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Raising the ghost of Arius : Erasmus, the Johannine comma and religious difference in early modern Europe

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RAISING THE GHOST OF ARIUS

*Erasmus,
the Johannine Comma
and Religious Difference in Early Modern Europe*

PROEFSCHRIFT
TER VERKRIJGING VAN
DE GRAAD VAN DOCTOR AAN DE UNIVERSITEIT LEIDEN,
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I know not a Passage in all the New Testament so contested as this.

Edward Calamy, 1719

It is rather a danger to religion, than an advantage, to make it now lean upon a bruised reed. There cannot be better service done to the truth, than to purge it of things spurious.

Isaac Newton, 1690

To use a weak argument in behalf of a good cause, can only tend to infuse a suspicion of the cause itself into the minds of all who see the weakness of the argument. Such a procedure is scarcely a remove short of pious fraud.

Richard Porson, 1790

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ABBREVIATIONS

ASD. *Opera Omnia Desiderii Erasmi*. Amsterdam: North Holland/Elsevier, 1969-2008; Leiden: Brill, 2009-.

ASD VI.8. *Annotationes in Novum Testamentum, 1-2 Cor.* Ed. Miekske L. van Poll-van de Lisdonk. Amsterdam: North Holland/Elsevier, 2003.

ASD IX.2. *Apologia respondens ad ea quae Iacobus Lopis Stunica taxaverat in prima duntaxat Novi Testamenti æditione*. Ed. Henk Jan de Jonge. Amsterdam: North Holland, 1983.

ASD IX.4. *Apologia qua respondet duabus invectivis Eduardi Lei; Responsio ad annotationes Eduardi Lei; Manifesta Mendacia*. Ed. Erika Rummel. *Responsio ad disputationem cuiusdam Phimostomi de divortio*. Ed. Edwin Rabbie. Amsterdam: North Holland/Elsevier, 2003.

CCCM. *Corpus Christianorum. Continuatio Mediaevalis*. 217 vols. Turnhout: Brepols, 1971-2006.

CCSL. *Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina*. 128 vols. Turnhout: Brepols, 1953-2008.

CE. *Contemporaries of Erasmus: A Biographical Register of the Renaissance and Reformation*. Ed. Peter G. Bietenholz and Thomas B. Deutscher. 3 vols. Toronto: Toronto UP, 1985-1987.

Correspondence. The Correspondence of Erasmus, trans. R. A. B. Mynors and D. F. S. Thompson, annotat. Wallace K. Ferguson and Peter G. Bietenholz. 11 vols. Toronto: Toronto UP, 1974-1994.

CSEL. *Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum*. 96 vols. Vienna: Tempsky, 1866-.

CW. *Collected Works of Erasmus*. Toronto: Toronto UP, 1974-.

DNB. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison. 60 vols. Oxford: OUP, 2004.

GA. Gregory-Aland manuscript numbers, given according to Aland *et al.*, 1994.

Glossa ordinaria. Bibliorum sacrorum cum glossa ordinaria iam ante quidem à Strabo Fulgensi collecta. 6 vols. Venice: Giunta, 1603.

Hansard. The Parliamentary Debates, ed. Thomas Curson Hansard. London: Hansard, 1803-.

LB. Erasmus, Opera Omnia. Ed. J. Le Clerc. 10 vols. Leiden: Van der Aa, 1703-1706.

New Grove. The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, 2nd ed. 29 vols. London: MacMillan, 2001.

Omnia Opera. Erasmus, Omnia Opera. 9 vols. Basel: Froben, 1538-1540.

Opus Epist. Opus Epistolarum Des. Erasmi Roterodami. Ed. Percy S. Allen, H. M. Allen and H. W. Garrod. 11 vols. Oxford: OUP, 1906-1947.

PG. Patrologiæ cursus completus. Series Græca. Ed. Jacques-Paul Migne. 161 vols. Paris: Seu Petit-Montrouge, 1857-1866.

PL. Patrologiæ cursus completus. Series Latina. Ed. Jacques-Paul Migne. 221 vols. Paris: Garnier, 1844-1905.

Text und Textwert. Text und Textwert der griechischen Handschriften des Neuen Testaments. Ed. Kurt Aland *et al.* Berlin: De Gruyter, 1987-.

WA. Martin Luther, Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe. Weimar: Böhlau, 1883-. I *Werke* (58 vols), 1883-1983; II *Tischreden* (6 vols), 1912-1921; III *Die deutsche Bibel* (12 vols), 1906-1961; IV *Briefe* (18 vols), 1930-1985.

Abbreviations for musical sources are given as in the *Répertoire international des sources musicales (RISM)*.

The following textual sigla are also used:

- | | |
|-----|---|
| C | <i>corrector</i> (C1, C2, C3...) |
| L | <i>lectio varia</i> (<i>in margine</i>); an L reading always substitutes for a T reading |
| S | reading in a supplemental part of a manuscript |
| T | text reading |
| * | <i>prima manus</i> |
| ** | <i>secunda manus</i> |
| [] | numbers given in brackets after a biblical citation refer to a <i>Teststelle</i> and <i>Lesart</i> assigned by <i>Text und Textwert</i> |

Unless otherwise stated, biblical citations in English are quoted from the New Revised Standard Version. All other translations, except where specifically noted, are my own.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The germ of this study was planted some time ago when I read the curious work *Tractatus aliquot Christianæ religionis* (1583) by Jan Sommer, a minor Transylvanian Reformer. Only a couple of copies of this book survive, including one in the Lambeth Palace Library, given to John Whitgift, Archbishop of Canterbury, by no one less than John Dee. It was Sommer's intention to show that several Christian doctrines had been stolen holus-bolus from Plato; amongst these was the notion of the Trinity. My curiosity about Sommer's claims led me into the heart of the Socinian debates and the question of the Johannine comma.

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