

Hyma, Albert. *The Life of Desiderius Erasmus*. Assen: Van Gorcum, 1972. 140 pp. Paperback, Dutch Gld. 17.50.

Albert Hyma has gained wide recognition for his remarkably large number of well-researched contributions to historical scholarship, most of them relating to Renaissance and Reformation themes. It is indeed gratifying to have this new publication on Erasmus from his pen.

The "Prince of the Humanists" has, of course, received attention on a number of occasions from Hyma, whose most recent book-length treatment of Erasmus prior to the present one was the 2d edition (enlarged) of *The Youth of Erasmus*, published in 1968 (see the review in *AUSS* 8 [1970], 96). This new *Life of Desiderius Erasmus* covers the full span of Erasmus' career more completely than any of Hyma's earlier publications. It utilizes relevant information from those earlier publications as well as the results of further research. Moreover, as has become a common practice for Hyma, he gives in this book a large amount of up-to-date bibliographical information; and he also corrects various erroneous views held about Erasmus, including some for which he takes responsibility himself.

A particularly significant correction relates to Erasmus' contact with the so-called "Oxford Reformers." Hyma himself, as well as Erasmus scholars in general, has tended to classify Thomas More, John Colet and others with whom Erasmus had contact in England in 1499-1500 and again a few years later as "Oxford Reformers." Hyma notes that a book by Robert P. Adams, published in 1962 by the University of Washington Press in Seattle, refers more correctly to these individuals as "The London Reformers," and has accordingly adopted this designation. Indeed, he uses this terminology as the title for Chapter 8 in the present book.

Another striking feature of the present publication is the careful attention given to the last few years of Erasmus' career, especially after 1533. It is unfortunate that no mention is made of the chapter by Margaret Mann Phillips "Some Last Words of Erasmus" in the symposium edited by John C. Olin and others, *Luther, Erasmus and the Reformation: A Catholic-Protestant Reappraisal* (New York, 1969), pp. 87-113; but probably this material was not yet available when Hyma prepared his manuscript. It would have been useful to have his expert appraisal of Phillips' treatment, which in some ways parallels his own. To the reviewer it appears that both of these scholars have made vital contributions to our knowledge of a portion of Erasmus' career which is too often sadly neglected.

So as to give an overview of the contents and scope of *The Life of Desiderius Erasmus*, its sixteen chapter titles are here listed: "Birth and Early Childhood," "With the Brethren of the Common Life," "At the Monastery of Steyn," "The Book Against the Barbarians," "At the University of Paris," "The First Trip to England," "Life in Paris and the Low Countries," "The London Reformers," "The Grand Tour of Italy," "Thomas More and Erasmus," "Professor at Cambridge," "The Greek New Testament," "Louvain Versus Wittenberg," "The Colloquies," "Conversion," and "On the Separation of State and Church." It is worth observing that in the final chapter Hyma aptly indicates that the Northern Renaissance with its ideals had much more responsibility for religious liberty and toleration than did the major Reformation churches.

Hyma's volume is a worthy contribution to the recent literature on Erasmus which has been appearing in celebration of the 500th anniversary of that famous humanist's birthday (given variously between 1466 and 1469, with Hyma choosing—most likely correctly—1469).

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Kaufman, Gordon D. *God the Problem*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972. xx + 276 pp. \$10.00.

The persisting Biblical emphasis upon God as acting has been an embarrassment to many theologians who wished to retain this way of speaking but could not really find a place for it in their thinking. *The "problem,"* I take it, is to speak of God as agent in an intelligible way. That this is possible is the fundamental thesis of the book.

"Act of God" is a comprehensible concept. The book explores the analogy of "personal action," attempting a metaphysic of agency so as to fill the gap between Biblical imagery and modern understanding of the world. The difference between historical and personal knowledge (does Kaufman overlook it elsewhere?) is that the reality of God is now accessible whereas the reality of history is not, or at least, is accessible in a manner in which the reality of history is not. So the analogy from historical knowledge to theological knowledge is less adequate than that from personal knowledge to theological knowledge. How careful must one be to qualify the term "historical" in different contexts to make precisely clear what one wants to say!

God is "ultimate cosmic agency" (p. 106) and as such provides the ground for human agency. What sort of ground? Correcting Braithwaite and contradicting Whitehead's disciples, the author suggests an alternative to traditional conceptions of God. "I believe in God" needs translation from "I am convinced that God is" to "I am acting as if the world is what I think it to be as grounded metaphysically in personal Being." In defence of such grounding the concept of transcendence (revelation is explicable best on the analogy of the personal act of making known what would otherwise remain unknown) is defended against a pan-en-theistic doctrine of immanence. The totality "world" is purposive, but "agency" better describes the teleological movement than does the impersonal term "process." Such agency is met at the limits of our world and our experience. So the experience of limitation (contingency, dependence) is the locus within human existence of theological meaning. The essay on Transcendence makes the important and careful distinction between meaning and truth, prolegomenon to theology and theology proper.

What is revealed is reality, "the real God," "ultimate reality," "the transcendent God," the ultimately real (pp. 151, 261). But for Kaufman there must be a final agnosticism, and here further clarification is called for in order to explain the antithesis, "historical knowledge is not personal," "personal knowledge is historical." The God revealed is the "available God" in contrast to the "real God." The idea of the "available God" is based on the analogy with historical knowledge which we are told is not the fundamental analogy. The "object" in history is *unknown* if knowledge means "having direct and personal acquaintance with." I could not encounter Wash-