they are an "inexhaustible repository" (p. xvii) of ideas about man as well as animals. Her examination of them in this book has, unfortunately, scarcely revealed the riches they contain.

J. DUTKA, *Univesity of Toronto*

Manfred Hoffmann. *Erkenntnis und Verwirklichung der wahren Theologie nach Erasmus von Rotterdam* (Beiträge zur historischen Theologie, hrsg. v. Gerhard Ebeling, 44). Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1972. Pp. xiv, 294. DM 56.—

Among the countless denunciations of Erasmus to be found in the motley utterances of Luther known as his *Table Talks* there is a particularly bitter reflection recorded for early December 1531 to the effect that "Erasmus is an eel; no one can grasp him save Christ alone; the man is double." This abiding epithet of the *homo duplex* constitutes the negative point of departure for the present investigation under two aspects: the abundance and the formal variety—in style, tone, and one might add, intention—of Erasmus' works appear irreducible to any set of pervasive principles, while ensuing centuries viewed the man and his work each according to its own tendencies and ideals. Thus across the spectrum from blind assent to apodictic repudiation emerged the image, drawn generally from a merely partial and hence necessarily distorted understanding of his works, of the skeptical or the rationalist Erasmus, the precursor of the Enlightenment or of Modernism, the foil of orthodoxy or the autonomous scholar.

In the face of these still widely accepted fixations, Hoffmann sets out to examine a group of key works according to the functioning of the texts themselves with a view to establishing the universal principles behind the various literary masques in which Erasmus as *homo ludens* delighted to appear. The investigation is to yield not a total picture of the theology of Erasmus but to delineate the method and structure of his theological thought.

For Erasmus, for whom theology was always a matter of "vita magis quam disputatio," it is evident that theology will not imply a speculative synthesis of a body of doctrine but rather a way of life, an attitude of spirit and a process of intellectual and moral maturing along the lines suggested by this attitude. The author takes as his sources for Erasmus' ideas on this subject a group of works written between 1514 (after his return from England) and 1519 (the beginning of the Reformation), in particular the three treatises introductory to his edition of the New Testament (*Paraclesis*, *Methodus*, *Apologia*), and most especially the *Ratio verae theologiae*, which merits his close attention both by reason of its contents and its literary structure, though there are frequent cross references to works written outside this period, such as the *Enchiridion*, the *De Libero Arbitrio*, and a number of the letters.

The intention and the chronological location of these key works in the Erasmian corpus convey that the title of the investigation refers to the proper reading and understanding of Scripture (*Erkenntnis*) and to its effect of moral transformation as a result (*Verwirklichung*). The result of the investigation is therefore limited in significance, reflecting a particular though representative stage in the development of Erasmus' ideas, and directed to theology in the peculiar meaning just described.

In this sense the structure of Erasmus' ideas is seen to be thoroughly founded on medieval and prior to that on Patristic and Platonic concepts. It is especially the *ordo*-structure

to which the author repeatedly calls attention as pervading the world without, the composition of man and the character of the word as intermediary, both sacred (*Scriptura*) and profane (*bonae litterae*). The visible world of nature, of human institutions and thus of history, reflects an ideal and invisible order, with which man comes into contact in ascending order with body, soul and spirit, through the letter of Scripture, which he is to penetrate in order to discover the true sense underlying the phenomenon of language. At the hierarchical pinnacle of all the orders is Christ, and the goal of the study of Scripture is assimilation to Christ as the response to the condescension of Christ as expressed in Scripture. In a word, the reader of Scripture is to become what he reads, but in order so to understand what he reads, he must already to a certain extent be what he is to become.

It is in the tension of this reciprocity that what may with adequate caution be called the Erasmian system develops, and it is to this peculiarity of Erasmian thought that the author draws repeated attention under various aspects. Exegesis vies with eisegesis, as the allegorist can derive the sense from the letter only after he is already to some extent permeated with this sense. Accordingly Erasmus does not proceed either purely inductively or deductively, but according to a method whose synthesis of both approaches Hoffmann finds generally less than felicitous, without recognizing that this is a necessary characteristic of any theological discussion which presupposes a given body of doctrine in turn pre-appointing to a considerable extent the outcome of that discussion. For Erasmus is neither a modern scholar in an absolute search for truth nor again a medieval spiritualist in flight from the world, but a man for whom pragmatic reality is altogether genuine and possessed of intrinsic value, though in turn all reality has for him a symbolic character, within a tradition, one might add, extending at least from the Greek Fathers to Goethe.

While an admirably thorough history and statement of the problem comprise the first chapter, the two remaining chapters deal respectively with knowledge (*Wissenschaft*) in its sources, the theology taken objectively together with its attendant studies, and human activity, the composition of man leading to the realization of this theology in him. Meticulously and painstakingly the author examines the dimensions of Christ as he accommodates himself to human accession in the word, and conversely of the human process of intellectual and moral assimilation to this ultimate goal. This is an exemplary piece of genuine philology, a minute examination of all the interacting terms of this complex and ultimately mysterious process.

But if the author's strength and indeed his unquestionable merit lie in this impeccably documented analysis of Erasmian terminology, certain weaknesses of the investigation as a whole paradoxically arise from the same direction, since he is indeed responsive to all the nuances of what Erasmus says, but not equally to what he often declines to say and hence says all the more profoundly. As a result some truly astonishing assertions have found their way into this book, beginning with the statement that no decisive impulses emanated from him upon the history of his own and subsequent times (p. 2), a statement incidentally soon contradicted by the author himself in detailing the effects of his thinking in universities, courts, and chanceries, especially in England (pp. 11 and 16); and continuing to the point made near the end that for Erasmus the relationship of nature and grace, human striving and divine assistance, remains in the last analysis unclear (p. 168). It would have taken, one might reply, a far lesser mind than that of Erasmus to attempt such a clarification.

Again, it seems mistaken to speak of the elimination of hope in his consideration of

the theological virtues (p. 46) or to claim that in the process of transformation hope plays no great part (p. 169). Surely a man so articulate on the great concern of world peace as Erasmus could not have failed to have an ultimately unshakable expectation of a better future, and the very process of realization under discussion in this book is unthinkable without a profound hope for its success on the part of Erasmus as teacher and the reader as pupil.

Yet these remain surface flaws in what is for the rest a valuable contribution to Erasmian scholarship, enhanced as an instrument for further research by a superb bibliography and an excellent index.

PETER SCHÄFFER, *The University of California, Berkeley*

Tenth Annual Report (1973-1974)
Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies
Victoria University
October 1974

The tenth year of the Centre's operation has brought sorrow, discouragement, and anxiety, but also the happy sense that something of permanent value has been achieved which will bear fruit in the future.

The tragic death early in the summer of a young colleague, David Sinclair, who had been a former student and Centre Fellow, was a shock to all who knew him, and a loss to scholarship in Canada. He will be remembered by many associates and former students for his fine qualities of mind and spirit.

This tenth year has also ushered in hard times which have frustrated some of our attempts to secure a larger measure of support from private foundations and government sources to help defray our rising costs.

Even so, there is much for which we are thankful. The work of the Centre has moved forward in many ways, largely thanks to the spirit of cooperation shown by interested colleagues throughout the University, as well as by the Centre Fellows, Assistants, and members of the staff of Victoria University Library. The continuing project on Renaissance bestsellers directed by Professor Ruth Harvey is making significant progress. Despite the serious lack of space for books and readers in the Centre library, more and more readers are using our collection of research materials not generally available elsewhere in Toronto.

As usual, there have been changes in the staff of the Centre. We wish to commend Dr. A.G. Reynolds, who recently retired as Registrar of Emmanuel College, for his service as Secretary of CRRS over the last few years.

Mrs. D. Sewell, a former Bibliographical Fellow, has recently been appointed Associate Editor for Publications at the Royal Ontario Museum. She continues her association with the Centre as a Research Associate.

Mrs. Sandra Walker has replaced Miss B. Jahnke as CRRS secretary for business opera-