



Erasmus and the Process of Human Perfection: The Philosophy of Christ

Sylvia Fitzpatrick

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This book presents a new interpretation of Erasmus' view of the true nature of Christianity. This new Erasmus no longer appears as he has been presented in the past: the brilliant intellectual who should have joined the reformers but who vacillated and in the end took the conservative option of staying with the Roman Church. Instead he emerges as a daring and innovative thinker who clearly did not belong to the ranks of either side of the confessional divide because, for him, the nature of outward Church organization was not important. His focus was always the transformation of the human being. Erasmus believed that Christianity was a philosophy that contained a set of instructions for the method of perfecting human nature itself. This was not the traditional Christian concept of a kind of moral improvement; it was an absolutely fundamental transformation of the person in the inner core of their being. He believed that the human being was made up of warring elements that caused an inner struggle which, with work and the instructions contained in Scripture, could be harmonised into a kind of equilibrium in which the individual will would be strengthened. Erasmus is now much studied by academics and little read by non-academics but his new vision of Christianity and the true purpose of human existence it contains would be of interest to both Christian and non-Christian alike. In true Renaissance spirit, the human being was always the central focal point, for Erasmus.

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