuchlin, a famous Hebraist⁵⁵.

⁴⁹ Ibid., f. 169v.

⁵⁰ F. Titelmans, *Annotationes ex Hebraeo...*, op. cit., f. XXVIIr.

⁵¹ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 214v.

⁵² Ibid., f. 199r.

⁵³ Ibid., f. 199r.

⁵⁴ Vide infra 5.3.4.

⁵⁵ E. Rummel, *The Case Against Johann Reuchlin: Religious and Social Controversy in Sixteenth-century Germany*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 2002. D. Ménager, *Erasmus, the Intellectuals, and the Reuchlin Affair*, [in:] *Biblical Humanism and Scholasticism in the Age of Erasmus*, ed. E. Rummel, Brill, Leiden 2008, pp. 39–54. D.H. Price, *Johannes Reuchlin and the Campaign to Destroy Jewish Books*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2011. D. O’Callaghan, *The Preservation of Jewish Religious Books in Sixteenth-century Germany: Johannes Reuchlin’s Augenspiegel*, Brill, Leiden 2013. F. Posset, *Johann Reuchlin (1455-1522): a Theological Biography*, De Gruyter, Berlin 2015.

To summarise, Titelmans stood firmly in the tradition of pre-modern exegesis that valued the spiritual sense above the literal one. He was convinced that Scripture was inspired and was fully understood only through Christ and within the Church. We shall now proceed to some examples of mystical exegesis of Titelmans to understand better his exegetical approach.

4.2 Mystical reading of Psalms

4.2.1 Tradition of exegesis of the Book of Psalms

The Book of Psalms was from the very beginning of Christianity among the most frequently read and commented books of the Bible. Indeed, it held a very prominent place in the teachings of Jesus, who cited Psalms more often than any other Old Testament book, and in the Apostolic Epistles⁵⁶. The Psalms are cited forty times in the New Testament⁵⁷. They were also cited by the Apostolic Fathers and even more so by early exegetes⁵⁸. The Psalter was recommended by Jerome to beginners as the gateway to Scriptures⁵⁹. The Psalms were widely known, usually by heart, also because of their liturgical use. The famous letter of Pliny the Younger hints at the practice of liturgical singing of psalms in the earliest decades of the Church⁶⁰. Liturgical use of Psalms is also testified by Tertullian⁶¹. Soon the practice of liturgical chanting of psalms developed into the liturgy of the hours, used especially by monastic communities⁶².

Unsurprisingly, such a widespread use of the Psalms prompted a proliferation of commentaries and homilies on this book. The earliest known person to have composed such works was Hippolytus of Rome, active around 200⁶³. He was shortly followed by Origen, who composed his commentaries around 222 and 225⁶⁴. Both works are preserved only in translations and citations by other authors. Vittorio Peri argued that Jerome's *Tractatus 59 in Psalmos* is a very

⁵⁶ L.M. McDonald, *The Formation of the Christian Biblical Canon*, Hendrickson, Peabody 1995, pp. 100–103.

⁵⁷ E.E. Ellis, *The Old Testament in Early Christianity: Canon and Interpretation in the Light of Modern Research*, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen 1991, p. 53.

⁵⁸ Not all apostolic fathers cited them with the same frequency, cf. G.W. Woolfenden, *The Use of the Psalter by Early Monastic Communities*, [in:] *Studia Patristica. Papers presented at the Eleventh International Conference on Patristic Studies held in Oxford 1991*, ed. E.A. Livingstone, Peeters, Leuven, 1993, vol. 26, p. 89.

⁵⁹ Hieronymus, *Epistulae*, ep. 107.12, ed. I. Hilberg, 1912, CSEL 55, p. 302: “discat primum psalterium, his se canticis auocet et in prouerbiis salomonis erudiatur ad uitam”.

⁶⁰ Pliny the Younger, *The Letters of Pliny*, 10.96, trans. B. Radice, 1969, LCL 59, p. 288.

⁶¹ Cf. Tertullianus, *Apologeticum*, 39, ed. E. Dekkers, 1954, CCSL 1, p. 153: “quisque de scripturis Diuinis uel de proprio ingenio potest, prouocatur in medium Deo canere”.

⁶² Cf. R.F. Taft, *The Liturgy of the Hours in East and West: the Origins of the Divine Office and its Meaning for Today*, Liturgical Press, Collegeville 1993, pp. 93–140.

⁶³ On controversies regarding the identity of Hippolytus see: M.-J. Rondeau, *Les commentaires patristiques du psautier, IIIe - Ve siècles*, Pontificium Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, Roma 1985, pp. 28–32. R.E. Heine, *Hippolytus, Ps.-Hippolytus and the Early Canons*, [in:] *The Cambridge history of early christian literature*, eds. L. Ayres, A. Louth, and F. Young, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2004, pp. 142–151.

⁶⁴ Cf. P. Nautin, *Origène: sa vie et son oeuvre*, Beauchesne, Paris 1977, *Christianisme antique* 1, pp. 368–371.

liberal translation of Origen's work⁶⁵. Unfortunately, also later Greek commentaries are known to us almost solely through citations in various catenae⁶⁶. These include works of Eusebius of Caesarea, Athanasius, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, Didymus the Blind, Evagrius of Pontus, Diodore of Tarsus, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Cyril of Alexandria and Theodoret of Cyrus. Exceptionally, the commentary of John Chrysostom was preserved in its entirety⁶⁷. Among the Latin fathers, the by far the most influential commentary was Augustine's *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, which had a great influence on Martin Luther⁶⁸. Another widely known Latin commentary was that of Cassiodorus⁶⁹. In addition, there are preserved fragments from the commentaries of Hilary of Poitiers, Ambrose of Milan and Jerome, the last perhaps a translation of Origen, as noted above.

Among early Christian literature on the Psalms, one text stands out as particularly interesting. Athanasius' Letter to Marcellinus on the Interpretation of Psalms was preserved in an important fifth-century biblical *codex Alexandrinus*, to which it had been attached as a kind of exegetical introduction to the Psalms⁷⁰. In this short letter, written for the benefit of Marcellinus, who strove to comprehend the meaning of each psalm, Athanasius laid down some important exegetical principles⁷¹. Allegedly, this wisdom was not his own, but he had learned it from an anonymous old master⁷². Regardless, whether it was merely a literary device or a true account of events, it seems to suggest that exegetical rules outlined by Athanasius were by no means novel at his time but reflected an established tradition. Athanasius began by observing that the book of Psalms contained truths that could be found also elsewhere in the Old Testament. "Yet the Book of Psalms is like a garden containing things of all these kinds", observed the Alexandrian⁷³. He went on to list examples of how the entire history of the Chosen Nation, starting from the first verses of Genesis, could be found in Psalms⁷⁴. But not only that. The Psalms prophesied Christ's

⁶⁵ V. Peri, *Omelia origeniane sui salmi: contributo all'identificazione del testo latino*, Biblioteca apostolica Vaticana, Città del Vaticano 1980, pp 41-65.

⁶⁶ G. Dorival, *Les Chaines Exégétiques Grecques sur les Psaumes. Contribution a l'Etude d'une Forme Littéraire*, Peeters, Leuven 1986-2018, vol. 1–5, Spicilegium sacrum Lovaniense 43–46; 54.

⁶⁷ Ioannes Chrysostomus, *Expositio in Psalmos*, PG 55. English translation: Joannes Chrysostomus, *St. John Chrysostom commentary on the Psalms*, ed. R.C. Hill, Holy Cross Orthodox Press, Brookline 1998.

⁶⁸ On *Enarrationes* see: D.F. Wright, *Augustine: His Exegesis and Hermeneutics*, [in:] *Hebrew Bible, Old Testament: the History of its Interpretation. From the Beginnings to the Middle Ages (Until 1300)*, eds. M. Sæbø, C. Brekelmans, and M. Haran, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen 1996, vol. I/1, pp. 710–714. Their impact on Luther: U. Saarnivaara, *Luther Discovers the Gospel: New Light upon Luther's Way from Medieval Catholicism to Evangelical Faith*, Wipf and Stock, Eugene 2003, (a reprint from the 1891 edition), pp. 60–66.

⁶⁹ Cassiodorus, *Expositio psalmodum*, ed. M. Adriaen, 1958, CCSL 97-98. English translation: Cassiodorus, *Cassiodorus Explanation of the psalms*, ed. P.G. Walsh, Paulist, New York 1990.

⁷⁰ Athanasius, *Epistola ad Marcellinum in Interpretationem Psalmorum*, PG 27, col. 11-46. English translation: Athanasius Alexandrinus, *The Life of Antony and The Letter to Marcellinus*, ed. R.C. Gregg, Paulist Press, New York 2004, pp. 101-130.

⁷¹ Cf. Athanasius, *Epistola ad Marcellinum...*, op. cit., col. 11.

⁷² *Ibid.*, col. 11.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, col. 11. English translation: Athanasius Alexandrinus, *The Letter to Marcellinus...*, op. cit., p. 102.

⁷⁴ Athanasius, *Epistola ad Marcellinum...*, op. cit., col. 11-14.

birth, his sufferings, resurrection, and ascension into heaven⁷⁵. It was not a mere repetition. According to the bishop of Alexandria, the words of the Psalms had a special quality to them, for they easily became our own: “and it seems to me that these words become like a mirror to the person singing them, so that he might perceive himself and the emotions of his soul, and thus affected, he might recite them”⁷⁶. In what followed he presented a typology of psalms indicating, which of them could be useful to a believer in a given situation: of joy, despair, repentance and so on⁷⁷. Athanasius presented two principles of spiritual exegesis that guided Christian lecture of the Psalms throughout the premodern period. First, the Psalms were a dogmatic compendium, containing the entire salvation history, almost a set of proof-text for Christian dogma. The Psalter was frequently used in this sense in ancient polemics, not least by Athanasius himself in his anti-Arian tirades⁷⁸. At the same time, however, the Book of Psalms was deeply personal, for due to its emotional form it made truths of faith very close to believer’s heart. As such, it brought spiritual consolation, instruction, and encouragement to individual believers. Therefore, the Psalms could be simultaneously read allegorically and morally.

Although Titelmans most likely did not know the text of Athanasius, he followed the same exegetical principles. After all, Athanasius was not their inventor, but merely an early exponent of a tradition which permeated Christian exegesis of both the East and the West. Titelmans shared ancient exegetes’ conviction that the Psalms contained the entire salvation history. In *Psalmus nuncupatorius* to the commentary on the Psalms Titelmans observed that David, the author of most psalms, received a singular revelation of future events.

Incerta quoque et occulta sapientiae tuae manifesta fecisti ei: reuelasti illi mentis oculos, et consyderabat mirabilia, quae nunquam hominis viderat oculus vel auris audiit.

In mysteria abscondita eorum quae multo post erant exhibenda in plenitudine temporis, penetrabat tuo perlustratus radio: spiritus enim tuus omnia scrutatur, etiam profundissima tua.

Consilia tua omnia quae decreuisti ab aeterno super redemptione generis nostri, non celabas illum: singulari priuilegio erudisti illum tua vnctione de omnibus⁷⁹.

He continued listing the mysteries of salvation that could be found in Psalms: the Incarnation in the virginal womb, the Nativity, the teaching and poverty of the Christ, His Passion, entombment, Resurrection, Ascension, elevation to the Father’s right hand, sending the Holy Spirit on His Church, the preaching of the Gospel, growth of the Church among persecutions, heresies, and

⁷⁵ Ibid., col. 14-18.

⁷⁶ Ibid., col. 23. English translation: Athanasius Alexandrinus, *The Letter to Marcellinus...*, op. cit., p. 111.

⁷⁷ Athanasius, *Epistola ad Marcellinum...*, op. cit., col. 27-38.

⁷⁸ Cf. Athanasius Alexandrinus, *The Letter to Marcellinus...*, op. cit., p. 24.

⁷⁹ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. + 2r.

finally the Last Judgement⁸⁰. Thus, commented the Franciscan, “non immerito a maioribus nostris hic Psalmore liber, totius scripturae sacrae summarium meruerit appellari”⁸¹.

Just like Athanasius he also observed that the Psalms were not only a repetition of truths known from other biblical books but had an added value of inspiring human hearts. In fact, Psalms seemed unique among all Scriptures.

Omnia namque ista, nempe docere, arguere, corripere, erudire in iusticia, ita efficaciter, ita valide, ita potenter praestant hi dauidici Psalmi, vt vix aliam sit inuenire scripturam in huiusmodi rebus parem, quae simul sic et intellectum illuminet et formet affectum. Nam et ipsa sancta Euangelia tametsi simplicius, lucidius, ac plenius omnia tradant quae ad piorum hominum mentes illuminandas et vitam instituendam conducunt (vnde nec dubium esse debet, haec longo interuallo autoritate dignitateque Psalmos antecellere) attamen non illam habent loquendi formam Psalmis peculiarem, qua fit, vt veluti impetu quodam legentium animos secum abripiant verius quam abducant, ita vt quem in viciis inuenerint, ad virtutis propositum auellant: quem in torpore compererint, ad alacritatem mentis restituant etc⁸².

Therefore, the book of Psalms was of greatest help in spiritual life. It led a sinner to penitence, taught how to pray, consoled in pain, protected from vain glory in success⁸³. In short it was useful in all circumstances of spiritual life. Like Athanasius, Titelmans thought that in the Psalter there was an apt response for any life situation. What was indispensable, however, observed Titelmans, was to listen to the psalms with spiritual ears, for the entire book of Psalms was sung with an accompaniment of a spiritual cithara⁸⁴. A mere literal reading of the Psalms was of limited use. Yet, the cryptic style of the Psalms was an impediment for many simple souls⁸⁵. Titelmans saw the purpose of his commentary in helping those less educated to have a full access to the treasures of this book. It seems unnecessary to list all cases of allegorical reading of the Psalms by Titelmans. In what follows we shall limit ourselves to examples regarding two pivotal events from the life of Christ – his Incarnation and Passion/Resurrection – as well as allegories of the history of the Church, perhaps the most original of Titelmans’ interpretations.

⁸⁰ Cf. Ibid., f. a2v.

⁸¹ Ibid., f. a4v.

⁸² Ibid., f. a4r.

⁸³ Cf. Ibid., f. a4r-v.

⁸⁴ Cf. Ibid., f. a4r-v: “totum enim spiritualis est haec cithara, imo merus est spiritus, ac proinde spiritualibus vult auribus audiri”.

⁸⁵ Ibid., f. a2r: “Attamen sermonum obscuritas et inuolucra verborum, simplicioribus magnum exhibent negocium [...] In hoc, Deus piissime, propositum fuit conatus nostri: impedimentum istud vt auferremus, pro subministratio nobis a te viribus. Vt fugaretur obscuritas, et verborum claritate pateret exposita sententiarum veritas: vt facile cui vis ingenio pia attentio donaret intelligentiam”.

4.2.2 Incarnation

Titelmans found many verses that prophesised the Incarnation of Christ. In Ps. 2:7 he noted that before being born in time, Christ was eternally born of the Father. It was indicated by the words: *ego hodie genui te*. Eternity has neither past nor future, therefore it is always “today”. The use of the past tense indicated that the verse spoke of the eternal birth from the Father, for if it were about the temporal birth from the Virgin, the present tense would be more apt⁸⁶. This interpretation followed that of Augustine, which was common throughout the Middle Ages⁸⁷. The same truth was attested in Ps. 109(110):3 (*ex vtero ante Luciferum genui te*). The word *vterus* seemed to suggest a temporal birth from virginal womb. The temporal indication, *ante Luciferum*, seemed, however, to contradict it. According to Titelmans the womb was to be understood metaphorically, as a symbol of divine fecundity⁸⁸. God had no hands, legs or other members, yet the Bible spoke frequently of such features. It was self-evident that they should be understood figuratively, just as the womb here. It signified that God gave birth to his Son of his own substance, unlike the universe, created *ex nihilo*⁸⁹. *Ante Luciferum* indicated eternity of this birth. *Lucifer* could be understood generally as angels, or specifically as the rebellious angel. The second reading derived from Isa. 14:12, which literally spoke of the king of Babylon, who spiritually should be understood as the Devil. Finally, one could understand *Lucifer* literally as stars, which also indicated the eternity of Christ⁹⁰. The last solution was derived from Augustine, who suggested that *Lucifer* was understood as stars and therefore time⁹¹. It was also the Bishop of Hippo who

⁸⁶ Ibid., f. 4r-v.

⁸⁷ Augustinus Hipponensis, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 2.6, op. cit., p. 5: “Quamquam etiam possit ille dies in prophetia dictus uideri, quo Iesus Christus secundum hominem natus est, tamen hodie quia praesentiam significat atque in aeternitate nec praeteritum quidquam est, quasi esse desierit, nec futurum, quasi nondum sit, sed praesens tantum, quia quidquid aeternum est, semper est, diuinitus accipitur secundum id dictum Ego hodie genui te, quo sempiternam generationem uirtutis et sapientiae Dei, qui est unigenitus Filius, fides sincerissima et catholica praedicat”. Augustine was cited in *Biblia cum glossa ordinaria. Pars II...*, op. cit., f. 230r. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, “In Psalmos reportatio”, 2.5, op. cit., p. 154: “Aeternitas ponitur in hoc, quod subjungit: ego hodie genui te, id est aeternaliter: non enim est nova, sed aeterna generatio; et ideo dicit: hodie genui te: quia hodie praesentiam signat, et quod aeternum est, semper est”. Dionysius Cartusianus, “Commentaria in psalmos omnes Daudicos commentaria in secundam quinquagenam psalterii”, art. 12, op. cit., vol. 5, p. 417: “Et ideo additur: Ego hodie genui te, id est in die aeternitatis: in qua non est prius et posterius, novum vel vetus, mutatio vel vicissitudinis obumbratio; sed dies ista est ipsamet aeternitas, quae est interminabilis vitae tota simul perfecta possessio”.

⁸⁸ Cf. Guilelmus Altissiodorensis, *Magistri Guillelmi Altissiodorensis Summa aurea*, 13.1, ed. J. Ribailier, CNRS, Paris 1980, Spicilegium Bonaventurianum 16, p. 27: “Hanc etiam fecunditatem ostendit Psalmista, cum in persona Patris ait: Ex utero ante luciferum genui te”.

⁸⁹ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 297r.

⁹⁰ Ibid., f. 297v.

⁹¹ Augustinus Hipponensis, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 109.16, op. cit. pp. 1615-1616: “Quid hic? Si Deus Filium habet, numquid et uterum? Sicut carnis corpora, non habet, quia nec sinum; dictum est tamen: qui est in sinu Patris, ipse enarrauit. Qui est autem sinus, ipse est uterus; et sinus et uterus pro secreto positus est. Quid est: Ex utero? Ex secreto, ex occulto; de meipso, de substantia mea; hoc est, Ex utero; quia, Generationem eius quis enarrabit? Accipiamus ergo Patrem dicentem ad Filium: ex utero ante luciferum genui te. Quid est ergo ante luciferum? Lucifer pro sideribus positus est, tamquam a parte totum significante scriptura, et ex eminenti stella omnia sidera. Sed illa sidera quomodo facta sunt? Vt sint in signis, et in temporibus, et in diebus, et in annis. Si ergo et in signis et in temporibus posita sunt

claimed that the womb should be understood metaphorically as God's own substance. It is more difficult to find sources for the identification of *Lucifer* with angels, which could have been Titelmans' own addition.

The Son, eternally begotten from the Father, was also born in time from the Virgin Mary. Ps. 18(19):6 spoke of a tent set in the sun. Titelmans explained that the sun was the Christ, and the tent was his flesh. Just as those who go for a military expedition take a tent as their field-dwelling, so the Christ took on flesh to fight Satan⁹². The sun could also be understood as Mary, from whom Christ took flesh⁹³. The following words of the same verse also suggested Incarnation: *Ipse quasi sponsus procedens de thalamo suo*. This could be understood spiritually as the union between divine and human natures in Christ but could also refer to Christ marrying the Church on the cross⁹⁴. Both interpretations were present in Augustine and mediaeval commentators⁹⁵.

There were other psalms that suggested the birth from the Virgin. Ps. 66(67):7 proclaimed that "the earth hath yielded her fruit":

Mystice potest haec terra intelligi, benedicta et immaculata genitrix dei, Maria: quae absque virili suscepto semine, sola sancti spiritus foecundatione, de sua substantia, de carne sua immaculata, fructum aeditit saluberrimum, qui est cibus, pabulum et refectio salutaris animarum: quemadmodum terra, coelesti in ea virtute operante, fructum progignit de sua materia⁹⁶.

Here Titelmans' interpretation differed from that of Augustine, who understood the fruit of the earth as acts of penitence and worship⁹⁷. An incarnational interpretation is espoused by Jerome and numerous mediaeval commentators⁹⁸. Incarnation was also suggested in Ps. 71(72):6

sidera, et lucifer nominatus est pro sideribus; quod est ante luciferum, hoc est ante sidera; et quod est ante sidera, hoc est ante tempora; si ergo ante tempora, ab aeternitate: noli quaerere quando; aeternitas non habet quando". Augustine was quoted in *Biblia cum glossa ordinaria. Pars II...*, op. cit., f. 300r.

⁹² Cf. Augustinus Hipponensis, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 18.1, op. cit., p. 102. Augustine was cited in *Biblia cum glossa ordinaria. Pars II...*, op. cit., f. 238v.

⁹³ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 47r.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, f. 47r.

⁹⁵ Augustinus Hipponensis, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 18.II.6, op. cit. pp. 109-110: "ille tamquam sponsus procedens de thalamo suo, exsultavit ut gigas ad currendam uiam; ipse in sole posuit tabernaculum suum; hoc est, ille tamquam sponsus, cum Verbum caro factum est, in utero uirginali thalamum inuenit; atque inde naturae coniunctus humanae, tamquam de castissimo procedens cubili, humilis misericordia infra omnes, fortis maiestate super omnes. Hoc est enim, gigas exsultavit ad currendam uiam, natus est, creuit, docuit, passus est, resurrexit, adscendit; cucurrit uiam, non haesit in uia. Idem ipse ergo sponsus qui haec fecit, ipse posuit in sole, hoc est in manifestatione, tabernaculum suum, hoc est sanctam ecclesiam suam". Cf. Thomas de Aquino, "In Psalmos reportatio", 18.3, op. cit., p. 208: "In sole posuit tabernaculum suum, idest in manifesto, quia cum invisibilis esset, per assumptionem corporis factus est visibilis: jo. 1: uerbum caro factum est, et habitavit in nobis. Item in sole, idest ardore, posuit tabernaculum suum, idest corpus suum, quia suscepit passibile: isa. 53: vere languores nostros ipse tulit, et dolores nostros ipse portavit".

⁹⁶ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 157r.

⁹⁷ Augustinus Hipponensis, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 66.8, op. cit., p. 865-866. His interpretation was followed by Cassiodorus, *Expositio psalmorum*, 66, op. cit., pp. 583-584; and many others.

⁹⁸ Cf. Hieronymus, *Tractatus in Librum Psalmorum*, 66, ed. G. Morin, 1958, CCSL 78, p. 38: "uultis scire quid sit iste fructus? Uirgo de uirgine, Dominus de ancilla, Deus ex homine, Filius ex matre, fructus ex terra". Hieronymus, *Commentarioli in psalmos*, 66, op. cit., p. 214: "Maria genuit Saluatorem". Bonaventura, *Sermones de tempore:*

(*descendet sicut pluuia in vellus*). Titelmans linked this with the story of Gideon from Judg. 6:36-40. Just like the fleece was wet while the entire grass remained dry, so also Jesus came on earth through the virginal womb of Mary⁹⁹. This interpretation was attributed to Jerome and was well known in the Middle Ages¹⁰⁰. But there was another mystery in this verse. The first preaching of Christ was to Jews alone, just like Gideon's fleece was wet while the earth around it dry. The second preaching, by the Apostles, was the exact opposite: all pagans were soaked with grace, but Israel remained dry¹⁰¹. This interpretation followed very closely that of Augustine, to the point of citing the same verses from the Gospel (Matt. 10:5; Matt. 15:24), which suggests that Titelmans was acquainted directly with the work of the Bishop of Hippo¹⁰². *Glossa ordinaria* reported Augustine's opinion, as did Peter Lombard (without naming the African Father) yet neither of these cited biblical verses which both Titelmans and Augustine quoted¹⁰³.

In Ps. 84(85) several verses alluded to the Incarnation. *Misericordia et veritas obuiauuerunt sibi*, proclaimed the Psalm in verse 11. This, according to Titelmans, could be read in a literal sense, but could also refer to the Annunciation¹⁰⁴. This mystical interpretation Titelmans

reportations du manuscrit Milan, Ambrosienne A 11 sup., 81.4, ed. J.-G. Bougerol, Les editions franciscaines, Paris 1990, p. 135: "Dedit autem Beata Maria fructum pariendo mundo filium fructuosum". Dionysius Cartusianus, *Commentaria in psalmos omnes Dauidicos commentaria in secundam quinquagenam psalterii*, art. 30, [in:] *Dionysii Cartusiani opera omnia*, Typis Cartusiae S. M. de Pratis, Monstrolii 1898, vol. 6, p. 153. Jerome cited by Petrus Lombardus, *Commentarium in Psalmos*, 66.5, op. cit., col. 600; and by *Biblia cum glossa ordinaria. Pars II...*, op. cit., f. 267v.

⁹⁹ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 175v.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Hieronymus (pseudo), *Breuiarium in psalmos*, 71, PL 26, col. 1028. Petrus Lombardus, *Commentarium in Psalmos*, 71.6, op. cit., col. 661. Bonaventura, *Commentarius in euangelium S. Lucae*, 1.63, op. cit., p. 25.

¹⁰¹ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., ff. 177v-178r.

¹⁰² Cf. Augustinus Hipponensis, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 71.9, op. cit., p. 97: "Recoluit et admonuit illud quod factum est per iudicem Gedeon, de Christo id habere finem. Petiit quippe ille signum a Domino, ut in area positum solum uellus complueretur, et sicca esset area; et rursus solum uellus siccum esset, et complueretur area; et ita factum est. Quod significauit, tamquam in area in toto orbe terrarum, siccum uellus fuisse priorem populum Israel. Idem ipse ergo Christus descendit sicut pluuia in uellus, cum adhuc area sicca esset: unde etiam dixit: Non sum missus nisi ad oues quae perierunt domus Israel. Ibi matrem de qua formam serui acciperet, in qua hominibus appareret, elegit; ibi discipulos quibus hoc idem praecepit, dicens: In uiam gentium ne abieritis, et in ciuitates Samaritanorum ne introieritis; ite primum ad oues quae perierunt domus Israel. Cum dicit: Ite primum ad illas, ostendit et postea, cum iam esset area compluenda, ituros eos etiam ad alias oues quae non essent ex ueteri populo Israel, de quibus dicit: Habeo alias oues quae non sunt ex hoc ouili; oportet me et ipsas adducere, ut sit unus grex et unus pastor. Hinc et apostolus: Dico enim, inquit, Christum ministrum fuisse circumcisionis propter ueritatem Dei, ad confirmandas promissiones patrum. Sic pluuia descendit super uellus, sicca adhuc area. Sed quoniam sequitur: gentes autem super misericordia glorificare Deum, ut accedente tempore compleretur quod per prophetam dicit: Populus quem non cognoui seruiuit mihi; in obauditu auris oboediuit mihi, uidemus iam gratia Christi siccam remansisse gentem Iudaeorum, totum que orbem terrarum in omnibus gentibus christianae gratiae plenis nubibus complui. Alio quippe uerbo eandem pluuiam significauit, dicens: guttae stillantes; non iam super uellus, sed super terram".

¹⁰³ Cf. Petrus Lombardus, *Commentarium in Psalmos*, 71.6, op. cit., col. 661: "In quo mystice significatum est, quod populus Iudaeorum prius irrogaretur gratia Christi, sicca area gentilitatis; et postea complueretur gentilitas, sicco vellere Iudaeorum. Per vellus enim Iudaea accipitur, quae auctoritate doctrinae exspolianda erat, ut ovis vellere. Vel quia pluuiae doctrinam detinebat, quam nolebat praedicari gentibus, ut vellus detinet pluuiam. Ait ergo rex ille: Prius descendet in vellus sicut pluuia, id est, gratia Christi, descendet prius in populum Iudaeorum. Unde matrem sibi et apostolos elegit, sicca area totius orbis, sicut pluuia prius descendit in vellus Gedeonis. Et postea descendet sicut stillicidia stillantia super terram, id est super gentes sicco vellere Iudaeorum, sicut postea fuit compluta area Gedeonis sicco vellere." See also: *Biblia cum glossa ordinaria. Pars II...*, op. cit., f. 272r.

¹⁰⁴ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 219r.

acknowledged to have come from Bernardus of Clairvaux¹⁰⁵. In the following verse the Psalmist was even clearer: *veritas de terra orta est et iusticia de coelo prospexit*. Christ was both truth and justice, and by assuming flesh of the Virgin, he made them come to earth¹⁰⁶. This interpretation was once again inspired by Augustine and his numerous followers¹⁰⁷.

There are many more examples of verses interpreted by Titelmans allegorically as referring to Christ's incarnation, but these presented above suffice to conclude that he was very conventional in his allegorical readings. He followed the interpretations of Augustine, which were commonly known in the Middle Ages and included in *Glossa Ordinaria* and numerous catenae. Occasionally Titelmans cited also other opinions derived from Jerome and possibly other authors. Thus, his work was mostly compilatory.

4.2.3 *Passion and Resurrection*

Alongside the Incarnation, Christ's Passion and Resurrection were the most important dogmas of faith. Unsurprisingly, Titelmans found many verses that predicted these salvific events. Ps. 21(22) was the one that was most easily interpreted allegorically as referring to the Passion of the Messiah, for it was cited several times by Gospel authors in the passion narrative. In fact, many modern biblical scholars claim that this psalm was the basis for the early apostolic predication of the Passion, which predated the composition of the Gospels¹⁰⁸. Such an interpretation was accepted by Christian exegetes, and Titelmans eagerly continued such a reading¹⁰⁹: "Hvnc Psalmum, manifestissimum est ad Christi personam spectare, ex Euangeliiis sacris: in quibus, ipsius versus

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Bernardus Claraevallensis, *Sermones in admuntiatione dominica*, 1.6, [in:] *Sancti Bernardi Opera*, eds. H. Rochais and J. Leclercq, Ed. Cistercienses, Romae 1968, vol. 5, p. 17: "Quia ergo multifarie multis que modis de eo praedictum fuerat in Prophetis quod in terris videndus foret et inter homines conversaturus, quonam modo id factum sit, et impletis quae de eo per os omnium Prophetarum dicta fuerant, habitaverit gloria in terra nostra, Psalmista indicat in his verbis, ac si manifestius dicat: Ut Verbum caro fieret et habitaret in nobis, misericordia et veritas obviaverunt sibi, iustitia et pax osculatae sunt".

¹⁰⁶ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 219v.

¹⁰⁷ Augustinus Hipponensis, *Enarrationes in Psalmo*, 84.13, op. cit., p. 1173: "Veritas de terra orta est: Christus de femina natus est. Veritas de terra orta est: Filius Dei de carne processit. Quid est ueritas? Filius Dei. Quid est terra? Caro. Interroga unde natus est Christus, et uides quia ueritas de terra orta est". Augustine was cited by Petrus Lombardus, *Commentarium in Psalms*, 84.11, op. cit. col. 798. Also by *Biblia cum glossa ordinaria. Pars II...*, op. cit., f. 282v.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. U.P. McCaffrey, *Psalm Quotations in the Passion Narratives of the Gospels*, "Neotestamentica", 1980, vol. 14, pp. 78–83.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Augustinus Hipponensis, *Enarrationes in Psalms*, 21.I.1, op. cit., p. 117; and 21.II.1, p. 121. Hieronymus, *Commentarioli in psalmos*, 21, op. cit., p. 198: "hoc uersiculo Dominus in cruce pendens usus est: ex quo animaduertimus totum psalmum a Domino in cruce posito decantari". Cassiodorus, *Expositio psalms*, 21.2, op. cit., p. 189: "Dominus Christus omnia praeuidens atque dispensans, cui futura cuncta praesentia sunt, quasi iam uicina passione permotus exclamat: Deus, Deus meus". Many other consonant patristic opinions cited by: Petrus Lombardus, *Commentarium in Psalms*, 21, introductio, op. cit., col. 225. Thomas Aquinas, *Super Evangelium S. Matthaei lectura*, 27.2, ed. R. Cai, Marietti, Torino 1951, p. 365: "Unde dicit Hieronymus quod impii sunt qui aliter Psalmum illum exponere volunt quam de passione Christi". Hieronymus, *Commentarioli in psalmos*, 21, op. cit., p. 198: "et interpretatione peruersa putant de esther totum uicesimum primum psalmum esse compositum: quod uidelicet ipsius periculo et intercessione apud regem sit de periculo israhel populus liberatus".

plures ad Christvm pertinere asseruntur, et in Christi passione impleti”¹¹⁰. He proceeded to list all the places in New Testament where the psalm was cited and concluded: “et videbit, quemadmodum clarissimo illuminationis radio praeuidens ante multa tempora Dauid quae futura erant, sic quasi praeterita descripserit, atque ea quidem ita perfecte atque distincte, ac si praesens ipse omnia transacta oculis conspexisset”¹¹¹. It was not only about the Passion, but also about the resurrection of Christ: “Quae vero dehinc sequuntur, a versu 23 ad Christi resurrectionem et ad nouae Ecclesiae per Christi resurrectionem genitae aedificationem pertinent, vsque ad finem Psalmi”¹¹². It also proclaimed the conversion of pagans and the rise of the Church. In subsequent *elucidatio* and *annotationes* Titelmans explained the allegorical reading of each verse, sometimes in a surprising manner¹¹³.

Various details of Jesus’ Passion were prophesied in many other psalms. Ps. 34(35) from verse 7 onwards could be interpreted both literally as David’s persecution by Saul and mystically as Christ’s Passion¹¹⁴. Some of the details fitted the Passion very aptly. *Surgentes testes iniqui, quae ignorabam interrogabant me* (v. 11) could be easily linked with the false witnesses who accused Jesus in front of the Sanhedrin, while *retribuiebant mihi mala pro bonis sterilitatem animae meae* (v. 12) could easily refer to Jewish ingratitude and Jesus’ mental suffering in the Garden of Olives¹¹⁵. Interestingly in both cases the Franciscan departed from patristic interpretations. In verse 11 he emphasised the dishonesty of his accusers, whose questions sought no information, but were disguised denunciations¹¹⁶. He did not mention the Augustinian interpretation, which emphasised Jesus’ ignorance of evil¹¹⁷. Similarly, in the next verse Augustine applied sterility to the Jews, while Titelmans read about the state of Jesus’ soul during the Agony in the Garden¹¹⁸. Most mediaeval authors followed Augustinian interpretations¹¹⁹; for the interpretations proposed by Titelmans it has thus far been impossible to find their source, so they could be his original contribution. The proper interpretation of the subsequent verse was more puzzling for Titelmans. Nothing was known of Christ’s fasts and the haircloth of which the psalm

¹¹⁰ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 50r.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, f. 50r.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, f. 50r.

¹¹³ Vide supra 3.4.3.

¹¹⁴ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 79r.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, f. 79v.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, f. 79v.

¹¹⁷ Augustinus Hipponensis, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 34.2.2, op. cit., p. 31: “Nos autem dicamus capiti nostro: Domine, quid ignorabas? [...] Ignorabat peccatum; et hoc peccatum ignorabat, non quasi non iudicando, sed non committendo”.

¹¹⁸ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 79v. Cf. Augustinus Hipponensis, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 34.2.2, op. cit., p. 313: “Ego adtuli fecunditatem, ipsi retribuiebant sterilitatem; ego uitam, ipsi mortem; ego honorem, ipsi contumelias; ego medicinam, ipsi uulnera; et in his omnibus quae retribuiebant, utique sterilitas erat”. Cf. Hieronymus (pseudo), *Breuiarium in psalmos*, 34, op. cit., col. 926: “Sterilitatem animae meae; id est, quomodo illorum animae steriles erant de bono, et plenae de peccato: sic voluerunt ut anima Christi fuisset”.

¹¹⁹ Cf. Petrus Lombardus, *Commentarium in Psalmos*, 34.13, op. cit., col. 351.

speaks. Thus, it had to be understood more generally, as referring to Christ's humility and the tribulations he suffered in life¹²⁰.

Haircloth and fasts were also mentioned in Ps. 68(69):11-12. Here Titelmans chose the same solution as in Ps. 34¹²¹. There was, however, an additional detail in Ps. 68. Verse 22 spoke of gall given as food and vinegar as drink. Titelmans observed that both Matt. 27:48 and John 19:29 spoke of vinegar, but nowhere was there any mention of gall. Yet, he was not disposed to discuss it in detail, stating: "Sed neque opus est tam exacte verba pensitare, ubi sententia manifesta est"¹²².

Psalms not only provided details of Christ's Passion but also explained its spiritual sense. Christ's mission was to fight the Devil and liberate mankind from his captivity. This was foretold in Ps. 44. Verse 4 prompted: *accingere gladio tuo super foemur [sic!] tuum, potentissime!* Titelmans commented that it referred to the entire mission of Christ, who had to fight the Devil in order to liberate his spouse, the Church¹²³. The next verse explained how this fight was fought: *propter veritatem et mansuetudinem et iusticiam*. It was fought with truth, because Devil's power was based on lies; and with meekness, because the Devil was a tyrant. In fact, Christ's meekness, patience, and obedience extended "even to the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:8). Finally, through justice, because Devil's reign was an injustice¹²⁴. While the general interpretation of truth, meekness, and justice as tools of salvation was similar to that of Augustine, the context of a duel with the Devil seems to be the Franciscan's addition¹²⁵.

It was not only the Passion that psalms prophesied, but also its aftermath. In Ps. 85(86):13 (*eruiisti animam meam ex inferno inferiori*) Titelmans saw a proof of what in theology has been known as the Harrowing of Hell. Christ after his death descended to *lymbo patrum*, where the souls of just patriarch awaited salvation, but not to the bowels of hell, where souls of the damned suffered for eternity. The lecturer from Leuven observed this verse could also be interpreted morally: as a thanksgiving of a Christian soul for preservation from mortal sins¹²⁶. Both interpretations were once again derived from Augustine¹²⁷. Verse 15 of this psalm (*da imperium tuum puero tuo*), predicted Christ's elevation to the right hand of the Father, as did also Ps. 2:8¹²⁸. Resurrection on the other hand had already been foreseen in Ps. 15:10, as testified by Peter himself

¹²⁰ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 79v.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, f. 169r.

¹²² *Ibid.*, f. 169v.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, f. 110v.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, f. 111r.

¹²⁵ Cf. Augustinus Hipponensis, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 44.14, op. cit., p. 503.

¹²⁶ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 222v.

¹²⁷ Augustinus Hipponensis, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 85.18, op. cit., pp. 1190-1191.

¹²⁸ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., ff. 222v-223r.

in the Acts 2:24-28¹²⁹. This last verse could also be applied to all believers and to universal resurrection from the dead.

As the examples enumerated above show, Titelmans by and large followed traditional lines of spiritual exegesis concerning Christ's Passion as foretold in the Psalms. Virtually all these interpretations originated from Augustine's *Enarrationes* and were included in numerous mediaeval catenae and *glossae*. Occasionally Titelmans developed his own interpretations, never however, radically departing from the inherited tradition. Nevertheless, he should not be too easily dismissed as a mere compiler who contributed nothing to the history of exegesis. He reiterated the importance of the spiritual sense precisely when most other exegetes, humanist (Erasmus), reformed (Luther) and Catholic (Cajetan), were preoccupied with the literal sense. Stating the same thing in a new context was more than a mere repetition.

4.2.4 *The Church*

According to an ancient exegetical tradition the Psalms prophesied not only events from the life of Christ but also Apostolic preaching and the rise of the Church¹³⁰. Titelmans followed this tradition but also enriched it, extending a salvation-history interpretation of the psalms to his own times. It was not merely the history of the Messiah that was coded in the Psalms; the entire history of the Church was there too.

Following the patristic tradition, Titelmans recognised events of the Apostolic Age in numerous psalms. Apostles were represented by children in Ps. 8:3, not because of inexperience, but due to humility. Despite their enemies' opposition, they filled the world with divine praise. The theme of humility, recurrent in Titelmans' thought, was crucial here:

Si enim per homines potentes, nobiles aut eruditos Deus Euangelicae fidei mysteria induxisset mundo, poterant dicere inimici fidei, quod non ipsa per se vicisset veritas, sed vi potentiae, aut sapientiae, aut eloquentiae saecularis introducta fuisset, quasi per violentiam in mundum: quemadmodum de impiissima illa secta quam ab authore Mahumeticam vocamus, a christifidelibus dicitur, et verissime dicitur¹³¹.

¹²⁹ Ibid., f. 35v.

¹³⁰ Some elements of this section have been published as: T. K. Mantyk, *Reading the Psalms in Times of Crisis. Franciscus Titelmans's Relecture of the Psalms in the Context of Humanism and Reformations*, [in:] *The Church in the Face of Crises and Challenges over the Centuries. Selected Issues from the History of the Church*, eds. M. Nabożny and M. Wysocki, Vanderhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen, 2023, pp. 23-34.

¹³¹ Ibid., f. 16v.

The identification of children with Apostles stemmed from Augustine and was conventional¹³². Titelmans in addition managed to create a contrast between them and the two biggest contemporary enemies of the Church, of whom he spoke frequently: Turks, who threatened the Empire¹³³, and proud heretics, whom he linked with humanists, especially Erasmus. Apostolic preaching was prefigured also in Ps. 18(19):1-4, Ps. 44(45):13; Ps. 71(72):2 and many other places¹³⁴. In what follows we shall concentrate on three Psalms (45, 67, 106), to show Titelmans' fidelity to tradition but also a degree of originality in his interpretations.

In Ps. 67(68) Titelmans recognised the entire salvation history. "Psalmum qui sequitur, ex illuminatissimo spiritu et corde mirabiliter pleno reuelationibus Dei processisse, tam ipsa verborum maiestas quam supereminens dignitas sententiarum et absconditorum propositio mysteriorum, aperte demonstrant"¹³⁵. Among these mysteries he listed the times of the Messiah, the time of grace, the gift of the Holy Spirit, apostolic preaching, Christ's descent to the abyss and his ascension at the right hand of the Father, the conversion of pagans and spiritual gifts bestowed on the Church.

For instance, verse 7 (*qui educit vinctos in fortitudine; similiter eos qui exasperant, qui habitant in sepulchris*) prefigured three mysteries: remission of sins, liberation of fathers from the Limbo and conversion of sinners¹³⁶. This liberation was compared to the Exodus, which was alluded to in verses 8 and 9¹³⁷. The "rain" mentioned in verse 10 was the doctrine of the Gospel, thanks to which "animals" spoken of in verse 11, that is faithful sheep of the Lord's flock, could live peacefully¹³⁸. What followed was even more clear: "Dominus dabit verbum euangelizantibus, virtute multa". For Titelmans it was a prefiguration of apostolic preaching, proclaiming the Good News not in learned words of human knowledge, but in the power and in spirit, with signs confirming the veracity of their message (cf. 2Cor. 12:12)¹³⁹.

¹³² Augustinus Hipponensis, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 8.5, op. cit., p. 50: "Non possum accipere alios infantes atque lactentes, quam eos quibus dicit Apostolus: Tamquam paruulis in Christo lac uobis potum dedi, non cibum".

¹³³ Cf. F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. a3v.

¹³⁴ Ibid., ff. 46r-v; 112r-v; 177v.

¹³⁵ Ibid., f. 157v.

¹³⁶ Ibid., f. 158r. Cf. Augustinus Hipponensis, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 67.7, op. cit., p. 872. Also Petrus Lombardus, *Commentarium in Psalmos*, 67.7, op. cit., col. 604.

¹³⁷ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 158r-v. Cf. Augustinus Hipponensis, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 67.9-10, op. cit., pp. 873-874.

¹³⁸ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 158v. Augustine claimed it the rain was the manna on the desert: Augustinus Hipponensis, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 67.9, op. cit. p. 874. Peter Lombard interpreted in the same way as Titelmans: Petrus Lombardus, *Commentarium in Psalmos*, 67.10, op. cit., col. 605: "Pluuiam, id est doctrina, Spiritus sancti gratiam voluntariam".

¹³⁹ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 158v. Cf. Hieronymus, *Tractatus in Librum Psalmorum*, 67, op. cit. p. 42: "in hebraeo habet 'quae euangelizantur'; hoc est, mulieribus eis, quae euangelizatae sunt Apostolis, ubi dicit 'euntes dicite fratribus meis' et cetera. [...] secundum septuaginta autem interpretes ad Apostolos dicit, quia Dominus eis dedit uirtutem praedicare euangelium".

Some of mystical readings were surprisingly precise. The mention of Benjamin in verse 28 (*Ibi Benjamin adolescentulus in mentis excessu*) was interpreted by Titelmans as referring to Paul the Apostle.

Inter hos autem fontes Israeliticos, qui suis fluentis, tympanistras iuenculas irrigarunt et viuificarunt, vnus non infimus fuit de tribu Benjamin, caeteris fratribus et Apostolis posterior vocatus (quemadmodum Benjamin inter fratres suos natu minimus erat) Paulus nomine: qui in extasi mentis supra se raptus, in paradysum, vsque in tertium coelum, audiuit ibi arcana verba quae non licet homini loqui, illicque in mentis excessu hausit ac didicit¹⁴⁰.

In annotations to this psalm, he developed this identification, arguing that just as Benjamin was the cause of his mother's death at her labour, so was Paul's preaching mortal for the Synagogue, his mother. Benjamin's initial name, *Benoni*, given by his mother, meant "son of my suffering". It suited Paul well in a sense that he was a source of sorrow for his mother, the Synagogue. As Benjamin's name was changed by his father, so was Paul's, for in the eyes of God he was the chosen vessel (cf. Acts 9:15). Other Apostles were mentioned in the following verse, as princes of Judah, Nephthali, and Zebulon, from which three tribes the majority of the Twelve came¹⁴¹. Titelmans supported his identification with Augustine's authority, who identified Paul with Benjamin in his comments on Gen. 49:27¹⁴². The same identification was applied by the bishop of Hippo in his *Enarrationes* on Ps. 67, although this was not cited by the Franciscan¹⁴³. Nor did Titelmans follow Augustine's etymological reading of names Judah, Nephthali, and Zebulon, on the bases of which the Church Father applied this verse to all Christians excelling in virtue¹⁴⁴.

Importantly, none of spiritual interpretations proposed by Titelmans was original. All of them were thoroughly rooted in past commentaries, especially those of Augustine and Jerome but also many others who elaborated on them. Titelmans showed himself a faithful follower of exegetical tradition. Yet he was not slavish in that and developed old interpretations in a changed context.

¹⁴⁰ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 160v. Cf. Hieronymus, *Tractatus in Librum Psalmorum*, 67, op. cit. p. 46: "Sanctum Paulum dicit: ibi, in Ecclesia: adulescentulum, nouissimum omnium Apostolorum, de tribu Benjamin". See also: Hieronymus, *Commentaria in Osee*, PL 25, col. 862. Jerome cited in *Biblia cum glossa ordinaria. Pars II...*, op. cit., f. 268v.

¹⁴¹ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 164r-v. Cf. Hieronymus, *Tractatus in Librum Psalmorum*, 67, op. cit., p. 46: "Apostoli sunt principes Iuda, hoc est Domini, quemadmodum dicit Iacob: 'Iuda, te laudent fratres tui'". Petrus Lombardus, *Commentarium in Psalmos*, 67.30, op. cit., col. 615.

¹⁴² F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., ff. 164r. Cf. Augustinus Hipponensis, *Sermones de Sanctis*, 279, PL 38, col. 1275: "Quid ergo? Si lupus rapax, semper rapax? Absit. Sed quid? Mane rapiet, ad uesperum diuidet escas. Hoc in Apostolo Paulo completum est, quia et de illo praedictum erat".

¹⁴³ Cf. Augustinus Hipponensis, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 67.33, op. cit., p. 893.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 67.33, p. 893.

We can find an example of such a development in his commentary on Ps. 45(46):4 (*Sonuerunt et turbatae sunt aquae eorum: conturbati sunt montes in fortitudine eius*). In an allegorical sense, this verse was often read as prophesying the persecution of the Church. Augustine commented that this verse prefigured the resistance that the preaching of the Gospel met. He cited examples from the Acts: Athenians (17:18) and Ephesians (19:34), who were not willing to accept Paul's teachings. The mountains that shook were the powers of the world, obstinate against the Good News¹⁴⁵. The same reading was followed by Cassiodorus, Pseudo-Jerome, Peter Lombard and others¹⁴⁶. Ambrose, on the other hand, claimed that roaring waters signified demons, who trembled at the moment of Christ's death¹⁴⁷. The Augustinian reading was taken up by Titelmans who observed that in Rev 17 waters signified multiple peoples. Thus, roaring waters were nations persecuting the Good News. He did not stop here, but updated the centuries-old interpretation:

Quemadmodum et amplius facient in nouissima Antichristi persecutione, quando omnes gentes pariter confluent in modum aquarum. Et sua multitudine ciuitatem sanctorum circumfluent, suisque persecutionibus atque insultibus concutient eam. Et erit tunc quidem tantus sonitus harum aquarum, tanta violentia, tam terribilis impetus et commotio, vt plurimos etiam potentes sit illa persecutio absorptura et demersura in maliciae profundum. Attamen quos elegerit Deus, hi in ciuitate munita quamquam angustati valde, tamen non erunt conturbati; quomodo de Ecclesia primitiua legimus quod quantumlibet grauibus persecutionum fluctibus quassaretur, commoueri tamen non potuit neque expugnari¹⁴⁸.

The persecution of the Church prophesied in Ps. 45 was therefore not only that of the ancient Church, but also one contemporary to Titelmans. He did not specify what persecution he had in mind but in the context of the entire book it is clear that he was concerned with the Turks, who threatened the Church in Austria and with reformers, who persecuted it from within¹⁴⁹. Reformers could include also humanists, for it seems that the two groups were not completely distinct in Titelmans' mind. The Franciscan, confronted with the crisis of the Church in his own time, found solace in the Bible, which foretold the tribulations of his time millennia earlier. The Bible was not a dead letter informing about the past, but a living word interpreting the present. Such a spiritual reading brought hope. Not only did it assure believers that present tribulations were from the outset

¹⁴⁵ Augustinus Hipponensis, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 45.6, op. cit. pp. 521-522.

¹⁴⁶ Cassiodorus, *Expositio psalmorum*, 45.4, op. cit., pp. 416-417. Hieronymus (pseudo), *Breuiarium in psalmos*, 45, op. cit., col. 960. Petrus Lombardus, *Commentarium in Psalmos*, 45.3, op. cit., col. 451.

¹⁴⁷ Ambrosius Mediolanensis, *Explanatio psalmorum XII*, 45.12, op. cit., p. 337.

¹⁴⁸ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 114r.

¹⁴⁹ Cf. *Ibid.*, f. a3v.

inscribed in the salvation plan, but also the victory of the early Church reassured her 16th-century counterpart of the ultimate triumph.

An even better example of such an actualisation is provided by Ps. 106(107). This psalm was traditionally read as a parable of salvation history. Such was the interpretation proposed by Augustine. In several trials described by the Psalm, the bishop of Hippo recognised first the events from the history of Israel and then the ascendancy of the Church. In the second verse, he noted that those redeemed by the Lord were the Israelites who escaped Egypt¹⁵⁰. Subsequent verses alluded to Israel's journey through the desert and various trials encountered there, from which they were saved by the Lord¹⁵¹. Their exodus was a symbol of baptism, through which a soul escapes evil, and their journey was symbolic of spiritual life as such. But the history of Israel was a mere preparation. In verses 32-38 Augustine found a figure of the rejection of Israel, due to his arrogance and the rise of the Church composed of converted pagans. They were the rivers in the wilderness, the dry land turned into springs. Israel on the other hand was a fruitful land that became barren¹⁵². As a consequence, they were made few (verse 39). The same fate – diminishing in numbers – awaited all who separated themselves from the unity of the Church, all schismatics and heretics¹⁵³.

This interpretation of Augustine was very influential. Subsequent generations of exegetes kept his framework and furnished it with further detail that they found hidden in the Psalm. Petrus Lombard, for instance, who based his commentary on Augustine, Cassiodorus, Alcuin, and several others, divided the psalm into seven sections, which encompassed the times of Israel (sections 2-4) and that of the Church (5-7), adding numerous details to Augustine's interpretation¹⁵⁴. The same was true of Titelmans, who developed an allegorical reading of this psalm to make it almost a textbook of the salvation history, extending to his own day. He used Augustine, as well as his successors, but also developed an allegorical meaning himself.

In the *argumentum* of the Psalm, he observed that while the previous one spoke specifically about the Chosen Nation, the present one was about the entire human race¹⁵⁵. In fact, according to Titelmans, it encompassed the entire history of mankind. He started literally from Adam and Eve. Those who wandered in the desert (verse 4) were considered by the Franciscan a symbol of humanity after the first parents' sin¹⁵⁶. They were deprived of water, that is of sacraments and

¹⁵⁰ Augustinus Hipponensis, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 106.3, op. cit., p. 1571.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 106.9-11, pp. 1575-1577.

¹⁵² Ibid., 106.13, pp. 1578-1579.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 106.14, p. 1580.

¹⁵⁴ Petrus Lombardus, *Commentarium in Psalmos*, 106, introductio, op. cit., col. 973.

¹⁵⁵ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 285v. Cf. Cassiodorus, *Expositio psalmorum*, 106.3, op. cit., p. 974: "Vnde euidenter aduertitur hanc generalem adunationem non de Iudaeis dici, sed de Ecclesia Catholica, quae ex toto orbe noscitur congregata".

¹⁵⁶ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 286r.

doctrine (verse 5), and failed to find a way to an inhabited city, namely, the heavenly one¹⁵⁷. God responded to their pleas and gave them his laws, as suggested by verses 6 and 7. Titelmans did not, however, specify, whether he meant the revelation of the Law to Moses or some other Old Testament covenant: with Noah, Abraham or another patriarch¹⁵⁸. For previous exegetes the *via recta* of verse 7 was Christ himself, but Titelmans was still long remote from the Incarnation in his chronological scheme¹⁵⁹. Whichever covenant Titelmans had in mind, it was but a temporal one. Subsequent verses described further tribulations, which the Franciscan interpreted as a consequence of disobedience to God's teaching. Verse 12, that spoke of being humbled by labour referred, according to him to Gen. 3 and the punishment imposed on Adam¹⁶⁰. Once again, God liberated those who called upon him in their suffering (verses 13-16). Titelmans was once more rather general in his interpretation and it is impossible to say, whether he meant the liberation from Egypt or the return from Babylon, if he at all had in mind any specific event of the Old Testament¹⁶¹.

His interpretation turned much more concrete from verse 20. It read: *Misit verbum suum et sanavit eos*. For the Franciscan the meaning was clear: "vbi venit plenitudo temporis, misit Deus pater filium suum sibi coaeternum et coaequalem, verbum suum quod erat in principio apud patrem, vt per ipsum sanaret genus humanum, atque restitueret, quod per ipsum a principio omnia facta fuerat"¹⁶². This verse was interpreted in the light of incarnation already before Titelmans, for instance by Dionysius Carthusianus¹⁶³. From this verse on, Titelmans read the Psalm as the history of the New Covenant. Believers should praise God for their salvation by the Word Incarnate, but not with calves as in the Old Covenant, but through a sacrifice of praise (verse 22)¹⁶⁴.

Verse 23 introduced the apostolic times. "Qui descendunt mare in nauibus facientes operationem in aquis multis" was interpreted by Titelmans as an allusion to the Acts of the

¹⁵⁷ This interpretation was present from Augustine onwards, see: Petrus Lombardus, *Commentarium in Psalmos*, 106.4, op. cit., col. 974: "Viam dico, civitatis habitaculi, id est quae ducit ad ciuitatem supernam, [Aug.] scilicet Jerusalem, in qua habitandum est". About the state without law see: Cassiodorus, *Expositio psalmorum*, 106, op. cit., p. 975: "Esurientes autem et sitientes curiosos huius saeculi significat uiros, qui ueritatis semitas diuersis opinionibus exquirebant. Sed quoniam non crediderant eius auctori, in uera sapientia non poterant inueniri". Cf. Petrus Lombardus, *Commentarium in Psalmos*, 106.4, op. cit., col. 974.

¹⁵⁸ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 286v.

¹⁵⁹ Petrus Lombardus, *Commentarium in Psalmos*, 106.7, op. cit., col. 974: "Et eduxit eos qui errabant in viam rectam, [Aug] quae est Christus, qui dicit: Ego sum via [Joan. XIV]. Quasi dicat: Eripuit eos de ignorantia, ostendens eis Christum viam, ut per hanc viam irent bene operando, in civitatem habitationis cujus civitatis viam ante non invenerant".

¹⁶⁰ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 286v.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, f. 287r.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, f. 287v.

¹⁶³ Dionysius Carthusianus, "Commentaria in psalmos omnes Daudicos commentaria in secundam quinquagenam psalterii", art. 11, op. cit., vol. 6, pag. 473: "Misit Deus Pater verbum suum, id est Filium suum unigenitum: de quo scriptum est, In principio erat Verbum. Hunc misit per incarnationem in mundum, juxta illud: Verbum caro factum est, et habitavit in nobis".

¹⁶⁴ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 287v.

Apostles. They went on ships to preach the Good News. Mirabilia (verse 24) were the signs with which Jesus' disciples proved their message¹⁶⁵. Such an interpretation was a historical development of an older reading. Augustine claimed that the sea was a symbol of numerous nations¹⁶⁶. Petrus Lombard interpreted descending as leaving contemplative life for the sake of active. He interpreted this verse as referring to all Church leaders, entrusted with preaching and governing their ships, that is local churches¹⁶⁷. For Titelmans it was specifically about the Apostles and their work. The same was true about the interpretation of "tempests" in subsequent verses. All read this as a reference to the persecution of the Church, but Titelmans seemed to be more specific. He interpreted it as the historical persecution of the Church that came to an end in specific time (that of Constantine, we might presume, although Titelmans did not name the emperor), differently from his predecessors who interpreted persecutions more universally, as pertaining to all tribulations of the Church until the end of time¹⁶⁸.

In the next section (verses 33-35) Titelmans followed Augustinian supersessionism and spoke of the rejection of Jews and the conversion of pagans, as did also mediaeval exegetes¹⁶⁹. From the converted pagans God created the new Church, new dwelling place (verse 36). Interestingly, Titelmans identified cattle of verse 38 as ordinary, humble Christians, "qui tanquam iumenta in sua simplicitate sub obedientia maiorum viuunt"¹⁷⁰. This followed Augustine's interpretation, adopted also in the Middle Ages¹⁷¹. The Franciscan departed from Augustine in the following verse. "Et pauci facti sunt" (verse 39) was read by Augustine and his mediaeval followers as referring to heretics and schismatics¹⁷². Titelmans on the other hand linked that with the preceding verse, identifying "the few" with "cattle". It was the number of the faithful that had diminished:

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., f. 287v.

¹⁶⁶ Augustinus Hipponensis, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 106.12, op. cit., p. 1577.

¹⁶⁷ Petrus Lombardus, *Commentarium in Psalmos*, 106.23, op. cit., col. 977: "Illi utique qui descendunt a contemplativa vita, in mare, id est ad activam vitam laboriosam. Vel in mare, ad procellam saeculi, scilicet in pro Christo fluctus tentationum patiantur. Ipsi dico existentes, in navibus, id est in Ecclesiis, quas gubernant: quae dicuntur naues, quia fluctibus saeculi tonduntur, sed non franguntur. Ipsi dico, facientes operationem dum praedicant et huiusmodi, in aquis multis, id est in populis multis".

¹⁶⁸ Cf. Dionysius Cartusianus, "Commentaria in psalmos omnes Daudicos commentaria in secundam quinquagenam psalterii", art. 11, op. cit., vol. 6, p. 475.

¹⁶⁹ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 288v. Cf. For instance Petrus Lombardus, *Commentarium in Psalmos*, 106.33, op. cit., col. 979.

¹⁷⁰ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 289r.

¹⁷¹ Cf. Augustinus Hipponensis, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 106.13, op. cit., p. 1580: "Iumenta et pecora dicuntur, in ecclesia simpliciter ambulancia, sed utilia; non multum docta, sed fide plena". Petrus Lombardus, *Commentarium in Psalmos*, 106.38, op. cit., col. 980. Dionysius Cartusianus, "Commentaria in psalmos omnes Daudicos commentaria in secundam quinquagenam psalterii", art. 11, op. cit., vol. 6, p.477.

¹⁷² Augustinus Hipponensis, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 106.14, op. cit., p. 1580: "Sed multum de se praesumentes, pauci facti sunt. Manifestum est, fratres, omnes qui se diuidunt ab unitate, pauci fiunt. Multi enim sunt, sed in unitate, dum non separantur ab unitate; cum enim coeperit ad eos non pertinere multitudo unitatis, in haeresi et in schismate pauci sunt". Petrus Lombardus, *Commentarium in Psalmos*, 106.39, op. cit., col. 981.

Verumtamen in posterioribus temporibus, et maxime circa tempora nouissima, magna illa simplicium fidelium atque etiam fidelium praepositorum multitudo ad paucitatem redacta est. Insuper et a tranquillitate illa pacis in qua viuunt homines, donec in simplicitate sua permanent, turbati sunt et in vexationem conscientiarum inducti; idque a tribulatione, angustia et dolore malorum multorum, exurgentium temporis processu in Ecclesia. In nouissimis namque temporibus, venientibus illusoribus et falsis magistris plurimis, et Antichristis multis vnum nouissimum praecurrentibus, per diuersa tempora multi seducti sunt, in maximo subinde numero: dum iumenta illa absque debita discretione magistros mendacii insequentia, abduci se permiserunt in vanos errores et prauas vanitates, multisque vicibus ex huiusmodi haereticorum tumultibus atque schismatibus mira vexatio et persecutio, interdum etiam exterior in corpore et corporalibus bonis, semper autem interior in conscientia, exorta est; et mala plurima ex horum nequicia, simplicibus in Ecclesia processerunt, quae etiam plenius implebuntur in nouissima Antichristi persecutione, quando in errorem inducentur (si fieri potest) etiam electi¹⁷³.

Application of “pauci facti sunt” to believers was not entirely new, for it can be found for instance in the commentary of Dionisius the Carthusian¹⁷⁴. While the 15th-century commentator linked this to the devastation of Christian settlements by infidels (thinking perhaps about contemporary advances of the Turks in the Balkans), Titelmans linked it with the turmoil caused by reformations. The fault was not with the simple sheep. It was, as verse 40 clearly indicated, the fault of the leaders: princes and prelates, who were charged with the protection of the flock. For former exegetes, those were pagan princes¹⁷⁵, but for Titelmans it meant Christian elites who went astray:

Confidentes in ingeniis suis, aut eruditione eloquentiae saeculi, ausi sunt contentiones suscitare, schismata erigere, haereses confingere, atque in his suis placitis defensandis omne studium omnemque conatum adhibere: et hoc contentionis studium quod omnes possidet haereticos, errare facit pluresque maiorum in inuio falsitatis et mendaci, et non in via veritatis, videlicet vt recta et regia via Catholicae veritatis relictas, sequantur deuia et falsa, sectantes suorum ingeniorum adinventiones et somnia, quae ipsi nec de fidei regula nec de scripturarum autoritate sumpserunt. Neque ipsi solum authores haeresiarum abducti sunt in deuia, sed (quod magis dolendum est) secum

¹⁷³ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 289r.

¹⁷⁴ Dionysius Cartusianus, “Commentaria in psalmos omnes Dauidicos commentaria in secundam quinquagenam psalterii”, art. 11, op. cit., vol. 6, p. 477: “Et pauci facti sunt fideles in aliquibus locis atque Ecclesiis, per occisionem eorum a tyrannicis ac impiis; et vexati sunt a tribulatione malorum, qui pios affligunt, et dolore eis inflictos a tyrannicis et perfidis. Saepe namque infideles urbes et villas, terras atque Ecclesias Christianorum vastaverunt, destruxerunt, et fideles occiderunt”.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid. art. 11, vol. 6, p. 477: “Effusa est contentio super principes: id est, maiores persequentium Christianos”.

iumentorum illorum simplicium plurimam multitudinem abduxerunt et abducunt, in perditionis itinera¹⁷⁶.

The heresiarchs that Titelmans had in mind were clearly reformers, whom he conflated with humanists. Although accusations of arrogance and seeking vain glory were the usual slander on heretics and schismatics, one cannot fail to see here a reference to Titelmans' polemic with Erasmus and other humanists, whom he accused precisely of these vices. Their error came from their disobedience to the Church and its tradition, from individualism, and from excessive confidence in their intellectual capacities. Thus, although they claimed that they based their teachings on Scriptures (which could be applied to Erasmus and reformers alike) they in fact understood none of them. Rejecting the rule of faith and straying away from the Church, they lost the key to Scriptures.

As we can see on the example of this Psalm, Titelmans' interpretation was at the same time traditional and innovative. On the one hand, he followed the millennium old line of interpretation, deriving from Augustine and enriched by other authors; on the other, he actualised their meaning in reference to contemporary events. Often Titelmans interpreted in a more concrete way verses interpreted more generally by previous exegetes. He also clearly considered the Bible to be the living Word of God that spoke not only of the past, but also of the present and of the future. Applying the mystical sense to Psalms one unlocked the mysteries of faith and prophecies of salvific events that were hidden in them. Mystical reading allowed for an always new interpretation of Scriptures which was, however, not wholly arbitrary, because it had to conform to the rule of faith and to exegetical tradition of the Church. As we shall see, he applied the same principles to his reading of the Song of Solomon.

4.3 Mystical reading of the Song of Solomon

4.3.1 History of the interpretation of the Song of Solomon

History of Christian interpretation of the Song of Solomon begins with Origen¹⁷⁷. The Alexandrian Father established a pattern of reading this book that remained valid at least for the next fifteen centuries. Most of Origen's exegetical output concerning this text is sadly lost – only first three of his ten books of commentary survived in Rufinus' translation, as well as two homilies

¹⁷⁶ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 289r.

¹⁷⁷ On the history of the Song's interpretation see: A.W. Astell, *The song of songs in the Middle Ages*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 1990. E.A. Matter, *The voice of my beloved: the Song of Songs in western medieval Christianity*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia 1990. K. Bardski, *Lektyka Salomona. Biblia-symbol–interpretacja*, Wydawnictwo Archidiecezji Warszawskiej, Warszawa 2011. H.W. Matis, *The Song of Songs in the Early Middle Ages*, Brill, Leiden 2019.

translated by Jerome¹⁷⁸. As we know from the comparison of surviving Greek fragment's, Rufinus's translation was somewhat liberal, nevertheless we can get a clear grasp of Origen's exegetical approach¹⁷⁹. It was deeply rooted in Neoplatonic thought and read the Song as an allegory. The true meaning of the text was not in its literal layer, which described carnal love of Solomon and Pharaoh's daughter, but in allegory. Things visible stood for invisible realities of Divine Wisdom. Origen outlined two threads of possible interpretation of the Song: collective, reading it as an allegory of the mystical union of Christ and His Church, and individualistic, interpreting it in the light of individual soul's relationship with God. Origen's reading was not so original. Already Jewish interpreters of this book, struggling with its explicit eroticism, interpreted it as an allegorical representation of the covenant between JHWH and His People.

Origen's lead was followed by numerous early Christian writers. Athanasius, Gregory of Nyssa, Theodoret of Cyrus and others all borrowed from him and developed his allegorical line of interpretation¹⁸⁰. A notable exception was the Antiochian exegete, Theodor of Mopsuestia, who insisted that the book ought to be read literally, as an erotic poem describing human love¹⁸¹. His position was scandalous even to his own Antiochene school, which was usually suspicious of over-allegorising, and was criticised by Theodoret of Cyrus, who in his commentary presented a non-literal reading of the Song, based on *theoria* concept¹⁸².

Origen's tradition of allegorical reading was passed on to the Middle Ages by Gregory the Great and the Venerable Bede¹⁸³. Gregory developed allegorical way of reading the Song, however in one direction only, namely, that of ecclesiastical, collective reading. This was taken up by Bede, who presented the Song as a book of exhortation for Christian prelates and preachers. Bede's reading of the Song was systematically ecclesiological. It emphasised the unity of the Church and clergymen's duty to preach the Word and defend this unity from heretics. Bede was very influential

¹⁷⁸ Origenes, *Homélie sur le Cantique des Cantiques*, ed. O. Rousseau, 1966, SC 37bis. Origenes, *Commentaire sur le cantique des cantiques*, eds. L. Brésard and H. Crouzel, 1991-1992, SC 375-376.

¹⁷⁹ Cf. Origenes, *The Song of songs: Commentary and homilies*, trans. R.P. Lawson, Newman Press, Westminster 1957, p. 5.

¹⁸⁰ Athanasius, *Fragmenta in Canticum*, PG 27, col. 1347-1362. Gregorius Nyssenus, *In canticum canticorum homiliae*, ed. F. Dünzl, Herder, Freiburg 1994, FC 16. Theodoretus Cyrensis, *Explanatio in Canticum canticorum*, PG 81, col. 27-213.

¹⁸¹ Theodorus Mopsuestenus, *Expositio in Canticum canticorum*, PG 66, col. 699-700. Cf. F.M. Young, *Traditions of Exegesis*, [in:] *The New Cambridge History of the Bible: From the Beginnings to 600*, eds. J.C. Paget and J. Schaper, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2013, p. 742.

¹⁸² Theodoretus Cyrensis, *Explanatio in Canticum canticorum...*, op. cit., col. 30.

¹⁸³ H.W. Matis, *The Song of Songs in the Early Middle Ages...*, op. cit., pp. 4-5. Cf. Gregorius Magnus, *Expositio in Canticum canticorum*, ed. P. Verbraken, 1963, CCSL 144. Beda Venerabilis, *In Cantica canticorum libri sex*, op. cit., pp. 167-375. D. Kasprzak, *The Allegorical Sense of Gregory the Great's Commentary on the Song of Songs*, "Analecta Cracoviensia", 2012, vol. 44, no. 44, pp. 101-114.

for Carolingian exegetes, such as Alcuin of York, Haimo of Auxerre, and others, and through them, by the means of *Glossa ordinaria*, influenced the entire Middle Ages¹⁸⁴.

The High Middle Ages brought significant shifts in the interpretation of the Song. According to Ann Astell, a new, more Aristotelian understanding of the soul brought with it a new appraisal of the emotional side of humanity¹⁸⁵. Thus, the affective nature of the Song, which insofar had been seen as an obstacle to overcome, gained new exegetical value in reading the poem. The 12th century saw a re-emergence of an individual lecture of the Song. Bernard of Clairvaux, who devoted 86 sermons to the Song, read it as a mystical narrative of the soul's union with God¹⁸⁶. Literal, erotic elements of the Song were no longer frowned upon, but gained a positive value in themselves. The monks were supposed to divert their longings arising from reading those passages from earthly to heavenly delights. Hence, Bernard was not shy to start with the literal sense, even to the point of arousing desires, in order to sharply redirect them to spiritual goods by means of allegory¹⁸⁷.

A similar reading was offered by the Victorines, Hugh, Richard, and Andrew¹⁸⁸. The last of them was also the most consistent in pursuing the literal sense of Scriptures. He was highly schooled in Hebrew and took unprecedented interest in the literal meaning of the Hebrew Scriptures¹⁸⁹. Literal exegesis of the Bible was further advanced in the Schools, and found its most influential exponent in Nicolas of Lyra. The Franciscan offered his own understanding of the literal sense. Further developing some thoughts of Aquinas, Lyra proposed *duplex sensus literalis*¹⁹⁰. Alongside the literal sense, as we understand it now, there was a literal-parabolaical meaning. Lyra did not follow Theodore of Mopsuestia's example¹⁹¹, instead claiming that the entire Song is a parable that is to be read historically. It was a coded narrative of the history of salvation, starting with the Exodus in chapter one and finishing in Parousia in chapter eight¹⁹². Various forms of literal meaning were Lyra's great contribution to the history of interpretation of the Song of Solomon.

¹⁸⁴ Alcuin, *Compendium in Canticum Canticorum*, [in:] *Alcuino, Commento al Cantico dei Cantici con i commenti anonimi Vox ecclesie, Vox antique ecclesie*, ed. R.E. Guglielmetti, Sismel, Firenze 2004, pp. 117–180. Haymo Halberstatensis, *Enarratio in Cantica canticorum*, PL 117, col. 295–358. This commentary, attributed by Migne to Haimo of Halberstadt, is now believed to be of Haimo of Auxerre.

¹⁸⁵ A.W. Astell, *The song of songs in the Middle Ages*, op. cit., pp. 8–10.

¹⁸⁶ Bernardus Claraevallensis, *Sermones super Cantica Canticorum*, [in:] *Sancti Bernardi Opera*, eds. H. Rochais, J. Leclercq, and C.H. Talbot, Ed. Cistercienses, Romae 1957–1958, vols. 1–2.

¹⁸⁷ Cf. A.W. Astell, *The song of songs in the Middle Ages*, op. cit., pp. 89–102.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 77–88. Hugonis de Sancto Victore, *De amore sponis ad sponsam*, PL 176, col. 987–994. Richardus de Sancto Victore, *Expositio in Cantica canticorum*, PL 196, col. 405–524.

¹⁸⁹ Vide supra 1.2.2.

¹⁹⁰ M. Dove, *Literal Senses in the Song of Songs*, [in:] *Nicholas of Lyra: the Senses of Scripture*, eds. P.D. Krey and L. Smith, Brill, Leiden 2000, p. 132.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, pp. 135–136.

All these various traditions of interpreting the Song coexisted in the early Renaissance. Some authors, such as Jaime Perez de Valencia, continued Lyra's historical interpretation, but majority were concerned with mystical interpretations regarding individual soul (Jean Gerson, Hendrik Herp, Girolamo Savonarola)¹⁹³. Titelmans followed neither Lyra's historical understanding, nor individualistic mystical readings, but instead turned to patristically inspired ecclesiological interpretation.

4.3.2 *The well-ordered Church of God*

According to Titelmans the Church was the main subject of the Song. Feeding on the tradition of the Church Titelmans was aware of both collective and individual interpretation. For example, his commentary on Song 3:1-4 developed both interpretations in succession¹⁹⁴. First, he gave a collective reading, interpreting the passage as describing the humanity's situation before the advent of Christ, and he then proceeded to outline an individual interpretation as an image of soul's rapport with God. Yet, in most places he was much more concerned with the ecclesiastical reading. Therefore, we can see in Titelmans' approach an attempt to return to an older, patristic way of reading the Song, with only a marginal treatment of mediaeval interpretations.

Titelmans emphasised that the community of the Church was the only mean of salvation. Commenting on Song 6:1 he noted that the Church was the garden of God; outside of it there was nothing but a desert¹⁹⁵. Christ was to be found only in His Church: "Extra Ecclesiam frustra quaeritur, qui inveniri illic non poterit, qui per deserta et sylvas non vagatur, sed in horto commoratur, in unitate videlicet catholicae et apostolicae Ecclesiae, extra quam salus nemini esse poterit"¹⁹⁶. To claim that there is no salvation outside the Church was on the one hand merely a repetition of a famous adage of Cyprian of Carthage, on the other it gained a whole new meaning amid Protestant reformations.

¹⁹³ Cf. M. Engammare, *Le Cantique des cantiques à la Renaissance: étude et bibliographie*, Droz, Genève 1993, pp. 54–61. J. Pérez de Valencia, *Cantica canticorum Salomonis cum expositione et questionis finalis discussione*, Josse Bade, Paris 1507. J. Gerson, *Super Cantica Canticorum*, [in:] *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. P. Glorieux, Desclée de Brouwer, Paris 1971, vol. 8, pp. 565–639. H. Herp, *Theologiae mysticae, sive in Cantica Canticorum, aut certe diuini amoris spiritaliumque nuptiarum Epithalamium Libri I*, [in:] *Theologiae mysticae*, Ioannes Neuesianus, Coloniae 1556, pp. 1–132. G. Savonarola, *Devoti discorsi sopra alcuni detti de la Sacra Scrittura, cavati da i suoi sermoni latini et vulgari, sopra il principio della Cantica*, al segno della Speranza, Venezia 1556.

¹⁹⁴ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum...*, op. cit., ff. 63r-69v.

¹⁹⁵ In contrast, interpreters of high Middle Ages read this passage almost exclusively in relation to an individual soul, see for instance: Petrus Joannis Olivi, *Expositio in Canticum canticorum*, 6, op. cit., p. 246: "Dilectus meus descendit in hortum suum". Eius descensus est mentis per speciales consolationes visitatio in quibus suam praesentiam experimentaliter exhibet"; and to the Virgin Mary: Thomas Cisterciensis monachus and Iohannes Algrinus, *Commentarium in Cantica Canticorum*, 7.5, PL 206, col.: 478C: "Hortus iste est uterus beatae Virginis". Bernardus Claraevallensis, *Sententiae*, 3.122, [in:] *Sancti Bernardi Opera*, eds. H. Rochais and J. Leclercq, Ed. Cistercienses, Romae 1972, vol. 6.2, p. 230.

¹⁹⁶ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum...*, op. cit., f. 126v. Cf. Cyprianus Carthaginensis, *Epistulae*, ep. 31.21.2, ed. G.F. Diercks, 1996, CCSL 3C, p. 555: "quia salus extra ecclesiam non est".

The polemical edge of Titelmans's interpretation is further revealed in his comment on Song 6:8. For him the one dove was the symbol of the one Church, beloved by Christ¹⁹⁷. She was the only daughter of her mother, that is of the Upper Jerusalem, the Church Triumphant. "Ecclesia enim triumphans non nisi unam, sanctam, catholicam et apostolicam Ecclesiam in terris pro sua filia agnoscit, synagogas satanae, ecclesias malignantium schismaticorum et haeticorum, conciliabula idololatrarum non agnoscit"¹⁹⁸. It is quite clear that Titelmans identified various reform movements with this Synagogue of Satan, in which there was no salvation. He further emphasised that the grace of God can be sucked like milk only from breasts of this one mother.

The Church was thus to be respected like a mother. "Quisquis vero eam despicit et contemnit, sicut ethnicus et publicanus, ex ipsa Domini praescriptione, debet haberi"¹⁹⁹. The Church was, according to Titelmans respected even by the Apostles themselves. He cited two events from the Acts to argue that whenever difficulties arose, the Apostles sought refuge and counsel in the Church. The Samaritans received the Holy Spirit through the Church represented by Peter and John (Acts 8:14-17), while Barnabas and Paul sought Church's support in the controversy over circumcision (Acts 15:2ff)²⁰⁰. Furthermore, the holy doctors of the Church, Augustine and Jerome, asserted that they would not have believed the Gospel had it not been affirmed by the Church's authority²⁰¹. This defence of the Church was clearly polemical against reformers, especially against Luther's principle of *sola scriptura*.

For Titelmans the Church, the unique vehicle of salvation, was a visible entity. The Franciscan recognised it in the image of Jerusalem in Song 6:3 – "pulchra es amica mea suauius et

¹⁹⁷ This was a traditional spiritual interpretation of this passage, see for instance: Cyprianus Carthaginensis, *De ecclesiae catholicae unitate*, 4, ed. M. Bevenot, 1972, CCSL 3, p. 252: "Quam unam ecclesiam etiam in Cantico Canticorum Spiritus sanctus ex persona Domini designat, et dicit: 'Vna est columba mea perfecta mea, una est matri suae, electa generici suae'". Beda Venerabilis, *In Cantica canticorum libri sex*, 4.6, op. cit., p. 309: "Vna est enim quia diuisionem scismatis non recipit, una est quia non alia ante legem alia sub lege alia sub gratia alia de circumcisione alia de praepotio collecta sed sicut unus dominus una fides unum baptisma unus Deus et pater omnium ita est una catholica electorum omnium multitudo per omnia et mundi loca et tempora saeculi eidem uni Deo et patri subiecta. Quae unde catholica sit appellata". Thomas Aquinas, *In Symbolum apostolorum, scilicet 'credo in Deum' expositio*, art. 9, [in:] *Opuscula Theologica II: De re spirituali*, ed. R. Spiazzi, Marietti, Torino 1954, p. 211: "Haec autem Ecclesia sancta habet quatuor condiciones: quia est una, quia est sancta, quia est Catholica, idest universalis, et quia est fortis et firma. Quantum ad primum sciendum est, quod licet diversi haeretici diversas sectas adinuerint, non tamen pertinent ad Ecclesiam, quia sunt divisi in partes: sed Ecclesia est una. Cant. vi, 8: una est columba mea, perfecta mea".

¹⁹⁸ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum...*, op. cit., f. 132r.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, f. 132r-v.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, f. 132 v.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, f. 132v. Augustinus Hipponensis, *Contra epistolam Manichaei quam uocant fundamenti*, 5, ed. J. Zycha, 1891, CSEL 25, p. 197: "ego uero Euangelio non crederem, nisi me Catholicae Ecclesiae conuocaret auctoritas". Hieronymus, *Altercatio Luciferiani et Orthodoxi*, 28, ed. A. Canellis, 2000, CCSL 79B, p. 67: "breuem tibi et apertam animi mei sententiam proferam, in illa esse Ecclesia permanendum, quae, ab Apostolis fundata, usque ad hanc diem durat. Sicubi audieris eos qui dicuntur Christiani, non a Domino Iesu Christo, sed a quoquam alio nuncupari, ut puta, Marcionitas, Valentianus, Montenses siue Campitas, scito ibi non Ecclesiam Christi sed Antichristi esse Synagogam [...] Nec sibi blandiantur, si de Scripturarum capitulis uidentur sibi affirmare quod dicunt, cum et Diabolus de Scripturis ali qua sit locutus et Scripturae non in legendo consistant sed in intellegendo. Alioquin, si litteram sequimur, possumus et nos quoque nouum nobis dogma componere, ut asseramus in Ecclesiam non recipiendos qui calciati sint et duas tunicas habeant!".

decora, sicut Hierusalem terribilis, ut castrorum acies ordinata”. Titelmans reflected that the image of Jerusalem could be read on many levels: literally, as praising the beauty of Solomon’s capital city; allegorically, as referring to *ecclesia militans*; and anagogically, as prophesying the beauty of the future Church in heaven²⁰². The second image, however, that of an army set in array, was univocally deciphered by him as describing the earthly Church. Titelmans invoked the Hebrew text of the Song, speaking literally of troops aligned under their banner, to claim that this was an image of the pilgrim Church, insuperable by the gates of hell (cf. Matt. 16,18). The Church was terrible to the enemies of salvation, that is demonic forces active in this world²⁰³. The main characteristic of this Church was its orderly fashion. It had one leader: Christ, and one banner: the holy Cross. The soldiers were arrayed according to different degrees and states of life, offices and merits in one beautiful and orderly whole. This reflected the hierarchical nature of the Church, from which it derived its very strength²⁰⁴.

The hierarchical nature of the Church was further explored by Titelmans several verses later. In 7:5 the Song spoke of the head and hair of the Bride: “caput tuum ut Carmelus et comae capitis tui sicut purpura regis iuncta canalibus”. The head could be understood in two ways: “alterum primum et principale, alterum secundarium atque vicarium”²⁰⁵. In the primary sense the only head of the Church was the Christ himself. In the secondary sense it was the pope, to whom Jesus gave universal power over his own sheep. The pope, as *Vicarius Christi*, was the visible head of the Church after the ascension of Christ to heaven, so that the body of the Church would not seem headless. The Franciscan invoked several biblical texts that had been traditionally used to support the claims of papacy: handing to Peter the keys of heaven in Matt. 16:19 and Luke 22:32, where Jesus assured Peter of his prayer for the unfaltering faith of the apostle. The Lovanian Exegete was clear that the promises and authority bestowed on Peter were valid also for all his successors: “Quod quidem verbum, non solum ad ipsam illam singularem Petri personam pertinere arbitrandum est, verumetiam ad universos posteros et successores illius, qui secundum divinam et canonicam electionem ad huius pastoralis regiminis universalem curam fuerint assumpti”²⁰⁶. This

²⁰² F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum...*, op. cit., f. 127r.

²⁰³ Ibid., f. 127v. Cf. Beda Venerabilis, *In Cantica canticorum libri sex*, 4.6, op. cit., p. 301: “Quae etiam terribilis est ut castrorum acies ordinata cum fixa intentione purae orationis omnem in se incursum daemoniaci repellit exercitus”.

²⁰⁴ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum...*, op. cit., ff. 127v-128r. Cf. *Biblia cum glossa ordinaria. Pars III...*, op. cit., f. 34v: “In uno quoque cornu in lateribus diuersis gradibus procuratorum per caritatem vnita et nunquam interrupta”.

²⁰⁵ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum...*, op. cit., f. 148v. A similar interpretation is found in Dionysius Cartusianus, “Enarratio in Canticum Canticorum Salomonis”, art. 2.7.5, op. cit., p. 419: “potest per caput Ecclesiae intelligi Pontifex summus, qui est summus, primus, ac generalis Christi vicarius super totam universalem Ecclesiam, sponsus, caput, praelatus, pastor, monarcha, doctor ac ductor ipsius; [...] Sed ipse est caput Ecclesiae vicariale. Christus vero caput est principale”.

²⁰⁶ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum...*, op. cit., f. 149r.

was a direct refutation of the argumentation of Protestant reformers, who claimed that the special status of Peter pertained only to his person and not to the office.

Further, Titelmans compared the pope to Mount Carmel. The pope was compared to the mountain because he was superior to all other prelates:

Recte quoque ille omnium pontificum et pastorum caput in terris Carmelo comparatur, propter excellentiam universalis potestatis sibi a Christo super Ecclesias omnes collatae: propter quam omnibus autoritate et dignitate praeceminet, merito ab omnibus singulari venerandus honore, propter eum cuius locum gerit et vice fungitur in terris²⁰⁷.

Again, this affirmation of the authority of the papacy run directly counter the claims of various reformers. Moreover, Titelmans emphasised that the pope was aptly compared to Mount Carmel, for it was inferior to the mountains of Lebanon, which earlier had served as an image of Christ himself.

The double interpretation of the head afforded two explanations of the hair of the bride. According to Titelmans, if one understood the head as Christ, hairs were the hosts of angels, who surrounded the Saviour²⁰⁸. Taking the second meaning, hairs were to be understood as clergymen: “Comas vero secundarii atque vicarii capitis intelligimus universos Christifidelium ordines, aut peculiariter universos Ecclesiae praelatos, quomodo cunque potestatem super alios et regiminis curam habentes, quorum omnis potestas et autoritas a Christi vicario eidem subiecta dependet, quemadmodum dependent capilli a capite”²⁰⁹. Titelmans offered here a rather radical solution to the problem that troubled the Catholic Church for several centuries, regarding the relationship between the power of the pope and other clergymen²¹⁰. In his view, all clerics enjoy only a delegated authority, derived from the pope. Such an opinion was dominant in Catholic theology until the second Vatican Council, which restored a more autonomous understanding of bishops’ power²¹¹. For the Franciscan the idea of a well-organised structure was further signified by the image of hair bound in orderly strands²¹². There was no place for disorderly locks in the Church’s

²⁰⁷ Ibid., f. 149r.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., f. 149v. Dionysius understood them as Apostles: Cf. Dionysius Cartusianus, “Enarratio in Canticum Canticorum Salomonis”, art. 21.7.5, op. cit., p. 419: “Quod si per caput Christus accipiatur, comae hujus capitis sunt gloriosi Apostoli et primi Salvatoris discipuli, qui ei familiariter et immediatius adhaeserunt, atque ab ipso sumpserunt gradum ac potestatem”.

²⁰⁹ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum...*, op. cit., f. 149v. Cf. Dionysius Cartusianus, “Enarratio in Canticum Canticorum Salomonis”, art. 21.7.5, op. cit., p. 419: “Porro, sicut per caput potest intelligi caput vicariale et etiam principale; ita per comas capitis possunt intelligi praecipui post dominum Papam praelati, et qui ei familiariter in regimine coassistunt”.

²¹⁰ On debates about the origin of bishops’ powers during the Council of Trent see: J.W. O’Malley, *Trent: What Happened at the Council*, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge 2013, pp. 196–197.

²¹¹ Cf. Concilium Vaticanum II, *Decretum de Pastoralis Episcoporum Munere in Ecclesia Christus Dominus*, 8: “Episcopis, ut Apostolorum successoribus, in dioecibus ipsis commissis per se omnis competit potestas ordinaria, propria ac immediate”.

²¹² F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum...*, op. cit., f. 150r.

hairdo. Finally, Titelmans made an analogy to a secular court: the pope was surrounded by prelates as a king is by his knights²¹³. a similar image to one he had already employed when commenting on Song 3:7.

Titelmans referred to the Church in numerous other images found across the Song, all to the same meaning: the visible Church was an orderly body, beautifully arranged in its doctrine as well as in its hierarchy and sacraments. The Church was compared to the house of Divine Wisdom (3:9)²¹⁴; a fortified castle (4:4)²¹⁵; a mountain firmly set in the ground (4:6)²¹⁶; font of knowledge and truth (4:12)²¹⁷, and a well-protected flock (8:9)²¹⁸. Yet, despite her beauty and order, the Church was constantly under threat both from the outside and from within.

4.3.3 *The threat to the Church*

The Church was both orderly arrayed and vulnerable. It was a mixed body of saints and sinners. According to Titelmans that was the meaning of the famous saying of the Bride in Song 1:5 – “Nigra sum sed formosa”. Origen interpreted these words as signifying Gentiles, who justified themselves towards Jews: we are of no noble origins; therefore, we are dark, but yet there is the image of God inscribed in us as well. Gentiles were like the Queen of Sheba and the Ethiopian wife of Moses – black, but beloved²¹⁹. Titelmans differed and offered three other possible ways of understanding this verse²²⁰. First, he claimed that there were different members in the Church, some dark through their sin, others beautiful due to virtuous life²²¹. A second possible understanding realised the fundamental division within each individual member of the Church: even the righteous stumble seven times a day, claimed Titelmans citing Prov. 24:16; nevertheless, they do not cease to be beautiful, as long as they do penance²²². Thirdly, the dark

²¹³ Ibid., f. 150v.

²¹⁴ Ibid., f. 77r.

²¹⁵ Ibid., f. 89r.

²¹⁶ Ibid., f. 91v.

²¹⁷ Ibid., f. 98v.

²¹⁸ Ibid., ff. 178v-179r.

²¹⁹ Cf. Origenes, *Commentaire sur le cantique I*, 2.1.1-15, op. cit., pp. 262–268. English translation: Origenes, *The Song of songs...*, op. cit., p. 92.

²²⁰ An identical explanation is found in Dionysius Cartusianus, “Enarratio in Canticum Cantorum Salomonis”, art. 3.1.4, op. cit., p. 302: “Ecclesia nigram se nominat: Primo, quoniam multi imperfecti, fragiles et infirmi ac peccatores in ea sunt: propter quod Christus comparat eam sagenae missae in mare, et ex omni genere piscium congreganti. Secundo, quia et ipsi electi ac boni, quotidie et frequenter in venialibus peccant, et eorum justitiae quasi pannus menstruatae censentur. Tertio, quia in vita hac variis tribulationibus, tentationibus, adversitatibus exercentur”.

²²¹ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Cantorum...*, op. cit., f. 15r. Cf. Matt. 13,24-30. Gregorius Magnus, *Expositio in Canticum canticorum*, 33, op. cit. p. 34: “Quia decoloravit me sol peccatricem adtendebat illam partem, quae Christo crediderat, pars illa, quae non crediderat”.

²²² F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Cantorum...*, op. cit., ff. 15v-16r.

complexion of the Bride was attributed to persecution and tribulations²²³. All three meanings were compatible with others pointing towards the perennial threat of corruption of Christ's Bride²²⁴.

Although the dialectics dark-beautiful applies to the Church of all times, Titelmans interpreted it in the light of contemporary events. The Bride was dark because she had been burned by the sun, identified by Titelmans as trials from within and from outside²²⁵. The outward threat was the Muslim conquest of Europe²²⁶. Writing in the early 1530s Titelmans was deeply depressed by the fall of Hungary, after the battle of Mohács in 1526 and the subsequent siege of Vienna in 1529. In the eyes of the Franciscan the situation looked dramatic: the Church, after being pushed away from northern Africa and the Middle East in the distant past, was now being also gradually evicted from Europe. According to Titelmans, only a small fraction of Europe remained in Christian hands.

The external threat was exacerbated by the assault from within. Titelmans lamented that there were so many false brethren in the Church that one should be astonished that some remained faithful among general depravity. Those false brethren were identical with “the sons of my mother” who “have fought against me” (Song 1:5). According to the Church Fathers, remarked Titelmans, they should be understood as Jews, who were older brothers of the Bride-Church, yet fought against her²²⁷. In a broader sense, however, he identified them with heretics of all times and especially the contemporary ones. It was because of them that the Bride grieved not to have kept her own vineyard. Many vineyards, explained the Franciscan, that is particular Churches, had fallen away from the Mother Church because of heretics, both in the past as well as in recent times²²⁸.

²²³ Ibid., f. 16r-v. Such an interpretation is also in: Beda Venerabilis, *In Cantica canticorum libri sex*, 1.1, op. cit., p. 196: “Ita est enim saepius obscurata afflictionibus infidelium sancta ecclesia quasi generalis mundi totius esset inimica”. Honorius Augustodunensis, *Expositio in Cantica canticorum*, 1.1.4, PL 172, col. 368: “Ideo dicitur Ecclesia formosa, quia in igne tribulationis excocta martyribus rubescit, virginibus albescit”.

²²⁴ Some other interpretations were also proposed, for instance about the Virgin Mary: Rupertus Tuitiensis, *Commentaria in Canticum canticorum*, 1, op. cit., p. 18.

²²⁵ Cf. Beda Venerabilis, *In Cantica canticorum libri sex*, 1.1, op. cit. p.197: “Facta autem tribulatione et persecutione propter uerbum continuo scandalizatur, solis uidelicet uocabulo tribulationem et persecutionem figuratam esse declarans”. Gregorius Magnus, *Expositio in Canticum canticorum*, 34, op. cit. pp. 34-35: “filii matris meae pugnaverunt contra me: quia filii synagogae, qui in infidelitate remanserunt, bellum persecutionis contra synagogae fideles gesserunt”. In contrast, according to Origen the blackening was by sins: Origenes, *Commentaire sur le cantique I*, 2.2.5-9, op. cit., pp. 300–302. English translation: Origenes, *The Song of songs...*, op. cit., pp. 108–109.

²²⁶ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum...*, op. cit., f. 17v.

²²⁷ Ibid., f. 19v. Cf. Gregorius Magnus, *Expositio in Canticum canticorum*, 34, op. cit. pp. 34-35: “filii matris meae pugnaverunt contra me: quia filii synagogae, qui in infidelitate remanserunt, bellum persecutionis contra synagogae fideles gesserunt.” Beda Venerabilis, *In Cantica canticorum libri sex*, 1.1, op. cit. p. 197: “Vox haec primitiae est ecclesiae quae ab ipsa synagoga de qua carnis originem duxit tribulationum bella suscepit sicut acta apostolorum plenissime docent”. On the other hand, Origenes understood them as Apostles, who thought for the conversion of the gentiles; or as angels, if the allegory was read as about an individual soul: Origenes, *Commentaire sur le cantique I*, 2.3.5, op. cit., p. 318. English translation: Origenes, *The Song of songs...*, op. cit., pp. 114–115.

²²⁸ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum...*, op. cit., f. 20v.

He further identified those heretics as the companions of the Shepherd in the following verse (1:6)²²⁹. The term “companions” (*sodales*) was, however, read by Titelmans as a euphemism. They were false friends, who, while claiming to teach the path of the Lord, were in fact usurpers, even antichrists of whom John wrote in his epistle²³⁰:

Qui vero de corde suo nova dogmata confingunt, quae nec a Christo nec ab Ecclesia didicerunt, et per nouam illam suam (proprie dico, suam) doctrinam hominibus salutem beatudinemque promittunt, hi neque discipuli sponsi neque coadiutores eius dici merentur [...] Propter quod, secundum veritatem dici merito possunt sponsi hostes et adversarii²³¹.

It is not difficult to see here an allusion to Martin Luther and his acolytes.

The perverse nature of heretics was, according to Titelmans, well represented by the image of little foxes in Song 2:15. Identification of foxes with heretics was common among Church Fathers, such as Augustine, Gregory of Elvira, Theodoret of Cyrus and Bede the Venerable²³². Heretics are aptly compared to foxes for unlike external enemies of the Church, who assault it openly like lions and wolves, the heretics act through cunning and deceit²³³. Outwardly they appear humble and pure, but inside they are full of corruption. Like foxes, who catch birds, so do heretics hunt more spiritual souls, detached from earthly matters. “Huiusmodi enim qui spiritualis aliqua ex parte videntur et plus caeteris sapere se existimant, experientia crebra monstrauit, monstratque etiam hodie, frequentius haereticorum astutiis decipi”²³⁴. Such foxes destroy the roots of vineyards, that is the fundamentals of the faith²³⁵.

It is important to notice that for Titelmans the proliferation of foxes/heretics was essentially a crisis of growth. He pointed out that foxes multiply in spring, that is, in the time of peace and prosperity of the Church. In times of tribulation, no heretics are to be seen²³⁶. Although it seems to be somewhat contradictory to his previous lamentations about the war with the Turks, it can however be understood in a more general sense, as a product of a long period of the Church’s prosperity in what we now call the Middle Ages. Those who follow heretical promptings are not

²²⁹ Origen interpreted them as angels: Origenes, *Commentaire sur le cantique I*, 2.4.13, op. cit., pp. 336–338. English translation: Origenes, *The Song of songs...*, op. cit., pp. 121–122.

²³⁰ Cf. Gregorius Magnus, *Expositio in Canticum canticorum*, 42, op. cit., p. 40: “Sed multi apparent sodales esse, et sodales non sunt. Multi enim doctores, dum peruersam doctrinam suaderent, sodales quidem uidebantur, sed inimici extiterunt”.

²³¹ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum...*, op. cit., f. 23r.

²³² Cf. Augustinus Hipponensis, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 80.14, op. cit., p. 1128. Gregorius Illiberitanus, *In Canticum canticorum libri quinque*, 4, ed. J. Fraipont, 1967, CCSL 69, p. 205: “Vulpes hoc in loco haereticos designat exterminantes uineas id est plebes sanctorum in fide et ueritate florentes”. Beda Venerabilis, *In Cantica canticorum libri sex*, 2.2, op. cit. p. 226. Theodoretus Cyrensis, *Explanatio in Canticum canticorum...*, op. cit., col. 107.

²³³ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum...*, op. cit., f. 58v.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, f. 59r.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, f. 60v.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, f. 60v.

the lax ones, but more spiritual souls, who seek deeper understanding and are thus deceived. This growth of the Church, both on an institutional as well as individual level found, according to Titelmans, no adequate response from the clergy. It is the neglect on their part that led to the proliferation of heresies.

The Franciscan presented clergymen as the guards of the Church. He found numerous adequate images in the Song. The Prelates were the Solomon's personal guard (3:7-8), the sixty armed men, expert in war²³⁷. They should hold the double-edged sword of the Word of God in their minds, contemplating it, and on their lips, ready to preach²³⁸. They had to be ready for martyrdom in order to defend the flock and always mortify their carnal desires with ascetic practices²³⁹.

Further in the Song, clergymen were compared to sharp teeth of the sheep (4:2)²⁴⁰. Those teeth served a dual purpose. First, they were to masticate the bread of the doctrine for those, who, like little children, were yet unfit to eat solid food and require soft gruel²⁴¹. Prelates fulfilled this duty by meditating the Word of God and the doctrine of the Church and expounding it to the simple souls. But there was also another purpose of teeth:

Non solum autem propter cibum dissecandum atque masticandum, dentibus comparantur doctores Ecclesiae, verumetiam propter officium defensionis, quo eisdem incumbit a lupis noxiis dominicum gregem defendere: non solum validis latratibus, oportune importune aduersus illorum impiam malitiam inclamando, verumetiam acribus morsibus durissimarum correptionum eosdem impetendo et persequendo: vt si rationabili instructioni nolint acquiescere, mansueteque correptioni minime cedere, severioris increpationis publicaeque obiurgationis acrioribus morsibus cogantur a proposito desistere²⁴².

It would have been better to prevent than to heal, acknowledged Titelmans citing Ovid's adage²⁴³; however, since heretics had already multiplied beyond measure, all means, physical force included, had to be employed to combat them. The Franciscan found in the Song a biblical argumentation to justify the physical persecution of heretics towards which prelates of the Church should work hand in hand with secular authorities²⁴⁴. He also emphasised that the sheep come out

²³⁷ Ibid., f. 74r-v. Cf. Beda Venerabilis, *In Cantica canticorum libri sex*, 2.3, op. cit. p. 238. According to Rupert it referred to sixty notable characters from the Old Testament, starting with Abraham: Rupertus Tuitiensis, *Commentaria in Canticum canticorum*, 3, op. cit., p. 62-63.

²³⁸ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum...*, op. cit., f. 74v. Cf. Beda Venerabilis, *In Cantica canticorum libri sex*, 2.3, op. cit., pp. 238-239.

²³⁹ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum...*, op. cit., ff. 74r; 76r.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., f. 85r. Cf. Gregorius Magnus, *Moralia in Iob*, 11.33, op. cit., pp. 610-612.

²⁴¹ Cf. Origenes and Gregorius Nyssenus, *Sul Cantico dei Cantici*, eds. V. Limone and C. Moreschini, Bompiani, Milano 2016, p. 1120.

²⁴² F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum...*, op. cit., f. 85v.

²⁴³ Ibid., f. 59v.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., f. 60r.

from washing, which signified that prelates had to be pure and free from any attachment to earthly goods in order to fulfil their role²⁴⁵.

Titelmans multiplied biblical images emphasising the role of the clergy: they were shields hanging from the tower of David²⁴⁶; doves sitting over clear waters of Scriptures and watching out for predatory hawks²⁴⁷; the nose of the Church, attentive to detect any smell of heresy²⁴⁸; and custodians of the vineyard²⁴⁹. Yet, they have many times failed their responsibility. Titelmans was not shy to emphasise the shortcomings and failures of the clerics of his time. He interpreted Song 1:5b: “posuerunt me custodem in vineis vineam meam non custodivi” as speaking of the failure of the clergy. “Verum ipsi male memores sui officii, nimium infideliter, heu nimium infideliter, commissum sibi minus administrantes, Ecclesiam non custodierunt”²⁵⁰. The critique of heretics in Titelmans’s commentary was parallel to the scourging of clerical vices, for he saw these as two sides of the same coin.

The first sin of the clergy was *inertia*. Unlike Paul, who is presented as a model of apostolic zeal, contemporary clergymen were reluctant to fulfil their duties, especially that of teaching²⁵¹. Their laziness was largely due to great incompetence. Titelmans lamented that while the Song described Solomon’s personal guard as most valiant of men, in his times the body of bishops was made of merely boys, elevated to their status because of nepotism, greed and foolish ambitions.

Quod malum, verendum est ne hac nostra miserabili et turbulentissima tempestate nimium multis eueniat: qui pueritiam vixdum egressi, imo etiamnum pueri, tam aetate quam sensibus, fortium istorum virorum loca, vel puerili ambitione suggerente, vel stultissimorum parentum auaritia impellente, occupare praesumunt; cumque spiritalis militiae necdum tirunculi esse didicerint imo prorsus earum rerum quae ad spiritalem militiam attinent rudes sint et inexperti, et plane (vt dici solet) ἀναλαβήτοι prima necdum elemeta sive abecedarias literas tenentes audent tamen in exercitatissimorum bellatorum locis consistere²⁵².

He had plentiful examples of such practices. Clement VII Medici, who held the keys of Saint Peter around the time of writing the commentary, had been made a cardinal only because he was a cousin of Leo X, (although he was already a grown man by then). After succeeding him (with a brief interim of Hadrian VI), he continued to reward his family members with church offices and

²⁴⁵ Ibid., f. 86r. Cf. Augustinus Hipponensis, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 94.11, op. cit., p. 1339.

²⁴⁶ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum...*, op. cit., f. 89v. Cf. Albertus Magnus, *Commentarii in primum librum Sententiarum*, ed. A. Borgnet, 1893, Opera omnia, vol. 25, p. 8: “Clypei autem sunt auctoritates veritatis repertae a Sanctis, habentes signa ducum nostrorum, scilicet, Augustini, Hieronymi, et aliorum Doctorum”.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., f. 120v.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., ff. 147v-148r. Cf. Beda Venerabilis, *In Cantica canticorum libri sex*, 4, op. cit., p. 323.

²⁴⁹ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum...*, op. cit., f. 182r-v.

²⁵⁰ Ibid., f. 21r.

²⁵¹ Ibid., f. 59v.

²⁵² Ibid., f. 75r-v.

benefices²⁵³. The Medici popes were by no means exceptional. According to Titelmans religious illiteracy of prelates was the cause of their inadequate response to Protestant reformations. They indulged in pleasures at the time of peril, beardless boys with no experience. What was needed of them was to take up the spiritual fight and restore the walls of the Church, as Nehemiah had restored those of Jerusalem²⁵⁴. It is not difficult to see in this allusion a sharp critique of the Renaissance papacy, indulging in delights of arts and riches but reluctant to take up the call for reform. There is an echo of disappointment in Titelmans' words with the failure to call a general council of Christendom, which had been awaited at least since the beginning of reformation in Wittenberg.

The list of clerical sins was much longer. According to Titelmans the Church had never been so rotten with scandalous behaviour: avarice, gluttony, laxity, hate, envy and above all else the neglect of divine matters²⁵⁵. As much as a polemic with evangelical reformers, the commentary of Titelmans can be seen as a dramatic call for a true reform of the Church. Unlike Luther, however, Titelmans did not think it necessary to reform the doctrine, but only the discipline of the clergy. In a way, the council of Trent, convoked eight years after his death, was a fulfilment of this wish. But Titelmans also implemented this reform on a personal level. Two years after writing the commentary on the Song of Solomon, he left Leuven and walked barefoot to Rome to join a newly born Capuchin reform of the Franciscan Order. He abandoned all academic activity and turned instead to simple manual labour and caring for the sick. The burden of the new life proved to be too harsh for him, leading to a premature death on the 12 September 1537. His personal decision is, however, an important clue to understanding his exegesis. Capuchin friars must have seemed to him this little fraction of the Church that was awake, while the rest of the body was asleep (cf. Song 5:2)²⁵⁶.

4.3.4 Making sense of the Church's history

In his commentary Titelmans did not limit himself to criticising reformers and sinful clergy. He also endeavoured to make sense of those events in the light of Scriptures. Everything that was happening to the Church, both good and evil, happened under God's providential plan. The Franciscan exegete interpreted the image of the moon in Song 6:9 as the key to understanding the history of the Church. This verse had been applied to the Church for centuries. Theodoret of Cyrus commented that just like the moon shone with the reflected light of the sun, so was the Church

²⁵³ N. Tomas, *All in the Family: The Medici Women and Pope Clement VII*, [in:] *The Pontificate of Clement VII: History, Politics, Culture*, eds. K. Gouwens and S.E. Reiss, Ashgate, Aldershot 2005, pp. 41–53.

²⁵⁴ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum...*, op. cit., f. 75v.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, f. 17v.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, f. 106r.

illuminated by Christ²⁵⁷. This interpretation was taken up by many other authors such as Bede the Venerable and many others²⁵⁸. Bede added also another very important observation: just like the moon waxed and waned, so did the Church:

Item pulchra ut luna in nocte uitae praesentis ubi uariante temporum statu nunc clara mundo nunc despecta atque oppressa nunc uirtutum candore plena nunc prauorum dehonesta uitiiis multifarium lunae crescentis ac decrescentis iter imitatur, electa ut sol in die futurae beatitudinis ubi manente statu aeternitatis uera lucis incommutabilis uisione clarebit impleta ipsius promissione qua dicit: Fulgebunt sicut sol in regno patris eorum²⁵⁹.

This interpretation was frequently taken up in subsequent commentaries and developed either in relation to the Church²⁶⁰ or to an individual soul²⁶¹. Others still applied this verse to the Virgin Mary, but since this thread was not pursued by Titelmans, neither shall we develop it further²⁶².

Titelmans applied to this verse an ecclesiological interpretation. He took up the ancient idea that the Church reflected Christ's light²⁶³. Presently the Church reflected this light imperfectly, but all Christ's beauty shall be imparted to her at the eschaton²⁶⁴. He also followed Bede's idea of the moon as the most irregular of all celestial bodies, waxing and waning in consecutive turns. Like the theologian from Jarrow, he applied that to Church's changing fortunes in history. However, while Bede limited himself to stating a general rule, Titelmans used this model to explain the entire history of the Church. He described successive stages of Church's waning and argued that they were always accompanied by waxing in other places.

He began with the Chosen Nation of Israel, a small portion of the world that enjoyed a degree of light, while the rest of humanity was submerged in darkness. When the preaching of the Apostles brought pagans to the light, it was Judea, which in turn succumbed to shades of disbelief

²⁵⁷ Theodoretus Cyrensis, *Explanatio in Canticum canticorum...*, op. cit., col. 178.

²⁵⁸ Beda Venerabilis, *In Cantica canticorum libri sex*, 4.6, op. cit., p. 31: "Pulchra ut luna quia a sole iustitiae illustrata noctem saeculi huius ipsa sublimis incedens scientiae caelestis et euangelicae conuersationis luce perfudit". Dionysius Cartusianus, "Enarratio in Canticum Canticorum Salomonis", art. 18.6.9, op. cit., p. 406: "pulchra ut luna: quoniam a Sole iustitiae omnem, quam habet, accipit lucem et claritatem, sapientiam et uirtutem".

²⁵⁹ Beda Venerabilis, *In Cantica canticorum libri sex*, 4.6, op. cit., p. 311.

²⁶⁰ Cf. Haymo Halberstatensis, *Enarratio in Cantica canticorum...*, op. cit., col. 340: "Sive pulchra est ut luna in praesenti uita, ubi aliquando concessa sibi pace et securitate crescit, aliquando aduersitatibus obscurata decrescit; electa ut sol, in alia uita, ubi perpetuo splendebit uisione conditoris sui".

²⁶¹ Cf. Dionysius Cartusianus, "Enarratio in Canticum Canticorum Salomonis", art. 19.6.9, op. cit., p. 412: "Pulchra ut luna: quoniam, sicut luna mox eclipsatur, opaco aliquo inter eam et solem erecto; sic anima quantumlibet uirtuosa, si ad momentum auertatur a Sole sapientiae sponso coelesti, obtenebratur, indiget que indesinenter conservari ab illo: alioqui mox labitur".

²⁶² Cf. Rupertus Tuitiensis, *Commentaria in Canticum canticorum*, 6, op. cit., p. 139: "Quando autem Spiritus Sanctus in te superuenit et Filium Virgo concepisti uirgo peperisti tunc tu et ex tunc pulchra pulchritudine diuina pulchra inquam non quomodocumque sed ut luna. Sicut enim luna lucet et illuminat luce non sua sed ex sole concepta sic tu o beatissima hoc ipsum quod tam lucida es non ex te habes sed ex gratia diuina gratia plena".

²⁶³ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum...*, op. cit., f. 133v.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, ff. 133v-134r.

in Christ²⁶⁵. After several centuries, the light of the Church was again dimmed by the false prophet “Mahumet”, who eradicated Christianity from Africa and most of Asia. Simultaneously, however, the light begun to spread over Europe, hitherto mostly barbarian²⁶⁶.

Nunc vero nostro hoc calamitoso saeculo, vbi non modica ex parte Europam ab annis aliquot obsidere caeperunt tenebrae diuersarum haeresum et impiissimorum errorum, in diesque magis ac magis schismatibus et haeresibus diuidi et scandalis maximis tota obuelari, videtur Ecclesia Latina, ita vt iam fere lumen omne extinctum videri possit, si angustia ista fidelium partium Europae cum latitudine illa olim florentissimarum Asianarum atque Aphricanarum Ecclesiarum conferatur, ecce ex improuiso mirabili Dei prouidentia, in terris hactenus nulli mortalium cognitis neque geographis vllis memoratis, neque vlla vnquam nauigatione (quod in hominum sit memoria) lustratis, in quibus nunquam Apostolorum vox audita fertur, nunquam hactenus nomen Christi auditum est (quod apud Asianos atque Aphricanos iam olim defecerat atque apud nos hodie nimium obscuratum et si dicere verum liceat extinctioni vltimaeque defectioni proximum cernitur) catholicae fidei lumen ab annis aliquot egregie proficere et supra quam dici possit incrementum sumere, fama omnibus Christifidelibus merito gratissima annunciat²⁶⁷.

The waning of the Catholic faith in Europe corresponded to its waxing in the newly discovered territories, where Christ was preached by mendicant friars, as Titelmans reported not without pride. Evangelisation of the “New World” was for Titelmans a proof that the Church was truly catholic, that is “generalis et universalis”²⁶⁸. It was God’s will that the Church should always shine like the full moon, though the Church’s own darkness, arising from sin and disbelief, prevented it. Yet, whether the Church is full and resplendent, or diminished in its brightness it is always one and the same Church of Christ, his beloved Bride²⁶⁹.

The Franciscan made it clear that all of this developed according to a mysterious plan of God, unknown to humanity. His explanation of the image of the moon echoed his argument made in favour of the Vulgate in his polemic with Erasmus, about the migration of the Word of God, which shall be explored in the next chapter. What is significant is that just as was the case with some psalms, Titelmans took up traditional interpretations and rewrote them according to contemporary context. In his interpretations he was much more specific about historical events than his predecessors, who preferred to formulate only a general rule, without concrete examples. Titelmans, on the other hand, not only read Scriptures through a prism of specific historical events but extended the interpretation all the way to the present, just as he did in his commentary on

²⁶⁵ Ibid., f. 134r-v.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., f. 134v.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., ff. 134v-135r.

²⁶⁸ Ibid., f. 135v.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., f. 135r.

Ps. 106(107). This shows once again that for him the Bible was not only about the past, but also about the present.

4.4 Mystical reading of Gospels

In the final part of this chapter, we shall look into Titelmans' spiritual interpretation of Gospels. In his commentary on the Gospel of Matthew, in addition to *elucidatio* and *annotationes*, Titelmans provided also more detailed explanations of eight Jesus' parables: *de sapiente et stulto aedificatore* (7:24-27), *de spiritu immundo* (12:43-45), *de rege rationem ponente* (18:23-35), *de laborantibus in vinea* (20:1-16), *de vinea et malis agricolis* (21:33-40), *de nuptiis regis* (22:2-14), *de decem virginibus* (25:1-13), *de seruis qui pecuniam acceperunt Domini sui* (25:14-30)²⁷⁰. Unfortunately, he did not explicate parables from chapter 13, for which also *annotationes* are missing. Titelmans explained Jesus' parables according to an allegorical or moral sense (occasionally both). He saw them as allegories of the salvation history, with a particular emphasis on the replacement of the Synagogue with the Church or as stories about individual moral responsibility of a believer.

Titelmans applied an allegorical reading to the parable of the unclean Spirit. In the exegetical tradition, this simile had been read in both ways, as an allegory of salvation history and in a moral, individualistic sense. The latter reading was preferred for example by Augustine, Gregory the Great, Hrabanus Maurus, and Lothar of Segni (Innocent III), while Hilary of Poitiers, Jerome, Remigius of Auxerre, and Dionysius the Carthusian preferred an allegorical interpretation (although the last one considered it to be a literal interpretation, according to *sensus literalis duplex*)²⁷¹. Titelmans proposed solely an allegorical interpretation and left the moral sense aside.

²⁷⁰ F. Titelmans, *Paraphrastica elucidatio in Matthaem...*, op. cit., ff. 65v-66v; 120v-121r; 169r-170v; 191v-193v; 207r-209r; 219r-222v; 257r-262v.

²⁷¹ Cf. Gregorius Magnus, *Moralia in Iob*, 33.3, op. cit., pp. 1676-1677: "Vnde et in Euangelio Veritas dicit quod spiritus exiens qui in locis aridis et inaquosis requiem non inuenit, quia domum quam reliquerat, uacuam, scopis que mundatam repperit, hanc multiplicior intrauit. Quia enim fluxa fit terra quae infunditur, loca arentia atque inaquosa sunt corda iustorum, quae per disciplinae fortitudinem ab omni carnalis concupiscentiae humore siccantur". Thomas Aquinas, *Catena aurea in quatuor euangelia*, in Matthaem 12.14, op. cit., p. 206. Hrabanus Maurus, *Expositio in Matthaem*, 4, ed. B. Löfsted, 2000, CCCM 174, p. 370. Innocentius III (Lotario di Segni), *Sermones*, de tempore, sermo 15, PL 217, col. 383. Hilarius Pictaviensis, *Commentarius in Matthaem*, 12.22-23, ed. J. Doignon, 1978, SC 254, p. 292: "Ergo insidentem plebis istius pectoribus spiritum immundum lex quae postea data est interuentu suo eiecit et ueluti quadam custodia circumiectae potestatis exclusit. Qui illinc exiens circum gentes desertas atque aridas oberrauit domum ueterem derelinquens, ut in his usque in diem iudicii non inquietata habitatione requiesceret. Sed rursum Dei gratia impertita gentibus, postquam in aquae lauacrum fons uiuus effluxit, habitandi cum his locus nullus est, et cum iam in his requiem non habet, intra se reputans optimum credit regredi in eam ex qua profectus est domum". Hieronymus, *Commentariorum in euangelium Matthaei*, 2, op. cit., p. 99: "inmundus spiritus exiuit a Iudaeis quando acceperunt legem et ambulauit per loca arida quaerens sibi requiem. Expulsus uidelicet a Iudaeis ambulauit per gentium solitudines quae cum postea Domino credidissent, ille non inuento loco in nationibus dixit: reuertar ad domum meam pristinam unde exiui, abeo ad Iudaeos quos ante dimiseram. Et ueniens inuenit domum uacantem scopis mundatam". Remigius of Auxerre cited in Thomas Aquinas, *Catena aurea in quatuor euangelia*, in Matthaem 12.14, op. cit., p. 205. Dionysius Cartusianus, *Enarratio in euangelium secundum Matthaem*, art. 24.12.43, [in:] *Opera omnia in unum corpus digesta*, Typis Cartusiae S. M. de Pratis, Monstrolii 1900, vol. 11, p. 158.

His explanation followed entirely the lines of Hillary's and Jerome's reading although was more elaborate²⁷². Israel was purified from demons by the election of Patriarchs and again by the gift of the Law. The demon departed to pagan nations, from which he was expelled in the time of grace. The Jews, who rejected Jesus' grace became thus a cleaned but empty house that the demon gladly took as his possession, inviting seven other evil companions.

Another parable that Titelmans explained as an allegory of salvation history was that of the evil workers in the vineyard. Such an interpretation had been suggested by Jesus himself (cf. Matt. 21:43) and unsurprisingly adopted by most ancient and mediaeval exegetes²⁷³. Titelmans' interpretation was here in no way original and followed older commentaries²⁷⁴. The same was true of the parable of the king and his debtor, which, however, was traditionally interpreted in a moral sense²⁷⁵. Here as well there was nothing original in Titelmans' explanation²⁷⁶.

A more interesting case is constituted by the double explanation of the parable of labourers in a vineyard²⁷⁷. Since antiquity, this pericope has been interpreted either allegorically or morally. Allegorical interpretation saw in the subsequent recruitment of workers at various times of the day the diverse ages of the world, in which God called various groups of people to his service. Such an interpretation was developed, among others, by Cyril of Alexandria, Gregory the Great, and an anonymous author of *Opus imperfectum in Matthaem*²⁷⁸. The other reading took subsequent hours to represent the ages of one's life and suggested that while some respond to God's calling in their youth, others convert on the deathbed. Such a reading was proposed by Chrysostom and again by Gregory the Great²⁷⁹. Titelmans presented both interpretations starting from the allegorical one:

Exiit primo mane Deus conducere operarios in vineam suam, quoniam a principio mundi Patres ad operandum bonum [...] inuitavit [...] Hora tertia iterum exiit, quoniam sicut in aetate prima, sic et

²⁷² F. Titelmans, *Paraphrastica elucidatio in Matthaem...*, op. cit., f. 120v.

²⁷³ Hieronymus, *Commentariorum in euangelium Matthaei*, 3, op. cit., p. 198. Ioannes Chrysostomus, *Homiliae XC in Matthaem*, 68.1, PG 58, col. 639-641. Augustinus Hipponensis, *Contra aduersarium legis et prophetarum libri duo*, 2.4, PL. 42, col. 647-648. A. Erikson, *Sancti Epiphani episcopi interpretatio euangeliorum*, 31, Gleerup, Lund 1939, p. 56. Hrabanus Maurus, *Expositio in Matthaem*, 6, op. cit., p. 562.

²⁷⁴ F. Titelmans, *Paraphrastica elucidatio in Matthaem...*, op. cit., ff. 207r-209r.

²⁷⁵ See for instance: Origenes, *Origenes Werke. 10. Origenes Matthäuserklärung. 1: Die griechisch erhaltenen Tomoi*, 14.7, ed. E. Klostermann, Hinrichs, Leipzig 1935, pp. 289-293. Ioannes Chrysostomus, *Homiliae XC in Matthaem*, 61.1-4, op. cit., col. 589.

²⁷⁶ F. Titelmans, *Paraphrastica elucidatio in Matthaem...*, op. cit., ff. 169r-170v.

²⁷⁷ Interpretation of this pericope in the 16th century has been analysed by Delville, who devoted some attention also to Titelmans: J.-P. Delville, *L'Europe de l'exégèse au XVI^e siècle: interprétations de la parabole des ouvriers à la vigne (Matthieu 20, 1-16)*, Leuven University Press, Leuven 2004, pp. 337-342.

²⁷⁸ Cyrillus Alexandrinus, *Fragment 226*, [in:] *Matthäus-Kommentare aus der griechischen Kirche*, ed. J. Reuß, Akademie-Verlag, Berlin 1957, Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur 61, pp. 228-230. Gregorius Magnus, *Homiliae in euangelia*, 1.19.1, ed. R. Etaix, 1999, CCSL 141, pp. 143-144. *Opus imperfectum in Matthaem*, 34, PG 56, col. 818.

²⁷⁹ Ioannes Chrysostomus, *Homiliae XC in Matthaem*, 64.3, op. cit., col. 612. Gregorius Magnus, *Homiliae in euangelia*, 1.19.2, op. cit., pp. 144-145.

in secunda (quae est a Noe vsque ad Abraham) similiter homines ad virtutis studium [...] inuitavit. Similiter fecit hora sexta et nona, id est, diuresis temporum distinctionibus, quarum prior ab Abraham protenditur vsque ad Moysen, et posterior totum tempus legis complectitur vsque ad Christi aduentum. [...] Circa vndecimam horam paterfamilias speciali modo exiit, filius quidem de sinu patris veniens, pater vero filium de sinu suo in mundum mittens in plenitudine temporis, quando aduenit hora nouissima et finis saeculorum²⁸⁰.

His division of world's history followed exactly that proposed by Gregory the Great²⁸¹. Pagans remained idle until the eleventh hour because there were no prophets to recruit them to work in God's vineyard. But when the Gospel finally came to them, they responded with zeal. The fact that the last workers were rewarded the same wage as the first was explained, according to the Franciscan, by the fact that they took the work up at the time of grace. He also explained that in heaven there would be no murmuring among saints, when all receive the reward of eternal life. The complaints of early recruited workers in the parable were but a literary device²⁸². This last point was emphasised also by Gregory²⁸³. The influence of the great pope is unmissable, but it is impossible to determine whether it was direct or via *Catena aurea*, where he was abundantly cited²⁸⁴. In contrast to the case of Ps. 106 and the Song 6:9, both discussed above, here Titelmans did not develop the interpretation of the parable to encompass post-biblical times all the way to the sixteenth century. Although he mentioned neither Gregory nor any other source, his interpretation was merely a paraphrase of older commentaries.

The same was true of the second of his interpretations. He linked the different hours of the day with the ages of man's life. Some responded to God's call in their childhood, others in adolescence, others still only in their last hour, just like the "Good Thief" at the cross²⁸⁵. It was never too late to repent. From this Titelmans led to a moral lesson: one should neither be overconfident about salvation, for the fear of a fall, even if he took up God's work in his youth, nor should one despair about it even if he had already wasted more than eleven hours of his life. There was always hope.

Titelmans' interpretation of the parable of the wise and foolish virgins from Mt 25:1-13 conflated the moral and allegorical sense. On the one hand he interpreted the story as an allegory

²⁸⁰ F. Titelmans, *Paraphrastica elucidatio in Matthaem...*, op. cit., ff. 191v-192r.

²⁸¹ Gregorius Magnus, *Homiliae in euangelia*, 1.19.1, op. cit., p. 143: "Mane etenim mundi fuit ab Adam usque ad Noe. Hora uero tertia a Noe usque ad Abraham. Sexta quoque ab Abraham usque ad Moysen. Nona autem a Moyse usque ad aduentum Domini. Vndecima uero ab aduentu Domini usque ad finem mundi, in qua praedicatores sancti apostoli missi sunt, qui mercedem plenam et tarde uenientes acceperunt". Cf. Cyrillus Alexandrinus, „Fragment 226”, op. cit., pp. 228-230.

²⁸² F. Titelmans, *Paraphrastica elucidatio in Matthaem...*, op. cit., f. 192v.

²⁸³ Gregorius Magnus, *Homiliae in euangelia*, 1.19.4, op. cit., pp. 146-147.

²⁸⁴ Thomas Aquinas, *Catena aurea in quatuor euangelia*, in *Matthaem* 20.1, op. cit., p. 292.

²⁸⁵ F. Titelmans, *Paraphrastica elucidatio in Matthaem...*, op. cit., f. 193r. Once again, the dependence on Gregory is discernable: Gregorius Magnus, *Homiliae in euangelia*, 1.19.2-3, op. cit., pp. 144-146.

of the Last Judgment; on the other, as an exhortation to amass the oil of good deeds²⁸⁶. His interpretation was based on patristic sources without, however, naming them. His identification of oil with charity and good deeds that are an external expression of it, the clamour at midnight with the trumpet of the last Judgment and so on were shared by many ancient authors, such as Augustine, Gregory the Great, and Hilary of Poitiers to name but a few²⁸⁷. Yet, it is difficult to determine what precise sources Titelmans had at his disposal. We must therefore limit ourselves to a general conclusion that also in this case, his spiritual reading of Matthew lacked in originality and novelty.

The same is true of spiritual interpretations of various symbols from the Gospel of John. Titelmans followed ancient and mediaeval interpretations, hardly ever proposing anything original. For instance, the pond from John 5 stood as a symbol of baptism, which was the conventional interpretation since patristic times²⁸⁸. The miracle of the multiplication of bread in John 6:2-15 gave Titelmans opportunity for three moral interpretations²⁸⁹. First, Jesus' thanksgiving over bread and fish was an example of gratitude (6:11)²⁹⁰, the gathering of remaining fragments served as an admonition not to despise even the smallest of God's gifts (6:12), and Jesus' escape from the crowd that was about to crown him gave a perfect model of humility (6:15). In John 7:8 Titelmans cited an allegorical interpretation of Cyril of Alexandria, who asserted that Jesus did not want to celebrate a figure of salvation, but awaited the true feast of redemption, at the hour of the Cross²⁹¹. In short there is very little originality in Titelmans' spiritual interpretations of the Gospel of John.

It is unlikely that Titelmans would be upset about the charge of little originality in his interpretations. More likely he would feel proud. It was tradition that he valued, and he consciously repeated older interpretations that were authoritative because of their antiquity. As we have presented in this chapter, Titelmans considered the mystical sense to be the kernel of Scriptures. The divine message was not in the letter but in the meaning deciphered by the Church in an act of communal reading. The keys to spiritual senses were in the Scriptures themselves, but also in the liturgy and the commentaries of Catholic fathers of the Church. Titelmans was especially concerned with the allegorical sense of Scriptures, while moral and anagogical senses were rarely

²⁸⁶ F. Titelmans, *Paraphrastica elucidatio in Matthaeum...*, op. cit., ff. 257r-260r.

²⁸⁷ Augustinus Hipponensis, *Sermones de Scripturis*, 93, PL 38, col. 579. Hilarius Pictaviensis, *Commentarius in Matthaeum*, 27.5, op. cit., p. 208. Gregorius Magnus, *Homiliae in euangelia*, 1.12.1, op. cit., p. 81.

²⁸⁸ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio paraphrastica in Ioannem...*, op. cit., ff. e6v; f6r. Cf. Chrysostom, cited in Thomas Aquinas, *Catena aurea in quatuor euangelia*, in Iohannem 5.1, op. cit., p. 397.

²⁸⁹ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio paraphrastica in Ioannem...*, op. cit., f. g3r-v.

²⁹⁰ Cf. Chrysostom cited in Thomas Aquinas, *Catena aurea in quatuor euangelia*, in Iohannem 6.1, op. cit., p. 415: "Chrysostomus. Sed quare paralyticum debens sanare non orat, neque suscitans mortuos, neque mare quietans; hic autem orat gratias agens? Ut scilicet ostendat, eos qui comestione incipiunt, gratias agere oportere Deo".

²⁹¹ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio paraphrastica in Ioannem...*, op. cit., f. k7v. Cf. Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on John...*, op. cit., pp. 264-265.

present in his commentaries. He was mainly concerned with the ecclesiological dimension of allegorical interpretations, which was more akin to patristic and early mediaeval readings than to late mediaeval interpretations. Titelmans occasionally developed older allegorical explanations along two lines: giving them more specificity and updating them in the context of current political and religious events. It is the latter that is especially important: the Bible was not a text from the past, but the Word for the present. It was this understanding of the Scriptures as the Living Word that made Titelmans an heir to patristic and mediaeval interpretations, and at the same time set him against humanist interpretations. It is his criticism of humanist exegesis that we shall now peruse.

Chapter V

Titelmans' polemics in defence of the Vulgate

The two previous chapters presented Titelmans' biblical scholarship, which, in accordance with the ancient consensus, oscillated between the literal and spiritual senses. The Franciscan was, however, open to introduce new elements, derived from humanist learning, as long as they did not undermine the authenticity of the Vulgate and dogmatic interpretations of Scriptures sanctioned by Church's authority. We intend to re-evaluate his dispute against Erasmus of Rotterdam in the light of those findings regarding his scholarship. We will argue that, contrary to what some older scholarship asserted, Titelmans did not object to humanist methodology as such, and was less conservative than both Erasmus and his modern eulogists were willing to admit. What stood at the centre of the polemic was not the humanist methodology, but the understanding of the Bible itself.

Humanist revolution in biblical scholarship tacitly altered the centuries-long understanding of what the Bible was. This is not to say that humanists themselves willingly wanted to challenge Scripture's authority. Nevertheless, as many of their critics sensed, their approach transformed the Bible from the Word into a text. Sadly, neither Titelmans, nor Erasmus and in fact no other polemist involved in the heated dispute had the capacity to articulate lucidly the main point of contention. Erica Rummel characterised it aptly saying "Any attempt to correlate Titelmans' *Collationes* with Erasmus' reply is an exercise in frustration. There does not seem to be enough common ground even for a discussion. Charge and riposte never match [...] Arguments and counterarguments are like ships passing in the night"¹. As an illustration Rummel cited the way in which both authors used a term "Latin authors". For Erasmus that meant classical Roman writers, for Titelmans any Latin speaker, therefore also Jerome and Augustine. The result of this profound misunderstanding between both sides of the dispute was that Erasmus and his devotees constantly tried to confine the polemic to the field of philology, not realising that their philological advancements had deeper theological implications than it was at first apparent. Catholic critics, Titelmans being here a good exemplification, unable to produce sound theological argumentation in defence of the old consensus resorted to authority of the Church as the final argument. Historians and theologians from radical orthodoxy circles attribute this failure to the influence of nominalist philosophy, unable to convey the notion of sacramentality². Verifying this assumption vastly exceeds the modest scope of this dissertation. Regardless of whether it is correct, the fact remains

¹ E. Rummel, *Erasmus and his Catholic Critics...*, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 17–18.

² J.K.A. Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy: Mapping a Post-secular Theology*, Baker, Grand Rapids 2005. B.S. Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation: how a Religious Revolution Secularized Society*, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge 2012, pp. 1–25.

that neither Titelmans nor Erasmus succeeded in comprehending and defining fully the scope of their debate. Hardly a criticism of them, given that the very same issue has eluded consecutive generations of scholars ever since.

In this chapter we shall present the outline of Titelmans' argumentation against Erasmus on the basis of his three principal polemical texts. First, we shall discuss theoretical basis for the defence of the Vulgate's authority, as laid down in *Prologus apologeticus* to *Collationes quinque*. There Titelmans argued vigorously for the inspired character of this translation. Next, we will analyse his practical defence of the old translation in his *Collationes quinque*, concentrating on the case of Rom. 5:12. Finally, we shall consider his *Libri duo de autoritate libri Apocalypsis* in which he defended the canonical status of this book and discussed its authorship. Titelmans' polemic with Erasmus is the only aspect of his biblical scholarship that has attracted some scholarly attention in the past. Most past scholarship, however, approached the debate from Erasmus' point of view, inevitably concentrating more on the philological aspect and identifying the crux of the dispute as a methodological feud between a humanist and a scholastic³. Erica Rummel, and especially Paolo Sartori have both contributed significantly to redressing this unfair perspective. Sadly, neither of them devoted much attention to Titelmans' biblical commentaries, and consequently they failed to appreciate fully theological implications of the polemic⁴. Here we shall attempt to re-evaluate the meaning of Titelmans' debate with humanists and demonstrate that it was more about the very understanding of the Bible than about methodology.

Finally, we shall devote some attention to Titelmans' relations to both Protestant and Catholic reforms. We shall try to understand why he turned his pen against humanists rather than Protestants, what understanding of German evangelical preachers he had, and how he evaluated their reform endeavours. Secondly, we shall inspect Titelmans' link with the Catholic Reform. Theology of his commentaries allows us to recognise him as a representative of the pre-Tridentine reform movement within the Church. Furthermore, his biblical writings had some impact on decrees of the Council of Trent.

5.1 Defence of the Vulgate in *Prologus apologeticus*

The prologue to *Collationes quinque* is arguably the most original part of Titelmans' *ouvrage*. The Franciscan presented in it the methodological background for the subsequent discussion of

³ H. de Vocht, *Collegium Trilingue, part 3...*, op. cit., pp. 144–153. J.H. Bentley, *New Testament Scholarship at Louvain in the Early Sixteenth Century*, "Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History", 1979, no. 2, New Testament Scholarship, pp. 53–79. J.H. Bentley, *Humanists and Holy Writ: New Testament Scholarship in the Renaissance*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1983, pp. 202–207.

⁴ E. Rummel, *Erasmus and his Catholic Critics...*, op. cit., pp. 14–22. P. Sartori, *La Controversia Neotestamentaria...*, op. cit., pp. 77–135; P. Sartori, *Frans Titelmans, the Congregation of Montaigu, and Biblical Scholarship*, [in:] *Biblical Humanism and Scholasticism in the Age of Erasmus*, ed. E. Rummel, Brill, Leiden 2008, pp. 215–223.

particular points of contention regarding the translation of Saint Paul's letter to the Romans. The discussion in *Prologus* evolved around three major themes: place of Scriptures in the salvation history, translation of Hebrew Scriptures into Greek and translation of both testaments into Latin. In the first part Titelmans established his conviction about the providential design regarding languages and transmission of revealed Scriptures. Translation into Greek was touched upon only briefly, however that into Latin was discussed at a great length. The lecturer from Leuven discussed the authorship of the Vulgate, considered the role of the Church and of the Holy Spirit in the process of translation, evaluated strengths and weaknesses of humanist translations and reflected on the style of Biblical Latin. Some of these subjects reappear throughout the entire *Prologus*. The aim of this section is to present arguments of Titelmans in a systematic fashion, trace their origins, wherever possible, and evaluate their effectiveness.

The main purpose of Titelmans in *Prologus apologeticus* was to defend the traditional translation of the Bible from humanist assaults. He was convinced of the value of the old translation and perceived works of humanists as an attack on it. "Quam proinde mirror quemadmodum nostra hac tempestate novarum rerum curiosi non pauci sectatores, ita vili, ita flocci, imo ita nihili pendant, ut eam velut prorsus indigna latinis, etiam explodendam atque exhibendam existiment, ac tantum non pedibus conculcandam"⁵. Among the scorners of the old translation Titelmans named three: Erasmus of Rotterdam, Lefèvre d'Étaples and Lorenzo Valla⁶, however he seemed to have targeted predominantly the first of them, who was by far the most eminent. According to Titelmans their commentaries, although useful for philological study, caused turmoil among the faithful⁷. Motivated by excessive zeal and immoderate ambitions, they made the Vulgate into an object of scorn and disdain⁸. According to the Franciscan, this led to a devaluation of the authority of the Bible. He saw the work of the three humanists as a major rupture with the tradition of the Church and with the established consensus regarding the Bible as the Living Word of God. Treated as a mere text, the Bible turned from the judge into an object of a learned judgment and could be interpreted by each according to his own desire. This was a break with the ecclesiastical nature of the Bible and its spiritual character. Thus, Titelmans wrote the *Prologus* to re-establish the authority of the Sacred Text.

⁵ F. Titelmans, "Prologus apologeticus", op. cit., f. a4r.

⁶ Ibid., f. a4v.

⁷ Ibid., f. a5r: "Et de horum quidem laboribus quos novis versionibus impenderunt, quatenus conducant, valeantque pie utentibus esse proficui, posterius dicturi, de annotationibus his ac et examinationibus illud ingenue (quod est veritatis) profiteamur [...] Sed offendit non minus pios animos".

⁸ Ibid., f. a4v.

5.1.1 Migration of the Word of God

For Titelmans, the departure point for the discussion about the biblical translation was not in philology, but theology. The young Franciscan started his defence of the Vulgate from sketching a broad picture of the salvation history and placing the significance of the Bible and its translations within it. He began with emphasising that the Holy Scripture came into being as God's response to human ignorance and sin⁹. Although a theological commonplace, it was an important argument that directed the entire reasoning of Titelmans. The very existence of the Scripture was a divine initiative. Writing down the holy books was not merely a human response to Divine Revelation. It was an act of God, and not just a singular, but a continuous act.

Titelmans also emphasised that the initial revelation was given in Hebrew. It was Hebrew, in which the Law was written, and later also histories and prophecies¹⁰. The choice of the language was not merely accidental. It was providential. The People of the Covenant were the chosen vessel in which the truth of the Revelation was to be preserved until the fullness of time (*plenitudo temporum*), when it was to be presented to the entire humanity. Thus, the choice of the language was firstly a sign of continuous divine supervision over His Word, of a prior design that accompanied the Revelation. Secondly, it was an indication of His affection and love towards the Chosen People¹¹. The gift of Scripture to the People of Israel was an act of trust that formed a special bond of mutual fidelity and love.

According to Titelmans, it was this relation of trust that determined the subsequent history of the Bible, its translations and diffusion. On the one hand, God, faithful to his initial design, desired to diffuse the knowledge of His love also to other peoples that so far remained under the shadow of ignorance and idolatry. On the other hand, the human partner turned out to be untrustworthy and treacherous, which placed the truth of Revelation in a great peril. Thus, God had to intervene in order to safeguard his own Word from corruption. Both aspects, faithfulness and treachery worked under divine supervision to the same end, namely, the universal salvation of the mankind.

Titelmans first developed the argument of God's design and faithfulness. He noted that while confining the Revelation to the Hebrew language was providential in preserving it, it was also a hindrance for other nations. Therefore, as a part of the preparation for the incarnation of Christ, to which Titelmans constantly referred as *plenitudo temporum* (cf. Gal. 4:4), Revelation had to be

⁹ Ibid., f. a2v: "Notus olim in Iudea, et ea pene sola deus omnipotens, cum sub foeda idolatria caeterae omnes populorum nationes in miseranda degerent caecitate, populo hebraeorum (quem sibi in peculiarem populum adoptaverat) pro magno dedit beneficio legis sacrae sanctam scripturam, quam pro populi electione, heraeis voluit habraico esse sermone conscriptam".

¹⁰ Ibid., f. a2v: "Huic [leges] adiunctae sunt procedente tempore in posterorum commonitionem sacrae historiae, deinde et prophetarum dinga oracula: omnia quidem hebraico tantum sermone conscripta".

¹¹ Cf. P. Sartori, *La Controversia Neotestamentaria...*, op. cit., pp. 90–91.

transmitted to the Greek language, which was much more commonly known. The Providence used the curiosity of the Hellenistic Egyptian monarch, Ptolemeus Philadelphus as an instrument of salvation¹². The king ordered a translation of the Hebrew Scripture into Greek, which gave origin to the so-called Septuagint. Titelmans interpreted it as a *praepratio evangelica*, paving the way for the Gospel of Christ. We shall return to details of Titelmans interpretation of the Septuagint translation and its significance later in this chapter¹³, here it suffices to emphasise that he saw it as an act of Divine Wisdom preparing the way for the universal proclamation of the Good News.

The New Testament was from the outset entrusted to the Greek language. Again, this was an expression of the universal salvific will of God. Greek was the language of the majority of the pagans, therefore God decided to use it as a tool of his Revelation¹⁴. Titelmans constructed a comparison between the passage from the Old to the New Testament and from the Hebrew to the Greek language. Just as Hebrew was appropriate for the “Synagogue” (as Titelmans described the people of Israel) so was Greek for the new Church, formed from pagan nations¹⁵. While the Hebrew language preserved the particularity of the Chosen People, the Greek ensured a universal appeal of the Gospel. The new language and the new Scripture surpassed the old, just as the perfect sacrifice of Christ surpassed the animal sacrifices of the Old Covenant¹⁶. Hence, just as Hebrew was the sign of God’s particular love for the people of Israel, so did the Greek language indicate the substitution of the Jews by Gentiles as God’s chosen people. Titelmans here clearly followed the patristic theology of replacement (supersessionism), which started with Justin Martyr and was

¹² F. Titelmans, “Prologus apologeticus”, op. cit., f. a2v: “Postea vero quam, decurrentibus saeculis, coepit appropinquare plenitudo temporis, quo missa de Patris sinu Veritas, orbi erat universo manifestanda, neque iam Iudeis solis, sed omnibus etiam nationum populis, iuxta Prophetarum vaticinia revelanda, divina providentia (quod ego quidem non dubito) factum est, ut ad regis Ptolomei qui Philadelphus cognominatus fuit, religiosam postulationem, ea que Hebraico sermone Hebraeorum populo fuerant tradita, gentibus iam in Graecum conversa sermonem fierent communia et que prius apud Hebraeos latitaverant eisque solis proficere poternt, facta in Graecum sermonem conversione, populo gentilium iam fieri inciperent manifesta hoc nimirum agente Spiritu Sancto, ut qui as unius dei notitiam et fidei veritatem iamiam essent convocandi, communemque essent com Iudaeis paulo post accepturi a Christo salutem, Scripturarum quoque, quae de illa praetestificati sunt, quaecunque acciperent velut praeparamentum”.

¹³ Vide infra 5.1.2.

¹⁴ F. Titelmans, “Prologus apologeticus”, op. cit., ff. a3r-a4v: “Postea vero, quam veritas propalata et a Iudeis repulsa, ab eisdem gentibus gaudenter suscepta est, digni habiti sunt qui proprio suo idiomate (id est tali, quod et vulgatissimum erat inter eos qui ex gentibus crediderant et latissime cognitum) eximiam illam novi testamenti et longe praecellentissimam scripturam acciperent, in stabilimentum et firmitatem salutaris fidei, cui per Apostolicam praedicationem fuerant iniciati; quiquam non iam ultra vel tecte vel involute, sed palam et aperte omnia fidei susciperent mysteria; imo clarius etiam et apertius, quam vetus ille hebraeorum populus suo patrio idiomate acceperat”.

¹⁵ Ibid., f. a3r-v: “Unde quemadmodum vetus illud synagogae aedificium, ex Hebreorum potissimum constabat natione, sic nova Ecclesia his quidem in structura veteri permanere volentiubs, ex aliis potissimum lapidibus construi coepit, id est gentium populis. [...] Hanc ob causam, dei providentia, quemadmodum prius illud vetus testmanetum veteri Hebraeorum sunagoge, hebraico sermone tradiderat, ita novae ex gentibus potissimum aedificandae ecclesiae, graeco idiomate (quod in gentibus ad Christi fidem conversis caeteri latius erat atque vulgatus) novum voluit condere testamentum”.

¹⁶ Ibid., f. a3r.

subsequently developed by Augustine¹⁷. What is crucial however, was his strong claim that all of this was not accidental but fulfilled God's previous plan.

The Greek language was not the ultimate sojourn for the Revelation. After some time, it started 'migrating' to the Latin language¹⁸. Here however Titelmans did not use the argument about the universality of salvation. Likewise, he refrained from making another logical step and arguing that to make the Gospel known to the broadest audience possible, it would be advisable to translate it into the vernacular. Such an argument would be very much to Erasmus's liking. However, Titelmans passed over such considerations in silence and instead developed the other argument, which explained migrations of the Word of God: human infidelity.

Apart from God's universal plan of salvation, the other engine that propelled the movement of the Divine Word was human infidelity. The Jews, who were God's special property, rejected God's Messiah and thus made themselves unworthy of Divine favour. Citing the Gospel, Titelmans argued that the Jews, who had been the first, became the last, the head was turned into the tail. All of this was caused by their incredulity and hardness of hearts¹⁹. Such an attitude not only prevented their salvation, but also endangered the immutability and the veracity of the Divine Word, which had been entrusted to them. Thus, the migration of the Word to the Greek language was also to safeguard its content from corruption. All of this had been foreseen in the divine plan. Titelmans emphasised that the prophets foretold the fall of Israel. Thus, human infidelity was incorporated into the providential design of God.

The same mechanism accompanied the transition of the Scripture from Greek to the Latin world. The Greeks, to whom the truth of the Gospel had been entrusted, turned out to be unworthy of it. Titelmans argued that the Greeks were guilty of a dual transgression²⁰. Some guided by their innate light-heartedness turned away from the truth of the Gospel and returned to the pagan vanities of their forefathers. Others, on the contrary, succumbing to immoderate curiosity, through an excess of studies and inquiries fell into schism and even heresies. Titelmans did not specify what particular errors of the Greeks he had in mind. One can only guess that speaking of schisms and heresies he referred not only to the so-called great Schism of 1054, but also to Arian, post-

¹⁷ Iustinus Martyr, *Iustini Martyris Apologiae pro Christianis. Iustini Martyris Dialogus cum Tryphone*, 11, ed. M. Marcovich, De Gruyter, Berlin 2011, *Patristische Texte und Studien* 38, pp. 87–89. For a historical overview of the problem see: M.J. Vlach, *Has the Church Replaced Israel?*, B&H Publishing Group 2010, pp. 27–77.

¹⁸ F. Titelmans, "Prologus apologeticus", op. cit., f. a4r.

¹⁹ Ibid., f. a2v: "iusto dei iudicio cuiusque dispositone provida factum est (iuxta hac de re multo ante praedicta Prophetarum oracula) ut quam prius in caput fuerat et in adoptionis honore, velut peculium domini, hebreorum populus, ordine penitus, converso fieret in caudam, et in opprobium: propter incredulitatem et cordis obstinationem sue ut ita dicam primitatis honore merito spoliatus et digne privatus".

²⁰ Ibid., f. a4r: "Proinde et illud mihi quidem de Spiritus Sancti bontate ac providentia existimare iustum videtur ac rationabile, postea quam ad Latinos potissimum devolui coepit fidei veritatis, graecis ex maxima parte, vel ob innatam levitatem ad vanitates patrias conversus, vel ob contentionis studium schismatibus variis ab Ecclesiastica unitate divisus, ut simili quoque cura latinis etiam dignam aliquam scripturare stabilitatem concesserit".

Chalcedonian and Iconoclast controversies. As to the first charge it is difficult to understand what he meant by returning to the ways of their fathers, since it was hard to accuse the byzantine world of paganism.

It is also possible that Titelmans was making an allusion to the mistakes of his contemporaries, adherents of the new learning. Some of them were indeed looking backwards to the pagan world (or were at least accused of such leanings)²¹, while others, Erasmus included, could easily fall under the charge of excessive curiosity. As we shall see later, Titelmans frequently accused his opponents of lack of moderation in their studies. Thus, in his discussion of the history of the Scripture Titelmans already alluded to deficiencies of his opponents. The schismatic and heretic nature of the Greek Christianity was to be later used as an argument against Erasmus's method of collating Greek manuscripts in order to amend the Latin text of the Bible.

Titelmans formulated a general rule concerning the relationship between orthodoxy and the Scripture. "Ita [...] facile videmus: quoadmodum cum fidei rectitudine, connexa semper fuerit scripturae veritas et cum illa haec uelit demigrare sit solita"²². The truth of the Scripture was inseparable from the orthodoxy of faith. Unlike Luther, who sought to determine orthodoxy on the basis of the truth of the Scripture, Titelmans taught that the truth of the Scripture could only be understood if one read it from the position of orthodoxy. The idea, as we have already seen in the first chapter, was not new. It was the consensus of the fathers that the Scripture can only be rightly understood within an orthodox community of faith, namely, the Catholic Church.

This is precisely the kernel of Titelmans' argumentation: the Latin Church became the safe haven for the Word of God. Unlike the Hebrews, who were obstinate, and unlike the Greeks, who proved to be unreliable, the Latins preserved incorrupt both the faith and the Scripture. This was the theological foundation for the subsequent polemic against Erasmus. The old Latin translation was not merely a human product, but an outcome of God's providential plan. Titelmans conceded that it was not set in stone and could perhaps be amended: "Profer nobis, obsecro, haec meliora, ueriora, elegantiora, graecis uiciniora, et spero futurum, ut Ecclesia antiquato vetere interprete, novum illum assumat, quisquis tandem haec praestiterit"²³. Any such initiative, however, had to come from God through his Church and not from a scholar's pursuit of vain glory²⁴. This theological perspective is indispensable to understand Titelmans' conservatism. He was not against new translations just because he was afraid of novelty and preferred the old translation. He

²¹ An example of a humanist flirting with pagan traditions of antiquity can be seen in Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, who revived in the West an interest in the hermetic tradition. On Pico see: S. Howlett, *Re-evaluating Pico. Aristotelianism, Kabbalism, and Platonism in the Philosophy of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola*, Palgrave Macmillan, Cham 2021.

²² F. Titelmans, "Prologus apologeticus", op. cit., f. a3v.

²³ Ibid., f. a6v.

²⁴ See: Ibid., f. c8r-v.

wanted to preserve the millennium-old ecclesiastical theology of the Scripture, which was clearly challenged by some humanists. Thus, his conservatism was basically the defence of the Church's understanding of the Scripture and Revelation.

Theology of the migration of the Divine Word is an original contribution of Titelmans to the pre-Tridentine debates about the Scripture. Paulo Sartori claimed that he had failed to find any similar argument in patristic or renaissance sources²⁵. It seems also that Titelmans' concept of the migration of the Word of God did not exercise much influence on his contemporaries and successors and, unlike some other of his ideas, never made it to official Church teaching. One should not miss that in its essence, his theology is another way of phrasing the centuries-old consensus about the nature of the Holy Scripture. This theological concept underlined the entire argumentation of Titelmans, which we shall now analyse in some more detail.

5.1.2 *The Greek translation of the Old Testament.*

In order to prove his point Titelmans had to present in more detail two crucial points in the providential history of the Word of God: its translation into Greek and into Latin. The latter is the crucial point of the entire *Prologus*, however it needs to be understood in the light of what Titelmans had to say about the origins of the Septuagint.

Titelmans did not treat this subject in much detail. Firstly, it was of secondary importance for his principal aim; secondly, he addressed his preface to an audience that was well accustomed with the issue. Debates about the Septuagint translation were already quite advanced in the Renaissance²⁶, and Titelmans clearly assumed that his reader was acquainted at least with their basic tenor. Therefore, rather than explaining in detail all aspects of the matter, he only glossed over them, yet not without making some important points.

Titelmans first talked about the Greek translation while discussing the migrations of the Word of God. He returned to the subject after many pages in relation to the discussion of divine inspiration of biblical translation. He essentially followed the legend narrated in the letter of Aristeas. Titelmans mentioned that God used the curiosity of the Hellenistic king Ptolemy in order to make the Old Testament available to the Greeks²⁷. The king asked the archpriest Eliezer for learned men to provide such a translation. In response, seventy-two sages were dispatched to Egypt, where they prepared for the king a Greek version of the Hebrew Scriptures.

²⁵ Cf. P. Sartori, *La Controversia Neotestamentaria...*, op. cit., p. 93. A light trace of similarity can be seen in Wolbero S. Pantaleonis, *Commentaria in Canticum Canticorum*, PL 195, col. 1046A.

²⁶ Among those, who discussed Septuagint were Manetti, in his second book of *Apologeticus*, and Cousturier, see: P. Sutor, *De tralatione bibliae, et nouarum reprobatione interpretationum*, Ioannes Paruus, Paris 1525, ff. VIIIr-XIXr. On Manetti see: A. den Haan, *Giannozzo Manetti's New Testament: Translation Theory and Practice in Fifteenth-Century Italy*, Brill, Leiden 2016, pp. 118–123.

²⁷ F. Titelmans, "Prologus apologeticus", op. cit., f. a2v.

The sources that Titelmans cited were Augustine and Jerome. The bishop of Hippo discussed the Septuagint translation in his opus magnum, *Civitas Dei*, as well as in *De doctrina Christiana*²⁸. Jerome treated this matter in his preface to the Pentateuch²⁹. Titelmans also quoted Joseph Flavius and the letter of Aristeas itself, however, since both are cited in Jerome's work, it is likely that Titelmans used his text as the reference³⁰.

The first important point that Titelmans made in relation to the Septuagint was to emphasise its authority. The main source of this authority was the fact that it had been accepted by the Church. Titelmans recognised that the Septuagint was quoted by the Apostles in the New Testament, thus received from them an authoritative recognition³¹. This was very much in line with Augustine's claim, who asserted:

For while there were other interpreters who translated these sacred oracles out of the Hebrew tongue into Greek, as Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion, and also that translation which, as the name of the author is unknown, is quoted as the fifth edition, yet the Church has received this Septuagint translation just as if it were the only one; and it has been used by the Greek Christian people, most of whom are not aware that there is any other³².

Hence, Titelmans followed here the ecclesiastical principle of exegesis: a biblical translation was correct not because of philological considerations, but because of its reception by the community of the faithful.

This, however, begged some questions. If the Septuagint, and the Latin translation based on it, enjoyed such authority, why did Jerome prepare another translation from Hebrew? More than that: why did the translation of the seventy differ from the Hebrew original? These questions were very important, because they paralleled the issue of contemporary, new Latin translations. If Jerome was right to prepare a philological translation to improve the Bible of the Church (Septuagint), were Erasmus and others not right to do the same with the Vulgate? Could philology challenge the theological authority bestowed by the Apostles and the early Church on the Septuagint?

²⁸ Augustinus Hipponensis, *De ciuitate Dei*, 18.42-43, op. cit., pp. 638-640. Augustinus Hipponensis, *De doctrina christiana libri quatuor*, 2.15, op. cit., pp. 47-48.

²⁹ Hieronymus, *Prologus in Pentateucho*, [in:] *Biblia sacra iuxta vulgatam versionem*, eds. R. Weber and R. Gryson, Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, Stuttgart 2007, 5th ed., pp. 3-4. Hieronymus, *Apologia aduersus libros Rufini*, 2.25, PL 23, col. 448C-450A.

³⁰ F. Titelmans, "Prologus apologeticus", op. cit., f. d1v.

³¹ *Ibid.*, f. a6v- a7r: "Facile quoque impetrasset Hieronymi autoritas ut uni praeponeretur interpreti aut infoelici aut miserando nec ab Apostolis autoritate confirmato nec multa adhuc saecula habenti, quae una Septuaginta viros illos, segregatos ex omni populo electorum Dei, per multa tempora etiam ante natum Christum autoritate irrefragabiles, Apostolorum quoque frequenti nimis usu roboratos, sibi fecit cedere communis universalis Ecclesiae et omnium spiritalium conventuum unanimi consensu".

³² Augustinus Hipponensis, *De ciuitate Dei*, 18.43, op. cit., pp. 638-639. English translation: NPNF, vol. 1/II, p. 386.

The response of Titelmans once again gave primacy to theological considerations. The translation of the Seventy was imperfect for theological reasons. Its translators could not prepare a perfect rendering into Greek, because, before the advent of Christ, some mysteries had still not been clearly revealed. Moreover, the spiritual immaturity of pagans, to whom the translation was directed, provoked a peril of a scandal, if some more arcane truths had been revealed to them openly³³. Therefore, their translation, although essentially correct, was not ideal.

According to Titelmans, Jerome translated the Old Testament from Hebrew, because he was aware of such deficiencies³⁴. This, Titelmans emphasised strongly, did not mean, that he rejected the Septuagint's authority. Quite the contrary. Jerome, according to Titelmans, recognised the intent of the Holy Spirit in the old translation. He realised, that some passages were translated not literally, but following the meaning (that is: the spiritual meaning) of the text. Even though Jerome preferred a different wording in numerous places, as testified by some citations in his works, he nevertheless frequently conceded to the authority of the Septuagint. Titelmans commented, that Jerome considered some passages translated by the Seventy as a prophetic development of the truth that had been present only in an embryonic form in the Hebrew original³⁵.

Titelmans strongly contrasted Jerome with Erasmus and his contemporaries. He emphasised the Stridonite's modesty and his willingness to yield to the authority of the Church. The young Franciscan claimed that although Jerome was aware of the Septuagint's imperfections and corrected them where necessary, he nevertheless held it in high esteem and never came close to diminishing its authority. Titelmans juxtaposed the humility of Jerome and his reverential treatment of the Septuagint with the bitter comments of the humanists in regard to the Vulgate. Jerome was for Titelmans the ideal of a biblical scholar and translator, equipped with all natural and spiritual qualifications necessary for the task³⁶.

³³ F. Titelmans, "Prologus apologeticus", op. cit., f. a3r: "Quando vero ad veritatem coeperunt appropinquante lucis tempore aspirare etiam gentium populi, participes facti sunt magne ex parte hebraicarum scripturarum: ut ad eam que ipsis ventura erat Christiane fidei veritatem, aliqua ex parte eorum animi pararentur, suo tempore amplectendam: tametsi pro sua qualitate atque imperfectione multis obiectis et velut obcolutis, nonnullis quoque quae ad secretiora fidei mysteria pertinebant suppressis non ita aperte omnia accepissent veritatis sacramenta: ne in scandalum et destructionem magis quam aedificationem eis fierent, quae illorum ad huc male instructa ruditas capere nequivisset".

³⁴ Ibid., f. c2r-v.

³⁵ Ibid., ff. a5v-a6r: "Quanto (inquam) vir ille modestius agebat cum Septuaginta interpretibus: non contentionibus deserviens aut muliebribus, non illos invidiose aemulans, non illorum locum superbis iniuriis ambiens: sed quia videbat non iuxta literam hebraicam veritatem redditam, sed novam potius scripturam aliquam in plurimis positam ab illis, quae nullo modo in Hebraicis poterat reperiri, et veluti ad huc opus restare in vertenda litera, intellexit (haud dubium quin Spiritu Sancto inspirante) hoc operis sibi servatum esse. [...] Non hoc agens ut interpretationem Septuaginta senum illorum suo loco pellere, aut despoliatam autoritate proiiceret: quoniam suggerente agnovit Spiritu et illos a Deo interpretationis imo plusquam interpretationis donum accepisse". Vide supra 3.5.4.

³⁶ Ibid., f. a5v: "Quanto vero divus Hieronimus, vir modestus et deo plenus, qui liguarum peritia, idicii gravitate, solidissima scripturarum intelligentia, Ecclesiasticorum dogmatum exactissima indagazione, fidei indefessa propugnacione, summam sibi in omnia saecula conciliavit (Spiritu Sancto haec omnia per hominem agente) autoritatem".

It is noteworthy to emphasise, that Jerome was also a role-model for Titelmans' main antagonist, Erasmus³⁷. Having encountered Jerome early in his life, Erasmus took him as a personal ideal of a Christian scholar. In his first major work, *Antibarbari*, he wrote: "Take Peter and Jerome, one the first among the apostles, the other first among the doctors. In Peter there was the ardour of faith at its highest; in Jerome there was learning at its best. It is for you to imitate the spirit of the one and the scholarship of the other"³⁸. His interest in the ancient translator continued and resulted in a critical edition of all Jerome's works. The way Titelmans used Jerome's figure against Erasmus must have been very aggravating for the scholar from Rotterdam. It also shows how ancient *fontes* could be used to very divergent aims in the Renaissance.

Titelmans' appraisal of the Septuagint in the *Prologus*, forced him to also address the question of the divine inspiration of a translation. He only tackled this issue after a long discussion of the Vulgate, much further in his argumentation. The issue of divine inspiration of translation shall be explored in much more detail later on in this chapter³⁹. Here it suffices to state that Titelmans conflated the views of Augustine and Jerome. He quoted Jerome's introduction to the Pentateuch, where the Father of the Church had made a distinction between *vates* and *interpres*, the prophet and the translator⁴⁰. This, however, did not mean that translators were deprived of divine assistance. Following Augustine, Titelmans claimed that to a degree they can also be called prophets, for they participated in divine inspiration⁴¹.

Titelmans departed from Augustine in one significant point. The bishop of Hippo followed the ancient legend, which asserted that the seventy worked separately, each in his own cell, yet produced, no doubt under divine supervision, a text that did not differ by even a single word⁴². Titelmans discredited this legend, citing Jerome, the letter of Aristeas and Joseph Flavius as his

³⁷ E.F. Rice, *Saint Jerome in the Renaissance*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore 1985, pp. 116–136.

³⁸ D. Erasmus, *Antibarbarorum Liber*, ed. K. Kumaniecki, North-Holland Publishing Company, Amsterdam 1969, ASD I–1, p. 130: "Summa modo conabitur imitari. Primus est Petrus, primus Hieronymus, hic Doctorum, ille Apostolorum. In Petro summus erat ardor fidei, in Hieronymo summa doctrina, alterius animum, alterius studia imitare". English translation: Erasmus of Rotterdam, *The Antibarbarians*, [in:] *Literary and Educational Writings I. Antibarbari / Parabolae*, ed. C. R. Thompson, trans by. M. Mann Philips, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 1978, CWE 23, p. 113.

³⁹ Vide infra 5.1.3.3.

⁴⁰ F. Titelmans, "Prologus apologeticus", op. cit., f. d1r. Cf. Hieronymus, *Apologia aduersus libros Rufini*, 2.25, PL 23, 449C: "aliud est enim uatem, aliud esse interpretem: ibi spiritus uentura praedicat, hic eruditio et uerborum copia ea quae intellegit transfert".

⁴¹ F. Titelmans, "Prologus apologeticus", op. cit., f. d1v: "Quin potius illud credendum est, eos divino Spiritu afflatus non solum interpretatos fuisse, sed magna ex parte etiam prophetasse, quemadmodum supra ex beato Augustino pulchre ostendimus". Cf. Augustinus Hipponensis, *De ciuitate Dei*, 18.43 op. cit., p. 640: "Quidquid porro apud utrosque inuenitur, per utrosque dicere uoluit unus atque idem Spiritus; sed ita ut illi praecederent prophetando, isti sequerentur propheticè illos interpretando; quia sicut in illis uera et concordantia dicentibus unus pacis Spiritus fuit, sic et in istis non se cum conferentibus et tamen tamquam ore uno cuncta interpretantibus idem Spiritus unus apparuit".

⁴² Augustinus Hipponensis, *De doctrina christiana*, 2.15, op. cit., p. 47: "qui iam per omnes peritiores Ecclesias tanta praesentia Sancti Spiritus interpretati esse dicuntur, ut os unum tot hominum fuerit. Qui si, ut fertur, multi que non indigni fide praedicant, singuli cellis etiam singulis separati cum interpretati essent, nihil in alicuius eorum codice inuentum est, quod non iisdem uerbis eodem que uerborum ordine inueniretur in ceteris. Quis huic auctoritati conferre aliquid nedum praeferre audeat?"

authorities. The two latter were quoted also by Jerome, which suggests this was his only direct source⁴³. This departure from Augustine is significant. Although the Franciscan from Leuven was convinced of the need of divine assistance in the process of translation, he was careful not to exclude the human element. Having the Seventy prepare a unanimous translation separately must have sounded to him as a too slavish form of divine inspiration. Rather, he wanted to show the necessity of combining the divine element with human scholarship. Thus, for Titelmans, the Septuagint was a result of a good combination of philology and theology, of literal and spiritual interpretation. Also, the cooperative work of the Seventy was used by Titelmans as a contrast to individual pursuits of the humanists he criticised. Biblical translation was the task for a community, not for an individual. It had to be an ecclesiastical undertaking. All these points were much elaborated upon in the discussion of the Vulgate.

Before we finally turn our attention to the heart of the matter, it is worth contrasting Titelmans with Cousturier, who, although unidentified by the Franciscan, was likely one of his sources and inspirations. Cousturier devoted the third chapter of his *De tralatione Bibliae* to the Septuagint. He considered the issue in much more detail than his younger colleague. Their interpretations are very similar, with both emphasising the inspired character of the Septuagint. However, Cousturier was less interested in emphasising the philological aspects of the work of the Seventy⁴⁴. This was a particular contribution of Titelmans to the thought of Erasmus's critics from the Montaigu circle.

The discussion over the translation of the Septuagint was necessary for Titelmans as an illustration of the first step in his historical scheme of the migration of the Word of God. Without engaging in too detailed a debate, it served the Franciscan exegete to demonstrate God's constant surveillance over his Word. Divine inspiration accompanied its translators, ensured that the translation was adopted to the needs of pagans and later appropriately translated into Latin by Jerome. Divine Providence used competent scholars in this process, combining human and divine elements. Besides, Titelmans emphasised that it was all done under the auspices of the community of faith and never was merely a private pursuit of vainglory. All these themes foreshadowed the

⁴³ F. Titelmans, "Prologus apologeticus", op. cit., ff. d1v-d2r: "Quod sicut pie a nonnullis credebatur, ita nulla potest sufficienti autoritate aut evidenti ratione convinci; imo, e contrario, ex Aristeia, regis Ptolomei Hyperaspiste, et Iosepho magis videtur haberi contrarium, eos videlicet in basilica simul contulisse, non divisim prophetasse. Atque hoc erat quod sua ratione Hieronymus studet ostendere". Cf. Hieronymus, *Apologia aduersus libros Rufini*, 2.25, op. cit., PL 23, 449C: "et nescio quis primus auctor septuaginta cellulas Alexandriae mendacio suo extruxerit, quibus diuisi eadem scriptitarint, cum Aristaeus, eiusdem Ptolomaei ὑπερασπιστής, et multo post tempore Iosephus nihil tale rettulerint, sed in una basilica congregatos contulisse scribant, non prophetasse".

⁴⁴ Cousturier was aware of the problems with the legend retold by Augustine and did not accept it as entirely true, however, unlike Titelmans, he did not use it to emphasise the need for sound philology as accompanying theology. Rather, he chose to underline the reality of the divine inspiration of translation. See: P. Sutor, *De tralatione bibliae, et nouarum reprobatione interpretationum...*, op. cit., ff. Xv-XI^r.

discussion of the Vulgate, which constituted the second and the more important step in Titelmans' historical scheme.

5.1.3 *The Latin translation of the New Testament*

Discussion of the Septuagint was merely a background to the main issue that interested Titelmans, namely, the authority of the Vulgate translation. It concerned the second stage in the odyssey of the Word of God, its arrival into the Latin world. It was the Latin translation that was challenged by Erasmus, Lefèvre and Valla, and it was this particular text that Titelmans meant to defend.

5.1.3.1 Who translated the Vulgate?

The received knowledge from the Middle Ages was that the Vulgate was a work of Jerome himself. Both the Old Testament and the New were translated by the Hermit from Bethlehem, at the explicit order of Pope Damasus. Nicholas Maniacoria, a great 12th century exegete, asserted: "Cuncta enim volumina veteris Testamenti prius de Graeco, postea vero veraciori editione de Hebraico transtulit in Latinum"⁴⁵.

This view was already challenged during the Middle Ages, for example by Roger Bacon and Nicholas of Lyra⁴⁶, however it was only in the Renaissance that Jerome's authorship of the Vulgate became an object of a heated controversy.

The reasons for humanists' doubts were the mistakes in the Vulgate as well as its style, full of barbarism and solecisms. Lefèvre, in a prefatory apology to his 1512 edition of the Pauline letters, claimed that the Vulgate had nothing to do with Jerome⁴⁷. It was an earlier translation, by an anonymous scholar. Lefèvre pointed out that Jerome's citations in his commentaries differed from the text of the Vulgate and that the Stridonite spoke of the *Latinus interpres* as a third person, different from himself. Consequently, he declared that no one could believe the Vulgate to have come from Jerome. True, he acknowledged, Jerome revised the New Testament, on the order of the pope, as he himself confessed at the end of the *Lives of Illustrious Men*⁴⁸. Yet, the French scholar maintained that this revision had been lost and the one which was subsequently accepted by the Church did not come from Jerome, but from some other scholar from the Roman circle,

⁴⁵ [Nicholas Maniacora], *Vita Sancti Hieronymi Presbyteri*, PL 22, col. 196.

⁴⁶ Cf. E.F. Rice, *Saint Jerome in the Renaissance*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore 1985, p. 175.

⁴⁷ J. Faber (Stapulensis), *Pauli epistolae quatuordecim*, Henricus Stephanus, Paris 1512, ff. a2v-a4v. E.F. Rice, *Saint Jerome in the Renaissance...*, op. cit., p. 175.

⁴⁸ Hieronymus, *De viris Illustribus*, [in:] *Hieronymus liber De viris illustribus. Gennadius liber De viris illustribus. Der sogenannte Sophronius*, ed. E.C. Richardson, Hinrichs, Leipzig 1896, Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der Altchristlichen Literatur 14,1a, p. 56: "Novum Testamentum Graece fidei rediidi, Vetus iuxta Hebraicam transtuli".

who was envious of Jerome's fame and knowledge. Thus, Lefèvre asserted, the Vulgate could claim no authority from Jerome. This was an important claim to make, because it liberated Lefèvre from the charge that he set on to improve a work of a saint and the father of the Church.

Lefèvre's views were shared by many other scholars: Paul of Middleburg⁴⁹, a graduate of Leuven, Johannes Reuchlin⁵⁰ and most importantly, Erasmus of Rotterdam, who read works of Lefèvre and Middleburg and accepted their conclusions. "Now, it is beyond dispute among scholars and has – I think, as a result of the writings of many authors – been accepted even by the unlearned that this edition of the New Testament is not Jerome's as he himself revised it" – declared Erasmus in his *Apologia* to the *Novum Instrumentum*⁵¹. Yet, his conclusion was much exaggerated. Jerome's authorship of the Vulgate was strongly asserted by many scholars, including famous humanists such as Zuniga and Steuco⁵². Titelmans was also among those who believed that the Vulgate enjoyed Jerome's authority.

Titelmans was aware of debates concerning Vulgate's authorship. Acknowledging that some ascribed the Vulgate's translation to Jerome, while others denied it completely, he followed a middle way⁵³. Although Titelmans did not specify who represented these views, the first group can easily be identified with most of mediaeval scholars, while the second with Lefèvre, whose views we have outlined above, and his followers. What the Franciscan meant by the middle way was that although Jerome did not translate the New Testament, he nevertheless revised an earlier edition, translated by an anonymous author, called by Titelmans *Vetus interpres*. Such an idea was by no means novel. It corresponded with the arguments of Zuniga and Cousturier, who was likely a direct influence on the young professor from Leuven⁵⁴.

What was novel was the great importance and authority that Titelmans ascribed to *Vetus interpres*. Although his identity remained unknown, Titelmans argued, that his authority equalled

⁴⁹ Cf. Paulus de Middelburgo, *Paulina de recta Paschae celebratione: et De die passionis Domini nostri Iesu Christi*, Octavianus Petrutius, Foro Sempronii 1513, f. BVIr-v: "Ex quibus constare arbor beatum Hieronymum nouum testamentum prout in ecclesia canitur non traduxisse". On Paul of Middleburg see: C.G. van Leijenhorst, *Paul of Middelburg*, [in:] *Contemporaries of Erasmus: A Biographical Register of the Renaissance and Reformation*, eds. P.G. Bietenholz and T.B. Deutscher, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 1987, vol. 3, pp. 57–58.

⁵⁰ In *Rudimenta Hebraica* he corrected over 200 places where Hebrew was wrongly translated. Cf. E.F. Rice, *Saint Jerome in the Renaissance...*, op. cit., p. 178.

⁵¹ D. Erasmus Roterodamus, *Apologia*, [in:] *Ausgewählte Werke*, ed. H. Holborn, Beck, München 1964, p. 165: "Iam illud quemadmodum extra controversiam est apud eruditos, ita indoctis etiam, multorum libris persuasum esse reor hanc novi testamenti editionem Hieronimi non esse, quemadmodum ab ipso fuit emendatum". English translation: R.D. Sider, ed., *The New Testament Scholarship of Erasmus: An Introduction with Erasmus' Prefaces and Ancillary Writings*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 2019, CWE 41, p. 460.

⁵² Cf. E.F. Rice, *Saint Jerome in the Renaissance...*, op. cit., p. 179.

⁵³ F. Titelmans, "Prologus apologeticus", op. cit., f. a7v: "Sunt enim qui vulgatae istius aeditionis beatum Hieronymum existimant primarium authorem quemadmodum eorum indubie est librorum, quos ex fonte hebraeo nobis latinitate donavit. Sunt ex adverso alii, qui in hac aeditione nihil putant Hieronymianum inesse, neque vel eius correctionem atque emendationem Hieronymo tribui patiantur; sed di quam ipse aliquando correxit, aliam esse dicunt ab ea qua vulgo utitur altina Ecclesia, quam sive latitare adhuc, sive prorsus autumant interciderisse. Harum vero partium neutri accedentes, mediam ipsam veritatis sententiam monstrare tentabimus".

⁵⁴ P. Sutor, *De tralatione bibliae, et nouarum reprobatione interpretationum...*, op. cit., ff. XLIIIr; XLVIIIr.

or even exceeded that of Jerome himself. “Illum (inquam) uirum sic habeo, sic colo, et sic ueneror, ut Hieronymo uel superiorem, secundum meum iudicium; uel parem propterea quod hoc plurimorum auribus sit tolerabilius, certe nulla ratione inferiorem”⁵⁵. This, Paolo Sartori claims, was Titelmans’ special contribution to the debate⁵⁶. Unable to defend the Vulgate with Jerome’s authority, Titelmans effectively transferred this authority to Jerome’s anonymous predecessor, thus safeguarding the value of the translation. *Vetus interpres* was, according to Titelmans, not only a skilled translator, but also a man of modesty and piety, a true tool of the Holy Spirit.

This stood in sharp contrast with the evaluation of the *Vetus interpres* by humanists. According to Titelmans, they showed no respect to his person⁵⁷. Indeed, Erasmus in his response to Titelmans ridiculed the young Franciscan’s esteem for the anonymous translator: “But if anyone presses our eulogist, he cannot settle for us whether the Translator was a Jew, a pagan, a Christian, a heretic or a believer, a cobbler or a soldier, a youth or a veteran, a man or a woman”⁵⁸. How could Titelmans base his argument on the person of *Vetus interpres*, without knowing anything about him?

For Titelmans, the authority of the *Vetus interpres* rested upon two pillars: the Church’s reception, and Jerome’s assessment. Let us begin with the latter. Why did Jerome only revise the old translation rather than prepare a new one? This question was Titelmans’ departure point. The Septuagint was a translation of a great authority, quoted by the Apostles themselves in the New Testament, yet Jerome decided to prepare a new translation of the Old Testament. Surely, argued the Franciscan, had Jerome thought that the *vetus aedito* was deficient he would not have hesitated to retranslate it too. Instead, he only revised it introducing minor corrections and removing scribal errors⁵⁹. If he did not prepare his own translation, it was because he recognised the old one as authoritative.

Titelmans emphasised the distinction that Jerome himself made concerning his work over the New and the Old Testament. He cited the *De uiris illustribus*, in which Jerome claimed to have

⁵⁵ F. Titelmans, “Prologus apologeticus”, op. cit., f. a6v.

⁵⁶ Cf. P. Sartori, *La Controversia Neotestamentaria...*, op. cit., p. 108.

⁵⁷ F. Titelmans, “Prologus apologeticus”, op. cit., f. a4v.

⁵⁸ D. Erasmus, *Responsio ad Collationes cuiusdam iuuenis gerontodidascalii*, LB, vol. 9, col. 967D: “Atqui si quis urgeat hunc laudatorem, non possit nobis expedire, Iudaeus-ne fuerit, an Ethnicus, an Christianus, haereticus an orthodoxus, sutor an miles, iuuenis an senex, uir an mulier”. English translation: D. Erasmus, *Responsio ad Collationes cuiusdam iuuenis gerontodidascalii*, [in:] *Controversies*, ed. D.L. Drysdall, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 1993, CWE 73, p. 143.

⁵⁹ F. Titelmans, “Prologus apologeticus”, op. cit., f. a7r: “Quis uero credat, di Hieronymus infelicem indicasset et Spiritum Sancto indignam hanc ueterem interpretationem, que tum errat in manibus, quin eadem cura qua Mosaicam observantiam, et Israelitica praemia et Prophetarum oracula studuit plena reddere, etiam hoc curasset, ut nobis sanctum Evangelium sanctasque Apostolorum literas quibus amplius debitor extitit, integra redderet et bona fide bonaqua auctoritate digna?”.

translated (*transtulisse*) the Old Testament and restored (*reddidisse*) the New⁶⁰. Although both terms are synonymous, Titelmans claimed that it was not merely a rhetorical device but indicated a different degree of Jerome's input into the text of the Vulgate. Jerome's work over the New Testament was limited to restoring *vetus aeditio* into its original state.

What if Jerome had translated the New Testament, but it was later lost? This argument echoes the claim made by Lefèvre, who argued, that Jerome's version of the New Testament was now lost. Titelmans responded that even if that had been the case, which he considered most unlikely, this would only have meant that Jerome's translation had been worse than the old one, therefore was rejected by the community of the Church. Either way, this proved the authority of *Vetus interpres*, recognised as superior by Jerome himself and/or by the Church⁶¹.

According to Titelmans the scope of Jerome's editorial intervention was very limited. Having been charged by Pope Damasus with restoring the original version of the old translation he only corrected those places where scribal mistakes contorted the meaning. Wherever the meaning was correct, even if the style was not to his liking, Jerome left the original version, out of reverence to the old interpreter⁶². We know that Jerome often preferred a different reading, for this is testified by his commentaries. Yet, while it was permissible to use different readings in private commentaries, in the official Bible of the Church Jerome accepted the received version.

Titelmans then proceeded to enumerate examples of Jerome's alleged editorial interventions. For example, in Gal. 2:5 and Gal. 5:8 Jerome restored a negation, which had been omitted due to an error, while in Rom. 12:11 he corrected *tempori servientes* into *domino servientes*⁶³. All these changes were necessary, because errors that crept into the old translations obscured the true sense of these passages. Wherever the sense was not obscured, Jerome kept the translation of *vetus aeditio*, even, if he preferred a different one⁶⁴. For example, in Gal. 5:9 Jerome criticised the translation of *Vetus*, however he left it unchanged⁶⁵.

⁶⁰ Ibid., ff. b4v-b5r: "Ubi dum ita distincte loquitur, vetus testamentum se asserens iuxta Hebraicam fidem seu veritatem transtulisse, novum vero non transtulisse se dicit, sed graece fidei reddidisse; nonne de recognitione tantum adque exemplarium graecorum collationem facta emendatione manifeste loqui cognoscitur?". Cf. Hieronymus, "De viris Illustribus", 135, op. cit., p. 56: "Nouum Testamentum Graecae fidei reddidi, Vetus iuxta Hebraicum transtuli".

⁶¹ F. Titelmans, "Prologus apologeticus", op. cit., f. a7r: "Itque aut aeditit Hieronymus quod non recepit Ecclesia, aut non edidit quod recipi potuisset. Utrumlibet elegeris, in gloriam cedit nostri interpretis".

⁶² Ibid., ff. a7v-a8r: "Quam veritatem ex eo facile fuerit demonstrare, quod pene omnia quae sensus ummutabant veritatem, in Commentariis taxata quasi in vulgata aeditione Latina male posita, inveniuntur in nostra aeditione sic haberi ut ea correxit Hieronymus, non sicut ipse asserit in vulgatis latinorum exemplaribus legi solitum. Quae vero nihil sensus veritatem immutabant, ita in publica lectione reliquit, ut fuerant; non nulla etiam ex eis, quae in privatis Commentariis visus fuerat modo quadam vellicare; quae ob. Hoc ita immutata reliquit ut fuerant, quod ad sensus mutationem nihil facerant".

⁶³ Ibid., f. a8r. Cf. B.M. Metzger, *New Testament Studies: Philological, Versional, and Patristic*, Brill, Leiden 1980, p. 204.

⁶⁴ F. Titelmans, "Prologus apologeticus", op. cit., f. b1r.

⁶⁵ Ibid., f. b1r: "Que autem minutula annotaverat, non illi dignum visum fuit immutare. Exempli gratia, dicit latinum interpretem male dixisse 'Modicum fermentum totam massam corrumpit', sed dicere debuisse, 'totam conspersionem fermentat'".

According to Titelmans, the differences between Jerome's private views, expressed in commentaries and private letters, and the Vulgate testified to the development of Jerome's thought. In his commentary on Galatians, Jerome omitted several words in 3:1 and 5:19, because, as he claimed, he did not find them in the Greek manuscript of Adamantius⁶⁶. Yet, while revising the Vulgate, he left those words, which he had found in Latin codices. Titelmans explained that Jerome had written his commentary much earlier than he revised the Vulgate. The Franciscan assumed that in the meantime Jerome either found some Greek manuscripts that testified to the Vulgate version, or changed his mind and decided to give more credence to Latin codices⁶⁷. Either way such changes proved, according to Titelmans, scholarly diligence of Jerome, who was not too haughty to alter his views, when he found evidence to the contrary.

All this testified to the high esteem that Jerome had for *Vetus interpres*. Titelmans denied that Jerome had ever been critical of the old translator. Any critical remarks about *vetus aeditio* stemmed either from a rhetorical mode of expression⁶⁸ or the impossibility of rendering perfectly the Greek text in the Latin language⁶⁹. Thus, according to the Franciscan, Jerome gave alternative possibilities of translating difficult passages, without however being acerbic about the old translator, towards whom he had a great respect. Another proof of this respect was the fact that while translating Origen's commentaries, Jerome frequently followed the translation of *Vetus* against Origen⁷⁰.

Titelmans was convinced that although Jerome did not translate the Vulgate New Testament, his authority fully supported it. Jerome recognised in the anonymous *Vetus interpres* a scholar of both learning and piety and dared not to alter his translation, except where it was clearly corrupted by scribal errors. Therefore, the authority of Jerome fully supports *vetus aeditio*.

⁶⁶ Ibid., f. b1r.

⁶⁷ Ibid., f. b1r-v: "Fortisan autem veriora postmodum consulens exemplaria, aut plura simul conferens, invenit in nonnullis ista haberi. [...] Satis enim probabile est et omnino verisimile, Comentarios istos in minores aliquot Paulinas epistolas multo ante edidisse Hieronymum, quam novum testamentum iussis Damasi Papae correxisset; et fortisan utebatur tum graecis exemplaribus vulgatoribus. Sed post rogatu Damasi paravit correctionem toto orbe divulgandam, iam haud dubie veteranus miles factus in dei palestra, credendus est maiori sollicitudine, pro negotii magnitudine et gravitate, ad plurium et emendatissimorum graecorum atque latinorum codicum fidem, summa diligentia cuncta expendisse loca, in quibus exemplaria conspiciebat variare. Unde fieri portuit, ut in quibusdam iam consentiret latinorum veritati, in quibus olim putabat correctionem faciendam".

⁶⁸ Ibid., f. b2r-v: "Nusquam vero Hieronymus interpretem veterem, tanquam indoctum, et rudem, vel indignum fide, aut oscitabundum, aut dormitantem arguit, aut irridet, aut vellicat; quamquam id prima facie videtur ei qui non novit, aut attendere nolit, rethorum loquendi consuetudinem, qua solent dicendi quodam acumine, in suis astruendis aliena velut deprimere; cum tamen id non intendant, sed sua tantum dicta magis astruere, quemadmodum et de Septuaginta interpretibus, illum multis secisse locis facile cognoscit, quisquis in Prophetas Commentarios diligenter legerit".

⁶⁹ Ibid., f. b2v: "Quoties autem in vocula aliqua aut oratione videtur taxare interpretem latinum, et aeditionem vulgatam vel inde est, quod ipse alio uteretur graeco exemplari quam latinus usus fuerat interpres, vel ut secundo addito vocabulo plenius exprimeret graecae dictionis emphasisism, aut etiam ut altero sensu reddito graecam abiguitatem manifestam faceret".

⁷⁰ Ibid., f. b3r-v.

Videant itaque qui suis annotationibus veteris aeditionis sic passim plurima taxant, suisque novis uersionibus innovant omnia, non solum interpreti ueteri, quem uelut ignotum parui pendunt parui pendere, sed pariter et diuo Hieronymo non se satis deferre, neque nihil eius auctoritati derogare; dum aeditionem quam ille se recognovisse et graece fidei (neque dubium quin diligenter) reddidisse affirmat, isti suis annotamentis et novitatibus uelut prorsus indignam monstrare conantur et quasi a graecorum fide passim dissentientem innouatione opus habere⁷¹.

Thus, one could not simultaneously revere Jerome and vilify the Vulgate. This was precisely what Erasmus did and no doubt this comment was directed mainly at him. Yet, Jerome's authority, great as it was, was insufficient to safeguard the Vulgate, thus Titelmans provided a more potent argument in its favour.

5.1.3.2 Ecclesiastical character of the Vulgate

Jerome was not the only buttress for the Vulgate's authority. For the professor from Leuven, the Vulgate was trustworthy because of the Church's approval. It was the Bible of the Church, not a private exercise in erudition. Titelmans emphasised that Jerome did not undertake to revise the *vetus aeditio* out of his own initiative, but only under an explicit command of the pope. Titelmans quoted the letter of Jerome to the pope, known as the preface to the Vulgate's New Testament, to show that it was the pope's commission that made Jerome's work of revision acceptable:

You urge me to revise the old Latin version, and, as it were, to sit in judgment on the copies of the Scriptures which are now scattered throughout the whole world; and, inasmuch as they differ from one another, you would have me decide which of them agree with the Greek original. [...] Now there are two consoling reflections which enable me to bear the odium—in the first place, the command is given by you who are the supreme bishop; and secondly, even on the showing of those who revile us, readings at variance with the early copies cannot be right⁷².

For Titelmans this stood in sharp contrast with works of Valla, Lefèvre and Erasmus, who had never received any ecclesiastical commission for their work and were instead motivated by a pursuit of vain glory⁷³. For Jerome the papal order was a shield against critics, Erasmus and his like had none of such a kind.

⁷¹ Ibid., f. b5r.

⁷² Hieronymus, *Praefatio in Evangelio*, [in:] *Biblia sacra iuxta vulgatam versionem*, eds. R. Weber and R. Gryson, Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, Stuttgart 2007, 5th ed., p. 1515: “Novum opus facere me cogis ex veteri, ut post exemplaria Scripturarum toto orbe dispersa quasi quidam arbiter sedeam et, quia inter se variant, quae sin tilla quae graeca consentient veritate decernam. [...] Adversus quam invidiam duplex causa me consolatur: quod et tu qui summus sacerdos es fieri iubes, et verum non esse quod variat etiam maledicorum testimonio conprobatur”. English translation: NPNF, vol. 2/VI, pp. 487-488. Cf. F. Titelmans, “Prologus apologeticus”, op. cit., f. b4v.

⁷³ F. Titelmans, “Prologus apologeticus”, op. cit., ff. a4v-a5v.

Titelmans emphasised also that the motivation of the pope was to ensure the unity of the Church⁷⁴. Variety of biblical translations endangered the unity of the Church, for, as Titelmans feared, each heretic could support his theological ideas with a translation that suited his needs. If everyone, argued the Franciscan, corrected the translation of the Bible according to his own preference, the Church would be immediately torn apart by schisms.

Nam si res pergat ut coepit et sciolus quisque mox ut graece latinaeque atque Hebraice didicerit uel tenuiter tentare incipiat huiusmodi emendationes, innovationes atque interpretationes, uideant intelligentes, quid inde commodi sit consecutura Ecclesia sancta dei. Nihil enim unitati Ecclesiae tam necessarium, nihil eam sic fouet atque in unitate intertinere potens est, ut scripturae unitas et omnino per omnia consensus⁷⁵.

It is impossible not to see here an allusion to movements of evangelical reform that were already well under way in German lands and elsewhere. Titelmans never referred to Luther and other Protestant reformers by name, however it was clear, that he considered the Doctor from Wittenberg to be one of the *sciolis* who translated the Bible as it pleased him, with no respect to the Vulgate⁷⁶. Titelmans was certainly aware of Luther's teachings, since the university of Leuven was among the first to condemn officially his teachings in 1519⁷⁷. Titelmans also seemingly shared a conviction common among Catholic critics of reformations, that "Erasmus lay the egg that Luther hatched"⁷⁸. Indeed, it was Erasmus's *Novum Instrumentum* that served Luther as the base for his new translation of the New Testament. An illustration concluding *Collationes* might be another indication of this conviction. An image of Christ trampling over a lion and dragon, with a citation from Ps. 90:13 "thou shalt trample under foot the lion and the dragon", was probably an allegory of the Catholic Church crushing Erasmus (lion) and Luther (dragon)⁷⁹. Erasmus recognised the allusion and took offence in it⁸⁰.

⁷⁴ Ibid., f. b4v.

⁷⁵ Ibid., ff. b5v-b6r: "Nam si res pergat ut coepit et sciolus quisque mox ut graece latinaeque atque Hebraice didicerit uel tenuiter tentare incipiat huiusmodi emendationes, innovationes atque interpretationes, uideant intelligentes, quid inde commodi sit consecutura Ecclesia Sancta dei. Nihil enim unitati Ecclesiae tam necessarium, nihil eam sic fouet atque in unitate intertinere potens est, ut scripturae unitas et omnino per omnia consensus".

⁷⁶ More on the German translation of the Bible by Luther see: J.L. Flood, *Martin Luther's Bible Translation in its German and European Context*, [in:] *The Bible in the Renaissance: Essays on Biblical Commentary and Translation in the Fifteenth and the Sixteenth Centuries*, ed. R. Griffiths, Ashgate, Aldershot 2001, pp. 45-70.

⁷⁷ Cf. G. Gielis, «Post exactam et diligentem examinationem». *How the Leuven theologians condemned Luther's theses (1519): context, practices and consequences*, "Annali di Storia delle Università Italiane", 2017, vol. 21, no. 2, p. 121.

⁷⁸ Cf. E. Rummel, *The Confessionalization of Humanism in Reformation Germany*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2000, p. 9.

⁷⁹ F. Titelmans, "Prologus apologeticus", op. cit., f. [312^v]: "conculcabis leonem et draconem". Cf. E. Rummel, *Erasmus and his Catholic Critics...*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 19.

⁸⁰ D. Erasmus, "Responsio ad Collationes", op. cit., col. 966A: "An putat nos nescire quid sibi velit ille Laureatus, calcans leonem et draconem?".

According to Titelmans there was nothing new in this problem, for also in the times of Jerome the Church was split apart by diverse heresies, each using its own translation⁸¹. It was precisely the Vulgate, revised by Jerome, which restored the unity and remained for centuries the foundation of it.

Postea vero quam sancti spiritus providentia, Damasi sollicitudine, per gloriosum illud orbis lumen sacrum Hieronymum, recognitionem istam exercuit sicque Ecclesia Sancta concordem scripturarum unitatem, maximum haud dubie beneficium, ex dei munere accepit, omni sublata uarietate, Latinarum Ecclesiarum unanimi consensus recognitionem illam uidemus gaudenter ab omnibus ubisque susceptam. Partim quidam (quod est omnino verisimile) Damasi pontifices autoritate, quandoquidem ad hoc ille onus istud iniecerat Hieronymo, ut uarietati latinorum codicum finem faceret; potissimum vero, Sancti Spiritus occultiori operatione, omnium Ecclesiarum animos in unum inflectentis consilium⁸².

Thus, whoever challenged the Vulgate, challenged the Church and the Holy Ghost himself. The translation of the Vulgate was not merely a matter of philology. It was a profound theological issue, concerning not only some particular doctrines, but the very foundations of Christian truth. Titelmans' conviction that the Holy Spirit's supervised the translation of the Vulgate was the corollary of his idea of the migration of the Divine Word. The Word of God had never been an orphan, and Providence always looked over it.

Auxiliary evidence for the authority of the Vulgate was provided by the Church Fathers. Titelmans several times claimed that the Vulgate was supported by scriptural citations of numerous Fathers such as Tertullian, Cyprian, Ambrose, Hillary, Augustine and Victorinus⁸³. For the young Franciscan, biblical references in the Church Fathers carried far more weight than all Greek codices taken together⁸⁴. This was more than a simple argument from authority. Titelmans showed that the Vulgate had always been the Bible of the Church. It lived within the Church in a reciprocal relationship between the Word and the community. The Word of God testified to divine truth, while the community testified to the veracity of the Word. The Fathers, whose faith was orthodox used an orthodox translation of the Bible. Heretics, on the other hand, used their own, heretical translations, as did Marcion, cited by Titelmans as an example⁸⁵.

For Titelmans the authenticity of the Bible depended on the community of the Church. The Bible is the living Word of God, not merely a text. Consequently, he objected to the methodology of revising the Vulgate. Importantly, he was not opposed to the idea of such a revision, for he was

⁸¹ F. Titelmans, "Prologus apologeticus", op. cit., f. b6r.

⁸² Ibid., f. b6r.

⁸³ Ibid., ff. b4r; b7r; c4r; d8v.

⁸⁴ Ibid., f. c7r.

⁸⁵ Ibid., f. b7r.

aware of scribal mistakes and omissions, however he objected to the principle that such correction should be made by collating Greek manuscripts, as Valla, Lefèvre and Erasmus had done. The Franciscan claimed that one would do better to correct Greek manuscripts according to Latin⁸⁶. After all, it was the Latin Church, which preserved the truth of Revelation, while Greeks had fallen into a schism, and, perhaps, falsified scriptures.

Titelmans argued that the method of collating Greek manuscripts could not be considered as the source of truth. First, Greek codices were by no means uniform⁸⁷. There were more discrepancies between different Greek versions than Latin. Which one was to be trusted? Greek codices had been corrupted by heretics, thus were full of contradictory versions. Latin codices, on the contrary, had been translated from Greek before such corruptions, thus they preserved incorrupt the authentic text of Bible⁸⁸. For example, according to Titelmans, the famous *Comma Johanneum*, in 1John 5:7, was a passage removed by Arians from the Greek text⁸⁹. Similarly, Titelmans pointed out that numerous other passages were distorted by heretics: Eph. 2:14 and Eph. 2:20 by Gnostics, Eph. 3:9 by Arians and so on⁹⁰. Greeks, trusting in human knowledge, had fallen into numerous errors, thus it was safer to trust Latin codices⁹¹. Titelmans conceded that present day Greek manuscripts did not contain such obvious corruptions by heretics as those that he had listed above; there should, however, always be caution in using texts preserved by schismatics⁹². Further, the Franciscan argued, the Church Fathers had been reluctant to use Greek text to correct the Latin one. He recalled Ambrose, who, despite knowing Greek, did not think it useful to consult Greek manuscripts in writing his commentaries⁹³.

On the other hand, did not Jerome collate Greek manuscripts to correct the Vulgate? How could Titelmans reconcile his esteem of Jerome with his critique of collating manuscripts? The Franciscan was aware of the problem. He responded arguing that while Jerome's method had been correct in his own time it was no longer so. Firstly, in Jerome's time there was no reliable Latin text. In *De Doctrina Christiana* Augustine testified that numerous Latin versions had existed

⁸⁶ Ibid., f. b5v: "Et ad eo videntur nostra hac tempestate corrupta atque variantia Graecorum exemplaria, ut fortisan modo sit tutius latinis graeca quam ex graecis latina corrigi".

⁸⁷ Ibid., f. b7r: "Cuius rei arguemntum non modicum apparens, est ipsa quoque graecorum codicum nimia dissensio et varietas multo maior quam in correctis latinis voluminibus inveniatur, eaque non in verbis modo et literis sed non raro in sententiis, ita ut nonnunquam prolixam sententiam habeant quaedam exemplaria, que non habent alia, aut aliter habeant".

⁸⁸ Ibid., f. b7v.

⁸⁹ Ibid., ff. b6v; c6v-c7r. On *Comma Johanneum* see: G. McDonald, *Biblical Criticism in Early Modern Europe: Erasmus, the Johannine Comma and Trinitarian Debate*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2016.

⁹⁰ F. Titelmans, "Prologus apologeticus", op. cit., ff. b7v- b8r.

⁹¹ Ibid., f. b8r: "ut merito potius simplicitati latinorum sit credendum quam illrum mendaciis, qui semper saeculari sapientiae fisi, variis erroribus ab initio sunt exagitati atque divisi".

⁹² Ibid., f. b8r.

⁹³ Ibid., f. b7r: "Is enim cum graece sciret et commentarios haud quoquam poenitendos ederet, non est tamen dignatus plerumquam graeca consulere, etiam ubi diversitatem aliquam ex graecis haberi constabat".

before Jerome's revision became commonly accepted⁹⁴. Secondly, Greek manuscripts at the time of Jerome were far less corrupt than in the 16th century. According to Titelmans, what was sensible at the time of Jerome was no longer so at the present time, due to over a century of corruption of Greek manuscripts⁹⁵. His argument finds some resonance in modern scholarship, for, as it has been outlined above, Erasmus used almost exclusively very recent and heavily corrupt Greek manuscripts, while ignoring those closer to the Vulgate, which are now recognised as much more reliable⁹⁶.

Titelmans responded also to other arguments made in the defence of Erasmus's methodology. For instance, he tackled the claim that the Council of Vienne from 1311 recommended the use of original languages in the study of the Bible. Titelmans correctly pointed out that the decree of the Council was to promote missionary activity in the Near East and had nothing to do with biblical translation⁹⁷. Thus, he remarked, there existed no ecclesiastical authority for undertaking new translations, as his adversaries had done.

The lack of ecclesiastical authorisation was not merely a matter of law and order but made humanist's work actively harmful for the Church. Titelmans did not deny that their work had some academic value, however he claimed it confused the simple. Those, who were ignorant of Greek could not judge for themselves the relative value of new translations. However, hearing of them, they became convinced that *vetus aeditio* was worthless. Thus, new translations had a devastating effect upon the authority of the Biblical text. It was no longer the source of authority but instead relied upon authority of its translator.

More particularly, changes introduced by Erasmus, Lefèvre and Valla destroyed some proof-texts commonly used to refute heresies: "Iterum, quemadmodum loca quaedam ex quibus confundi solet haereticorum pravitas, novis adinventionibus ita immutaverint, in sensus tortos et a vero abhorrentes, ut haereticorum erroribus aut omnino non valeant, aut minus valeant, revincendis"⁹⁸. Titelmans brought up the case of *Comma Johanneum* as well as that of Rom. 5:12 to illustrate the point. He argued on over 40 pages that the changes introduced by Erasmus to this verse would render it useless to refute the Pelagian heresy⁹⁹.

In both elements of this pragmatic criticism one can easily hear the echo of Protestant reformations. From the perspective of Catholic theologians, it was often seen as a revival of ancient

⁹⁴ Augustinus Hipponensis, *De doctrina christiana*, 2.15, op. cit., p. 47.

⁹⁵ F. Titelmans, "Prologus apologeticus", op. cit., ff. b8r-c1r; c5v.

⁹⁶ J.K. Elliott, *The Text of the New Testament*, [in:] *A History of Biblical Interpretation: The Medieval Through the Reformation Periods*, eds. A.J. Hauser and D.F. Watson, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 2009, pp. 243–246.

⁹⁷ F. Titelmans, "Prologus apologeticus", op. cit., ff. c1r-v. Cf. Decretum Concilii apud Vienna Allobrogum, *Inter sollicitudines* [in:] A. Baron and H. Pietras, eds., *Dokumenty Soborów Powszechnych: Tekst grecki, łaciński, polski*, Wydawnictwo WAM, Kraków 2003, vol. 2, pp. 582–584.

⁹⁸ F. Titelmans, "Prologus apologeticus", op. cit., f. c4r-v.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, ff. 112r-135r. Vide infra 5.2.

heresies and an attack on the authority of the Church. Titelmans did not argue against reformers directly, for seemingly he considered their mistakes a consequence of a more fundamental error made by Erasmus and his like regarding the Biblical text. In a way, *Collationes* are an anti-protestant treaty, attacking Protestant reforms at their roots rather than at trunk or branches.

5.1.3.3. Divine inspiration of biblical translation.

The capital sin of humanist scholars was not merely in challenging the Church, but the Holy Spirit himself. According to Titelmans, the Vulgate was inspired by the Holy Spirit. He alluded to this throughout the discussion from the very beginning, where he outlined the grand salvific programme of God, however he only developed this claim much further in the discussion. Titelmans believed that the predominance of the Vulgate, as almost the only Latin translation to have survived from the antiquity, proved its divine origin.

Ut hac ratione pie satis credi atque existimari possit, non humanam eam esse interpretationem, neque sola humana eruditione confectam, sed peculiarem quoque Sancti Spiritus afflatum adfuisse; cuius etiam prouida dispositione factum credimus, ut in tanta diuersitate uersionum haec sola praeualuerit, imo non praeualuerit modo, sed pene sola permanserit¹⁰⁰.

Just as only four Gospels survived by the virtue of the Holy Spirit actively guiding his Church, so, out of numerous translations, only the Vulgate became universally accepted by the Churches¹⁰¹. This claim was perfectly consonant with his historical model. God supervised the translation into Latin and ensured that only the version which arose under his supervision survived in the Church.

Titelmans based his claim that an interpreter needed divine assistance on the evidence from Jerome. He quoted Stridonite's prologue to the Pentateuch to prove the point:

Now I beg you, my dearest Desiderius, that you help me with your prayers – since you have made me to undertake such a task, and to begin with Genesis – that I may be able to translate the books into the Latin language in the same spirit by which they were written¹⁰².

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., f. c8v.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., f. c8v: “Et quemadmodum quatuor illa Evangelia, ab omnibus Ecclesiis ut a Spiritu autore tenentur credunturque descripta, ita non dissimile uero sentire uidebitur, qui ad hanc latinorum utuntur Ecclesiae non solum dicat humanam adfuisse eruditionem, sed simul etiam specialem aliquam Spiritus illuminationem et afflatu peculiarem”.

¹⁰² Hieronymus, “Prologus in Pentateucho”, op. cit., p. 4: “Nunc te precor, Desideri charissime, ut me, quia tantum opus subire fecisti et a Genesi exordium capere, orationibus iuves, quo possum eodem spiritu quo scripti sunt libri, in Latinum eos transferre sermonem”. Cf. F. Titelmans, “Prologus apologeticus”, op. cit., f. d2r.

According to the Franciscan, had Jerome thought that human skill was sufficient to exercise the task of biblical translation he would not have asked his friend, Desiderius, for prayers. Clearly, however, the Father of the Church believed that without divine assistance, his work would be in vain. This was echoed by Jerome's remark in his commentary on Galatians, quoted by the professor from Leuven: "Omnis qui Evangelium alio interpretatur spiritu et mente quam scriptum est, credentes turbat et convertit Evangelium Christi"¹⁰³. Biblical translation was impossible without the Holy Spirit.

This brought Titelmans to the crucial point of the entire dispute. Following Jerome, he asserted that the Gospel of Christ was not in words but in the meaning. "Nor should we suppose that the Gospel is in the words of the Scriptures; rather it is in the meaning, and not the surface meaning, but the innermost", wrote Jerome¹⁰⁴. Therefore, heretics, such as Marcion and Basilides did not have the Gospel, even though they had the text of the Scripture, because they lacked the Spirit of God. Quoting Jerome, Titelmans brought up the essential element of the patristic consensus about the Bible: that it was the Word of God, and not merely a text. Although he never used the term "sacramental" his claim is consonant with what Hans Boersma called the "sacramental understanding of the Scripture"¹⁰⁵. Whoever translated without the Spirit of God, and without the Church, not only translated faultily, but destroyed the very Word of God. Although the Franciscan did not make this point explicitly, the logical follow up of his claim was, that just as Marcion and Basilides, so also Erasmus and Luther did not have the Gospel at all.

However competent the translator, without the Spirit of God, his translation was no longer the Word of God.

At qui Spiritus Sancti negat requiri afflatum, in scripturarum interpretatione, humanam facit scripturam quam sine illo tentat interpretari; quando et quod docetur Evangelium, non iam diuinum est sine illo sed sit humanum. Et profecto si in uerbis, in superficie, in sermonum foliis esset Euangelium, posset utriusque lingue peritus sola eruditione et uerborum copia per se esse sufficiens. Quia uero in sensu, in medulla, in radice rationis latet Euangelium, constat haec sicuti a Spiritus pendent afflatu, ita Euangelii interpretationem, aut sanctae scripture, sine illo non recte fieri¹⁰⁶.

¹⁰³ F. Titelmans, "Prologus apologeticus", op. cit., f. d2r. Cf. Hieronymus, *Commentarii in VI epistulas Paulinas*, Ad Galatas 1.1.6-7, ed. G. Raspanti, 2006, CCSL 77A, p. 20.

¹⁰⁴ Hieronymus, *Commentarii in VI epistulas Paulinas*, ad Galatas 1.1.11-12, op. cit., p. 25: "Nec putemus, in uerbis scripturarum esse Evangelium, sed in sensu: non in superficie, sed in medulla: non in sermonum foliis, sed in radice rationis". English translation: T.P. Scheck, ed., *St. Jerome's Commentaries on Galatians, Titus, and Philemon*, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame 2010, p. 70. Cf. "Prologus apologeticus", op. cit., f. d2r.

¹⁰⁵ H. Boersma, *Scripture as Real Presence: Sacramental Exegesis in the Early Church*, Baker Academic, Grand Rapids 2017, p. 27.

¹⁰⁶ F. Titelmans, "Prologus apologeticus", op. cit., ff. d2r-v.

Without divine inspiration an interpreter loses the spiritual sense, and his translation becomes merely his own, human, and no longer divine¹⁰⁷. Whatever was composed solely with human skill, could be translated with no divine aid. Titelmans took up the argument of Jerome that Cicero did not need divine inspiration to translate Xenophon's *Oeconomicum*. "Que vero Spiritu divino scripta sunt, ut digna sit interpretatio, sicut Spiritu divino legi, sicut Spiritu divino intelligi, ita Spiritu divino videntur debere interpretari"¹⁰⁸.

Titelmans was aware of the distinction that Jerome made between *vetes* and *interpres*. It was a different kind of inspiration that accompanied the translator than that of the biblical author¹⁰⁹. Inspiration of the translator was not equal to that of the Gospel author; however, it was sufficient to render in a foreign language all truths of the text without obscuring them¹¹⁰. It prevented the translator from falling into following his own fantasies, rather than the truth of the Word.

Importantly, for Titelmans divine inspiration did not exclude the need for purely scholarly competence. Translation was also a human affair. Titelmans asserted that "eruditionem et utriusque linguae perfectam cognitionem atque verborum copiam, bonum interpretem constituere atque perficere"¹¹¹. Hence, in his view the work of biblical translation was parallel to the character of the Bible itself. Since it was both human and divine word it required a cooperation of those both elements to produce a faithful translation. After all, the Word of God was identical with Christ, who was both fully man and fully divine. Therefore, the young Franciscan did not reject the need for philological competence.

He realised, however, its limitations. Even the most competent scholar was bound to err without divine assistance. Titelmans quoted Augustine's *De Doctrina Christiana* to explain that discrepancies between Latin, Greek and Hebrew, as well as ambiguities of meaning of certain words made it impossible to render them in the correct sense relying solely on philological prowess¹¹². He gave an example from Ps. 13(14):3 (*veloces pedes eorum ad effundendum sanguinem*), where the Greek word *oxys* could be translated as *potens*, or *veloces* or *acutos*. Philology alone was not sufficient to solve this riddle, according to Titelmans.

The Vulgate then, for the young Franciscan, was a paramount example of a good translation. It received scholarly approval from Jerome, who revised it, it enjoyed an almost universal

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Ibid., f. d2v: "Sed verendum est, ne ubi abditi sunt spiritualium sensus mysteriorum, ibi humanam (hoc est suam) non divinam faciat scripturam".

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., f. d2v.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., ff. c8v-d1r.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., f. d3r: "Videtur ergo ei qui dignam debeat interpretatonem facere, Spritus Sancti afflatum esse necessarium: qui interpretantis insidens menti, suo eam habet coelesti limine illustrare; ut spiritualem germanamque intelligentiam, quantum oportet ipse capiat; deinde intellectaaptis sermonibus de idiomate in idioma transponat, et ita quidem interpretantis mentem dirigere, ut nulla phantasia in sententias devias et a scripturae veritatis aliensa, raptus aberret".

¹¹¹ Ibid., f. d1r.

¹¹² Ibid., f. d3r. Cf. Augustinus Hipponensis, *De doctrina christiana*, 2.11, op. cit., p. 42.

acceptance within the Church and bore a mark of divine inspiration. Therefore, it was to be treated with utmost reverence, which Erasmus, Lefèvre and Valla lacked. Yet, Titelmans did not consider their work completely useless, as we shall now discover.

5.1.3.4 Evaluation of new translations.

Titelmans' highest esteem of the Vulgate did not mean he had none for the new translations. The Franciscan was able to recognise the value of humanist scholarship and acknowledged some positive aspects of it. "Ego quidem non censeo damnandum", asserted the scholar from Leuven regarding humanist translations¹¹³. In this aspect he was quite unique among the critics of Erasmus. A simple confrontation with Coustruier and Noël Beda makes it clear, how moderate and balanced Titelmans' view was. Paolo Sartori claimed that Titelmans was absolutely original in acknowledging some value in the work of his opponents. "It is practically impossible to find another critic of Erasmus, who was capable of keeping such a balance amidst the violent climate of the controversy surrounding the New Testament"¹¹⁴. This should be perhaps credited to the fact, that Titelmans was much younger than most other opponents of Erasmus and received some humanist education alongside his scholastic formation. The Franciscan certainly had a much better understanding not only of biblical languages but also of the intricacies of translator's task than any of his older colleagues from the Montaigu circle.

Titelmans' positive evaluation of Valla's, Lefèvre's and Erasmus's works stemmed from his theory of biblical translation. Although he emphasised the role of divine inspiration, he never rejected the importance of the human element. It was precisely to this human element, which humanist annotations could make a valuable contribution. Titelmans asserted that an interpreter needed to possess a good command of both languages and a copious vocabulary. He never denied these qualities to his opponents. Quite the contrary: he acknowledged the philological value of their work. If one was to treat their translations as merely paraphrases, they could be seen as very useful in shedding some extra light on the text of the Bible¹¹⁵. The Franciscan was aware that no translation was perfect, thus he acknowledged that some formulations used by his opponents, being more elegant or simply proposing a different possibility of translating a given text could lead "ad plenioram intelligentiam capiendam"¹¹⁶.

¹¹³ F. Titelmans, "Prologus apologeticus", op. cit., f. c7r.

¹¹⁴ P. Sartori, *La Controversia Neotestamentaria...*, op. cit., p. 119. "E' praticamente impossibile trovare un altro oppositore erasmiano che sia stato capace di tanto equilibrio nel violento clima delle controversie neotestamentarie".

¹¹⁵ F. Titelmans, "Prologus apologeticus", op. cit., f. c7v: "Neque item conveniebat commentatorum more, interpretem multas ad idem voces coacervare, aut longio frequentibusque sive periphrasibus sive paraphrasibus uti in interpretado, quod illis melius licuit, dum intelligentiam potius quam interpretationem in plurimis sectari studuerunt".

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, f. c7v.

This use, however, was strictly limited to private study. Titelmans claimed that translations of Erasmus and his like could only be used for “privata lectione in cubiculo”¹¹⁷. First, only a scholar acquainted with Greek could benefit from such reading, while the simple folk would clearly be scandalised by alleged imperfections of the Vulgate. Secondly, the Franciscan clearly abhorred an idea that the new translation could be used to replace the Vulgate as the liturgical text.

Ironically, the kind of use that according the Titelmans befitted new translations was precisely the one that Erasmus advocated in his *Apologia*: “Let the Vulgate be the edition that is read in the schools, chanted in the churches, quoted in sermons; no one is standing in the way. I think I can promise that whoever reads my version at home will better understand his own”¹¹⁸. The Humanist from Rotterdam was careful not to challenge the official translation and offered his own to be read “in cubiculum”, as Titelmans wished. The Franciscan, however, mistrusted Erasmus’ assertions. It seems that for Titelmans deeds spoke louder than words. He saw Erasmus’ translation as the root of reformations introduced in numerous places by his disciples. It is also likely that he took Erasmus’ disclaimer for what it most likely really was: a tactical device to evade some criticism of his audacious undertaking.

For Titelmans, the three humanists were all guilty of excess. Neither their ambitions nor their methodology was completely mistaken, however they failed to use them moderately. Rather than lending their talents to the Church and applying their philological skills to purify the Vulgate from scribal errors, they immoderately took on to prepare wholly new translations disregarding the Church’s authority. No one had the right to introduce new translations without the approval of the Church¹¹⁹. Excess violated the principle of moderation, that Titelmans had imbibed at Montaigne. “Semper tamen illud est observandum, ut ne quid nimis”¹²⁰. His opponents transgressed this rule. Thus, failing to show respect to the Vulgate they offended God, who supervised its translation, the Church, which approved it and the Fathers, who based their theology on it¹²¹. Although there was much good to be found in them, they had an immoderate taste for novelty and elegant style, which shall be discussed in the next section.

5.1.3.5 Style of Latin biblical translations.

According to Titelmans, humanists were motivated to retranslate the Bible because they had found the Vulgate deficient in style. If the Bible had been written in a better, clearer and more

¹¹⁷ Ibid., f. c7v.

¹¹⁸ D. Erasmus Roterodamus, “*Apologia*”, op. cit., p. 168: “Illa legatur in scholis, canatur in templis, citetur in concionibus. Nullus obstat. Illud ausim polliceri, quisquis hanc nostram domi legerit, suam rectius intellecturus est”. English translation: R.D. Sider, *The New Testament Scholarship of Erasmus...*, op. cit., p. 466.

¹¹⁹ F. Titelmans, “*Prologus apologeticus*”, op. cit., f. c8r.

¹²⁰ Ibid., f. c8r.

¹²¹ Cf. Ibid., f. c8v.

elegant Latin it would be more widely read, ran the argument of some followers of the new learning¹²². It is possible that he was making here an allusion to Erasmus's *Paraclesis*, in which the humanist advocated the broadest possible readership of the Bible¹²³. The allusion, if any, is dim. Titelmans responded sharply to such an argument claiming that "absurdum videtur, ut propter interpretis ruditatem, a sacris literis auertantur, qui nihil amant quod non sit sermonis uenustate conditum"¹²⁴.

The Bible had its own particular style, which was far superior to any earthly eloquence. Titelmans developed a concept of triple eloquence, which was uniquely his own.

Est enim carnalis quaedam eloquentia, blandiloqua et assentatoria, mollis atque foeminea: quae ex lumbis potius carnis, quam ex spiritu dei, ortum habet, et carnales homines atque muliebres uiros plurimum oblectat. Est alia eloquentia non aequae ut prior uenerea, sed magnifica, sublimis, et grandiloqua, mira maiestate uerba trutinans, orationes librans, miris ad ornata humanis affectibus. Qua sermonis forma usi sunt sapientes huius saeculi, ad suam admirabilem sapientiam sic obscure describendam, ut quae paucissimis esset accessibilis. Haec est illa uerbi sapientia atque sermonis supereminencia, in qua sapientes mundo sua dogmata magnifice tradunt, quae crucis Christi humilitatem euacuat, quam se Paulus nescire gloriatur, quam ipse despiciens, huius saeculi principibus relinquit. Est autem haec, priori aliquanto magis mascula, magisque virilis, atque eo quidem superbior et supereminentior. [...] Verum aeterna patris sapientia ueniens in mundum, nec hanc nec illam elegit: sed terciam quandam nouus philosophus, immo uero nouus sophus et nouus magister nobis demonstrauit credendibus in eum¹²⁵.

The first and the second were examples of secular eloquence and corresponded roughly to poetics and rhetoric. Titelmans considered rhetoric superior to poetry and supported his claim quoting Plato's *Republic*¹²⁶. It is not to say that the Franciscan despised either of these styles. Quite the contrary: they had an apt application for secular knowledge, but they were unfit for divine matters. Rendering Revelation through purely human eloquence would corrupt its content. After all, the Word of God while fully human was also fully divine.

The mixed nature of Revelation required a new type of eloquence that would mix human fragility with divine power. It was this third type of eloquence, peculiar to the Vulgate, which

¹²² Ibid., f. d4r: "Nec dum uero satisfactum est iis quos offendit in interpretatione uulgata sermo rudis et incompositus, sive (ut ipsi uolunt) horridus et sordidus, barbarismis eam et solaecismis plenam conquerentibus; ut merito hac de causa uideatur innovatione prorsus indignuisse. Cum enim plurimi a sacris literis conspiciantur abhorre, propter sermonis inelegantiam, uidetur hoc per quam utile ac necessarium, ut eloquentiori stilo et dictione magnificentiori ipse adornentur; quo uel sic, magis multi ad eas perlegendas alliciantur".

¹²³ D. Erasmus Roterodamus, *Paraclesis ad lectorem pium*, [in:] *Ausgewählte Werke*, ed. H. Holborn, Beck, München 1964, p. 142.

¹²⁴ F. Titelmans, "Prologus apologeticus", op. cit., f. d4r.

¹²⁵ Ibid., f. d4r-v.

¹²⁶ Ibid., f. d4v: "Nam et Plato, ab ea quam ipse instituit reipublica poetas uoluit esse exules".

Titelmans praised. “Haec est simplex illa et casta, humilis et modesta, mitis et benigna, seuera et amabilis, munda et nitida eloquentia, qua et ipse est in carnae nobiscum locutus, et suos item discipulos loqui uoluit”¹²⁷. It derived its strength not from the force of rhetorical figures and elegant style, but from its content, which was of divine origin. God had deliberately chosen such a simple style, so that form would not obscure the content. Simplicity of the Apostles, their unlearned language, almost crudity of expression was necessary, so that the Bible could shine with divine and not merely human knowledge. The Apostles were “uelut tabulae rasae, ut in eis describere posset libere Spiritus Sanctus pro suo placito”¹²⁸. Interestingly, Titelmans’ argument corresponded with the First Capuchin Constitutions, drawn up six years later. This similarity partly explains the attraction he felt for the new reform¹²⁹.

Titelmans mustered several arguments to support his claim. First, he resorted to the argument from the Bible itself. He cited the First Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians, in which the Apostle claimed that his preaching had nothing to do with the charm of human wisdom, but instead demonstrated the Spirit and the power of God¹³⁰. Next, he invoked several patristic examples to show how divine eloquence exceeded the human. He cited John Chrysostom, who preferred Paul’s rudeness in speech to all great rhetors:

Now were I to insist upon the polish of Isocrates, the weight of Demosthenes, the dignity of Thucydides, and the sublimity of Plato, in any one bishop, St. Paul would be a strong evidence against me. But I pass by all such matters and the elaborate ornaments of profane oratory; and I take no account of style or of delivery; yea let a man’s diction be poor and his composition simple and unadorned, but let him not be unskilled in the knowledge and accurate statement of doctrine¹³¹.

Clearly, there was a strong polemical edge in such a quotation, for ancient rhetors were a role model for humanists such as Valla, who wrote much on Quintilian and the elegance of Latin style. Titelmans was not setting himself against the knowledge of the ancients, he simply argued it had little relevance to Christian knowledge.

In a sense Titelmans wrote here yet another chapter in the long polemic between faith and culture, encapsulated in Tertullian’s famous question “What indeed has Athens to do with

¹²⁷ Ibid., f. d4v.

¹²⁸ Ibid., f. d5r.

¹²⁹ C. Cargnoni, *I Cappuccini: fonti documentarie e narrative del primo secolo (1525-1619)*, Edizioni Frate Indovino, Perugia 1988, vol. 1, p. 411: “E perché al nudo e umil Crucifixo non sonno conveniente terse, fallerate e fucate parole, ma nude, pure, semplice, umile e basse, niente di meno divine, infocate e piene di amore, a exemplo di Paulo, vaso di elezione, el quale predicava non in sublimità di sermone e di eloquenzia umana, ma in virtù di Spirito”.

¹³⁰ 1Cor. 2:4. Cf. F. Titelmans, “Prologus apologeticus”, op. cit., f. d4v.

¹³¹ Joannes Chrysostomus, *Sur le sacerdoce, (Dialogue et Homélie)*, 4.6.69-74, ed. A.-M. Malingrey, 1980, SC 272, pp. 268–270. English translation: NPNF vol. 1/IX, p. 67. Cf. “Prologus apologeticus”, op. cit., f. d6r.

Jerusalem?”¹³². Such a conflict characterised the life of Jerome, whom Titelmans invoked as another case against human eloquence. The Franciscan cited Jerome’s confession from the commentary to the Galatians, where the Father had claimed not to have touched any pagan literature for more than fifteen years¹³³. This was an allusion to the story of Jerome’s dream that the famous translator told in a letter to Eustochium:

Suddenly I was caught up in the spirit and dragged before the judgment seat of the Judge; ... Asked who and what I was I replied: “I am a Christian.” But He who presided said: “Thou liest, thou art a follower of Cicero and not of Christ. For ‘where thy treasure is, there will thy heart be also.’” Instantly I became dumb, and amid the strokes of the lash—for He had ordered me to be scourged—I was tortured more severely still by the fire of conscience, considering with myself that verse, “In the grave who shall give thee thanks?” Yet for all that I began to cry and to bewail myself, saying: “Have mercy upon me, O Lord: have mercy upon me”¹³⁴.

This experience had a profound impact on Jerome. According to Titelmans it transformed him profoundly and made him worthy to become a translator of the Bible. “Postquam autem desinens esse Ciceronianus, factus est perfecte Christianus, et coepit oblectari simplicitate diuinorum sensuum magis quam foliis uerborum, iam dignus deo factus est minister in scripturis sacris et transferendis et explanandis”¹³⁵. A true Christian could not value rhetoric above doctrine, elegance of expression over orthodoxy of meaning. Thus, an interpreter, who wanted to remain true to the Spirit of the Gospel, had to reject secular eloquence, just like Jerome had done. Titelmans mustered other examples of Church Fathers, who turned away from rhetoric, including Cyprian of Cartago and Marius Victorinus, much to the same tenor¹³⁶.

Titelmans did not entirely condemn human eloquence: “nemo existimet in uniuersum eloquentiam damnare, aut eam in omnibus negligendam siue fugiendam uelle suadere; sed ... in Ecclesiasticis Scripturis, in quibus simplicitas sola require debet ueritatis, eloquentiae saecularis non admodum habendam esse rationem”¹³⁷. Earthly eloquence was useful as a school exercise for young scholars, as Chrysostom had proposed¹³⁸. Yet it had little use beyond it and certainly should

¹³² Tertulianus, *De praescriptione haereticorum*, 7.9, ed. R.F. Refoulé, 1954, CCSL 1, p. 193: “Quid ergo Athenis et Hierosolymis?”.

¹³³ F. Titelmans, “Prologus apologeticus”, op. cit., f. d6r.

¹³⁴ Hieronymus, *Epistulae*, ed. I. Hilberg, 1910, CSEL 54, p. 30: “cum subito raptus in spiritu ad tribunal Iudicis pertrahor [...] interrogatus condicionem Christianum me esse respondi. Et ille, qui residebat: 'mentiris', ait, 'ciceronianus es, non Christianus; ubi thesaurus tuus, ibi et cor tuum'. Ilico obmutui et inter uerba - nam caedi me iusserat - conscientiae magis igne torquebar illum me cum uersiculum reputans: in inferno autem quis confitebitur tibi? Clamare tamen coepi et heilulans dicere: miserere mei, Domine, miserere mei”. English translation: NPNF, vol. 2/VI, p. 35. Cf. E.F. Rice, *Saint Jerome in the Renaissance...*, op. cit., p. 3.

¹³⁵ F. Titelmans, “Prologus apologeticus”, op. cit., f. d6r.

¹³⁶ Cf. Ibid., f. d5v.

¹³⁷ Ibid., f. d7r.

¹³⁸ Cf. Ibid., f. d6v.

not be applied to the holiest of texts. Besides, indulging excessively in earthly eloquence could corrupt the taste of the youth so that when they later approached the text of the Bible they might be abhorred by the simplicity of its style. Instead, rather than bending the style of the Bible to accommodate it to earthly tastes, one should educate the youth from the youngest age to appreciate the simplicity of Biblical style¹³⁹. Otherwise, one could end up casting pearls before swine. If the simple style of the Bible was good for the Apostles and Christ himself, it was good for all.

How was one to approve of a style full of barbarisms and solecisms? This was precisely the charge raised against the Vulgate by humanists. According to Titelmans, this charge came from those who failed to recognise an aesthetic value in any Latin style that diverged from that of Cicero. Indeed, there was an ongoing debate among humanists themselves, as to what constituted good Latin style, and whether only that of Cicero was acceptable. According to Titelmans, the Vulgate was attacked as full of barbarisms and solecisms by those who did not approve of anything that differed from Cicero, Livy and Virgil¹⁴⁰.

Titelmans responded by arguing that non-classical Latin style was not an error. The language evolved throughout history and although the Latin of Fathers: Augustine, Ambrose, Tertullian, to name a few, differed from that of Cicero, it was correct and elegant in its own way¹⁴¹. A simple style was not equivalent to barbarism, according to the Franciscan.

His criticism seems to be partly misguided. His prime opponent, Erasmus, was hardly a Ciceronian. In fact, he criticised those who believed that only Ciceronian Latin was correct and rather opted to use a much simpler style in his translation. This, however, did not mean he accepted barbarisms. In *Apologia*, attached to his *Novum Instrumentum*, he argued:

Again, a somewhat purer Latinity offends some, in particular those who judge nothing cogently argued unless it abounds in monstrous solecisms. Others, on the contrary, disdain anything that does not reflect that Ciceronian polish. In this work I have not aspired to eloquence; at the same time I have not rejected an elegant expression when it was available. God is not offended by solecisms, but

¹³⁹ Ibid., f. d7r: “Neque simplicitatem atque ruditatem in qua deus voluit sensuum mysteria humiliter et ipse proponere per filium suum et ab Evangelistis recondi in Scripturis, debere ob. Puerorum atque saecularium hominum affectiones aut imminui. Aut mutari aut auferri. Quasi Scripturae aptandae sint, hominum affectibus at non magis al illam se debeat quisque accommodare. Et cavere optamus, ne dum nimis volumus omnes ad scripturas allicere, au tillas suo nativo spoliemus ornatu, meretricium superadidentes cultum, aut etiam margaritas ante porcos spargamus, sanctumque exhibeamus canibus”.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., f. d8r-v: “Nam propter humanitatis stadium [...] qui ex difertis saeculi oratoribus atque poetis ad sacras scripturas sese conserunt eum dictionem longe dissimilem illorum dictioni conspiciunt et aliam prorsus sive connectendi sive efferendi consuetudinem, qualem apud principes literaturae saecularis invenisse se non meminerunt, barbarismis omnia ac solaecismis scatere existimant, et quicquid fortisan in ae inveniunt, quod non item apud Tullium, Livium, Virgilium caeterosque oratorum atque poetarum legerint, mox ad barbarismos et solaecismos pertahunt”.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., f. d8v.

neither does he delight in them. He hates a haughty eloquence, I admit, but he hates much more an arrogant and conceited bumbling¹⁴².

Thus, Erasmus strove to take the middle way between those who obstinately defended every word of the Vulgate (like Titelmans) and those, who would have the Bible rewritten in classical style. He believed that philological skills should be applied to cleanse the Vulgate from numerous errors that crept into it through the incompetence of translators and copyists. In other words, one should remain faithful to the content but nevertheless strive to render the text in the most elegant style possible.

For Titelmans the question was not merely philological, but also theological. The wording of the Vulgate was divinely inspired therefore to blame the Vulgate was to indirectly blame the Holy Spirit. Did the Holy Spirit take a nap when the interpreter erred in translating?

To defend his views, Titelmans began with a definition of solecism and barbarism. He quoted Augustine from *De Doctrina Christiana*¹⁴³. Essentially, barbarisms were errors of words, while solecisms errors of syntax. In other words, whatever diverged from the idiomatic use of the language was either a barbarism or a solecism. This was, however, precisely the weakness of this definition and the point which Titelmans elaborated. After all, which idiomatic use was to be taken as the reference point? There was no single good Latin style. Some styles were more elegant than others, which did not mean that simple style was an error. The Franciscan lamented that some labelled as barbarism everything they could not find in Cicero and Livy. However, if that was the case, all Latin Fathers would be guilty of barbarisms, even though all of them were Latin native speakers¹⁴⁴. This was absurd. One needed to realise that there were peculiarities of style in each author. Each of the Fathers had his own style, and so had *Vetus interpres*. One should not consider as solecism or barbarism what in fact was a peculiarity of style of a given author¹⁴⁵.

The position of *Vetus interpres* was more difficult than that of Fathers. An author is free to choose expressions that suit him, while an interpreter is bound to render the original in the most faithful manner possible. Titelmans noted that each language had its specific vocabulary and

¹⁴² D. Erasmus Roterodamus, "Apologia", op. cit., p. 173: "Rursus alios offendit sermo paulo purior ac Latinior, nempe hos, qui nihil acutum iudicant, nisi quod prodigiosis scateat soloecismis. Alii contra fastidiunt, quicquid non refert Ciceronianum illum nitorem. Nos in hoc Opere ut non affectavimus eloquentiam, it munditiem, si qua in promptu fuit, non respuimus. Non offenditur Deus soloecismis, at idem non delectatur. Odit superbam eloquentiam, fateor: at multo magis superciliosam at arrogate infantiam". English translation: R.D. Sider, *The New Testament Scholarship of Erasmus...*, op. cit., p. 477.

¹⁴³ Augustinus Hipponensis, *De doctrina christiana*, 2.13, op. cit., p. 45: "Nam soloecismus qui dicitur, nihil est aliud quam cum uerba non ea lege sibi coaptantur, qua coaptauerunt, qui priores nobis non sine auctoritate aliqua locuti sunt. Utrum enim "inter homines" an "inter hominibus" dicatur, ad rerum non pertinet cognitorem. Item barbarismus quid aliud est nisi uerbum non eis litteris uel sono enuntiatum, quo ab eis, qui ante nos latine locuti sunt, enuntiarum solet?". Cf. F. Titelmans, "Prologus apologeticus", op. cit., f. d8r.

¹⁴⁴ F. Titelmans, "Prologus apologeticus", op. cit., f. d8v.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, f. d8v.

syntax, which made it more likely for the so-called barbarism and solecism to creep in. The Vulgate was in that respect dependent on Greek and Hebrew, which were its predecessors as chosen vessels of the Revelation. Titelmans cited Jerome, who in his commentary to Galatians pointed out that even Cicero while translating philosophical works had to coin new terms in Latin to render Greek idioms. It was all the more difficult for biblical interpreters to find relevant Greek/Latin equivalents of Hebrew/Greek expressions¹⁴⁶. Consequently, *Vetus interpres* had to leave in some places words or word structures that were unknown in Latin but reflected a Hebrew and Greek manner of speaking. This stemmed also from the need to translate entire expressions (*loquutiones*) and their meaning, not just words. “Pluris siquidem interpretanti esse sententiarum fructus debent quam verborum folia”¹⁴⁷. In some places, solecisms and barbarism gave more justice to the original than elegant expressions in Ciceronian Latin.

Titelmans’ treatment of barbarism and solecism demonstrated once again his reverence to the interpretative tradition of the Bible. Yes, the style of the Vulgate was remote from classical norms, but it was received from past generations of the Church and so should be treated with reverence. The Vulgate enjoyed divine supervision. If God chose to leave barbarism and solecism in some places, it was his good pleasure to have done so and no one should deride it.

Differences in approach to solecism and barbarism encapsulate different positions from which Titelmans and Erasmus approached the task of Biblical translation. For Erasmus, translation was the matter of philology, which could shed light on theology. For the Franciscan it was just the contrary. Biblical translation was rooted in the theological understanding of what the Bible was. It was this theological understanding, which in turn should guide philological work, even when it suggested some stylistic compromises. For Erasmus, the Bible was a text and should be treated as any other text, at least on the level of translation and edition. For Titelmans it was the Word of God, living within the tradition of the community of the Church. It should be treated with reverence, even when it contradicted some rules of elegant Latin style. What is essential is to realise that although Erasmus started with philology, such a decision itself was theological, with profound consequences. If the Bible was just a text it was all subject to human interpretation and evaluation. Erasmus’s decision gave much more preference to a literal than to a spiritual reading of the Bible. The Bible was no longer authoritative but derived its authority from the erudition of

¹⁴⁶ Hieronymus, *Commentarii in VI epistulas Paulinas*, ad Galatas, 1.1.11-12, op. cit., pp. 26–27: “Si itaque hi qui disertos saeculi legere consuerunt coeperint nobis de nouitate et uilitate sermonis illudere, mittamus eos ad Ciceronis libros qui de quaestionibus philosophiae praeantur et uideant quanta ibi necessitate compulsus sit tanta uerborum portenta proferre quae numquam latini hominis auris audiuit: et hoc cum de graeco, quae lingua uicina est, transferret in nostram. Quid patiuntur illi qui de hebraeis difficultatibus proprietates exprimere conantur? Et tamen multo pauciora sunt in tantis uoluminibus Scripturarum quae nouitatem sonent quam ea quae ille in paruo opere congegit”. English translation: T.P. Scheck, *St. Jerome’s Commentaries on Galatians, Titus, and Philemon...*, op. cit., p. 72. Cf. “Prologus apologeticus”, op. cit., f. e1v.

¹⁴⁷ F. Titelmans, “Prologus apologeticus”, op. cit. f. e2r.

whoever translated and interpreted it. It was no longer a sacramental sign of God's presence, but an academic riddle to be solved by study and interpretation. According to Titelmans this challenged the centuries long understanding of what the Bible was, and it was precisely against this challenge that he protested in his *Prologus Apologeticus*.

5.2. Defending the Vulgate in Practice: Examples from *Collationes quinque*

Theory of *Prologus* was put into practice in *Collationes quinque*¹⁴⁸. It is a rather lengthy and tedious work. The Franciscan set on to defend every iota of the Vulgate against changes introduced by humanists. Given the vastness of the task, he limited himself to 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 ones¹⁴⁹. In all cases he defended the old translation, even if at times he admitted that an alternative proposed by humanists was clearer¹⁵⁰. 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 Erasmus¹⁵¹. In what follows we will limit ourselves to a discussion of a single verse, Rom. 5:12. It is by far the longest discussion of a single verse in *Collationes*, covering over 40 pages of a six-hundred pages long work¹⁵². Thus, it shall provide enough material to illustrate Titelmans' argumentation and illuminate the essence of his disagreement with Erasmus.

5.2.1 Translation of Romans 5:12

The first humanist to have changed the traditional translation of Rom. 5:12 was Lefèvre.¹⁵³ 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:

¹⁴⁸ A significant part of this section has been published as: T.K. Mantyk, *Translating Romans 5:12 in the early 16th century. Franciscus Titelmans's polemic against humanists*, "Biblical Annals", 2021, vol. 9, no. 3, pp. 525–546.

¹⁴⁹ F. Titelmans, *Collationes quinque...*, op. cit., f. 4v.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., ff. 206v-207r. For instance, 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.

¹⁵¹ D. Erasmus, "Responsio ad Collationes", op. cit., 965E-966D. Lefèvre did not deign to respond, while Valla had been long dead at that time.

¹⁵² F. Titelmans, *Collationes quinque...*, op. cit., ff. 112r-135r.

¹⁵³ Valla commented on Rom. 5:6-7 and 5:10-11, he took, however, no issue with Rom. 5:12, see: L. Valla, *In Latinam Novi Testamenti interpretationem ex collatione Grecorum exemplarium adnotationes aptissime vtilis*, In vico sancti Iacobi sub Leone Argento at in monte diui Hilarii sub Speculo, Paris 1505, f. o4v.

The Vulgate	Lefevre 1512	Erasmus 1516
-	-	Διὰ τοῦτο, ὡσπερ δι' ἑνὸς ἀνθρώπου ἡ ἁμαρτία εἰς τὸν κόσμον εἰσηλθε, καὶ διὰ τῆς ἁμαρτίας ὁ θάνατος, καὶ οὕτως εἰς πάντας ἀνθρώπους ὁ θάνατος διήλθεν ἐφ' ᾧ πάντες ἥμαρτον.
<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> ¹⁵⁴	<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> ¹⁵⁵
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*) which begs an apodosis introduced with

¹⁵⁴ J. Faber (Stapulensis), *Pauli epistolae quatuordecim...*, op. cit., f. i4r.

¹⁵⁵ D. Erasmus, *Nouum Testamentum ab Erasmo Recognitum III. Epistolae Apostolica (prima pars)*, ed by. A.J. Brown, Elsevier, Amsterdam 2004, ASD VI–3, p. 70. 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' critique.

οὕτως (*ita*). Yet such an apodosis appears to be missing. Lefèvre simplified the construction by omitting καὶ (*et*), 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 Rom. 5:12 is a “rhetorical syllogism.”¹⁵⁶ 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.¹⁵⁷ Thus, in a grammatical sense this sentence is unfinished, that is, forms an *anacoluthon*. This had already been suggested by Origen¹⁵⁸ and was eagerly used as an argument by Lefèvre’s critics, as we shall see later.

The translation that stirred much more controversy was that of Erasmus. His 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.¹⁵⁹ 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.¹⁶⁰ 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 ἥμαρτον (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.¹⁶¹ This translation can, however, be matched with both senses of understanding the nature of sin. In fact,

¹⁵⁶ J.T. Kirby, *The Syntax of Romans 5.12: a Rhetorical Approach*, “New Testament Studies”, 1987, vol. 33, no. 2, p. 284.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. C.E.B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, T&T Clark, Edinburgh 1975, vol. 1, p. 272. J.D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, Word Books, Dallas 1988, p. 273. D.J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 1996, p. 318. R. Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary*, Fortress Press, Minneapolis 2006, p. 373.

¹⁵⁸ Origenes, *Commentarii in Epistulam ad Romanos*, 5.1, ed. T. Heither, 1993, FC 2/3, p. 32.

¹⁵⁹ The first to use the argument was an anonymous commentary on the epistle to the Romans attributed to Ambrose, see: Ambrosiaster, *Commentarius in Pauli epistulam ad Romanos (recensio γ)*, 5.12, ed. H.J. Vogels, 1966, CSEL 81.1, p. 163: “ut ipsa primordia peccati manifestaret, ab Adam coepit, qui primum peccavit, ut providentiam unius dei per unum reformasse doceret, quod per unum lapsum fuerat et tractum in mortem”. Augustine used this verse extensively in anti-Pelagian polemics, see for example: Augustinus Hipponensis, *De peccatorum meritis et remissione et de baptismo paruulorum*, eds. C.F. Vrba and J. Zycha, 1913, CSEL 60, pp. 9–10.

¹⁶⁰ C.E.B. Cranfield, *Romans...*, op. cit., pp. 274–275.

¹⁶¹ J.D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8...*, op. cit., p. 273. C.E.B. Cranfield, *Romans...*, op. cit., pp. 277–279. D.J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans...*, op. cit., p. 321. J.A. Fitzmyer, *The Consecutive Meaning of ἐφ’ ᾧ in Romans 5.12*, “New Testament Studies”, 1993, vol. 39, pp. 321–339. Fitzmyer claimed there is no support for causal use of this phrase before the 6th century after Christ, thus he prefers to translate “so that”.

Robert Jewett claimed that Paul held both positions to be equally true and developed a paradoxical argument.¹⁶² This *crux interpretum* hardly needs to be resolved here; realising the complexity of the issue, however, will help us to understand the nature of Titelmans' 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' once friend and collaborator, Edward Lee, turned against him ascribing to his translation and annotations serious theological shortcomings.¹⁶³ Among other issues he pointed out the translation of Rom. 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 Masson¹⁶⁴) 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. The defence of his translation choices was later reproduced in the fifth and final edition of *Novum Testamentum* in 1535. 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.

5.2.2 Principal line of Titelmans' argumentation

Discussion of Rom. 5:12 forms the last part of the second dialogue in *Collationes*¹⁶⁵. 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' arguments.

The principal argumentation of Titelmans was 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

¹⁶² R. Jewett, *Romans...*, op. cit., p. 376.

¹⁶³ For a detailed study of Lee's objections see: R. Coogan, *Erasmus, Lee and the Correction of the Vulgate: The Shaking of the Foundations*, Librairie E. Droz, Geneve 1992. C. Asso, *Martin Dorp and Edward Lee*, [in:] *Biblical Humanism and Scholasticism in the Age of Erasmus*, ed. E. Rummel, Brill, Leiden 2008, pp. 167–196.

¹⁶⁴ D. Erasmus, "Responsio ad Collationes", op. cit., col. 984E. Cf. P. Sartori, *Tracce dell'opera di Jacobus Latomus nel Prologus Apologeticus di Frans Titelmans*, [in:] *Margarita amicorum. Studi di cultura europea per Agostino Sottili*, eds. F. Forner, C.M. Monti, and P.G. Schmidt, V&P, Milano 2005, pp. 1032–1042. Sartori claims that while Titelmans was inspired by his master, he was also an independent thinker who developed ideas of his own.

¹⁶⁵ F. Titelmans, *Collationes quinque...*, op. cit., ff. 112r-135r.

spread to all men, in whom all receive life”¹⁶⁶. 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’ 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.¹⁶⁷ 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 the Catholic interpretation of this passage¹⁶⁸. This list of authorities was most likely compiled on the basis of Augustine’s *Contra Julianum*, where all of them were cited¹⁶⁹. 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 writings¹⁷⁰. 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 died for all, hence all must have died in the first Adam.¹⁷¹ The infants do not die because of their personal sins, but because of original sin. Consequently, one has to interpret Rom. 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.¹⁷² 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

¹⁶⁶ Origenes, *Commentarii in Epistolam ad Romanos...*, 5.1, op. cit., p. 32: “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. F. Titelmans, *Collationes quinque...*, op. cit., f. 112cv.

¹⁶⁷ F. Titelmans, *Collationes quinque...*, op. cit., f. 117r.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, f. 114r.

¹⁶⁹ Augustinus Hipponensis, *Contra Julianum*, 1.3.5-10, PL 44, col. 643-647.

¹⁷⁰ F. Titelmans, *Collationes quinque...*, op. cit., ff. 117v-118r.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, f. 118v.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, f. 118r-v.

Catholic authorities rather than heretics.¹⁷³ 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: "In quibus uerbis nonne uides etiam te unacum Iuliano iuste et merito obiurgari a sancto patre Augustino, qui eadem in culpa deprehenderis, nescio an etiam grauiori"¹⁷⁴. 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 claiming that disagreeing with Augustine was no crime. In his *Responsio* he maintained that many scholastic theologians disagreed with Augustine regarding free will¹⁷⁵. He also claimed that Augustine had taught about the indispensability of ministering the blood of Christ for infants after baptism, as a necessary mean 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 ironically¹⁷⁶.

He protested even more vehemently against the charge that only he and Pelagians interpreted this passage in a different sense than that of original sin¹⁷⁷. 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 to interpret Rom. 5:12 in the sense of original sin, but he argued that before Augustine this had not been the only opinion among orthodox writers¹⁷⁸. Thus, he challenged Titelmans' principal claim that the interpretation of Rom. 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 false¹⁷⁹. 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

¹⁷³ Ibid., f. 119r.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., f. 118r.

¹⁷⁵ D. Erasmus, "Responsio ad Collationes", op. cit., col. 988B-C.

¹⁷⁶ D. Erasmus, *Annotationes in Nouum Testamentum (pars tertia)*, ed. P.F. Hovingh, Brill, Leiden 2012, ASD VI-7, p. 156: "Quod si non permitunt hic hactenus ab Augustino disintere, ut liceat hunc Pauli locum bifariam interpretari, quin idem honoris habetur omnibus quae vir ille docuit et asseueravit in hac ipsa disputatione". English translation: D. Erasmus, *Annotations on Romans*, ed. R.D. Sider, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 1994, CWE 56, p. 149.

¹⁷⁷ Cf. D. Erasmus, "Responsio ad Collationes", op. cit., 989A. D. Erasmus, *Annotationes in Nouum Testamentum (pars tertia)*..., op. cit., p. 154. F. Titelmans, *Collationes quinque*..., op. cit., f. 119r.

¹⁷⁸ Cf. D. Erasmus, *Annotationes in Nouum Testamentum (pars tertia)*..., op. cit., p. 156.

¹⁷⁹ F. Titelmans, *Collationes quinque*..., op. cit., f. 119r.

commentary on the Romans, whose author is now known as Ambrosiaster¹⁸⁰. Titelmans cited Ambrosiaster to show that he clearly meant *in quo* to refer to Adam and to original sin: “In quo – id est in Adam – omnes peccauerunt. Ideo dixit in quo, cum de mulier loquantur, quia non ad speciem retulit, sed ad genus. Manifestum est itaque omnes in Adam peccasse quasi in massa. Ipse enim per peccatum corruptus quos genuit, omnes nati sunt sub peccato”¹⁸¹. 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 sin¹⁸².

Erasmus, however, did not challenge the fact that Ambrose, as well as Origen and Chrysostom, interpreted Rom. 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 responded that while subsequent verses could be correctly read as speaking of personal sins, in Rom. 5:12 Ambrosiaster meant original sin alone¹⁸³. He conceded that Rom. 5:14 could be interpreted both ways, depending on which reading one chose. 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 followed¹⁸⁴. The majority of fathers, however, read ‘had not sinned’, which, according to Titelmans, pointed to the situation of infants, who, although they had no opportunity to sin, are nevertheless subjected to death¹⁸⁵. Thus, with a negation, it was about original sin. Yet, according to the Franciscan, this mattered but a little, since whatever the interpretation of Rom. 5:14, in Rom. 5:12 all Fathers saw original sin.

Origen, according to the scholar from Leuven, also interpreted this passage in this way¹⁸⁶. Nevertheless, the evidence from Origen was inconclusive, as both adversaries agreed, not least

¹⁸⁰ On Erasmus’ use of Ambrosiaster see: R. Faber, *The Function of Ambrosiaster in Erasmus’s Annotations on the Epistle to the Galatians*, [in:] *The Unfolding of Words: Commentary in the Age of Erasmus*, ed. J.R. Henderson, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 2012, pp. 70–85.

¹⁸¹ Ambrosiaster, *Commentarius in Pauli epistulam ad Romanos (recensio γ)*, 5.12, op. cit., p. 165. Cf. F. Titelmans, *Collationes quinque...*, op. cit., f. 117r.

¹⁸² F. Titelmans, *Collationes quinque...*, op. cit., f. 117r. Cf. Ambrosius Mediolanensis, *Expositio euangelii secundum Lucam*, 4.67, ed. M. Adriaen, 1957, CCSL 14, p. 131: “Omnes enim in Adam mortui, quia Per unum hominem in hunc mundum peccatum introiuit, et per peccatum mors et ita in omnes homines pertransiuit, in quo omnes peccaverunt. Illius igitur culpa mors omnium est”. Ibid., 7.234, p. 295: “Fuit Adam et in illo fuimus omnes: periit Adam, et in illo omnes perierunt”.

¹⁸³ F. Titelmans, *Collationes quinque...*, op. cit., f. 129v.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., f. 128v; cf. Ambrosiaster, *Commentarius in Pauli epistulam ad Romanos (recensio γ)*, 5.14, op. cit., p. 169. Origenes, *Commentarii in Epistulam ad Romanos*, 5.1, op. cit., p. 58.

¹⁸⁵ F. Titelmans, *Collationes quinque...*, op. cit., f. 129r. Titelmans listed Chrysostom, Cyril of Carthage, Irenaeus and Augustine as holding this opinion.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., f. 117v. Cf. Origenes, *Commentarii in Epistulam ad Romanos*, 5.1, op. cit., p. 46: “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”.

because of deficiencies of Rufinus's translation, who, Erasmus claimed, omitted some thoughts of the Alexandrian Father¹⁸⁷.

There was much more discussion concerning Chrysostom. According to Titelmans, the patriarch of Constantinople clearly interpreted Rom. 5:12 in the light of original sin¹⁸⁸. Erasmus, however claimed, that in comments on Rom. 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 could not 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.¹⁸⁹

To support such an understanding of the patriarch of Constantinople's words, Erasmus brought in a citation from a much later Greek commentary of Theophylactus of Ohrid, which by and large copied that of Chrysostom. This was partly to avail the fact, that his manuscript of Chrysostom was badly copied and missed some fragments.¹⁹⁰ Erasmus quoted Theophylactus' commentary on Rom. 5:12 to show, that Chrysostom had meant individual sins: "Nam eo [Adam] labente, vel qui de ligno nihil edissent, suo crimine mortales sunt facti, perinde ac si ipsi peccato forent obnoxii, quia ille peccasset"¹⁹¹. All became mortal by their own individual sins, not by the sin of Adam.

Titelmans challenged this evidence. He accused Erasmus of a deliberate mistranslation of Theophylactus' commentary¹⁹². He claimed that here Erasmus misunderstood the Greek bishop, as he had done in other places too¹⁹³. The Greek pronoun αὐτῶ can be understood either as a reflexive or personal pronoun¹⁹⁴. Thus, Theophylactus' 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 αὐτῶ and demonstrated that Erasmus had erred¹⁹⁵. He also used comparative evidence from Theophylactus' commentary on 2Cor 6:1 where there was an analogous problem of translation¹⁹⁶. The text of Theophylactus should then be

¹⁸⁷ D. Erasmus, "Responsio ad Collationes", op. cit., 988E. D. Erasmus, *Annotationes in Nouum Testamentum (pars tertia)*..., op. cit., p. 146.

¹⁸⁸F. Titelmans, *Collationes quinque*..., op. cit. f. 117r: "Ipsa transgressio peccati, totum labefecit mundum, factum alumnum peccati; quia omnis qui facit peccatum, servus est peccati". Cf. Ioannes Chrysostomus, *Commentarius in epistulam ad Romanos*, 10.1, PG 60, pp. 474-475.

¹⁸⁹ D. Erasmus, *Annotationes in Nouum Testamentum (pars tertia)*..., op. cit., p. 152.

¹⁹⁰ D. Erasmus, "Responsio ad Collationes", op. cit., col. 990E.

¹⁹¹ D. Erasmus, *Annotationes in Nouum Testamentum (pars tertia)*..., op. cit., p. 152. Erasmus quoted verbatim the 1529 edition of Porsena's translation. Cf. Theophylactus, *In omnes Divi Pavli epistolas enarrationes*, trans. C. Porsena, Petrus Quentell, Coloniae 1529, f. XIIv.

¹⁹² F. Titelmans, *Collationes quinque*..., op. cit., f. 119r.

¹⁹³ Cf. *Ibid.*, f. 45v.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, ff. 119v-120r.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, f. 120r. For Erasmus's outrage see: D. Erasmus, "Responsio ad Collationes", op. cit., 966B.

¹⁹⁶ F. Titelmans, *Collationes quinque*..., op. cit., f. 120r-v. Cf. Theophylactus, *In omnes Divi Pavli epistolas enarrationes*..., op. cit., f. LXXXVIIIv.

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)¹⁹⁷. Regardless of this, Titelmans was correct that Erasmus had quoted a mistaken translation. Theophylactus, and thus also Chrysostom, clearly spoke of original sin, which supported the Vulgate version.

According to Titelmans, the evidence of Theophylactus 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 Rom. 5:12 were acceptable¹⁹⁸. 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 Fathers¹⁹⁹. What is also significant here, it 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 by him *Hyberniensis*), a 9th century Irish grammarian,²⁰⁰ as well as to Irenaeus of Lyon and Cyril of Cartago²⁰¹. 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 called this work), but Erasmus made scholia of pseudo-Jerome his main witness for the plurality of ancient catholic interpretations of Rom. 5:12²⁰². Ironically, neither of the polemicists was aware that in fact this commentary had been written by Pelagius himself²⁰³. 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,

¹⁹⁷ Theophylactus, *Comentarius in Epistolam ad Romanos*, 5.12, PG 124, col. 404C.

¹⁹⁸ F. Titelmans, *Collationes quinque...*, op. cit., f. 128v.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, f. 122r-v.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, f. 117v.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, f. 129r.

²⁰² Titelmans referred to this work in other places, for example discussing Rom. 5:7, *Ibid.*, f. 110v; however, did not bring Pseudo-Jerome up in the relation to Rom. 5:12. Erasmus, on the contrary, invoked the authority of this commentary several times: D. Erasmus, "Responsio ad Collationes", op. cit., col. 988F. D. Erasmus, *Annotationes in Nouum Testamentum (pars tertia)...*, op. cit., pp. 144–146. Pseudo Jerome was also the only patristic authority invoked in the earliest version of annotations, see: D. Erasmus, *Annotations on Romans*, ed. R.D. Sider, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 1994, CWE 56, p. 152, n. 2.

²⁰³ On the authorship of this commentary and numerous interpolations see: A. Souter, *Pelagius's Expositions of Thirteen Epistles of St. Paul. I Introduction*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1922.

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 prism²⁰⁴. According to Christine Christ-von Wedel, this historicity was the most remarkable element of Erasmian theological method²⁰⁵. 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 that they had considered every aspect of Paul's letters: "Nihil equidem addubito, quin sanctitate conspicui uiri illi et eruditione praeclari, insuper et affectibus liberrimi, multo purius, interius, exactiusque omnia perpenderit atque perspexerint, quam nos homunculi illis neque ex infimo conferendi uariis affectionibus subditi uarieque affecti ualeamus sive expendere siue perspicere"²⁰⁶. 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.²⁰⁷

5.2.3 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 novelties²⁰⁸. Thus, the Franciscan assembled some additional arguments using two very diverse methodologies: humanist and scholastic.

As we have already seen in the case of Theophylactus, 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

²⁰⁴ More on Erasmus' use of Fathers in his annotations on Romans see: C. Houth Vrangbaek, *Patristic Concepts of Original Sin in Erasmus' Annotationes in Epistulam ad Romanos*, [in:] *Authority Revisited: towards Thomas More and Erasmus in 1516*, eds. W. François et al., Brepols, Turnhout 2020, pp. 193–217. See also: M. Vessey, *Erasmus and the Church Fathers*, [in:] *A Companion to Erasmus*, ed. E. MacPhail, Brill, Leiden 2023, pp. 24–44.

²⁰⁵ C. Christ-von Wedel, *Erasmus of Rotterdam: Advocate of a New Christianity*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 2013, p. 10. She also claimed that "Erasmus turned the theologian into a historian", *Ibid.*, p. 87.

²⁰⁶ F. Titelmans, *Collationes quinque...*, op. cit., f. 124v.

²⁰⁷ Cf. F. Titelmans, "Prologus apologeticus", op. cit., f. c 8r: "Semper tamen illud est observandum, ut ne quid nimis".

²⁰⁸ Cf. F. Titelmans, *Collationes quinque...*, op. cit., f. 126r.

changing the third person into the first hardly altered the meaning. Even here he suspected that Erasmus might have wanted to emphasise individual actions in contrast to the grace of God. Yet, admitting it to be no more than a suspicion, he dropped the matter²⁰⁹. Erasmus professed the change to be merely an error²¹⁰. He claimed it must have crept into his translation from an English manuscript, meaning probably *codex Leicestersiensis*, which was one of the codices that he had inspected while in England²¹¹. 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 cause²¹². 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 $\delta\iota\alpha$ was used with accusative it was translated as *propter*, for instance thrice in Rom. 4:23-25, while when it was used with genitive it was rendered with *per*²¹³. He also pointed out that Erasmus himself had always translated $\delta\iota\alpha$ 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 ten words changed with no harm to the meaning than have the least of words altered in such a manner as to diminish the truth.²¹⁴

Erasmus considered Titelmans' 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' points "an ignorant fantasy" and cited in his support Ps. 43(44):22, where *propter* was used in a causal sense²¹⁵. Nevertheless, Erasmus had made a mistake and his derogatory response was clearly intended to mask this fact.

Moreover, 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 another²¹⁶. The same quality was present in the Greek verb $\delta\iota\tilde{\eta}\lambda\theta\epsilon\iota\nu$, a compound verb including

²⁰⁹ Ibid., f. 115r.

²¹⁰ D. Erasmus, "Responsio ad Collationes", op. cit., 986E-F.

²¹¹ On codices used by Erasmus see: E. Rummel, *Erasmus' Annotations on the New Testament: From Philologist to Theologian*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 1986, pp. 35-42.

²¹² F. Titelmans, *Collationes quinque...*, op. cit., f. 115r.

²¹³ Ibid., f. 115v.

²¹⁴ Ibid., f. 116r.

²¹⁵ D. Erasmus, "Responsio ad Collationes", op. cit., col. 986B: "Indoctum somnium".

²¹⁶ F. Titelmans, *Collationes quinque...*, op. cit., f. 116r.

a preposition διὰ, which corresponds to Latin *per*.²¹⁷ 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.²¹⁸

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.²¹⁹ 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 a death of soul.²²⁰ Thus, following Erasmus' 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 valid²²¹. 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 false²²². 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

²¹⁷ Ibid., f. 116r.

²¹⁸ Ibid., f. 116r.

²¹⁹ D. Erasmus, "Responsio ad Collationes", op. cit., col. 986D.

²²⁰ F. Titelmans, *Collationes quinque...*, op. cit., f. 130r-v.

²²¹ Ibid., ff. 130v-131r.

²²² Ibid., f. 131r-v.

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.²²³

All such logical problems were resolved if one accepted that Paul had spoken of original sin in Rom. 5:12²²⁴. 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 of whether one understood death to be physical or that of soul, both premisses were true and so was causality²²⁵.

Titelmans triumphed. He admonished Erasmus that departing from the tradition he run into innumerable problems: "Vide autem, quanti id periculi foret, si in aeditione tua latina ... a ueteri ueritate discedens et a patribus te segregans pronunciatum aliquod ponas, cuius ueritas rite tueri non possit"²²⁶. The Franciscan also explained in parenthesis, why Erasmus and others run into such a threat: "quae licet uersio tua sit secundum latinitatis dictionem, Pauli tamen scriptura secundum sententiarum ueritatem reputatur et ut diuina ueritas diuinaque scriptura legitur"²²⁷. For Titelmans it was not enough to translate according to *latinitatis dictionem*; one had to follow *diuina ueritas*, which had always resided in the Catholic Church. Philology was not sufficient to comprehend the deepest meaning of Divine Scriptures, which exceeded human understanding.

Erasmus did not think it worthy to respond to such arguments and considered such speculations a waste of time²²⁸. In fact, he was particularly prejudiced against logic²²⁹. 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.

5.2.4 Translation, reforms, and the Church

Countering Titelmans' attack, Erasmus asked, why, if the changes he had introduced to Rom. 5:12 were allegedly so heretical, Jan Briart, the dean of Leuven's faculty of theology, had found

²²³ Ibid., ff. 131v-132r.

²²⁴ Ibid., f. 132r.

²²⁵ Ibid., f. 132v.

²²⁶ Ibid., f. 132v.

²²⁷ Ibid., f. 132v.

²²⁸ D. Erasmus, "Responsio ad Collationes", op. cit., col. 992B.

²²⁹ D. Erasmus Roterodamus, *Ratio seu Methodus. Compendio perveniendi ad veram theologiam*, [in:] *Ausgewählte Werke*, ed. H. Holborn, Beck, München 1964, p. 187.

no fault with them, when he had been asked to give a theological evaluation of *Novum Instrumentum* in 1516²³⁰. 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. "Verum non omnibus ea est pietatis affectio. ... Ex his, licet plerosque uideamus ab Ecclesia per dies singulos segregari, ac noua sibi confingere pessima dogmata, nouasque oppidatim synagogas Sathanae certatim erigere"²³¹. The Church had a maternal responsibility to win them back to the true faith²³². Erasmus's greatest sin was, according to the Franciscan, that he undermined the authority of the Church and thwarted her efforts.²³³

Erasmus repeatedly assured that he had never challenged the dogma of original sin, but merely suggested that Rom. 5:12 could be interpreted also in a different way. He professed to believe in this dogma thanks to other scriptural proofs and, above all else, the authority of the Church²³⁴. 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 neither named nor dated. He claimed it had forbidden to interpret Rom. 5:12 in any other sense than that of original sin²³⁵. Erasmus, who identified the council as that of Milev from 416, refused to take her pronouncements as binding²³⁶. It had merely been a local council, he argued, and such councils had decreed many things that no medieval catholic theologian held to be true. For example, he invoked Hilary's testimony about

²³⁰ D. Erasmus, "Responsio ad Collationes", op. cit., 985C.

²³¹ F. Titelmans, *Collationes quinque...*, op. cit., f. 126r.

²³² Cf. Ibid., f. 126r.

²³³ Ibid., f. 125r.

²³⁴ D. Erasmus, "Responsio ad Collationes", op. cit., col. 988A. Erasmus pointed out that the doctrine of original sin could be more plainly demonstrated from Job 14:4-5 and Ps 51(50):7. On how seriously he took the charge of Pellagianism see: D.L. Drysdall, *The 'Youth Who Would Teach His Elders' and the Final Version of Erasmus' Annotations*, "Erasmus Studies", 2006, vol. 26, no. 1, pp. 67-69.

²³⁵ F. Titelmans, *Collationes quinque...*, op. cit., f. 129v.

²³⁶ The Council of Milev is known from its letter sent to pope Innocens, see: *S. Aureli Augustini Hipponensis Episcopi Epistuale*, ep. 176, ed. A. Goldbacher, 1904, CSEL 44, pp. 663-668. Cf. H.-J. Sieben, *Die Konzilsidee der Alten Kirche.*, Schönningh, Paderborn 1979, Konziliengeschichte. Reihe B: Untersuchungen, p. 75. The authority of this Council was invoked in the Council of Trent: Concilium Tridentinum, Sesio V (sub Paulo III) die 17 iunii 1546, Decretum super peccato originali, *Ut fides nostra*, 4 [in:] A. Baron and H. Pietras, *Dokumenty Soborów Powszechnych...*, op. cit., vol. 4, p. 238.

the council of Sirmium, which had anathemised all who claimed the Holy Spirit was uncreated God²³⁷.

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 exhortation²³⁸. In the history of the Church, he asserted, increase in dogmatic rigidity was usually accompanied with decrease of moral uprightness²³⁹. 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"²⁴⁰.

According to Titelmans, this was no time for such nuances. Old heresies were reappearing, and Erasmus's arguments removed weapons from the hands of defenders of orthodoxy²⁴¹. 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 scholastics²⁴². 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 claims²⁴³. The Council of Trent agreed with Titelmans on this point, citing Rom. 5:12 as one of the proof-texts for the doctrine of the original sin²⁴⁴.

²³⁷ D. Erasmus, "Responsio ad Collationes", op. cit., col. 989C. Hilarius Pictaviensis, *Liber de Synodis seu Fide Orientalium*, PL 10, col. 511.

²³⁸ Cf. Allen, ep. 1334, vol. V, p. 178: "Imo hoc demum est eruditionis theologicae, nihil ultra quam sacris literis proditum est, definire; verum id quod proditum est, bona fide dispensare. Multa problemata nunc reiiciuntur ad Synodum οἰκουμένην: multo magis conueniebat quaestiones eiusmodi in illud reiicere tempus quum subalto speculo et aenigmate, videbimus Deum de facie". Ironically, the addressee of the letter was a brother of Charles of Carondelet, who was Titelmans' patron.

²³⁹ Cf. Allen, ep. 1334, vol. V, p. 180-181: "Tandem fides in scriptis potius quam in animis esse coepit, ac pene tot erant fides quot homines. Creuerunt articuli, sed decreuit synceritas: afferbuit contentio, refrixit charitas".

²⁴⁰ D. Erasmus, *Annotationes in Nouum Testamentum (pars tertia)*..., op. cit., pp. 164-166: "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. F. Titelmans, *Collationes quinque*..., op. cit., f. 124r.

²⁴¹ F. Titelmans, *Collationes quinque*..., op. cit. ff. 127v-128r.

²⁴² D. Erasmus, "Responsio ad Collationes", op. cit., col. 985C.

²⁴³ For instance, Menno Simons, Sebastian Frank and Balthasar Hubmaier; for further reference see R. Coogan, *Erasmus, Lee and the Correction of the Vulgate*..., op. cit., pp. 50-51.

²⁴⁴ Concilium Tridentinum, Sessio V (sub Paulo III) die 17 iunii 1546, Decretum super peccato originali, *Ut fides nostra*, 4 [in:] A. Baron and H. Pietras, *Dokumenty Soborów Powszechnych*..., op. cit., vol. 4, p. 238: "Quoniam non aliter intelligendum est id, quod dicit Apostolus: Per unum hominem peccatum intravit in mundum, et per peccatum mors, et ita in omnes homines mors pertransiit, in quo omnes peccaverunt, nisi quemadmodum ecclesia catholica ubique diffusa semper intellexit. Propter hanc enim regulam fidei ex traditione apostolorum etiam parvuli, qui nihil peccatorum in semetipsis adhuc committere potuerunt, ideo in remissionem peccatorum veraciter baptizantur, ut in eis regeneratione mundetur, quod generatione contraxerunt".

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,²⁴⁵ 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.²⁴⁶ 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.²⁴⁷ 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 the 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-alls," would interpret the Bible as it pleased them, with no reference to the Church's authority²⁴⁸. 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 everyone interpret it for himself?

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

²⁴⁵ Cf. F. Titelmans, "Prologus apologeticus", op. cit., f. d2v.

²⁴⁶ See especially Titelmans' concept of the migration of the Word of God: Ibid., f. a2v-a4r. Cf. T.K. Mantyk, *Migracje słowa Bożego, czyli obrona wartości Wulgaty według Franciszka Titelmansa*, "Biblical Annals", 2019, vol. 9, no. 3, *Migracje*, pp. 532–534.

²⁴⁷ Cf. J.C. Paget, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Second Century*, [in:] *The New Cambridge History of the Bible: From the Beginnings to 600*, eds. J.C. Paget and J. Schaper, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2013, p. 565.

²⁴⁸ F. Titelmans, "Prologus apologeticus", op. cit., ff. b5v–b6r: "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".

known at the time²⁴⁹. Surely, the criticism of Titelmans was exaggerated and often unjust. But it was not completely off the mark. Under the pretence of objectivity of his method, Erasmus somehow arrived at an interpretation of Rom. 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 philologist²⁵⁰. 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 translations²⁵¹.

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. It was the tradition of the Church that gave authority to the Bible more than the other way around. Titelmans argued similarly in his work devoted to the Book of Revelation, to which we shall now turn.

5.3. Defending the Vulgate in practice: the authority of the Apocalypse

5.3.1 *The problem of Apocalypse's canonicity*

The Book of Revelation is in many ways the most original of all New Testament writings. It is the only canonical Christian apocalyptic text and from the very beginning it was treated with suspicion by some. It enjoyed considerable popularity among pre-Nicene Christians, yet their chiliastic theology became something of an embarrassment for the future generations²⁵². In the West it was generally regarded as canonical and was included in the Muratorian Canon and commented upon by numerous Fathers²⁵³. The Greek East had more doubts, and the Book of Revelation was not included as canonical neither by Cyril of Jerusalem, nor the Apostolic Canons,

²⁴⁹ On the unreliability of manuscripts used by Erasmus see: J.K. Elliott, "The Text of the New Testament", op. cit., p. 243.

²⁵⁰ Cf. J. Christians, *Erasmus and the New Testament: Humanist Scholarship or Theological Convictions?*, "Trinity Journal", 1998, vol. 19, no. 1, pp. 51–80.

²⁵¹ F. Titelmans, "Prologus apologeticus", op. cit., f. b5v. Titelmans observed that discrepancies in translation between those, who claimed to faithfully translate from the Greek original made 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 as mistaken on the philological ground, see: D. Erasmus, *Apologia ad Iacobum Fabrum Stapulensem*, ed. A.W. Steenbeek, Elsevier, Amsterdam 1996, ASD IX–3.

²⁵² On early Christian millenarism see: J.D. Tabor, *Ancient Jewish and early Christian millennialism*, [in:] *The Oxford handbook of millennialism*, ed. C.L. Wessinger, Oxford University Press, New York 2011, pp. 252–266.

²⁵³ On Muratorian canon see: C.K. Rothschild, *The Muratorian Fragment: Text, Translation, Commentary*, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen 2022, Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum 132. Apocalypse was commented upon by: Iustinus Martyr, *Iustini Martyris Apologiae pro Christianis. Iustini Martyris Dialogus cum Tryphone*, op. cit., pp. 210–212. Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses*, 5.31.2-5.36, eds. A. Rousseau, L. Doutreleau, and C. Mercier, 1969, SC 153, pp. 392–466. P. Prigent and R. Stehly, *Les fragments du De Apocalypsi d'Hippolyte*, "Theologische Zeitschrift", 1973, vol. 29, no. 5, pp. 313–333.

nor the Council of Laodicea²⁵⁴. The uncertainty notwithstanding, it was commonly used in liturgy and Church's life.

At the beginning of the 16th century both biblical humanism and reformations re-opened the debate about the status of the Book of Revelation. Erasmus of Rotterdam criticised it on philological grounds, while Martin Luther distrusted it because of its theological content. Both men were suspicious about allegorical language of the Apocalypse and considered it of minor value, if at all inspired. It was especially Erasmus' criticism that alarmed Titelmans and spurred the young scholar to publishing a defence of its authority.

Erasmus' doubts about the Apocalypse were voiced in his *Annotationes* of 1516. In the final note on Rev 22:20 he included a mini essay on the canonicity of this text, which he expanded significantly in the 1522 edition²⁵⁵. According to Irena Backus, the Humanists frustration with the Apocalypse stemmed partly from his difficulties in obtaining a reliable copy of its Greek text²⁵⁶. In fact, he only had at his disposal a 12th century manuscript that he obtained via Reuchlin. It lacked the last six verses of the Greek text that Erasmus retranslated into Greek from Latin (from the fourth edition onwards he used the text derived from the Complutensian Polyglot). In the *Annotationes*, however, there was no mention of difficulties with manuscripts.

Erasmus' reservations regarding Apocalypse's canonicity rested on factors both internal and external to the text. In the 1516 edition he emphasised the former²⁵⁷. He noted that the use of author's name, *ego Ioannes*, was unusual for John the Evangelist, as well as for New Testament's authors in general. Paul, speaking of his own mystical experiences in 2Cor. 12:11 referred to himself in the third person. The authorship itself was dubious, since some Greek codices called the author John the Theologian, rather than the Evangelist. Besides, some of the book's content was used by heretics, which cast further doubts. The most important argument stemming from the text itself was its highly allegorical language, different from plain apostolic preaching. "Ad haec quosdam eruditissimos viros totum hoc argumentum ceu fictum multis conuitiis insectatos fuisse, quasi nihil haberet apostolicae grauitatis, sed vulgatam tantum rerum historiam figurarum inuolucris adumbratam"²⁵⁸. Unlike Gospels, Acts and epistles, that gave historical information and contained edifying moral teachings, the Book of Revelation included only obscure allegories that

²⁵⁴ Cyrilius Hierosolymitanus, *Catecheses*, 4.36, PG 33, col. 499-502. Apostolic Canons: B.F. Westcott, *A General Survey of the History of the Canon of the New Testament*, Macmillan, Cambridge 1870, 3rd ed., pp. 504-505. Council of Laodicea: B.F. Westcott, *A General Survey of the History of the Canon of the New Testament*, Macmillan, Cambridge 1881, 5th ed., p. 433.

²⁵⁵ D. Erasmus, *Annotationes in Nouum Testamentum (pars sexta)*, ed. P.F. van Poll-van de Lisdonk, Brill, Leiden 2014, ASD VI-10, pp. 612-619.

²⁵⁶ Cf. I. Backus, *Reformation Readings of the Apocalypse: Geneva, Zurich, and Wittenberg*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2000, p. 3. I. Backus, *The Church Fathers and the Canonicity of the Apocalypse in the Sixteenth Century: Erasmus, Frans Titelmans, and Theodore Beza*, "The Sixteenth Century Journal", 1998, vol. 29, no. 3, p. 652.

²⁵⁷ D. Erasmus, *Annotationes in Nouum Testamentum (pars sexta)*..., op. cit., p. 612.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., p.612.

lacked apostolic seriousness. Erasmus did not specify who were the learned men on whose authority he relied here, but it was clear that allegorical character of the Revelation was contrary to his own taste²⁵⁹.

Apart from the argument from *viri eduditi* regarding the content of the Apocalypse Erasmus mustered some other arguments external to the text. He noted that in the times of Jerome the Greek Church did not recognise the canonicity of this book. Besides Dorotheus, bishop of Tyre, affirmed that John wrote the Gospel while at Patmos, but was silent about the Apocalypse. In the 1516 edition he provided no further patristic evidence, but he expanded this significantly in the 1522 one. There he added several testimonies derived from Eusebius of Caesarea's Ecclesiastical History and that of Jerome's letter to Dardanus. First, he invoked Dionisius of Alexandria, who dismissed Cerinthus as its alleged author and attributed the book to some John other than the Evangelist²⁶⁰. The idea of Cerinthus' authorship appealed to Erasmus, as it was confirmed also by Gaius, an orthodox author cited by Eusebius; it was however eventually rejected by him²⁶¹. After all, God could not suffer that a work of a heretic would pass for an inspired text for so long²⁶². He also recognised that some of the oldest fathers, such as Irenaeus and Justin commented on the Revelation. He was aware that both of these fathers adhered to chiliastic beliefs, just as Victorinus of Poetovio and Apollinarius. According to Jerome, the Book of Revelation was disputed at his time in the East, just as the Letter to the Hebrews was in the West. Therefore, in Erasmus' eyes the Revelation was of doubtful canonicity, due to its allegorical style and ambiguous patristic testimony. He did not dare, however, to expunge it from the canon. Rather, he concluded with a more general remark: "Inter gemmas etiam nonnihil est discriminis et aurum est auro purius ac probatius. In sacris quoque rebus aliud est alio sacratius". The Book of Revelation was for Erasmus clearly the least "holy" of all the New Testament.

Erasmus' doubts about the canonical status of the Revelation were met with little response. In fact, in 1516 his opinion did not seem very controversial, as many other Catholic writers from the first half of the 16th century expressed doubts about the canonicity of some biblical writings. Cajetan shared Luther's suspicion regarding the letter of James and refused to comment the Revelation, for its literal sense was completely unclear to him²⁶³. Jean de Gaigny also commented that there were doubts about this book's authorship, but that it should be received by the virtue of

²⁵⁹ He might have referred to Eusebius Caesariensis, *Histoire Ecclésiastique*, 7.25.1-3, ed. G. Bardy, 1955, SC 41, vol. 2, pp. 204–205.

²⁶⁰ D. Erasmus, *Annotationes in Nouum Testamentum (pars sexta)*..., op. cit., p. 614. Eusebius Caesariensis, *Histoire Ecclésiastique*, 7.25.6, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 206.

²⁶¹ Eusebius Caesariensis, *Histoire Ecclésiastique*, 3.28.1-2, ed. G. Bardy, 1952, SC 31, vol. 1, pp. 137–138.

²⁶² D. Erasmus, *Annotationes in Nouum Testamentum (pars sexta)*..., op. cit., p. 216.

²⁶³ Cf. D. Janz, *Cajetan: A Thomist Reformer?*, "Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme", 1982, vol. 6, no. 2, p. 96.

Church's acceptance²⁶⁴. Thus, also Erasmus' conditional acceptance did not seem highly scandalous. In fact, Titelmans was the first author to have taken a serious issue with Erasmus' argumentation. Irena Backus observed – unfairly, as we have argued in this dissertation – that Titelmans “opposed practically all that Erasmus stood for”. Yet she admitted that this was not the reason enough to explain his defence of the Revelation. Instead, Titelmans sensed that diminishing Apocalypse's canonicity threatened all established tradition and Church's authority²⁶⁵. As we hope to demonstrate, it was even more than that.

His defence of the authority of the Book of Revelation was intended as prolegomena to a commentary on it, which he, however, never wrote. It was necessary because “hac nostra tempestate improbi quidam erronei, qui iudicio sanctae Ecclesiae relicto loquuntur quaecunque ipsis visa fuerint, et mente corrupti blasphemant quaecunque non intellexerint multis modis libro huic detrahere conspiciantur, et fidem omnem abrogare”²⁶⁶. He made no secret that the main culprit was Erasmus, to whom he addressed the preface. The humanists put together various arguments against Apocalypse's authority in such a persuasive fashion that a reader could hardly fail to accept his conclusions²⁶⁷. Titelmans, however, claimed that Erasmus' arguments once put under scrutiny fell one after another. “Caetera, post solidiorem discussionem et exactius iudicium comperi parum admodum habere probabilitatis, aut minimo negotio posse rationabiliter dissolui, quae prima facie apparentia admodum uisa fuerant”²⁶⁸. He claimed that Erasmus' arguments were often based on misinterpretation, selective reading, mistaken citations, exaggerations and so on. Thus, Titelmans intended to show weakness of Erasmus' claims and provide arguments that supported the canonicity of the Book. Somewhat counterintuitively, he started with the latter in book one, and devoted book two to the former.

Titelmans' work had a strong polemical edge to it. He sent his work in manuscript to Erasmus before the publication as he asserted in the preface²⁶⁹. He claimed that he did not want to criticise Erasmus behind his back, as the Humanist often did. In order to emphasise his honesty, he even reprinted Erasmus' argumentation in its entirety, so that a reader could evaluate himself the strength of the Humanist's claims²⁷⁰. Erasmus did not respond to Titelmans. Instead in

²⁶⁴ J. Gaigny, *Brevissima et Facillima in Omnes Divi Pauli Epistolas Scholia, vltra priores editiones, ex antiquissimis Graecorum authoribus, abunde locupletata. Itidem in Septem Canonicas Epistolas et D. Joannis Apocalypsin, breuissima scholia recens edita*, Simon Colinaeus, Parisiis 1543, ff. 198v-199r.

²⁶⁵ I. Backus, *Reformation Readings of the Apocalypse...*, op. cit., p. 14.

²⁶⁶ F. Titelmans, *Libri duo de autoritate libri Apocalypsis...*, op. cit., f. a2r.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, ff. a2v-a3r.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, ff. a3r-v.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, f. a3v. Cf. Allen, ep. 2417, vol. IX, pp. 99-102. Titelmans mentioned sending his work on the Apocalypse in F. Titelmans, *Epistola Apologetica Fratris Francisci Titelmanni Hasselensis pro opere Collationum ad veteris Ecclesiasticae interpretationis Novi Testamenti defensionem aedito, as Desyderium Erasmum Roterdamum, sacrae Theologiae professorem*, Guilielmus Vorstermannus, Antuerpiae 1530, f. e6r-v. Cf. Allen, ep. 2245, vol. VIII, p. 312.

²⁷⁰ F. Titelmans, *Libri duo de autoritate libri Apocalypsis...*, op. cit., ff. a5v-a7v.

February 1530 he wrote to his Franciscan brethren complaining about a loquacious critic from Brabant (i.e. Titelmans) and another one from Spain (Carvajal) and admonishing friars to stop these unlearned donkeys²⁷¹. No further polemic followed and both men never returned to their feud.

It is worth noting that in 1520s Erasmus was not the only famous critic of the Apocalypse. Luther expressed his serious doubts about it too, however on very different grounds²⁷². In the preface to his 1522 translation of the New Testament he found the Book of Revelation wanting not on philological but theological level²⁷³. Like Erasmus, he was mistrustful of the allegorical language of this book and lamented that no other biblical text spoke so obscurely about Christ. Christocentrism, and especially the doctrine of the justification by faith, were Luther's criteria to determine canonicity of biblical writings. The Book of Revelation fell short in them. Somewhat surprisingly, however, his position shifted in the late 1520s and by 1530 he recommended the Revelation as an allegory of the decay of the Roman Church²⁷⁴. Titelmans ignored Luther's arguments, even though his allusions to "prefaces in vernacular" suggest that he was aware of them²⁷⁵.

5.3.2 Patristic authorities

For Titelmans, the crux of the argument about Apocalypse's canonicity rested with the Fathers. He accused Erasmus of exaggerating ancient doubts about its status and claimed that there was a universal agreement of Catholic Fathers regarding this book. He was not so naïve as to claim that there were no dissident voices. At the very beginning of the book one he admitted, not without a sense of shame, that there were in the past those who negated John's authorship and indeed an inspired character of the Apocalypse. Some even ascribed it to a heretic Cerinthus. He invoked testimony of Dionisius of Alexandria and that of Gaius, both cited in *Historia Ecclesiastica* and used by Erasmus²⁷⁶. He discussed these testimonies at some length offering a simple solution: none of those who doubted the canonicity of the Revelation was a man of any standing in the early community. In fact, Dionisius and Gaius provided no names of such critics, which suggested that they were distinguished neither by learning, nor by orthodoxy, nor the sanctity of life²⁷⁷.

Recognised authorities had a very different position on this book:

²⁷¹ Allen, ep. 2275, vol. VIII, pp. 364-365.

²⁷² Cf. I. Backus, *Reformation Readings of the Apocalypse...*, op. cit., pp. 6–8.

²⁷³ M. Luther, *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe. Die Deutsche Bibel*, ed. G. Bebermeyer, Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, Weimar 1931, vol. 7, p. 404.

²⁷⁴ His 1530 preface: *Ibid.*, pp. 406–421. The 1546 preface was identical.

²⁷⁵ F. Titelmans, *Libri duo de autoritate libri Apocalypsis...*, op. cit., f. k2v.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, f. b1r

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, ff. b3r-v; d4r-v.

Eudentissimus enim ac ualidissimus sanctorum atque eruditissimorum patrum autoritatibus contraria sententia demonstrari potest, nimirum esse librum hunc Apocalypsis diuinam scripturam, Spiritu Sancto conscriptam: cui (quantumuis non intelligatur) summa debeatur, sicut et caeteris diuinae scripturae libris reuerentia, ac debere intra numerum Canoniarum recipi scripturarum²⁷⁸.

Titelmans proceeded to list ancient authorities who testified to Revelation's canonicity. First came Jerome. He acknowledged in the letter to Dardanus that some in the East had doubts about it, just as others in the West doubted about the Letter to Hebrews, but he nevertheless accepted both texts as inspired²⁷⁹. Next, Titelmans cited a long passage from Dionysius of Alexandria, who accepted Revelation's authority despite some reservations that he articulated²⁸⁰. He continued to list other authorities: Augustine, popes Innocent I and Gelasius and the third Carthaginian Synod²⁸¹. These authorities and above all else the fact that the book was in constant use in the Church were sufficient for him to safeguard the canonicity of the Revelation.

Although the inspired character of the Book of Revelation was thus considered proven by Titelmans, he acknowledged that some Fathers expressed doubts about its authorship²⁸². Such reservations did not negate the Book's authority, for whoever wrote it (son of Zebedee or else) was clearly a saint. Nevertheless, in order to confront these uncertainties, the Franciscan felt the need to dig even deeper, back to the earliest patristic testimonies. He cited the testimony of Papias, reported by Eusebius, about two Johns active in Ephesus: the Evangelist and the Presbyter²⁸³. Both were acceptable as potential authors. Titelmans thought, however, that he could prove the apostolic authorship of the Apocalypse. The son of Zebedee was exiled on Patmos, where the Book was written, unlike the Presbyter. His exile was affirmed by testimonies of Eusebius, Irenaeus, Clemens, Jerome and Dionysius the Areopagite²⁸⁴.

²⁷⁸ Ibid., f. b4r

²⁷⁹ Ibid., f. b4r-v. Cf. Hieronymus, *Epistulae*, ep. 129, ed. I. Hilberg, 1918, CSEL 56, p. 169: "hanc epistulam, quae scribitur ad Hebraeos [...] Quodsi eam latinorum consuetudo non recipit inter scripturas canonicas, nec graecorum quidem Ecclesiae Apocalypsin Iohannis eadem libertate suscipiunt, et tamen nos utramque suscipimus nequaquam huius temporis consuetudinem sed ueterum scriptorum auctoritatem sequentes, qui plerumque utriusque abutuntur testimoniis, non ut interdum de apocryphis facere solent - quippe et gentilium litterarum raro utantur exemplis - sed quasi canonicis et ecclesiasticis".

²⁸⁰ F. Titelmans, *Libri duo de autoritate libri Apocalypsis...*, op. cit., ff. b4v-b5r. Cf. Eusebius Caesariensis, *Histoire Ecclésiastique*, 7.25, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 204-210.

²⁸¹ F. Titelmans, *Libri duo de autoritate libri Apocalypsis...*, op. cit., f. b5r. Cf. Augustinus Hipponensis, *De doctrina christiana*, 2.8, op. cit., p. 40. Innocent's Letter to Exuperius Tholosanus see: B.F. Westcott, *A General Survey of the History of the Canon of the New Testament...*, op. cit., p. 570. Synod of Carthage see: Ibid., p. 440. On Decretum Gelasianum see: E. von Dobschütz, *Das Decretum Gelasianum de libris recipiendis et non recipiendis*, Hinrichs, Leipzig 1912.

²⁸² F. Titelmans, *Libri duo de autoritate libri Apocalypsis...*, op. cit., f. b6v.

²⁸³ Ibid. f. b7v. Cf. Eusebius Caesariensis, *Histoire Ecclésiastique*, 3.39.4, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 154.

²⁸⁴ F. Titelmans, *Libri duo de autoritate libri Apocalypsis...*, op. cit., ff. c2v-c5r. Cf. Eusebius Caesariensis, *Histoire Ecclésiastique*, 3.18, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 121. Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses*, 3.3.4, eds. A. Rousseau and L. Doutreleau, 1974, SC 211, p. 44. Clemens Alexandrinus, *Quis dives salvetur*, 42, PG 9, col. 647. Hieronymus, "De uiris Illustribus", 9, op. cit., p. 13. Dionysius Areopagite, *Epistolae*, ep. 10, PG 3, col. 1117-1120. English translation see: Pseudo-Dionysius, *The complete works*, tran. C. Luibheid, Paulist, New York 1987, pp. 288-289.

The last of these authorities was by far the strongest, for Dionysius was Paul's disciple and a contemporary of John²⁸⁵. In his work *De ecclesiastica hierarchia*, he included the Revelation in the canon, as a text of John the Apostle, son of Zebedee, and ascribed great authority to it. Titelmans cited a passus from Dionysius about the utility of all holy Scriptures and identified the Apocalypse with "arcana et mystica uisio", which, according to Dionysius, was second only to Gospels themselves in terms of sanctity and authority²⁸⁶. To understand Dionysius better he invoked Lefevre's preface to his edition of Areopagite's works²⁸⁷. The choice of the French Humanist was probably not accidental: it served to emphasise that even humanists opposed Erasmus' view about the Revelation.

Dionysius was by no means an unproblematic authority. The authenticity of his writings was suspected already in the Middle Ages and was clearly rejected by Valla and Erasmus²⁸⁸. There were, however, also those who defended him all the way into the seventeenth century²⁸⁹. Titelmans was aware of these problems, yet instead of discussing this issue himself, he directed a reader to a work of a contemporary Flemish scholar, Josse Clichtove²⁹⁰. This Parisian Doctor of Theology, in his work directed against Luther, defended traditional attribution of the mystical works in question to the Athenian converted by Saint Paul²⁹¹. He supported his argumentation with a testimony of John of Damascus as well as – unsurprisingly for a Parisian scholar – the tradition of Dionysius as the first bishop of Paris²⁹². For Titelmans these arguments from tradition were clearly persuasive therefore he did not hesitate to use Dionysius as his prime witness.

Having established the authority of the Book of Revelation on the basis the patristic agreement and the book's apostolic authorship Titelmans proceeded to demonstrate that the Revelation was accepted by the Church throughout the ages. He concentrated especially on the Greek Church, given that the Apocalypse was contested there at the time of Jerome. He claimed that Origen accepted it before Jerome's times, John of Damascus after and Chrysostom

²⁸⁵ F. Titelmans, *Libri duo de autoritate libri Apocalypsis...*, op. cit., f. c8v.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, ff. c7r-v. Cf. Dionysius Areopagite, *De ecclesiastica hierarchia*, 3.4, PG 3, col. 430. English translation: Pseudo-Dionysius, *The complete works...*, op. cit., p. 214.

²⁸⁷ F. Titelmans, *Libri duo de autoritate libri Apocalypsis...*, op. cit., f. c8r. Cf. Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples, *The prefatory epistles of Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples and related texts*, ep. 20, ed. Eugene F Rice, Columbia University Press, New York 1972, pp. 60–61.

²⁸⁸ Cf. L. Valla, *In Latinam Novi Testamenti interpretationem...*, op. cit., f. XXVv: "hic Dionysius an aliquid scripserit incertum est: cuius neque latini neque graeci meminerunt. At ne ipse quidem Gregorius indicat fuisse illum Ariopagitam qui hos libros qui in manibus versantur scripserit quorum authorem quidam nostrae aetatis eruditissimi graeci colligunt fuisse". D. Erasmus, *Annotationes in Nouum Testamentum (pars secunda)*, ed. P.F. Hovingh, Elsevier, Amsterdam 2003, ASD VI–6, pp. 288–292.

²⁸⁹ Cf. J.-L. Quantin, *The Fathers in Seventeenth-Century Roman Catholic Theology*, [in:] *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West: from the Carolingians to the Maurists*, ed. I. Backus, Brill, Leiden 1997, p. 978. E. Wilberding, *A Defense of Dionysius the Areopagite by Rubens*, "Journal of the History of Ideas", 1991, vol. 52, no. 1, pp. 19–34.

²⁹⁰ F. Titelmans, *Libri duo de autoritate libri Apocalypsis...*, op. cit., ff. c8v-d1r. On Clichtove see: J.-P. Massaut, *Josse Clichtove, l'humanisme et la réforme du clergé*, Belles Lettres, Paris 1968.

²⁹¹ J. Clichtoveus, *Antilutherus, tres libros complectens*, Petrus Quentell, Coloniae 1525, ff. VIIIv-XXIr.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, ff. XIr-XVr.

contemporaneously with the Stridonite²⁹³. These witnesses nullified Erasmus' suggestion as if the Revelation was not received in the Greek Church in the early centuries²⁹⁴. In the Latin world, Titelmans asserted, there was no shortage of witnesses to Apocalypse's authenticity, especially after the time of Augustine²⁹⁵. He listed authors of commentaries on the Apocalypse: Vicotrinus Petavionensis, Tychonius, Casiodorus, Apringius of Beja, Isidor of Sevilla, Bede the Venerable, Alcuinus, Haimo, Rabanus Maurus, Ambrose Ansbert, Rupert of Deutz, Richard of St. Victor and Alexander of Hales²⁹⁶. Interestingly, Alexander of Hales was the only Franciscan that Titelmans mentioned. He ignored the entire tradition of Franciscan commentaries in the spirit of Joachim di Fiore (that of Petrus Iohannis Olivi being the most well-known²⁹⁷). A convenient choice, given a heterodox tint that this tradition bore. He also ignored millenarist tendencies of early patristic witnesses. He mentioned Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Melito of Sardis and Hippolytus of Rome as testimonies to the authenticity of the Book of Revelation, but, unlike Erasmus, disregarded entirely their theological interpretations of it²⁹⁸.

The aim of Titelmans was to prove beyond doubt that the Book of Revelation was accepted always and everywhere by orthodox Fathers. Those who negated its authority were minor, unlearned figures or even heretics. For the Franciscan it was the *consensus patrum*, or *consensus ecclesiae* that bestowed authority on biblical writings. Against such a consensus philological objections raised by Erasmus were but a trifle. Titelmans argued that paradoxically even the popularity of Apocalypse among heretics confirmed its canonicity, for heretics cited writings that Catholics considered as authoritative²⁹⁹. Erasmus, even though he professed his willingness to submit himself to the judgment of the Church, effectively challenged *consensus ecclesiae* and thus diminished her authority, opening the way to all sorts of new heresies. Titelmans considered Erasmus' arguments for doing so very weak and contested them in the second book of his work.

5.3.3 Criticism of Erasmus

In Titelmans' eyes Erasmus was guilty non only of challenging ecclesiastical consensus, but also of doing it on very insufficient grounds. The Franciscan accused the Humanist of exaggerating doubts that ancient authors held, selectively citing ancient sources as to hide arguments to the

²⁹³ F. Titelmans, *Libri duo de autoritate libri Apocalypsis...*, op. cit., ff. c5v-c6r.

²⁹⁴ Ibid., ff. d2r-d3r.

²⁹⁵ Ibid., f. c4r.

²⁹⁶ Ibid., ff. d6r-d7r.

²⁹⁷ Petrus Iohannis Olivi, *Lectura super Apocalypsim*, ed. W. Lewis, Franciscan Institute Publications, Saint Bonaventure 2015. On controversies regarding this commentary see: D. Burr, *Olivi's Peaceable Kingdom: A Reading of the Apocalypse Commentary*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia 2016.

²⁹⁸ F. Titelmans, *Libri duo de autoritate libri Apocalypsis...*, op. cit., f. d5v. Cf. D. Erasmus, *Annotaciones in Nouum Testamentum (pars sexta)...*, op. cit., pp. 616–618.

²⁹⁹ F. Titelmans, *Libri duo de autoritate libri Apocalypsis...*, op. cit., f. d3r.

contrary and concentrating on insignificant details while misunderstanding the spiritual significance of the Book of Revelation. He responded to these arguments in the second part of his work, frequently repeating his arguments from the first part of the book and proceeding in a rather verbose way³⁰⁰.

First of all, Erasmus drew unsubstantiated conclusions from the evidence he cited. Neither testimonies of Jerome nor that of Dionysius of Alexandria suggested that the Book of Revelation was commonly rejected by ancients, as Erasmus would have his reader believe³⁰¹. Titelmans analysed each testimony brought up by Erasmus to show that they were much more ambiguous than Erasmus presented them. For instance, he cited the entire passage from *Historia Ecclesiastica* reporting Dionysius' words to demonstrate that while it mentioned those who rejected the Apocalypse, it also spoke of numerous brethren, who held it in high esteem. Thus, Titelmans castigated Erasmus for misrepresenting his sources:

Neque autem mirari satis, Erasme frater, qua ratione ista sic neque recte neque sincere contra veritatem adducis. Nam si inaduertentia aut negligentia factum dicas, aut in memoriae lapsum conicias, est profecto tibi ista non satis honesta patrocinatrix, neque excusatio sufficiens. Est enim aperta nimis partium istarum quas male iungis nimia distantia in omnibus huiusmodi quae Ecclesiasticas determinationes concernunt, nequaquam sat est, perfunctorie patrum quos citare uolueris auctoritatem inspicere, sed exactius oportet cuncta pensare: maxime in his quae auctoritati potius quam rationi innituntur³⁰².

In addition to pointing out imprecise use of sources by Erasmus, Titelmans added a somewhat contorted argumentation regarding the extent of suspicions that ancient authors had about the Apocalypse. For instance, he tried to differentiate between *dubitare* and *non liquido constare*. Dionysius of Alexandria did not doubt John's authorship, he merely could not affirm it with clarity³⁰³. Such hair-splitting distinctions must have seemed to Erasmus as a yet another example of scholastic folly, which he loathed.

Erasmus cited only those passages that conformed to his theses. Titelmans accused him of deliberate omission of some arguments, even though there were to be found in the same books that Erasmus cited.

Quod si forte in excusationem assumas, ista te non perpendisse, non legisse te cum ista scriberes pontificum conciliorumue decreta, ista antiquissima patrum testimonia non aduertisse, neque sic

³⁰⁰ Loquacity was one of the charges that Erasmus frequently brought against the Franciscan, see Allen, ep. 2300 vol. VIII, p. 406: "Titelmannus [...] iuuenis [...] petulantissime loquacitatis".

³⁰¹ F. Titelmans, *Libri duo de auctoritate libri Apocalypsis...*, op. cit., ff. d2v-d4v.

³⁰² *Ibid.*, f. h5v.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, f. h3r.

examinata habuisse, aut certe non occurrisset memoria, nihil te releuat excusatio, neque enim uerisimile est ista te non legisse, cum ex eisdem libris qui in contrarium ueritatis facere possunt, sollicite desumpseris, unde nos ueritatem monstrare laborauimus³⁰⁴.

Effectively this attested that both men had the very same sources at their disposal but differed greatly in their interpretation.

Apart from criticising Erasmus' use of patristic evidence, Titelmans sought also to counter some specific philological charges that Erasmus' brought against the Apocalypse. The Humanist commented that a triple use of the proper name of the author in the Book of Revelation was contrary to the practice of the John's Gospel author. Such a discrepancy put into doubt that both texts came from the same hand. Erasmus added that using proper name was contrary to the apostolic practice. Paul spoke of his own mystical visions in the third person (Cf. 2Cor. 12:11). The Franciscan found Erasmus' arguments much exaggerated. First, he cited argumentation of Ruper of Deutz, who claimed the use of the proper name was necessary to safeguard the acceptance of the book, given its difficult content³⁰⁵. Triple use of the name corresponded with three witnesses required by the Jewish Law. Titelmans added that also Paul used his name three times in his shortest letter, that to Philemon. Besides, he observed, historical books of the Old Testament usually bore no name of the author, but prophetic books did. The name of the author was necessary to ascertain the validity of prophecies, while historical books required no such authorisation. The Book of Revelation, being a prophetic text, rightly used the name of its author, unlike the historical Gospel of John³⁰⁶.

Another charge that Erasmus brought up, that of the author being called the Evangelist in some codices while Theologian in others, Titelmans rightly found somewhat ridiculous³⁰⁷. First, he commented that it was invented by the Humanist, as no earlier author used this argument. It made as much sense, Titelmans sarcastically observed, as distinguishing works of Cicero from those of Tullius. *Theologus* was a sobriquet commonly ascribed to John the Apostle in the Greek tradition, as Titelmans demonstrated on the bases of several testimonies³⁰⁸. Thus, Titelmans concluded, John the Evangelist and John the Theologian were clearly one and the same person.

³⁰⁴ Ibid., f. g1v.

³⁰⁵ Ibid., ff. e5r-e6r. Cf. Rupertus Tuitiensis, *Commentarium in Apocalypsim Iohannis apostoli*, PL 169, col. 848: "Quam ob causam iste dicturus siue narraturus hoc modo sui nominis positionem triplicat. Nunquid casu aut nomen suum dilatare studens inculcat et replicat. Non utique sed utilitati nostrae intendens reuelationes difficillimas quas conscribere ingreditur praemunit ac defendit ne contemnantur ne quod futurum erat ob sui difficultatem liber uituperetur et sensibus dignis carere iudicetur aut eius cuius est scilicet ioannis apostoli et euangelistae dilecti iesu christi esse denegetur".

³⁰⁶ F. Titelmans, *Libri duo de autoritate libri Apocalypsis...*, op. cit., ff. e6v-e8v.

³⁰⁷ Ibid., f. f2v

³⁰⁸ Ibid., ff. f3r-f6v.

He found it more challenging to dismiss obvious differences in literary style between John's Gospel and the Apocalypse. He conceded there were some stylistic differences between John's Gospel, epistles, and Revelation, but he claimed there were also significant similarities in style and theological concepts³⁰⁹. He listed several such similarities, did not, however, dwell much on questions of style. After all, stylistic nuances were but a trifle in confrontation with unanimous consensus of the Church. According to Titelmans the problem of Erasmus was that he gave more credence to unreliable and even heretical Greek tradition than to the Latin one³¹⁰. The problem was analogous to that of the revision of the New Testament's text, for which Erasmus preferred to follow heretical Greek codices than the sane western tradition. The potential damage could be great indeed.

5.3.4 *The new context*

Titelmans was not *per se* opposed to discussions regarding the biblical text. In fact, he thought that Erasmus' could be excused for his critical remarks on the Apocalypse published in 1516.

Ita, quod ad primam tuam aeditionem et secundam attinet, forsitan hac te excusatione utcumque (licet tenuiter admodum) expurgare posses, quod ita magnam praestiteris occasionem haereticis male sentiendi de sacratissima scriptura, contra uniuersalis Ecclesiae uenerandam approbationem. Forsitan utcumque hoc te excusationis uelamine posses contegere, quantum ad primam et secundam aeditiones, quod tum temporis non suspicabaris exoriturum tale saeculum, aut exurrecturos haereticos eius modi, qui ista in malum et in blasphemiam raperent³¹¹.

Academic discussions, even if with mistaken conclusions, were permissible at the time of peace. What Titelmans could, however, not accept, was that Erasmus, instead of repenting for his too liberal criticism of Apocalypse's authority, amplified his attacks on this holy Book in subsequent editions of *Annotationes*.

Verum quod in tempore quo aeditionem tertiam aedebas, hoc est, Anno domini 1522 quo tempore sciebas exurrexisse haereticos, qui de hac Ecclesiastica scriptura indignissime non senserint modo, sed loquebantur etiam et scribebant adeo ut ipsam dicerent nihil habere neque Propheticum neque Apostolicum, sed mera continere somnia, a quopiam impostore conficta: quod illo (inquam) tempore priora requiris intacta ut fuerant. Deinde, quod in quarta quoque aeditione adhuc postrema, quam anno domini 1527 emisisti (quo tempore adeo creuit haec pessima de sancta scriptura existimatio, ut

³⁰⁹ Ibid., ff. f1v-f2r.

³¹⁰ Ibid., f. g8v.

³¹¹ Ibid., f. k2r.

non solum iam apud eruditos, uerum etiam apud uulgi hominum firmaretur, uernaculo sermone aeditis libris, et praecipue praefationibus indignissimis, libro huic lingua uernacula praemissis) quod hoc (inquam) tempore, non solum non amoues, uerum etiam auges ac firmas potius offendicula, haec quo excusationis uelamine obtegere ualeas, ego plane non intelligo³¹².

What was only a minor mistake in 1516 was a crime in 1520s. It seems that Titelmans knew Luther's preface to the Book of Revelation from his New Testament translation of 1522 and alluded to it in the words cited above. It was precisely the emergence of reformations in German-speaking cities that rendered Erasmus' deliberations about the Apocalypse unacceptable. Although Titelmans commended Erasmus' pledge that he was ready to submit himself to the judgment of the Church, he observed, that not all shared this docile disposition of heart. Whoever chose his own judgment over that of the Church, erred.

Qui enim suum sensum uel suum etiam ingenium iudido praeponunt Ecclesiae, propter suas coniecturas aut rationes (quas humano sensu uel ingenio uel diabolica subtilitate sibi adinueniunt) illis determinationibus submittere sese recusantes, hos certum est, ad synagogam satanae spectare, quantum uis se Christianos profiteantur. Hac ergo laudandus es, quod Ecclesiae auctoritatem tuis anteponis coniecturis³¹³.

Sadly, there were many who were much more stubborn. Thus, although Erasmus might have felt justified in his own eyes, in reality his writings caused much damage to the Church, claimed the Franciscan. Erasmus gathered stones which heretics hurled at the Church³¹⁴.

Titelmans found an analogy to Erasmus' actions in the Middle Ages. He compared the Humanist to Andrew of Saint Victor, who, although perfectly orthodox, presented Jewish interpretations of the Old Testament without a sufficient commentary, thus causing some confusion among less learned Christians³¹⁵. Titelmans cited a critique of Andrew by his fellow canon Richard of Saint Victor. Richard castigated Andrew for presenting Jewish arguments against messianic reading of Isa. 7:14 without any response, thus leaving an impression that Christians erred in their interpretation³¹⁶. "Ad quaestionem ante propositam nullam solutionem reddere, sed quasi insolubilem relinquere, quid aliud est, quam cisternam apertam et sine operculo relinquere? Sed si caderit bos aut asinus in eam, secundum legis praeceptum dominus aeternae reddet precium

³¹² Ibid., f. k2r-v.

³¹³ Ibid., f. f7r-v.

³¹⁴ Ibid., f. k2v.

³¹⁵ Cf. Andreas de Sancto Victore, *Expositio super Isaiam*, 7.14, ed. F.A. van Liere, 2021, CCCM 53C, pp. 65–68.

³¹⁶ F. Titelmans, *Libri duo de auctoritate libri Apocalypsis...*, op. cit., f. k3r-v. Cf. Richardus de Sancto Victore, *De Emmanuele libri duo*, PL 196, col. 601-666.

umentorum”, argued Richard³¹⁷. Bulls and donkeys were symbols of unlearned men, who were led astray by irresponsible teachers. Interestingly, Titelmans used the same image of beasts of burden in his interpretation of Ps. 106(107)³¹⁸. “Quam vero ab Ecclesiasticis uiris res istiusmodi debeat esse aliena, uidelicet non solum non pronunciare aut definire contraria fidei et Ecclesiae iudicio, uerumetiam in diubium reuocare quae communi consensu sunt probata et definita”, commented the Franciscan³¹⁹.

Erasmus’ fault was all the bigger given his great authority³²⁰. Doubts he openly expressed diminished Church’s authority and encouraged heretics³²¹. Thus, Erasmus acted contrary to Church’s interest:

Non est haec consuetudo Ecclesiasticis scriptoribus, ut falsas aliorum opiniones eas quae Ecclesiae aduersantur, proponat, ac uerbis quo ad possint exaggerent, ea uero quae pro ueritate faciunt silentio praemant uel occultent, minuantque pro uiribus. Vel silere in totum oportebat falsa, uel certe falsis uera opponere, falsasque obiectiones ueris rationibus destruere³²².

Titelmans felt that Erasmus was hypocritical in his repeated pledges of obedience towards the Church, for he constantly subverted her authority. Similarly as in *Prologus apologeticus*, also here the Franciscan accused his older colleague of seeking vain glory and personal fame at the expense of truth³²³.

Titelmans’ defence of the authority of the Book of Revelation exposed once again some of the chief differences between him and Erasmus. The first was their attitude towards *consensus patrum*. Irena Backus commented that “to the Dutch scholar, despite his weak demurrers, the authorship, the style, and the content take precedence over the consensus; to Titelmans, the consensus overrules all other considerations, possibly with the exception of authorship”³²⁴. For the Franciscan the Bible was an ecclesiastical book and it was the community of the Church that decided both the canon of Scriptures and their correct interpretation. The consensus of ancient, Catholic Fathers were the yardstick of biblical interpretation. Titelmans’ logic might appear a little circular here: consensus of Catholic Fathers established the correct interpretation, at the same time

³¹⁷ F. Titelmans, *Libri duo de autoritate libri Apocalypsis...*, op. cit., ff. k3v-k4r. Titelmans cited Richardus de Sancto Victore, *De Emmanuele libri duo...*, op. cit., col. 614. Richard’s criticism was taken up by Franciscan authors in the following centuries, especially Petrus Olivi and Nicholas Lyra, see: F.A. Van Liere, *Andrew Of Saint-Victor And His Franciscan Critics*, [in:] *The Multiple Meaning of Scripture; the Role of Exegesis in Early-Christian and Medieval Culture*, ed. I. Van ’t Spijker, Brill, Leiden 2009, pp. 291–309.

³¹⁸ Cf. F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 289r.

³¹⁹ F. Titelmans, *Libri duo de autoritate libri Apocalypsis...*, op. cit., f. k3r.

³²⁰ *Ibid.*, f. g3v.

³²¹ *Ibid.*, f. g3r.

³²² *Ibid.*, f. e4r.

³²³ *Ibid.*, f. k5v.

³²⁴ I. Backus, *Reformation Readings of the Apocalypse...*, op. cit., p. 18.

adherence to this consensus determined, whether a given ancient writer could be considered a Catholic. *Consensus patrum* was for him a fixed reality, even if historical facts suggested a more complex picture. Thus, Titelmans was not at all bothered about the fact that the 4th Council of Toledo that he cited, testified as much to Apocalypse's authority as to the fact it was widely challenged in the early Church.

Apocalypsim librum, multorum conciliorum autoritas, et synodica sanctorum praesulum Romanorum decreta, Ioannis Euangeliste esse praescribunt, et inter diuinos libros recipiendum constituerunt. Et quia plurimi sunt qui eius autoritatem non recipiunt, eaque in ecclesia Dei predicare contemnunt, si quis eum deinceps aut non receperit, aut a Pascha usque ad Pentecostem in Ecclesia non praedicauerit, excommunicationis sententiam habebit³²⁵.

The Council of Toledo represented for Titelmans the consensus of the Church, while numerous others, that the council mentioned, were clearly wrong. We shall explore the difference in Titelmans' and Erasmus' approach to patristic evidence in the next section, here it suffices to emphasise that Titelmans considered interpretation of the Bible as a communal, not individual activity. This placed him firmly within the exegetical consensus of ancient and mediaeval Church.

Titelmans also followed the ancient Church's endeavours to find balance between the literal and spiritual senses. Erasmus' mistrust of the Book of Revelation was generally founded on his distaste with its allegorical content. Apocalypse lacked in his eyes *apostolica gravitas*, because it neither gave ethical teachings, nor informed about early Church's history. It seemed to have little or no literal meaning and consisted only of allegories. Titelmans was shocked by Erasmus' radical shift towards sheer literal interpretation, for he considered allegorical sense the kernel of Scriptures. In opposition to Erasmus, he vigorously defended the Revelation's dignity precisely on the grounds of its allegorical content. He conceded that Fathers rarely used it in argumentation, but in his opinion, this stemmed from the Book's great value and not from the lack of it. Similarly as the beginnings of Ezekiel and Genesis as well as books of Daniel and Song of Solomon, also the Revelation was too mystical to be easily employed in argumentation against heretics³²⁶. Moreover, the Franciscan resorted once again to an argument from authority. He cited Jerome, who asserted that in the Book of Revelation "tot sunt sacramenta quod verba"³²⁷. He also invoked Rupert of Deutz, Dionysius the Areopagite, Haimo of Halberstadt (in fact of Auxerre) and Richard

³²⁵ F. Titelmans, *Libri duo de autoritate libri Apocalypsis...*, op. cit., f. c4v. Cf. P. Hünermann and H. Denzinger, eds., *Enchiridion symbolorum definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum*, §486, Herder, Freiburg 2014, pp. 204-205.

³²⁶ F. Titelmans, *Libri duo de autoritate libri Apocalypsis...*, op. cit., ff. i7v-i8r.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, f. i8v.

of Saint Victor³²⁸. All these authors testified that Apocalypse was a gem because of its spiritual content.

Two exegetical rules of the Church attested Apocalypse's authority against all critics. Titelmans recapitulated:

Istius modi uirorum spiritualium concordi iudicio, malo ego sane quantum ad huius libri opinionem fidere, quam hominum haeticorum et corde peruersorum indoctis blasphemis acquiescere, aut fauere: quibus (praeter coniecturulas aut suspiciunculas aliquot) nihil aliud pro ratione est, nisi sola imperitia cum adiuncta impudentia: quae ubi simul adsunt, mira ualent, et inaudita efficiunt, apud eos potissimum qui simili sunt insania correpti. Nam tales hac tempestate esse constat complures, quos sola imperitia cum adiuncta impudentia, eruditissimos uiros et magnos etiam Theologos, Diuinorumque eloquiorum dissertores facit³²⁹.

It was precisely the proliferation of arrogant heretics which rendered Erasmus' work more harmful and forced Titelmans to defend Apocalypse. Why, however, did he turn his pen against humanists rather than reformers, whom he saw as the main problem? This question shall be confronted in the next section.

5.4 Titelmans, humanism, and reformations

5.4.1 Titelmans and humanism

Older scholarship often identified Titelmans as an anti-humanist, only because he dared to attack Erasmus. In reality, his rapport with humanism was more complex. On the one hand, Titelmans was undoubtedly conservative, on the other, he was in many ways a humanist. In this section we shall summarise his approach to the "new learning" and identify the kernel of his disagreement with Erasmus.

Sartori stated that Titelmans could in many ways be called an "erasmian"³³⁰. For the Scholar from Rotterdam the ideal of education, as he outlined it in *Institutio principis Christiani* and other writings, rested above all on the knowledge of languages and the use of rhetoric³³¹. This stood in sharp opposition with scholasticism, which concentrated on dialectics, logic. Titelmans' education encompassed both modes of thinking. At Leuven he received thorough training in logic, sufficient

³²⁸ Ibid., f. i8v.

³²⁹ Ibid., f. k1r.

³³⁰ P. Sartori, "Frans Titelmans", op. cit., p. 220.

³³¹ Erasmus, Desiderius, *Institutio Principis Christiani*, ed. O. Herding, North-Holland Publishing Company, Amsterdam 1974, ASD IV-1. D. Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince*, [in:] *Literary and Educational Writings. Panegyricus / Moria / Julius exclusus / Institutio principis christiani / Querela pacis*, ed. A.H.T. Levi, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 2016, CWE 27, pp. 199-288. Cf. J. Powell, *Erasmus the Educator: Moral Reformation and Pedagogy in Light of the Philosophia Christi*, "Christian Education Journal", 2018, vol. 15, no. 2, pp. 208-223.

for him to author a best-selling textbook on this matter. There were, however, also humanist elements in his education. Titelmans wrote in elegant Latin. Although Erasmus criticised him for his loquacity, he never accused him of a barbaric style. He also knew Greek well. The extent of his knowledge of Hebrew is less clear. In commentaries written in 1530s he explained various features of this language in more detail than in his early works, which suggests that by this stage his prowess in Hebrew was more than elementary. As to Aramaic, which he boasted to know, there is no evidence confirming it, for the only references to this language are based on Latin translations of Aramaic targums³³². Therefore, even if his knowledge of ancient languages was slightly inferior to what he would like his reader to believe, it was still considerable. It is worth recalling that Erasmus himself, although a master of Latin and Greek, had hardly any knowledge of Hebrew, not to mention Aramaic³³³.

Titelmans' humanist education was not limited to the knowledge of languages. In his commentaries he used two literary genres dear to biblical humanists: paraphrase and annotations. Although he criticised those, who despising Vulgate's barbaric style wished to rewrite the Bible in a more elegant fashion, his paraphrases served to a degree the very same purpose: to transform the scriptural message into a better, more lucid, read³³⁴. Nowhere did Titelmans use detailed divisions, typical for scholastic exegesis or the formal language of the mediaeval *questio*. He was also sceptical about too extensive a use of etymologies and preferred to interpret many passages in rhetorical rather than logical sense.

All this does not mean that Titelmans was in the slightest opposed to scholasticism as such. His debate with Erasmus demonstrated that he thought that logic could help to determine the correct interpretation of a difficult passage³³⁵. He also frequently resorted to mediaeval authorities in his writings. Nevertheless, although his commentaries originated from university environment, he cannot be labelled a scholastic exegete.

What is undoubtedly true about Titelmans, is that he was a conservative. His conservatism did not, however, limit itself to upholding scholastic theology. In a way, it extended all the way to the beginnings of the Church. He had a great interest in Church Fathers, and occasionally

³³² Titelmans knew and used A. Giustiniani's translation targums on the Psalms, see: *Psalterium Hebraeum, Graecum, Arabicum et Chaldaeum, cum tribus latinis interpretationibus et glossis*, trans. A. Giustiniani, Petrus Paulus Porrus, [Genuae] 1516. Aramaic targums were also translated into Latin in the Complutensian Polyglot.

³³³ G. Kisch, *Erasmus' Stellung zu Juden und Judentum*, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen 1969, Philosophie und Geschichte 83/84, p. 20. More on Erasmus' alleged antisemitism see: A. Godin, *L'antijudaïsme d'Erasmus: équivoques d'un modèle théologique*, "Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance", 1985, vol. 47, no. 3, pp. 537–553. H.M. Pabel, *Erasmus of Rotterdam and Judaism: A Reexamination in the Light of New Evidence*, "Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte - Archive for Reformation History", 1996, vol. 87, pp. 9–37. In the work on *Novum Instrumentum* Erasmus was assisted with Hebrew expertise by Oecolampadius: J. Fisher, *The Old Testament Editor of the First Published Greek New Testament: Johannes Oecolampadius (1482–1531)*, "Journal of Early Modern Christianity", 2018, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 35–55.

³³⁴ F. Titelmans, "Prologus apologeticus", op. cit., f. d4r.

³³⁵ Vide supra 5.2.3.

endeavoured to correct some mediaeval interpretations in the light of patristic writings. His interest in Church's early theology linked him to humanists. What differentiated him from Erasmus was the way in which they used the patristic evidence. For Erasmus, ancient controversies and plurality of views among recognised Church Fathers served to shift an emphasis from scholastic dogmatism and love of definitions in favour of an ethical dimension of Christian life. For Titelmans, patristic tradition testified unanimously to Church's teaching and authority. As their dispute made it clear, they often appealed to the same authorities, but interpreted them differently. For instance, they both took Jerome as their hero: for Erasmus, his example supported solid philological analyses of the Bible, for Titelmans, it defended the authority of the Vulgate and a firm adherence to the Church. While Erasmus proposed an ethical reform, centred around philology, and Luther a dogmatic reform centred on the principle of justification by faith, Titelmans wanted a conservative reform centred around Church's authority.

The new learning was thus not to be discarded but applied in defence of conservative theology and Church's authority. This is precisely how Titelmans applied humanist methodology in his commentaries. Whenever original languages helped to affirm Church's teaching and authority, they were a welcomed addition to Catholic exegesis. Titelmans was content to use Greek and Hebrew philology to correct some corrupted passages, as well as to illuminate the meaning of more obscure verses³³⁶. Whenever, on the other hand, philological evidence stood in opposition to established Church's dogma, as was the case with Erasmus' annotation on Rom. 5:12, it was to be overruled and subjugated to the better judgment of theology. Philology was not evil, as long as it knew its place: as theology's younger sister, in fact, a servant. It was dangerous when it overstepped its boundaries.

Such a limited acceptance of philology was common among Erasmus' critics. What was particular for Titelmans was the fact that he knew ancient languages better than most other Erasmus' critics and had a more positive approach to humanistic method. Given that it is unpersuasive to see Titelmans' debate with Erasmus as a methodological contest between a theologian and a philologist. They were both closer to each other than they realised and were willing to admit. If anything, it was a duel of a theologian who dabbled in philology with a philologist who dabbled in theology. Their disagreement regarded the authority of the Church and the very nature of the Bible.

Titelmans' criticism of Erasmus regarded not so much philology as such, but rather the departure from the exegetical consensus that we have described in Chapter One. Nowhere did Titelmans use a term "exegetical consensus", nor he defined his own exegetical principles. He

³³⁶ Vide supra 3.2.2 and 3.3.1

was, however, a very faithful adherent to this consensus, which for him was equivalent to the Catholic exegesis as such. Indeed, it is only thanks to the development of critical, philological exegesis in the five centuries dividing us from Titelmans that we can define pre-critical exegesis. For Titelmans and his contemporaries it was simply “the exegesis”, which the Franciscan accepted unquestioningly. Yet he knew very well when it was challenged.

Although Titelmans did not use the terminology we adopted in Chapter One, we can infer easily from his writings that it was the demise of the ancient exegetical consensus that he sensed and opposed in Erasmus’ works. First of all, he followed this consensus very strictly. He ascribed great importance to literal exegesis, convinced that any interpretation had to rest on what was truly present in the text and not on exegete’s imagination³³⁷. At the same time, he valued the spiritual sense much more than the literal one and considered reading only *secundum litteram* as diabolical³³⁸. He also frequently insisted that all reading had to be done within the community of the Church, in full subjection to its authority. Erasmus questioned spiritual exegesis, for instance attacking the Book of Revelation, and undermined Church’s authority, for example criticising her long-established Latin translation³³⁹. Thus, he threatened the two pillars on which the Catholic exegesis rested.

Titelmans’ works demonstrate his suspicion that there was more at the stake than just methodology, even if he failed to conceptualise this suspicion clearly. What was really challenged by Erasmus was not only the Church’s authority but the very nature of the Bible. Erasmus’ insistence on philology shifted exegetical balance decisively towards the literal sense and transformed the milieu of biblical interpretation from a church nave and a chapter hall into scholar’s private studio. Thus, the Bible was no longer the Sacred Word, that sounded within the community of faith, it was a text that imparted its secrets to a skilful philologist in the intimacy of his room. Titelmans often emphasised that the true sense of the Bible was not in words, thus indirectly indicating that he did not perceive the Bible as merely a text. The sense resided in meaning that the community of the Church discovered through faith. He expressed it clearly speaking about biblical translation:

Et profecto si in uerbis, in superficie, in sermonum foliis esset Euangelium, posset utriusque lingue peritus sola eruditione et uerborum copia per se esse sufficiens. Quia uero in sensu, in medulla, in

³³⁷ Vide supra 3.1.

³³⁸ Vide supra 4.1.4.

³³⁹ Although Erasmus’ was critical of allegorical interpretations, he did not dismiss the allegorical sense completely, see: M. Hoffman, *Rhetoric and Theology: The Hermeneutic of Erasmus*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 2019, pp. 95–133.

radice rationis latet Euangelium, constat haec sicuti a Spiritus pendent afflatu, ita Euangelii interpretationem, aut sanctae scripture, sine illo non recte fieri³⁴⁰.

Jerome translated according to this logic, asserted the Franciscan, therefore often departed from the Hebrew and Greek wording in order to render correctly the sense of a given scriptural passage³⁴¹. Words mattered a little, the sense did. The sense did not reside in words alone, but in an act of reading informed by faith. As we have seen in numerous examples provided in previous chapters, Titelmans was more concerned with the sense given to scriptural passages by the Church than with philological explanations. Philology alone could not lead to an understanding of the Bible; faith could.

For those reasons Titelmans was afraid of humanists. If the fundamentals of the Bible and Church's authority were shattered, any heresy could follow. And indeed, in the eyes of the Franciscan, they did. To combat evangelical reformations, one had to strike at the root, not at branches. The root, according to Titelmans, was humanism and its mistaken understanding of what the Bible was. A similar view was often expressed by his intellectual mentors, such as Noël Beda and Jacques Masson. In the preface to his book against humanists Beda 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"³⁴². Titelmans reluctantly conceded that Erasmus might not have been a heretic himself, but he was sure that the Humanist had 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 Bible³⁴³. For this reason, he turned his pen against humanists rather than reformers.

5.4.2 *Titelmans and Protestant reformations*

Titelmans attacked Erasmus and fellow humanists because he saw in them the root of the problem that manifested itself with Luther, Zwingli and other reformers. He never disputed directly against reformers, but he occasionally alluded to them in his commentaries. In this section we shall analyse Titelmans' attitude towards "Protestant" reformations and try to understand how

³⁴⁰ F. Titelmans, "Prologus apologeticus", op. cit., f. d2v.

³⁴¹ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Ecclesiasten Salomonis...*, op. cit., f. c7v.

³⁴² Cited after J.K. Farge, *Noël Beda and the Defense of the Tradition*, [in:] *Biblical Humanism and Scholasticism in the Age of Erasmus*, ed. E. Rummel, Brill, Leiden 2008, p. 158.

³⁴³ On Erasmus' impact on Protestant reformers see: P.G. Bietenholz, *Encounters with a Radical Erasmus: Erasmus' Work as a Source of Radical Thought in Early Modern Europe*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 2009. M. Engammare, *John Calvin's use of Erasmus*, "Erasmus Studies", 2017, vol. 37, no. 2, pp. 176–192. M. Ptaszyński, *Reformacja w Polsce a dziedzictwo Erazma z Rotterdamu*, Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warszawa, 2018. M. Rankin, *Tyndale, Erasmus, and the Early English Reformation*, "Erasmus Studies", 2018, vol. 38, no. 2, pp. 135–170.

he understood them, paying attention both to his comments on reformed theologians and, more significantly, significant theological omissions.

Although Titelmans did not engage in polemics against reformed theology, the presence of “heretics” is strongly felt in his biblical commentaries. Alongside Turks, he perceived them as the major threat to the Church of his times. In the dedicatory letter addressed to Cardinal Quiñones at the beginning of his commentary on Ecclesiastes, Titelmans praised the Cardinal for his efforts in peace making, observing that Christianity was threatened from two directions:

Hinc quidem pestiferis haesiarchis, Indies et pluribus et crudelioribus, Christi sponsam Ecclesiam suorum errorum veneno inficere ac perdere studentibus: qui sicut serpens Euam seduxit sua astutia, ita simplicium hominum animas suis pestiferis dogmatibus corrumpere studiosissime laborant. Illinc vero immanissimis Turcis, quorum Indies cum ambitione crescit auaritia, praecedentis victoriae multiplicis fiducia ad vltiora semper perurgente animum, Christianique sanguinis in eis sitis ardescit vehementior, graui pondere et tota suae potentiae virtute [...] Ecclesiae incumbentibus, et opportunitatem praestolantibus, terramque et mari diligentissime perquirentibus, vt praecipua Christianorum praefidia siue vi siue fraude occupent, quo deinde paulatim, oblata occasione intestini alicuius dissidii, vniuersum sibi orbem Christianum subiiciant, sanctumque Christi Iesu nomen solum in coelis et in terris venerandum et adorandum penitus eiiciant, ab hominum memoria³⁴⁴.

The Turkish threat was strongly felt in territories ruled by Charles V in 1520s and 30s. The memories of the tragic battle of Mohac in 1526, which ended the Jagiellonian rule over Hungary and Bohemia and subjected the larger part of Hungary to the Turks, as well as the siege of Vienna in 1529, were too recent to be easily discarded. The external threat was aggravated in Titelmans’ eyes by an internal strife caused by reformers. The theme of the double threat appeared in most commentaries of Titelmans. He referred to it in the dedicatory letter to Charles V, preceding his commentary on the Psalms³⁴⁵, identified persecution by Turks and false brethren as the source of Spouses’ darkness in the Song³⁴⁶, and lamented the gloom of Islamic conquests and Protestant “heresies” that darkened most of Europe in recent years³⁴⁷. He alluded to the Protestant threat in numerous other passages of his commentaries, making it evident, that he was much preoccupied with the proliferation of reform movements that he considered heretical³⁴⁸.

³⁴⁴ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Ecclesiasten Salomonis...*, op. cit., f. b3r-v.

³⁴⁵ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. a3r-v.

³⁴⁶ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum...*, op. cit., f. 17v.

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, f. 134v.

³⁴⁸ F. Titelmans, *Paraphrastica elucidatio in Matthaeum...*, op. cit., f. 37v. F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum...*, op. cit., ff. 19v, 20v, 45v. F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., ff. 43v; 114r; 286r; 331r.

He never named any of the “heretics” he had in mind, however both references to their teachings and some other allusions (“euangelicorum titulo sese venditantes”³⁴⁹) make it clear that he thought of “Protestant” reformers in German towns. Some comments are, however, more ambiguous, and could be equally applied to humanist as well as to Protestants. In Song 7:4 he commented that the nose of the Bride was symbolic of Church’s capacity to detect the stench of heresy, even if expressed with eloquent words.

Sit mendacii stercus, quantumuis honesto colore depictum, solo nihilominus olfactu facillime discernet inter mundum et immundum. Sit falsitas haeresis, vel quantum ad fidem vel quantum ad mores, quantumuis colorata eloquentiae fucis, imo et falsis scripturarum allegationibus aut sophisticarum rationum apparentiis, facile nihilominus sancta Ecclesia haereticae impietatis abominandum foetorem deprehendet, eandemque per rigoris sui seueritatem anathematizando mortiferam pronuntiabit, et extra fidelium omnium societatem longe proiiciendam decernet³⁵⁰.

It is not entirely clear whether Titelmans thought of Protestants or humanists, when he spoke of the reek adorned with eloquence. Perhaps eloquence referred to humanists, while false arguments from Scriptures to reformers. It is, however, also possible, that Titelmans did not differentiate clearly between the two groups. After all, were not many reformers also humanists³⁵¹? There was no need for nuances where the unity of the Church was under threat.

Indeed, Titelmans’ view of heretics was unnuancedly negative. In the Song of Solomon Titelmans found many images of heretics’ perversity: they were thorns (2:2), deceitful foxes (2:15), and dead waters (4:15)³⁵². They were shepherds leading astray (1:6) and did not belong to the one Church (6:8). They were invidious critics, who did not spare even the most ancient of authorities³⁵³.

It was precisely their arrogance that stood at the root of their heresies. Instead of accepting teachings from the Church and her magisterium, they taught themselves, and clandestinely imparted their false knowledge to their unfortunate disciples:

Non possumus enim obedire diuinae voluntati, nisi sciatur quae sit illa: discitur autem, audiendo ab iis quorum interest eam docere. In quo verbo fortisan etiam illud indicatur, vulgares homines non debere se sibi magistros constituere, sed ab illis esse audiendam atque discendam legem, quibus a deo commissum est in ecclesia docendi officium: ab episcopis videlicet et sacerdotibus, quibus

³⁴⁹ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Ecclesiasten Salomonis...*, op. cit., f. o7r.

³⁵⁰ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum...*, op. cit., f. 147v.

³⁵¹ On relationships between humanists and reformers see: A.E. McGrath, *The Intellectual Origins of the European Reformation*, Blackwell, Oxford 2004, pp. 44–66.

³⁵² F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum...*, op. cit., ff. 39v; 58v; 101r.

³⁵³ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Ecclesiasten Salomonis...*, op. cit., f. n3v.

commissum est a deo verbi ministerium. [...] Iterum docemur, non in angulis, aut in conuenticulis tenebrarum docendam aut discendam esse dei legem, sed in domo dei, in qua, quae dei sunt, et communem populi spectant salutem, peragi debent. [...]. At vero hac nostra tempestate, longe secus quidam faciunt et docent improbi homines, euangelicorum titulo sese venditantes, qui damnanda arrogantia, et scelerata praesumptione sibi prouinciam assumunt docendi quae nunquam didicerunt, sola linguae volubilitate et infatigabili loquacitate instructi, caeterum neque quid loquantur, neque de quibus doceant, (iuxta Pauli Apostoli verbum) intelligentes, quos non domini spiritus ad docendum mittit, sed praesumptionis spiritus ad loquendum exagitat. Qui dum se sibi magistros constituunt, stultis praeceptoribus se discipulos subdunt, et quomodo stultos se praeceptores faciunt, sic auditores suos insipientes, discipulos reddunt, nimirum similes sui. Docent quoque hi non in templis, sed in angulis, in penetrabilibus, in conclauibus, in conuiuuiis, denique nusquam non, vbi suae prauae quam docent falsitati quicquam putauerint se posse proficere³⁵⁴.

Here Titelmans voiced several concerns typically raised by Catholic apologists. They accused heretics of no formal training in theology and no ecclesiastical licence to teach. The former was generally truer about humanists than reformers, yet the fact that Martin Luther always exposed his doctoral title shows how persuasive this argument could be³⁵⁵. Moreover, they taught in hidden places as if they were afraid of the light of truth. This was true of the Low Countries in Titelmans' time, for the obvious fear of prosecution.

Without an ecclesiastical licence to teach, heretics could not understand Scriptures correctly. They also violated another principle of exegesis, *analogia scripturae*, taking verses out of context and twisting them as it pleased them. They learned that from the Devil himself, who perversely used the Bible tempting Christ in the desert.

Quemadmodum haeretici hac in parte suum patrem, mendacii omnis parentem, mendaces filii insequentes, scripturas citare sunt soliti: desumentes ex eis particulas aliquas, quae secundum aliquam apparentiam pro illorum erroribus facere videntur, dissimulantes et nolentes attendere quae antecedunt et quae consequuntur, ne eliciant rectam sententiam et veritatem inueniant³⁵⁶.

Titelmans made a similar observation in annotations to the sixth chapter of John's Gospel, where he claimed that heretics used Christ's words against Christ's doctrine³⁵⁷.

Despite their obvious mistakes they were successful because they deceived simple souls. As foxes hunted innocent birds so analogically heretics concentrated on "soaring" souls: those more disposed towards heavenly things, but lacking in knowledge. "Propter quod, et foemineo sexui

³⁵⁴ Ibid., ff. o6v-o7v.

³⁵⁵ Cf. R.J. Serina Jr., *Luther's Doctorate and the Start of the Reformation*, "Lutheran Forum", 2009, vol. 43, no. 2, pp. 53–56.

³⁵⁶ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 243r.

³⁵⁷ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio paraphrastica in Ioannem...*, op. cit., f. i6r.

magis solent insidiari ac praeualere, quam virili; non solum quia infirmior est et minus habens iudicii, verum etiam ob peculiarem deuotionis erga coelestia affectum, qui illi tribui solet, adeo vt publice in Ecclesiis pro deuoto foemineo sexu, ex patris Augustini verbis, orari sit receptum”³⁵⁸. Simple souls could be deceived because those, who were supposed to protect them went astray. Titelmans blamed earthly rulers, who instead of defending faith actively promoted heresies³⁵⁹. Only a man of experience could engage in a polemic with heretics; a simpleton would be deceived by their trickery³⁶⁰. Shepherds should constantly look after their flock, yet not a few failed their duty, contributing to damnation of many³⁶¹. “Procul dubio non ita multae passim animae miserem deperirent, quot nunc cernimus ante oculos maximo perdi numero: dum ex omni parte circuiens hostis, ad nocendum semper vigilat, bona autem pars eorum, quorum erat lupis obsistere, somnum grauem in cubilium penetralibus dormiunt, nihil minus quam de commissa sibi domo solliciti”³⁶². Aware of the shortcomings of clergymen of his time, Titelmans was an advocate of reform, which he however perceived very differently than Luther.

How did Titelmans actually understand the content of heretical teachings that he so fiercely criticised? Since he did not write polemical treatises against “Protestants”, we cannot expect to find in his works a comprehensive analysis of reformed theologies. Nevertheless, some rare remarks in his biblical commentaries produce an interesting image that suggest a rather fragmentary understanding of evangelical reforms by the Franciscan. While he seemed to be aware of some aspects of reformed teachings, he completely ignored some other crucial points preached by Luther and his followers.

For Titelmans reformation was first of all a Eucharistic heresy. Speaking of Oecolampadius, whose translation of Gregory Thaumaturgos he used, he described the Reformer as a “berengarian”³⁶³. This referred to an 11th century theologian Berengarius of Tours, who challenged the notion of Christ’s real presence in the Eucharist³⁶⁴. Although Berengarius had no disciples his figure evolved throughout Middle Ages into a great heresiarch and an epitomisation of all eucharistic heresies³⁶⁵. Oecolampadius, alongside other Swiss reformers, rejected the doctrine of

³⁵⁸ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum...*, op. cit., f. 59r.

³⁵⁹ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 289r.

³⁶⁰ Cf. *Ibid.*, f. 90r.

³⁶¹ Cf. F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum...*, op. cit., f. 120v.

³⁶² F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 264r.

³⁶³ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Ecclesiasten Salomonis...*, op. cit., f. c6v.

³⁶⁴ On Berengarius see: C.E. Sheedy, *The Eucharistic Controversy of the Eleventh Century Against the Background of Pre-scholastic Theology*, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington 1947. G. Macy, *The Theologies of the Eucharist in the Early Scholastic Period: a Study of the Salvific Function of the Sacrament According to the Theologians, c. 1080-c. 1220*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1984. E.J. Kilmartin, *The Eucharist in the West: History and Theology*, ed. R.J. Daly, Liturgical Press, Collegeville 1998, pp. 97–98.

³⁶⁵ G. Macy, *Berengar’s Legacy as Heresiarch*, [in:] *Treasures from the Storeroom. Medieval Religion and the Eucharist*, ed. G. Macy, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville 1999, pp. 59–80.

the real presence, scandalising Catholics and Luther alike³⁶⁶. Interestingly, there seems to be a genuine link between Swiss reformed theology and that of Berengarius, since reformers derived some of their ideas from the early medieval thinker via a Dutch scholar Cornelius Hoen³⁶⁷. It is not impossible that Titelmans knew the work of Hoen, who also came from the Low Countries, and because of it was particularly attentive to eucharistic heresies in reformed teaching.

Titelmans discussed Eucharistic errors of reformed theologians twice in his biblical commentaries. In annotations to Ps. 109:4 he observed that reformers negated sacrificial character of the Mass³⁶⁸. This was a clear allusion to Luther, who, although he retained a conviction of Christ's presence in consecrated host, rejected the idea of Mass as a sacrifice. Luther wrote: "Iam et alterum scandalum amovendum est, quod multo grandius est et speciosissimum. Id est, quod Missa creditur passim esse sacrificium, quod offertur deo"³⁶⁹. For Luther sacrificial character of the Mass negated gratuity of salvation. If Mass was a sacrifice, it was a "work" with which one "bought" his salvation, run the logic of the Reformer from Wittenberg. Thus, the idea that Melchizedek offered a sacrifice to God was extraneous to Scriptures and was introduced into the canon of the Mass alongside many other "Roman abuses". Titelmans agreed that Gen. 14:18 did not speak explicitly of the meal offered by the King of Salem as a sacrifice but argued that it did not deny it either. Melchizedek, just as Jewish priest under the Old Law, and Christian ones under the New, first offered a sacrifice and then gave it to men to eat³⁷⁰. It was the authority of the Church and her tradition that reassured sacrificial interpretation of both Melchizedek's offering and the Mass. Titelmans discussed Melchizedek's case also in his commentary on the Mass's Canon, where he argued that since Melchizedek was a priest, he must have offered a sacrifice. Without a sacrifice there could be no priesthood³⁷¹.

³⁶⁶ On Oecolampadius' view of the Eucharist see: L.P. Wandel, *The Eucharist in the Reformation: Incarnation and Liturgy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2006, pp. 58–60. On other Swiss reformers see: C. Euler, *Huldrych Zwingli and Heinrich Bullinger*, [in:] *A Companion to the Eucharist in the Reformation*, ed. L.P. Wandel, Brill, Boston 2014, pp. 57–74. On Luther's theology of the Mass see: L.P. Wandel, *The Eucharist in the Reformation...*, op. cit., pp. 96–100; and V. Leppin, *Martin Luther*, [in:] *A Companion to the Eucharist in the Reformation*, ed. L.P. Wandel, Brill, Boston 2014, pp. 39–56. Luther's attack on Swiss reformers: M. Luther, *Sermon von dem Sakrament des Leibes and Blutes Christi wider die Schwarmgeister*, [in:] *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, Hermann Böhlau Nachfolger, Weimar 1897, vol. 19, pp. 474–523.

³⁶⁷ Hoen's impact on Swiss reformers see: B.J. Spruyt, *Cornelius Henrici Hoen (Honus) and his Epistle on the Eucharist. Medieval Heresy, Erasmian Humanism, and Reform in the Early Sixteenth-Century Low Countries*, Brill, Leiden 2006, p. 181. Hoen's use of Berengarian tradition: *Ibid.*, p. 163: "Hoen in his Epistola did not develop original thoughts, but instead revived age-old heretical arguments in an entirely new and different context. Some of them date back as far as Berengar and the Cathars, others were concentrated in treaties by Wyclif and Hus in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries".

³⁶⁸ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., ff. 297v-298r.

³⁶⁹ M. Luther, *Martin Luther's The church held captive in Babylon: a prelude: a new translation with introduction and notes*, ed. D. Janz, Oxford University Press, New York 2019, p. 122.

³⁷⁰ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 298r.

³⁷¹ F. Titelmans, *Tractatus de expositione mysteriorum Missae...*, op. cit., f. g7r: "In scriptura expresse inveniatur Melchisedech fuisse sacerdos dei excelsi, simul etiam implicite ponatur eius sacrificium. Nec enim sine sacrificio sacerdos esse potest, cum omnis pontifex ad hoc constituatur (iuxta Apostoli testimonium) ut offerat dona et sacrificia pro peccatis populi".

Another passage, where Titelmans discussed reformers' views on the Eucharist were his annotations on John 6. Titelmans followed a traditional Catholic interpretation which read this chapter in sacramental context, as a proof of Christ's real presence in a eucharistic bread. Yet he noted that some contemporary heretics interpreted it differently:

Heretici plaerique nostri temporis dignissimo huic sacramento [...] studiosissime detrahentes, nihil eorum quae hic dicuntur de sacramentali illa manducatione intelligendum contentunt, sed omnia referent ad fidem, dicentes, Christi manducare carnem et sanguinem nihil esse aliud quam in Christum verum hominem credere; de sacramentali autem verae carnis et sanguinis veri sumptione, nec verbum audire volunt³⁷².

Titelmans retorted stating that Christ's words in John's Gospel were quite clear: he was the bread of life, and this bread was identical with his body. The Church is the body of Christ not only through faith, but also through sacramental receiving of Jesus' body. This interpretation was, according to Titelmans, testified by all tradition. He cited Cyril of Alexandria, Theophylactus and Chrysostom as specific witnesses, but emphasised that it was a universal opinion of all orthodox Fathers, Greek and Latin alike³⁷³. He observed that reformers used a passage from Augustine to support their claims. Augustine "totum hunc textum absque mentione sacramentalis cibi enarrat, per manducationem corporis Christi non aliud intelligens, quam spiritualem societatem sanctorum"³⁷⁴. The Franciscan responded that other texts of the Bishop of Hippo made it clear, that he understood Christ's words from John's Gospel as referring to the sacrament of Eucharist, and the fact that here he offered an alternative interpretation did not contradict it. He also observed that reformers used John 6:63 (*spiritus est qui vivificat, caro non prodest quicquam*) as an argument³⁷⁵. This verse was also used by Erasmus to criticise ritualism without charity: for him the Mass was a commemorative meditation that ought to produce fruits of fraternal love³⁷⁶. Titelmans responded that these words indicated the need to receive the Eucharist sacramentally, and not only physically. He cited Chrysostom and Theophylactus to support his claim³⁷⁷. He concluded his argumentation once again emphasising *consensus patrum*:

³⁷² F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio paraphrastica in Ioannem...*, op. cit., f. i1r.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*, ff. i1v-i3v.

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, f. i4r. It is not clear which text of Augustine Titelmans had in mind, but he was likely referring to Augustinus Hipponensis, *In Iohannis euangelium tractatus*, 26.13, ed. R. Willems, 1954, CCSL 36, p. 266.

³⁷⁵ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio paraphrastica in Ioannem...*, op. cit., f. i4v.

³⁷⁶ Cf. D. Erasmus, *Paraphrasis in Euangelium secundum Ioannem*, ed. J. Bloemendal, Brill, Leiden 2022, ASD VII-3a, p. 178: "Atque huius societatis vobis mysticum symbolum relicturus sum carnem meam et sanguinem meum, quod ne ipsum quidem sumpsisse profuerit, nisi secundum spiritum sumpserit". On Erasmus' view on the Eucharist see: J.B. Payne, *Erasmus: his Theology of the Sacraments*, Knox, Richmond 1970, pp. 126-154.

³⁷⁷ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio paraphrastica in Ioannem...*, op. cit., ff. i4v-i5v.

Ex his omnibus sanctorum patrum interpretationibus, tametsi non per omnia quantum ad singulas particulas similiter exponent, illud tamen summatim colligitur, concordi omnium sententia locum istum propositum prorsus nihil officere orthodoxorum intellectui, qui sermonem Christi supra enarratum de sacramentali corporis et sanguinis Dominici manducatione dictum accipiunt³⁷⁸.

Another heresy, that Titelmans associated with reformers was that concerning free will. He was most certainly acquainted with Erasmus' polemic against Luther concerning this matter. Erasmus' defence of *libero arbitrio* was met with Luthers *De severo arbitrio* and worsened already bad relations between the two thinkers³⁷⁹. Titelmans alluded to Luther's heretical position commenting John 6:44 (*nisi pater qui misit me traxerit eum*): "Tractus iste non violentiae est neque coactionis, sed liberae electionis: vt nullo modo per ipsum existimetur, auferri libertas arbitrii, quam catholicae Ecclesiae sanctis dogmatibus cogimur confiteri"³⁸⁰. He continued to argue this listing patristic authorities: Cyril of Alexandria, Chrysostomus, Theophylactus and Augustine. He emphasised human freedom also commenting John 8:43 (*quia non potestis audire sermonem meum*): Jesus's words did not negate free will but indicated unwillingness of his listeners³⁸¹.

In the commentary on Song 1:3 he claimed that a short phrase negated two heresies:

Dignum quoque est consyderatione profundiori, quam pulchre paucissimis verbis sponsa hic geminum haereticorum excluserit errorem, cum dixit: Trahe me post te, curremus. Siquidem vnica hac et breuissima oratione contrariae duae haereses destruuntur: quarum prior, hominem ex solis naturalibus, sine peculiari Dei gratia saluari posse; altera, sine hominis cooperatione, per solam Dei gratiam in homine operantem, ipsum saluari, stulte contendebat³⁸².

The former heresy could be associated with Pelagianism, the latter with Luther and other reformers. Titelmans stressed the need for cooperation between human free will and divine grace in numerous other places of this commentary. In Song 5:4-5 he found an example of cooperation between divine grace (the Groom put his hand through the keyhole) and human response based on the faculty of free will (I opened to my beloved)³⁸³. He made a similar interpretation of Song 5:1 and 8:5³⁸⁴. It is true that in no place did Titelmans explicitly refer to any of reformers, however

³⁷⁸ Ibid., ff. i5v-i6r.

³⁷⁹ On Luther-Erasmus debate see: R. Torzini, *I labirinti del libero arbitrio: la discussione tra Erasmo e Lutero*, Olschki, Firenze 2000. G.O. Forde and S.D. Paulson, *The Captivation of the Will: Luther vs. Erasmus on Freedom and Bondage*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 2005.

³⁸⁰ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio paraphrastica in Ioannem...*, op. cit., f. h7v.

³⁸¹ Ibid., f. m5r.

³⁸² F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum...*, op. cit., f. 11v.

³⁸³ Ibid., f. 111r.

³⁸⁴ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticorum...*, op. cit., f. 104r, and f. 170r: "Pulchre vero in his verbis, gratiae Dei et liberi arbitrii cooperatio datur intelligi, cum dicitur ipsa sponsa ascendere de deserto".

the sheer frequency, with which he accentuated the freedom of human will suggest that he had the Erasmus-Luther debate at the back of his mind.

Apart from these two theological themes there were some other allusions to reformed teaching in Titelmans' commentaries. In the introductory letter to the commentary on Ecclesiastes he spoke of people adorning statues, which was criticised by heretics³⁸⁵. This was probably an allusion to reformers' criticism of the cult of saints and perhaps even to iconoclasm. In his annotations on Ps. 129 (130) he espoused the doctrine of purgatory, claiming the Church had learned it from the authority of saints³⁸⁶. Therefore, he explained, this psalm was traditionally used by believers as a prayer for the dead. Purgatory, prayer for the dead as well as authority of saints were all negated by reformers, thus this remark could be seen as polemical, even if only implicitly. Similarly, his observations concerning cemeteries in Eccles. 6:3 could have a similar polemical tint³⁸⁷. The Franciscan explained that just as the living were united in one Church, so also the dead were symbolically united by the same place of rest. In some reformed towns there were attempts to move the graveyard far from the parish church, motivated initially by sanitary reasons, but soon entangled in religious debates concerning the efficacy of the prayer for the dead³⁸⁸. Perhaps Titelmans wanted to reaffirm Catholic tradition of burying the dead in the sacred ground of the churchyard.

Perhaps in analysing Titelmans' relation towards "Protestant" reforms what was absent from his writings is more significant than what we can find there. Most significantly, nowhere did Titelmans address, or even allude to the central issue raised by Luther: the justification by faith. For instance, in commentary on Ps. 68(69):28 he discussed the difference between justification in the Old Law and in the New Law, on the basis of the letter to the Romans, yet did not allude in any way to the great ongoing debate initiated by the Doctor from Wittenberg³⁸⁹. Similarly, in the entire paraphrase of the Epistle to the Romans nowhere did he mention any controversy regarding justification by faith alone. Again, in commentary on Song 1:3, he spoke of God's free grace using an expression *sola gratia* without any indication that both the concept and the very expression were at the centre of theological debates with Lutherans. It is difficult to determine, whether Titelmans was unaware of those crucial aspects of Luther's theology, or knowing them, decided to ignore them for some other reason.

Finally, it is worth observing that Titelmans tended to see reform movements not as something new, but as a re-emergence of old heresies. This was typical for mediaeval theology

³⁸⁵ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Ecclesiasten Salomonis...*, op. cit., f. b5r.

³⁸⁶ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 337r.

³⁸⁷ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Ecclesiasten Salomonis...*, op. cit., f. t1r.

³⁸⁸ Cf. C. Koslofsky, *The Reformation of the Dead: Death and Ritual in Early Modern Germany, 1450-1700*, St. Martin's Press, New York 2000, pp. 19-77.

³⁸⁹ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 170r.

that always tried to identify dissident movements with ancient heresies. Therefore, for Titelmans eucharistic heresy of Oecolampadius and fellow Swiss reformers was merely berengarianism, and Anabaptists were new Pelagians. No doubt had he lived to witness theologies of Servetus and Socinius, he would have labelled them Arians, whose re-emergence he feared in his polemical writings³⁹⁰.

As we have seen, Titelmans was aware of evangelical reformations, feared and opposed them, even though he had a rather limited understanding of what they stood for. In the light of his biblical commentaries his understanding of evangelical reforms was limited the questions of Church's authority, Eucharist and free will. Further studies are needed to understand the reception of reformed theologies among Catholic theologians was such as Titelmans prior to the Council of Trent.

5.4.3 Titelmans and the Catholic Reform

The fact that Titelmans was opposed to evangelical reformations did not mean that he was opposed to the Church Reform as such. Quite the contrary. First of all, he participated in various reform movements, starting from Montaigu, through observant Franciscans and finally the Capuchin reform. Secondly, he criticised abuses and called for a reform in his biblical commentaries. Finally, his writings had some impact on the decisions of the Council of Trent. We shall briefly examine these three aspects in this section.

Titelmans grew up in the spirit of Church reform and strived to effectuate it in his personal life. The congregation of Montaigu, where he grew up, was strongly oriented at the reform of morality and advancement of knowledge among Catholic clergy. It was profoundly conservative, but at the same time much concerned with correcting abuses in the Church. Its representatives, and Titelmans' mentors, such as Noel Beda and Jacques Masson, although critical of evangelical reforms, were in a way themselves reformers. J. K. Farge wrote:

Historians whose predilection for humanism or for the Protestant Reformation have thus been mistaken to relegate Noël Beda to the status of a "reactionary" opposed to any change or reform in the university or in the Church. Beda was himself the product of a reformation of the University of Paris. New, reforming statutes had been imposed in 1452, and Beda's mentor Standonck had worked with other reformers to rouse the University of Paris from a lackluster period of decline that had prevailed during, and in the wake of, the Hundred Years War. They worked with the Parlement of Paris and certain bishops to build an intellectual and institutional infrastructure that would promote and sustain a reformed Gallican church. In the most important study that has been devoted to their

³⁹⁰ Cf. F. Titelmans, "Prologus apologeticus", op. cit., f. c4r-v. F. Titelmans, *Collationes quinque...*, op. cit., ff. 127v; 196r.

efforts, Augustin Renaudet reached a conclusion that has been overlooked: “In this intellectual revival everybody took part, scholastics and humanists alike.” Noël Beda was a scholastic trying to do his part in promoting appropriate reform³⁹¹.

Thus, Titelmans was from his early days formed by a reform-oriented spirituality. This did not change with his decision to become an observant Franciscan. Observant movement was a reform of the Order of Friars Minor that originated in the mid 14th century Italy. In the early 16th century, the Observant friary in Leuven was still considered a model of rigorous Franciscan life³⁹². It is very likely that the young alumnus of Leuven’s Montaigu College was attracted to join the Observant branch precisely by the austerity of their life. It is clear that he had such a motivation also thirteen years later, when he set off to Rome in order to join Capuchins. This stunning decision, which eventually costed Titelmans his life, is the best indication of how seriously he treated the task of Church’s reform. According to the Chronicle of Bernardinus a Colpetrazzo he intended to return to Brabant in order to transplant Capuchin reform there³⁹³. Clearly, Titelmans thought that Church’s reform had to start with his own life and then progress through an institutional reform of the Order. He can be counted among exceptional individuals, who tried to promote Catholic Reform before the Council of Trent³⁹⁴.

The Franciscan author from Leuven alluded to the need of reform in his biblical commentaries. In his commentary on the Song of Solomon he lamented the inadequate intellectual and moral disposition of prelates, who instead of defending the Church were concerned with their own comfort³⁹⁵. Similarly in his comment on Ps. 100(101):2 he castigated clerical vices and expressed a hope for reform:

Bonus autem pastor, in medio gregis et domus preambulat, vt ex omni parte circueuntes aduersarios repellat, et nullibi illis, quantum quidem in ipso fuerit, nocendi concedat aditum. Atque vtinam hac nostra tempestate, istud tam praeclarum Prophetiae exemplum imitentur principes populorum, maxime autem Ecclesiarum praelati. Vtinam magis assuescerent ad perambulandum in medio domus suae, vtinam a perequitandis campis et syluis percurrendis, prorsus abstinerent, vtinam non in angulis

³⁹¹ J.K. Farge, “Noël Beda and the Defense of the Tradition”, op. cit., p. 146.

³⁹² Cf. B. de Troeyer, *Bio-bibliographia Franciscana Neerlandica saeculi XVI*, B. de Graaf, Nieuwkoop 1969, vol. 1, pp. 91–93. F. Gonzaga, *De origine seraphicae religionis...*, op. cit., pp. 991–992.

³⁹³ Bernardinus a Colpetrazzo, *Historia Ordinis...*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 177: “Desiderava di portare la Riforma et habito capuccino nella patria sua, ma per esser’ la Congregatine non molto cresciuta, non pareva ai Padri di potergli dare Frati convenienti a simile impresa, et per questo si indugiava il negotio”. In reality Capuchins were forbidden to found houses beyond Alps by the papal bulla, see: Paul III, bulla *Dudum siquidem* [in:] Michaele a Tugio, ed., *Bullarium Ordinis FF. Minorum S. P. Francisci Capucinatorum*, Joannis Zempel, Romae 1740, vol. 1, p. 22.

³⁹⁴ An overview of Catholic Reforms before the Council of Trent: J.C. Olin, *Catholic Reform From Cardinal Ximenes to the Council of Trent, 1495-1563: An Essay with Illustrative Documents and a Brief Study of St. Ignatius Loyola*, Fordham University Press, New York 2022, pp. 1–43.

³⁹⁵ Cf. F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Cantica Canticatorum...*, op. cit., f. 75r-v. Bernardinus a Colpetrazzo, *Historia Ordinis...*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 177. Vide supra 4.3.3.

in cubilibus ociosi desiderent, magis autem in debita sollicitudine medium domus suae, imo domus Dei (quemadmodum ex officio illis incumbit) perambularent. Procul dubio non ita multae passim animae misere deperirent, quot nunc cernimus ante oculos maximo perdi numero³⁹⁶.

He praised cardinal Quiñones for being a zealous prelate, who constantly walked around his house, admonished and protected the flock entrusted to him, namely, the order of Friar Minors. The Order suffered from outside adversaries but also false brothers, who were more devoted to flesh than the spirit, and growing like cockle among wheat contaminated the community. Titelmans thanked the Cardinal for his watchful protection, especially at the general chapter in Nice³⁹⁷.

Had Titelmans lived longer, he would no doubt contributed much more to the task of Catholic Reform. It remains within a field of historical fiction what could have been his contribution to the Council of Trent, had he lived to see it. Staying within the confines of facts we can however identify some areas, in which Titelmans' writings exercised some indirect, or perhaps even direct influence on decrees from the Council's first period.

The Bible, its translation and interpretation was one of the pressing issues that the Council had to address. In order to confront the themes of sin and justification, raised by Luther, conciliar fathers had to clarify the sources of Revelation. While Luther limited himself to *sola scriptura*, Catholic theologians all believed that also Tradition constituted a valid source of doctrine. They had to, however, clarify what was the relation of Tradition to Scriptures, what Scriptures were actually authoritative and how to interpret them. The questions of canon, language of the Bible, translations, and interpretative authority were discussed at the Council from February to June 1546³⁹⁸. Titelmans' writings played some role in theological considerations concerning these matters.

The question regarding which we know that conciliar fathers consulted Titelmans was the authority of the Vulgate. At the 4th session of the Council, on the 8th of April 1546, it promulgated a decree known as *Insuper eadem*, which defended the authority of the Vulgate. It stated: "haec ipsa vetus et vulgata editio, quae longo tot saeculorum usu in ipsa ecclesia probata est, in publicis lectionibus, disputationibus, praedicationibus et expositionibus pro authentica habeatur, et quod

³⁹⁶ F. Titelmans, *Elucidatio in omnes psalmos...*, op. cit., f. 264r.

³⁹⁷ F. Titelmans, *Commentarii in Ecclesiasten Salomonis...*, op. cit., ff. a6r-a7r.

³⁹⁸ On discussions about the Bible during the 1st period of the Council see: H. Jedin, *Geschichte des Konzils von Trient. Band II. Die erste Trienter Tagungsperiode 1545/47*, Herder, Freiburg 1957, pp. 42–82. G. Bedouelle, *La Réforme catholique*, [in:] *Le temps des Réformes et la Bible*, eds. G. Bedouelle and B. Roussel, Beauchesne, Paris 1989, Bible de tous les temps 5, pp. 327–368. J.W. O'Malley, *Trent: What Happened at the Council*, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge 2013, pp. 89–102. W. François, *Scripture and Traditions at the Council of Trent: The Fourth and Fifth Sessions (1546)*, [in:] *Scripture and Traditions at the Council of Trent: The Fourth and Fifth Sessions (1546)*, ed. N.H. Minnich, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2023, pp. 72–96.

nemo illam reicere quovis praetextu audeat vel praesumat”³⁹⁹. The Council did not intend to condemn other translations, nor did it express any view on the original languages of the Bible or vernacular translations. What it meant was that the Vulgate was free from doctrinal errors, and although not perfect, it was sufficient as a base for teaching, preaching and all other theological use.

Promulgation of the decree did not put an end to debates. Nineteen days after the promulgation of *Insuper eadem*, Angelo Massarelli, the Council’s secretary was sent by cardinal Marcello Cervini, one of the Council’s three presidents at its first period and the future pope Marcellus II, to Domenico de Soto to inquire about recent authors who wrote on the authority of the Vulgate⁴⁰⁰. The Dominican suggested Agostino Steuco and Fraciscus Titelmans⁴⁰¹. Arthur Allgeier demonstrated that the terminology used by Titelmans in *Collationes quinque* was very similar to that of the Council’s decree regarding the Vulgate⁴⁰². Titelmans frequently spoke of “vetus nostra ac vulgata aeditio” meaning non only the translation ascribed to Jerome, but more generally all old translations as opposed to those of Erasmus, Lefevre and others. “This seems to be exactly what the *Insuper* decree intended to say with words *haec vetus et vulgata aeditio*”, concluded the German scholar⁴⁰³. This did not mean that either Titelmans or the Council failed to distinguish *vetus Latina* from the Vulgate. Both were aware of the difference, however opposed all old translations to the new ones⁴⁰⁴. According to Allgeier Titelmans provided an important step in the formulation of the Council’s thought regarding the Vulgate⁴⁰⁵.

Titelmans was naturally not the only theological source for the *Insuper* decree. Johannes Driedo, another Leuven theologian, work *De Ecclesiasticis scripturis et dogmatibus* was perhaps

³⁹⁹ Concilium Tridentinum, Sessio IV (sub Paulo III) die 8. aprilis 1546, *Insuper eadem*, [in:] A. Baron and H. Pietras, *Dokumenty Soborów Powszechnych...*, op. cit., vol. 4, p. 212.

⁴⁰⁰ S. Merkle, ed., *Concilii Tridentini diariorum pars prima: Herculis Severoli commentarius. Angeli Massarelli diarai I-IV*, Herder, Friburgi Brisgoviae 1901, p. 542: “Fui ad S. Laurentium, ubi loquutus sum cum doctore fratre Dominico Sotto odr. Praed, in vinea illius loci, cum esset cum Rdo D. episcopo Pacensi, de rationibus, quibus probatur vulgatam aeditionem bibl[iae] esse Hieronymi, dixitque Titilman [sic!] et D. Augustinum, praepositum Augubinum, bibliothecarium papae, hanc rem dissere”. Cf. B. Emmi, *Il posto del ‘De ecclesiasticis scripturis et dogmatibus’ nelle discussioni tridentini*, “Ephemerides theologicae Lovanienses”, 1949, vol. 25, p. 590. On Cardinale Cervini/pope Marcellus II see: W.V. Hudon, *Marcello Cervini and ecclesiastical government in Tridentine Italy*, Northern Illinois University Press, DeKalb 1992. On Massarelli see: S. Merkle, *Concilii Tridentini diariorum pars prima: Herculis Severoli commentarius. Angeli Massarelli diarai I-IV...*, op. cit., pp. LXVIII-CXXIV. On Domenico Soto see: D.J. Castaño, *Domingo de Soto: una Breve Bibliografía para Iniciarse en el Estudio de su Obra y de su Pensamiento*, “Azafra: Revista de Filosofía”, 2016, vol. 18, pp. 113–128.

⁴⁰¹ On Steuco see: R.K. Delph, *Emending and Defending the Vulgate Old Testament: Agostino Steuco’s Quarrel with Erasmus*, [in:] *Biblical Humanism and Scholasticism in the Age of Erasmus*, ed. E. Rummel, Brill, Leiden 2008, pp. 297–318.

⁴⁰² A. Allgeier, *Haec vetus et vulgata editio: Neue wort- und begriffsgeschichtliche Beiträge zur Bibel auf dem Tridentinum*, “Biblica”, 1948, vol. 29, no. 4, pp. 380–382.

⁴⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 382: “Das scheint genau das zu sein, was im *Insuper* - Dekret mit *haec vetus et vulgata editio* gesagt werden will”.

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 384.

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 379: “Er stellt unter den Zeitgenossen vielleicht den nächsten Zugang zur Formulierung des Tridentinums von *haec vetus et vulgata editio* dar und erheischt auch darum eine besondere Berücksichtigung weil dieser Sachverhalt, wie es scheint, bis jetzt nicht beachte worden ist”.

even more important for the Council's understanding of the Vulgate⁴⁰⁶. What we want to emphasise here is that Titelmans' view of the Vulgate was almost identical to that expressed in conciliar decrees. He defended it as an authentic, that is sufficient for theological purposes translation of the Bible⁴⁰⁷. He did not condemn other translations, as long as they did not challenge Catholic theology and had an ecclesiastical approval, nor did he discard completely the use of original languages.

There is also a theological similarity in Titelmans' and Council's understanding of biblical hermeneutics. The Council decreed:

ut nemo, suae prudentiae innixus, in rebus fidei et morum, ad aedificationem doctrinae christianae pertinentium, sacram scripturam ad suos sensus contorquens, contra eum sensum, quem tenuit et tenet sancta mater ecclesia, cuius est iudicare de vero sensu et interpretatione scripturarum sanctarum, aut etiam contra unanimem consensum patrum ipsam scripturam sacram interpretari audeat⁴⁰⁸.

First, the Council confirmed the old consensus that Biblical interpretation was an ecclesiastical and not a private enterprise. This was one of the main points on which Titelmans challenged Erasmus. Secondly, the Council emphasised the idea of *consensus patrum*, which, as we have demonstrated above, was very important for Titelmans. We have no evidence regarding whether any of conciliar Fathers was familiar with Titelmans' views on that matter. We can, however, claim that his views had certainly contributed to the formation of the theological ambient in which conciliar decrees arose.

The Council shared with Titelmans also an important deficiency. Just like him, it was incapable of confronting humanist and reformed ideas about the biblical text on a deeper, theological level, thus resorted to an argument from authority. Rather than arguing for both ecclesiastical and literal-spiritual exegesis on the grounds of sacramentality of the Scripture it simply imposed a set of rules to safeguard ecclesiastical control over biblical interpretation.

Titelmans' theology was congruent with that of the Council of Trent also in respect to the canon. On the same day that the Council voted on *Insuper* decree, it passed another decree concerning the canon of Scriptures. Differences between the Hebrew and the Greek canons of the

⁴⁰⁶ Cf. B. Emmi, *Il posto del 'De ecclesiasticis scripturis et dogmatibus' nelle discussioni tridentini...*, op. cit. W. François and A. Gerace, *Trent and the Latin Vulgate: A Louvain Project?*, [in:] *The Council of Trent: reform and controversy in Europe and beyond (1545-1700)*, eds. W. François and V. Soen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen 2018, pp. 131–174.

⁴⁰⁷ On the meaning of the word “authentic” in conciliar decrees see: A. Allgeier, *Authentisch auf dem Konzil von Trient. Eine wort- und begriffsgeschichtliche Untersuchung*, “Historisches Jahrbuch”, 1940, vol. 60, no. 1, pp. 142–158.

⁴⁰⁸ Concilium Tridentinum, Sessio IV (sub Paulo III) die 8. aprilis 1546, *Insuper eadem*, [in:] A. Baron and H. Pietras, *Dokumenty Soborów Powszechnych...*, op. cit., vol. 4, p. 212.

Old Testament were discussed within the Church since antiquity, with Jerome opting for the former (more restrictive) and Augustine for the latter (extended). In the 16th century matters got more complicated with Martin Luther relegating letters of James, Jude and that to the Hebrews, as well as the Book of Revelation to a secondary status, less important than other New Testament writings. Conciliar Fathers decided to reaffirm the extended canon approved at the Council of Florence⁴⁰⁹. In regard to some disputed books, they also sought to strengthen their authority. Council of Trent added the word “apostle” to names of New Testament authors, who had been identified only by name in the decree of the Council of Florence. This was particularly significant in case of the author of the Book of Revelation, since his identity with the son of Zebedee was contested. As we have demonstrated above, Titelmans argued for such a traditional identification. His *Libri duo de auctoritate libri Apocalypsis* was the most extensive recent text discussing the problem by any Catholic writer. Even though we have no direct evidence that Titelmans’ text was known to prelates and theologians present in Trent, it certainly constituted a broad background to their decision regarding the canon.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that the Council’s decree on the original sin interpreted Rom. 5:12 according to the tradition, just as Titelmans had argued against Erasmus⁴¹⁰. Once again, no direct influence can be demonstrated due to the lack of sources. The discussion of Rom. 5:12 made part of *Collationes quinque* that Domenico Soto recommended to Cardinal Marcello Cervini⁴¹¹. It is not unreasonable to assume that he was not the only theologian present in Trent who knew Titelmans’ works.

To conclude: Titelmans made part of the Catholic reform in numerous ways. He grew up in a reform-oriented Congregation of Montaignu and was a member of two Franciscan reforms: Observants and Capuchins. He advocated a reform of the clergy in his writings and almost certainly had some influence on the decisions of the Council of Trent. Although the extent of the latter is difficult to assess precisely, we can safely assert that his biblical scholarship contributed to creating the general theological climate in which the Council was born.

⁴⁰⁹ Concilium Florentinum, Sesio XI, die 4 febrarii 1442, Bulla unionis Coptorum, *Cantate Domino*, 8:3-4 [in:] A. Baron and H. Pietras, eds., *Dokumenty Soborów Powszechnych: Tekst łaciński, grecki, arabski, ormiański i polski*, Wydawnictwo WAM, Kraków 2003, vol. 3, pp. 584–586. Concilium Tridentinum, Sessio IV (sub Paulo III) die 8. aprilis 1546, *Sacrosancta oecumenica* [in:] A. Baron and H. Pietras, *Dokumenty Soborów Powszechnych...*, op. cit., vol. 4, pp. 210–212.

⁴¹⁰ Concilium Tridentinum, Sesio V (sub Paulo III) die 17 iunii 1546, Decretum super peccato originali, *Ut fides nostra*, 4 [in:] A. Baron and H. Pietras, *Dokumenty Soborów Powszechnych...*, op. cit., vol. 4, p. 238. Vide supra 5.2.

⁴¹¹ S. Merkle, *Concilii Tridentini diariorum pars prima: Herculis Severoli commentarius. Angeli Massarelli diarai I-IV...*, op. cit., p. 542.

Conclusions

In this dissertation we have striven to bring out from oblivion biblical works of Franciscus Titelmans. We do not claim that he was a greater or even an equally accomplished scholar as his more famous adversaries; certainly not. Lorenzo Valla, Jacques Lefèvre and above all else Erasmus of Rotterdam rightly have attracted more attention from scholars of Renaissance. Nevertheless, such a concentration on only one group of intellectuals inevitably led to a distorted image of the historical reality of the early 16th-century scholarly debate. Erasmo-centrism of many scholars, which is hardly a matter of the past, inadvertently produced several inaccuracies. First, it overemphasised dualistic opposition between scholasticism and humanism. In many ways this originated from a gullible repetition of Erasmus' rhetorical arguments against his opponents. Secondly, it failed to account for the dynamics of evolution among conservative, Catholic theologians. Too often scholars merely reproduced Protestant claim as if nothing worthy of attention occurred in biblical studies prior to Erasmus and Luther. Many Catholic scholars of the early 16th century, Titelmans included, were not reactionaries but reformers. This was true also of the field of biblical studies. Consequently, it is only through studies devoted to figures such as Titelmans that we can arrive at a more balanced picture and obtain a more complete view of the intellectual history of the Renaissance.

In this dissertation we have endeavoured to present Titelmans' biblical scholarship in the context of exegetical tradition of the Church and challenges brought to it by humanism. In the first chapter we have outlined the development of what we have called "an exegetical consensus" in the Early Church. It was born out of the necessity to counter two opposite tendencies: one coming from Jewish interpretation of Scriptures, the other from Gnosis. To counter the former, Christian theologians developed various ways of spiritual reading of Scriptures. Old Testament prophecies that literally spoke of various events from the history of the Chosen Nation were reinterpreted typologically and allegorically as referring to the Messiah. According to de Lubac such a reinterpretation was inherent in the very nature of Christianity. Allegorisation, however, soon turned out to be a dangerous strategy. Many Christian thinkers, nowadays known as Gnostics, commenced to construct allegorical interpretations that were unacceptable to "Catholic" theologians. In order to counter this challenge, theologians of the "Great Church" emphasised the importance of the literal sense that could not be entirely abandoned and constituted a bulwark against too liberal spiritualisations of scriptural stories. They also engineered hermeneutical rules that indicated a correct reading within the literal-spiritual continuum. Those rules, however, lay not in the text, but outside of it, in the community that read it. Correct interpretation of a given

passage was recognised by its compatibility not only with other biblical passages, but above all else with the general “rule of faith”, that is the deposit of doctrine inherited from the Apostles. The Bible and the Church lived in a dialectical relationship, one feeding on and interpreting the other. This constituted the “sacramental” understanding of the Word of God; not as a text, but the living presence of God within His Church by the means of Scriptures.

As we have argued in Chapter One, this sacramental understanding defined biblical exegesis for well more than a millennium. Although in some regions and periods various authors emphasised more the literal (Antiochenes, Jerome, the late Middle Ages) or the spiritual (Alexandrians, Augustine, the early Middle Ages) sense of the Bible, there was a broad consensus that correct biblical hermeneutics had to encompass both ends of the spectrum under the auspices of the Church. Throughout the Middle Ages there was a gradual tendency to emphasise ever more the literal sense of Scriptures. On the one hand it led to an increased preoccupation with the original languages of the Bible (especially with Hebrew, much less so with Greek), on the other it produced some rather cumbersome interpretations, with numerous divisions and subdivisions of the text and enumerations of possible meanings of words. Although Catholic exegesis of the 15th century remains insufficiently researched, and constitutes a largely uncharted territory, one could venture a hypothesis that biblical humanism was both a reaction against and a development of those tendencies. It reacted against too artificial meanings imposed by scholastic exegetes on the text. Humanism preferred to read paying attention to rhetorical sense of the text rather than to dialectical complicacies. At the same time, however, humanism was a development of the preoccupation with the letter. It sought to do the same thing as late scholastic theologians but to do it better. More research is needed to verify this hypothesis. Undoubtedly, however, humanist learning inadvertently posed a challenge to the “old consensus” in biblical exegesis.

Chapter One demonstrated that humanists, especially Erasmus, cherished literal sense above spiritual and individual judgement of a scholar above that of the community of believers. This truly shook the foundations of biblical exegesis as they had been previously understood and shocked many Catholic theologians as well as Martin Luther. Some opponents of Erasmus were critical of the “new learning” as such (Cousturier being the most radical here), others were humanists themselves (for instance Stunica, Dorp, Lee). None of them, however, succeeded in articulating very clearly the essence of what they feared in Erasmian revolutionary approach to exegesis.

In Chapter Two we have presented the life and works of Franciscus Titelmans, yet another critic of Erasmus, and a biblical commentator in his own right. First, we articulated that the scholar from Leuven received a mixed education, which included both scholastic and humanist elements. He wrote in elegant Latin style, was well versed in Greek, had some working knowledge of

Hebrew and perhaps even a touch of Aramaic. The Congregation of Montaigne, to which he owed his schooling, instilled in him a conservative spirituality, which was nevertheless matched with good training in humanist methodology. Titelmans sought to follow such a spirituality in his life, seeking to intensify the ascetic dimension of it, first by joining Observant Franciscans, then Capuchin friars. He also held such a conservative line in his writings, often underlying his firm adherence to the Church and Her traditions, nonetheless mixing such an approach with elements of the “new learning”. As we have demonstrated in our analysis of his works, he preferred literary genres particular to biblical humanism, such as paraphrase and annotations. In most of his works he sought to uphold traditional Church’s teachings, at the same time striving to update it using tools provided by humanist scholarship. Moreover, the analysis of Titelmans sources has shown that mediaeval authors played a relatively minor role in his biblical commentaries. He preferred to cite patristic authorities (albeit he knew them mostly via mediaeval citations) and often used contemporary scholarship of humanists and even reformers, although he preferred to remain tacit about this fact.

The third chapter presented detailed analyses of literal interpretations of Scriptures in Titelmans’ commentaries. It demonstrated that he possessed some philological prowess that he applied to the Biblical text, whenever no dogma was at stake. The Franciscan used Greek and, less frequently, Hebrew to establish the correct reading, purging the text from copyists’ mistakes; to explain ambiguous words, clarify grammatical issues, and indicate rhetorical figures present in the text. In numerous places he demonstrated his attentiveness to literary qualities of the text and distanced himself from typically scholastic preoccupations with divisions of the text, logic and etymologies. He used also other disciplines to illuminate the biblical text: history, geography, natural sciences. But the prime place was always given to theology. It is the most evident in his commentary on passages where complex dogmatic interpretations had been constructed on the basis of the Vulgate, very remote from the original wording. Although Titelmans was perfectly aware of these textual discrepancies and commented on them, he nevertheless defended dogmatic interpretations based on the Vulgate. He argued that the true meaning was not in the surface of Hebrew and Greek words, but in a deeper sense that, thanks to divine inspiration, had been grasped by the translator of the Vulgate. Thus, instead of using philology to correct clearly erroneous translations of the Vulgate, he used theology to accommodate discrepant Hebrew and Greek readings to dogmatic interpretations based on the Vulgate. In other words, Chapter Three demonstrated both Titelmans’ openness to use philological analyses as well as the limits that this methodology possessed in his eyes. It was useful, when it strengthened Church’s dogma and authority; it was perilous when it challenged them.

In Chapter Four we have analysed Titelmans' spiritual interpretations. He made it very clear that although he paid much attention to literal sense, it was the spiritual one that constituted the essence of Scriptures. Titelmans firmly stated that Scriptures, being written under Holy Spirit's inspiration, could be correctly understood only in the very same Spirit. Titelmans repeated the ancient Christian rule that it was the Christ himself, who was the key for Scriptures. Whoever read without Him, that is, in a purely literal way, erred. Indeed, exclusively literal reading could be diabolical, as Titelmans illustrated with an example of Matt. 4:6.

Titelmans' spiritual interpretations were mostly based on previous authors. He borrowed extensively from Origen, Augustine, John Chrysostom and others, whom he knew through mediaeval catenae and renaissance editions. Although he knew and respected the traditional fourfold division of Scripture's senses, he usually limited himself to commenting only on the allegorical sense and omitted the moral and the anagogical. Within the allegorical sense his main concern was ecclesiology. This is clearly visible in his commentary on the Song of Solomon. Since Origen the Song was interpreted either in a collective sense, as an allegory of God's love to the Church, or in an individual one, as an image of the soul's rapport with the Creator. Titelmans knew both interpretations and gave a clear preference to the former. Although his interpretations followed traditional lines, they were not completely uninventive. This is visible in Titelmans' historical interpretations of Ps 106(107) and Song 6:10. Both texts were since antiquity read as allegories of history, starting with the history of the Chosen Nation, and prophesying its rejection and substitution by pagans. The Franciscan took up these interpretations and extended them all the way to his own times. This clearly shows that he perceived the Bible not as a voice from the past, but as the divine Word in the present. Words of Scriptures interpreted contemporary reality around their readers. This was also evident in passages that Titelmans referred to evangelical reformers and humanists. Importantly, Titelmans hardly ever rejected past interpretations, even if he preferred different ones. He accepted that there existed a plurality of admissible readings, as long as they remained within the confines of the Church's teachings.

Armed with this understanding of Titelmans' biblical commentaries, in Chapter Five we have confronted his polemical writings. His own exegetical works made it evident that he was not *per se* opposed to humanist methodology. The crucial question of this chapter was therefore: what was it exactly that Titelmans opposed in biblical humanism and why did he decide to turn his pen against men of letters?

Searching for the response, we have analysed three different polemical texts of Titelmans. *Prologus apologeticus* presented us with his theoretical considerations concerning rules of biblical translation. The long passus on the translation of Rom. 5:12, included in *Collationes quinque*, demonstrated a practical application of such rules, while Titelmans' treatise on the Book of

Revelation offered his views on canonicity and authorship of the last book of the New Testament. All three texts revealed Titelmans' coherent theology of the Word of God. To begin with, he was convinced that the Divine Providence oversaw not only the process of composition of the Scriptures, but also guided their transmission. Nothing was left to accident. According to Titelmans, translations to Greek (the Septuagint) and then to Latin (the Vulgate) were executed under the supervision of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, it was the Vulgate that contained the fullness of divine Revelation, not because it was flawless from the philological point of view, but because the Holy Ghost saved its translator from any doctrinal error. The Latin Bible expressed the truths of faith more clearly and accurately than Hebrew and Greek original and Greek translations. This was so partly because many biblical truths remained veiled until the advent of Jesus and could not be fully understood before His Resurrection, and partly because both Jews and Greeks departed from the orthodoxy of faith and consequently distorted and even falsified some scriptural passages. Thus, the Latin translation was worthy of the highest appraisal, notwithstanding its imperfect Latin style. In fact, its simple style was a to be admired for its humility.

The authority of the Vulgate was further affirmed by all Catholic Fathers of the Church. The very translation derived its authority from Jerome. Titelmans conceded that the Stridonite was not the translator of the Vulgate, but nevertheless argued that he had revised and approved the translation by an anonymous interpreter, a man of great learning and holiness. All orthodox Fathers confirmed this. For instance, in the case of Rom. 5:12 Titelmans' argued that all Fathers who followed the Catholic faith interpreted this verse as speaking of the original sin. Only Pelagians dissented. Similarly, no Church Father opposed the canonicity of the Book of Revelation, and those who expressed their reservations were men of neither great learning nor of personal sanctity. *Consensus patrum* was the bulwark safeguarding the correct interpretation of Scriptures from all heretics.

For Titelmans, biblical exegesis was not about philology alone. Linguistic analyses could be useful as an auxiliary tool, helping to detect inevitable copyists' errors and to clarify ambiguous expressions from Hebrew and Greek. Philology was however incapable of reaching the kernel of Scriptures' sense, for it was not in words, but in meanings hidden in them. This meaning was discovered by the Church in the historical process of listening to the Word of God. It was not only the literal meaning; very often the deepest sense resided in allegorical interpretations that sometimes seemed much removed from the authorial intent. Yet, they conformed to the intent of the Scriptures' primary author: the Holy Spirit. Fathers of the Church, decrees of Church's councils, her dogmas and teachings all bear witness to this deepest sense of Scriptures.

Although Titelmans failed to articulate it clearly, he shared the ancient and mediaeval "sacramental", "participatory" understanding of the Word of God. The Bible was not a text, but

the living Word. This Word sounded not only in the past, but also in the present. It was not destined to an individual, but to the community of faith, to the Church. Thus, exegesis of the Fathers was authoritative, for it testified to how God's Word spoke to the Church in the past. Any philological reading that challenged an established interpretation was not only mistaken, but it was also groundless. The Bible was not a text, philology could not illuminate it without the perspective of faith. All this was implicit in Titelmans' theology of Scriptures, but regrettably, he failed to expose it clearly. Failing to appeal to a more profound theological argumentation, he resorted to the argument from Church's authority. It remains to be studied whether such a failure, which was by and large shared by the Council of Trent, was a consequence of his training in nominalist philosophy that struggled with the concept of "sacramentality".

In Chapter Five we hope to have demonstrated that the point of contention between Titelmans and humanists was not so much the methodology itself, but the underlying understanding of the very nature of the Bible. It is a great simplification to square Titelmans' polemics against Erasmus into a framework of humanist-scholastic disputes. It is even more mistaken to associate one with forces of progress while the other with reactionism. Arguably it is more useful to see Titelmans as a conservative humanist, or a humanising scholastic. His critique of humanists stemmed not out of fear of the new methodology, but rather carried an important theological point, which he however failed to articulate clearly. He is hardly to be blamed; none in his era succeeded in this task.

This observation opens a broader perspective. One could risk a hypothesis that debates around Erasmus' *Novum Instrumentum* of 1516, in which Titelmans participated, mark an initial stage of an "unintended revolution" in Biblical studies. This "revolution" consisted of a shift in the meaning of the word "Bible". This shift was neither intended nor realised clearly by the agents of this "revolution", yet in the course of centuries it transformed the significance of concepts such as "scriptures" and "exegesis", without changing the words themselves. In other words, an ancient and mediaeval theologian did not mean the same as a modern one, when he used the word "Scriptures".

The hypothesis we propose suggests that biblical studies had suffered from a similar catastrophe that Alasdair MacIntyre suggested to have happened in the field of ethics. He proposed a famous thought experiment, according to which a global catastrophe wiped out all natural sciences¹. Scientific terminology was later taken up by subsequent generations, but it was used in a way that had little to do with original meanings of words they employed. Yet, such a change was undetected and "scientists" after the catastrophe were convinced that they were doing exactly the

¹ A. MacIntyre, *After Virtue: a Study in Moral Theory*, Duckworth, London 1981, pp. 1–5.

same thing as their predecessors. MacIntyre suggested that this was the state of ethics after the Enlightenment. Terms such as “good” and “bad” continued to be used, but their meaning was very different from the one ascribed to them by pre-Enlightenment philosophy. In the field of biblical studies such a shift would mean that theologians lost the understanding of the Bible as the Word and came to see it as a text; yet they seem to believe that they continue doing what Origen, Chrysostom, Augustine, Aquinas *et alii* were doing centuries ago.

The present study suggests that if such a shift has indeed occurred, it originated in the early 16th century. Although before there were occasionally differences among theologians as to the exact role of the letter and spirit in exegesis, those were variations of emphasis. The general consensus, illustrated in Chapter One, was upheld. It was only with the Renaissance and especially with Erasmus of Rotterdam that the very foundations of this consensus came to be questioned. From that period on, we can easily trace a red thread of continuous tension between philologically oriented exegesis, which assumed that the Bible was a text, and more faith-oriented approaches (traditional and mystical), which treated Scriptures as the Living Word. One can see these tensions in Richard Simon’s disputes with Bossuet², controversies around Alfred Loisy and “modernism” and in Joseph Ratzinger’s critique of historical-critical method³. The future pope Benedict XVI argued that although historical-critical method had its great advantages, it was not free of very serious shortcomings, that often rendered it theologically barren. The way to resolve the crisis lay not in a simple return to patristic approaches, that were themselves not free from weaknesses, but in a new hermeneutical approach that would take advantages of the strengths of both approaches, being simultaneously aware of the deficiencies of both⁴. Ratzinger’s approach in its kernel is not completely dissimilar from what Titelmans endeavoured to do, struggling to merge traditional exegesis with some elements of humanist learning. We are convinced that much more research into the history of exegesis is needed to fulfil the late pope’s appeal. It is only through a deep understanding of historical shifts that we can identify correctly the essence of the crisis that Ratzinger described and continue to look for an antidote. Such research could help to respond whether we can indeed speak of any “revolution” in the understanding of the Bible and whether it had its origins in the Renaissance.

The hypothesis of a shift from Bible-Word to Bible-text understanding is partly inspired by the Radical Orthodoxy movement. According to the proponents of this theological current it was

² On Richard Simon see: S. Müller, *Kritik und Theologie: christliche Glaubens- und Schrifthermeneutik nach Richard Simon (1638-1712)*, EOS, Sankt Ottilien 2004. S. Müller, *Richard Simon (1638-1712), Exeget, Theologe, Philosoph und Historiker: eine Biographie*, Echter, Würzburg 2005.

³ J. Ratzinger, R.E. Brown, and W.H. Lazareth, *Biblical Interpretation in Crisis: the Ratzinger Conference on Bible and Church*, ed. R.J. Neuhaus, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 1989.

⁴ An example of a practical implementation of Ratzinger’s suggestion: G. Vall, *Ecclesial Exegesis: a Synthesis of Ancient and Modern Approaches to Scripture*, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington 2022.

the nominalist philosophy, starting with Duns Scotus, which “desacramentalised” Christian world view. The idea of Bible-Word is founded upon the sacramentality of the Scriptures. No surprise then, if a loss of the notion of sacramentality led also to a “secularisation” of the Bible. All such broad hypotheses exceed vastly the scope of this dissertation, nevertheless it might be worth observing that Titelmans’ scholastic training, as befitted a Franciscan, was mostly based on Duns Scotus. Perhaps his failure to articulate his theological views in terms of sacramentality of Scriptures had something to do with that. Further research is needed to establish the patterns of change in late mediaeval exegesis and the potential influence of nominalist philosophy on such changes.

This dissertation hoped to demonstrate that Titelmans, although no match for Erasmus in terms of originality, deserves to be studied. His theological positions had been more complex than older historiography recognised. His case illustrates the elusiveness of labels such as “humanist” or “scholastic” in the early 16th century. Analyses of his biblical commentaries help to understand more clearly his differences with Erasmus and consequently bring to the fore the novelty of biblical humanism of the Scholar from Rotterdam. Much more research is needed to obtain a more comprehensive picture of transformations of Christian exegesis in the early 16th century. Such research could lead present-day theology, and especially biblical studies, to a better self-understanding in the context of historical developments and help to overcome some crises which those fields are experiencing.

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