going to agree with this assimilation of the erotic into divine love, let alone gather around it as a point of commonality for future inter-faith dialogue.

Notwithstanding these shortcomings, this text is still a forward move in a positive direction as scholars of all three faiths continue to dialogue and interface in an attempt to better understand each other, accentuate the common positives, and make progress in the ultimate aim which is to bring together these three faiths under the rubric of love and respect in order to reverse the centuries of violence and war, and better enable the billions of followers to peacefully co-exist on this planet, one which is constantly developing into a 'global village' with each passing day.

Christiane Tietz, *Karl Barth: A Life in Conflict*, trans. Victoria J. Barnett. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021. (Xix + 448pp.) [ISBN: 978-0-19-885246-9]

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When I read a biography I hope for the story of a *life* portrayed all its dynamism, depth, suffering, and hope. A good biography will set its subject in their time and context, describing their relationships, work, involvements, and achievement. It identifies the defining events and circumstances that shaped the direction of the life, as well as those changes and experiences—often unsought—which nevertheless altered the trajectory of the life. Of course, it should be factual and accurate, based on careful, critical examination of primary and other relevant sources. Finally, the descriptive account of the life will also enable something of the *person* themselves to be seen and understood. I want to gain a sense of the person as they understood themselves, as they were viewed, experienced, and understood by their contemporaries; something of their character, ethos, thought, and activity. I hope that the account is three-dimensional as it were, setting forth the person in all their uniqueness, complexity, paradox, and depth. Christiane Tietz has, in my estimation, achieved this richness in her recent biography, *Karl Barth: A Life in Conflict*.

An immediate question arises concerning the need of her biography: is not Eberhard Busch's magisterial *Karl Barth: His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts* (ET 1976) sufficient? Tietz's biography will complement rather than supplant that of Busch. Given the nature of the case—the one and the same life—it covers much of the same ground, utilises similar materials, and is organised along comparable lines. Both are works appreciative of Barth's contribution to modern theology. Nevertheless, Tietz's biography has certain advantages, in addition to its being slightly shorter and easier to read! In the more than half century that has now elapsed since Barth's death, further important sources have become available to the biographer. The elapsed time allows critical distance in the engagement with Barth, and

Tietz also writes with a greater sensitivity to the present moment which is in so many ways different to that in which Busch prepared his biography (see for example, 337f.).

Karl Barth was a man of remarkable energy and ability and lived and worked in tumultuous times. As a participant in the dramatic events unfolding in the twentieth century, his life was also full of drama. Tietz's account of this life is given in fourteen chapters beginning naturally enough with Barth's childhood in Basel before moving chronologically through his years as a student, and the various phases of his career first as a pastor and then as a professor until his retirement from the University of Basel at age seventy-five, in 1962. Two of these chapters are devoted to exploring the context in which he wrote the two editions of his Romans commentary, including a discussion of the emerging 'dialectical theology' movement in the early 1920s. Another chapter provides a succinct overview of Barth's *Church Dogmatics*. Finally, Tietz includes a chapter on the troubled and troubling circumstances of Barth's relationship with Charlotte von Kirschbaum. The book, which is extensively referenced, concludes with a brief but important epilogue, and a chronology of Barth's life.

Tietz's subtitle "A Life in Conflict" provides an orientation for the biography. Her story portrays a quite pugnacious character who exasperated at times even his friends. As a child he enjoyed a good scrap with his school mates. It could be tough, it seems, to be his friend, colleague, or associate. He had conflicted relationships at times with his parents and extended family, with members of his parish in Safenwil, and some theological colleagues in each of his professorial appointments. He appears to have relished the polemical cut and thrust of academic theology, including dispute with his teachers and critics. He engaged in significant conflicts in church affairs and of course, in the political affairs of his day. Tietz notes that Barth acknowledged in one early encounter that he had 'behaved in an Old Testament-like fashion.' Says Tietz, "Barth resolved to do things differently the next time. There would however be few times when he succeeded in this" (65).

In addition to this overarching theme, Tietz adopts three central lenses to help her tell the story. First, she is concerned with Barth's career as a theologian and especially his theological development. This, of course, was Barth's own preoccupation. Tietz notes that in the more than 9,000 pages of the *Church Dogmatics*, "Barth completely reconceptualized theology from its very foundations." She cites Barth's own explanation: "I could not 'simply go along' with an accepted church doctrine and theological tradition; I had to think through and develop everything anew, from a center which I considered the right one—namely, the Old and New Testament witness to the person and work of Jesus Christ" (362). Something of Barth's focus is captured in a 1929 letter to Charlotte von Kirschbaum shortly before she joined the Barth household: "I would so like it if you could join in with joy and we could work together with *that special fanaticism* without which no respectable work in any area comes into being" (186, emphasis added).

Second, Tietz examines Barth's political interest and engagements throughout his life, but especially in chapters ten through twelve covering Barth's time in Bonn during the rise of Nazism (1930-

35) and subsequently in Basel (1945-62) in the lead-up to World War II, during the war itself, and then in the postwar reconstruction, the confrontation of the West with Soviet communism, and the proliferation of atomic weapons. Barth was a political animal. Yet Tietz carefully details the theological presuppositions and arguments that supported Barth's convictions, also tracing the development of his political thought during this period as he was forced to consider more deeply questions of church and state posed by the activity of the Nazi regime. She notes criticisms directed against him by his contemporaries both within the church and without, and concurs with Barth that they misunderstood both his positions and his reasoning.

Finally, Tietz explores the conflicts of Barth's personal circumstances, especially his relationship with Charlotte von Kirschbaum and its lifelong impact on Nelly Barth, and also on Charlotte, and Karl Barth himself. Tietz tells the story without judgement, noting that "all three suffered from the situation, but also how each, at least in their respective view, tried to behave responsibly toward the other two" (178). Complicating the affair was the recognition of all three of them concerning "Barth's responsibility for the theology and church of his times" (221). Both women experienced deep anguish, anger, depression, and despair, and yet continued in the relationship trying to make it work. Before their death, the Barth children acknowledged how indispensable Charlotte von Kirschbaum was to Barth's theological work and commended their mother's endurance and forbearance, noting that this too was a significant contribution to their father's work. In retrospect, however, they said the situation in the house was "unbearable" (178). They too suffered.

The family received understanding and support from various friends but also harsh criticism from others. Anna Barth (Karl's mother) asked bluntly, "What good is the most discerning theology when it suffers a shipwreck in your own home?" (220) Karl Barth also suffered inner tension and stress over the whole matter, speaking of the "*two* who have been given to me" (222), and recognising: "the very fact is that the greatest earthly blessing bestowed upon me in my life is simultaneously the harshest judgement against my earthly life. So I stand before God's eyes, without being able to escape God in the one way or another..." (223). Tietz's conclusion:

> Personally Barth never found a resolution for the burden of his 'three-way relationship.' He was well-aware of his own guilt and did not sugarcoat the situation nor did he attempt to justify it theologically. It is conspicuous that in this matter Barth did not use any Christological concepts of argumentation to lead to clarification. He who otherwise dismissed 'experience' as a theological category remained here under the spell of his own experience (409).

In the brief epilogue Tietz affirms the abiding significance of Karl Barth and his theology. She notes that Barth's strict distinction between God and humanity, God and the world, introduced a critical edge to his theology which forbade religious justification of social and political ideals and myths as though there was something divine in them. She concludes that "the critical potential of Barth's theology is as necessary today as it was in Barth's times and could make Barth's thinking relevant far beyond the

theological realm once more today" (411). She concedes "the majority's return to liberal theology," but nevertheless remains convinced that,

> theology is not primarily concerned with human cultural performance of religion, but with God…. Theological thinking must begin with God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ, in which the Christian church believes, and orient itself toward that…. Ultimately Barth's theology is a continuation of the Reformers' insight that human beings do not get beyond themselves by themselves (411).

With this I can certainly agree, and commend this fine book for its careful, lively portrayal of this still-relevant theologian. Though he is dead, he still speaks.

Bruce Gordon*, Zwingli: God's Armed Prophet.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021. (xxi + 349pp.) [ISBN: 978-0-300-23597-5].

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> Unlike the Florentine Dominican preacher Girolamo Savonarola, Machiavelli's 'unarmed prophet,' Zwingli never made the mistake of separating the vision of godly reform from political and military power. Zwingli was God's armed prophet, but not simply because he fell at Kappel, cut down by Catholic soldiers. The weapons with which this visionary was armed were many (1-2).

So begins Gordon's account of Huldrych Zwingli. Gordon portrays his subject armed with immense personal capabilities and attributes: a sharp and superior intellect, an accomplished musician, a zeal (and matching capability) for biblical and humanist studies, an energetic disposition, pastoral warmth and approachability, an effective preacher with a talent for articulating the new faith with remarkable persuasion, and a flair for working with those who possessed power. Zwingli burned with twin loves: first for his God, then for his country, although in the end he seemed willing to sacrifice the latter for the former. He had an unrelenting hostility toward Catholicism and Anabaptism, and an unwavering belief in divine providence and the righteousness of his cause: reform, a purified church, and a godly society. Already by 1520 Zwingli's concern at official opposition to church reform 'had found darker expression.' 'Zwingli's perspective had shifted … For the rest of his life, Zwingli would view the gospel in terms of a seismic Pauline struggle between light and darkness. The opponents would vary – from Rome to the Habsburgs and Luther; but the conviction never ebbed' (59). His language became more martial as would, in time, his demeanour and action. Remembered both fondly and despised, Zwingli was a divisive figure during his life and after his death—and remains so even in modern Zurich. For Gordon, Zwingli was neither hero nor martyr but an