

INTRODUCTION:
VISUAL EXEGESIS AND PIETER BRUEGEL'S *CHRIST
AND THE WOMAN TAKEN IN ADULTERY*

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Exegesis in the Christian tradition involves the close reading of Scripture by a theologian trained to search out the divine truths it conveys. These truths are generally seen to operate within several 'registers of sense': the literal sense concerns the meanings that the author, as instrument of divine revelation, intends to communicate; the consequent sense, to be discerned by the exegete, complements the literal, but is inferred from it, often by analogy (either extensive – the application of the biblical passage to a new subject – or allusive – the adaptation of the biblical passage itself to a new meaning); the typical sense operates when biblical persons, objects, and events are construed not literally, but rather as figurative types of new truths to be manifest at a future time and place.¹ These new truths

N.B. The précis of the contributors' essays, to be found at the close of the "Introduction", were written with the collaboration of James Clifton. I am grateful to Michel Weemans for his careful reading of the text and many valuable insights.

¹ On the exegetical theory and practice in the Roman Catholic tradition, see Maas. A.J., "Exegesis", in Herbermann C.G. – Pace E.A. – Pallen C.B. – Shahan T.J. – Wynne J.J., S.J. (eds.), *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, 15 vols. (New York: 1907–1912) V 692–706. On the multiple senses of Scripture in patristic, Augustinian, and medieval exegesis, see Margerie B. de, S.J., *Introduction à l'histoire de l'exégèse. II. Les premiers grands exégètes latins* (Paris: 1983); De Margerie, *Introduction à l'histoire de l'exégèse. III. Saint Augustin* (Paris: 1983); and De Margerie, *Introduction à l'histoire de l'exégèse. IV. L'Occident latin de Léon le Grand à Bernard de Clairvaux* (Paris: 1990). On the canonical four senses – literal, allegorical, tropological, and analogical – see Lubac H. de, *Medieval Exegesis: The Four Senses of Scripture*, trans. M. Sebanc – E.M. Macierowski, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: 1998–2009), esp. I 225–267, 423–457, on the literal and spiritual meanings of Scripture, as analogized to the Old and New Testaments. On typology and the spiritual understanding of Scripture, see Lubac H. de, *Scripture in the Tradition*, trans. L. O'Neill (New York 1968; reprint, New York: 2000) 11–31; on typology as a form of historical thought rooted in the spiritual sense, see Ohly F., *Sensus Spiritualis: Studies in Medieval Significance and the Philology of Culture*, ed. S.P. Jaffe – trans. K.J. Northcott (Chicago – London: 2005) 31–67. On 'exegesis' and 'reflection' as complementary modes of biblical interpretation, especially as regards the exegetical usage of the Victorine school and its derivations, see Ocker C., *Biblical Poetics before Humanism and Reformation* (Cambridge: 2002) 15–30; on the distinction between literal and spiritual meaning in medieval signification and allegory, 31–48; on the conflation of literal and spiritual meaning in the reading of biblical images during the fourteenth century and later, 78–93; on the 'literal-historical', 'literal-non-historical', and 'figurative senses

are known as antitypes, by warrant of a famous proof text – 1 *Peter* 3:21; the types, on the other hand, are often called ‘shadows’ or ‘allegories’, and as subspecies of the typical sense, they may also be identified as ‘parables’, a form of symbolic usage licensed by Christ himself.² Subdivision of the antitype produces the three senses, or better, the triple sense elaborated by the Scholastics: a truth of faith is discovered allegorically; a divine favor is discovered anagogically; and a moral virtue is discovered tropologically. In reading Scripture, the exegete was expected to make use of authoritative sources: first, an approved text of the Bible, such as the Vulgate of Saint Jerome; second, the homiletic treatises and exegetical commentaries of the Church Fathers, both Greek and Latin; third, commentaries sanctioned by the Schools, such as the *Glossa ordinaria* of Walafrid Strabo and the *Glossa interlinearis* of Anselm of Laon;³ fourth, doctrinal compendia

of Scripture’, 93–106; and on Nicholas of Lyra’s conviction that two literal meanings are to be found in some biblical texts, 142–145. On the historical critical method in patristic and medieval exegesis, see Prior J.G., *The Historical Critical Method in Catholic Exegesis* (Rome: 1999) 43–87, esp. 84–87. On the related problem of ‘emendation’ and ‘conjecture’ in text-critical, as opposed to exegetical methodology, see Krans J., *Beyond What’s Written: Erasmus and Beza as Conjectural Critics of the New Testament*, *New Testament Tools and Studies* 35 (Leiden – Boston: 2006).

² On types and antitypes as exegetical devices that harmonize the two testaments by means of analogical images, see Daniélou J., *Sacramentum futuri: études sur les origines de la typologie biblique* (Paris: 1950); Lampe G.W.H. – Woollcombe K.J., *Essays on Typology* (Napierville: 1957); Daniélou J., *From Shadows to Reality: Studies in the Biblical Typology of the Fathers*, trans. W. Hibberd (Westminster: 1960); Smith J., *A Priest Forever: A Study of Typology and Eschatology in Hebrews* (London: 1969); Anderson R., *Types in Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: 1978); Sabourin L., *The Bible and Christ: The Unity of the Two Testaments* (New York: 1980); Davidson R.M., *Typology in Scripture: A Study of Hermeneutical Typos Structures* (Berrien Springs: 1981); Goppelt L., *Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New*, trans. D.H. Madvig (Grand Rapids: 1982); Keener H.T., *Typology and English Medieval Literature* (New York: 1992); Julius C.-B., *Die ausgeführte Schriftypologien bei Paulus* (Frankfurt am Main – New York: 1999); Rehm S., *Spiegel der Heilsgeschichte: Typologische Bildzyklen in der Glasmalerei des 14. bis 16. Jahrhunderts im deutschsprachigen Raum* (Frankfurt am Main – New York: 1999); Malone P., *The Same as Christ Jesus: Gospel and Type* (London: 2000); Ostmeyer K.-H., *Taufe und Typos: Elemente und Theologie des Tauftypologien in 1. Korinthen 10 und 1. Petrus 3* (Tübingen: 2000); Seitz C.R., *Figured Out: Typology and Providence in Christian Scripture* (Louisville: 2001); and Baker D.L., *Two Testaments, One Bible: The Theological Relationship between the Old and New Testaments* (Downers Grove: 2010).

³ On the spurious attribution of the *Glossae* to the monks Strabo of Fulda and Anselm of Laon, see Froehlich K., “The Printed Gloss”, in *Biblia Latina cum glossa ordinaria: Facsimile Reprint of the Editio princeps Adolph Rusch of Strassburg 1480–81*, 4 vols. (Turnhout: 1992) I, XII–XXVI, esp. XXIII. Strabo and Anselm are first identified as the primary and secondary authors in the Paris edition of 1590, sponsored by the theological faculty of Paris. On the origins of the *Glossa ordinaria* and its status as the pellucid ‘voice’ of Scripture, see Smith L., *The ‘Glossa Ordinaria’: The Making of a Medieval Bible Commentary* (Leiden – Boston: 2009).

such as the *Summa theologica* of Thomas of Aquinas;⁴ and finally, specific interpretations promulgated by conciliar and papal decree.

Implicit in all three categories of sense, especially the typical, is the assumption that Scripture employs visual images, producing them verbally, which is to say, rhetorically, for the purpose of engaging the reader's (or auditor's) faculties of memory, imagination, and understanding. These faculties, having been aroused visually, are thus enlisted in the task at hand – the unfolding of scriptural meaning. The images may themselves be defined by reference to the various registers of sense: literal images portray biblical persons, objects, and events; consequent images are inferred from the literal by processes of analogy; typical images comprise both types and antitypes – the persons, objects, and events, now construed as visual figures of truths, favors, or virtues (that is, as prefigurations of allegorical, anagogical, and tropological antitypes) that resolve into focus once they are analogized to their typifying images. Recourse to exegetical images is ultimately justified by two scriptural proof texts – 2 *Corinthians* 4:4 and *Colossians* 1:15 – that famously designate Christ as the 'image of God' (*imago Dei*) and 'image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature' (*imago Dei invisibilis primogenitus omnis creaturae*), who in himself makes God visible and thereby licenses other images of the creator.

Between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, the theory and practice of exegesis proved responsive to three great developments that brought pressure to bear on the ways in which visual images were conceived, in their form and function, manner and meaning, as exegetical instruments and accordingly put to use. The first is the humanist philology that scrutinized the source texts, questioning if not quite displacing the singular authority of the Vulgate, reading the canonical books according to rules of rhetoric and dialectic codified by the Ancients, and situating biblical history and prophecy within their appropriate contexts – archaeological, geographical, and socio-cultural. The second is the proliferation of printed bibles, both Latin and vernacular, at the turn of the sixteenth century. Whether Roman Catholic, Lutheran, or Reformed, these publications were often illustrated, with the majority of images occurring in Pentateuch and the historical books of the Old Testament, in the *Psalms*, in the Gospels and *Acts*, and in *Revelation*. The third is the establishment of the major

⁴ On fifteenth-century adaptations of the Thomistic *sensus litteralis*, see Minnis A.J., "Fifteenth-Century Versions of Thomistic Literalism", in Lerner R.E. – Müller-Luckner E. (eds.), *Neue Richtungen in der hoch- und spätmittelalterlichen Biblexegese*, Schriften des Historischen Kollegs, Kolloquien 32 (Munich: 1996) 162–180.

reproductive print publishing houses in Antwerp, Lyon, Rome, and elsewhere around the mid-sixteenth century, and as a consequence, the rise in popularity of exegetical woodcuts and engravings, issued not as biblical illustrations, but as independent prints and print series.

Printed images served as vehicles for the introduction of novel exegetical formats: for example, they are often richly inscribed with scriptural tags and texts; in aggregate, these extracts cohere into a biblical intertext whose mutually discursive elements are read by way of the pictorial image to which they jointly attach.⁵ The prints also often contain scriptural paraphrases in prose or verse, or alternatively, exegetical prompts that invite various readings of the scriptural imagery. Moreover, the visual image can itself constitute a reading of Scripture: the picture then usurps the function of prompting the biblical interpretation. The advent of new kinds of text-image apparatus, such as the emblem book, at mid-century, further enriched and complicated the exegetical potential of scriptural imagery. Pioneered by Georgette de Montenay and Benito Arias Montano, the former Calvinist, the latter Roman Catholic, the scriptural emblem book places various types of image – historical, enigmatic, allegorical, paraphrastic – into conversation with various types of biblical text – citations, epigrams, and commentaries. The interaction of the emblem's verbal and visual components is dialogic, reciprocal, and polyvalent, and the emblematic readings of Scripture that ensue are frequently inventive and occasionally unorthodox. By the second half of the sixteenth century, a new format of Bible, consisting entirely of prints and print series that distill the Old and New Testaments into images, had been promulgated in Antwerp. The picture bible illustrates and at the same time interprets Scripture, following the canonical order, as established by Trent, Luther, or Calvin, and reducing the text proper to condensed and corollary biblical subscriptions.

Entitled *Imago exegetica: Visual Images as Exegetical Instruments, 1400–1700*, this volume of *Intersections: Interdisciplinary Studies in Early Modern Culture* consists of essays that pose questions about the relation between verbal and visual hermeneutics. Exegesis, as theologians and historians of art, religion, and literature, have come increasingly to acknowledge,

⁵ On prints as catalysts for new methods of image-based exegesis, see Melion W.S., "Scripture for the Eyes: Bible Illustration in the Sixteenth-Century Low Countries", in Clifton J. – Melion W.S. (eds.), *Scripture for the Eyes: Bible Illustration in Netherlandish Prints of the Sixteenth Century* [exh. cat., Museum of Biblical Art, New York; Michael C. Carlos Museum, Emory University, Atlanta] (London – New York: 2009) 14–106, esp. 50–62.

was neither solely textual nor aniconic; on the contrary, following from Scripture itself, which is replete with verbal images and rhetorical figures, exegesis has traditionally utilized visual devices of all kinds. In turn, visual exegesis, since it concerns the most authoritative of texts, supplied a template for the interpretation of other kinds of significant text by means of images. Seen in this light, exegetical images prove crucial to understanding how meaning was constituted visually, not only in the sacred sphere but also in the secular, a proposition explored by several of our contributors.

In writing their essays, the authors were invited to address the following topics, at least implicitly. How and why were images used as instruments of scriptural interpretation between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries? Are the verbal images put forth in the Bible and other sacred texts, generative of the verbal images utilized by exegetes and other interpreters of Scripture? How did pictorial images come to complement or substitute for these verbally produced images? How and why were images of various kinds seen to function as legitimate or even privileged means of scriptural understanding within systems of visual exegesis that operate in tandem with sacred texts, or alternatively, invoke or replace the absent text? What was the theology of the image that allowed it to mediate the exegete's access to scriptural truth? And how were these mediating devices accommodated to lay practices of scriptural engagement? In addition, with specific reference to the Christian tradition, the contributors were urged to ponder various collateral issues: the appearance of new categories of biblical subject, not previously illustrated, in the early modern period; the introduction of new systems of analogy and typology, complementary or alternative to the canons of visual exegesis codified in manuscripts and incunabula such as the *Biblia pauperum* (*Poor-Man's Bible*), the *Speculum humanae salvationis* (*Mirror of Human Salvation*), and the *Historia scholastica* (*Scholastic History*);⁶ the paratextual and commentatorial status

⁶ On the *Biblia pauperum*, see Engelhardt H., *Der theologische Gehalt der 'Biblia pauperum'*, Studien zur deutschen Kunstgeschichte 243 (Strassburg: 1927); Schmidt G., *Die Armenbibeln des XIV. Jahrhunderts*, Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung 19 (Graz – Cologne: 1959); Berve M., *Die Armenbibel: Herkunft, Gestalt, Typologie* (Beuron: 1969) 7–25; Labriola A.C. – Smeltz J.W., *The Bible of the Poor [Biblia Pauperum]: A Facsimile and Edition of the British Library Blockbook C.9 d.2* (Pittsburgh: 1990) 3–10; and Henry A., *Biblia pauperum: A Facsimile and Edition* (Ithaca: n.d. [1987]) 3–46. On the *Speculum humanae salvationis*, see Breitenbach E., *Speculum humanae salvationis: Eine typengeschichtliche Untersuchung* (Strassburg: 1930); Wilson A. – Lancaster Wilson J., *A Medieval Mirror: Speculum Humanae Salvationis, 1324–1500* (Berkeley: 1984); and Labriola A.C. – Smeltz J.W., *The Mirror of Salvation [Speculum Humanae Salvationis]: An Edition of British Library Blockbook H. 1784* (Pittsburgh: 2002) 1–8. On the *Historia scholastica*, see Seybolt R.F., “The *Legenda Aurea*,

of printed images in Latin and vernacular bibles published after the late fifteenth century, and related to this, the jointly illustrative and exegetical status of the printed images published in picture bibles after the late sixteenth century; the distinctive forms and functions taken by scriptural images within new literary genres such as the exegetical emblem book; and the application of visual exegesis as a method of meditative spiritual exercise leading to the formation and reformation of the soul. Finally, they were also encouraged to consider how exegetical methods of interpretation came to operate more widely, having been adapted and simplified for the educated laity. How did exegetical practices inform the viewing of semireligious and secular images made for private or public consumption?

Little attention has been paid to the relation between scriptural images and the exegetical images that facilitated scriptural interpretation, to the manner in which verbal images entered into the argument of exegetical homilies, paraphrases, and commentaries, or to the image-theory that undergirded verbal and visual methods of exegesis.⁷ And nor has the early modern transition from verbal practices of exegetical image-making to visual practices based in pictorial print media been sufficiently examined. Likewise, the expansion of exegetical activity from a strictly delimited community of churchmen and theologians, to more loosely constituted communities of biblically literate laymen, including learned artisans, such as the printmaker and stained-glass painter Dirk Vellert (ca. 1480–ca. 1547) and the master painter, draftsman, and print designer Pieter Bruegel (ca. 1525–1569), requires more sustained consideration. Let us therefore examine Bruegel's celebrated grisaille, *Christ and the Woman*

Bible, and *Historia Scholastica*", *Speculum* 21 (1946) 339–342; Hindman S., "Fifteenth-Century Dutch Bible Illustration and the *Historia Scholastica*", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 37 (1974) 131–144; and Morey J.H., "Peter Comestor, Biblical Paraphrase, and the Medieval Popular Bible", *Speculum* 68 (1993) 6–35.

⁷ Most recently, on visual typology as an instrument exegetical interpretation, see Falkenburg R., *The Land of Unlikeness: Hieronymus Bosch, "The Garden of Early Delights"* (Zwolle: 2011) 66–81 and *passim*. On the exegetical form, function, and meaning of landscape imagery, see Ribouillault D. – Weemans M. (eds.), *Le paysage sacré. Le paysage comme exégèse dans l'Europe de la première modernité* (Florence: 2011); Weemans M., "Le paysage monde comme pérégrination spirituelle et exégèse visuelle", in Tapié A. – Weemans M. (eds.), *Fables du paysage flamand: Bosch, Bles, Brueghel, Bril* [exh. cat., Palais des Beaux-Arts de Lille] (Paris – Lille: 2012) 76–83; and Melion W.S., "'Conspicitur prior usque fulgor': On the Functions of Landscape in Benito Arias Montano's *Humanae salutis monumenta* (1571)", *Emblematica* 20 (2013), forthcoming.

Taken in Adultery of 1565, in order better to understand how exegetical analogies are embedded within his biblical composition [Fig. 1].⁸

Bruegel illustrates the episode recounted in *John* 8:3–11: the scribes and Pharisees, hoping legally to confound Christ, bring before him a woman taken in adultery, whom the law of Moses (*Leviticus* 20:10) condemns to be stoned. Their expectation is that Christ, who is sitting in the Temple and teaching, will attempt to contravene the law and thus himself become liable to censure and condemnation. Instead, ‘Jesus bowing himself down, [writes] with his finger on the ground’, and only when they fail to grasp his written response, does he ‘[lift] himself up’ and say to them: ‘He that



Fig. 1. Pieter Bruegel, *Christ and the Woman Taken in Adultery* (1565). Oil on panel, 24.1 × 34.4 cm. London, Courtauld Institute of Art, Seilern Collection.

⁸ On Bruegel's *Christ and the Woman Taken in Adultery*, see Grossman F., “Bruegel's ‘Woman Taken in Adultery’ and Other Grisailles”, *The Burlington Magazine* 94 (1952) 218–229; Gibson W.S., *Bruegel* (London: 1977) 134–139; Marijnissen R.H. – Ruyffelaere P. – Calster P. van – Meij A.W.F.M., *Bruegel: Tout l'oeuvre peint et dessiné* (Antwerp: 1988) 288–289; Robert-Jones P., *Pieter Bruegel* (New York: 2002) 138–139; Sellink M., *Bruegel: The Complete Paintings, Drawings, and Prints* (Ghent: 2007) 214; and Jonckheere K., *Antwerp Art after Iconoclasm: Experiments in Decorum, 1566–1585* (Brussels: 2012) 206–209, which cogently argues that Bruegel's grisaille comments on the relation between hypocrisy and iconoclasm.

is without sin amongst you, let him first cast a stone at her'.⁹ He then 'stoops[s] down' once again and continues writing on the ground until the accusers, realizing that they themselves are the accused, depart 'one by one, beginning at the eldest'.

Bent down at the front of the image, his silhouetted torso and backside made voluminous by the fall of his loosely draped robe, Christ is shown writing the opening words of the admonition to the scribes and Pharisees: 'He that is without sin, let him [...]' ('Die sonder sonde is, die V [...]'). He may be seen to have humbled himself, unlike the adulterous woman's prideful plaintiffs, not only in refusing to accuse in the manner of her self-appointed judges, but also in assuming an attitude that places his head at waist-height and the bulk of his body beneath that of every other bystander. This attitude, in that it gives greater prominence to Christ's buttocks than face, appears surprising, even indecorous, and in this sense underscores the theme of self-abasement. That he is closer to her than any of the surrounding onlookers, all of whom have distanced themselves, emphasizes that in positioning himself below a mere sinner, Christ yet attaches himself to the sinful woman, deigning to incur with her the people's scorn and reproach. Various compositional devices further enhance the clear reference to his exemplary humility: it is the penitent woman, not he, who occupies the center of the picture (marked by the intersection of its diagonal axes), and who aligns with the central vertical axis; and her head, not his, overtops those of the other figures, many of whom have already begun to slink away. Bruegel invites the viewer's identification with Christ by placing our vantage point at the level of his eyes: we look down at the text he is inscribing, and up at the faces of the crowd, followers at left, detractors at right. Amongst the latter, the bearded Pharisee at the extreme right carries a book in a bag hanging from his waist. This book, along with the pseudo-Hebraic letters embroidered on the hem of his tunic, identifies him as a man who cleaves to the letter of the law, rather than espousing the Gospel.

As Manfred Sellink has recently observed, Bruegel cleaves very closely to the pericope he illustrates.¹⁰ However, he also incorporates proleptic references to two key elements of the doctrinal disquisition that immediately follows his encounter with the adulteress. First, he alludes to the

⁹ *John* 8:6–7, in *The Holy Bible Translated from the Latin Vulgate*, ed. R. Challoner (Baltimore: 1899; reprint, Rockford: 1971). Unless otherwise noted, biblical citations come from this edition.

¹⁰ Sellink, *Bruegel* 214.

revelatory statement with which Christ resumes teaching in the Temple, after the irruption of scribes and Pharisees has been deflected: ‘Again therefore, Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world: he that followeth me, walketh not in darkness, but shall have the light of life”’.¹¹ The grisaille technique, since it entirely relies on tonal variation to articulate forms, heightens the viewer’s attention to effects of light and shadow, and by extension, to the thematic of spiritual illumination and obumbration. The upper expanse of Christ’s robe, its smooth surface brightly lit from shoulder to waist, causes him to shine amidst the crowd of penumbral figures, some of whom crane forward better to see what he has written, while others fade stealthily into the shadows. The brightness of Christ serves as analogue to the imagery of light that he utilizes in *John* 8:12 to declare his Messianic identity. The *Glossa* provides a further warrant for the light effects foregrounded in the grisaille: the glossarist avers, with reference to *John* 8, that Christ taught in the Temple at dawn to signify that his merciful doctrine supersedes the shadows of the law, like the rising of a new light (‘mane est ortus novae lucis post tenebras legis’).¹²

Second, the image’s paradoxical combination of references to the extreme humility of Christ (his bending low beside the penitent adulteress) and to his divine eminence (the brilliant light that singles him out), forecasts the equally paradoxical image of theophany and self-sacrifice put forward by him in *John* 8:28, his prophecy of the Crucifixion: ‘Jesus therefore said to them, “When you shall have lifted up the Son of man, then shall you know, that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself, but as the Father hath taught me, these things I speak”’. This passage, along with *John* 3:14 – ‘And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of man be lifted up’ – asserts that Christ, howsoever bruised and battered in his humanity, shall broadcast his divinity incontrovertibly, once he is fastened to the cross and raised up for all to see. Augustine famously makes this point in *Tractate 40 on the Gospel of John* 8:28–32, and his exegetical arguments, later distilled and disseminated in the *Glossa*, achieved wide currency.¹³ He plays upon the double meaning of the verb

¹¹ *John* 8:12.

¹² *Biblia Sacra cum Glossa ordinaria, primum quidem a Strabo Fuldensi Monacho Benedictino collecta [...] et Postilla Nicolai Lirani Franciscani, necnon additionibus Pauli Burgen-sis Episcopi, & Matthiae Thoringi replicis, opera et studio theologorum Duacensium*, 4 vols. (Antwerp, Jan van Keerbergen: 1617) V, col. 1152.

¹³ Augustine A., *Tractates on the Gospel of John* 28–54, eds. Halton T.P. – Clark E., et al., trans. J.W. Rettig, *Fathers of the Church: A New Translation* 88 (Washington, D.C.: 1993) 124–134, esp. 124–126.

'exalto' (to raise, elevate, but also to deepen, extend down) and the noun 'exaltatio' (exaltation in the literal sense of lifting up and the figurative sense of glorifying or magnifying): raised upon the cross, his body hanging pendant, Christ was jointly exalted as redeemer, for the very same people who had crucified him would soon be converted into his followers, their sins having been forgiven by the saving power of his sacrifice.¹⁴ In prophesying his Crucifixion, Jesus hereby affirms his divine authority, for he implicitly demonstrates before the fact, as it were, that no sinner is so wicked, that he may not pardon him, no sin so heinous that he may not forgive it. Indeed, the phrase 'I am he' signifies that his being is immutable, divine in substance, and proceeds from the Father.¹⁵ Augustine, as Nicholas of Lyra infers in his postils to the *Glossa*, reads *John* 8:28 by way of *Philippians* 2:7–10; Paul here construes the humiliation of the crucified Christ as the cause of his exaltation in the eyes of God: 'He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross. For which cause God also hath exalted him, and hath given him a name which is above all names'.¹⁶

The pictorial devices that Bruegel utilizes to adumbrate key points from the sermon of Christ, prompt us to examine the episode recounted in *John* 8:3–11, his handling of the adulterous woman, by reference to *John* 8:12 and 8:28, the meaning of which the grisaille may be thought to exemplify. The image, in other words, mobilizes one set of scriptural passages to read the event described in another. The challenge the artist poses for the biblically literate viewer is like the challenge posed by Christ for his beholders: what he does and what he writes are given to be observed and interpreted as evidence of his divine and human condition, of his merciful doctrine that illuminates spiritually, and of his new way of dealing that supplants the strictures of the law. Bruegel was licensed to treat *John* 8:3–11 in this way – which is to say, exegetically – because one of the most canonical of all exegetical compendia, the *Glossa ordinaria*, describes Christ's encounter with the adulteress, and his altercation with the scribes and Pharisees, as if these were performative events discharged by Christ himself for the purpose of producing an exegetical effect.

¹⁴ *Ibidem* V, col. 1151: 'Exaltationem autem crucis dicit, quia & ibi exaltatus est quando pependit in ligno, hoc oportebat impleri per manus eorum qui postea fuerant credituri, qui bonus dicit hoc, quare nisi ut nemo in quocumque scelere, & male sibi conscius desperaret, quando videat eis donari homicidium qui occiderant Christum'.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*: 'Esse est immutabile divinae substantiae. Sed ne ipse qui loquitur, intelligeretur esse pater'.

¹⁶ *Philippians* 2:8.

The *Glossa* codified the notion that Christ, in his handling of the adulteress and her accusers, was purveying an exegetical image – typological in form and function – of the new law he strove to promulgate and preserve in place of the old ('ipse custos legis est & lator legis').¹⁷ To paraphrase: as the finger of God inscribed the tablets of Moses, writing the law upon stones hard as the hearts of the people God wished to regulate ('digito Dei scripta fuit lex in lapide pro duricia illius populi'), so now Jesus, who is God made man, bends down to write upon the soft earth, inducing it to bear spiritual fruit ('nunc iam inclinatus in homine [...] scribens in terram quae fructum reddit').¹⁸ The *Glossa* thus urges us to visualize this scene as an enacted antitype, an exegetical image that marks *John* 8:3–11 (especially 8:6–8) as the fulfillment of *Exodus* 31:18. The conviction that a Mosaic type underlies this antitype derives from the crucial distinction between law and grace adduced in *John* 1:14 and 1:17, which characterize the mystery of the Incarnation as a process that brings an image to light; something never before seen by human eyes is rendered newly visible – the grace and truth of God heretofore obscured by the law: 'And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw his glory, the glory as it were of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. [...] For the law was given by Moses; grace and truth came by Jesus Christ'.

The circumstances under which the 'two stone tables of testimony, written with the finger of God' were handed to Moses – atop Mount Sinai, wreathed in flames and veiled in smoke, barely perceptible to the fearful people watching from below – implicitly contrast with the circumstances that now obtain: whereas the people formerly stood far beneath Moses, Jesus instead positions himself beneath the nearby onlookers; whereas God interacted with Moses from on high, his fearful voice distant yet audible to the Israelites, his divine majesty signalled but also hidden by fire and smoke, Jesus instead crouches down and thereby epitomizes the virtue of humility, giving himself as an exemplum to be seen, and framing his response as a written text to be read.¹⁹ Having been accosted, he at first remains silent, admonishing his audience not aurally but visually, and resorting to speech only after they fail to comprehend the tableau vivant he has enacted: 'When therefore they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said to them, "He that is without sin among you, let him first

¹⁷ *Biblia Sacra cum Glossa ordinaria* V, col. 1153.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*.

¹⁹ On the manifestation of the Lord in thunder, lighting, smoke, and trumpet blasts atop Mount Sinai, see *Exodus* 19:16–19.

cast a stone at her".²⁰ And having thus answered, he then resumes his former attitude and continues writing.

There is another sense in which *Christ and the Woman Taken in Adultery* may be identified as exegetical. As Nicholas of Lyra declares with regard to the story's protagonists, the scribes were expert in scripture ('illi qui habebant noticiam scripturarum') – that is, exegetes – who used their knowledge falsely and foolishly to confute Christ ('hic consequenter ponitur confutatio falsitatis').²¹ The scribe wearing a version of a scholar's cap, who leans over and harangues him, gesturing disputatiously, is one such exegete, whose words Christ counters with the exegetical image comprised by his action of lowering himself to write. He looks at the stones lying at the scribe's feet, rather than directly at him, as if to indicate that his interlocutors, in their hearts, are hard as stones; Bruegel subtly intimates that their attachment to the law issues from the 'duricia illius populi', to quote from the *Glossa* and its rendering of a Mosaic type.²² By the same token, the scribe seems poised to reach for the stones, in fulfillment of the punishment prescribed in *Leviticus 20:10* and *Deuteronomy 17:7*, and contravened by the admonition that Jesus traces *in terram* rather than *in lapide*.²³

The *Glossa*, more precisely, Nicholas of Lyra's postils to the ordinary glosses, delineate an alternative reading of Christ's silent riposte that helps to explain a key feature of Bruegel's grisaille – the sign of the cross made by the adulteress with the thumbs and index fingers of her clasped hands. Her pious gesture is made all the more conspicuous by the relative scarcity of hand gestures elsewhere in the picture. The Pharisee at far right, for example, has tucked his hands beneath his tabard, and most of the other figures' hands are placed out of sight. Bruegel counterposes Christ and the adulteress to the Pharisee and the scribe, the only other brightly lit figures. Like Jesus, who bends over and points, so too does the scribe: his mouth open and hands fluttering, he remonstrates with the Lord, loudly contesting what has been silently written. His palms, pivoting at the wrists and crossed at a right angle, perhaps signify the scribe's intention of 'crossing' Jesus, in the sense of contravening his teaching (from one of the meanings of 'cruce', a cognate of the Latin

²⁰ *John* 8:7.

²¹ *Biblia Sacra cum Glossa ordinaria* V, col. 1153.

²² *Ibidem*.

²³ Alternatively, the scribe may be thought to have let go of the stone lying just below his loosened grasp.

‘cruciare’ – ‘to afflict’, ‘to trouble grievously’).²⁴ The scribe’s crossed palms would seem to signal his desire to oppose and ultimately crucify the Lord. Just as the woman looks down at what Christ is writing, so too does the Pharisee to the scribe’s right, but whereas she reacts by making the sign of the cross, he hides his hands, as if purposely refusing to ‘grasp’ the import of the *doctrina Christi*. The book he carries, along with the pseudo-Hebraic letters embroidered on the hem of his robe, signify that he lives according to the letter of the law, whereas the partial text inscribed by Christ, its final words still to be written, indicates that the Gospel is more open-ended. It imposes the requirement of interpretative agency on all potential followers of Christ, who are compelled, on the model of the penitent adulteress (and counter-model of the Pharisee and the scribe), to attend to his meaningful words and deeds, to bring to completion his unfinished admonition, and more than this, fully to apprehend the message he both enacts and transcribes. One might put this as follows: by juxtaposing Christ and the adulterous woman to the Pharisee and scribe, Bruegel is staging a call for exegetical engagement, urging his audience (including us, of course) to make a moral and spiritual choice between the founder of the New Law and the representatives of the Old. Rather than merely parroting the Old, we must strive to interpret the New, bringing our eyes, mind, and heart to bear as we set about this task.

The reading of one event from the life of Christ onto another, as we shall see, is an exegetical exercise that was richly elaborated by Erasmus in his *Paraphrase on the Gospel of John* (Basel, Froben: 1523, 1524, 1534, 1535) and the *Adages* (Basel, Froben: 1517/18, 1528, 1530, 1533, 1536). The woman’s gesture connotes penitence, as well as adherence to the new law founded by Christ, and concomitantly, it testifies in advance to her belief in the forgiveness of sin; but it also calls to mind, both literally and figuratively, the way of the cross that Christ must endure in order to redeem the burden of original sin. Moreover, the woman’s attitude, downward glance, and position beside the hunched figure of Christ recall images of Veronica keeping vigil with Christ on the road to Calvary. In Martin Schongauer’s *Carrying of the Cross* (ca. 1470–1474), for example, Veronica stands a few paces beyond the fallen Christ, her veil held ready, her forearms crossed in

²⁴ On the verb ‘crucen’, in the sense of ‘pijnigen’ or ‘martelen’, see Verdam J., *Middel-nederlandsch handwoordenboek*, ed. C.H. Ebbinge Wubben (The Hague: 1932; reprint, The Hague: 1981) 315; and Heinsius J. (ed.), *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche taal*, Vol. 8, Pt. 1 (The Hague – Leiden: 1916), col. 450.

sympathy with his plight [Fig. 2].²⁵ Her pose reverses that of the adulteress, but is similarly rotational, and her face likewise expresses sorrowful resignation. Fallen beneath the weight of the cross, his left arm extended, his left hand pressed downward, Schongauer's Christ closely resembles, in mirror reversal, Bruegel's: just as the former kneels at the foot of a hummock, so in the grisaille, Christ genuflects at the edge of the podium that supports the adulteress, scribes, and Pharisees. In truth, his pose presages the one he takes in the *Carrying of the Cross*, painted the year before, in 1564: there too his torso is bent forward, one arm is extended, one hand touches the ground, and his gaze is earthbound [Fig. 3].²⁶ The silhouette of Christ is virtually identical in the two panels, as if his action in the grisaille were a *typus*, a foreshadowing, of the event enacted on the road to Calvary. In addition, the silhouetted scribe who accosts Christ at right, approximates in pose, profile, and headgear the profile figure fifth from the right in Schongauer's print, who like his painted counterpart bends forward and gesticulates with his left hand. These similarities suggest that Bruegel consulted Schongauer as his prime source, and more importantly, that he encoded into his version of *Christ and the Woman Taken in Adultery* an allusion to the Passion, and specifically, to the carrying of the cross.²⁷

²⁵ On Schongauer's *Carrying of the Cross*, see Minott C.I., *Martin Schongauer* (New York: 1971) 40–42; Châtelet A., "Les gravures de Martin Schongauer", in Widerkehr L. – Anzelewsky F. – Béguerie P., et al., *Le beau Martin. Gravures et dessins de Martin Schongauer (vers 1450–1491)* [exh. cat., Musée d'Unterlinden, Colmar] (Colmar: 1991) 239–425, esp. 366–369, no. G83; Renouard de Bussiere S., *Martin Schongauer. Maître de la gravure Rhénane vers 1450–1491* [exh. cat., Musée du Petit Palais, Paris] (Paris: 1991) 120–125, no. 13; and Landau D. – Parshall P., *The Renaissance Print, 1470–1550* (New Haven – London: 1994) 53.

²⁶ On Bruegel's *Carrying of the Cross*, see Gibson, *Bruegel* 123–133; Demus K. – Klauner F. – Schütz K., *Flämische Malerei von Jan van Eyck bis Pieter Bruegel* (Vienna: 1981) 81–86; Marijnissen, *Bruegel* 223–232; Falkenburg R.L., "Pieter Bruegels *Kruisdraging*: Een proeve van Close-Reading", *Oud Holland* 107 (1993) 17–33; Gregory J.E., "Towards the Contextualization of Pieter Bruegel's *Procession to Calvary*: Constructing the Beholder from within the Eyckian Tradition", *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* (1996) 207–221; Meadow M., "Bruegel's *Procession to Calvary*: Aemulatio and the Space of Vernacular Style", *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* (1996) 181–205; Seipel W., et al., *Pieter Bruegel the Elder at the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna* (Milan: 1998) 68–83; Müller J., *Das Paradox als Bildform: Studien zur Ikonologie Pieter Bruegel d.Ä.* (Munich: 1999) 136–142; Roberts-Jones P. – Roberts-Jones F., *Pieter Bruegel* (New York: 2002) 36–44; and Sellink, *Bruegel* 191–193.

²⁷ Falkenburg, in *Land of Unlikeness* 71–75, describes a similar example of implied doubling, in which the pose of Adam, with legs extended and feet crossed beneath the figure of Christ the Word (in the *Paradise* wing of the *Garden of Earthly Delights*), represents the crucifixion of the New Adam, whose self-sacrifice shall spiritually remarry fallen humankind to its *Sponsus-Artifex*.



Fig. 2. Martin Schongauer, *Carrying of the Cross* (1470–1474). Engraving, 29.1 × 43.2 cm. London, British Museum AN45842001.



Fig. 3. Pieter Bruegel, *Christ Carrying the Cross* (1564). Oil on panel, 124 × 170 cm. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Inv. 1025.

The *Glossa* justifies this layering of episodes from the ministry and Passion of Christ. Nicholas of Lyra, in his postil to the ordinary gloss on *John* 8:8, 'And again stooping down, he wrote on the ground', argues that Christ, when he first crouched down, wrote the line he thereafter spoke, 'He that is without sin [...]'; but when he crouched a second time, he chose instead to transcribe the sins of the woman's self-righteous judges: 'Some say that to strengthen his admonition, he wrote what he had written before. Others say, and more justly, that he seems to have transcribed the sins [of the scribes and Pharisees], in order to demonstrate that in their accusation of this woman, they were injudicious'.²⁸ Nicholas of Lyra's implication is that Christ bends down ('se inclinans') to engage with human sin, that the accusers' many transgressions, if they are fully to be exposed, oblige him to lower himself, as if bearing down on him. The analogy to the bearing of the cross, borne as the wages of sin, is made explicit in the postil to the ordinary gloss on *John* 8:28, 'When you shall have lifted up the Son of man [...]', which states unequivocally that what Christ means to evoke in his sermon is the cross he shall inevitably endure ('scilicet, in cruce').²⁹ Layered upon this reading of *John* 8:28, Nicholas of Lyra's reference to *Philippians* 2:7–10 connects the cross to the Isaian imagery of Christ humbling himself in the manner of a servant, and to the antithetical imagery of his heavenly glorification: 'But emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men [...]. That in the name of Jesus every knee should bow'.³⁰

Adapted from Schongauer's celebrated engraving, Bruegel's portrayal of Christ bent low like a servant before lesser men than he, and yet shining brightly, would seem to function as an exegetical type: the event it foreshadows, the carrying of the cross (*John* 19:17), profoundly humbles its bearer, even as it glorifies him as the light of the world. Based in the *Glossa*, the analogy between *John* 8:3–11 and *John* 19:17 was further elaborated and popularized by Erasmus in the *Paraphrase on John*.³¹ In paraphrasing the

²⁸ *Biblia Sacra cum Glossa ordinaria* V, col. 1154: 'Dicunt aliqui, quod scribebat idem quod prius ad ostendendum maiorem firmitatem sententiae. Alij dicunt & melius, ut videtur quod scribebat eorum peccata; ut eos ostenderet ineptos ad accusationem huius foeminae'.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, col. 1151: 'Scilicet, in cruce, in qua fuit extensus in aere, & per quod exaltatus est a patre, secundum quod dicitur Philipp. 2.b'.

³⁰ *Philippians* 2:7 and 2:10.

³¹ On Erasmus's *Paraphrase on John*, see Rabil A., Jr., "Erasmus' *Paraphrase of the Gospel of John*", *Church History* 48 (1979) 142–155; on paraphrasis as an exegetical instrument and its basis in the historical imagination, see Vessey M., "Introduction", in Pabel H.M. – Vessey M. (eds.), *Holy Scripture Speaks: The Production and Reception of Erasmus' Paraphrases on the*

Gospels, *Acts*, and Epistles, Erasmus relied heavily on rhetorical figures that aid the process of visualization by amplifying upon the sparser images provided by Scripture. Detailed, affective, and memorable, his paraphrastic imagery offered guidance to lay readers of the Bible, helping them to discern the meanings latent in the words and actions of Christ and the apostles. Consequently, as Michel Weemans has shown with reference to Herri met de Bles, the *Paraphrases* served as a valuable visual exegetical source for artists such as Bruegel, whose *Christ and the Woman Taken in Adultery* closely aligns with Erasmus's account of *John* 8:3–11, 8:12, and 8:28.³²

Erasmus states explicitly that Christ, in his merciful treatment of the adulteress and humbly silent refutation of the scribes and Pharisees, was picturing for his viewers the nature of his relation to the law of Moses.³³ Exposing the law's imperfection, he fashioned himself into a living image of the law's completion: since 'the law only penalizes public crimes', but fails to expose the far greater but often secret crimes of 'arrogance, disdain, envy, [and] hatred', Jesus silently reproves the woman's accusers by reacting humbly rather than proudly, mildly rather than viciously, thus disclosing their malevolence.³⁴ For Erasmus, in other words, the encounter with the adulteress is a visual antitype that operates both locally and categorically, for it is seen to fulfill what the genre of the Mosaic type can only partially or defectively presage. Jesus acknowledges and accommodates

New Testament' (Toronto – Buffalo – London: 2002) 3–25; Vessey, "The Tongue and the Book: Erasmus' *Paraphrases on the New Testament* and the Arts of Scripture", in *ibidem* 29–58; Roussel B., "Exegetical Fictions? Biblical Paraphrases of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries", in *ibidem* 59–83; and Sider R.D., "Historical Imagination and the Representation of Paul in Erasmus' *Paraphrases on the Pauline Epistles*", in *ibidem* 85–109. On the rhetorical effects mustered by Erasmus in the *Paraphrases*, including vividness of representation, see Bateman J.J., "From Soul to Soul: Persuasion in Erasmus' *Paraphrases on the New Testament*", *Erasmus in English* 15 (1987–1988) 7–16.

³² Weemans M., "Herri met de Bles's *Way to Calvary: A Silenic Landscape*", *Art History* 32 (2009) 307–331, esp. 308–312.

³³ Erasmus Desiderius, *D. Erasmi Roterodami paraphrasis in Evangelium secundum Ioannem* (Basil, Johann Froben: 1524) 94: 'Hoc aculeo animis illorum iniecto, rursus inclinatus scribebat in terra, facto suo depingens, quid ab illis vellet fieri'. Erasmus is referring to the image restaged by Christ when he bows down a second time. As regards his initial decision to respond visually rather than verbally, Erasmus states that the action of Christ was more eloquent than speech; see *ibidem* 93: 'Oratione nihil respondit, sed ipso facto plus loquebatur'.

³⁴ Sider R.D. (ed.) – Phillips J.E. (trans. – annot.), *Collected Works of Erasmus: New Testament Scholarship – Paraphrase on John* (Toronto – Buffalo – London: 1991) 105. Cf. Erasmus, *Paraphrasis in Evangelium secundum Iohannem* 92.

the full complexity of the human condition that the law can only discount or regulate: 'But Jesus knew the secrets of human hearts, and nothing at all, no matter how hidden, escaped his awareness. [...] Yet he did not declare her innocent, lest he seem to abolish the law of Moses, necessarily applied to the control of wrongdoers, for he had come to complete the law, not abolish it. Nor did he declare her guilty, because he had come into the world not to destroy sinners, but to save them'.³⁵

Erasmus repeatedly emphasizes that Jesus reproves the scribes and Pharisees not verbally but visually. As he puts it: '[Jesus] did not answer in words, but he said more by his very act' ('*ipso facto plus loquebatur*').³⁶ He 'displayed the mercy of the gospel law' ('*ostendit evangelicae legis [...] clementiam*'), 'teaching us in this very act' ('*hac ipsa re nos docens*') that each person must stoop down and 'put off the disdain and haughtiness with which he flatters himself and in pride of heart looks down on his neighbor'. On the contrary, it is necessary that he 'sink down within [himself]', and like all true followers of Christ, penitently consider the 'deed portraying what he wanted done by them' ('*facto suo depingens, quid ab illis vellet fieri*').³⁷ Turning away from the external concerns of the Mosaic law, he must grapple internally with the matters of conscience that are the purview of the spiritual gospel law ('*ut in se descenderent*').³⁸ If terms and phrases such as *ipso facto*, *depingens*, and *hac ipsa re nos docens* indicate that Christ here teaches by means of the admonitory image he himself bodies forth, the complementary call to follow Christ in judging 'according to the spirit' insists that the image he purveys must be parsed exegetically, its true meaning taken to heart: 'For that cannot be seen except when wicked desires have been removed and hearts judge according to the spirit, and when, from the things I do and say and from comparison with the sayings of the prophets, minds that are willing to believe see that the matter is a heavenly one, not a human one'.³⁹ Erasmus

³⁵ Sider (ed.) – Phillips (trans.), *Paraphrase on John* 105. Cf. Erasmus, *Paraphrasis in Evangelium secundum Iohannem* 93.

³⁶ Sider (ed.) – Phillips (trans.), *Paraphrase on John* 106. Cf. Erasmus, *Paraphrasis in Evangelium secundum Iohannem* 93.

³⁷ Sider (ed.) – Phillips (trans.), *Paraphrase on John* 106. Cf. Erasmus, *Paraphrasis in Evangelium secundum Iohannem* 93–94.

³⁸ *Ibidem* 93: 'Admonebat illos, qui ream ad poenam crudelem pertrahebant, ut in se descenderent, & iuxta divinam legem suam excuterent conscientiam'.

³⁹ Sider (ed.) – Phillips (trans.), *Paraphrase on John* 109; also see *ibidem* 110: '[...] for the Son is not known by physical eyes but by faith, and the Father cannot be shown to human senses, but spiritually winds his way into devout hearts'. Cf. Erasmus, *Paraphrasis in Evangelium secundum Iohannem* 96–97. This and other allusions to spiritual sight derive

is arguing that the paraphrastic image of Christ's encounter with the adulteress, scribes, and Pharisees must be viewed in light of the oracles prophesying his words and deeds, and in conjunction with analogous scriptural passages recounting his Passion. This reads like an appeal for the kind of exegetical image Bruegel has produced, the meaning of which hinges on discerning what the recalcitrant scribes and Pharisees fail to see, namely, that Christ is enacting the Isaian imagery of the servant (*Isaiah* 42:1–4, 49:1–6, 50:4–9, and 52:13–53:12) and prefiguring the evangelical imagery of the carrying of the cross.

Erasmus treats *John* 8 as an integrated whole: the altercation with the woman's persecutors is presented as one phase of a continuous sermon preached in the treasury of the Temple in Jerusalem. As Erasmus puts it: 'So with the informers sent away and each one's crimes revealed to him and the sinning woman let go, Jesus used this incident to develop the conversation he had begun earlier'.⁴⁰ The many references to cross and crucifixion that punctuate the sermon (especially *John* 8:21, 'Whither I go, you cannot come', and 8:28, 'When you shall have lifted up the Son of man [...]') attach to the events narrated in *John* 8:3–11, as if they were altogether correlative. Erasmus thus encourages us to infer that the meekness and mercy displayed by Jesus are correspondent to the virtues he exemplified when he bore the cross on the road to Calvary, ultimately to be borne upon it: "I do not go where your wickedness impels me, but I go willingly to a place where you cannot follow" (*John* 8:21). Our Lord Jesus hinted at much in this puzzling statement: first, that he would go to his death of his own free will; and then that through his death and resurrection he would be brought into heaven, where no one who is wise in the world's sense can be brought'.⁴¹

For Erasmus, nearly everything the Lord Jesus says and does in *John* 8, every image he brings to eyes and mind, has to do with the cross he shall bear ineluctably. The Jews cannot look past his humanity, and so they (unlike us) fail to ascertain that even now, as he stoops at their feet, he is

from the *Glossa*, which interprets *John* 8:12 and much of what precedes and follows it as an adjuration to see the light of Christ *in spiritualibus* rather than *in corporalibus*; see *Biblia Sacra cum Glossa ordinaria* V, col. 1155: 'Lux enim magis proprie dicitur in spiritualibus quam in corporalibus, quia lux habet rationem manifestativi, quod proprie habet locum in cognitione intellectiva'.

⁴⁰ Sider (ed.) – Phillips (trans.), *Paraphrase on John* 107. Cf. Erasmus, *Paraphrasis in Evangelium secundum Iohannem* 95.

⁴¹ Sider (ed.) – Phillips (trans.), *Paraphrase on John* 111. Cf. Erasmus, *Paraphrasis in Evangelium secundum Iohannem* 97–98.

fulfilling 'everything that the prophets had written about Jesus', and foretelling the 'completion of that ultimate sacrifice on the altar of the cross for the salvation of the world'.⁴² What he teaches, whether it is transmitted visually or verbally, must be compared to other scriptural loci that prophesy his advent, ministry, and Passion, fulfill the things his words and deeds have foretold, or enshrine his further teachings. To the extent that the episode with the adulteress visualizes key points of doctrine, it must be unfolded by means of collation with the *philosophia Christi* housed elsewhere in Gospels and Epistles. As it was incumbent upon the Jews to compare Jesus's past, present, and future actions, so are we obliged scripturally to know him by reading *John 8* in conjunction with the related biblical events that come before and after: 'For some basis had now been laid for faith, though they had not yet achieved the level to which they were later to be advanced. So our Lord Jesus encouraged these people to be steadfast in that which they had somehow begun until they proceeded to perfect knowledge of him'.⁴³ The *Paraphrase on John*, therefore, furnishes a convenient *locus classicus* for the notion that Christ, in his exchange with the adulterous woman and her indicters, was fashioning a sacred image, exegetical in form and function, that requires spiritually to be parsed and interpreted by recourse to other scriptural loci. That Erasmus's paraphrase on *John 8* cleaves so closely to the argument of the *Glossa*, especially its patristic citations and Nicholas of Lyra's integral postils, suggests that both sources were crucial in establishing the exegetical context for Bruegel's *Christ and the Woman Taken in Adultery*. His pictorial version of this subject, even if it does not directly derive from Erasmus's intensely visual paraphrase, bears so striking a resemblance to its verbal imagery, and so easily accommodates its analogical tropes, that one may well be justified in asking whether Bruegel was converting into paint the scriptural image that Erasmus had vividly rendered *in paraphrasi*. In this sense, Bruegel may be said to have emulated Erasmus, encoding into the grisaille various references to the cross and the burdensome vocation it entails for *Jesus inclinatus in homine*.⁴⁴

Bruegel would also surely have known the imagery of *Psalm 21*, recited on Good Friday as part of the solemn liturgy of the Passion. The association

⁴² Sider (ed.) – Phillips (trans.), *Paraphrase on John* 112. Cf. Erasmus, *Paraphrasis in Evangelium secundum Iohannem* 99.

⁴³ Sider (ed.) – Phillips (trans.), *Paraphrase on John* 113. Cf. Erasmus, *Paraphrasis in Evangelium secundum Iohannem* 99.

⁴⁴ *Biblia Sacra cum Glossa ordinaria* V, col. 1153.

between *John* 8:3–11 and *John* 19:17, between the ministry of Christ and his Passion, partly rests upon the Psalmist's foundational metaphor of Christ as worm in *Psalms* 21:7: 'But I am a worm, and no man: the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people'. As Augustine explains in the *Expositions on the Book of Psalms*, one of his most widely read treatises, this psalm is 'spoken in the person of the Crucified', who speaks 'not in the person of [sinful] Adam', but in his own person, as Jesus Christ, 'that so at least human pride might deign to imitate [his] humanity'.⁴⁵ According to Augustine, the connection between the imagery of dust and of the cross is strengthened in verse 16, 'Thou hast brought me down into the dust of death', which refers both to Christ fallen beneath the weight of the cross and to Christ crucified: 'And to the ungodly appointed to death, whom the wind casteth forth as dust from the face of the earth, Thou broughtest Me down'.⁴⁶ The Psalmist, Augustine further observes, draws a parallel between the gospel doctrine disseminated by Christ Minister and the Passion endured by Christ Crucified. The Passion has an exegetical force that unlocks the wisdom deeply embedded within the *doctrina Christi*: 'My wisdom, which was written of Me in the sacred books, was, as if hard and shut up, not understood; but after that the fire of My Passion was applied, it was, as if melted, manifested, and entertained in the memory of My Church'.⁴⁷ The psalm's vision of Christ lowered unto dust, like its call to view his teaching through the lens of the Passion, correlates to Bruegel's image of Christ humbly writing in the dust, as also to the layering of allusions to the Passion onto a key episode from his Temple ministry. That Bruegel shows Jesus tracing the text he also enunciates in *John* 8:7 accentuates the analogy to *Psalms* 21:7, which is commonly interpreted, following Augustine, as spoken in the voice of Christ. Other parallels make it likely that Bruegel is inviting the viewer to read the grisaille in terms of *Psalms* 21's richly worked imagery of the Passion, as expounded by Augustine.⁴⁸ For instance,

⁴⁵ Augustine A., *Expositions on the Book of Psalms*, trans. J.E. Tweed – T. Scratton – H.M. Wilkins, et al., 6 vols. (London: 1847–1848) I 144. Cf. Augustine A., *Enarrationes in Psalmos 1–32 (Expos.)*, ed. C. Weidmann, Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum XCIII/1A (Vienna: 2011) 317.

⁴⁶ Augustine, *Expositions on the Book of Psalms* 147. Cf. Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 325.

⁴⁷ Augustine, *Expositions on the Book of Psalms* 146. Cf. Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 325.

⁴⁸ On *Psalms* 21 as a major source of Passion iconography, and its mining by exegetes and liturgists who used it to visualize the torments of Christ, see Marrow J., 'Circumdede runt me canes multi: Christ's Tormentors in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages and Early Renaissance', *Art Bulletin* 59 (1977) 167–181, esp. 168–172.

his exposition of verse 17, 'For many dogs have encompassed me', brings to mind the rigoristic scribes and Pharisees who attempt to entrap Jesus: 'For many came about Me barking, not for truth, but for custom'.⁴⁹ His exposition of verse 21, 'Deliver, O God, my soul from the sword', describes it as a prayer for salvation of the people from the hostile representatives of custom, and as such, perhaps applies to the way Bruegel's Jesus interposes himself protectively between his followers at left and the scribes and Pharisees at right.⁵⁰ And the exposition of verse 22, 'Save me from the lion's mouth', celebrates the virtue of humility and lauds Jesus for embracing it fully: 'And from the loftiness of the proud, exalting themselves to special pre-eminence, and enduring no partakers, save My humility'.⁵¹ In showing how Jesus humbles himself before the upholders of the law, Bruegel epitomizes the psalm's renunciation of pride.

Erasmus revisited the paradox of glorious humility, adducing as paradigms both the ministry and Passion of Christ, in the various editions of the *Adagiorum chiliades* (*Collection of One Thousand Adages*) that feature the apothegm 'Sileni Alcibiadis' (The Sileni of Alcibiades). According to Roger A.B. Mynors, the saying first appeared as a short entry in the 1508 Aldine edition of the *Chiliades*, but by 1515, the explanatory apparatus had begun greatly to expand, assuming its very extensive final form in the Froben editions of 1517/18, 1528, and later.⁵² Having printed the adage separately in 1517, Froben then issued seven further editions, in Latin, Dutch, English, French, German, and Spanish. The 'Sileni Alcibiades' can therefore be said to qualify as one of Erasmus's most popular works, and for this reason, the many points of comparison between Erasmus's exposition of the adage and Bruegel's composition of *Christ and the Woman Taken in Adultery* deserve closer examination.⁵³

⁴⁹ Augustine, *Expositions on the Book of Psalms* 147. Cf. Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 325.

⁵⁰ Augustine, *Expositions on the Book of Psalms* 147. Cf. Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 327.

⁵¹ Augustine, *Expositions on the Book of Psalms* 147. Cf. Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 327.

⁵² On the 'Sileni Alcibiades', see Mynors R.A.B. (trans. – annot.), *Collected Works of Erasmus: Adages II vii 1 to III iii 100* (Toronto – Buffalo – London) 405–406; Weemans M., "Herri met de Bles's *Sleeping Peddler*: An Exegetical and Anthropomorphic Landscape", *Art Bulletin* 88 (2006) 459–481, esp. 473–475; and Weemans, "Bles's *Way to Calvary*" 315–322.

⁵³ On the currency of Latin adages, as they pertain to Bruegel, see Sullivan M., "Bruegel's Proverbs: Art and Audience in the Northern Renaissance", *Art Bulletin* 73 (1991) 431–466; on proverb collections in the vernacular and Bruegel's engagement with them, see Meadow M., *Pieter Bruegel the Elder's 'Netherlandish Proverbs' and the Practice of Rhetoric* (Zwolle: 2002).

The *Adages*, strictly speaking, are by no means exegetical, but the ‘Sileni Alcibiades’, in its account of Christ as a Silenus figure, marshals the same scriptural loci that Bruegel later folded into his portrayal of Christ as paragon of humility and harbinger of the way of the cross. The Silenus of Alcibiades, as Erasmus explains, refers to small figurines of carved wood that opened to reveal the effigy of a deity: they came to stand for any person who seemed absurd or ridiculous from without, but upon careful inspection was discovered to be sublime and beautiful from within. Erasmus invokes as his prime example Christ, whose humble background and lowly appearance were a mockery to the Pharisees, whose toilsome embrace of the human condition led finally to the way of the cross, and whose willingness to shoulder the burden of human sin ensured the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecies of the servant. This justification of the analogy between Christ and the Silenus of Alcibiades comprises the full range of scriptural allusions assembled by Bruegel – the servant songs of Isaiah, the references to the cross in *John* 8 and 19, and more generally, to the Passion elsewhere in the Gospels and Epistles. Like Bruegel, Erasmus laminates allusions to the ministry and Passion of Christ, maintaining that his efforts as teacher are themselves stations on the way of the cross, indices of the all-encompassing vocation of servitude that secure his claim to dignity in lowliness, splendor in abjection:

And what of Christ? Was not He too a marvellous Silenus, (if one may be allowed to use such language of Him)? And I for my part do not see how any who proudly call themselves Christians can escape the duty of reproducing this to the utmost of their power. Observe the outside surface of this Silenus: to judge by ordinary standards, what could be humbler or more worthy of disdain? Parents of modest means and lowly station, and a humble home; poor Himself and with few and poor disciples, recruited not from noblemen’s palaces or the chief sects of the Pharisees or the lecture-rooms of philosophers, but from the publican’s office and the nets of fishermen. And then His way of life: what a stranger He was to all physical comforts as He pursued through hunger and weariness, through insults and mockery the way that led to the cross! It was this aspect of Him that the mystic and poet contemplated when he described Him in the words (Isaiah 53:2–3), ‘He had no form nor comeliness; we beheld Him and there was nothing to look upon, and we desired Him, despised as He was and the last of men’, and a great deal that follows to the same effect. And now, if one has the good fortune to have a nearer view of this Silenus, open – if, in other words, He shows Himself in His mercy to anyone, the eyes of whose soul have been washed clean – in heaven’s name what a treasure you will find, in that cheap setting what a pearl, in that lowliness what grandeur, in that poverty what riches, in that weakness what unimaginable valour, in that disgrace what glory, in all

those labours what perfect refereshment, and in that bitter death, in short, a never-failing spring of immortality!⁵⁴

Erasmus's adage is all the more relevant to Bruegel's panel in that the author construes his portrayal of Christ as pictorial in character, calling it an *imago* that Christians should closely attend: 'Why are those men so much revolted by this picture of Him ('ab hac imagine'), who boast none the less that they bear His name?'⁵⁵

The saying 'Silenus Alcibiades' can be applied as well to the format of the grisaille, whose plain exterior harbors an exceptionally rich subject, partially concealing it from any viewer unable to engage with the exegetical analogies that the picture implicitly sponsors – the parallel between Christ the humble teacher writing upon the dusty ground and Christ the worm who eats the dust of the earth, between his lowering himself before the sinners around him and his carrying of the cross, between his ministry of service and his sacrificial servitude. In this respect, pictorial execution and Christological argument are perfectly matched. The apparent simplicity of the grisaille, its eschewal of color and compositional clarity, make it analogous to the modest, unprepossessing exterior of a Silenus figure; and like such a Silenus, which may be opened to reveal a finer deity, the grisaille may be unfolded, its exegetical apparatus probed, its beautiful argument apprehended. The result, in the one case as in the other, is that the true nature of Christ, his incarnate divinity, will be revealed. Indeed, to use an Erasmian simile, the simple style and complex content of Bruegel's

⁵⁴ Mynors (trans. – annot.), *Erasmus: Adages II vii 1 to III iii 100* 264. Cf. Erasmus Desiderius, *Adagiorum chiliades* (Basil, Johann Froben: 1541) 683: 'An non mirificus quidam Silenus fuit Christus? Si fas est de hoc ad eum loqui modum, quem equidem haud video cur non omnes pro virili debeant exprimere, qui Christiani nomine gloriantur. Si summam Sileni faciem intuearis, quid iuxta popularem aestimationem abiectius, aut contemptius? Tenuis & obscuri parentes, domus humilis: ipse pauper & pauculus, & pauperulus habuit discipulos: non e magnatum palatij, non e pharisaeorum cathedris, non e philosophorum scholis, sed a telonio & retibus ascitus. Tum vita, quam a voluptatibus omnibus aliena, per famem, per lassitudinem, per convicia, per ludibria, ad crucem denique pervenit. Hac illum parte contemplabatur mysticus ille vates, cum eum depingens: Non erat, inquit, ei species, neque decor. Vidimus eum, & non erat aspectus: & desideravimus eum despectum, ac novissimum virorum. Caeteraque permulta, quae in hanc sequuntur sententiam. Iam si contingat apertum hunc Silenum propius intueri, hoc est, si cui dignetur ipse se purgatis animi luminibus ostendere, deum immortalem, quam ineffabilem reperies thesaurum: in quanta vilitate, quale margaritum: in quanta humilitate, quantam sublimitatem: in quanta paupertate, quantas divitias: in quanta infirmitate, quam incogitabilem virtutem: in quanta ignominia, quantam gloriam: in quantis laboribus, quam absolutam requiem. Denique in morte tam acerba, perennem immortalitatis fontem'.

⁵⁵ Mynors (trans. – annot.), *Erasmus: Adages II vii 1 to III iii 100* 264. Cf. Erasmus, *Adagiorum chiliades* 683: 'Cur si abhorrent ab hac imagine, qui titulo tamen illius se iactant?'

panel are like the components of a parable: ‘The parables in the Gospels, if you judge them by their outward shell, would be thought, surely, by everyone to be the work of an ignoramus. Crack the nutshell and of course you will find that hidden wisdom which is truly divine, something in truth very like Christ Himself.’⁵⁶ By the same token, the process of interpretation activated by the grisaille’s conjunction of simple style and complex content, resembles the process of scriptural exegesis, as described by Erasmus: ‘After all, Scripture too has its own Sileni. Pause at the surface, and what you see is sometimes ridiculous; were you to pierce to the heart of the allegory, you would venerate the divine wisdom.’⁵⁷ The Christian calling, as Erasmus avows, requires that one see the spiritual truth wantonly ignored by the scribes and Pharisees – namely, that Christ ‘though he was in every way the lord and master of all things, took upon himself the part of a servant and not a master’.⁵⁸

The adage ‘Silenus Alcibiades’, as elucidated by Erasmus, since it concerns a pagan *imago* that precisely corresponds to the sacred *imago* bodied forth by Christ, can be said to distill and, more than this, to commend the process of visual exegesis that Bruegel’s *Christ and the Woman Taken in Adultery* likewise encourages and cultivates. As I have tried to demonstrate, this process presumes a high level of familiarity with the Bible, combined with sensitivity to the visual analogies that prompt reflection on parallel pericopes – the complementary imagery of *John* 8:8 and *Psalms* 21:7, for example. These analogies, whether they bridge the two Testaments or function solely in the New, are for the most part typological; moreover, they tend to operate intra-scripturally, bringing selected passages into mutual relation, so that they are read in tandem: there is little reliance on the systematic exegesis of the theologians, and only the more standard exegetical sources – the *Glossa*, Nicholas of Lyra’s postils, and Augustine’s *Enarrationes* – are likely to have been consulted. These sources would probably have been familiar to Bruegel and his viewers from sermons and

⁵⁶ Mynors (trans. – annot.), *Erasmus: Adages II vii 1 to III iii 100* 267. Cf. Erasmus, *Adagiorum chiliades* 684: ‘Evangelicas parabolae, si primum aestimes corticem, quis non iudicet hominis esse idiotae? Si nucem frangas, nimirum reperies arcanam illam, ac vere divinam sapientiam, planeque quiddam ipsi Christo simillimum’.

⁵⁷ Mynors (trans. – annot.), *Erasmus: Adages II vii 1 to III iii 100* 267. Cf. Erasmus, *Adagiorum chiliades* 684: ‘Iam habent & suos Silenos arcanae literae. Si consistas in superficie, ridicula nonnumquam res sit: si penetres usque ad anagogen, divinam adores sapientiam’.

⁵⁸ Mynors (trans. – annot.), *Erasmus: Adages II vii 1 to III iii 100* 271. Cf. Erasmus, *Adagiorum chiliades* 686: ‘[...] qui cum modis omnibus princeps ac dominus esset omnium, ministri partes suscepit, non domini’.

the ferial liturgy. The pertinence of the Erasmian material is fourfold: his conception of *paraphrasis* is visual, indeed pictorial; in the *Paraphrase on John* and the *Adages*, he views the ministry of Christ by reference to the Passion, and vice-versa, interweaving the *doctrina Christi* and the *via crucis*; his conception of scriptural exegesis is visual, in that it is exemplified by the adage ‘Silenus Alcibiades’ and his image-based reading of it; and throughout, he appreciates Christ as an image-maker whose preferred pedagogical instruments – illustrative parables and enacted tableaux – evince a clear commitment to the process of visual exegesis.

Bruegel’s interest in reading the Bible through scriptural images was distinctive in degree (subtlety and ingenuity of visual argument) not kind, as comparison with Gerard van Groeningen’s *Christ and the Woman Taken in Adultery*, engraved by Lucas van Doetecum and included in the 1579 and 1585 editions of Gerard de Jode’s *Thesaurus veteris et novi Testamenti*, may serve to indicate [Fig. 4].⁵⁹ For Van Groeningen, the emphasis falls on the Solomonite temple precinct, the authority of which Jesus usurps when he inscribes his admonition to the scribes and Pharisees. The miter worn by the foremost accuser identifies him as a Temple priest who represents the old religion, soon to be superseded. Christ points at what he has just written and with his other hand gestures toward a cluster of onlookers, whose consciences he hopes to stir. He is speaking the words recorded in *John* 8:7: ‘He that is without sin among you [...]’ (recorded in the inscription at the base of the print). In fact, Van Groeningen is more exact than Bruegel about the moment illustrated: it is the interval between the two campaigns of bending down to write, when Jesus ‘lifted himself up’ to clarify what he had silently been communicating. However, the action of lifting himself, along with the gesture of his outstretched arms, also constitutes a patent allusion to a future event – the crucifixion, prophesied in *John* 8:28, ‘When you shall have lifted up the Son of man [...]’. His attitude of genuflection further inflects the gesture’s significance, allowing it to be read as expressive of humble entreaty, and consequently,

⁵⁹ On Van Groeningen’s *Christ and the Woman Taken in Adultery*, plate 9 of the series *Events in and around the Temple*, see Luyten G. (ed.) – Schuckman C. (comp.), *The New Hollstein Dutch and Flemish Etchings, Engravings, and Woodcuts, 1450–1700: Gerard van Groeningen*, 2 vols. (Rotterdam – Amsterdam: 1997) I 115, no. 87; Luyten G. – Schuckman C. (eds.) – Nalis H. (comp.), *The New Hollstein Dutch and Flemish Etchings, Engravings, and Woodcuts, 1450–1700: The Doetecum Family*, 4 vols. (Rotterdam: 1998) III 112, no. 625. On De Jode’s *Thesaurus*, see Mielke H., “Antwerpener Graphik in der 2. Hälfte des 16. Jahrhunderts: Der *Thesaurus veteris et novi Testamenti* des Gerard de Jode (1585) und seine Künstler”, *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 38 (1975) 29–83; and Rosier B.A., *The Bible in Print: Netherlandish Bible Illustration in the Sixteenth Century*, 2 vols. (Leiden: 1997) I 138.



Fig. 4. [COL. PL. 1] Lucas van Doetecum after Gerard van Groeningen, *Christ and the Woman Taken in Adultery* (ca. 1572). Engraving and etching, 19.8 × 28.8 cm. Plate 9 from *Events in and around the Temple*, in Gerard de Jode (ed.), *Thesaurus sacrarum historiarum Veteris et Novi Testamenti, elegantissimis imaginibus expressus excellentissimorum in hac arte virorum opera* (Antwerp, Gerard de Jode: 1585). London, British Museum AN1262367001.

of self-abnegation. Alternatively, it functions as a welcoming gesture addressed to the penitent adulteress, who stands for all sinners whom Christ offers benevolently to embrace. Van Groeningen's *Christ and the Woman Taken in Adultery*, part of a series focusing on his ministry in and around the Temple, is less multi-layered than Bruegel's, in part because the decision to show Christ 'lifted up' rather than 'bowing himself down' reduces greatly the range of visual analogies upon which depend the image's exegetical scope and argument.⁶⁰ In any event, comparison of the panel and print reveal how adeptly visual means were utilized to harness multiple scriptural loci and reflect upon them conjointly.

⁶⁰ On the series, *Events in and around the Temple*, a suite of thirteen plates engraved ca. 1572, see Luyten (ed.) – Schuckman (comp.), *New Hollstein: Gerard van Groeningen* 113–131, nos. 78–91; and Luyten – Schuckman (eds.) – Nalis (comp.), *New Hollstein: Doetecum Family* 109–127, nos. 616–629.

As mentioned above, the grisaille can be seen, in certain respects, to allude specifically to one of Bruegel's greatest compositions, the *Carrying of the Cross* of 1564 [Fig. 3]. Not only is the figure of Christ positioned similarly in both works, but the figures of the Virgin Mary and the penitent adulteress are also analogous. Mary's thumbs are crossed, and the sign of the cross reverberates through the rest of her interlaced fingers. John's pointing gesture gives added emphasis to her crossed hands: combined with her mournful face and slumped posture, they reveal how intensely she identifies with her son, burdened as he is by the cross, and how heavily she is weighed down by compassion for Christ in his Passion. Unlike the woman taken in adultery, whose index fingers are extended in imitation of the scribing hand of Christ, Mary's hands are curved, in imitation of his right hand that curls around the bole of the cross, and left hand that cups the earth. Her closed eyes emphasize that her co-suffering is achieved meditatively, through the faculty of spiritual vision.⁶¹ Just as the grisaille opposes the adulteress to the scribe, so here Mary is opposed to the figure of Simon of Cyrene's wife, who wears a cross pendant from the rosary hanging at her waist, and yet does everything she can to prevent her husband from being drafted as an aide to Christ. Both Mary and Simon's wife are aligned with the picture's diagonal axes that cross at the figure of Christ fallen beneath the weight of the cross.⁶² Bruegel plays upon the irony of this juxtaposition: her back turned toward Jesus, Mary discerns him with the eyes of the spirit; turned toward him, Simon's wife yet fails to recognize the Christ, for she remains spiritually blind. Framed as antitheses, Mary and Simon's wife, like their counterparts in *Christ and*

⁶¹ Mary's arms enframe her heart, the seat of her sorrow. Another grisaille, the *Death of the Virgin* (ca. 1564), painted for Abraham Ortelius, analogizes the crossed fingers of St. John the Evangelist, sleeping at left, with the crucifix (propped up on a pillow) at which Mary intently stares. The relation between the sign of the cross made by John and the effigy of Christ crucified placed before Mary calls to mind the joint vigil kept by them at the foot of the cross. Bruegel draws a parallel between the gentle sleep of John and the beatific death of the Virgin, between the death-like sleep of the one and the sleep-like death of the other. These complementary states register as indices of their mutual absorption in the sacrificial death of Christ. On the analogical structure of Bruegel's *Death of the Virgin*, see Melion W.S., "Ego enim quasi obdormivi: Salvation and Blessed Sleep in Philip Galle's *Death of the Virgin*", *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* (1996) 15–53; and Sellink M., "The Death of the Virgin, c. 1564", in idem, *Bruegel* 194–195.

⁶² Positioned on these cruciform axes, Mary and Simon of Cyrene's wife are connected by the gray color of the former's habit and the latter's sleeves; this same color attaches both of them to Christ, who wears a darker shade of the same gray. Thus joined, they mark the three corners of a notional triangle, the sides of which are demarcated by pathways through the crowd of onlookers.

the Woman Taken in Adultery, function as scriptural prompts, bringing to mind a congeries of biblical passages relating to vision and blindness, not least *John* 9:39: ‘And Jesus said: “For judgment I am come into this world; that they who see not, may see; and they who see, may become blind”’. In the grisaille, this binary attaches to the distinction between evangelical faith and Pharisaism, between the acuity of the former and the blindness of the latter.⁶³

Many of the essays that follow, like the introduction above, explore the ramifications of visual exegesis for early modern interpreters of the Bible, the laity especially. For the most part, they examine the relation between artistic practice and biblical hermeneutics, although other kinds of sacred image are also considered. Practices of visual exegesis, as will become evident, set a standard for the interpretation of other kinds of image as well.

The first five essays give thought to visual typology – the analogical construction of types and antitypes – as a method of biblical interpretation. Jamie Smith sheds light on the sequence of Old Testament types that set forth the vocations of Jesus, Mary, and the donor in Jan van Eyck’s *Virgin and Child with Canon Joris van der Paele* of 1436. The Virgin and Child are seated within a choir ringed by an ambulatory, the figured capitals of which, as Smith shows, derive from the series of Pauline types expounded in the *Epistle to the Hebrews*. One of these capitals features Jephthah who foreshadows the exegetical vocation of Christ, his mission of explicating Scripture: for Van Eyck, exegesis is visualized as a process of spiritual coloring that transforms monochromatic sculptural types into polychromatic pictorial antitypes. Wim François tracks the changes in William Vorsterman’s semi-official Dutch language Bibles and New Testaments, from the famous ‘Protestantizing’ illustrated Bible of 1528, rich in paratextual material, through the sparer, more orthodox Catholic Bibles of 1529–1531, to the more fully glossed, but still essentially Catholic Bibles of the 1530s to mid-1540s. The woodcut illustrations in the Vorsterman Bibles likewise waned and waxed, and François focuses on examples from the new set of illustrations in the Bibles of 1533–1534 and following,

⁶³ As Koenraad Jonckheere suggests in *Antwerp Art after Iconoclasm* 208–209, Bruegel may also be alluding to the association between the grisaille exterior of triptychs and their polychrome centerpieces. Seen in this light, the grisaille implicitly calls forth a polychrome image of the Carrying of the Cross. This polychrome image is to be visualized as internal to the beholder, just as it is internal to the virtual triptych the existence of which Bruegel’s panel infers. Bruegel is playing upon the dynamic relation between the pictorial image and the meditative images it calls forth.

examining the typological relationships they establish in conjunction with the many glosses and marginal annotations to the text, which continue the medieval typological tradition of the *Biblia Pauperum* and *Speculum humanae salvationis*.

Giovanni Careri takes stock of the pictorial devices utilized by Michelangelo in the Sistine *Last Judgment* to represent the end of historical time as the dissolution of scriptural typology. Foreshortening, the *figura serpentinata* (serpentine figure), and *terribilità* (forcefulness) cause time and space to contract, and with this contraction, the *distantia temporum* (historical distance) that separates and distinguishes between types and antitypes altogether ceases to exist. Colette Nativel unfolds the exegetical argument of Rubens's *Epitaph of Jan Michielsen and Maria Maes* of 1617. As one looks left to right, the figures of the Virgin and Child in the left wing adumbrate the Pietà cum Lamentation in the central panel, and they in turn prefigure John the Evangelist in the right wing, who gazes heavenward like Mary and carries the book of the Gospels, just as she bears up the body of Christ. These historical referents operate like scriptural types, and as Nativel argues, they have their source in several key passages from the *Gospel of John*, most importantly in *John* 1:17, which draws a parallel between the Law of Moses and the grace and truth of Christ. Caroline van Eck proposes that Vermeer's so-called *Allegory of Faith* be interpreted not as an allegory but instead as a collection of types, each of which connects to an adjacent thing, person, or event inhabiting a shared historical continuum. The picture consists of Old Testament types – the serpent and the apple, for example, or the crushing of the former by a stone – that prefigure the sacrifice of Christ and the sacrament of the Eucharist. That the female protagonist gazes at the image of the Crucifixion reflected in the spherical mirror – more precisely, at the mirror image of the painting in the painting – emphasizes the visual rather than textual nature of the scriptural types at issue. In this formulation, the process of exegesis proves to be emphatically pictorial.

The next five essays broaden the topic of discussion: they investigate how visual analogy, the structural principle that undergirds visual typology, operated as an exegetical instrument, enabling various kinds and degrees of hermeneutic engagement with sacred imagery. Bret Rothstein considers the meditative functions of 'edifying correlation' in the *Tree of Jesse* of ca. 1500, attributed either to Geertgen tot Sint Jans or Jan Mostaert, a painting that richly elaborates upon the metaphorical connotations of the rosary. Embedded within the pictorial fabric are numerous

ghedenckenissen (prompts to memory) that assist the beholder to discover analogies of form and of thought that may then be cultivated and amplified, as the votary sets about the task of exercising himself or herself spiritually. Walter Melion closely explicates Dirk Vellert's *Calling of Peter and Andrew* of 1523, showing how it diverges from pericopic traditions of scriptural illustration, and instead offers a reading of *Matthew* 4:18–22, *Mark* 1:16–18, and *Luke* 5:1–11 that exemplifies the evangelical mission of Christ and the apostolic vocation of his earliest followers. As portrayed by Vellert, Christ is seen to ponder the meaning of an everyday task, fishing, which he is about to convert into a metaphor (or better, a condensed parable) of Christian ministry, namely, fishing for men. The print's argument turns on an analogy between the metaphorical conversion of fishing and the spiritual conversion of Peter, and this analogy, issuing from intimate familiarity with Scripture, itself functions as a trope for the meditative process of visual exegesis.

Michel Weemans analyzes the exegetical form and function of two landscapes by Herri met de Bles, dating from the mid-sixteenth century, both of which include scenes of John the Baptist preaching. Such landscapes, if their argument is properly to be decoded, require the viewer to reflect upon analogical correspondences amongst biblical protagonists, elements representative of the Book of Nature, and topical details interpolated from the present time. Approached in this way – not iconographically but exegetically – Bles's landscapes may be said to foster a dynamic of conversion that pivots from the literal to the spiritual sense of things. Todd Richardson points up the privileged status of gesture in Jan van Hemessen's paintings, situating his work in the context of a developing interest in gesture and body language as aspects of visual communication, humanist interest in the gesture of ancient oratory, and a tradition of typological exegesis. Richardson's analysis of Van Hemessen's *Mocking of Christ*, in which Christ holds the cross as if playing a harp – thus invoking for the attentive, scripturally and visually learned viewer an association with King David, *Psalms* 22 and 57, and the Crucifixion – reveals how represented gestures are used to engage the viewer in a novel interpretation of a well-known subject, whose unfolding functions as a spiritual exercise. The importance of gesture likewise informs Tatiana Senkevitch's analysis of Philippe de Champaigne's *Sleep of Elijah*, commissioned by Anne of Austria, queen mother of France and counter-reformatory defender of the Eucharist, for the convent of Val-de-Grâce. Drawing on Paul Ricoeur's concept of the 'exegesis of human existence', Senkevitch examines the analogical

relationship between the story of the biblical figure and the personal history of the votary. Champaigne advances but doubly complicates the traditional typological, eucharistic meaning of the subject by, on the one hand, assimilating the subject to an exercise of personal devotion – especially as adduced by Anne’s spiritual mentor, Mère Marguerite d’Arbouze, in her *La Traité de l’oraison mentale*, but also implicit in the eremetical subjects painted by Champaigne for Anne – and, on the other, drawing on inventions by Raphael, thereby coupling the matter of artistic imitation with typological exegesis.

The next subsection comprises four essays that deal with a crucial function of exegetical images – the spiritual conformation of the viewer-exegete to Christ. Ingrid Falque interprets the spatial ambiguities evident in Hans Memling’s *Virgin and Child with Maarten van Nieuwenhove* of 1487, and other such works, as allusions to the three registers of Christian life that Jan van Ruusbroec and other proponents of the *devotio moderna* construe as distinct yet complementary, interpenetrative rather than successive – the active life, the inner life, and the contemplative life. Based in exegetical meditation upon Scripture, these three facets of the votary’s espousal to Christ are constitutive of the *ghemeine leven* (common life) that reconciles humanity and the Godhead. Elliott Wise, focusing on Rogier van der Weyden’s Escorial *Crucifixion*, demonstrates that its most conspicuous feature – the vermilion veil juxtaposed to the body of Christ – derives from the exegetical imagery of the Holy Blood vividly evoked by Ruusbroec in such treatises as *The Spiritual Tabernacle* and *A Mirror of Eternal Blessedness*. The figurative significance of the color vermilion originates in exegesis of *Psalm 21*’s oracular reference to Christ the Man of Sorrows as a worm (‘vermiculus’). More important to Rogier than Ruusbroec’s mystical theology were the dynamic methods of scriptural image-making he promoted and the intensely evocative verbal images he produced to foment and sustain the soul’s spiritual conformation.

Leopoldine Prosperetti examines a new category of *imagines exegeticae* – epitomes of eremitical solitude – that first became popular in the 1580s. Designed by Marten de Vos, engraved by Adrian Collaert, and issued by Jan Sadeler ca. 1587, the print series *Solitudo sive vitae patrum* (*Solitude or the Lives of the Fathers*), along with its three sequels, distills the nature of the solitary lives led by the Desert Fathers and recounted by the great exponents of the *vita solitaria*, from Saint Jerome to Francesco Petrarca. The *Solitudo* consists not only of pictorial images but also of appended *carmines*, which jointly comment on the textual sources, codifying them into a visual and verbal *vitae patrum*; conversely, this novel compendium

was itself the object of exegetical commentary, as Prosperetti makes clear by reference to Georges Garnefelt's *Elucidationes*. Joseph Chorpenning traces the exegetical origins of the meditative and contemplative imagery of the heart famously promulgated by Francis de Sales as an alternative to the militant Catholicism prevalent in Paris at the close of the sixteenth century. In particular, Francis favored the process of *lectio divina*, applying it to the principal scriptural *loci* whence issues the Salesian portrayal of the sacred heart – *Proverbs* 23:26, *Song of Songs* 8:6, *Joel* 2:12, and *Galatians* 2:20. As Chorpenning explains, the ultimate source of Francis's cordiform word-pictures and word-emblems was *Genesis* 1:26, which he construed as a warrant for the spiritual painting of human hearts in the image and likeness of their source – the loving heart of Jesus.

The five essays that follow adduce other examples of biblical reading, as effected through images. Maria Deiters considers a particularly active engagement with the biblical text: the Pfinzing Bible, a so-called House or Family Bible created by a Nuremberg patrician, Martin Pfinzing, which consists of Sigmund Feyerabend's 1561 edition of the Luther translation greatly expanded through the addition of prints and miniatures by Albrecht Dürer, Jost Amman, Virgil Solis, and others; extensive textual commentary on those images, probably by a Lutheran theologian; and a foreword connecting the Bible to the family history. Deiters likens the Pfinzing Bible to other forms of didactic literature, such as Veit Dietrich's *Summaria christlicher Lehr*, in both the use for lay devotions – the understanding and internalization of the word of God – and the tripartite structure of biblical passages, images, and commentaries. She analyzes the role played by images in the ruminative, non-linear reading of the Pfinzing Bible, with particular attention to the woodcuts of Virgil Solis and their hand-coloring in the circle of Georg Mack the Elder, whose liberal use of gold enables a sensuous apprehension of the process of illumination through the Holy Spirit. Merel Groentjes assays the historical structure of Maarten van Heemskerck's extensive print series, the *Clades Judaeae Gentis* (*Disasters of the Jewish People*) of 1569, engraved and published by Philips Galle. Many of the biblical episodes selected by Heemskerck were rarely if ever illustrated, and more familiar scenes are often depicted in a new way, leading Groentjes to inquire into his *modus operandi*. As she points out, even his approach to typology is unconventional: analogies are posited between types and antitypes situated entirely within the Old Testament, and the history of the Jews, as he and his collaborator Hadrianus Junius conceive it, consists in a gradual loss of typological coherence, resulting finally in a disconnect between the later history of the Jews and

the Gospel antitypes – the Nativity and Epiphany – that the Old Testament events apparently fail to portend.

Shelley Perlove surveys Rembrandt's career-long representation of the Second Temple, the sacred setting for important events in Christ's infancy and ministry, and its elaborate architecture, accoutrements, and rites. More than merely archaeological, certain details of his compositions, such as clouds of incense smoke in several works and the treasure box (*corban*) in his etching of the *Presentation in the Temple*, parallel textual commentaries of Christian scholars, including those in the *Statenbijbel*, in interpreting Hebrew history, rites, and Scripture – especially the prophecies of Haggai and Malachi – as foretelling the advent of Jesus as Messiah, the 'glory of the latter Temple'. Rembrandt thus visualizes not only New Testament narratives, but Christological readings of Hebrew prophecy and history. James Clifton seeks to clarify such visual hermeneutics by proposing a partial taxonomy of modes of depiction in scriptural illustration, using as his examples images of the Beatitudes, which were represented in remarkably different ways around the turn of the seventeenth century in the Netherlands. He identifies five modes (narrative, exemplificatory, figurative, hieroglyphic, and verbal), but recognizes the possibility of additional ones, as well as hybrids of these, all of which function as 'modes of expounding on sacred Scripture', inevitably overlapping with, but not aligning with the traditional four senses of Scripture (literal, allegorical, tropological, and anagogical) and thus functioning independently as instruments of (visual) exegesis. His focus is on the structural, on how the various parts of these images (and, most often, image-text combinations) function together, as well as on how the votary may activate the parts in a dynamic, ruminative, non-linear reading of them. His ultimate example, that of the so-called text paintings in some Reformed churches, leads to a consideration of the (re)presentation of Scripture as image and, consequently, the importance of frames and framing in the production of meaning, a subject examined incisively in the following essay by Ralph Dekoninck and Agnès Guiderdoni. With examples of biblical illustration and religious emblematics ranging from the last decade of the sixteenth century to the first decade of the eighteenth, the authors analyze and categorize the various forms of structural and functional interplay between central images and their framing devices, between *ergon* and *parergon*, and the ways in which this 'combinatory art' can operate as a *machina spiritualis*, producing simultaneously meaning and spiritual experience. These 'games of framing and montage' offer an exegesis both of their biblical content and – through the meta-discourse of the frame – of them-

selves, thus participating in discourses of the word (especially Scripture) as image and image as text.

The next six essays explore some of the ways in which visual images transmit authority or respond to the authoritative status of the scriptural subjects they represent. Birgit Ulrike Münch examines Albrecht Dürer's panel of *The Martyrdom of the Ten Thousand* (1508), painted for Frederick the Wise of Saxony, which represents the torture and execution of soldiers who had converted to Christianity while fighting for the Romans in Asia Minor, but also includes a double portrait of Dürer and his friend Conrad Celtes. The legend was introduced in the twelfth century in support of the crusades, which would have resonated with Frederick as well, but it had no clear textual or visual tradition at the turn of the sixteenth century, allowing the artist an unusual freedom in his interpretation. Münch elucidates Dürer's adaptations from North Italian painting, as well as his allusions to Dante, while placing the painting within the context of Frederick's famous collection of relics and Wittenberg humanism. Arthur diFuria situates Maarten van Heemskerck's *Heliodorus Driven from the Temple* of 1549 within the shifting religious and political circumstances of the Low Countries at mid-century. The print's ambivalent relation to multiple sources of authority responds to these unsettled conditions: it evidently derives from Raphael's *Expulsion of Heliodorus*, but solely acknowledges the authorship of Heemskerck; it portrays a subject considered scriptural by Roman Catholics and apocryphal by Lutherans; on one account, it celebrates papal and episcopal authority, but on another, questions the probity of the Church, calling for its purification. The accommodationist stance of Heemskerck (and his collaborator Dirck Volkertszoon Coornhert) toward these competing claims testifies to their complex and interrogative reading of *translatio* as a category of imitation deriving from the political concept of *translatio imperii*.

Wolfgang Neuber peruses two sorts of familial book – the one textual, the other pictorial – that would have held pride of place, along with the family Bible, within the German aristocratic household the *Familie Beck*, functioning as a warrant of their social and cultural authority. His case study centers on the *Family Book* of Hieronymus Beck von Leopoldsdorf, begun by the owner's grandfather Konrad and father Markus, and significantly expanded by Hieronymus, whose additions were designed to operate within an imperial system of appraisal susceptible to what Neuber calls the 'exegesis of rank'. The largely textual *Family Book* was supplanted sometime between 1570 and 1580 by a fully pictorial *Portrait Book* that signals a crucial shift from verbal to visual signifiers of familial and personal

prestige. A politically charged representation of a biblical narrative is the subject of Dagmar Eichberger's essay, in this instance an angel of God persuading a reluctant Gideon to free the Israelites from their enemies, which was staged as one of the five multi-media tableaux vivants – organized and subsequently described and depicted in a manuscript by Lucas de Heere – that punctuated the festive entry of Francis, Duke of Anjou and newly appointed sovereign of the United Provinces, into the Calvinist city of Ghent on 20 August 1582. It was common practice to evoke Old Testament heroes in modern political contexts in the Netherlands, including entries and other forms of representation, but Gideon was an unusual choice. Eichberger considers previous depictions of him, including Maarten van Heemskerck's series of six prints from 1561, on which De Heere drew in staging the tableau, and a series of eight tapestries commissioned by Duke Philip the Good, celebrating his newly founded Order of the Golden Fleece, and argues that De Heere employed the specific episode of the dialogue between Gideon and the angel to persuade the ruler to lead the Calvinist community against the Spanish and restore the values of the Burgundian dukes.

Larry Silver addresses the vexed question of Pieter Bruegel the Elder's putative response to contemporary events – namely, the oppressive Spanish regency in the Netherlands – in his late works of 1562–1567. While acknowledging such a response, discreetly achieved by the artist, with 'plausible deniability' in the face of possible punishment, Silver calls attention to Bruegel's consistent expression of religious as well as pacifist sensibilities, in which political concerns over tyranny and violence, for example, are subsumed into a belief in an era of grace marked by the advent of Christ as Prince of Peace, and holy figures are offered as exemplars of piety and humility. Bruegel's pictorial strategies, such as the staging of Christological narratives so that the viewers are challenged to discover the main subject – and thus the spiritual content – of the works, engage them in a process of discovery, interpretation, and insight. Jürgen Müller delves into the semantic ambivalence and subversive argument to be found in two late paintings by Pieter Bruegel, *The Peasant and the Birdnester* and the *Fall of the Blind Leading the Blind*, both dated 1568. Whereas the former contains an inverted allusion to Sebastian Brant's chapter on *Eygenrichtikeit* ('self-assertive pertinacity') in the *Ship of Fools*, the latter covertly endorses Sebastian Franck's account of heresy as the true fruit of institutional religion, in the *Paradoxon* and the *Geschycht-bibel*. Müller maintains that Bruegel's readings of Scripture are implicitly heterodox: the *Birdnester* ironizes the biblical parable of the wide and

narrow paths, and the *Blind Leading the Blind* utilizes the fall of the blind in *Matthew* 15:14, *Luke* 6:39–41, and *Romans* 2:19, to cast doubt on the very notion of confessional legitimacy.

The subsequent three essays focus on exegetical emblems. Nathalie de Brézé explores the narrative, figurative, and exegetical function of putti, angels, and related celestial beings – so often overlooked – in the paintings, prints, and emblems of the *pictor doctus* Otto Vaenius. She demonstrates that his understanding of angels, which she calls ‘the vectors of the Scriptures’, though ultimately derived from the scriptural source material, was filtered through patristic and medieval commentary. Angels bearing biblical inscriptions in several of the paintings in Vaenius’s cycle of *The Triumph of the Church* play a crucial role in what can be described as an ‘allegory of exegesis’. Agnès Guiderdoni sheds light on the extensive fresco cycle painted in the Visitandine church of Sainte-Marie-d’En-Haut, Grenoble, to commemorate the canonization of Francis de Sales in 1666 and to enhance the attendant festivities. This pictorial complex, designed by the Jesuit emblemist Claude-François Ménéstrier, comprises various kinds of symbolic image: *camayeux de cirage* (monochromes resembling polished waxworks), *imprese* (devices), *vases* (vessels), *images iconologiques* (iconological figures in the form of female personifications), and twelve medallions chronicling the life of the Virgin, each episode of which encodes an allegorical reference to the life of Francis de Sales as co-founder of the Visitandine Institute. These elements, as a whole and in their parts, were construed by Ménéstrier as exegetical in form and function, their ultimate source being the Bible and its many emblems and enigmata. Trudélien van ’t Hof further extends our consideration from Scripture per se to the history of religion – its ‘progressive decline and corruption [...] and its recent reformation’ – as conceived and depicted emblematically by Romeyn de Hooghe around 1700 in his *Hieroglyphica*, which foregrounds images and relegates explanatory texts to a secondary role. De Hooghe argued that hieroglyphs, or ‘sacred engravings’, could best convey essential meaning to the audience. Focusing her attention on de Hooghe’s treatment of the Lutheran Reformation, van ’t Hof analyzes his ‘interpictoriality’, that is, his reference to existing imagery and his transformation of it through ‘replacing’, ‘adding’, and ‘composing’ toward the generation of new meaning.

The final two essays clarify the relation between two exegetical functions – prefiguration and transfiguration – closely associated with visual typology (the transformation of the type in and through the anti-type) and its desired effect on the exegete (his or her transformation into

the image of Christ, the ultimate exegete). Alexander Linke discerns the interconnections between exegetical typology and concepts of artistic competition and continuity and analyzes the intersection of the two in several projects by Giorgio Vasari that respond to Raphael's famous and definitive *Transfiguration*, a painting born of a storied rivalry between Raphael and Sebastiano del Piombo. The subject of the Transfiguration of Christ, in its extensive theological ramifications, offered the possibility of transcending traditional typological meaning and unifying disparate biblical subjects, operating as a kind of 'typological meta-image', linking past and present within both the history of the divine covenant and the history of art. Barbara Haeger's close formal and iconographic reading of one of the versions of Rubens's richly allusive *Christ Triumphant over Sin and Death* enables her to assess how the painting structures the viewer's experience, not only to reveal sacred truth, but also to provoke self-reform in conformation to the perfected image of the resurrected Christ. In marking the transformation of the subject from Lutheran invention to Catholic reformulation, she notes the alignment of Rubens's painting with a Jesuit emphasis on the mediating role of Christ, institutions, and images. Rubens conflates the temple veil rent in twain and an unveiling shroud, resurrection and triumphant presence, *historia* and *imago*, thus disclosing the image of the invisible God, figuring the Tridentine sanction of images, and prompting the votary to engage in a transformative process of visual exegesis.

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