

set against the prevailing scholasticism, it championed the primacy of grammar over dialectic. Over against the multiplication of meaning in scholasticism produced by the dialectical harmonization of propositions drawn ahistorically from a tradition possessing undifferentiated authority, humanists sought to grasp the original meaning of ancient texts and on that basis to reground and so re-form contemporary church and society.

In this light, not only is the early (and late!) Luther a thorough-going "humanist," but in the decisive respect he is an unexcelled exemplar of the movement's most fundamental aspirations. Dost demonstrates this among other things by tracing in some detail the earlier correspondence between Luther and Erasmus before their relation soured. In this light, one could suggest that the Erasmus/Luther debate turns out to be a debate between two Christian humanists, one (Luther) accusing the other (Erasmus) of getting cold feet in the decisive hour.

Dost's first two chapters provide an excellent survey of the scholarly discussions of the relevant themes. This survey of the literature will be as useful to theologians and other interested disciplines as it is to historians. Dost brings this discussion to focus in a manageable way by proposing to study Luther's correspondence from its beginning through his enforced stay at the Wartburg. In this way he tests not only Luther's express adherence to the humanist agenda, for example, in the educational reforms at Wittenberg, but also his assimilation of humanist epistolary conventions. This study occupies chapters 3 through 6, which cover the transition of Luther from academic firebrand to embattled confessor and potential martyr.

In the process, Dost sheds new light on a vexing matter: Luther's frequent and increasing abandonment of irenic disputation with its potential for rational persuasion in favor of vehement and often crude polemic in his public writings. Generally this is attributed to a peculiar apocalyptic turn of mind in Luther that inclines him to see in the dramatic events of his protest the final battle between God and the devil in the world's last ravaged hour. That is true so far as it goes. But what Dost brings out is that Luther, according to this early correspondence and in keeping with the highest aspirations of contemporary humanism, would have preferred to restrict debate to Latin, and finally felt forced to the use of German in response to a vernacular smear campaign launched by Eck following the Leipzig debate. At least part of Luther's ensuing vitriol is outrage at Eck's violation of the humanist ideals.

With the turn to the vernacular, a war *for* hearts and minds and a war *against* implacable opponents had now to be waged. Luther's embattled sense of isolation at the hands of opportunistic opponents crying for torches and faggots corresponds to the manifest decline which Dost documents in his use of the polite, winsome, and leisurely conventions of humanist letters. The failure of the academic ideal of humanist scholarship to resolve by research the issues raised by Luther's (humanist!) attacks on scholastic theology and on indulgences left him with nothing but the *rhetorical* tools of polemic, which he had also learned from his *humanist* sources.

With that interesting complication of our knowledge of the early Luther, Dost has perhaps made more of a contribution than his book itself claims. Dost's conclusion is a much too conventional reiteration of traditional Lutheran apologetics which lacks the conceptual precision which his own research demands. To the question, "Was Luther a humanist?" Dost can only throw up his hands and say: "In some ways, yes, and in other ways, no." This answer is unworthy of the discovery he has made. What the book demonstrates is that Luther was a humanist in every serious and relevant sense of the word, and that his turn to the sources, the Scripture, including *its* apocalyptic interpretation of history and the corresponding descent into apocalyptic invective, was the fruit of this research program.

Renaissance Humanism in Support of the Gospel in Luther's Early Correspondence: Taking All Things Captive. Timothy P. Dost. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001. 244 pp. \$79.95. ISBN 0-7546-0350-4.

REVIEWED BY: Paul R. Hinlicky, Roanoke College

This erudite and interesting study succeeds both in filling a gap in our knowledge of Luther's early affinity with northern humanism and in driving another nail into the coffin of the old "Luther versus humanism" canard. Taking his cues from Paul Kristeller and Helmar Junghans, Dost correctly grasps that the humanist movement was a research program, not a religious doctrine, an ideology, a worldview, nor a philosophical system. As a hermeneutic