



JUAN GINÉS DE SEPÚLVEDA OBITUARY WRITTEN IN REMEMBRANCE OF ERASMUS OF ROTTERDAM — A MEMORIAL OR A SETTLING OF SCORES?

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ABSTRACT: Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda's inclusion of an obituary of Erasmus of Rotterdam in Book XV of *De rebus gestis Caroli V* is usually considered a belated recognition by the Spaniard after the series of notorious disputes they had endured. The hypothesis put forward in this paper is radically different and completely new. It is based on a profound interpretation of the obituary itself and its historical context, which leads to the conclusion that it is more a matter of Sepúlveda settling scores, declaring that he was right in criticising the Dutchman. Hence, we would be, in the presence of an intelligent use of the obituary genre, in defence of his positions on Humanism and the Reformation.

KEYWORDS: Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, Reformation, Humanism, Juan Luis Vives, religious controversies

La necrológica escrita por Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda en recuerdo de Erasmo de Rotterdam,
¿memorial o ajuste de cuentas?

RESUMEN: La inclusión de una necrológica de Erasmo de Rotterdam en el libro XV de *De rebus gestis Caroli V* de Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda ha sido habitualmente considerada un reconocimiento tardío por parte del cordobés tras la serie de sonadas disputas acaecidas entre ambos. La hipótesis de este trabajo es radicalmente distinta y totalmente novedosa. Parte de una interpretación profunda del propio obituario y de su contexto histórico, concluyendo que se trata más bien de un ajuste de cuentas con el que Sepúlveda proclama que tuvo razón en las críticas que dirigió al holandés. Nos encontraríamos, pues, ante la inteligente utilización del género de la necrológica para la defensa de sus posturas ante el humanismo y la Reforma.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, Reforma, Humanismo, Juan Luis Vives, disputas religiosas

La nécrologie écrite par Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda en souvenir d'Érasme de Rotterdam,
mémorial ou règlement de comptes ?

RÉSUMÉ : L'inclusion d'une nécrologie d'Érasme de Rotterdam dans le livre XV du *De rebus gestis Caroli V* de Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda a généralement été considérée comme une reconnaissance tardive de la part du Cordouan suite à la série de disputes notoires entre les deux hommes. L'hypothèse de cet ouvrage est radicalement différente et totalement nouvelle. Elle se fonde sur une interprétation approfondie de la nécrologie elle-même et de son contexte historique, pour conclure qu'il s'agit plutôt d'un règlement de comptes par lequel Sepúlveda proclame qu'il avait raison dans ses critiques à l'égard du Néerlandais. Nous nous trouvons donc devant l'utilisation intelligente du genre de la nécrologie pour défendre ses positions sur l'Humanisme et la Réforme.

MOTS-CLÉS : Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, Réforme, Humanisme, Juan Luis Vives, disputes religieuses

1. INTRODUCTION

Book XV of the thirty that make up the *History of Charles V —De rebus gestis Caroli V—* by Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda contains, in its colophon, an obituary devoted to Erasmus of Rotterdam. This tribute in memory of the Dutch humanist's death is surprising since it was written and included in the work many years after his death.¹ Nevertheless, this addition should not come as a surprise, as it is known that Sepúlveda's *Historia Carolina* remained unpublished until the Matritense edition of 1780, apparently because the author himself decided to not have it published "a la espera de mejores tiempos" (Cuart Moner, 1995, p. XXXVI). We are also aware of a letter by Diego de Neyla, dated precisely the same year, suggesting that the text should remain unpublished. The masterpiece in question was supposed to have been completed in 1560 (Muñoz Machado, 2012, pp. 312-347).

Cuart Moner (1995, p. XCVIII) attributes the decision not to publish the work immediately to Sepúlveda's intention "de ir efectuando cambios y retoques en la misma a tenor de la información que le fuese llegando y dejar a la posteridad el cuidado de su puesta al día y publicación". One of these finishing touches could be specifically the addition of the portrait of Erasmus, whose author placed it after the description of the Seville and Valladolid *autos de fe* of 1560 (Cuart Moner, 2003, p. LXIII). Consequently, Sepúlveda, against the pre-established logic of any obituary, includes in his chronicle the account of Erasmus's death, which occurred on 12 July 1536, twenty-three years after his death. This detail is striking not only because of its date, but also because of its content, for on a superficial first reading it

¹ It should be recalled that in the same year as Erasmus's death, 1536, the Cordoban Sepúlveda was officially appointed as chronicler by a decree of 15 April, signed by the emperor and Francisco de los Cobos, for a salary of 80,000 *maravedis p.a.* (Cuart Moner, 1995, p. XXXVIII).

might seem that Sepúlveda is concerned about the posterity of Erasmus's work. The tenor of the letter is as follows (de Sepúlveda, 2003, pp. 92-93):

Hoc anno mense Iulio Desiderius Erasmus Roterodamus Basileae decessit, cum vixisset annos circiter septuaginta, vir eloquentia et multarum rerum cognitione clarus, acri ingenio et copioso, arguto et supra quam credi potest festivo; cuius nomen diu, dum viveret, adeo fuit multorum vocibus celebratum ut homines nihil nisi de Erasmo loquerentur, utique trans Alpes, nam Itali non tantopere eius vel doctrinam vel eloquentiam demirabantur. Plurimos libros edidit, partim suos suoque Marte lucubratos, partim alienos sacrorum auctorum sanctorum sanctorumque Patrum a se diligentissime correctos ac prudenter emendatos, nonnullos etiam doctissimis scholiis enarratos. Quibus rebus id erat assecutus, ut de litteris non modo profanis, sed etiam sacris ac litterarum studiosis optime meritis esse videretur, si de rebus sacris ac eorum ministris maiore adhibita reverentia temperatiusque disseruisset nec rebus sacrosanctis iocos et ludos miscuisset; postremo, si periculosus suspicionibus serendis abstinuisset; quae mala multi viri graves, eruditi et religiosi non dubitaverunt seminaria Lutheranarum insaniarum fuisse confirmare. De qua hominum opinione Erasmus in Antapologia pro Alberto Pio ipse certiore feci et amice etiam per litteras monui, ut suorum scriptorum ancipitia loca definiret, dubia et obscura declararet omnique ratione sibi suisque libris consuleret et posteritatis rationem duceret, quasi divinans fore, id quod accidit, ut eo mortuo librorum eius lectio catholicae fidei cultoribus interdiceretur. Nam viventi Pontifices maximi parcebant, non quod eius mentem et scripta probarent, sed ne exagitatus ab ipsis palam descisceret ab ecclesia catholica et in castra Lutherana coniectus apertius ecclesiae rationibus officeret, ut mihi Clemens septimus indicavit, cum Antapologia, quam dixi, perlecta, modestiam qua usus in Erasmus fuissem commendaret.

In July of that year, Desiderius Erasmus died in Basel after a lifetime of about seventy years. He was an illustrious man for his eloquence and wealth of knowledge. He had a keen and rich talent, witty and more amusing than one might think. For a long time, as long as he lived, his name was so extolled by the comments of many that people spoke of nothing but Erasmus. It is certain that this happened on the other side of the Alps, since the Italians did not admire either his science or his eloquence to such a great extent. He published many books, some of his own and inspired by his Mars, some others, from the Holy Scriptures and from the Holy Fathers, which he revised with great care and wisely amended, and some of which he even explained further with highly learned commentaries. With this activity he would have gained great fame in the scholarly realm of the Humanities both on profane and sacred levels, and among fans or followers of the Humanities, if he had treated sacred matters and their ministers with temperance and greater respect, and had not mixed jokes and derision with sacred matters; in short, if he had refrained from encouraging dangerous suspicions. These evil insinuations, as many respectable, competent and religious men did not hesitate to say, were the seeds of Luther's delusions. In the *Antapologia pro Alberto Pio* I myself made this opinion of the people known to Erasmus, and in personal letters I also advised him to clarify the ambiguous passages of his writings, to resolve the doubtful and obscure ones, and in any case to take care of himself and his books in consideration of their potential posterity; as I had guessed what would happen, namely that after his death Catholics were forbidden to read

his books. During his lifetime, the Supreme Pontiffs excused him, not because they approved of his ideas and writings, but to prevent him, angered by them, from openly deserting the Catholic Church and being thrown into the Lutheran camp, and from opposing more clearly the principles of the Church, as Clement VII pointed out to me when, after reading the *Antapologia* I previously mentioned, he praised the moderation I had used with Erasmus.

Note that, as is customary in an obituary, the text mentions the month and year of Erasmus's death, although, so many years after the event, it does not seem important to specify the day. In reality, Sepúlveda appears to be settling scores with Erasmus under the guise of an obituary and apparently with equanimity, as we will try to show in this contribution, in order to construct the image he wants posterity to have of the relationship between the two of them and of the Dutchman's role in the dissolution of Christian unity in Europe.

2. COLD REVENGE

Sepúlveda's use of the genre's various conventions underlines the possibility that the obituary is, in fact, a settling of scores. As might be expected, he begins by extolling the virtues of the deceased.² He therefore stresses the Dutchman's eloquence and knowledge, but at the same time he points out the *unsavoury* or *acerbic* nature of his talent by means of the expression *acri ingenio*. With equal mastery, he uses the adjective *arguto* to simultaneously emphasise his *subtlety* or tendency to censure, and, lastly, *festivo* to underline the *pleasantness* of his character. In fact, none of these words is innocent, the first two having been chosen for their clearly amphibological semantics, which are blurred in translations such as those of the edition we use: *talento agudo*, *ingenioso* and *divertido* (2003, p. 92). Sepúlveda, a master of allusion, as we shall see, uses terms such as *acer*, which shows that Erasmus is *sharp*, but also *sour*;³ *argutus*, describing him as *witty*, but also *tattling* and *convoluted*;⁴ or *festivus*, which hits at his *joviality*, but also his *lightness*.⁵

From this perspective, the contrast that he draws between Italy and the rest of Europe when it comes to assessing the fame of the Dutchman is obvious:⁶ Erasmus enjoyed immense

² [...] *vir eloquentia et multarum rerum cognitione clarus, acri ingenio et copioso, arguto et supra quam credi potest festivo*. ["He was an illustrious man due to his eloquence and wealth of knowledge. He had a keen and rich talent, witty and more amusing than one might think"].

³ For *acer* in the sense of *sharp*: Verg. *Aen.* 9. 718; Ov. *Met.* 9. 788; Luc. 2. 323. On the meaning of *sour*: Lucil. 1005; Lucr. 4. 329, Verg. *G.* 4. 409; Hor. *Sat.* 2. 3.116; Plin. *Nat.* 19.170.

⁴ *Argutus* in the sense of *witty*: Cic. *de orat.* 2. 268; Mart. 1. 1. 3; Quint. 7. 3. 14. Meaning *tattling* or *convoluted*: Prop. 1. 18. 26; Ov. *Ars* 1. 80.

⁵ *Festivus*, to denote one endowed with *joviality*: Ter. *Ad.* 986; Cic. *Phil.* 5. 13. To denote one characterised by *lightness*: Cic. *Flac.* 91; Apul. *Met.* 3. 23.

⁶ [...] *cuius nomen diu, dum viveret, adeo fuit multorum vocibus celebratum ut homines nihil nisi de Erasmo loquerentur, utique trans Alpes, nam Itali non tantopere eius vel doctrinam vel*

fame throughout Europe, while in Italy there was not so much admiration neither for his thought nor for his eloquence —*vel doctrinam vel eloquentiam*, so that Erasmus's fame is once again called into question in the more general characterisation that opens the obituary —*vir eloquentia et multarum rerum cognitione clarus*. The figure of Erasmus is thus shaped both by *Europe* and by *Italy*, and if in one place he is sharp, in the other he is bitter; if in one place he is witty, in the other he is tattling; and if in one place he is jovial, in the other he is light-hearted.

Hence, if we relate this to the rest of the obituary, we can conclude that it is divided into four blocks, which are structured by this double European and Italian description of Erasmus: (1) his general and ambiguous personality; (2) the clarification of the initial ambiguity by distinguishing between the European and Italian receptions of Erasmus; (3) the synthesis of the reasons for the disappointment with the Dutchman provoked in Italian circles; and (4) the formulation of the restraint with which, *malgré tout*, he was treated in Italy; Sepúlveda and his friend Albertus Pius⁷ being two examples of this circumspect, sane, and balanced treatment accorded to him.⁸

In our opinion, this is the ultimate reason for the inclusion of such an obituary. More than announcing the death of a great man, it is a civilised way of settling scores so that posterity can place the actors of the century in their proper place. Erasmus's role was to be that of an intellectual of great stature who, although endowed with splendid philological qualities, allowed himself to be carried away by bitterness, to treat the most sacred things in the most unfortunate and rude manner, and thus to open the door to Lutheranism. Sepúlveda, on the other hand, plays the role of the moderator, acting in good faith, recognising the merits of the Rotterdamer, but with the same good faith pointing out the dangers of his *doctrine* and *eloquence*.⁹

Time would prove the Spaniard right, for by the time he wrote the obituary, the split in European Christianity was already irreversible. In this context, with the Council of Trent nearing its end in 1563 —and with the Counter-Reformation underway, not long after the general ban on Erasmus's works had been decreed in 1558 as a heretic *primae classis*, or within months of the 1559 *autos de fe* of Valladolid and Seville against suspected Spanish Lutherans, Sepúlveda would proclaim that his moderation had rightly warned Erasmus of the

eloquentiam demirabantur. [“For a long time, as long as he lived, his name was so extolled by the comments of many that people spoke of nothing but Erasmus. It is certain that this happened on the other side of the Alps, since the Italians did not admire either his science or his eloquence to such a great extent”].

⁷ Albertus Pius embodies Italian culture. Sepúlveda defended him against Erasmus in the *Antapology* mentioned in the necrology which is the subject of this paper.

⁸ Sepúlveda and his Italian friend are thus among the respectable, competent and religious men — *virii graves, eruditi et religiosi*— who urged Erasmus to change his attitude so as not to be singled out as a promoter of Luther. It should be remembered that at the end of the obituary, Pope Clement VII congratulates the Spaniard on the moderation he used in his *Antapologia* against Erasmus.

⁹ On the conflicts between Erasmus and Sepúlveda: Espigares Pinilla (1993).

dangers of his books. The conclusion was plain: if Erasmus had listened to him and tempered his words, the situation might not have come to this.

Thus, it was justified that in the third part of the obituary, when referring to the specific merits of Erasmus, i.e. the books he had written, he highlights his editions of the Scriptures and the Patristic works. However, he does not fail to introduce another insinuation,¹⁰ which is completely distorted in the translation published by the City Council of Pozoblanco. Specifically, we refer to the translation of *partim suos suoque Marte lucubratos* as *en parte suyos y trabajados con su propio aliento*. This way of translating the Latin text removes all reference to Mars. In other words, it removes all reference to the bellicosity of Erasmus's writings. To understand the significance of this omission, it is necessary to refer to the letter that Sepúlveda himself wrote to Alfonso de Valdés. On this other occasion, he openly showed the admiration he felt for the Dutchman by saying that *qui Erasmum quasi numen par Dianae Minervaeque suscipis et eius scripta dictataque velut oracula legis* (2007, p. 58).¹¹ Thus, if the reference to Mars emphasises Erasmus's bellicosity, the references to Diana and Minerva emphasise his purity and holiness on the one hand, and his inspiration and wisdom on the other. In this obituary, therefore, Sepúlveda tries to place all of Erasmus's creative work under the broad label of a controversial author.

The award also acknowledges his expertise in editing and commenting on biblical and Patristic texts. However, this positive assessment has its pitfall, which is none other than Erasmus's habit of mixing jokes and mockery with sacred subjects. Among these mockeries, Sepúlveda cannot fail to mention those aimed at censuring the clergy. Let us recall the adjectives *argutus* and *festivus* at the beginning of the obituary, for in contrast to this *frivolous* Erasmus there are *multi viri graves, eruditi et religiosi* who *non dubitaverunt seminaria Lutheranarum insaniarum fuisse confirmare*.¹² Thus, the *acer, argutus* and *festivus* Erasmus is placed before the mirror of serious, learned and religious men who accuse him of being the seed of Lutheranism. In his attempt to settle accounts with Erasmus, the Cordoban could not have been more effective. Yet again, he does so by insinuation, since if he had not done so the vendetta would have been exposed. Sepúlveda shifts the responsibility on to eminent *Italians*, among whom his own name will appear in the last part of the obituary, but, even then, he does so by merely passing on the opinion of others.

¹⁰ *Plurimos libros edidit, partim suos suoque Marte lucubratos, partim alienos sacrorum auctorum sanctorum sanctorumque Patrum a se diligentissime correctos ac prudenter emendatos, nonnullos etiam doctissimis scholiis enarratos*. [“He published many books, some of his own and inspired by his Mars, some of others, from the Holy Scriptures and from the Holy Fathers, which he revised with great care and wisely amended, and some of which he even explained with highly earned commentaries”].

¹¹ “You admire Erasmus as a divinity equal to Diana and Minerva, and read his writings and teachings like oracles”.

¹² “These evils insinuations many respectable, competent and religious men did not hesitate to say, were the seeds of Luther's delusions”.

3. FORERUNNER OF LUTHERANISM?

There could be no more serious censure against Erasmus than that of favouring Lutheranism, and that is why, in the last part of the obituary, Sepúlveda, in order to emphasise his good faith, his moderation and his equanimity, reminds him of how he had already warned him of all this in the *Antapologia pro Alberto Pio* and, more importantly, how he had kindly counselled him to amend his work in order to avoid suspicion, danger and ambiguity. This piece of advice is also to be found in a number of letters in which he would have tried to prevent Erasmus from being banned after his death.¹³ In our opinion, this explicit statement of his desire to protect the glory of Erasmus is one of the keys to explain the late inclusion of this fragment in the form of an obituary: the ban on Erasmus's work had already been imposed, and it is at this moment that Sepúlveda takes the opportunity to recall that he had foreseen it in good faith and, moreover, with he had some advice that could have prevented the ban.

Having said this, the obituary ends with another implied attack: during Erasmus's lifetime, respect was maintained for him in order to prevent him from joining the ranks of the Lutherans. It is clear, therefore, that it was Erasmus and Erasmus alone who was responsible for the fate that befell his work and for the harmful consequences that, according to Sepúlveda, it had for Christianity. This is why Erasmus is ultimately responsible for the separation from the Church —because he did not moderate his work— and for the banning of his works —because he did not follow Sepúlveda's well-intentioned words of advice, who later became the representative of the *virī gravi, eruditi* and *religiosi*.

We believe that this reading of the obituary fully explains its late inclusion in the *Chronicle of Charles V*, and it is therefore surprising that no editor of this work has ever alluded to this self-justifying reading. Moreover, it has usually been said that this is an exercise in moderation and in weighing up Erasmus's merits, which is Cuart Moner's view (2003, p. LXV), who claims that the text “parece dictado no tanto desde el antagonismo intelectual, mucho más explícito en otros escritos del cordobés, como desde la prudencia que aconsejaban los tiempos”. From our point of departure, however, *prudence* in 1560, with the *autos de fe* of Seville and Valladolid still fresh in mind, with the total prohibition of Erasmus's works, and with the Counter-Reformation in full swing, it would have been better to keep quiet and not to include the obituary of Erasmus who had died almost twenty-three years before in the *History of Charles V*. In this context, it seems that Sepúlveda is trying to prove to future generations —the future generations that will see the publication of this work— that he had done everything he could to soften Erasmus and that, in the end, he was right in what he had

¹³ [...] *ut suorum scriptorum ancipitia loca definiret, dubia et obscura declararet omnique ratione sibi suisque libris consuleret et posteritatis rationem duceret, quasi divinans fore, id quod accidit, ut eo mortuo librorum eius lectio catholicae fidei cultoribus interdiceretur*. [“I also advised him to clarify the ambiguous passages of his writings, to resolve the doubtful and obscure ones, and in any case to take care of himself and his books, in consideration of potential posterity, as if I had guessed what would happen, namely that after his death Catholics were forbidden to read his books”].

feared and foretold, and that, in spite of all this, he kept within the limits of restraint, temperance and equilibrium.

If we go back to the texts quoted by Sepúlveda himself —the *Antapologia*¹⁴ and some letters — we find that it is true that he gave Erasmus certain warnings, but these were magnified in the obituary. It seems that what moved Sepúlveda was the *respect* or *fear* of a duel with Erasmus as *Mars*. Therefore, the first letter he wrote to him on 1 April 1532 (Losada, 1973, p. 75) was to warn him against the publication of the *Antapologia*, stating that he wanted him to know about a publication that was *non infenso animo sed officii gratia* (2007, p. 54).¹⁵ In this regard, he continues to point out that *minime abuti velle ignoratione tua, quo liber posset interea latius ac liberius divagari*.¹⁶ Erasmus replied on 16 August 1532 (de Sepúlveda, 2007, p. 56):

Librum tuum multo ante acceperam Lutetiae excusum quam idem mihi redderetur excusus Romae, in quo quidem, quo magis amo doctrinam, ingenium et eloquentiam, hoc vehementius doleo, tibi hoc operae in tale argumentum esse collocatum. Sentio te quorundam affectibus inservivisse, sed iste animus dignus erat, qui Musis tantum et Christo serviret. Ex reciprocatione talium libellorum non video quid nasci possit, praeter dissidia, quorum in mundo plus satis est. Itaque consultius arbitror non respondere.

I received your book in the Paris edition long before I obtained the Rome edition. Certainly, as much as I appreciate the knowledge, the talent and the elegance in it, it grieves me from the bottom of my heart that you have expended so much effort on such a matter. I understand that you were carried away by the raptures of certain people, when your mind deserved to serve the muses and Christ alone. I see nothing to be gained by replying to such books, except discord, of which there is more than enough in the world. I have therefore thought it more prudent not to give an answer.

And indeed, Erasmus did not reply to the *Antapologia* in the same year when the persecutions of prominent Erasmists began, leading J. L. Vives, in a letter of 10 May 1534, to express his fear for Erasmus's peace of mind in his life's later years. After acknowledging the difficulties of the times, he says: "*Tempora habemus difficilia, in quibus nec loqui nec tacere possumus absque periculo. Capti sunt in Hispania Vergara et frater eius Touar; in Britannia episcopus Roffensis, et Londinensis, et Thomas Morus. Precor tibi senectam facilem*" (Allen, 1992, X, p. 384).¹⁷ Notice the contrast Vives draws between the difficult reality —*difficilia*—

¹⁴ On *Antapologia*: Solana Pujalte (1991); Sánchez Gázquez (1997-1998).

¹⁵ In other words, he did not write the *Antapology* "intending to offend, but according to what he felt was his duty".

¹⁶ "I was in no way trying to take advantage of your lack of information to facilitate a wider and freer distribution of my book meanwhile".

¹⁷ "We are living through difficult times, when it is neither safe to speak nor to remain silent. In Spain, Vergara and his brother Tovar have been arrested; in England, John Fischer, Bishop of Rochester and London, and Thomas More. My best wishes to you for a peaceful old age".

and the wish for Erasmus to have a peaceful old age —*facilem*. These were the times when the Lutheran debate was definitely simmering, and disputes, clashes and arrests were spreading throughout Europe. The lexical relationship that Vives establishes between these times and the old age of Erasmus shows how aware he was of the fact that the Dutchman was seen by many as the chief instigator of the social and religious breakdown of Europe. Perhaps Erasmus was alluding to the same facts when he said in the above-mentioned letter that there was a great deal of *dissidence* in the world.

In those moments, Sepúlveda, grounded in Italian Humanism,¹⁸ is grateful to Alfonso de Valdés for mediating between himself and Erasmus, although he does not fail to point out that the Dutchman's main enemy was himself.¹⁹ In response to Alfonso de Valdés's efforts, he promised not to attack Erasmus again.²⁰ These words are in line with those he wrote to Albertus Pius himself when he found out about his document against Erasmus, to whom he attributed an enormous shamelessness in responding to his detractors —*nolo enim dicere impudenter*, at the same time with the expression *difficile calamum continere* (de Sepúlveda, 2007, p. 40),²¹ he recalls Juvenal's saying: *difficile est saturam non escribere* (I,30).²²

The obituary appended to the *History of Charles V* seems to vindicate those who accused him of seeking the glory of a confrontation with Erasmus; a glory sought when Erasmus had been dead for more than twenty years and in the midst of a general prohibition of his works. We do not know whether Sepúlveda was seeking the reputation that Alfonso de Valdés had warned him about, but we do know that in his obituary he reminded Erasmus of everything that had offended him, starting with the criticism that he had stirred up Lutheranism. Thanks to this memory, he set himself up as an advocate of peace through the warnings and prudent advice he gave to Erasmus, whose virtues he acknowledged. Sepúlveda reserved for himself

¹⁸ [...] *nam quo magis homines nostri, id est Hispani, quam Itali Erasmi eruditionem et facundiam demirantur* (de Sepúlveda, 2007, p. 38) ["Our people, the Spaniards, I mean, admire Erasmus's learning and eloquence more than the Italians"].

¹⁹ [...] *ignoscendum est dolori tuo propter nimium amorem quo tantopere prosequeris Erasmus tamque sollicite studes ipsius gloriae, ut in aliena eius causa plus paene tu quam ipse in sua laborare videaris* (de Sepúlveda, 2007, p. 57) ["Your grief must be excused by the extraordinary affection which you have for Erasmus, and which leads you to be so concerned for his good name, that you seem to take an interest in a foreign cause almost more than he does himself"].

²⁰ *Parebo igitur libenter tuis monitis nec ulterius, ut ipse admones, nisi me itidem officium etiam atque etiam adhortabitur, progrediar equidem, ut teneam meam consuetudinem, neminem sine causa necessaria, ut iniuriam repellam, laedendi, non ut ei occurram suspicioni, a qua me tantopere dehortaris, ne gloriae voluisse videar cum Erasmo contendere* (de Sepúlveda, 2007, pp. 57-58) ["I shall therefore gladly obey your advice, and henceforth, as you recommend, I shall go no further unless my duty of friendship compels me inexorably to do so; and that will be to follow my habit of not wounding anyone to repel an injury without an inescapable motive; it will not be to avoid that danger, of which you warn me so much, namely that of appearing to have sought to quarrel with Erasmus for the sake of glory"].

²¹ "I will not speak uninhibitedly [...] It is hard to keep the pen in check".

²² On the relationship between Sepúlveda and Albertus Pius: Solana Pujalte (2005).

the more merciful role of having tried to bring Erasmus to his senses by acknowledging all his merits. This potential vanity does not affect Sepúlveda's honesty, because he was sincere both in thinking that the Rotterdamer should have listened to him and toned down his criticisms of the Church, and in acknowledging his virtues, and so on. On October 15, 1532 he was pleased with Erasmus's decision not to reply to the *Antapologia*, thus maintaining the intellectual fluidity between them.²³ This is the letter that Sepúlveda seems to be alluding to in his obituary, when he remembers that Erasmus wrote a missive to Cardinal Cajetan saying that he wanted to review his books on his own initiative —*sponte*. It was then that Sepúlveda encouraged him to do so.²⁴

However, the obituary silences the fact that this revision was Erasmus's own intention. We do not believe that this is a malicious silence, considering that Erasmus would not have made such a revision. From then on, the two authors would maintain an elegant correspondence on a number of passages in the New Testament, which shows the different critical positions of the two authors concerning biblical philology (Sáenz-Badillos, 1973). It can be said that it was Erasmus who took a cautious approach to Sepúlveda. The Dutchman did so once he had replied (2011b) to the *Responsio accurata et paraenetica* (2002) that Albertus Pius had dedicated to him in 1529. As early as 1525, the Italian had affirmed that Erasmus and Luther were part of the same plague of Christianity, perhaps because of a certain proximity that existed between Erasmus's *madness* at the cross and Luther's *theologia crucis*.²⁵ This is reflected in the following words written by Sepúlveda in the *Antapologia*:

Ad summam, inquit, quicquid ille innuit, hic strenue ac diligenter exequitur: offenditur multitudine monasteriorum Erasmus, Lutherus omnia monasteria demolitur; mussat ille nescio quid de cultu divorum, Lutherus cultum divorum execratur; alter vult ceremoniis, cantibus, festis modum imponi, alter summovet haec omnia; de primatu Petri et Ecclesiae

²³ [...] *quod scribis te consultius arbitrari ad eum non respondere, ne inter nos dissidium excitetur, prae te fers egregiam quamdam humanitatem et sapientiam, qui nolis otium nostrum, ab studiis utilioribus avocatum, molestis contentionibus conteri, eisdemque parum fructuosis* (de Sepúlveda, 2007, p. 59) ["What you say, that you think it wiser not to answer him, lest there should be dissension between us, shows a great kindness and wisdom. For you do not wish our intellectual activity to be wasted on unpleasant quarrels, which, moreover, are unprofitable, from the most profitable pursuits"].

²⁴ *Quod opus ut urgeas, quamquam, ut video, hortare non eges, tamen pro mea in te singulari benevolentia et observantia, ego quoque te iterum atque iterum oro et precibus omnibus obtestor; uno siquidem facto (crede mihi) silentium impones obtrectatoribus tuis et a bonis omnibus egregiam laudem assequeris et, quod maxime convenit tuae pietati, firmior ipse iuxta Pauli praeceptum infirmiorum imbecillitates sustinebis* (de Sepúlveda, 2007, p. 60) ["Although I note that you do not need to be encouraged to do so, I also ask you repeatedly and implore you with great entreaties, because of the special affection and devotion I have for you, to put your efforts into this task. Believe me, with a single gesture you will shut the mouths of your detractors, you will gain the exceptional approval of all good people, and —what corresponds most to your sense of religiosity— you will be able to bear more firmly the weaknesses of the fainthearted by following Paul's teaching"].

²⁵ On the possible connections between Erasmus and Luther: Campana (2005).

Romanae nescio quid quaerit Erasmus, Lutherus Petrum redigit in ordinem et omnes apostolos pares facit Ecclesiamque et episcopum romanum nihilo caeteris dignitate praefert; videt aliquid Erasmus quo decreta quaedam Ecclesiae possent in melius emendari, Lutherus Ecclesiae et conciliorum decretis omnem adimit auctoritatem, et ad hunc modum de plerisque aliis Lutheri dogmatis loquuntur (2000, p. 168).

To sum up, whatever Erasmus's demands, Luther followed them with energy and attention. Erasmus is annoyed by the proliferation of monasteries; Luther demolishes them. I do not know what Erasmus censures regarding the veneration of saints; Luther condemns the veneration of saints. One wants to put an end to ceremonies, songs and feasts; the other abolishes all these things. I do not know what Erasmus has in mind about the primacy of Peter and the Church of Rome; Luther reduces Peter to the regular order, makes all the apostles equal, and denies the Church and the Bishop of Rome any primacy over others. Erasmus sees in some of the decrees of the Church something that could be changed and improved; Luther removes all authority from the decrees of the Church and the Councils. The other Lutheran postulates are in the same vein.

It could not be put more bluntly: if Erasmus refers to monasteries, Luther demolishes them; if Erasmus questions the cult of the saints, Luther suppresses it; if Erasmus does not clearly adhere to the primacy of Peter, Luther reduces his dignity to that of Bishop of Rome; or if Erasmus sows doubts about certain decrees of the Church, Luther calls them invalid and useless. This insinuation seems to contradict the existence of a sincere friendship. This quotation shows that the cordiality between Sepúlveda and Erasmus had something of an air of deceit about it, and a great deal of suspicion about its sincerity; hence the irony of Sepúlveda having to correct or amend Erasmus when Erasmus constantly corrected himself.²⁶ He used the same irony to judge *Ciceronianus* in a letter to Alfonso de Valdés (de Sepúlveda, 2007, p. 38). Consequently, if Erasmus corrects himself so often, what aggression can there be in others also correcting him and, with St Augustine, asking him to retract anything that might harm Christianity? This is the meaning of the following words from his *Antapologia*:

Quanto esset humanius digniusque homine et Christiano et religioso, ut, quando vides multa loca tuorum scriptorum a plerisque omnibus theologis, non solum a Pio, tum scholis, tum

²⁶ *Quod si talem videri vis quicumque damnat quidquam in libris Erasmi, ipse quoque Erasmus in primis invidus erit sui atque calumniator. Nemo enim plura damnavit in Erasmo quam Erasmus, qui nullum propemodum scripsit librum quem non semel emissum, iterum et tertio emendatum, ediderit, quosdam etiam saepius, ut librum Adagiorum ac Conversionem Novi Testamenti et Adnotationes in idem, quas a te iam quarto editas esse mihi primus Stunica retulit, in quo nuper iacturam non mediocrem fecerunt literae virtutesque omnes* (de Sepúlveda, 2000, p. 118). [“And if you want anyone who censures something in Erasmus's books to be so regarded, Erasmus himself would be one of the first to criticise and slander him. In fact, no one censured Erasmus more than Erasmus himself, who did not write a book that he published after first completion, but corrected it two or three times; sometimes even more, such as the *Liber Adagiorum*, the *Conversio Novi Testamenti* and the *Adnotationes* to it, which, as Zuniga told me, is now in its fourth edition. With the recent death of the latter, the letters and all the virtues have suffered no small loss”].

libris, improbari, partim ut suspecta et ancipitia, partim ut quiddam gravius praeferentia, pareres amicis sanctisque monitis Pii ac, omnis contentionis oblitus, cuancta scripta tua, sed tanquam aliena, sedato animo et de veritate solum publicoque Christianorum doctorum iuxta et indoctorum commodo sollicitus, accuratissime recognosceres, omnia lubrica, sinuosa vel quoquo modo impedita loca, quibus aliquos non temere offendi posse existimares, sic in optimum sensum confirmares, explicares ac expedires, ut nemo posset talium tuorum dictorum sinistra interpretatione vel labi in minus pias opiniones vel quae bona mente scripseris quasi malitiose tradita criminari! Nam, licet omnia munda essent, tamen authore Paulo malum est homini qui per offendiculum manducat. Iubet Deus per apostolum a cibus etiam haud dubie mundis abstinere, si periculum sit, ne quis fratrum scandalizetur (de Sepúlveda, 2000, p. 170).

How much more kind and worthy would it have been of a devout Christian man, seeing that most theologians, and not only Albertus Pius, in their lectures or in their bookshave attacked many passages of your writings, either as suspicious and ambiguous, or as favouring something worse! If you had submitted to the kind and pure advice of Pius, and, ignoring all discussion, had carefully gone through all your writings as if they were not your own, and had applied to them a calm mind, intent only on the truth and the common good of all Christians, learned and unlearned. In this way, you were able to confirm, illustrate and explain in the best possible way all those devious, confused or in some way confusing fragments which you considered to be grounds for censure. In this way, no one could misinterpret your words, draw unholy conclusions, or attribute malice to what you wrote with good intentions. According to Paul's testimony, even if everything is pure, it becomes evil to him who feeds by scandalising (Rom 14:20). God, through the apostle, commands us to abstain from even doubtlessly pure food if there is a risk of scandalising a brother.

This was the other occasion on which Sepúlveda called on Erasmus to correct his works, this time with the force of the verb *scandalizare*, which refers directly to Lk 17:2 and the piece of advice Jesus gave that anyone who caused a scandal should have a millstone fastened to his neck and be cast into the sea. When this verb is related to the above-mentioned reference (2007, p. 60) to Rom 15:1,²⁷ it becomes clear that Sepúlveda positions Erasmus in a faith that obliges him to sacrifice certain opinions and to endure certain criticisms. Therefore, although Sepúlveda maintains correct form in accordance with what was considered proper by the Roman court, on many occasions, as he will do in the obituary, insinuation is worse than direct affirmation. According to Mechoulán, insinuation was his preferred tool —Il préférera l'insinuation, ou miex la confusión des thèses de l'humaniste de Rotterdam avec celles du réformateur— (1974, p. 19). His strategy was therefore to try to avoid a melee and to feign caution in order to conceal the suspicions and scruples that Erasmus aroused in the cloak of recognition of his intellectual excellence.

²⁷ [...] *debemus autem nos firmiores inbecillitates infirmorum sustinere et non nobis placere.* ["We must steadfastly uphold the weaknesses of the fainthearted and not become self-satisfied"].

4. JUAN LUIS VIVES AND JUAN GINÉS DE SEPÚLVEDA IN COMPARISON

One can be sure that Sepúlveda was perfectly honest in maintaining this duplicitous attitude, as has already been said above. His attitude contrasts with that of J. L. Vives, who also wrote a letter to Erasmus under these circumstances, on 6 August 1526, also recommending that he correct some aspects of his works, although in his case without insinuating the scandal provoked, but for the clarity of the message itself. This is the difference between a person who does not share a considerable part of the Erasmian doctrine and eloquence, and another who has somehow made it his own. Here is Vives's text:

Olim ad te destinaueram scribere (sed nescio quemadmodum excidit), ut libros omnes tuos cures, dum vivis, redactos in certos aliquot tomos excudi. Non dubito quin aliquid tibi tale in mentem multo antea venerit, et hoc animo moliaris; sed eo facies celerius, cum intelliges alios quoque impense cupere. Multae sunt tuorum operum editiones atque impressiones. Si e vita discedas, ut tibi est ac nobis omnibus discedendum, priusquam omnia collegeris, et quae sit postrema iudicii tua mens declaraueris, qua et te profitearis stare et alios velis idem facere, quicumque sunt tecum sensuri, magnopere timeo ne magna sequatur operum tuorum confusio ac perturbatio: vnde periculum sit ne pereat tibi tua gloria (sed hoc fortassis ad te leue), sed certe fructus quoque studiorum tuorum, cum haerebit lector, incertus quid demum ipse vel probaris vel improbaris. Nam nunc qui editiones distinguunt, utcunque sensum animi tui deprehendunt; posterius vero, quibus editiones separare non licebit, confundentibus omnia typographis, máxima monumentorum tuorum utilitate frustrabuntur. Adde iis quae, ut alia alia deferuntur, complura sunt abs te edita; quorum títulos ne audiuerunt quidem homines tui nominis perstudiosi, et qui plurimum se per opera tua profecisse sentiunt ac prae se ferunt.

*Inter quos sunt nonnulli, qui ex me quaerunt quo fine existimem introductam abs te disputationem illam *Ἰσθμοφαγίας* de Voto, et vi praeceptorum in opere tituli Puerilis, et quod videtur pueris scriptum, rem tantam neutiquam intellecturis. Respondeo quaedam; quibus ut illis satisfaciam nescio, mihi utique non satisfacio: nam alienissima videtur mihi et loco et personis illis dissertio (Allen, 1992, VI, pp. 374-5).*

I have been meaning to write to you for some time —I don't know why I have delayed— to recommend that you should try to publish all your books in your lifetime, collected in a certain number of volumes. I have no doubt that you yourself have had this idea long before, and that you have given it much thought. But you will act more quickly if you know that others want it with all their might. There are many editions and prints of your works. If you leave this life, as must happen to you and to all, without having first collected all your works and without having declared what is your final thought and the position which you have adopted and which you wish all those who claim to be your followers to adopt, I fear that your works will give rise to confusion and misinterpretation. Hence, the danger that not only your fame - which perhaps you care little for - but also the fruit of your labours will be run aground, for the reader will be perplexed, not knowing what you approve or reject. So that those who now distinguish your editions may know your true thought in each case; but for those who will come later on, who will not be able to distinguish the various editions because of the confusion

which printers are wont to introduce into everything, the greater part of the fruit of your labours will be frustrated. What is more, as your books circulate, you have published many works whose titles are not even known to those who are enthusiastic about your name and who know that, thanks to them, they have made and continue to make great progress.

Among them there are some who ask me why you have introduced this controversy about the vows and the force of the precepts in a work with a title for children and which seems to have been written for children who cannot understand the subject. I answer some things that I do not know if they satisfy them. They certainly do not satisfy me, because the subject seems to me to be totally alien to the place and the addressees.

It is curious that Vives, in 1526, should assume that the advice he will give Erasmus for the correction of his works had already crossed the Dutchman's mind. It is the same thing that the latter said to Cardinal Cajetan, as Sepúlveda testifies in the aforementioned letter. He also pointed out to him that the plethora of corrected editions of his works added to the complexity of his thought. He also warned him that his works should not give rise to misunderstandings that would end up damaging his fame, since the nuances of his thought are not really known. The question of the multiplicity of editions may also frustrate the reader who does not know all of them. Note the intriguing fact that they are essentially the same arguments as those of Sepúlveda, to which is also added the example of the controversy over fish food, which, although written for children, deals with delicate issues, and therefore *inter quos sunt nonnulli, qui ex me quaerunt quo fine existimem introductam abs te disputationem illam Ἰχθυοφαγίας de Voto, et vi praeceptorum in opere tituli Puerilis, et quod videtur pueris scriptum, rem tantam neutiquam intellecturis*.

In the proposed example, it is clear that Vives disapproves of the mixing of serious subjects within a childish context —another of Sepúlveda's censures in the obituary— to the point of finding no satisfactory explanation to justify such an approach.²⁸ Then, in Greek, he alludes to the concept of *πρέπον* or *decorum* to make it clear that the problem is not the content, but the confusion caused by the discord between form and content. In any case, Vives assumes that there must be a reason for this and asks for it in order to overcome these scruples.²⁹ Consequently, his attitude is not to insinuate, by presenting serious, wise and religious men, but to ask openly, convinced that there must be some ultimate reason in the choices of a master like Erasmus when he writes. Vives wants to understand what he misses in the Dutchman, in order to be able to explain it to others —and to himself.

Vives had numerous reasons to be angered by Erasmus, and he even shared one of them with Sepúlveda, namely the Dutchman's insult at treating Sepúlveda as a beginner and

²⁸ [...] *nam alienissima videtur mihi et loco et personis illis dissertio* ["because the subject seems to me to be totally alien to the place and the addressees"].

²⁹ *Sed nihil dubito quin tibi facti tui pulcherrime constet ratio: quam non grauaberis primis litteris quas ad me dabis, vno aut altero verbo subiicere, ad eximendum et meum et meorum amicorum scrupulum* (Allen, 1992, VI, pp. 374-5). ["But I have no doubt that you had a good reason for doing so. Take the trouble to tell me in a few words in the first letter you write to me, so that I and my friends may be relieved of such scruples"].

omitting any reference to Vives in the first edition of his *Ciceronianus* (Maestre Maestre, 2002), but the attitude of the two is completely different: Sepúlveda shares the opinion of those Italian scholars who considered Erasmus to be the seed of Luther, while Vives shares the demands of the Rotterdam scholar for the reform of the Church. The Valencian therefore undermines the credibility of those who accuse his friend of being a Lutheran, while Sepúlveda gives credence to the accusation. See the following letter from Vives to Erasmus dated 19 January 1522:

Lutherianum te hic existimari certum est; sed ab eisdem quos ipse, quum adesses, non ignorabas, si quid esset odii et invidiae plenum, tibi solitos impingere: nec faciliorem viam existimant minuendae famae atque existimationis tuae quam si te cum Luthero coniungant. Qui haec conantur, non sunt illi quidem multi, sed assiduo clamant et inculcant, nihilque omittunt quod ad hoc persuadendum putent facere; et maxime vellent persuasum Caesari ac principibus, tametsi hoc, quantum intelligo, non aperte agant neque directe, sed oblique et per occasionem. In aula sunt theologi aliquot Parrisienses. Hi quod in te <im>probant solum est quod de Luthero semper te pronunciasse dicunt ambigue; sed isti facile te ferunt, modo Lutherus opprimatur (Allen, 1992, V, p. 8).

It is certain that you are regarded here as a Lutheran; but they are the very ones who, when you were present, were known to accuse you if there was any cause for hatred or antipathy. They thought that there was no surer way of bringing your fame and reputation into disrepute than by associating you with Luther. Those who persist in this are not many, to be sure, but they are constantly protesting and revolting, and doing everything in their power to convince others. What they want most is to meet the emperor and the princes, but, as far as I can see, they do not do so openly and directly, but by the back door and by taking advantage of opportunities. In the court there are some theologians from Paris who only reproach you for always speaking ambiguously about Luther. But they have no difficulty in tolerating you on condition that Luther is destroyed.

That is why, in the same letter, Vives quotes two of the accusations against Erasmus, but without giving them any credence and presenting them as absurdities:

[...] prius, dixisse te Antuerpiae biblioplae ut venderet libros Lutheri, nihil veritus diploma; alterum, Lutherum, quum ut recantaret, incitaretur, respondisse non id esse sibi integrum inconsultis iis quibus auctoribus et impulsoribus negotium hoc suscepisset; suspicari se te esse inter reliquos, et de primis vnum nominatum (Allen, 1992, V, p. 9).

[...] first, that you had told a bookseller in Antwerp to sell Luther's books without seeking permission; secondly, that Luther, when urged to retract, replied that he could not do so without consulting those by whose authority and impulse he had undertaken this enterprise, and that he suspected that you were among them, and even among the first ones he mentioned.

The final explanation for all these accusations against Erasmus is none other than to attack him out of envy, although he is supported by the reason of his doctrine —*in inuidiam tamen conantur trahere, et munitum omni alia parte, hac tentant inuadere*— (Allen, 1992, V, p. 9).³⁰ This last sentence is the one that separates the piece of advice that Sepúlveda and Vives give Erasmus regarding the same facts and arguments, albeit from different assumptions. In this sense, if Sepúlveda considers that *pietas* obliges him to defend Albertus Pius, Erasmus's opponent, Vives is moved by *pietas* to defend Erasmus by forewarning and informing him of all the events that reach his ears from his privileged position in the court of Charles V. Therefore, he never doubted Erasmus and, although he considered him a perfect Christian, he comforted him against all attacks with the relief of appealing to a conscience that had Christ himself as its guide, model and defender.³¹ In this respect, Vives is particularly aware of the fate of Spanish Erasmism. He knows from Vergara, for example, of the injustice that Zúñiga inflicts on him —and considers it almost an honour.³² He is also aware of the hatred and resentment of the vagrant friars, especially after the translation of the *Enchiridion*, as he tells Erasmus in a letter dated 13 June 1527.³³

³⁰ “[...] however, they try to draw them into enmity and invade all other parts of the fortress”.

³¹ *Decretum animi tui est, quale semper fuit, Christianum; et indubie paratum est tibi a Christo ingens illius et copiosum praemium, quandoquidem tan mala tibi ab hominibus refertur gratia; tametsi quantum ad hos spectat, prout fuerit tui studiosus vel secus nouus Pontifex, leniet aut asperiores reddet horum voces. Sed quaeso te, vis tu communem bonorum hominum sortem recusare? Per Christum rogo te etiam atque etiam, mi Erasme, ne te angas animo, ne praecipites senectutem tuam, demissis in imum pectus istis rumusculis; nam cui et Christus ipse et boni omnes et innocentia conscientiae tantopere fauent, non est a malis nocere facile. Tibi enim quum culpa vacaueris, quae est vna bono viro in vita praestanda, quem tibi exitum statuat Deus, curandum non est* (Allen, 1992, V, p. 10). [“Your beliefs are Christian, as they always have been. No doubt Christ has prepared for you his great and abundant reward, since the favour of men has been so badly returned to you. But as far as they are concerned, the new pontiff will make their voices more or less unpleasant, according to the sympathy or antipathy they feel for you. But tell me, do you want to avoid the common fate of the good? By Christ I beseech you, my dear Erasmus, not to be distressed, not to anticipate your old age by harbouring these little rumours in the innermost recesses of your breast, for he who has Christ himself on his side, who receives the support of all good men and that of the voice of his innocent conscience, is not easily harmed by the wicked. Therefore, since you are free from guilt, which is the only thing a good man should pursue in life, you need not worry at all about the destiny that God will determine for you”].

³² *Megaeram dicas, non hominem. Ab huiusmodi moribus praedito magna laus est vituperari, cui placere nemo possit sine suspitione similitudinis morum* (Allen, 1992, V, p. 39). [“You would say he is a fury, not a man. It is a great honour to be reviled by one with such habits. No one can please him if he suspects you of sharing his ways”].

³³ *Existimo tumultus hos ex Enchiridio tuo verso natos esse; nam si id frequens sit in hominum manibus, vt esse audio, multum ths palaias tyrannidos detrahet Fratribus. Et fortassis iam coeptum est fieri, videlicet excitatis ea lectione multorum animis ad cognitionem magnarum et pulcherrimarum rerum, quae tandiu fuerant occultatae; tum etiam quod coepit permultos pigere indignissimae seruitutis quum vbique, quacunque Christianum nomen patet, grauissima est, tum vero in nostra natione ne seruis quidem aut asinis tolerabilis. [...] Et spero Christum aliquando tandem excitatum iri et miseraturum miserabilem suum gregem, ne Semper caecus et viae ignarus*

5. TO CONCLUDE

In short, the similarities between Vives's and Sepúlveda's concerns about Erasmus stem from two different visions: for the Valencian, Erasmus is an opening to the true Christ; for the Andalusian, he is a danger that threatens the authority of the Church. In this sense, while the Andalusian wanted Erasmus not to say what he said, the Valencian remained confident until the last moment that the whole process against his works and his disciples would lead nowhere, given the prestige of his supporters.³⁴ He therefore attributed to Erasmus some words of Vergara in which the latter even trusted in the imperial favour against the manoeuvres of the vagrant friars.³⁵ Consequently, Vives's final piece of advice to Erasmus in the face of Sepúlveda's warnings is to worry about his life, confident that posterity will do him justice.³⁶

erret, raptatus per mille praecipitia ab iis quibus se commiserat ducendum (Allen, 1992, VII, pp. 84-85). ["I think that this uproar comes from the translation of your Enchiridion, for if it falls into the hands of many men, as I understand it, the monks will lose much of their old tyranny. And perhaps it has already begun to do so, either because, by its reading, it has stimulated the minds of many to the knowledge of high and great mysteries so long hidden, or because it has begun to weigh upon them the utterly unworthy servitude to which they have subjected the wretched people; servitude which, if it is intolerable everywhere, is intolerable in Christian lands, especially in our own, where neither slaves nor mules can endure it. [...] I am confident that Christ, too, will be moved with pity and compassion for his flock, so that it will not go blind and wandering, dragged over my precipices by those to whom he had entrusted the care of its guidance"].

³⁴ *Qui mihi mihi optimam spem praebent futuram tuam causam, hoc est litterarum et pietatis, superiorem; sunt enim viri illi integerrimi, bonaeque eruditioni fauent vnice, et eo nomine tibi amicissimi* (Allen, 1992, VII, p. 84). ["They all give me the greatest hope for your future cause, which is the cause of letters and piety, for they are men of perfect integrity and seek only to promote good learning, and are therefore very close friends of yours"].

³⁵ *In Erasmum conspirarunt numer monachi nostri, non omnes quidem sed plerique. Quo enim quisque istorum ordo longius abest a mendicitate, hoc minus illi est iniquus. Res ad magistratus relata est, atque hactenus quidem summo cum Erasmi fauore procedit. Princeps meus hominem sibi penitus tuendum suscepit. Fauet illi etiam Caesar apertissime. Fauent magistratus ipsi, fauent denique boni omnes. Aduersarii quoniam vident nihil sibi hac contentione nisi commune odium quaeri, paulatim iam frigere incipiunt, libenterque, quantum existimo, quod cum bona omnium pace fieri liceret, factum mutarent* (Allen, 1992, VII, p. 109). ["Our monks have plotted against Erasmus, not all of them, it is true, but most of them. The further these orders move away from begging, the less hostile they are to him. The matter is in the hands of the judges, and, so far, the case is very much in Erasmus' favour. My prince has taken it upon himself to defend this man vigorously. The emperor is also very clearly in his favour, the judges themselves are in his favour, and finally all the good people are in his favour. His opponents, seeing that they are only attracting general hostility by this fight, are beginning to cool down, and I think they would be willing to change the cause if they could do so with the consent of all"].

³⁶ *Peracta tibi est maiore ex parte vitae fabula. Quod superest, plausui da totum, non spectantium modo et praesentium, sed Christi, cui tot labores sunt tibi desudati, sed conscientiae tuae; et si quid spectantibus quoque tribuis, posterorum potius quam praesentium. Illi enim sublata inuidia caeterisque affectibus purum te verumque Erasmum considerabunt reddentque meritas tibi laudes, tanto copiosius quanto iniquiores tibi tui seculi homines fuerunt, virtusque tua minus est ab iis cognita*

Thus, it has turned out to be true that posterity has done Erasmus justice, although at the time when Sepúlveda wrote his obituary he seemed to have been erased from the chessboard of Christianity by an inquisitorial ban. With his obituary, he was ultimately trying to calm his soul, “una de las almas más atormentadas por los signos contradictorios de su época” (Ramos Pérez, 1991, p. 401). Sepúlveda’s inner anguish makes it difficult to outline his thought within the usual broad spectrum of labels, as he simultaneously admires and denigrates Erasmus. Thus, it can be said that the Cordoban is a Spaniard who, although brought up in the Humanism tradition of Alcalá, where Erasmists reigned, eventually ended up as an Italian Humanist (Muñoz Machado, 2012, pp. 73-129), *gravis, eruditus* and *religiosus*.

There is no doubt, therefore, that he was familiar with Erasmus, but he was frightened by the consequences of Erasmus’s works, and especially by his constant and sharp criticism of the clergy, which led to an undermining of the authority of the Church, as is evident in his attacks on Julius II (Seidel Menchi, 2006, pp. 63-83). He was also repelled by Luther’s flippant criticism of certain positions, such as free will, and wrote his own *De fato* in 1526,³⁷ noting Erasmus’s lack of firmness on the same issue (de Sepúlveda, 2005). Nor was he convinced by the extreme irenicism of the Dutchman, in which he detected traces of Lutheranism (Mechoulan, 1974, p. 37; Ramos Pérez, 1991, p. 406). These were the same positions that led to his long controversy with Bartolomé de las Casas (Hanke, 1974; Martínez Castilla, 2006),³⁸ which eventually led to his being abandoned by some of his followers (Cuart Moner, 1995, p. XXXIX).

inter quos versabatur; quod Socrati videmus contigisse. Rogo te etiam atque etiam ne te afflictes; cogitesque, si te unum spectes gloriamque tuam, te satis vixisse, et interesse iam tuae posteritati. Arguere enim ex nonnullorum bonorum iudiciis potes, qualis de te apud nasciturus populos futurus est sermo. Quod si reputes, pro lucro deputabis id quod posthac viues, viuesque securus et laetus; atque id demum erit viuere sine anxietate, sine solitudine; facietque te aetas tua multis canis munita multorum latrantium contemptorem. Et ipse velut fati exemptus et in excelso quodam existimationis bonorum hominum positus loco, infra te videbis omnia (Allen, 1992, V pp. 39-40). [“The comedy of your life is half over. What you have left, devote it to winning the applause not only of those present, but of Christ, to whom you have devoted so much effort and toil, and of your conscience. And if you also give some value to the spectators, better to those who will come than to those who are present. For when they have overcome envy and other passions, they will see a pure and true Erasmus. And they will give you the praise you deserve, with all the more generosity the more unjust your contemporaries have been. This is what happened to Socrates. I beseech you not to grieve and think that you have lived long enough if you look only to yourself and your fame, and that you have posterity before you. Think, therefore, what many wise men will think of you, and what those who are not yet born will say of you. If you meditate on this, you will gain what is left of your life, and you will live securely and happily. This will truly be a life without fear and anxiety. Age will fill you with grey hair and protect you from the scorn of so many critics. You yourself will be able to see everything beneath your feet when you are, so to speak, unburdened and free from fate, and you will stand in a high place of honour for all good people”].

³⁷ On *De fato*: Sánchez Gázquez (2005); de Sepúlveda (2010).

³⁸ Vives is also an important author in this controversy (Losada, 1998).

That is why Sepúlveda could admire Erasmian philology, but not opinions similar to Luther's (Rodríguez Peregrina, 1989, p. 63). For this reason, he did not like the pure and simple determination of an *anti-Erasmist*, but rather that of an Italian scholar who was able to savour the thought of Erasmus, while at the same time being repelled by his links to Luther and the Lutherans. This doctrinal disagreement with Erasmus is also the basis of his divergence with him on the eloquence surrounding Ciceronianism (Asensio, 1978; Maestre Maestre, 1987, Núñez González, 1988). For all these reasons —and others, Sepúlveda joined the large group of Catholic critics of Erasmus, as E. Rummel's book (1989) calls them, whom the Dutchman confronted without batting an eyelid and who made Vives fear that he would not be able to live a peaceful old age.

Summing up, Sepúlveda's obituary of Erasmus, written more than two decades after the Dutchman's death, appears to be a more a way of settling scores and, aware of Europe's point of no return, making his position on these events clear.³⁹ The Cordoban wanted to show that he was right in his assessment of the Rotterdammer's work. Therefore, the reference to Erasmus's death is not as aseptic as one might conclude from Losada's words when he says that Sepúlveda "en el capítulo 31 se refiere a la muerte de Erasmo y pondera la importante significación del gran humanista, con quien estaba en personal relación" (1973, pp. 167-8). On the contrary, in these few lines Sepúlveda summarises the conclusions he wants posterity to draw from his relationship with Erasmus. More than an obituary for Erasmus, it is Sepúlveda's own intellectual epitaph.

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³⁹ The comparison with Vives is essential, because the Valencian uses practically the same arguments, as we have seen, but his objective has nothing to do with settling scores. In the case of the Valencian, there is a sincere concern for his friend and teacher.

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