
In *Biblical Humanism and Scholasticism in the Age of Erasmus*, Erika Rummel continues her exploration of the humanist-scholastic debate and the role of humanists in the theological and biblical-philological controversies of the early modern period, this time with the company of many of the leading scholars in the field. The essays in this collection address many of the issues Rummel investigated in previous work, including the *Humanist-Scholastic Debate in the Renaissance and Reformation* (1995) and the challenges to biblical humanists when they trod too far into theological inquiry for the comfort of scholastic theologians (*Erasmus and His Catholic Critics*, 2 vols. [1989]). In this volume of essays, however, Rummel takes the topic one step further by considering the chronological and regional differences that shaded the humanist-scholastic polemic and the challenges it posed for humanists involved in the study of Scripture.

The book is arranged in five sections: an introductory section followed by regional investigations of the scholastic-humanist debates in Spain, Paris, Leuven, and Italy. In the first section, Rummel’s introductory essay is complemented by two articles that establish the background and tone of the polemics between scholastics and humanists, which took on greater significance after the emergence of Luther’s challenge to Christian unity. For her part, Rummel lays out not only the structure of the volume but also the contours of the debate. Humanists of the fifteenth and sixteenth century increasingly extended their *ad fontes* approach and language studies into the area of scriptural studies and theological inquiry. As a result, academic theologians “regarded humanists as trespassers on their professional turf” (2), without the proper training to guard safely against heresy and theological error. Rummel shows both how the debate emerged in three phases—“literary, academic, and doctrinal” (4)—and how the phases manifested themselves differently across the various geographical and academic milieus. In addition, Rummel is quick to point out that, in each setting, humanist and scholastic interests often overlapped not only in the subjects of their inquiries but also in methodology.

Rummel’s essay is followed by John Monfasani’s contribution, “Criticism of Biblical Humanists in Quattrocento Italy,” in which he explores the importance of papal support, particularly that of Pope Nicholas V (1447–1455), for humanistic biblical studies. Furthermore, Monfasani identifies the fundamental role of the Italian Renaissance humanists, especially Lorenzo
Valla, in later efforts of Northern humanists in biblical studies. While the essay might have been more happily housed in the final section on Italian biblical humanism, it nevertheless provides a strong introduction to the foundational role the Italian quattrocento played in creating a space for humanistic inroads into biblical scholarship, not only in Italy, but also in Northern Europe. The final essay in the introductory section, “Erasmus, the Intellectuals, and the Reuchlin Affair,” by Daniel Ménager, handles two topics that emerge frequently in subsequent essays: biblical humanists’ attitudes about the value of Hebrew scholarship and the internal struggles among biblical humanists over qualifications and methodology.

The second section examines the Spanish context of biblical humanism. Taken together, three essays provide insight into an area of sixteenth-century humanism often overlooked in English studies of humanism. In a fascinating essay, Carlos del Valle Rodríguez investigates “Antonio Nebrija’s Biblical Scholarship.” Valle Rodríguez assesses the struggles Nebrija faced in his efforts to use humanism to combat what he viewed as the barbarism of Spanish intellectual life. Nevertheless, Nebrija’s efforts to revise the Vulgate “made him suspect in the eyes of the Inquisition” (68). In “Anti-Erasmianism in Spain,” Alejandro Coroleu probes the multifaceted relationships between devotees and critics of Erasmus. Coroleu notes that although Erasmus had many supporters in the imperial court in Spain, conservative scholars like Stunica and Sancho Carranza de Miranda challenged Erasmus’ orthodoxy and methodology. Charles Fantazzi looks at a more internationally renowned Spanish humanist, Juan Luis Vives, who only relatively recently has attracted sustained scholarly attention. Fantazzi depicts Vives as a confident and independent intellectual whose polemical In Pseudodialeticos challenged scholasticism effectively because of his own scholastic expertise and training. Fantazzi notes that although Vives’ critique of the logicians did not deal a comprehensive blow to scholasticism, it reflected the efforts of Vives and his allies, including More and Erasmus, to challenge “the transference of the caviling and barbarous language of the logicians to the realm of theology and the resulting obfuscation of the simple truths of revelation” (105).

The third section consists of two assessments of the pivotal role of Paris theologians in the humanist-scholastic debate. First, Guy Bedouelle puts into perspective Jacques Lefèvre d’Étaples’ controversial biblical humanism by pointing to Lefèvre’s sometimes overlooked contributions to it, from a French translation of the Vulgate to commentaries on the Pauline Epistles—publications that soon put him at odds with not only traditional scholastic theologians but also Erasmus. Lefèvre’s real troubles, however, originated with