

DeMolen has shattered a number of the more popular caricatures of Erasmus, including that of his being some sort of scoundrel who shunned neither falsification nor contradictory statements if such would foster his own welfare. Rather, a careful study of both Erasmus' written works and his correspondence from the earliest extant pieces until the time of his death in 1536 reveals a rather remarkable consistency in his outlook and emphases; indeed, for most of this time he had an overriding concern to encourage, and also to attempt to exemplify, a holiness of life in imitation of Christ. Among sources important to him were the sacred Scriptures, the Church Fathers, and devotional-type writings such as Thomas a Kempis' *Imitation of Christ*.

DeMolen's assessment stands in sharp contrast to the view that Erasmus was but a classicist, whose genuine interest was ancient letters, but who had generally little religious conviction. It also modifies the view of those scholars who would allow some small degree of spiritual tone to Erasmus' work, especially as evidenced in his *Handbook of a Christian Knight* (prepared in 1501 and first published in 1503). What DeMolen demonstrates is that Erasmus began his emphasis on his *Philosophia Christi* as early as 1489, while he was a canon in the Augustinian monastery at Steyn; and, moreover, that from that time onward the theme is pervasive, not simply incidental, in Erasmus' writings.

Although I normally do not review the same title for more than one scholarly journal, in the case of *The Spirituality of Erasmus of Rotterdam* I have also prepared a critical review for the *Erasmus of Rotterdam Society Yearbook*, 8 (1988): 145-148. That review differs somewhat in nature from the present one, and therefore the interested reader may wish to consult that review also. (The most helpful procedure, of course, is to peruse the book itself for the genuinely fascinating information it presents.)

In closing, a *caveat* is in order: The reader of this book should not expect total cohesiveness, for the topical treatment utilized does not lend itself to a consistent chronological presentation; and there is, as well, some duplication of material among the various chapters. Nevertheless, the volume is lucid both in its parts and in its totality. I would highly recommend it to anyone seeking a better understanding of Erasmus, and especially to those who are interested in the great Humanist's spiritual dimensions.

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Elwell, Walter A., ed. *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*. 2 vols. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988. 2210 pp. \$79.95.

The primary intention of the two-volume *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* is to make the ancient concepts of the Bible vibrant and understand-

able to the non-specialist in today's world. As a result, technical jargon is avoided, Greek and Hebrew terms are transliterated, and scholarly arguments are kept to a minimum. Also in keeping with the comfort level of the target audience, it maintains a conservative stance toward the biblical text; the Bible is assumed to be what it claims to be, the Word of God.

We are not, however, dealing with some kind of mindless biblicism. The editors and writers of the *Encyclopedia* read like a who's who of the most eminent evangelical biblical scholars in the English-speaking world. General Editor Elwell is best known for his earlier *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*. The five associate editors include such well-known names as Peter Craigie and Roland K. Harrison. The more than 5,700 articles are produced by over 175 high-quality scholars such as David Aune, Colin Brown, F. F. Bruce, James D. G. Dunn, George Eldon Ladd, I. Howard Marshall, Leon Morris, and Edwin Yamauchi.

The *Encyclopedia*, made up of completely new material, includes a "mini-commentary" on each Bible book; extensive articles on major biblical themes; general articles on historical, cultural, and literary backgrounds; entries on every biblical person and most historical events and geographical places; and over 600 photos, maps, and other illustrations. In addition, there are thirty "omnibus articles" that cover various aspects of life in biblical times, bringing together a number of related items in one place for convenience. Bibliographies are occasionally offered, but are not a regular feature. Cross-references are normally from minor to major articles. Authors for articles worked on by several different people are not attributed.

A major problem with the *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* is the claim on the "dust jacket" that "more advanced [students] discover it to be far more thorough and complete than any Bible dictionary." It is not clear what is meant by "advanced" or by "dictionary." Whether or not intended, the impression is left with the browser that this *Encyclopedia* will be of great value to the scholar and that it will compare favorably with such standards as the *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*. This is certainly not the case. Most articles are minimal in their discussion of scholarly issues and totally lacking in bibliographies. The *Encyclopedia's* few bibliographies focus particularly on works of previous generations and on those of evangelical scholars. Reference to critical works is rare.

Particularly disturbing is the age of the bibliographical material. A fairly extensive survey revealed only two items from the 1980s, and both, not surprisingly, are in the article on Ebla (the latest being 1981). This deficiency is masked to the casual reader because no dates are given in the bibliographies. Such first-rate recent evangelical commentaries as those of F. F. Bruce on Thessalonians (1982) and John (1984), Peter Davids on James (1982), Robert Gundry on Matthew (1982), Peter O'Brien on Colossians and Philemon (1982), and Stephen Smalley on the letters of John

(1984) are all missing, even though the *Encyclopedia* was published in 1988. (This is particularly surprising in that Bruce and Davids are among the writers of the *Encyclopedia*.) By contrast, the fourth volume of *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, published around the same time, contains a multitude of references to works in the 1980s, right up to 1985. Since many of the commentaries which were left out are superior to items in the respective bibliographies, one can only conclude that most of the content of this *Encyclopedia* is at least ten years old.

Such quibbling, however, needs to be placed in perspective. The primary intent of the *Encyclopedia* is simplicity and clarity combined with scholarly accuracy. In this, it succeeds admirably. Its closest competitor is *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, a more critical work also aimed at the general reader, even though produced by the Society of Biblical Literature. In content the two are fairly equal, but the *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* is much more complete. *Harper's* leaves out many minor entries without providing any significant improvement in the quantity and quality of the bibliographies. Of the two, the Baker approach is to be preferred. Though not as complete as the *ISBE* or even *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, the *Baker Encyclopedia* should be given careful consideration by non-specialists who are appreciative of its style, intent, and theological stance. Specialists, on the other hand, are advised to stick with the *ISBE* and/or *IDB* until the *Anchor Bible Dictionary* makes its long-awaited debut in a couple of years.

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Grant, Robert M. *Greek Apologists of the Second Century*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1988. 254 pp. \$19.95.

Robert M. Grant, Professor Emeritus of New Testament and Early Christianity at the University of Chicago, is deservedly recognized as one of the greatest living authorities on the crucial second century of Christian history. In this book he shares the ripe fruits of a lifetime of study.

The book offers a rather complete survey, from the Jewish and pagan background of apologetic and its Christian beginnings (he rightly sees Acts 14 and 17 as the earliest Christian specimens of the genre) through to the use of the second-century Christian apologists by writers in later centuries. All major and minor figures are dealt with.

Greek Apologists of the Second Century consists of twenty-three short chapters, three appendices, notes, and a useful bibliography. The chapters deal not only with the apologists themselves but also with the political and religious situations which they addressed. Able attention is given to the reigns of Trajan, Hadrian, Marcus Aurelius, and Commodus; and