London and the Bibliothèque Nationale of Paris combined shelve about one-half of the total. This underlines the importance of bibliographic research in numerous libraries. One sometimes finds notable printings in obscure libraries very far from the places of publication. Another conclusion, with which this reviewer fully concurs, is that, while the cataloguing of medieval and Renaissance manuscripts is important and difficult work – and is appreciated as such – producing a comprehensive bibliography of sixteenth-century printings on an author or subject can be equally important and difficult – but is less recognized and appreciated. The Cranz-Schmitt volume is a very useful one that should facilitate and encourage further study of Renaissance Aristotelianism.

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Jerry H. Bentley. *Humanists and Holy Writ: New Testament Scholarship in the Renaissance*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983 Pp. xiii, 245.

Ever since the time of Burckhardt, it has been an historiographical commonplace that Renaissance humanists displayed a radically new attitude towards the ancient world. They venerated that world, and passionately sought to recover it as fully as possible: they collected classical cameos and statues, studied architectural remains, copied inscriptions, and reclaimed and circulated previously neglected texts. At the same time, they were acutely aware of the gulf that separated them from that world. In order to bridge that gulf and recover their beloved antiquity, both pagan and Christian, they developed tools of philological analysis and historical criticism – and so created modern scholarship.

Jerry Bentley illustrates this commonplace with a detailed appreciation of New Testament scholarship in the Renaissance. Renaissance humanism, according to Bentley, broke with the medieval tradition of biblical studies, a tradition dominated by allegorical and spiritual exegesis and framed in the Aristotelian terms of scholastic theology. “The Renaissance humanists,” he says, “were determined to set aside the medieval tradition of New Testament study and replace it with a brand of scholarship that aimed to recover or reconstruct the assumptions, values, and doctrines not of the Middle Ages, but of the earliest Christians” (p. 31). The pioneer in this undertaking was Lorenzo Valla, “the first westerner since the patristic age to enjoy a thorough knowledge of Greek and to apply it extensively in his study of the New Testament” (pp. 32–33). Valla used his knowledge of Greek and mastery of philology to criticize and emend the Vulgate, to propose better Latin translations of certain passages, and to attempt a sounder explanation of the literal sense of scripture.

The second step in the progress of humanist New Testament scholarship was taken in Spain, by a team of scholars at the university of Alcalá. This university had been founded by the noted reformer, Cardinal Francisco Ximénez de Cisneros, and it was Ximénez who gave the impulse to the Complutensian Polyglot Bible. He assembled a group of experts in the three biblical languages and charged them with preparing a scholarly edition of the scriptures. The editors of the Complutensian Polyglot Bible improved on Valla’s methods in some ways. They recog-

nized, as he did not, that the Greek text, like the Latin, was subject to corruption, and so it was not enough to correct the Latin to accord with the Greek. But they employed no editorial principle consistently, following now one, then another. Since they were generally guided by a desire to reaffirm the text of the Vulgate, they often chose from among variant Greek readings the one that agreed with the Vulgate. But they did not always attempt to resolve textual problems: when the six volumes of their edition were printed between 1514 and 1517, the parallel columns of text (Greek and Hebrew flanking the Latin in the Old Testament, Latin and Greek side by side in the New) often preserved unreconciled differences between the two.

The culminating achievement of Renaissance New Testament scholarship was that of Erasmus. It was Erasmus who arranged for the publication of Valla's *Adnotationes* on the New Testament (1505), who published the first edition of the Greek New Testament, with a revised version of the Vulgate in parallel columns (1516), who prepared a fresh translation of the New Testament (1505-1506) and printed it in place of the Vulgate in the second edition of his New Testament (1519), and who justified his editorial decisions with an ever-growing body of philological annotations, which by the fifth edition in 1535 filled a 783-page folio volume. He consulted a wider range of manuscripts, both Latin and Greek, than either Valla or the Complutensian scholars, and he treated those manuscripts with model philological sophistication: "in several thousand notes he evaluated a vast body of Greek and Latin textual data, considered from all angles the best Latin representation of the Greek text, and offered explanations of the Greek text sensitive to literary, historical, and philological realities" (p. 217). The result of his efforts was a text of the Greek New Testament that remained the standard until the nineteenth century.

As he tells this story, Bentley displays impressive erudition and an admirable mastery of the many languages, ancient and modern, needed to study New Testament scholarship in Renaissance Italy, Spain, France, England, and the Netherlands. What his work lacks, unfortunately, is a breadth of historical vision commensurate with its subject.

Bentley's view of history is resolutely teleological and positivistic: his aim is to recount the steady liberation of New Testament scholarship from its medieval theological concerns and its irreversible progress towards the modern acme of disinterested scientific philology, represented here by the work of Bruce Metzger. Bentley, accordingly, is not interested in how humanists in general approached holy writ, but only in the efforts of those few humanists who contributed significantly to the development of modern philology: the rest can be dismissed as voices of "stubborn conservatism" (p. 207; see also pp. 45, 110). He says little of Giannozzo Manetti's Latin translation of the New Testament (1455-1457), other than that he "fell victim to inadequate manuscript resources" (p. 46). He dismisses Marsilio Ficino's commentary on the Epistle to the Romans and John Colet's exegesis of the Pauline epistles as being more concerned with theology than philology (p. 9). He acknowledges that Guillaume Budé was a worthy philologist, but judges his observations on the New Testament too sketchy to be evaluated. He recognizes that the many works of Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples cer-

tainly demonstrate the seriousness of his interest in the New Testament, but disapproves of Lefèvre's approach: "In one issue, one controversy, one problem after another, he allowed his deep piety, his commitment to tradition, or his mystical theology to override philological considerations" (p. 11).

Bentley does not seem to appreciate why it was that Lefèvre followed the dictates of piety, tradition, and theology, rather than philology. He assumes that the New Testament is a text like any other, subject to textual corruption and philological emendation. This assumption is a perfectly reasonable one for a modern, secular philologist – but it is totally inappropriate to expect it to be shared by a Renaissance humanist. Again and again, even Bentley's heroes leave him feeling puzzled or betrayed. "In his notes to the New Testament, strange to say, Valla's attempts at the higher criticism lack the rigor and insightfulness of his efforts elsewhere" (p. 47). The Complutensian editors "declined to employ their talents except in the service of traditional Latin orthodoxy. As a result, they did not advance understanding of the scriptures as much as they might have, had they less timidly applied sound philological methods" (p. 97). Even Erasmus modified his text and reconsidered his arguments in response to the criticisms of Edward Lee, Frans Tittlemans, and Stunica – even though their criticisms "were motivated by considerations of theology" and were not "properly philological" (pp. 202, 203).

The fact of the matter was that Valla and Erasmus, Lee and Stunica, Colet and Lefèvre all recognized that the New Testament was *not* a text like any other text. They lived in an age of increasingly bitter theological controversy – controversy that in essential ways turned on how the New Testament was to be read and understood – and they all engaged in the theological and scriptural arguments of their age. By ignoring this, Bentley closes himself off from the possibility of recovering or reconstructing the assumptions, values, and doctrines of a period when *sola scriptura* became an ideological battle cry. He turns a large and important topic into a minor and peripheral one by sidestepping the theological issues and working instead towards the uninspiring conclusion that his contribution to "scholarly methods . . . was perhaps the most enduring of all the legacies Erasmus bequeathed to his cultural heirs" (p. 193). This focus on method rather than matter extends even to the index, which lists references to biblical manuscripts but not biblical passages. And so it is that the bold promise of the title, announcing a book that will explore the varied ways in which devout and troubled humanists grappled with holy writ, fades to the diminished compass of the subtitle, a monograph on New Testament scholarship in the Renaissance.

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