

# [The that the praise of folly could](https://assignbuster.com/the-that-the-praise-of-folly-could/)

The Praise of Folly takes on a verydiverse form of life during sixteenth century Europe.

In1509 the author, Desiderius Erasmus, turned his literarytalents to the ridicule and denunciation of monastic vice, immorality, and wickedness. He was considered the” Prince of Humanists” 1 because he was one of the mostimportant men in Europe during the period of theReformation, The historical and cultural references in hisbook proves that the Praise of Folly could not have beenwritten during any other time period except sixteenthcentury Europe. Erasmus is one of the most fascinating andinscrutable characters in history. There is no doubt that hewas a genius, He was also a bon vivant, but his tastes rantoward good conversation and good food rather thanconspicuous consumption.

He whined endlessly about histroubles, and he begged shamelessly for ever more moneyfrom his patrons. But he was one of the “ most far-sightedindividuals to walk this planet,” 2. Before any others, hesaw how the corruption and misdeeds of the church wouldlead to danger, and when Martin Luther hijacked Erasmusreform efforts and turned them into outright revolt, Erasmussaw that this split in Christendom would lead tocatastrophe; a catastrophe that was realized a century later.

Erasmus, even from childhood, had a craving to read, study, learn and know. He spent his life as a scholar andwriter. He was a man of quick wit and a keen mind. Hehad struck a raw nerve by writing the Praise of Folly. But itmust be noted that while Erasmus found the wickedness ofthe priests revulsive, he did not disapprove of RomanCatholic doctrine. He praised himself to be a citizen of theworld, not attached 2 to a particular country but findinghimself at home in European countries where culture andhumanism were flourishing. The two societies he claimed tobelong to were both the republic of letters and the Christianchurch.

In Roman Catholic doctrine, he wished only for areformation of priestly morals and conduct, not of Romantheology, and he disapproved of the doctrinal revolutioninitiated by Luther. It is said that Erasmus laid the egg thatLuther hatched, meaning that Erasmus was the one whoinspired the Protestant Reformation. The particular state ofmind which produced the “ modern world” was amanifestation of the same mind as underlay the ProtestantRevolution.

The Protestant “ calling” was a treatment ofworldly avocations as God-created and fulfillable in a spiritof worship. This concept enabled the Protestant to see inhis ordinary daily work an activity pleasing to God andtherefore be pursued as actively and profitably as possible. On the other hand, medieval and Roman CatholicChristianity were held to have condemned the world, withconsequent hostility to economic activity and especially tothat essential capitalist ingredient, the taking of interest onusury. Protestantism were therefore asserted to have beenthe necessary precondition of the growth of modernindustrial capitalism. The basic belief of Protestantismpromoted the spirit of the entrepreneur, and for that reasoncapitalism is found flourishing in reformed countries, whilethe Reformation is found spreading among the commercialand industrial middle classes. The desire for spiritualnourishment was great in many parts of Europe, andmovements of thought which gave intellectual content towhat in so many ways was an initial search for God havetheir own dignity. Neither of these, however, comes first inexplaining why the Reformation took root her and vanishedheresies led to a permanent division within the church thathad looked to Rome. This particular place 3 is occupiedand the play of secular ambitions.

The Reformationmaintained itself wherever the lay power favored it; it couldnot survive where the authorities decided to suppress it. For this was the age of uniformity, an age which held at alltimes and everywhere that one political unit could notcomprehend within itself two forms of belief or worship. Much of the work of the Praise of Folly is satire at theexpense of rhetoricians, grammarians and theologians, buttowards the close, Erasmus tackles monks and prelatesalso, not excluding the Popes.

But it concludes in anunexpected way; a witty moving praise of a form ofreligious ecstasy with the folly of God in saving the worldthrough crucifixion associated with the folly and madness ofthe pious. Erasmus regarded scholasticism as the greatestperversion of the religious spirit; according to him thisdegeneration dated from the primitive Christologicalcontroversies, which caused the church to lose itsevangelical simplicity and become the victim of hair-splittingphilosophy, which culminated in scholasticism. With thelatter there appeared in the