



In Praise of Folly

Desiderus Erasmus

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Erasmus wrote In Praise of Folly, his masterpiece of ironic literature, in less than a week while en route to England from Italy to visit his good friend Thomas More. He wrote it merely to amuse himself and he was astonished at its immediate and wide popularity. But his satire of the clergy, the upper classes, and general pretentiousness, narrated by the goddess Folly, daughter of Youth and Wealth, struck a chord and is considered by some historians to be one of the catalysts of the Protestant Reformation. This might have disappointed Erasmus who, though critical of the Church, never intended to encourage a split and remained a faithful adherent until his death. Still read regularly in college English courses, Erasmus's timeless classic remains as relevant today as it was when first written nearly five hundred years ago. Dutch humanist, scholar, and theologian DESIDERIUS ERASMUS (1466?-1536) is perhaps best remembered for In Praise of Folly. His other works include Handbook of a Christian Knight (1503), Instituto principis Christiani (1516), and Colloquia familiaria (1518).



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