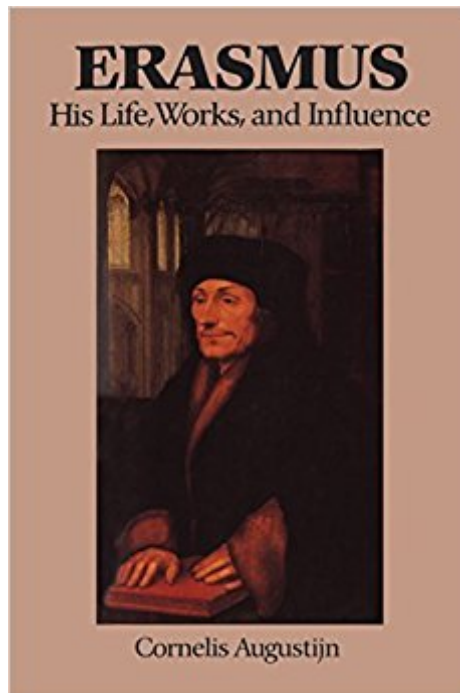




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Erasmus: His Life, Works, And Influence (Erasmus Studies)



Synopsis

Erasmus: His Life, Works, and Influence is a comprehensive introduction to Erasmus's life, works, and thoughts. It integrates the best scholarship of the past twenty years and will appeal to undergraduates in all areas of cultural history as well as Erasmus specialists.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Text: English (translation) Original Language: Dutch --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Cornelis Augustijn is Professor of Church history, Free University of Amsterdam.J.C. Grayson lives in Liverpool. He has translated numerous scholarly books from various languages.

do not care for it! I want to return it.

Cornelis Augustijn has done us a great service. This slender volume explicates the essential story of Erasmus as clearly as any English major could hope and as briefly as any minimalist could pray. It allows Erasmus to speak for himself and provides essential context for many of the most important quotations. It is sober and thoughtful in presenting external evidence of Erasmus's internal and external conflicts: (1) his commitment to humanism and philology, (2) his attachment to the Roman Catholic Church, as he conceived it in its origins, (3) his

sympathy with Luther's insistence on "Only Scripture" and (4) his personal sufferings throughout his life during these vicious times. It seems that only the company of friends and fellow humanists gave him comfort. His most notable achievement among many was his publication of a Greek text of the New Testament, which has become the basis for many translations of the New Testament in English, rather unfortunately as it turns out. Centuries later, we have much better critical editions of the New Testament in Greek, but this in no way diminishes Erasmus's singular achievement. The same cannot be said of translators who continue to use texts dating from the eleventh century which themselves are copies of texts. Erasmus sought to use philology, the new humanist tool used to understand the Classics, to understand Scripture. He understood biblical scholarship as linguistic scholarship. New understandings of scripture, he believed, would overthrow the deductive syllogism and the congeries of misconceptions founded upon ideological sand. "Theology, however had degenerated; its practitioners spoke a secret language about unreal questions...He wanted to reunite Christianity with culture, so that a cultured person could also be a Christian with a good conscience and not live in two distinct worlds." (p. 104) This is a tall order during the unsettled time of the Reformation and the decades which prepared this ideological earthquake. On the one hand, Luther, unreasoning, certain, uncompromising, came to regard Erasmus as an enemy because Erasmus would not totally agree with Luther's positions. On the other hand, Roman Catholic scholars associated with significant universities set intellectual traps for him and attempted to discredit his works because he refused to condemn Luther's positions unequivocally. Michael Servetus, whose writings extend and amplify some of Erasmus's writings, became so dangerous to established authorities that Catholics conspired with Calvinists to arrange for the capture and horrible execution of Servetus. Sir Thomas More, a great friend of Erasmus, was beheaded the year before Erasmus expired. Is it any wonder, then, Erasmus writes to Richard Pace (quoted by Augustijn on p. 125) as follows.

"Even had all he wrote been religious, mine was never the spirit to risk my life for the truth. Not everyone has the strength needed for martyrdom. I fear that, if strife were to break out, I shall behave like Peter. When popes and emperors make the right decisions, I follow, which is godly; if they decide wrongly I tolerate them, which is safe. I believe that even for men of good will this is legitimate, if there is no hope of better things." Mr. Graziano is the author of *From the Cross to the Church: The Emergence of the Church from the Chaos of the Crucifixion*.

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