

the preponderance of seventeenth-century English biblical scholars treated. The textual accomplishments of scholars in the early German Enlightenment are not ignored, but the rest of the European mainland is largely left out of the picture, despite the wide-ranging geography of McDonald's account of sixteenth-century editions. Still, the author has drawn an astonishing history of the multiple responses to defenses, negotiations, or rejections of the Comma Johanneum. What this book superbly demonstrates is that the relation between philology and theology is by no means straightforward, and that there was by no means a clash between philology and theology.

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Erasmus's Life of Origen: A New Annotated Translation of the Prefaces to Erasmus of Rotterdam's Edition of Origen's Writings (1536). Thomas P. Scheck, trans. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2016. xxxv + 234 pp. \$65.

The title of this book is quite misleading. Erasmus's life of Origen, as such, occupies only pages 138 to 159 of the book, while the next thirty-five pages contain Erasmus's assessment of various homilies of Origen on books of scripture and a very brief essay on his method of teaching and speaking. The real thesis of the book, however, is announced in the introduction: "How Erasmus's lifelong exertions in advancing biblical and patristic scholarship demonstrate the sincerity, vitality, and orthodoxy of his program for the renewal of Catholic theology in the first half of the sixteenth century" (xix). This is a formidable task indeed. In the preface to the book, following the lead of the famous French theologian Henri de Lubac, Scheck expatiates on the misunderstanding of Erasmus by historians of the Renaissance in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He chooses two extreme examples of this hostility toward Erasmus, which are almost a caricature of the violent aspersions that were sometimes cast on Erasmus's character. The first is a certain Joseph Sauer, professor of church history at the University of Freiburg at the beginning of the nineteenth century, who wrote the article on Erasmus for the 1917 Catholic Encyclopedia, and the other is Christopher Hollis, whose biography of Erasmus is simply a catalogue of the worst possible characteristics that could be imagined. Sauer and Hollis speak of Erasmus's vain, cold-blooded, poisonous, subversive, rationalistic, and, above all, egotistical character. Such scurrilous slanders should not have been resurrected, in my opinion, even if only in order to expose their malice. Scheck could have chosen more fair-minded and credible historians to balance this viewpoint, such as Johan Huizinga, Roland Bainton, Cornelis Augustijn, or any number of others to be found in Bruce Mansfield's *Erasmus in the Twentieth Century*.

Erasmus has always been a controversial figure, beginning in his own lifetime, but in our day, especially after Vatican II, he is more and more regarded as an important defender of the Christian religion. As far as defending his orthodoxy is concerned, Erasmus himself is the best vindicator of his own reputation through his writings, which are becoming increasingly more well known through the critical edition of his works being published by Brill, now very near completion, and the English translations and commentaries of his works published in the Toronto Collected Works of Erasmus, now numbering more than sixty volumes of a projected eighty-six.

In the chapter on Erasmus's program of theological renewal Scheck begins rightly with the *Method of True Theology*, in which Erasmus counsels prayerful meditation on the scriptures and the auxiliary study of the commentaries of the fathers of the church, among whom he signals Origen as the foremost. This innovation met with resistance in many quarters, as Scheck points out, including at the University of Louvain in the person of Jacobus Latomus, who wrote a tract condemning Erasmus's ideas and reinforcing the importance of the dialectical method of the Scholastics. At the end of this chapter the discussion turns to modern Catholic critiques of Erasmus's program. At one point Scheck quotes a sentence from John O'Malley's superb history, *What Happened at Vatican II*: "Just as Erasmus had wanted to displace medieval scholasticism with a biblical/patristic theology, the twentieth-century *ressourcement* wanted to do essentially the same" (39–40). *Ressourcement* is the term used by French theologians in the 1930s and 1940s to refer to the return to original patristic thought. O'Malley's perception could hardly have been more exact. Yet Scheck makes the remarkably inappropriate comment that in this way Erasmus is thus erroneously converted into an Anglican-style Protestant. This is but one of the many undeservedly harsh criticisms to be encountered in this book.

The translation of the prefaces is well done with only the occasional incorrect or inelegant rendering. Although there is much to be learned about Erasmus's indebtedness to Origen in his scriptural commentaries, as Scheck maintains, the fact remains that Jerome is his main exemplar. Erasmus was too cautious to wish to be closely identified with an exegete who held a number of heterodox beliefs.

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Truth and Irony: Philosophical Meditations on Erasmus. Terence J. Martin.
Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2015. xii + 258 pp. \$65.

With *Truth and Irony*, Terence J. Martin has written a marvelously rich and intelligent set of essays on the wisdom of Desiderius Erasmus. According to Martin, Erasmus presented his readers with a specific form of irony with which he attempted to draw