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

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attention to the unbridgeable gap that lies between human aims and human achievement. Attesting to an "ironic experience" inherent to many aspects of life, it would have been Erasmus's aim throughout his works to draw attention to the fact that some of our most fundamental problems are unsolvable, and thus to communicate a form of wisdom that is unsettling rather than appeasing. Despite that I very much enjoyed reading Martin's book, I nevertheless doubt whether Erasmus himself was the ironic thinker Terence Martin makes him out to be. Rather, it is my view that Erasmus was a highly programmatic thinker, who most of the time was not in the least ironic.

Martin's book is in essence a collection of essays on Erasmus's way of dealing with three weighty issues in philosophy: the question of truth telling, the question of war and peace, and the question of the good life. I have the least problems with the first, even though one might wonder whether the phenomenon of deceit is really indicative of any deep problem in Erasmus. The same may be said with regard to the second issue: the question of war and peace. Here again, I doubt whether Erasmus regarded the issue as a paradoxical one. Martin's essay weighs "war" against "sanity," and discusses how it can be that there is a Christian prohibition on warfare when at the same time all human beings, Christians included, obviously cannot do without war, or even have "a longing for war," as Erasmus himself established. The problem I have with this way of examining the question is that it carries the risk of misrepresenting Erasmus's own position. Even if Erasmus raised the right questions, this is not to say he was in any doubt about them. In fact, I see no reason to conclude that Erasmus was conscious of a dilemma with regard to warfare. Whether or not war is "natural" or "sane," is Martin's, not Erasmus's, question. Erasmus himself may well have seen war as something "natural," but he did not in any way consider it sane. War was never sane, according to Erasmus, but simply wrong—and brutally un-Christian.

Erasmus's understanding of the fact that human practices are very different from human ideals should not, therefore, make us believe he yielded toward an accepting stance about people not living up to their ideals, or that he devised a sophisticated position on the incongruities of man in order to explain the "ironic experience" of failure on this basis. For all his possible irony, Erasmus was primarily a moralist. This moralism is also relevant for the question of happiness and the good life, the subject of the last of Martin's three essays, which deals extensively with *The Praise of Folly*, the only book by Erasmus still widely read today. Martin considers the finale of *The Praise of Folly* the ultimate example of Erasmus's ironical stance. Erasmus here presents a "foolish" interpretation of the Christian faith in terms of a renouncement of worldly pleasures that is not to be taken entirely seriously, according to Martin, since it is still Folly who speaks to us. At the same time, the passage should nonetheless have an unsettling effect on the reader, since Erasmus would wish us to consider to what extent the ascetic ideal of the Christian good life is incompatible with our everyday acceptance of earthly pleasures. If it is true that Erasmus—as others, such as M. A. Screech,

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have pointed out—keeps referring in all of his works to the possibility of spiritual rapture and mental ecstasy (and especially so in the last part of the *Folly*), it is equally true, Martin argues, that he continuously confronted his Christian readership with an Epicurean fascination for the importance of pleasure, never in fact making a definitive choice between the Epicurean appreciation of pleasure and the Christian virtue of the ascetic life.

For Erasmus, however, to promote spiritual rapture never meant to advocate mysticism or asceticism. Rather, it involved putting forward the Platonic idea that morality, whether philosophically or religiously inspired, requires a redirection of mental energy that may bring people to a mental level exceeding the level of their primary reactions. To see this is to admit that it is indeed still Folly who is speaking to us in the last part of the *Folly*, but at the same time to accept that she is now positively serious. She can be, since according to Erasmus there is no folly involved in seeing both philosophy and religion as genuine kinds of folly. Philosophy and religion both yield morality, but morality is something strange—it is not something that comes naturally. If only rapturous Platonists and Christians appeared to be aware of this, it was also something Erasmus accepted without the slightest bit of irony.

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Ignatius of Loyola: Legend and Reality. Pierre Emonet, SJ.
Ed. Thomas M. McCoog, SJ. Trans. Jerry Ryan. Philadelphia: Saint Joseph's University Press, 2016. x + 152 pp. $40.

This welcome addition to the literature on Saint Ignatius Loyola (1491–1556) sets out to show the reality behind the legends about Ignatius, the gilded hagiographical one and the darker, condemnatory one, to arrive at the real, complex human being whose praises, according to the author, have been equaled by the criticisms of his detractors. To do this, Emonet proposes to draw upon Ignatius's own accounts and to look at the witness of his closest collaborators. As his chief source the author takes the autobiographical narrative dictated to Ignatius's colleague Goncalves da Câmara, from 1553 to 1555, as a sort of foundational testament. But it ends in 1540, the year of the foundation of the Society of Jesus, and so provides little about his role as founder and first superior general of the society from 1540 to 1556. Emonet suggests that the variety of opinions about Ignatius is due in part to what a critical observer might see as ambiguous characteristics, such as the regular tension between the freedom of the individual and loyalty to the institution; indeed, Silvia Mostaccio in her recent *Early Modern Jesuits between Obedience and Conscience during the Generalate of Claudio Acquaviva (1581–1615)* (2014) sees this tension as a feature of the Jesuits and even of the early modern world. The dictated autobiography was withdrawn from circulation in 1571

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