

defense of the authority of antiquity in matters cosmological, or from any conflict between science and religion.

F. demonstrates that despite the many cardinals and various papal bureaucrats and other persons involved in the Galileo case, Paul V and Urban VIII bear personal responsibility for its outcome in 1616 and in 1633 respectively. But F. also argues that John Paul II's desire to acknowledge that Galileo's condemnation was a mistake, and thus in some sense close the case, was frustrated by other Vatican authorities who made a muddle of the honesty and clarity the pope desired. Cardinal Paul Poupard, on F.'s account, seems to have played a major role in such a muddling. Though books on the Galileo case are extraordinarily abundant, this volume merits attention both by historians and by anyone concerned with how papal bureaucracy may be functional and/or dysfunctional.

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JEWISH MESSIANIC THOUGHT IN AN AGE OF DESPAIR. By Kenneth Seeskin. New York: Cambridge University, 2012. Pp. ix + 222. \$100.

Seeskin's primary source is Kant's *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, around which his other interlocutors elaborate in their fashion, absorbing and critiquing German Enlightenment philosophy. Other main authors considered in detail are Maimonides, Hermann Cohen, Emil Fackenheim, Steven Schwarzschild, and Franz Rosenzweig, with interspersed critical notes on Gershom Scholem, Emmanuel Levinas, and Walter Benjamin. S. places Kant's ethics and Hegel's historiography at the center, from which he argues for his own rational, ethical, and demythologized messianism.

At the outset S. presents the contemporary picture as that of despair: the horrors of the 20th century loom in the background, the present state of Israel is in constant threat, and the diaspora continues. In an acknowledgement of the unity of the three monotheistic faiths, S. argues that each believes in a better future for humanity based on a messianism. S. wishes to clarify two questions: Is this messianic better future based on wishful thinking that is bolstered by mythology? And is this future ethical and rational? Following Kant, S. sides with the rational approach to a messianic future, with anything else being a fantastical and mythological error.

S. describes five ways of conceptualizing the idea of the messiah, each with its own merits and drawbacks: "1. inflate the idea of the Messiah, 2. deflate it, 3. marginalize it, 4. internalize it, or 5. defer it" (19). S. focuses first on Maimonides's deflation of the messianic event as purely rational, presaging Kant's rationalization of religion. Second, the internalizing of

the messianic event is represented by Hasidism after the failure of Sabbatai Zevi, who notably converted to Islam at the threat of death. Messianism is thus lived out in everyone, as we are all carrying the suffering of the Other. Third, infinitely deferring the messianic event is contingent on the paradox of the human endeavor to bring about the messianic age. It is unlikely that we can bring it about, but other than an impossible and infinite striving, perhaps we can simply wait on God's grace. Within this paradoxical situation do we continue endlessly and impossibly to strive to bring about the Messiah's arrival, or do we do nothing and simply wait for the Messiah at God's chosen time?

After a brief introduction to the various theories of messianism, S. presents Maimonides's deflated Messiah as a precursor to Kant's reasonable approach to religion. Certainly there is a large body of demythologizing in Maimonides's account of the coming of the Messiah and an emergence of intellectual contemplation on God. S., however, does not account for the actual mythologizing about the Messiah that is contained in much of Maimonides's writings. Comparisons with Kant are tenuous when one regards Maimonides's extended *oeuvre*. One can make similar comparisons between Maimonides's negative theology and Kant's critique of ontotheology. When we examine the two, we realize that S.'s emphasis on Kant rather than Maimonides leaves the reader with a Jewish theology that is in practice German Enlightenment philosophy.

Internalism, for S., resumes a focus on Kant and his concept of demythologized ethical hope. According to Kant hope is not wishful thinking but rather is working toward an ethical imperative that is beneficial to society and the other. Reason alone cannot bring about ethical behavior; only hope can. Pairing Kant with Hermann Cohen's internalist messianism, S. argues that hope is what grounds the believers' invocation of the Messiah, who will arrive when we act in light of ethical hope. Gershom Scholem reiterates that the one who acts with intense ethical hope for the world may be the Messiah (52).

Infinite deferral raises the questions of whether the internal messianism is ever expressed outwardly, and whether the full coming of the Messiah is the hoped-for yet not realized. Consider S.'s summation of Steven S. Schwarzschild's assessment that "the Messiah not only has not come but also will never have come; rather he will always *be* coming—then he will never come in finite time" (79). This sets up humanity for constant ethical failure, and, reinforced by Kant, no person can be ethically perfect, nor can any action be perfectly morally good. This impossibility is resolved in knowing that God is infinitely good, and that the finite believer can only strive toward that goodness (94, 98). In the Kantian view, the infinitely deferred Messiah is continually evoked through the believers' hope and striving (103).

After an analysis of historiography and Jewish existential thought, S.'s answer to the complexities of messianism is that the Chosen People should strive for social justice.

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WOMEN AND THE VATICAN: AN EXPLORATION OF OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS.
By Ivy A. Helman. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2012. Pp. x + 262. \$35.

Much of the discussion of feminist theology and magisterial teaching on women focuses on a particular issue, such as sexual ethics or the ordination of women to the priesthood. Helman provides instead a broad overview of the subject that will assist readers just entering the conversation and will provide a larger perspective to those concerned primarily with one issue.

H. outlines the development of the Vatican's theology of women by decades from 1960 to 2011, arguing that the clarification of the magisterial thinking on women is prompted by feminism, which the magisterial theology supports in some ways and critiques in others. An introduction discusses the different waves of feminism and intrafeminist discussion, as well as sketches pre-1960 church teaching. Each chapter introduces the documents of a given decade, concluding with excerpts or full texts of those H. considers most significant. The conclusion synthetically examines the theology of women emerging from these developments.

H. highlights the main themes of marriage, sexuality, dignity and human rights, service, and gender complementarity as they arise over the decades, while resolutely maintaining a broad vision of the emerging theology of women as a whole. These themes are contextualized with reference to historical, cultural, and theoretical shifts in feminism and women's legal rights and opportunities, such as the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision and the concept of gender as a social construction in the 1990s and 2000s. In addition, tangential theological themes such as the Roman Catholic Church's attitude toward scientific and technological developments are introduced when needed and treated briefly and effectively. In the conclusion, H. summarizes magisterial teaching on the definition of femininity and womanhood, as well as what the Vatican deems necessary for women to be fulfilled in family, church, and society.

The unitive treatment of these themes as they contribute gradually to a general theology of the nature of women and their needs is significant, as is the identification of the most essential documents and their historically contextualized presentation. Nonetheless, H.'s greatest achievement is her tone, which, by its studied neutrality and nuance, grants access to readers across the spectrum of feminism and ecclesial politics. She acknowledges the substantial agreements between various feminist positions and Vatican