documents. This is unfortunate, as the Calendar does not reproduce every letter in the collection, often paraphrases or abbreviates the letters' contents, and is not always accurate in its transcriptions.

The picture of Robert Sidney which emerges from this book is in the end much less interesting than it might have been. Indeed, it could be argued that we are hardly left with a coherent picture of him at all. The many confusions engendered by Hay's topical approach, the absence of an introduction or a concluding chapter to give us an overview of his life (the book ends abruptly with the date and manner of Sidney's death), the lack of even a simple time-line mean that even the basic facts of Robert's life are scattered throughout the text, and its broader patterns remain unassessed. Hay's habit of referring to Sidney by his title rather than his name is indicative – he is Sidney, Lisle, Leicester, but never a single character or a whole life. Robert Sidney is not one of the legendary personalities of the Elizabethan era; and perhaps his life will always be more interesting for what it tells us about his times than for its own sake. But we need to see it as a coherent whole in order to learn from it, and Hay does not allow us to do that.

MARTHA KURTZ, *Long Island, New York*

Shimon Markish. *Erasmus and the Jews*, translated by Anthony Olcott, with an afterword by Arthur A. Cohen. Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1986. Pp. vi, 203.

Shimon Markish, the son of a noted Yiddish poet executed at the orders of Stalin, had made a name for himself as a devotee of the works and ideas of Desiderius Erasmus before his emigration from the Soviet Union. He is currently a lecturer at the University of Geneva, and although he reads a wide range of European languages, he still writes in Russian. This book, translated directly from a Russian manuscript, has already been published in a French translation.

One of the most interesting writings of the late Professor Guido Kisch of Basel was his *Erasmus' Stellung zu Juden und Judentum* (Tubingen: Mohr, 1969), a little book which, when taken together with his *Zasius und Reuchlin: Eine rechtsgeschichtlichvergleichende Studie zum Toleranzproblem im 16 Jahrhundert*, Pforzheimer Reuchlinschriften, vol. 1 (Constance: Thorbecke, 1961) and his brief essay "Toleranz und Menschenwurde," in Paul Wilper, ed., *Judentum im Mittelalter. Beiträge zum christlichen-jüdischen Gespräch*. *Miscellanea mediaevalia*, vol. 4 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1966), 1–36, laid the foundation for a scholarly discussion of the treatment of Jews by humanists in the German Renaissance. Since neither Kisch's essays nor several other important contributions on the subject have been translated (mostly from German), it is good to have the present study by

another scholar available in English. We are told that the author was moved to write this book after reading Kisch's book on Erasmus and the Jews in a library in Budapest, but Markish manages to communicate his strong differences with Kisch without engaging in polemics.

What Markish has done is to ransack the totality of the works of Erasmus for references to Jews and Judaism, while Kisch concentrated almost entirely on the correspondence of Erasmus. Markish's conclusion is that Erasmus never took serious thought about Jews as human beings living in his own age, but rather considered them only as a theological problem or a thematic straw-man for criticizing contemporary institutions. Although Markish makes some references to modern secondary literature in his first chapter ("The Problem Posed"), if only to differ with it, the bulk of his book is based foursquare on the sources. Work as a serious scholar of Renaissance culture in the Soviet Union and in Hungary clearly has some incidental heuristic advantages, since it forces a scholar to concentrate on original texts rather than what others believe to have been written. This gives his work a refreshing directness and independence extremely valuable for those who have had trouble quieting the babble of scholarly journals as they confront the writings of Renaissance humanists.

After this introductory chapter, which is by far the weakest because the most derivative, Markish moves with an admirable crispness through the range of relationships between Erasmus and Judaica; the Mosaic Law, Judaism itself and artificial construct of a lifeless custom Erasmus called "Judaism" for polemic purposes; the Old Testament, which Erasmus comprehended (as did Luther) only as a Christian document; the Jews of the Gospel era, who were vilified for rejecting their messiah in terms adopted from Augustine; the Jews of his own day, who were largely ignored or used as symbols of the evil into which Christianity might fall; and lastly the Hebrew language, which Erasmus revered in theory but which he was strangely never willing or able to master. In his conclusion, Markish argues that Erasmus never had a well-considered attitude towards Jews as human beings or as a community, but that his views were simply a function of his particular view of the proper practice of Christianity. Since Erasmus rejected a religion of the Law, he rejected Moses and all his works except as a necessary, preparatory stage in the religious childhood of mankind. He was not so much anti-Judaic as he was anti-Mosaic.

In his "Afterword," the late Arthur A. Cohen severely chides Markish's irenic treatment of Erasmus, particularly Markish's refusal to equate pre-modern anti-Jewish attitudes as being the same as modern anti-semitism. To Cohen, there is clear continuity between the hostility to Jews in Erasmus and the ideology of secular anti-semitism in our own times. While it is easy to understand Cohen's views, it appears to me that Markish is closer to being correct in scholarly terms than is Cohen. As historical scholars, we have to be able to interpret the past in the language

of our own times, but it seems pointless to haul past thinkers before a fictive bar of justice to answer for crimes far beyond their own ken. Another approach would be to argue (as does Guido Kisch or Jerome Friedman) that Erasmus was gratuitously hostile to Jews, and hostile in a way which was inconsistent with his own stated philosophy of tolerance. This again appears to me to play tricks on the dead by overstating or universalizing a concept of tolerance which was a subordinate aspect of Erasmus' *philosophia Christi*, and which was never more than a tool for the ultimate expansion of the *philosophia* to the whole of humanity.

STEVEN ROWAN, *University of Missouri – St. Louis*