

“Philosophy” only partially compensates for the omission); and the exclusion of Barth’s two most important Catholic interlocutors, Erich Przywara and Hans Urs von Balthasar, is inexcusable. Despite these shortcomings, Burnett has provided us with an excellent resource. As B. notes in his introduction, it is far from clear that Barth himself would have approved of this venture. But there is no doubt that his legacy—in the academy and in the church—has been well served by it.

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Marcion and Prometheus: Balthasar against the Expulsion of Jewish Origins in Modern Religious Thought. By Anthony C. Scigliano Jr. New York: Crossroad, 2014. Pp. xxv + 219. \$32.95.

In this volume Scigliano offers a wide-ranging investigation of Balthasar’s theology of religions, with particular focus on his understanding of Judaism. At the most fundamental level, S. argues that Balthasar offers “a remarkably hospitable and capacious Christian theology of religions without sacrificing Christian content” (ix). Given Balthasar’s reputation, the former claim of hospitality may seem odd or suspect; yet S. demonstrates this point with great clarity and force, particularly in the final chapter’s excellent discussion of Balthasar’s positive valuation and engagement with non-Christian myth, philosophy, and religious thought. Balthasar resists any overarching, a priori theological evaluation (positive or negative) of other religions and instead advocates and enacts an a posteriori approach that engages other cultures and religions with an expectation of finding seeds of the truth, goodness, and beauty of God. This basic move is what S. fittingly describes as “Christological hospitality,” and he demonstrates well how hospitable Balthasar can be.

This fine discussion of theology of religions opens and closes the book, but the heart of the text is an exploration of the anti-Marcionite structure of Balthasar’s thought. The book begins with Balthasar’s discernment of a transformed Marcionism in modern thought and within modern anti-Semitism in particular. In view of the Third Reich and other manifestations of anti-Semitism, Balthasar judges Marcionism as not only the “first systematic form of theological anti-Semitism” but also “the primary demon of modern anti-Judaism” (6). Such a reading gets right Balthasar’s reading of modernity and puts S. in line with other genealogies of modernity that recognize the reemergence of anti-Jewish and quasi-gnostic thought patterns.

The next step in S.’s argument is a portrait of Balthasar as a deeply anti-Marcionite theologian who resists this modern deformation with a maximal affirmation of the OT’s revelatory character. Put simply, “for Balthasar one requires an Old Covenant education to rightly apprehend the form of Christ” (81). In this way, the Old Covenant has an irreplaceable “pedagogical role,” both apophatically in

tearing down idols and demythologizing the cosmos, and cataphatically in offering a preliminary sketch of the fullness to come in Christ (37–40). Balthasar accordingly rejects the use of any other prehistory as primary for understanding the truth of Christ—whether in aggressive forms inspired by anti-Semitism or in seemingly innocuous forms shaped by dialogue with other religions and cultures. Echoing Romans 11, Balthasar argues, “there can be no Christianity which is not, a priori and inwardly, related in a deeply sympathetic manner to the ‘holy tree,’ as the branch is related to the root” (106).

Surprising to many readers will be the final move regarding Balthasar’s understanding of Judaism. Balthasar, as early as 1957—seven years before Vatican II’s *Nostra aetate*—argues that God’s covenant with the Jews is not forsaken, rejects a Christian mission to the Jews (for “such a mission would suggest that the Jews are no longer God’s people” [98]), and calls for genuine dialogue. This position, though not significantly developed further, remained Balthasar’s for the rest of his life.

Let me express one nitpicky addition and one main reservation. First the addition: Balthasar on several occasions appeals to the image of the 24 elders standing before the throne in the Book of Revelation and specifically emphasizes that these are not uniformly Christian figures. The twelve elders of Israel represent a covenant that “has not, in fact, been superseded” (Theo-Drama, vol. 5, p. 419), nor is it entirely clear how this affirmation fits with Balthasar’s overall thought, but it remains a fruitful opening to be explored.

Now my reservation: S. presents a convincing case that a Marcionite tendency has returned in modernity, but the question of more classical supersessionism remains. Although it is clear that Balthasar would reject the form of supersessionism in the *Epistle to Barnabas* and the harsh rhetoric of John Chrysostom, S. rightly notes that Balthasar is a “soft supersessionist” in that he still holds to fulfillment of the Old Covenant in Christ (107) and that Israel is “predestined to find its fulfillment in the Church” (140). Given this, it is unsurprising that Balthasar has trouble actually putting much detail into his formal affirmation of the ongoing mission of the Jewish people; it is hard for him to name its ongoing purpose apart from Christ. This is the problem, of course, of any classical trinitarian and Christocentric theology. S. does helpfully develop some aspects of what this might look like (154), but more needs to be done if Balthasar’s thought can provide a clear way forward for Christian understanding and engagement with Judaism.

S. has done great service to all who are interested in Balthasar’s thought, Jewish–Christian relations, and Christian responses to modernity. The book is a very good introduction to Balthasar and also offers a clear vision of what a robustly trinitarian and Christocentric theology looks like when it is authentically hospitable to Judaism.

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