

*Benedict XV. A pope in the world of the 'useless slaughter' (1914–1918)*. Edited by Giovanni Cavognini and Giulia Grossi and directed by Alberto Melloni. 2 vols. Pp. 852 + 853–1707. Turnhout: Brepols, 2020. €185. 978 2 503 58287 0; 978 2 503 58288 7

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The content of these handsomely produced volumes is almost identical with the Italian edition (rev. this *JOURNAL* lxx [2019], 673–5), except that the ninety essays, divided into four not particularly helpful sections, are now presented in English regardless of the language – rarely English – in which they were originally written. While this may encourage a slightly wider diffusion of this collection, it is difficult to imagine that many scholars who are studying this no longer ‘unknown pope’ will not have at least a reading knowledge of the languages in which the text was originally composed. The high production standard of the original has been maintained, though the essays are no longer in double column, there is no slip case, the binding is now green rather than red and on the front of each volume there is a somewhat frightening picture depicting, one presumes, the ‘useless slaughter’ of which Benedict xv spoke. There is one welcome change: abstracts of the essays have been appended at the end of the second volume. There are some minor quibbles with both editions. For instance, and as I remarked in the original review, from reading the chapter entitled ‘Churches in war: faith under fire’ one might be forgiven for thinking that Great Britain had not taken part in World War I, or that much has been written on the impact of that war on the Churches in Britain. And one might have hoped that the appearance of a new edition would have encouraged the publishers to print a more thorough index: that in the book is of names only. None the less, as the original review concluded, for those concerned not just with papal history but also with ecumenism, diplomacy and the Catholic Church’s relations with Judaism, these two volumes are a rich resource.

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*Karl Barth. A life in conflict*. By Christiane Tietz (trans. Victoria J. Barnett). Pp. xx + 448 incl. 47 ills. Oxford–New York: Oxford University Press, 2021. £25. 978 0 19 885246 9

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This book is a stunning achievement. That a biography of a theologian is so engrossing speaks not only to the kind of life that Barth led, but also to the skill and patience of the biographer. What Tietz offers in this book is a comprehensive account of Barth’s life and work – the two, of course, being inseparable – that displays him in all his humanity. This is not just a document of what Barth did and where Barth went. It is a remarkable attempt to portray Barth’s complex personality – his humour, his temper, his stubbornness, his generosity, his conviction. This all-too-human Barth can often disappear from view behind his gigantic theological *corpus*. Tietz has done the world of theology a service by pulling him back into the spotlight.