

REVIEWS

Opera Omnia Desiderii Erasmi Roterodami, Ordinis Quinti Tomus Octavus: "Enchiridion," "Exomologesis." Desiderius Erasmus.

Ed. Juliusz Domański, Jean-Pierre Massaut, and André Godin. *Erasmi Opera Omnia V-8*. Leiden: Brill, 2016. viii + 454 pp. \$179.

Of the two works included in this volume, the first, *The Handbook of the Christian Soldier*, became one of Erasmus's most popular writings, a best seller in its day. There were forty editions of the work in his lifetime, seventy editions by the end of the century, and an extraordinary number of translations into various languages, beginning with Czech. It was first published in February 1503 together with three companion pieces in a book entitled *Lucubratiunculae* (little lucubrations). The full title reads: "The handbook of the Christian soldier, replete with most salutary precepts of much efficacy against all the allurements of vice, and a model of true Christianity." The Greek word *enchiridion* means both *dagger* and *handbook*, but it is clear that the military metaphor was uppermost in Erasmus's mind. Erasmus himself was surely a scrappy soldier in the militia of Christ. The two weapons he prescribes for this warfare are prayer and knowledge and he reinforces his exhortations not only with references to the scriptures and the fathers of the church, but also to pagan poets and philosophers, especially Plato. He provides a system of twenty-two rules to be observed in this spiritual combat, of which the fifth rule, the acquisition of piety through the progress from visible to invisible things, is elaborated at great length. He warns Christians not to be absorbed in exterior ceremonies and rituals, but to seek an interior piety. Toward the end of the treatise he states provocatively, "Monachatus non est pietas" (The monastic life is not a state of holiness), but a way of life which may be beneficial or not according to one's physical and mental qualities.

In his excellent introduction Professor Domański, a famed Erasmus scholar, examines the particular connotations of certain key words and metaphors that Erasmus uses to define his notion of spirituality, derived in great part from his reading of Origen at this time. He analyzes his uses of sources, classical, scriptural, and patristic, with great insight and clarity, alluding also to similarities with Pico della Mirandola's *Rules and Weapons of the Spiritual Battle* and with the writings of Marsilio Ficino. Domański chooses as the basis of his critical text the editio princeps of 1503 published by Dirk Martens rather than the Froben edition of 1518, in which Erasmus made certain modifications that Domański considers to be of little significance in content or form. The exquisite learning of the annotations contributes greatly to the understanding of these pious admonitions.

Erasmus first published the *Exomologesis* (the Greek word for confession) in 1524, which drew much criticism from various sources. More of a practical manual than a theological treatise, it is symmetrically divided into two parts, one naming and describing nine advantages of sacramental confession and the other nine disadvantages. The discussion of

the first group tends to be more abstract than concrete, while in the analysis of the disadvantages the language is much more realistic, spiced with shrewd psychological insights into human conduct. The fourth disadvantage, for example, has to do with the practices of bad priests, who instead of acting as physicians of the soul are accomplices and are sometimes guilty of what in canon law is termed solicitation. In the revised version of the work, published in 1530, one-third longer than the previous one, Erasmus dwells at much greater length on the disadvantages. Massaut and Godin, distinguished *érasmistes*, introduce many facets of what they term Erasmus's pastoral humanism present in earlier works, especially in the annotations on his *Novum Testamentum* and his answers to carping critics like Edward Lee and Diego López Zúñiga. Toward the beginning of this second edition, which the French editors use as their basic text, Erasmus admits to being more inclined to acknowledge the divine origin of the sacrament. As with the previous work the text is elucidated with an astounding plenitude of references and cross-references. This splendid enterprise of the Conseil International pour l'édition des œuvres complètes d'Erasmus now numbers fifty volumes. *Quod faustum bonum felixque sit!*

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Der Messias-Dialog: Der hebräische Text von 1539 in deutscher.

Sebastian Münster.

Ed. Alfred Bodenheimer. Trans. Rainer Wenzel. Introduction by Stephen G. Burnett. Basel: Schwabe Verlag, 2017. 250 pp. €48.

Usually remembered as one of the sixteenth century's most important cosmographers, Sebastian Münster was also one of its greatest Hebraists, and the welcome publication of this work will certainly expand our appreciation for this understudied humanist, as well as enrich our understanding of Christian-Jewish polemics in late medieval and Renaissance Europe. The dialogue was published in Hebrew alone, in 1529, and, a decade later, in a Hebrew/Latin diglot edition. This highly readable German translation now provides access to this important text in a modern European language.

Before encountering the primary text, the reader is treated to an exceptional introductory essay on this dialogue, considered both in the abstract and within a larger, late medieval and Renaissance context, by Stephen G. Burnett, an essay that builds upon a seminal article of his (Stephen G. Burnett, "A Dialogue of the Deaf: Hebrew Pedagogy and Anti-Jewish Polemic in Sebastian Münster's *Messiahs of the Christians and the Jews* 1529/39," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 91 [2000]: 168–90). The dialogue itself is just under seventy pages, and touches upon eclectic topics before the protagonists finally debate their competing understandings of the Messiah. The Jew and the Christian—"the Nazarene"—argue, for example, over the degree to which Jews are simply closed-minded or foolish in rejecting Christianity, and discuss topics such as Lilith, Leviathan,