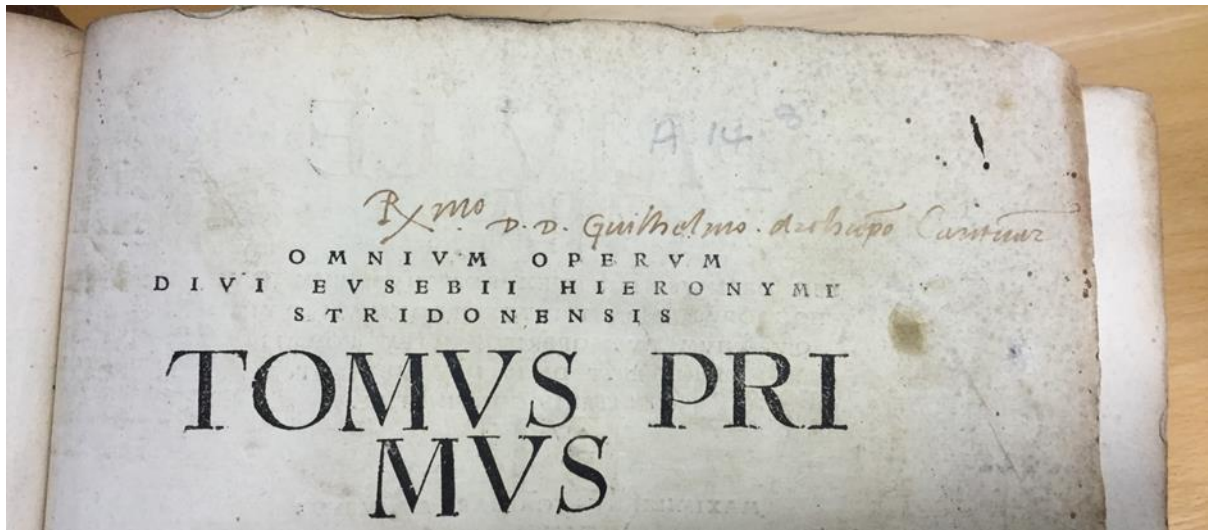


**Jerome's Journey:
William Warham and the Dedication Copy of Erasmus's Edition of Jerome (1516)¹**

In the early sixteenth century, the exchange of gifts was a fundamental part of human relationships, just as it is now. Gifts served a variety of functions: they might confirm friendships, forge common identities, secure patronage and political support or care for the soul.² Certain periods of the year were associated with giving and receiving presents. Under the Tudors, New Year was typically when courtiers competed for royal attention by sending tokens of their affection and the monarch was expected to repay in kind.³ Lower down the social spectrum, scholars and authors used gifts not only to attract the attention of wealthy patrons, but also to provide their works with powerful defenders who could ensure a favourable reception.

Today, the library of New College possesses an important book in this latter category. It is a nine-volume copy of the works of St Jerome, printed in Basel in 1516 by Johann Froben (BT1.74.9–13). This work was edited (in part) by the Dutch scholar, Desiderius Erasmus (d. 1536), and dedicated to the then Archbishop of Canterbury, William Warham (d. 1532).⁴ Erasmus arranged for Warham to receive his own personal copy of the work in the year of its printing and it is these dedication volumes that now reside at New College. This is evident from their title pages where Erasmus has personally addressed the work to Warham in his distinctive hand.



'R[everendiss]mo D[omino] D[omino] Guillelmo Archiep[iscop]o Cantuar[ensi]'.
[To the Very Reverend Father, William Warham, Lord Archbishop of Canterbury].
Erasmus's inscription to the title page of New College Library, Oxford, BT1.74.9

The nine printed volumes are now bound in five physical units as they would have been in 1516, since Erasmus inscribed only those five title pages which would have been at the front of the physical volumes (i.e. vols I, III, V, VI, and VIII). Sadly, however, the original presentation binding was replaced by the college at some point after 1553. It is now bound in reversed leather, a style that became popular in Oxford in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.⁵

¹ My heartfelt thanks to the staff of New College Library for their invaluable assistance and especially to Alexandra Plane for her help with Warham's bequests.

² Felicity Heal, *The Power of Gifts: Gift Exchange in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2014).

³ Jane Lawson (ed.), *The Elizabethan New Year's Gift Exchanges, 1559-1603* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 5–6.

⁴ J. J. Scarisbrick, 'Warham, William (1450?–1532)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Hereafter ODNB. R. J. Schoeck, *Erasmus of Europe*, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1990–1993).

⁵ David Pearson, *Oxford Bookbinding* (Oxford, 2000), p. 47. Each of the Jerome volumes has printed flyleaves from an edition of Giacomo Filippo Foresti's chronicle *Supplementum supplimenti delle croniche* (Venice, 1553), USTC no. 830307. The book could not have been bound earlier than that year. The title pages of several of the volumes show the impress

Though Erasmus offered a number of his writings to English patrons in the period, the physical dedication copies are rare; notes from the author rarer still. Two volumes bestowed on Henry VIII are now at Cambridge and Charlecote Park.⁶ A third may be the two-volume New Testament and notes printed on vellum (now at St John's College, Cambridge) that were presumably intended for John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester.⁷ None of those are inscribed by their author. That New College should have the Jerome edition, however, is no great surprise. Warham had been a fellow of the college from 1475 to 1488 and was a great benefactor of the library. At present, 17 manuscripts and 41 printed books still in the college's possession can be traced to Warham.⁸ These and others arrived in at least four instalments in 1508, 1516, 1523, and 1532, though the exact details of these gifts are sometimes frustratingly vague. Moreover, it may be that other college members in the archbishop's household had a part to play in the Jerome text making its way to New College.

It is not the gift itself but the mechanics of its giving that are the focus of this Note. Thanks to the extensive survival of Erasmus' correspondence, a great deal is known about how New College's Jerome edition came to England and the European network of printers, couriers, booksellers, binders and friends required to present a volume at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Such processes are often hidden from view but they shed light on the early modern book trade and the practice of gift-giving more generally. In turn, an understanding of these processes can help us to understand how the books may have originally been presented and how they arrived at New College.

I

Strictly speaking, Warham received the dedication edition of Jerome in two instalments: the first in June 1516 and the second sometime after November. 1516 was a busy year for Erasmus.⁹ At the start of the year he was in Basel at the press of Johann Froben, helping to complete the printing of another of his scholarly endeavours: the Greek New Testament with a new Latin translation and notes. That work was complete by March, at which point Froben and his team moved on to Jerome's writings. Erasmus had edited the saint's extant letters for the edition and these filled the first four volumes of the projected nine. The printing of these first was finished in May, at which point Erasmus left Basel for the Low Countries, taking with him a copy of the opening tomes to pass on to Warham.¹⁰

Erasmus had intended to take the quicker road through Lorraine, but had rerouted along the Rhine after encountering bands of soldiers in the mountains of the Vosges.¹¹ He arrived in Antwerp on 30 May and arranged 'to send someone to England to deliver the volumes of Jerome to the archbishop of Canterbury'.¹² Pieter Meghen, Erasmus' trusted servant and a talented scribe

of a chain clip on the lower portion of the front cover, though the present binding was chained in the top portion. The spines have been re-backed in later centuries.

⁶ Cambridge University Library, MS Add. 6858, Plutarch. Charlecote Park, Desiderius Erasmus, *Institutio principis Christiani* and others (Basel, 1516). See Cecil H. Clough, 'A presentation volume for Henry VIII: The Charlecote Park copy of Erasmus's *Institutio Principis Christiani*?' *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 44 (1981), pp. 199–202.

⁷ St John's College, Cambridge, T.7.7-8, *Nouum Testamentum* and *Annotationes in Nouum Testamentum* (Basel, 1527). Fisher may have passed them onto his newly founded Cambridge college. They were at St John's by 1544.

⁸ R. W. Hunt, 'The Medieval Library', in John Buxton and Penry Williams (eds), *New College Oxford, 1379–1979* (Oxford, 1979), p. 330.

⁹ Schoeck, *Erasmus*, pp. 165–93.

¹⁰ Epp. 407-8, *Collected Works of Erasmus*, 89 vols (Toronto, 1974–), III, pp. 285–87. Hereafter *CWE*.

¹¹ Ep. 412, *CWE* III, pp. 290–1.

¹² Ep. 410, *CWE* III, p. 289.

in his own right, left for England with the volumes in June.¹³ He caught up with Warham at Otford in Kent and duly presented the opening four at the end of the month.¹⁴

Erasmus had hoped that Warham's remaining volumes would be forwarded to him in Antwerp not long afterwards along with seven other complete sets.¹⁵ However, the troops that had impeded his progress north in May had subsequently cut off Froben's supply of paper and the remaining volumes were not finished until September.¹⁶ Wishing to make up for this delay, Froben sent the Jerome editions straight to the Frankfurt book fair for sale. Erasmus, lacking the means to transport such a large shipment of books had to arrange for their delivery through the Cologne bookseller, Franz Birckmann, whose business had outlets in London and Antwerp.¹⁷ In the meantime, Erasmus briefly visited England himself, hoping to see his patrons and distribute copies of other works. By November he was still arranging for several Jerome works to be bound in Antwerp and he demanded their swift dispatch 'for the addition of notes', presumably the same notes that Erasmus added to the title pages of the New College edition.¹⁸ Erasmus had left the city by that point to visit the royal court in Brussels and entrusted the binding of the books to his friend Pieter Gillis. It may not have been until March 1517 that Warham received all nine volumes of the Jerome edition, for only in that month does a letter from the archbishop to the scholar survive.

New College's Jerome thus tell us a great deal about the scale of operation required to print, bind and present a book to a patron in the early sixteenth century. The passage of the volumes from Basel to England was twice disrupted by war. Books were entrusted not only to scholars or printers, but to servants, messengers, booksellers and binders. Letters passed north and south to Basel, England and Antwerp. Friends were asked to keep the wheels in motion. Throughout this process a great deal of trust was required. Printers and booksellers placed large amounts of capital on the line to produce and distribute the volumes. Authors entrusted them to messengers and couriers. In return for their gifts, patrons were expected to reward their scholars. Warham, in fact, spent several months trying to arrange for an annuity to be advanced to Erasmus abroad. This necessitated creating another network of friends and intermediaries. The archbishop's secretary and another New College *alumnus*, Thomas Bedyll, was sent to London with the lawyer and counsellor, Thomas More, to arrange matters with a Genoese merchant there, Raffaele Maruffo, and Gillis once again acted as an intermediary for Erasmus in Antwerp.¹⁹

II

Once a book is rebound, it is very unusual to have an idea of its previous incarnation. However, the journey of BT1.74.9-13 also hints as to where the text was originally bound: Antwerp. The city was one of the capitals of book production in Europe in the period, rivalling Venice and Paris.²⁰ Erasmus knew several prominent figures in the trade there, such as Birckmann, and could rely on his friend, Gillis, to handle business in his absence.²¹ It may not be a coincidence that, when Froben printed a second edition of Jerome's works (1524-7), Erasmus had the books bound at Antwerp

¹³ J. B. Trapp, 'Pieter Meghen, 1466-1540', *Contemporaries of Erasmus: A Biographical Register of the Renaissance and Reformation*, 3 vols (Toronto, 1985-7), II, pp. 420-2.

¹⁴ Ep. 425, *CWE* III, p. 316.

¹⁵ Ep. 439, *CWE* III, p. 336.

¹⁶ Ep. 419, *CWE* III, p. 301.

¹⁷ Epp. 469, 475, 476, *CWE* IV, pp. 81, 94, 95.

¹⁸ Epp. 477, 491, *CWE* IV, p. 96.

¹⁹ Ep. 424, *CWE* III, p. 314.

²⁰ Werner Waterschoot, 'Antwerp: Books, Publishing and Cultural Production before 1585', in Patrick O'Brien (ed.), *Urban Achievement in Early Modern Europe: Golden Ages in Antwerp, Amsterdam and London* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 233-48.

²¹ Several of Erasmus' works were printed in Antwerp by the likes of Dirk Martens, Willem Vorsterman, Michiel Hillen de Hoochstraten and Jan Thibault in the period. See, Hilmar Pabel, 'Erasmus, Willem Vorsterman and the Printing of St Jerome's Letters', *Quaerendo* 37 (2007), pp. 269-272.

before sending them to Warham. This later edition, the scholar boasted, was not only printed on 'better paper and with more elegant type' but was now 'beautifully bound' and 'decorated in gold'.²² The whereabouts of this second Jerome gift are unknown and Erasmus himself was uncertain as to whether they had been delivered. It would have been a prized object in England since it was only at the end of the 1510s that English humanists began to impress their patrons with such gilt-bindings.²³ The country's bookbinders experimented with the technique in the following decade but English collectors usually relied on foreign centres for this finer craft.²⁴

The arrival of a second full edition of Jerome's works from Erasmus around 1527 may also have provided the stimulus for giving away the earlier, less elaborate set. Nevertheless, the exact date of arrival for BT1.74.9-13 at New College is hard to pin down. Warham's 1508 gift of theological manuscripts is evidently too early. The unknown quantity of books he provided in 1516 can presumably be discounted too since the earliest Warham could have received the final Jerome volumes was at the end of the year. In 1523 the college wrote a letter of thanks to the archbishop for a gift of the 'choicest authors in many disciplines' which may well have included Jerome's writings.²⁵ The last known bequest of books came after Warham's death in 1532, with the archbishop's will stipulating that New College receive all of his 'civil and canon law books... to be chained in the library', presumably the new library which had been erected in Warham's time in Oxford, along with some 'prickesong bookes for the use of the warden, fellows and scholars of the same college'.²⁶ Whilst this makes no mention of anything like Erasmus' gift, the college's Benefactors' Book suggests that this later date might be plausible. It wrongly lists a Jerome edition 'with the annotations of Erasmus' under the date of 1508, but it groups that entry with a series of legal texts like those described in the will. The college document known as the *Liber Albus* is no more enlightening. A sixteenth-century annotator has added a number of names to an earlier record of donations but lists neither the items nor the date on which they were given, simply stating that the archbishop had 'given the college certain books [*quosdam libros*]'.²⁷

If the Jerome volumes had not arrived before Warham's death, it may have been Thomas Bedyll (d. 1537) who passed them to New College.²⁸ Bedyll, like Warham, had been a scholar at both Winchester and New College. He was elected a fellow of the latter in 1502 and proceeded with his canon law studies. In 1508 he became Warham's secretary and moved into the archbishop's household. Bedyll and Erasmus likely met shortly thereafter and began to write to each other.²⁹ It was Bedyll who was entrusted with distributing the archbishop's library on Warham's death.³⁰ So whilst all of the archbishop's theological material should have gone to All Souls, Bedyll may have redirected the Jerome in the direction of his *alma mater*, perhaps aware of its significance or with unwritten instruction from Warham.

Regardless of when the nine tomes arrived at the college, they did not lie unread. There are a number of annotations in several different contemporary hands and other signs of use, such as folded corners. That the book was rebound may similarly indicate a high usage. The latter years of Warham and Erasmus' friendship had played out against the backdrop of the growing reformation storm in Europe. On his deathbed, Erasmus admitted that few friends now wrote to

²² Ep 1465, *CWE* X pp. 301–2. Epp. 1828, 1831, *CWE* XIII, pp. 149–50, 153.

²³ Giles Barber, 'The Advent of Gold Tooling in English Bookbinding and the intermediary role of Thomas Linacre', in David Pearson (ed.), *For the Love of the Binding: Studies in Bookbinding History Presented to Mirjam Foot* (London, 2000), pp. 53–66.

²⁴ Mirjam Foot and Howard Nixon, *The History of the decorated bookbinding in England* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 25–6. New College has several gilt-bindings by the King Henry Binder thanks to another archbishop, Reginald Pole.

²⁵ Hunt, 'The Medieval Library', p. 330.

²⁶ The National Archives, PROB 11:24, Thower (1531–1533), f. 131v.

²⁷ New College, *Liber Albus*, f. 10v.

²⁸ P. R. Carter, 'Bedyll, Thomas (c. 1486–1537)', *ODNB*.

²⁹ Ep. 387, *CWE* III, p. 229.

³⁰ See n. 26.

him from England, since 'either death has stolen them all or fear restrained them'.³¹ The tensions of the period now spilled out onto the pages of the Jerome at New College. One conservative reader, employing a distinctive symbol of a cross with dots, marked passages of Jerome in support of traditional doctrines, such as the devotion of relics.³² Barely twenty pages later, however, a more reformed reader was indignantly writing in the margin that 'images are against the religion of Christ'.³³ If, then, the gift of books had previously stood for an international network of scholars, printers and patrons, in the hands of later New College readers it became a symbol of precisely the opposite: a Europe riven with religious debate and division.

Tim Wade
Research Student
New College, Oxford

³¹ Ep. 3104, *Opus Epistolarum Erasmi*, ed. P.S. Allen, Mary Allen, and H. W. Garrod, 12 vols (Oxford, 1906–58), XI.

³² New College Library, Oxford, BT1.74.9–13, *Omnium Operum Divi Eusebii Hieronymi Stridonensis*, II, f. 54r.

³³ *ibid.*, II, f. 73v. They write: '*imagines contra religionem christi?*'