

these, as Lewis contends, was itself calculated and confessionally-tinged. It reflected an intention to define Rome's Jewish people as a distinct community, separate and indeed separable from its Christians. It was, of course, during the sixteenth century that Rome's ghetto was formalised. Rather, as Lewis seeks to argue, the material evidence gathered from supposedly 'Jewish' catacombs – especially material objects such as gold, glass and lamps, along with inscriptions – do not in fact definitively demonstrate that there was a defined and distinct Jewish community in Rome. Instead, Jews lived by what is termed 'voluntary association', practising a 'small group religion', organically integrated into Roman society.

Late antique Rome, then, was not a city defined by corporate religious communities, or necessarily by confrontations between defined blocs of pagans and Christians. It was considerably more fluid than that. What is more, Christians 'located' themselves in various ways in and around Rome, and not solely or even primarily by fixed sacred sites. According to this book, it was not until demographic and economic problems began to create wider problems for Rome from the fifth century, alongside the barbarian invasions, that Church institutions began to shape the city more significantly, in effect filling a vacuum.

As the conceptualisation of Rome's ancient remains was thus created during the early modern period, so it was confirmed and romanticised in the nineteenth century. Lewis illustrates this by drawing attention to a series of rather fanciful paintings from the 1800s depicting scenes of burial and indeed of worship in a clandestine world of early Catholic faith, when it was still persecuted. In various instances, too, nineteenth-century archaeological endeavours were themselves predicated on the ideological categorisations created in the early modern period, not least in the treatment of what have been seen as Jewish catacombs.

The book is written with a conversational tone, perhaps a little too conversational in places, with repeated contractions in the prose. While the references to very contemporary aspects of Rome's catacombs – the visitor experience at particular sites, for example – gives the book a sense of lively immediacy, I also wonder if they could date it quite quickly. I, as a reader, would have preferred a firmer editorial hand. Perhaps also the images could have been a bit larger and, in a couple of instances, a little sharper. Those quibbles aside, this is a wide-ranging and engaging book that engages skilfully with a very considerable body of historiography, methodological reflection and source material. It should encourage us to think again about how Rome's sacred geography took shape, from uncertain beginnings in late antiquity to ideological clarity in the sixteenth century, and then to the more romanticised and historically sanitised visitor experience of our modern world.

DURHAM UNIVERSITY

TOBY OSBORNE

Erasmus on the New Testament. Selections from the Paraphrases, the Annotations, and the writing on biblical interpretation. By Robert D. Sider. Pp. xvi + 331. Toronto–London: University of Toronto Press, 2020. \$47.95. 978 1 4875 2410 4
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The great Dutch humanist Desiderius Erasmus began writing about the New Testament relatively late in his career. Though he had published the notes on

that text made by the Italian Lorenzo Valla in 1505, he would not complete his own edition of the New Testament until 1516, by which point he was almost fifty years of age. But he certainly made up for lost time: twenty of the eighty-six volumes (vols xli–lxx) of the *Collected Works of Erasmus (CWE)* published by the University of Toronto Press are taken up by his New Testament writings. Robert Sider has been responsible for several of the volumes in that collection. Indeed, this book might be regarded as another product of that very substantial and impressive project as Sider seeks to distil that great body of work into a single accessible volume. It is important to note that while many of the texts here do draw on the *CWE*, it does also contain new translations made by Sider for those texts where the relevant volumes have not yet appeared.

The material presented here might, for convenience, be divided into four main categories. The first consists of texts through which Erasmus intended to shape his readers' approach to the New Testament as a whole. Chapter ii contains the full text—the only writing to appear in its entirety—of his *Paraclesis* ('Summons'), a highly influential work in which he passionately advocated the translation of the Bible into the vernacular to ensure that its 'philosophy of Christ' could be disseminated as widely as possible. This work first appeared as a preface to his first edition of the New Testament in 1516, but was subsequently published as a text in its own right in 1522. Chapter iii contains extracts taken from his *Ratio verae theologiae* ('System of true theology') which was a thoroughly revised and much expanded version of an earlier text (his *Methodus*) which had also been a preface to the first New Testament edition; the *Ratio* first appeared in 1519 as a preface to the second edition and it too would subsequently become a free-standing text. While the *Paraclesis* addressed the question of why one should read the New Testament, the *Ratio* set out how one should do so: that is to say, it sets out Erasmus' approach to biblical interpretation. Above all, Erasmus advocated treating the New Testament as literature, and recommended particular attention be devoted to the context in which it was written, the language used and the imagery and other literary and linguistic features of the text.

The second section (chapters iv–vi) contains extracts from Erasmus' *Paraphrases* of the various books of the New Testament, in which he used the opportunity of providing an extended gloss on the biblical texts to put forward different forms of analysis and exposition. While the chapters in this section are divided according to the books of the New Testament (Gospels and Acts; the Pauline Epistles; the Catholic Epistles), the material within each is presented in rather more thematic form. For instance, in the first and main section of chapter iv, extracts from the four Gospels and Acts are interwoven to allow a coherent life of Christ to be narrated. Similarly, in chapter v, extracts from a range of books are drawn together to provide rather more detailed insight into, for example, Erasmus' analysis of Paul's interpretation of the death of Christ (drawing in turn on his paraphrases of Romans iii, Colossians ii and Romans vi), and Erasmus' response to certain features of Paul's ethical thinking (drawing on Romans xii, Romans xiii, 1 Timothy vi and two different editions of Romans ix).

In the third section (a single chapter, but over ninety pages in length), attention turns to the annotations with which Erasmus supplemented his translation of the New Testament. While their main aim was to defend and clarify his translation of

the Greek text, they provided another avenue through which his approach to, and understanding of, the Scriptures could be expounded. Even more than in the previous section, this material is organised thematically, collating some of his principal insights on the Scriptures (covering themes such as the nature of the biblical canon, the authority of Scripture, and its text and language), the use of the Bible in theological debates, ‘Church and society’ and ‘people and places’ (the last of which captures some of his thoughts on individuals including the humanists Guillaume Budé and William Warham, and the family of the Holy Roman emperor, Charles v). In the final section (again a single chapter), the volume draws together a number of letters in which Erasmus reflected on his biblical projects at greater length, as well as a couple of dedicatory letters. This is the only chapter where material is drawn from earlier volumes in the *CWE*.

The volume as a whole begins with an introductory essay which provides a brief overview of Erasmus’ work on the New Testament, as well as some context to each of the main components of his *oeuvre* reflected in this volume. Each chapter, and each main subsection, opens with an introductory section in which Sider provides the context and provides a gloss or rationale for the selection of material which follows. There is sparing use of annotations on the texts themselves: typically, there are two or three footnotes to each page. But the texts are clearly cross-referenced to the *CWE* so the reader who wishes for more by way of explanatory material can turn to that much fuller resource should they wish. The twenty volumes of Erasmus’ New Testament writings in the *CWE* would – for most readers – be overwhelming. This volume gathers together, in little more than 300 pages, extracts which highlight the diversity of that work, and provide an insight into that huge *corpus*. Of course, any other editor might have made a different choice, but Robert Sider has here made a compelling selection which showcases the work of the Dutch scholar with sufficient – but not too much – supporting apparatus. It works very well as a volume in its own right, but if it encourages readers (and one imagines these may be especially university students and a more general audience) to refer directly to volumes within the *Complete Works* as well, it has more than served its purpose.

UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL

KENNETH AUSTIN

Season of conspiracy. Calvin, the French Reformed Churches, and Protestant plotting in the reign of Francis II (1559–60). By Philip Benedict. Pp. xii + 224 incl. 2 ills. Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society Press, 2020. \$37 (paper). 978 1 60618 0853

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Philip Benedict’s *Season of conspiracy* opens like a detective novel. A police detail interrogates Pierre Menard, a Lyonnais cabinetmaker, about his role in the abortive conspiracy to seize control of Lyon during the tumultuous events of 4–5 September 1560. Faced with torture, ‘Menard’ admits his involvement in smuggling weapons and soldiers into the city and hiding them. He confesses that his real name is Gilles Triou, and that he entered Lyon from Geneva. Thus begins Benedict’s painstakingly detailed research connecting the Conspiracy of