C.S.M. Rademaker, E. Kearns, A. Godin, and Ch. Béné (eds.)


This volume in the Amsterdam edition (*ASD*) of Erasmus’ *Opera Omnia* is the seventh volume in the fifth *ordo*, which is the *ordo* consisting of “religious” works, or, more specifically, the works *pertinentium ad pietatem*. This particular volume contains seven comparatively neglected works from Erasmus’ corpus, but, as the editors in their introductions make clear, there is much value in these works for students of Erasmus seeking a thorough understanding of his religious worldview. It is, simply insofar as it makes these works available to his students in high-quality edited versions, a welcome edition. More than that, the editors have provided us with detailed historical and textual introductions to the text, as we have become accustomed to with the series, setting each work both in the context of Erasmus’ life and in the broader milieu of early sixteenth-century Christianity. The editors also offer an overview of the works’ various printed editions used for the compilation of the critical editions themselves, and often the subsequent printing and translation histories of the works, usually in order to demonstrate the importance these works had in the sixteenth century, even if they have not garnered that same amount of attention today. Moreover, in addition to the actual *apparatus criticus*, each editor provides brief analyses of formal and textual issues.

The first two works in the volume—*De immensa Dei misericordia concio*, and *Virginis et martyris comparatio*—were published in the same year (1524) as the *De libero arbitrio diatribe* against Luther, and so at first blush we might be forgiven for not paying them due attention. But as C.S.M. Rademaker points out, both works, and especially the *Sermon on the Infinite Mercy of God*, were reprinted and translated several times in the first half of the sixteenth century (in Italy alone it was translated three times into the vernacular and published by three different houses). The *De immensa Dei* is a sermon composed by Eras-
mus on the infinite mercy of God, printed first, it seems, by Froben in Basel in September of 1524. Christoph von Utenheim had asked Erasmus to write the sermon, and while not aimed explicitly at Luther (as was the Diatribe), Rademaker points out that Von Utenheim asks Erasmus to revise out a direct condemnation of the Lutherans in the treatise—and so presumably in an earlier instantiation it stood alongside the Diatribe in a more obvious thematic way. In any case, what we have now is a carefully revised treatise on a contemporary controversial topic. Dwelling on the infinite mercy of God, Erasmus implicitly rejects the staunch form of predestinarian theology of the Lutherans. Erasmus’ sola Dei misericordia is here—again, not explicitly, although the timing of the publication makes it quite clearly deliberate—pitted against Luther’s sola fide. Rademaker’s introduction contains a nice overview of the themes involved and their historical and theological significance, complete with an analysis of the structure of the sermon, comments on the text itself and the editions it is collated with, and the subsequent history and reception of the text (no doubt Luther did not approve, but three passages, according to Rademaker, also made their way onto the Index expurgatorius of Rome).

The Virginis et Martyris Comparatio, also edited and introduced by Rademaker, consists of a revision and expansion of a letter Erasmus wrote (ep. 1346), probably in 1523, to the nuns of Cologne who looked after the relics of the Maccabean martyrs extolling the virtues of virginity and martyrdom. The expanded treatise was printed by Froben in 1524 along with the Sermon on the Infinite Mercy of God, and also alongside editions of Latin translations of the works of Josephus (4 Maccabees, which digresses on the virtues of martyrdom using the Maccabean martyrs as prime examples, was thought to have been written by Josephus at this time). The edition of the work printed here aims to demonstrate the expansion of the text from its first instantiation as a letter to the Cologne nuns to the definitive version of the treatise printed in 1524 through the use of notes in the critical apparatus—a valuable exercise tracing Erasmus’ thought and technique. As with the Sermon on the Infinite Mercy of God, the apparatus contains abundant and helpful references to the sources (classical, biblical, Patristic) which Erasmus employs in the work.

The Concio de Puerō Iesu, edited by E. Kearns, was ostensibly written for use at St. Paul’s school, founded by John Colet in 1510, while Erasmus was in London. The school itself was founded with the purpose of educating children in Christian humanist learning. The boys were to read authors who have “eloquence joyned with widsome,” per Colet (159). For Erasmus, though, the child Jesus himself is identified with Wisdom which, as Kearns points out, links this work to the Moria. The ideas here, as in the Moria, are overtly Pauline, with significant resonance with the early chapters of 1 Corinthians: the text begins