

The early 16th century was a period of radical changes in Christian biblical interpretation. The whole process was instigated by the most famous scholar of the Age, Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466-1536). In 1516 the great humanist published the Greek text of the New Testament with a new Latin translation, demonstrating, that the Latin translation used until then was not always philologically correct. Some, both Catholics and Protestants, received his work with enthusiasm, while others were very critical about it.

This project concerns a lesser-known part of Erasmus' biblical oeuvre: his paraphrases. Unlike his philological work destined for professional theologians, his paraphrases were intended for preachers and educated laity and sought to explain the biblical message in simple and elegant Latin. This also met some opposition. Noël Beda, an influential theologian from Paris thought that such rewritings of the Holy Writ were by necessity mistaken and he had them banned in France. Yet, Beda's own follower, Franciscus Titelmans started publishing his own paraphrases of biblical books shortly after. Why?

Titelmans remains undeservedly a rather unknown figure. Yet, in his short life (1502-1537) he published twenty books, mostly on the interpretation of the Bible. Many of them included paraphrases of biblical text, not so dissimilar from those produced by Erasmus. In fact, the Humanist from Rotterdam accused his younger colleague of trying to replace his paraphrases. In our project we shall verify whether Erasmus was right.

In the first part of the project, we shall compare the text of chosen fragments of paraphrases of both authors. We want to verify, whether the younger of the two scholars was inspired by or even borrowed from the paraphrases of the older. We shall also individuate fragments that had significant differences in the way that both authors treated biblical text. In the second stage, we shall conduct theological analyses of chosen fragments. We shall inspect whether textual choices reflected different theological positions of the two authors. We also hope to discover, whether it is true that Titelmans was content to follow Erasmus' interpretation whenever they were neutral, but changed these, that he considered heretical.

The study shall deepen our knowledge of theological changes of 1520s and 1530s. Although this might seem of little relevance five centuries after, it is worth recording that what we know as "the modern world" was largely born out of theological disputes of the 16th century. Understanding renaissance theology can help us to understand our modern society.