broadly appealing essays, Erika Rummel explains “Why Noël Béda Did Not Like Erasmus’ *Paraphrases.*” This is a very good look at the “Scholastic/Humanist controversy” from the Scholastic side. The Paris theologians’ eventual condemnation of the *Paraphrases* presaged their later fate. Guy Bedouelle shows that the major French translation of 1563 was put forward as suggesting a medial position between Catholic and Protestant extremes; but it was moderate Protestants who were offering this suggestion. In successive editions under Edward VI, the English *Paraphrases* were given an increasingly Protestant slant. Gretchen E. Minton considers why the English chose not to use a text by John Bale to supply a paraphrase for Revelation (omitted by Erasmus). John Craig surveys English parish records to see whether the royal injunctions were followed that mandated the placing of a copy of the *Paraphrases* in every parish church. His conclusion is “that the ‘Protestant’ Erasmus of the English *Paraphrases* was indeed a durable presence in the parishes” (p. 336). Craig starts his essay with two provocative pages asking (and guessing) why there has been little study of Erasmian influence in England in recent decades. Craig’s essay implicitly perhaps refutes one of the rationales for this neglect: Erasmianism has been put aside as a merely elite phenomenon by social historians interested in the experience of the non-elite majority. Yet if Craig is right, the *Paraphrases* came “down” into the parishes and might have formed part of that experience. Erasmus’ impact on sixteenth-century English religion has been both over-and under-estimated; more work is needed to find the right assessment.

These essays engage special topics, but most have implications that should interest all students of Erasmus. The quality of the scholarship is uniformly high. The book clearly advances beyond previous work on the *Paraphrases* — and there are many more areas to explore.

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*Essays in Divinity* (1651) is a remarkably revealing work for Donne scholars. Written after the composition of the Holy Sonnets (conventionally dated 1609–10) and shortly before he was ordained a clergyman in 1615, the *Essays* probably provides a clearer and more straightforward account of the religious views of the man, John Donne, than anything else he wrote, apart from a few letters to his most intimate friends, such as Henry Goodyer. As a preacher, Donne would have been very aware that his sermons represented the Estab-
lished Church and its head, the King. *Pseudo-Martyr* (1610) and *Ignatius His Conclave* (1611) were both polemical works, written to catch the eye and the favor of that King at a time when he was embroiled in a bitter dispute with various Roman Catholic controversialists. *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions* (1624) consists of Donne’s personal meditations on the experience of a grave illness during the preceding year, but the work is also dedicated to Prince Charles, the heir apparent, and aimed at the edification of a larger reading public. *Biathanatos* (1647?, 1648), a quirky speculation on the morality of suicide, written about 1608 during Donne’s dispiriting Mitcham years, is clearly the work of a man enduring a crisis of self-doubt. *Essayes in Divinity*, however, which the poet seems to have composed as a preparation for Holy Orders, provides a portrait of a man setting his spiritual house in order and seeking to settle for himself his own profession of Christian faith.

Anthony Raspa’s fine new edition should prove to be, therefore, an exceedingly welcome volume to scholars investigating the work of John Donne and the religious literature of the earlier seventeenth century. Since John Donne, Jr., first published the work in 1651, twenty years after his father’s death, only two editions have appeared — by Augustus Jessop (1855) and Evelyn Simpson (1952) — which are both now out of print. Raspa has done more, however, than provide a reliable new text. He clarifies the status of the text by offering a persuasive argument that there was no real reissue with politically motivated revisions of the dedicatory materials in 1653: “The complications that surround the appearance of the text in 1651 and 1653 were not due, as has been argued, to a mixture of good and bad political intentions attributable to the younger Donne, involving Puritans and the monarchy, but were the result of the strains and stresses of manual mid-seventeenth-century printing, [. . . of] the rules governing book rights, and [. . . of] the ownership practices of publishers” (p. lxi). Further, Raspa shows, contrary to Simpson, that Donne did use the Authorized Version of 1611 and that Donne’s son was correct in dating the *Essayes*: “The influence of the King James Bible upon its citations and quotations, and the pagination of the 1614 edition of Buxtorf’s *Synagoga Judaica* in Donne’s marginalia (p. 102), confirm that he completed the work in that year” (pp. xxxix–xl).

But it is in his extensive interpretive introduction and commentary that Raspa makes his truly outstanding contribution to the study of this work and to a general understanding of John Donne. As Raspa observes, Simpson’s pioneering edition — admirable as it is — leads us to regard the *Essayes* as “an appendage to the yet unwritten sermons” (p. xxiii), so that we fail to see that “the work belongs clearly to the literary genre of commentaries on Genesis and Exodus in the current of exegetical works from roughly Erasmus onwards” (p. xxii). If there is a single overriding fault in the great mass of contemporary Donne scholarship, it is the tendency to reduce a brilliant visionary poet and
thinker to the status of a provincial competitor in Stuart ecclesiastical politics. Whatever the exigencies of his situation as a servant of the English Church, Donne the poet, Donne the philosophical theologian, never forgot his roots in the cosmopolitan humanism of Erasmus and his ancestor Thomas More; and this heritage, as Raspa points out, is reflected in the Essayes:

Provocatively, it is neither particularly Protestant nor Catholic. Donne drew his authorities for Essayes from the fiercest controversialists on both sides of the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation with practically no reference to their differences, as though they were all indiscriminately relevant to his exegesis of the first verses of Genesis and Exodus. (p. xx)

It is this sophisticated “Erasmian” sensibility that underlies what Raspa describes as Donne’s “considerable reluctance to go [. . .] too far in either a Catholic or a Protestant way” (p. xxxiii). It is this same sensibility that leads to Donne’s remarkable assertion (for 1614) in his discussion of Exodus 1:1: “so Synagogue and Church is the same thing, and of the Church, Roman and Reformed, and all other distinctions of place, Discipline, or Person, but one Church, journeying to one Hierusalem, and directed by one guide, Christ Jesus” (p. 58).

Raspa’s commentary, running to more than 80 pages for just over 100 pages of text, is an extraordinary achievement. While Donne’s poetry is notorious for its arcane allusions, it does not begin to match the formidable erudition of his scholarship when he undertook to investigate a profound subject. Raspa has diligently tracked down and generously quoted sixteenth-century volumes that are largely forgotten and accessible only in the rare book rooms of major research libraries. He has not only identified Donne’s sources, but also placed them in context and explained their significance for the Essayes. While Simpson’s edition does a fine job of showing how this work furnishes ideas for many of Donne’s sermons, as well as a background for many poems, the new edition brings to light the influence of works that will be unfamiliar even to many experienced Renaissance scholars. The painstaking effort Raspa has put into his detailed commentary is thus justified by serving as a salutary reminder that John Donne was the spiritual and cultural heir of a humanist tradition that stretched across the English Channel and back through the sixteenth century into the Middle Ages.

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