**Renaissance and Reformation**
**Renaissance et Réforme**

# Erasmus, Desiderius. Annotations on Galatians and Ephesians. Trans., ed., and annot. Riemer A. Faber

C. Mark Steinacher

Volume 43, numéro 3, été 2020

URI : https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1075312ar
DOI : https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v43i3.35330

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Éditeur(s)

Iter Press

ISSN

0034-429X (imprimé)
2293-7374 (numérique)

Découvrir la revue

Citer ce compte rendu

Steinacher, C. (2020). Compte rendu de [Erasmus, Desiderius. Annotations on Galatians and Ephesians. Trans., ed., and annot. Riemer A. Faber]. *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*, *43*(3), 302–305. https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v43i3.35330

Di Teodoro's introduction perfectly succeeds in emphasizing this text's crucial role in the birth of historic conservation and preservation, not only as a scholarly discipline but first and foremost as a civic duty. The legacy of Raffaello and Castiglione, as Di Teodoro persuasively argues, still echoes in Article 6 of the Italian Constitution. Slightly less successful, because of its lack of *conspectus fontium,* is Di Teodoro's attempt at detecting the humanistic sources of the letter's approach to Roman antiquity, or the philosophical premises of some of its central arguments. Take, for instance, the letter's juxtaposition of architects and painters. Grounded on historical and technical observations, this comparison is also based on a clearly stated view concerning the reliability of instrumental measurements as opposed to sensory perceptions (51–52) whose origins might be of interest not only to literary scholars but also to historians of science. These lines of inquiries, however, might have strayed from the clearly stated scope of this publication.

Di Teodoro's book, to conclude, constitutes a useful and accessible point of entry into the letter of Raffaello and Castiglione, as well as a welcome complement to this scholar's numerous and more technical publications on this age-defining text.

MATTEO SORANZO
McGill University
https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v43i3.35329

**Erasmus, Desiderius.**
***Annotations on Galatians and Ephesians.*** **Trans., ed., and annot. Riemer A. Faber.**
Collected Works of Erasmus 58. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017. Pp. xx, 256 + 2 ill. ISBN 978-1-4426-4193-8 (hardcover) $150.

The title alerts readers that the volume comprises Erasmus's annotations on two Pauline epistles, rather than his commentary. The key difference between the two genres was not Erasmus's decision not to treat every single verse; often commentaries do not cover texts exhaustively. Rather, Erasmus's interest lay with issues surrounding the transmission and preservation of the Greek New Testament text more than with points of interpretation.

The *Annotations* were born in controversy, yet the modern editor defends Erasmus's goal to justify his textual and philological decisions (xv). Comments are neither polemical nor devotional, seeking instead to establish the history of exegesis of the two books throughout church history. Erasmus arguably favoured Patristic scholarly exegesis over more recent work, although he displayed a clear grasp of figures from multiple eras. Erasmus's text also displays his familiarity with non-Christian ancient writers.

These notes began as simple marginalia in Erasmus's personal copy of the Vulgate. First published in his 1516 New Testament, by 1519 the *Annotations* were published separately. The final edition (1535) was bolstered by two more decades of research and reflection, and is the basis for this translation. While aiming for readable English, the translation retains grammatically stilted passages, reflecting syntactical infelicities in Erasmus's own emendations (xvii).

The introduction paints the historical context. Galatians and Ephesians, along with Romans, were central to early evangelical reform. Erasmus used these letters while interacting with Martin Luther, as well as when he adumbrated his own religious reform regime. Erasmus's 1503 *Handbook of the Christian Soldier* drew heavily from "the whole armour of God" imagery in Ephesians 6.

Textual criticism is central. An editor's footnote summarizes Erasmus's travels to expose himself to the greatest number of manuscripts (3). Despite the Vulgate's official status, the Greek text retained primacy, demonstrated by Erasmus's occasional bold move to emend the Vulgate (10), perhaps inspired by Paul's own departure from both the Hebrew and Septuagint (82). For Erasmus, the Septuagint not only determined the superior reading of any contested passage, but also clarified idioms, style, and syntax. He cautioned that readers ignored at their own peril the use of "figures of speech and patterned word order" (6).

Although text-critical comments are scattered throughout the text, a particular cluster appeared in annotations on Galatians 5. While not elaborating the processes by which textual errors crept in, Erasmus distinguished between scribes' apparently innocent technical flaws and deliberate emendations (21, 97, 121, 123, 141, 219). He attributed textual variants of Ephesians 2:20 and Galatians 4:24 "to the deeds of a distorter" (77, 149). Regarding differences at Ephesians 2:1, Erasmus mused that the corruption may have arisen from copyists' confusion of comments by Aquinas or Jerome with the actual text (133–34).

Regarding the *Quadriga*, the fourfold scheme of interpretation privileging three non-literal levels of meaning, Erasmus betrayed concern with the time-honoured method. Regarding Galatians 1:20, he suggested Jerome's "interpretation at a higher level […] seems […] somewhat too forced" (18). He believed Jews stopped at literal interpretation but affirmed the text's historical facts demanded consideration to reach the optimal (thus essential) spiritual application of the text (9, 76, 79, 82).

Prominent early church scholars (e.g., Ambrose, Augustine, and Tertullian) earned Erasmus's displeasure for following textual variants dissonant with the dominant Greek tradition (4). Augustine was also rebuked for being too harsh regarding Peter's conflict with Paul (31, 35). Numerous figures were ridiculed for advancing interpretations that Erasmus found unconvincing or erroneous (18, 19, 24, 45, 66, 69). Early contemporary scholars, such as Lorenzo Valla, also suffered the compiler's critique (ix, 13, 17). Erasmus challenged his contemporary Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples, deeming his interpretations contrary to "the rationale of the Greek language" (220; see also 174). Critiques also flowed in real time. The 1522, 1527, and 1535 editions memorialized Erasmus's sense of personal pique by including new material reflecting his controversies with conservative critics (xiv).

The closest Erasmus came to engaging Protestants directly was his defence of Petrine primacy. This was occasioned by Paul's recitation in Galatians 2:11 of his controversy with Peter. The "false claims of heretics" likely refers to Protestant apologists' use of this passage to renounce papal supremacy (32). If abuse of the scripture by heretics justified ignoring passages, Erasmus claimed, a great deal of the Bible would be omitted. Even Augustine and Ambrose erred, being unnecessarily harsh in accusing Peter of "superstitious falsehood […] untrustworthiness, quarrelling, and denial" (31). Remarkable is Erasmus's subtle admission, by defending Origen and Cyprian despite their flawed theology, that some Protestant teaching may be true because books may contain an admixture of truth and error (35–36).

Erasmus anticipated the Council of Trent's judgments. An extended discussion of matrimony as sacrament, occasioned by Ephesians 5:32, displays Erasmus's acceptance of the 1439 Council of Florence as reiteration of what was "likely […] tradition [… passed] down to us continually from the apostles or at least the holy fathers" (209–10). On the whole, Erasmus's views were consonant with and pointed to the outcomes of Trent's traditionalist agenda.

Erasmus's human side pokes through in this volume, as when discussing the propriety of joking. He distinguishes between jokes that are "learned and seasoned with wit" and those that reflect "tasteless festivity" or "arouse silly laughter" (193–95).

The modern editor's textual apparatus often highlights articles and books suitable for more detailed discussion of salient topics. This tome is aimed at the specialist and is not particularly useful for pastors.

C. MARK STEINACHER
Tyndale Seminary
https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v43i3.35330

**Erasmus, Desiderius.**
***The Correspondence of Erasmus: Letters 2803 to 2939.* Trans. Clarence H. Miller, with Charles Fantazzi. Annot. James M. Estes.**
Collected Works of Erasmus in English 20. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2020. Pp. xxiv, 364 + 13 ill. ISBN 978-1-4875-0585-1 (hardcover) $225.

Volume 20 of the *Collected Works of Erasmus* (*CWE 20*) translates volume 10, pages 213–395, of P. S. Allen, Helen Allen, and H. W. Garrod's *Erasmi Epistolae* (Oxford 1941). *CWE 20* approaches the completion of the long, painstaking project of making that extraordinary edition available in English; one volume of letters and a cumulative index remain to be published. *CWE 20* includes 166 letters, 68 by Erasmus, some no longer than notes. The volume covers correspondence between May 1533 and May 1534, a dark year for Erasmus but a productive one.

Working from home while his world collapsed around him, Erasmus felt himself dying. He heard rumours he was dead. In June 1533, he had pain in his feet, shins, knees, and hips, and in August took a turn for the worse. By November, with his house infested by fleas, he wrote, "I am old, sickly, worn out." In February 1534, he suffered "unbearable pain" lasting for days. At times pain left him paralyzed. Despite it, he kept up with his correspondence and friendships. He entertained house guests who stayed a few days or a few months. He published the *Purgatio* (his last smack at Luther) and two capstone works: the *Liber de sarcienda ecclesiae concordia*, his appeal for concord of creeds; and