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Olive B. White

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Author(s): Olive B. White

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RICHARD TAVERNER'S INTERPRETATION OF
ERASMUS IN *PROVERBES OR ADAGIES*

FOR his work on the Bible in English and for his translations from Erasmus, Richard Taverner has had a modest importance in early Tudor literature.¹ In other respects, he has been an easy man to disregard. He misses the pioneer's distinction in both his fields; he obscures the interest of his own utterances by offering them in the guise of translation; even what we know of his life suggests no highly individual achievement.² In summary, his biography traces a path well worn by his generation of humanists—scholars trained at Renaissance Oxford and Cambridge, men matured in the dramatic, dangerous school of experience that was England between the fall of Wolsey and the death of Henry VIII. The times welcomed such a useful scholarship as Taverner devoted to education, politics, and religion. We, in turn, may increase our understanding of those times by recognizing, not simply the work he did, but also his methods and some of his results. For such a study, his little book preserved in exemplars of six editions, *Proverbes or Adagies . . . gathered out of the Chiliades of Erasmus*, has the double interest of revealing more of Taverner's thought than we should expect to find in it and of helping to color the fame of Erasmus in England.³

Though Erasmus had antagonists in England as elsewhere, that fame was prevailingly auspicious during most of his life. The learned—friends or enemies, correspondents, and readers—could know directly from his works where he finally stood in the critical religious struggle of the 1520's and 1530's;⁴ except among controversialists who chose to quote the

¹ For his translations, see Harold H. Hutson and Harold R. Willoughby, "The Ignored Taverner Bible of 1539," *The Crozer Quarterly*, xvi (1939), 161–176; Charles Read Baskervill, "Taverner's *Garden of Wisdom* and the *Apophthegmata* of Erasmus," *SP* xxix (1932), 149–159; Henry B. Lathrop, *Translations from the Classics into English from Caxton to Chapman*, University of Wisconsin Studies in Language and Literature (Madison, 1933), pp. 70–71.

² *Dictionary of National Biography* sub Taverner; Hutson and Willoughby, *op. cit.*, pp. 165–167.

³ Two editions represented by copies in the Huntington Library are the basis of this study: *Prouerbes or adagies with neue additions gathered out of the Chiliades of Erasmus by Richard Tauerner. Hereunto be also added Mimi Publiani* (London, 1539), and *Proverbes or Adagies gathered out of the Chiliades of Erasmus by Richarde Tauerner. With neue additions as well of Latyn prouerbes as of Englysshe* (London, 1545). As Professor Baskervill noted (*op. cit.*, pp. 150–151), the title page of 1539 argues an even earlier edition. The six editions listed in *STC* (10436–10441) range from 1539 to 1569, a long life for a book of this sort.

⁴ The letters of these years, particularly to correspondents in England and Spain, are all-important evidence (P. S. Allen and H. M. Allen, *Opus Epistolarum Des. Erasmi Roterdami*, vols. vi–x [Oxford, 1926–1941], *passim* [vols. ix and x ed. H. M. Allen and H. W. Garrod]).

middle-aged Erasmus against the elder,⁵ his significant writings from *Hyperaspistes Diatribæ aduersus Seruum Arbitrium Martini Lutheri* (Basle, 1526) till his death ten years later could have left little doubt of his central position. Men with small Latin or none, however, had to feed their curiosity about the mighty Erasmus on the crumbs of quotation and of reference scattered in controversy and on his works as they came into the vernacular. The first of these in English—Gentian Hervet's rendering of *De Immensa Dei Misericordia* and Margaret Roper's of *Precatio Dominica* (both 1524–1525/26)⁶—had the virtue of presenting Erasmus in some of the writings which, a few years later, he himself recommended as suitable for popular reading.⁷

In spite of this favorable beginning, however, the long-enduring English emphasis on *The Praise of Folly*, some of the most notorious *Colloquies*, and a few passages in *Enchiridion Militis Christiani* also started early. The traditional picture of Erasmus as Luther's inspiration and betrayer, as—by the gentlest interpretation—a reformer who loosed forces he was too timid to guide to the end, is one of the most tightly framed in the gallery of the Ichabods of history. Though not completely obliterated, the portrait suggested by the little devotional works translated in the 1520's and such successors as Thomas Paynel's version of *De Contemptu Mundi* (1533) is far more shadowy than the popular one encouraged by many of the translations of the 1530's—for example, that of *Enchiridion* which is probably Tindale's (1533),⁸ *Ye Pylgremage of Pure Devotion* (?1536),⁹ or Taverner's *Proverbes* (1539).

⁵ See, for example, Tindale's famous gibe (1530) at both More and "his darling Erasmus" (*Answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue*, Parker Society [Cambridge, 1850], p. 16).

⁶ A. W. Reed, "The Regulation of the Book Trade before the Proclamation of 1538," *Early Tudor Drama* (London, 1926), pp. 169–173; John Archer Gee, "Hervet's English Translation, with its Appended Glossary, of Erasmus's *De Immensa Dei Misericordia*," *PQ*, xv (1936), 136–152, and "Margaret Roper's English Version of Erasmus' *Precatio Dominica*," *Review of English Studies*, xiii (1937), 257–271.

⁷ See especially his letter to Alfonso Fernandez, the discreet translator of *Enchiridion Militis Christiani* into Spanish (Allen, *op. cit.*, vii, 356–357, Ep. 1969). Erasmus' suggestions for translation are "De misericordia Domini, De matrimonio Christiano, Paraphrases, Commentariolos in quatuor Psalmos, et si qua sunt huiusmodi quae, per commodum interpretem tractata, possunt conducere moribus hominum." Cf. Thomas Paynel's rendering of his complaint against those who "(nat withstandynge that I am a lyue, and commaunde the contrarie) do vulgate and put forthe abroad suche trifles as I wrote whan I was yong to exercise my style, nat thinkynge that they shulde be spred abroad and common for euery man to haue" (*De Contemptu Mundi* [London, 1533], sig. A4).

⁸ John Archer Gee, "Tindale and the 1533 English *Enchiridion* of Erasmus," *PMLA*, xlix (1934), 460–471, and "John Byddell and the First Publication of Erasmus's *Enchiridion* in English," *ELH*, iv (1937), 43–59.

⁹ Henry de Vocht, *The Earliest English Translations of Erasmus's COLLOQUIA, 1536–1566* (Louvain, 1928). For the date of the book, see especially pp. xli–li.

Adagia is, in many ways, one of Erasmus's central scholarly achievements. He probably worked harder on his editions of the Fathers, his *Novum Instrumentum*, his *Paraphrases*; but no other enterprise—not even the accumulating *Colloquia*—testifies to such long devotion as his gathering, comparing, and annotating of pithy sayings from the literatures of antiquity. Between the first edition of *Adagiorum Collectanea* (Paris, 1500), with its 818 entries, and the final *Adagiorum Chiliades* of 1536, we see his sustained enthusiasm at work. Has Erasmus often been called modest? At least, the count of his aphorisms, of which he had finally 4,151, is a prodigal underestimate, for most of the entries include variants and analogues of the main quotation.¹⁰

After the thousands of this harvest, Taverner's hundreds in *Proverbes* seem a scanty gleaning. There is, however, something pleasantly Erasmanian in the increase between the edition of 1539, with its 187 proverbs, and that of 1545, with 235.¹¹ Like his master, Taverner must have been busy from edition to edition, for the later one introduces, not only further adages from the Latin, but also fifty-one English proverbs—folk wisdom wedded to learning.¹²

The slimness of Taverner's work, even in its enlarged form, finds a match in the apparent simplicity of his treatment. As two scholars noticing the little book in other connections have remarked, this simplicity is misleading, for what the Englishman does with his source differs greatly from it.¹³ The directions of change are worth a more careful charting than a summarizing description alone can give. If Taverner were to be judged as a humanist, his ignoring of most of Erasmus's parallel passages and erudite *scholia* would be disappointing; he clearly had no intention of impressing anyone with the learning which we know he possessed. His brevity might even suggest that he had drawn on some convenient epitome, such as *Adagiorum Omnium, tam Græcorum q̄ Latinorū Aureum flumen . . . D. Erasmi Rot . . . secundum ordinē Alphabeti, per Theodoricum Cortehoeuivm selectum . . .* (Antwerp, 1530); but *Proverbes* lacks the efficient good order of digests, with their implication that here is, if anything, an improvement on the original, and it includes occasional bits that must have come from Erasmus's own pages. Taverner's prologue admits cheerfully the disparity between his master's work and his:

¹⁰ The comparisons in this paper are based on Froben's *Adagiorum Chiliades Des. Erasmi* (Basle, 1539). In the preface to the edition of 1533, Erasmus wrote the history of the work (*Opera Omnia* [Leyden, 1703], vol. II, sig. *3). See P. S. Allen's appraisal of *Adagia* as one of Erasmus's "two most notable compositions" (*Erasmus: Lectures and Wayfaring Sketches* [Oxford, 1934], pp. 61–66).

¹¹ The index of 1539 omits several adages included in the volume.

¹² Repeating and occasionally doubling these native proverbs, Taverner uses them in the interpretation of fifty-four, all told, of Erasmus's.

¹³ Lathrop, *op. cit.*, pp. 70–71; Baskervill, *op. cit.*, pp. 150–151.

Forasmoeche as I thynke it wol be no les pleasaunte then profitable vnto you (good readers) to heare some of the most nette & handsome prouerbes which the incomparable lerned man Erasmus Roterodam hath in his boke of Chiliades gathered to gether out of the moste approued authors: although it be a matter of great importaunce to handle them in their kynde, and a prouince farre surmountyng the sklender capacitie of my wytte: yet for your sakes and for the loue I beare to the furtheraūce & adourment of my natiue countrey, I wyll not stycke after myne accustomed maner, which is *rudiori ac crassiori minerua*, to make here a brefe collection of some of them.¹⁴

Though a quick comparison shows that *Proverbs* depends heavily on the early part of its source, closer scrutiny finds a late adage breaking a selected run from the first half just often enough to indicate that Taverner used the full work. So we cannot mark him down as the translator who begins a vast enterprise only to abandon it one-twentieth done.

To be sure, a precisionist may ask if the result of such clipping and chopping as Taverner's is justly to be called translation. The fault is ours if we insist on that description. The title pages announce only a "gathering out of the Chiliades of Erasmus." The great name occurs, however, not only on the title page and in the prologue, but also in occasional parenthetical notes like these: "as full eloquentlye declareth Erasmus," "sayeth Erasmus," "sayth this excellent clerke,"¹⁵ and in fuller notes sending the reader to the source. Where, for example, Erasmus has written a tract of several thousand words (sixteen quarto pages) on *Dulce bellum inexpertis*, Taverner translates: "Batell is a swete thyng to them that neuer assayed it," and adds: "He that lysteth to knowe more of this prouerbe, let him go to Erasmus which hādleth in his Chiliades this prouerbe both ryght copiously & also eloquently."¹⁶ Another long essay by Erasmus, the partly autobiographical one on *Festina lente* (somewhat more than eight pages), elicits this comment after the translation: "Yf ye liste to knowe more of thys prouerbe most worthy continuallye to be borne in mynde, reade the Chiliades of Erasmus, who hādleth this mater at large."¹⁷ Even the forgetful reader, then, could not lose sight of Erasmus through the book nor fail to think it carefully rendered.

In spite of this deference to "the flower of eloquence," "the incomparable lerned man Erasmus"¹⁸—perhaps even because of the magic in the honored name—Taverner takes interesting liberties with his text. His

¹⁴ Sig. Ai v in both edd., 1539 and 1545 (some variants in spelling). Cf. Taverner's similar apology for his inadequate praises of King Henry in his prefatory epistle to *The Most Sacred Bible* (London, 1539): "Certes, it far passeth bothe the slender capacite of my wytt, and also the rude infancy of my tong" (Sig. ~~xx~~.ii.). ¹⁵ Sigs. Eviii—Fi.

¹⁶ Sig. Gi v; (1545) sig. Iiii; cf. *Adagiorum Chiliades* (1539), pp. 845–861.

¹⁷ Sig. Dv and v; cf. *Adag. Chil.*, pp. 349–357.

¹⁸ *Mimi Publiani* (bound with *Proverbs* of 1539, with a joint title page but separate signatures), sig. Bi; *Proverbs*, sig. Ai v.

work is a medley of methods: there are passages as happily translated as anyone could wish; fair paraphrases skillfully naturalizing foreign material; and purposeful substitutions, excursions, and additions. To distinguish his own views from his author's, he does not employ such typographical aids as some of his contemporaries used in controversy and in translation.¹⁹ Even an occasional marginal hand, emphasizing striking passages from Erasmus and some of Taverner's own contributions as well, lacks the merit of a single connotation. Once, to be sure, in the discussion of *Ignavis semper feriæ*, which four times within as many pages insists that this treatise on excessive holydays is Erasmus's, Taverner remarks scrupulously: "Hytherto haue I translated the wordes of that renowned clerke Erasmus," before he adds: "But now in Englande thanked be god through the hygh benefyte of oure incomparable prince Henry the .viii. dyverse superfluouse holydayes be already abrogate."²⁰ Most of the time, however, only a comparison of Latin and English shows us where Erasmus is speaking and where Taverner. Such must have been the case for sixteenth-century readers if any stopped to ask whether what they read presented Erasmus faithfully or not.

The changes, beyond simple condensation, fall into two major groups: those introducing Erasmus to moderate and devout English readers of 1539 and the 1540's in a probably more acceptable guise than he wore in the original; and, on the other hand, those attributing to him opinions—religious, political, and social—that may be described as post-Erasmian or even wholly inconsistent with Erasmus's views.

In the first of these groups, some of the most striking examples are the changes which give *Proverbs* a stronger scriptural coloring than the source has. Readers who had begun to know Erasmus in the tiny devotional works rendered by Gentian Hervet and Margaret Roper would find nothing strange in this fact; and proponents of the "new learning," in the senses of the Reformation rather than of the Renaissance, would be reassured by the Christian emphasis. Of course, Taverner's contemporary work on the revision of Matthew's Bible (1539) may have made the scriptural coloring of *Proverbs* almost unconscious. The way he uses his material, however, is no less interesting for the possibility that the memorable phrases are as natural a language for him as the English proverbs he cites.²¹

¹⁹ Cf. e.g., *The Apologie of Syr Thomas More, Knyght*, (London, 1533), *passim*, where different type fonts mark the quotations from the "Pacifier" and from More's own earlier utterances, and Nicholas Udall's edition of Erasmus's *Apophthegmes* (London, 1542), where the same device separates the translator's commentary from the text.

²⁰ Sig. Fii. Taverner continues with a denunciation of papal authority.

²¹ Do his quotations, of which about a score may be distinguished from casual allusions,

As we should expect, to be sure, Erasmus frequently cites scriptural parallels to his adages; but amid the humanist's wealth, they count for no more than comparable aphorisms of Pythagoras or Plato or gnomic verses from Homer, Euripides, Terence, or Horace. How different, then, is the effect when Taverner omits all the pagan wisdom and retains only the scriptural illustration! For example, of Erasmus's citations under *Occultæ musices nullus respectus*, Taverner is content with that from the twentieth chapter of Ecclesiasticus;²² again, where Erasmus brings Sophocles and Homer as well as Saint Paul into the discussion of *Mulierem ornat silentium*, Taverner writes:

Silence garnysheth a woman. Assuredlye there is no tyre, no apparayl that better becometh a woman then sylence. Whych thyng also the Apostle Paule requyareth, whyle he forbyddeth women in the church or congregacion to speake, but wylleth them to aske theyr husbādes at home, yf they be in doubt of any thyng.²³

Sometimes Taverner keeps one or two of the pagans but, by the excision of the rest, makes the biblical reference, perhaps even subordinate and incidental in the Latin, particularly emphatic. On Erasmus's well-packed page, for example, the comment, "Et euangelicum illud de uia arcta, quæ ducit ad uitam," is but one among many elucidating *Difficilia, quæ pulchra*; not so in Taverner's rendering, however, for after mentioning

correspond to the renderings in his Bible? Curiously, no. The discrepancies are striking; e.g., *Proverbs*: "he toke bread, and thankes yeuen, brake it and sayde to his disciples, take, eate, this is my bodye, whiche is betrayed and broken for you" (sigs. Hi v-Hii, with marginal reference: "Math. 26, Mar. 14, Luc. 22, I Cor. 11").

Bible: "Jesus toke bred and when he hadde geuen thankes, brake it, and gaue it to the disciples, and sayde: Take eate, this is my body" (Math. 26; sigs. Bv v-Bvi).

"Jesus toke breed, blessed and brake, and gaue to them and sayd. Take, eate, this is my body" (Mark 14; sig. Di v).

"And takyng breed and gyuyng thankes, he brake and gaue it to them, sayinge: This is my body which is gyuen for you" (Luke 22; sig. Fi v).

"For the Lorde Jesus the same nyght in which he was betrayed, toke breed: and thanked & brake, and sayde. Take ye, and eate ye: this is my body which is broken for you" (I Cor. 11; sig. Mii v).

Nor is there recognizable correspondence between the quotations in *Proverbs* and Coverdale, the earlier Matthew's, or the Great Bible (exemplar of 1541 seen). Even when Erasmus includes the same scriptural citation as Taverner, the latter is likely to make an independent translation; e.g., Erasmus interprets *Durum est contra stimulum calcitrare* (Acts 9) with "*durum aduersum deum pugnare*" (*Adagiorum Chiliades*, p. 115, sub *Contra stimulum calces*); Taverner places the Pauline sentence as his heading and renders it "It is harde kyckynge against the gode" (sig. Bvi). His Bible gives "It is harde for the to kycke agaynst the prycke" (Acts 9; sig. Hiii v).

²² Sigs. Cviii v-Di; *Adag. Chil.*, p. 258.

²³ Sig. Gii; *Adag. Chil.*, p. 880. Cf. "in the church or congregacion" with Erasmus's "in ecclesia."

Solon alone among the ancients, he elaborates thus: "which thyng also teachethe vs our Guyde & sauour Christe sayng that narowe is the way which leadeth to lyfe," and he adds the marginal reference, "*Math. 7.*"²⁴ Even when the original gives a little more attention to the scriptural material, it is less striking in a full company than in almost solitary state. In discussing *Amicorum communia omnia*, Erasmus makes a long, characteristically classical explication before he remarks on the similarity between the ideals of the Pythagoreans and the teaching of Christ, the starting point for Taverner, who amplifies the idea with denunciations of both monks and Anabaptists.²⁵

The biblical emphasis increases with Taverner's independent citations offered in Erasmus's name. For the latter's completely classical development of *Mali corui malum ouum*, we find substituted, with a marginal reference to *Math. 7.*²⁶

An euyll tre (sayeth Christ) can bryng forth no good frute. Our foreparētes Adā & Eve were for theyr trāsgression depriued of originall iustice, of the true feare of God, of the true and pure loue of God, of the true and perfyte knowlege of God. etc. Wherefore all we that be sprōge of them, cā not but be lykewyse spotted & naturally corrupted wyth the same vyces.²⁷

While Saint Jerome serves to begin the discussion of *Diues aut iniquus est, aut iniqui hāres* in both Latin and English, Erasmus then appeals to Plato, Menander, and Plutarch; but Taverner turns to the Gospel:

How true it is not only experience teacheth, but our leader and capitayne Christe also in hys doctrine declareth vnto vs whych bycause he wolde fraye vs frō the wycked Mammon, sayeth a camel shall soner passe through a nedles eye, than a ryche man entre into heuen. Meanyng that it is excedyng harde for such as flowe in worldly goodes to haue a mynde vntangled wyth the same, & to beare them selues vpriight towardes god and man.²⁸

Though Aesop in illustration of *Non uidemus mantica quod in tergo est* may have seemed too edifying or possibly too amusing to discard, Taverner replaces Persius, Horace, and even Saint Jerome with "accordyng to the euangelical prouerbe, we can see a mote in other mens eyes, where in oure owne we can not espye a greate beame."²⁹ Equally brief is his sub-

²⁴ Sig. Dv v; *Adag. Chil.*, p. 360.

²⁵ Sigs. Giv v-Gv; *Adag. Chil.*, p. 14.

²⁶ Incorrectly changed to *Math. 5* in 1545 (sig. Ciii).

²⁷ Sigs. Cii v-Ciii; cf. *Adag. Chil.*, p. 301.

²⁸ Sigs. Dii v-Diii; *Adag. Chil.*, p. 307. In the last sentence of his commentary, Taverner moderates his strictures with Old Testament examples: "Yet I woll not gaynsay but a mā may be ryche and not put hys confidēce in hys ryches, as Dauid, Job, Abrahā and many other Patriarches were."

²⁹ Sigs. Hiv v-Hv (1545 only); *Adag. Chil.*, p. 223. Interestingly enough, Erasmus uses the sentence from Saint Matthew in his comment on the very next adage: *Festucam ex alterius oculo eijcere* (pp. 223-224).

stitution of another sentence from the Sermon on the Mount for Epictetus in the discussion of *Cibum in matellam ne immittas*; between Plutarch and Horace, he inserts: "So that it is al one in effecte with that sayenge of Christ. Cast not perles afore swyne."³⁰

Such substitutions are responsible for some of the rare passages in which Taverner exceeds the length of the original. So he does when, in the spirit of More before him and Shakespeare after, he moralizes *Omnia idem pulvis*:

All is one selfe dust or ashes. From earth we came, and to earth we shall. Yea the scripture sayeth: that ashes we be, and to ashes we shal reuerte. Now amonges ashes or dust I pray you what great difference is there? How wol ye discerne the ashes of a kynge, of an Emperoure, of a Duke, of a great byshop from the Ashes of a cobler yea of a begger?³¹

To the funereal thought, Erasmus gives but four lines and an echo from Lucian. More surprising still is the contrast between Taverner's long essay on *Panem ne frangito* and Erasmus's forty words. In this extraordinarily brief discussion, to be sure, the latter establishes the analogy between Pythagoras's teaching and Christ's from which Taverner develops his plea against the profanation of the Eucharist, a plea fortified by appeal to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and Paul.³²

Less frequent than these biblical additions and emphases, but likewise auspicious for his master's fame, are some of Taverner's alterations touching princes, a theme on which he had more reason than Erasmus to be discreet. The latter never underestimated the worth of a king's favor in terms of gifts and prestige; but surely not till the very end of his life did he glimpse, in the martyrdom of his friends, the power of princes over liberty and life. Taverner, however, whether in 1539, at the end of a bloody decade, or in 1545, when he himself had been in prison, had learned one of the prime lessons of the time, the lesson in which the Duke of Norfolk had tried vainly to coach More: "Indignatio principis mors est." So reading Erasmus on *Multæ regum aures atque oculi*, a not very serious discussion citing Lucian, Aristotle, Aristophanes, Euripides, and others—but not Saint Paul—we may wonder what Taverner will make of such levity as endows kings not merely with ears but "iis . . . tam asininis ac longis." No such graceless folly! Instead, we read:

Kynges haue many eares & manye eyes, as who shulde saye, no thyng can be spoken, nothyng doon so secretly agaynst kynges and Rulers, but by one meanes or other at length it wol come to their knowlege. They haue eares that lysten an hundred myles from thē, they haue eyes that espye out more thynges, then

³⁰ Sig. Gvii; *Adag. Chil.*, p. 18.

³¹ Sig. Hvi and v (1545 only); *Adag. Chil.*, pp. 237–238.

³² Sigs. Hi-iii; *Adag. Chil.*, p. 21. Cf. n. 21, *supra*, and pp. 942–943, *infra*.

men wolde thynke. Wherefore it is wysdome for subiectes, not only to keep theyr princes lawes and ordinaūces in the face of the worlde, but also preuely: namely syth Paule wold haue rulers obeyed euen for conscience sake.³³

The marginal note "*Roma. 13*" enforces a doctrine already dear to the King.³⁴ Elsewhere, too, Erasmus is schooled to speak equally acceptable vituperation and flattery, both wanting in the original discussion of *Frons occipitio prior*:

These thynges tende all to thys ende, that euery man shulde as muche as maye be, execute hys busynes, hys callynge, hys office by hym selfe and not by vycares or deputies, as nowe we se done, well nere of all degrees of men. There be Kynges, there be Cardinales, there be Bishops, Prelates and sondry other officers and magistrates in Christendome, whych do all by vycares and deputies, but themselves lyue in most ydelnes and in all kyndes of pleasure lyke popes. Wold god these wold take exemple of our most vigilāt prince and soueraygne lord kinge Hēry the eyght, who not only setteth vigilant deputies and ministers under hym, but also loketh hym selfe ryght busely vpon hys charge cōmitted vnto him of god.³⁵

Similar in tone is the little introduction to an anecdote reporting Henry VII's acid comment on the sermon of a friar who dared to denounce the life of princes. Taverner contrives thus to pay a pretty compliment to the dead author as well as the living king:

All be it I studye in these prouerbes to be shorte, yet it becometh not me an Englysh man and the kynges seruauant to passe ouer wyth sylēce the thyng, that Erasmus beyng a straunger vnto vs vouchsaued here to recorde of the moost prudent and excellēt prince kinge Henry the .vii. father to our moost drad souerayne lorde that now is."³⁶

The relation of subject to ruler was not the only theme inviting the moralist to reflection in a time that had some notably hard lessons to teach about the mutability of fortune, about trust and distrust, about

³³ Sig. Aiiiii; *Adag. Chil.*, pp. 60–61.

³⁴ Cf. the exposition of the thesis in Tindale's *The Obedience of a Christian Man* (London, 1528); James Gairdner, *The English Church in the Sixteenth Century from the Accession of Henry VIII to the Death of Mary* (London, 1903), pp. 126–127. In Taverner's Bible, Romans 13 has both the heading, "The obedience of men vnto theyr rulers," and a marginal hand against "Wherefore ye must nedes obaye not for feare of vengeance onely: but also because of conscience" (sig. Liiiii v).

³⁵ Sigs. B [misprint for A] vii v-viii. Contrast the relative mildness of Erasmus's "At hodie fere episcopi & reges omnia alienis manibus, alienis auribus atque oculis agunt, neque quicquam minus ad se pertinere putant quam rempub. aut priuatis suisque distenti, aut uoluptatibus occupati" (*Adag. Chil.*, p. 68). See also the comment of Professor Lathrop on Taverner's additions here (*Translations from the Classics*, p. 71, where most of the passage above is quoted).

³⁶ Sig. Evi v, *sub Ne puero gladium*; *Adag. Chil.*, p. 492.

basic human experience. Moralist, avowedly Erasmus was; yet Taverner deepens his appeal to the thoughtful average man in such additions as these: "It is commonly sene by the hygh prouidēce of God that goodes vnlawfully gotten vanysh awaye, no man knoweth how" (sig. Cviii v). "Suche persons [as offer a stone in one hand, bread in the other] be in Englād not a fewē" (sig. Di v). "Wythout fayle it is harde at thys daye to mete with one whom thou mayst trust in all thynges" (sig. Dvi). "There is no person, be he neuer so ryche, neuer so myghtye, neuer so muche in hys princes fauour, yea though he be hym selfe a prynce, a kynge, a kesar, but nedeth the ayde of frēdes" (sig. Dviii v). "Semblably manye men & women there be which by their owne noyse and bewrayeng of them selves, seke theyr owne bande and destruction" (sig. Gvi [only in 1545]). "Lorde God; what personages, what families, what cities, ye what realmes and hole countries haue been vtterly subuerted and ouerthrowē by the malice of neighbours. Agayne on the other syde, nothinge is better, nothinge more commodiouse, nor pleasaunt, than is a good and honest neyghbour, which thyng is elegantly declared by our englysshe prouerbe, which speketh in this wise. A nere neyghbour is better than a farre frende" (sig. Gi [only in 1545]). Especially by 1545, Taverner had had more experience in some of these matters, good and bad, we may believe, than Erasmus ever had.

To a modern reader, Taverner's critical additions—social, political, and religious—seem the most significant of all. What effect could they have had on Erasmus's reputation? For one thing, of course, men who sympathized with the changes of the time undoubtedly relished the support that so famous a scholar as he seemed to give them; their appreciation helped to decide the familiar judgment of him in the English-speaking parts of the world. However much encouragement some of his own pronouncements have given to this idea of him as a reformer before the Reformation, it is an incomplete and distorted estimate; yet it has meant for his name such celebrity as the scholar, no matter how prodigious, would probably never have enjoyed. In the shaping of this particular reputation, the many translators during the first decades, and not Taverner alone, had strategic advantages. To be sure, their changes were frequently so slight as to be probably unconscious: the word added, the word dropped, may testify simply to a quickly fixed habit of thought. If, for example, Erasmus wrote "pontifices," he meant "the bysshoppes of Rome," one of Cromwell's propagandists may well have reasoned, and that was that.³⁷ Since the assumption aligned the great humanist among the supporters of the King's policy in religion, so much the better.

³⁷ So Taverner in the discussion of *Ignauis semper feriæ sunt* (cf. p. 932, *supra*).

We are not considering villainous misrepresentation but, rather, the result of two interesting facts—the way in which a few decades, particularly in that century, can alter the inflection of criticism, and the differing effect of the utterance in the two languages. Though neither fact needs laboring, a glance at each may be useful reminder. What a man could say in 1500 or 1515, as for centuries past, without grave suspicion of disloyalty to the Church became within a few years comfort to the forces of revolt. In our own troubled day, we cannot miss the reality of that situation, for we have seen similar confusion and shifting in the development of current ideologies. Englishmen like Taverner recognized the basic principle when they tried to halt religious and social change on a steep grade. Less acute than the difference caused by a few years may seem that due to language. What Erasmus wrote in Latin, however, he addressed to an international company of readers, clerics and scholarly laymen. When he spoke sharply of churchmen or princes, he spoke chiefly to them and to their counselors; and relatively few outside the family knew what he was saying. Even well-whetted words, then, had a kind of safety edge that no lively rendering into a vernacular could possibly have. Translation meant, not only that the family doors were flung wide, but that curious outsiders caught the most abusive remarks and, naturally enough, improved them in repetition. The embellishments are not all that we need to note, however; highly revealing, too, are the differences in temperature and in pressure between the Latin and the English.³⁸

That Erasmus becomes at least a Protestant sympathizer in translation is less surprising than that he becomes a Henrician, opposed to the extremists of the day and, in his conservatism, probably acceptable to many insurgent Englishmen only because of his supposed antipapalism. Some of the doctrinal commentaries have no parallels in the Latin. *Vivorum oportet meminisse*, for example, invites Erasmus to explore several classical utterances on the remembrance of the dead and the need men have to be no less mindful of absent friends than of the present. Discarding all this matter, Taverner substitutes a strenuous twofold reproach of those who spend their money in commemoration of the dead rather than in charity to the living:

And yf they go aboute to extende theyr lyberalitie & to do any good dedes, they hadde leuer lashe oute theyr wycked Mammon on the deade, than on the quycke. So lyttel regard they haue to the lyuely ymages of God, whom god neuertheles so

³⁸ Consider, for example, what Taverner makes of *Frons occipitio prior* (p. 936, *supra*, and n. 35).

tēdereth, that what so euer we bestowe vpon them, he cōteth bestowed euen vpō hymselfe.³⁹

Still more eloquent evidence of conditions in England at the time than gibes at Catholic practice are Taverner's denunciations of extremists, whether they espoused doctrines politically dangerous in their anti-nomianism or inclined to such evangelical excess as licensed the plowman to speak as a prophet. Whereas Erasmus, discussing *Multitudo imperatorum Cariam perdidit*, could speak calmly of anarchy, Taverner not only emphasizes the lesson with a marginal hand, but also heightens the feeling of the passage even while he holds fast to its intention:

Wherefore this prouerbe aduertiseth vs that nothyng is more noysome nor more pestiferous to a cōmō weale, then the ouermuche libertye of a multitude, where no man chieflie is obeyed, but euery man doth as him lusteth. This unfeul libertie or licence of the multitude is called an Anarchie, A mischief surely in maner worse thē any Tyrānye.⁴⁰

As elsewhere, by this dramatic clipping of a passage which in the original continues with illustrative quotations, Taverner sharpens his strictures. The dread of anarchy recurs more insistently in the English pages than in the Latin: "Inutilis populus, nisi principis autoritate gubernetur" has this elaboration: "That commonaltie is nothyng worth, that is not gouerned by thauthorite of a prince. In sūma, wher is an anarchie and no monarchie, I meane, where one hedde & ruler is not, but euery mā as a lorde doth what hym lusteth, there is no thyng well done."⁴¹ Such anxiety reminds us not only of the disturbances, like the Pilgrimage of Grace, that threatened Henry's ministers, but also of some of the anti-nomian ideas astir in spreading religious groups of the time. "Monkry at this day" detains Taverner less than "the wycked Anabaptistical secte, whiche woll haue no Rulers, no order, but which go about to disturbe the hole world with horrible confusion."⁴² This arraignment, curiously enough, attaches to the gentle aphorism, *Amicorum communia omnia*. When the fear of "prophane and straunge doctrines"⁴³ drives him, Taver-

³⁹ Sig. Bii v; the edition of 1545 adds: "Also this prouerbe hath place agaynst them that immoderately bewaile the dead. Where vnto agreeth oure Englyshe prouerbe sayenge. We ought to lyue by the quycke and not by the deade" (sig. Biii). For the Latin, see *Adag. Chil.*, p. 79.

⁴⁰ Sigs. Fiii v-iii. Erasmus thinks tyranny still the worse evil: "Hanc Gręci uocant *avapxlar*, malum pene tyrannide peius, qua nihil potest esse peius" (*Adag. Chil.*, p. 541).

⁴¹ Sigs. Fv v-vi, *sub Ouium nullus vsus si pastor absit*; *Adag. Chil.*, pp. 546-547.

⁴² Sig. Gv; cf. *Adag. Chil.*, p. 14, where we find no concern about either monks or Anabaptists.

⁴³ Sig. Fiii and v, *sub Cæno puram aquam turbans nunquam inuenies potum*; *Adag. Chil.*, p. 536.

ner loses the charity that in quieter sentences he describes with considerable beauty. Yet to the men who held forbidden tenets, as well as to the dreamers of Utopias, he would grant this much: "Lawes (as testifyeth thapostle Paule) be not made for the ryghtuous persons, but for horemongers, aduouterers, theues, traytours, mansleers and suche other. If al were good we shulde nede no lawes."⁴⁴

In spite of such a concession, Taverner is no optimist and no leveler; his distrust of the people is as deep-rooted as Erasmus's or their classical masters'. At times, he underscores his contempt more heavily than does Erasmus, as when in the discussion of *Nihil ad Parmenoniſ suem* he declares: "Assuredly suche a fonde beast is the people, that the thyngge that they ones take into theyr heades, be the contrary neuer so apparant, they styffely vpholde."⁴⁵ We may wonder, then, whether there is not social propaganda, as well as a clever translator's use of vivid language, in such thoroughly naturalized exhortations as these: "It becometh not Jacke Strawe to reasō of princes maters,"⁴⁶ and "Let not the shomaker medle further then hys shoes. Lette the ploughman talke of his plough."⁴⁷ Vigorously inclusive is his still later injunction: "Let the kobler medle wyth clowtyng his neyghbours shoes, and not be a captaine in felde, or meddel wyth maters concernynge a common wealth. Let them iudge of controuersies in the christen religion, that be lerned in the same, and not euery Jacke plowman."⁴⁸ Not truly Erasmus's, this zeal to keep the humble in order!

Yet, much of the time, Taverner seems to be pleading for moderation. In this effort, of course, Erasmus sets him an example; but the disciple sometimes outstrips the calm pace of the teacher. For one thing, as the tracts of Christopher Saint-German and other contemporaries testify, conditions in England encouraged "pacifiers." In the year of the Six Articles, it was important to urge the middle way between "gospellers" and "Papistes": "All that haue the gospel hangynge at theyr gyrdels be no gospellers. Nor agayne all that disprayse the leude fasciō of the Papistes be not forthwyth Heritiques."⁴⁹ More temperate, as well as length-

⁴⁴ Sig. E [misprint for D] iiii and v, sub *Bonæ leges ex malis moribus procreantur*; *Adag. Chil.*, p. 337.

⁴⁵ Sig. Giv v. The misprint *Parmenionis* in the heading is corrected in the next line. *Adag. Chil.*, pp. 26-27.

⁴⁶ Sig. Ciii v, sub *Quæ supra nos, nihil ad nos*. As interesting as the appearance of Jacke Strawe here is the omission of theology, which Erasmus links with politics: "qui de negociis principum, aut theologiæ mysteriis temere loquuntur" (*Adag. Chil.*, p. 218).

⁴⁷ Sig. Biii and v, sub *Oportet remum ducere qui didicit*; cf. Erasmus's illustrations from Plutarch and Horace (*Adag. Chil.*, p. 87).

⁴⁸ Sig. Ei and v, sub *Quam quisque norit artem, in hac se exerceat*; *Adag. Chil.*, pp. 416-417.

⁴⁹ Sig. Cv, sub *Non omnes qui habent citharam, sunt citharædi*. Misers and kings serve Erasmus as illustrations (*Adag. Chil.*, p. 230).

ier, is the interpretation Taverner gives the archaphorism, *Ne quid nimis*:

Some can not do but they ouer do, ether in the redresse of the abuses in the church they wyll runne to farre & quyte and cleane take away al honest ceremonies, tradicions, and lawes, or els in the mayntenynge of that is honeste, they woll wythout choyse styffely defēde yea and kepe styll in theyr churches al customes, ceremonies, and traditiōs be they neuer so detestably abused and gone from the fyrst institutiō So harde it is to kepe the golden mediocritie whych the sayd Poete Horace full wyttely describeth.⁵⁰

In still another little discourse on this moving theme, Taverner is wholly content to follow Erasmus closely for these two sentences moralizing *Quot homines, tot sententiæ*:

Thapostle Paule not forgetfull herof aduertyseth vs, that for the excludyng of contencion we suffer euery man to abunde in hys owne sence, whose counsaile yf oure diuines in Christendome wolde followe, there shulde not be at thys day so great dissensiō in the church in maters of smal weyght. For there be many thynges which without daunger of the christen relygyon maye be unknowen wel ynough.⁵¹

Because Taverner frequently raises the pressure in a timely adage, the few examples of his reducing it are notable. Passages that might be construed as socially inflammatory evidently made him cautious. For about ten years—from, let us say, the time of *The Supplication for the Beggars* (1529)—one branch of Protestantism had agitated against wealth and privilege in ways recalling Lollardy and the Peasants' Revolt. In its desperate tone, this literature differs from the main body of English religious writings of every conviction with their basic Christian pleas for charity and justice. Certainly, the violent contrasts in Tudor economy attested by Simon Fish, More, Starkey, and many other witnesses must have led a moderate man to puzzled meditation. Honest concern over the dangers of fanaticism to the social fabric may explain, then, such an unusual muting as that in Taverner's rendering of *Pecuniæ obediunt omnia*.⁵²

⁵⁰ Sig. Ciiii v; *Adag. Chil.*, pp. 226–227. Considering the un-Horatian context here, we may wonder at Taverner's not pinning his argument to Plutarch's "pietatem esse mediam inter cōtemptum numinum & superstitionē" (p. 227).

⁵¹ Sig. Bv and v. Though pagan poets surround Saint Paul in the original—Persius, Horace, Terence, Euripides, and Homer—the Christian emphasis which Taverner preserves is strong: "Huc alluisse uidetur & diuus Paulus apostolus, cum admonet, ut ad præcludendā æmulationem sinamus unūquenque in suo sensu abundare. Cui consilio si theologorum uulgus auscultaret, nō esset hodie tanta digladiatio de nihili quæstiunculis: Sunt enim omnino quædam quæ citra pietatis dispendium ignorari possunt" (*Adag. Chil.*, p. 99).

⁵² On the relations between social and religious agitation at this time, see especially James Gairdner, *Lollardy and the Reformation in England* (London, 1908), I, 307–309 and *passim*.

Though Erasmus might safely write: "Vide quid populo iurent principes, quid episcopi, quid abbates, imo quid in baptismo Christiani omnes,"⁵³ there had been mutterings to hint that princes could fall as easily as bishops and abbots. The last reproach alone is, therefore, enough for even a client of Cromwell to translate: "Thys prouerbe was neuer better verified than at thys daye amonges Christen mē, which neuertheles by their professiō ought to despyse worldly goodes."⁵⁴ More than once Taverner mitigates a specific censure of wealth. To some rich men he gives the comfort of good company—David, Job, and Abraham.⁵⁵ In 1545, revising his first essay on *Nequicquam sapit, qui sibi non sapit*, he goes so far as to elaborate an unedifying defense of self-interest: "I can not denye but a man maye very well after an honest sorte loke to his owne profyt and gaynes where he is in that place as he may helpe hym selfe. For as oure common prouerbe sayeth. He is an euyll cooke, that can not lycke his owne fyngers."⁵⁶

In scale with his whole undertaking, most of Taverner's supplementary remarks are brief; so his few long essays are the more impressive. Of these, the treatise developing *Panem ne frangito* is a particularly eloquent tract for the times. After translating Erasmus's forty words. Taverner applies the lesson of Pythagoras to the tragic discord of his own day:

Christen men be in dede breakers, but no eaters of this bread that Pythagoras speaketh of. What discorde, what contentiō, what mortall hatred, is between Christians, it wolde make a true Christen mans harte blede to se. And yet Christ with a farre greater solēnitie taught his disciples this concord thē euer pythagoras did. At a solēne souper the nyght before his departure out of this world from vs, he toke bread, and thanks yeuen, brake it and sayde to his disciples, take, eate, this is my bodye, which is betrayed and broken for you. This do ye, in remembrance of me etc. Lo with how expresse & lyuely a sacrament he hathe incorporate vs into him selfe. He maketh vs all one with him, yea and all one together with in our selues. And yet setting this most sacred Symbole and sacrament at naught, by malice & discord we disseuer our selues one of vs from an other, yea & cōsequētly from him that thus in hys own bodye hathe knytte vs together. Is not the brede (sayth S. Paule) whiche we breake the partakyng of the lordes body? [Marg. n. —1. Cor. 10.] For we beyng many be one bread and one body. We be all partakers of one bread and of one cuppe. Christe himselfe speaking of Judas who vngentlye betrayed him sayd, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted vp his hele ayenste me. I praye you do not we Christē mē (at lest wey whiche wyl so be called) expresse & resemble Judas? yearlye by thys solemne sacrament we be incorporate in Christ, we be partakers of his body, we eate the mystical bread, This in outwarde appaurance is a symbole and argumēt of an excedyng vnitie and

⁵³ *Adag. Chil.*, p. 128.

⁵⁴ Sig. Bvi v.

⁵⁵ Sig. Diii; cf. n. 28, *supra*.

⁵⁶ Sigs. Cii v-Ciii (1545).

brennyng charitie. But inwardly very Judasses yea and outwardly to, we lyft vp our heles, we kyck, we spurne, ayenste Christe. Wherefore to returne to my purpose we be breakers and not eaters or (to speake more truly) we be vnworthy eters of this mystical breade not discernynge the lordes bodye. And for thys cause I meane for the prophanacion of thys sacrament no doubtte the terrible thretenynges that Paule speaketh of, be come vpon vs. Many of vs be weake and many slepe. [Marg. n. —1. Cor. 11.]⁵⁷

Not accidentally, we may believe, does this essay of his own, to all intents offered in Erasmus's name, bring both the edition of 1539 and that of 1545 to a close. *Panem ne frangito* (one of the *Symbola Pythagoræ*) occurs near the beginning of Erasmus's work.⁵⁸ Then, too, instead of placing the added proverbs of 1545 at the end of the book, Taverner inserts them a few pages earlier and leaves a group from 1539 in their original position.

Thus *Proverbes* adapts Erasmus to his Tudor readers. Because it is a composite work, it preserves more significant evidence for the history of ideas in sixteenth-century England and for a study of Erasmus's fame and influence there than any which a faithful translation could offer.

OLIVE B. WHITE

Bradley Polytechnic Institute

⁵⁷ Sigs. Hi-Hiii. Cf. p. 935, *supra*.

⁵⁸ *Adag. Chil.*, p. 21.