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## The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth

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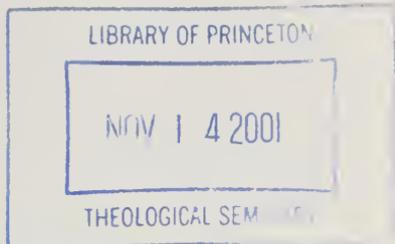
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in Calvin's theological evolution between which Calvin took his decisive turn into Protestantism.

The *Psychopannychia* is a curious work and the 1536 *Institutes* is an interesting one. However, neither the one nor the other substitute for a careful reading of Calvin's final version of the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.

Zwingli died in 1531 not 1541 (p. 31); Luther's *Appeal to the Nobility of the German Nation* was written in 1520 not 1518 (p. 165).

Charles Partee  
Pittsburgh Theological Seminary

Webster, John, ed. *The Cambridge Companion To Karl Barth*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000. Pp. 312. \$54.95.

If there was one book I would recommend to read along with the writings of Karl Barth, this would be the one.

A collection of eighteen essays by leading scholars of Barth's work, each essay presents an accessible yet fresh and critical account of Barth's writing using key themes from his theology. Further, each details Barth's contribution to twentieth, century and constructive theology, and shows areas where Barth is insufficient. After a chapter introducing Barth's life, three essays present the overall distinctive marks of his theology, along with the roles divine revelation and scripture play in his method. Eight essays then show the impact of his method on his understandings of God and God's relationship to humanity: The Trinity; God's gracious election; creation and providence; Christology; salvation; humanity; the Holy Spirit; Christian community and sacraments. Five essays speak of Barth's ethics and of the critical engagement between Barth's theology and political action, the other religions, feminism, and postmodernity. A concluding chapter summarizes the ongoing impact of Barth's theology.

Of the sixteen core essays, most are very strong, even exemplary, in several respects. First, the writing is tight. Each essay averages seventeen pages—long enough for depth, detail, and clarity, but not so long that the ideas become confusing. After each essay, I felt refreshed, not exhausted, and thus ready to read more. Second, coming from among the best of Barth scholars these essays provide valuable insight into the range of Barth's thought in a way that nurtures a fuller depth to the theological and pastoral imagination, in essence placing Barth's theological imagination in the service of preaching, teaching, and theological reflection. For example, "Theology" (Chapter 2, Schwoebel) presents the finest introduction to Barth's thought I have read. And "Salvation" (Chapter 9, Gunton) brings clarity to the massive CD IV. The three chapters on humanity, ethics, and political engagement (Chapters

10, Kroetke; 13, Biggar; 14, Werpehowski) are excellent introductions to both Barth's thought and these topics in general, and could be used in theology, Christian ethics, or church adult education courses.

Third, several essays illuminate Barth's views in ways that either counter unhelpful stereotypes of Barth or challenge his theological thinking. An example of the former is Di Noia (Chapter 15) who reveals nuances in Barth's thought which challenge the often-presumed "exclusivist" position of Barth concerning truth in other world religions. Sympathetic readers who yet provide serious doctrinal challenges to Barth's thinking are McCormack (Chapter 6), who challenges inconsistencies between Barth's doctrines of the immanent Trinity and election, and Gunton (Chapter 9) who claims that Barth's deficient pneumatology not only affects his Christology but ramifies through many other elements of the God-world relation. Finally, several essays place Barth in critical conversation with contemporary thought. For example Sonderegger (Chapter 16) articulates many of the reasons Barth seems to be the enemy of feminism, then effectively places him in dialogue with certain feminist critics. In so doing, she masterfully reveals Barth to be both the friend and the foe of feminism. And Ward (Chapter 17) shows how Barth is, and is not, similar to postmoderns like Levinas, Lyotard, Nietzsche, and Sartre.

In two ways, the book's greatest strengths also reveal limitations. First, the book casts itself as "an introduction to the subject for new readers and non-specialists." However, this "companion" to Barth's thought actually requires of readers some knowledge of systematic theology and some familiarity with Barth's thought and work. For example, Hunsinger's excellent introduction to Barth's Christology (Chapter 8) assumes the reader's knowledge of the Christological debates and early church councils. For use in adult education or sermons, the minister would need to supplement this chapter of background information about the meaning and substance of these debates and councils. Second, while many of the essays (Sonderegger, Ward, and others) place Barth's thought in sharp critical engagement with counter-voices in contemporary theology, their succinctness nevertheless places limitations on the extent to which critical engagement with these other voices is possible.

This book is an excellent resource for the pastor who knows basic systematic theology, some Barth, and who wants to engage Barth's writings in order to enhance his or her preaching or teaching. And it is a "must have" book for Barth scholars, whether sympathetic or critical of Barth's perspective.

Gregory Anderson Love  
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