

# Erasmus of Rotterdam

Historical Theology

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## DUTCH PHILOSOPHER AND CATHOLIC THEOLOGIAN (1466-1536)

Influential in both the Protestant reformation and the Catholic Counter-Reformation.

Known for his extensive writings.

### I. EARLY LIFE AND EDUCATION

#### A. BORN IN ROTTERDAM IN 1466?

1. His father was a Catholic priest in Gouda
  - a. Gerard the Curate of Gouda
  2. His mother was Margaretha Rogeius (Latinized form of Dutch surname Rutgers)
    - a. Never legally married
    - b. Daughter of a doctor and possibly Gerard's housekeeper
    - c. They had an older son named Peter

#### B. EARLY EDUCATION

1. He was afforded the highest education available to a young man of his day.
  - a. At age 9 he was sent to the best Latin schools in the Netherlands
  2. At a school run by the Brethren of the Common he began to learn Greek
    - a. There he also gained an appreciation for a personal relationship with God.
    - b. Lamented the harsh rules and strict methods

- c. While there both his parents died of the plague and ended his studies there

#### C. ORDINATION

1. Forced by poverty he was consecrated in the Canon regular of St. Augustine
  - a. Ordained on April 25, 1492
  - b. He never actively worked as a priest
2. Was offered a position as secretary to the Bishop of Cambrai
  - a. He was given a temporary dispensation from his religious vows because of poor health
  - b. Pope Leo X later made the dispensation permanent

#### D. UNIVERSITY EDUCATION AND TEACHING

1. Sent by the Bishop to study at the University of Paris
  - a. A center for reforming zeal
  - b. Introduced to Renaissance Humanism
2. Invited to England to teach at Queen's College
  - a. became acquainted with King Henry VII, John Colet, Thomas More and others
3. While teaching at Oxford was impressed by the Bible teaching of John Colet
  - a. this prompted him to pursue mastering the Greek language

4. He preferred a life as an independent scholar
  - a. This would cause him much heartache later in life
  - b. He finally settled in Basel Switzerland where he could express himself freely

## II. ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND INFLUENCES

### A. A PROLIFIC WRITER

1. By 1530 between 10 and 20 percent of all books sold were authored by him
2. In Praise of Folly was probably his most well known
  - a. Attack monastic and ecclesiastic corruption
  - b. Ridiculed supposed miracles and criticized the use of indulgences and useless church rites
  - c. This caught the attention of Luther as well as other would-be reformers

### B. THE TEXTUS RECEPTUS

1. He compiled the first Greek New Testament
  - a. It went through at least five editions
2. Was use by others to translate from and praised by Pope Leo X
  - a. William Tyndale
  - b. Martin Luther
  - c. The Geneva Bible
  - d. The King James Version

### C. INFLUENCED THE REFORMATION

1. His reform mindedness inspired men like Luther

2. He never wanted to cause the division in the Church
3. Because he would not join the reformers, he was called a coward
4. Because he sought reform in the Church, he was accused of being in the camp with reformers

## III. WHAT HE TAUGHT AND BELIEVED

### A. HE BELIEVED IN FREE WILL AND SYNERGISM

1. Based his argument more on church fathers rather than scripture
2. Prompted Luther to write On the Bondage of the Will

### B. HE PROMOTED THE CONCEPT OF RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE

1. Taught that disputants should exercise temperance in their language so the truth would not be lost in the wrangling
2. Argued against the death penalty saying "it is better to cure a sick man than to kill him"

### B. THE SACRAMENTS

1. He held to the teaching of Transubstantiation
2. Regarding last rites he said "a dying person could achieve a state of salvation without priestly rites"

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erasmus>

<https://www.gotquestions.org/Desiderius-Erasmus.html>

<https://www.christianitytoday.com/history/people/scholarsandscientists/erasmus.html>