

Erika Rummel, ed. *Biblical Humanism and Scholasticism in the Age of Erasmus*.

Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition 9. Leiden: Brill, 2008. viii + 334 pp. index. bibl. \$195. ISBN: 978-90-04-14573-3.

The Brill series of Companions to the Christian Tradition defines its subjects for companionship generously. This volume is no exception. What exactly is its subject? The title of Erika Rummel's introduction ("Scholasticism and Biblical Humanism in Early Modern Europe") differs enough from the one on the spine to put Erasmus in the shade and yet at the same time — oddly, in view of some of what follows — discourages the thought that there could ever have been a "biblical scholasticism" worthy of both terms. A claim on the back cover, nowhere made so explicitly inside, restores the figure of Erasmus to an age less exclusively his own: "The chapters offered here seek to lend a voice to Erasmus's critics and to right the balance in a historical narrative that has traditionally favoured the humanists." One way to construe the volume is as part of the reaction, with Rummel's *Erasmus and His Catholic Critics* (1989) and *The Humanist-Scholastic Debate in the Renaissance and Reformation* (1995), to the progress of the Amsterdam and Toronto Erasmus-editions into the division of that writer's works containing answers to the many critics of his biblical-philological enterprise. The overall genre, then, is companion-as-antidote. Antidote to Erasmus, companion to Rummel. The encompassing narrative is essentially that of *The Humanist-Scholastic Debate*, as

concentrated in chapter 5 of the earlier book (“Biblical Scholarship: Humanistic Innovators and Scholastic Defenders of Tradition”).

Four unnumbered sections, or “chapters” (4), successively present the critics of biblical, especially Erasmian, humanism as they lined up in Spain, at Paris, at Leuven, and in Italy, though the pattern is complicated by essays within those sections that mainly tell the stories of humanist biblical scholars of distinctly Erasmian temper. A substantial essay on “Criticism of Biblical Humanists in Quattrocento Italy” (by John Monfasani) serves as a prelude to the main sequence, albeit followed by another on the Reuchlin affair (Daniel Ménager) that is left standing rather by itself. Monfasani’s initial survey has a splendid counterpoise near the end of the volume in Paul F. Grendler’s essay on “Italian Biblical Humanism and the Papacy, 1515–1535,” at fifty pages easily twice the length of most others and worth the space it occupies. Grendler provides a well-documented, nuanced introduction to a field now wide open for further study.

The other ten contributions were evidently commissioned on the principle of letting acknowledged experts on individual “Contemporaries of Erasmus” present the cases for their men and occasionally for their opponents too (even including Erasmus). The scholarly representation is impressively international and the translations are well done. Antonio Nebrija (portrayed by Carlos del Valle Rodriguez) would have been in Erasmus’s camp, as of course was Juan Luis Vives, who here offers a vantage point for looking sympathetically at those whom he satirized. Charles Fantazzi’s piece on “Vives and the Pseudodialecticians” includes a re-reading of the Erasmus-Dorp-Vives dossier that saves Vives from being the pawn of Erasmus that Lisa Jardine (in *Erasmus, Man of Letters* [1993]) almost made him. Dorp’s detachment from Erasmus is further assisted by Cecilia Asso (“Martin Dorp and Edward Lee”). The essays of Guy Bedouelle on “Attacks on the Biblical Humanism of Jacques Lefèvre d’Etaples” and James K. Farge on “Noël Beda and the Defense of the Tradition” together paint an extremely rich canvas of the Parisian milieu. That of Leuven is equally well served by Asso, Marc Gielis (on Jacques Masson or “Latomus”) and Paolo Sartori, even if readers interested in Frans Titelmans will want to look up Sartori’s fuller treatments of that prodigy in other places. The volume is rounded out for Italy with pieces by Nelson H. Minnich on Alberto Pio and Ronald K. Delph on Agostino Steuco. There is a consolidated bibliography of secondary works and an index of names, but no index of biblical passages cited. The highest standards of intellectual history are maintained throughout. Some authors are more constrained than others by the underlying prosopographical plot of this “Companion.” The volume is weakest where its pseudo-genre dictates most strongly. Erasmus, in any case, emerges a more compelling figure from being so circumscribed.

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