

greatness of Israel consists in its being able to give back to God the blessing received. Israel's obedience by its very nature contains an aesthetic dimension. The joy of Israel is to sing psalms of praise to God for benefits received.

The misery of Israel lies in its unfaithfulness. The covenant is broken through disobedience. Balthasar has a beautiful long chapter in which he deals with the history of the prophets, each of whom summoned Israel back to faith.

Reading the story of Israel in the light of Christ, Balthasar sees the history of the people of God as inevitably leading to a crisis from which no inner-worldly escape can be found. The failure of obedience leads to the exile. This seems to represent the end of the covenant or the death of Israel from which there is no resurrection. The period from the exile to Christ Balthasar calls the long twilight. Israel desperately seeks to remain faithful, clinging to the Torah and the temple sacrifices even though the prophets no longer speak. What has happened to God's Word? Israel learns to live with the silence of God, still always hoping that God will speak.

Balthasar sees three attempts on Israel's part to find a way out of the crisis: one, the hope in a future terrestrial messiah; two, the apocalyptic expectation that the heavens will open and God will intervene; three, the search for wisdom or the longing that God's glory be embedded in the whole cosmos. None of these attempts succeeds but all point to a synthesis which must be given from above, namely in the coming of Christ. Only in Christ does the history of Israel become clear as *figura* pointing to the fulfilment in the God-Man.

As always, Balthasar's control of his material is astonishing. Though not trained as an exegete, he passes in review the entire development of the Old Testament in masterly fashion. Each phase of the story is treated with such care that the reader is left with fresh insights. In short, the synthetic power of Balthasar's vision makes this one of his most original and fascinating contributions to theological aesthetics.

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THE HOLY EUCHARIST by Aidan Nichols OP *Veritas*, Dublin. 1991, pp.153; £8.95.

This book claims to present a comprehensive account of the Catholic Church's Eucharistic doctrine by tracing three principal themes—presence, sacrifice and ecclesiological relevance—from the New Testament, through the patristic, mediaeval and Tridentine periods, to the twentieth century. A glance at the very extensive footnotes and bibliography will reveal how wide a range of sources is here made available in the author's synthesised form. A final chapter offers a so-called systematic summary focussed on the writing of Pope John Paul II and Hans Urs Von Balthasar.

The intended readership seems unclear: treatment of such a vast

subject in 132 small pages is barely subsistence diet for serious theological students; a passing reference on p.102 to "a committed Catholic Christian of average intelligence willing to take trouble to find out about the faith" may indicate the author's target, but the inevitably brief, telescoped and allusive treatment of many major points presumes a great deal more background and contextual knowledge than such characters could be expected to carry in their heads.

This difficulty of level is immediately evident in the first chapter's commencement with St.John's Gospel. The author fights old exegetical battles over again but so succinctly that their significance must escape those without a solid grounding in New Testament studies. The speedy transition to a symbolist approach is little more helpful, since it permits the author to slide from theological study to devotional reflection which, however inspiring, ignores standard reputable exegesis of such areas as the Bread-of-Life discourse in chapter 6, and strains to include irrelevant material and some unlikely interpretations. The phrases quoted from *The Didache* on p. 11 surely allude not to John's account of the multiplication of the loaves, but to St.Paul's remarks in I Corinthians 10:17. Treatment of the Pauline references to the Last Supper is generally good, but imbalance is again apparent in the tedious yet unsatisfactory discussion of the problems raised by the Synoptic account, and the distortingly abbreviated treatment of material from *The Acts*.

Despite some rather strange Trinitarian theology (is the Father "the source of all divine action" or "the fount of the Godhead"? pp.44-5) in the patristic chapter, the use of St.Augustine's writings on the Eucharist is much more satisfactory, but here too as throughout the book brevity vitiates useful analysis. Among the mediaevals Paschasius appears simply as a naive realist; Berengar and Aquinas fare better, though the final paragraph of this chapter on the status and use of the word "transubstantiation" is simplistic in the extreme. The presentation of Gabriel Biel's teaching on sacrifice is useful, as is the welcome emphasis on the sacrificial character of Christ's heavenly intercession. Analysis of Trent's teaching could have been more precise, though the omission on p.92 of that council's crucial phraseology with regard to sacrifice is rectified in passing sixteen pages later.

Some interesting points, and interesting characters, are raised in the twentieth century, but selection is arbitrary and coverage inadequate. Significant aspects of some of the questions raised are dismissed in a cavalier fashion while lesser topics are dwelt on at length. The argument offered for the inadequacy of the transfinalisation theory implies that the real function of symbolic discourse, as recovered by the liturgical movement in indicating how the whole of the eucharistic prayer is consecratory, has escaped the author despite allusion to it in the earlier patristic chapter. The phenomenology which underlies transignification theories is not so much demolished here as side-stepped by a mixing of the realms of discourse which presumes that scholastic philosophy necessarily has a privileged position in theological study. Granted that

this has long been the quasi-official position of the Church, its simple assumption is still not an adequate critique of twentieth century thought.

A certain partiality here also seems indicated by the phrase "to recreate the Catholic pattern from the kaleidoscope of the post-conciliar Church"(p.122). The same stance is indicated by the inclusion, in so small a book about the Catholic doctrine of the Eucharist, of an 8-page appendix on "The Eucharist in Anglicanism" with its attack on the work of ARCIC.

The adoption of one particular letter of Pope John Paul II together with the writing of Von Balthasar, here elevated to the status of "the great contemporary 'Church Father'" (p.7), is all of a piece with the uncritical mixing, especially in chapters 5 and 6, of various theological opinions with the established doctrine of the Church. While the treatment of the Church's doctrine in this book purports to be historical, the method is in fact that of looking for—and at all costs finding—the doctrine of the Eucharist as developed and expressed by the Council of Trent constantly and explicitly stated throughout the preceding sixteen centuries as well as in the present day.

There are a few tiresome misprints in the text and one discourteous error. The eminent New Testament scholar, Professor C.K.Barrett, described on p. 9 as a Congregationalist is an ordained minister of the Methodist Church, who was prominent in opposing the Anglican-Methodist unity scheme in 1969.

MARY CECILY BOULDING, OP

WOLF IN THE SHEEPFOLD: THE BIBLE AS A PROBLEM FOR CHRISTIANITY, Robert P. Carroll, SPCK, 1991, pp.xi + 159, £9.99.

'Familiarity with the long histories of Jewish, Christian, humanist and rationalist interpretations of the book in all its manifestations', has, he says, provided Dr Carroll, as he reconsiders the Bible, 'with a wide knowledge of the range of possible readings generated by individuals and communities over many centuries'. He writes, flatteringly, for 'the well-read reader', 'the intelligent reader', and for 'any competent reader'. His latest book, however, may well make even some of these somewhat uncomfortable. Those of a rueful countenance may feel yet again cheated by his so often referring to all those grand books they will not get to read: 'a book-length study could be written on this topic', 'it would take a much longer and a rather different book to spell out all the moves', 'the question of women is too big to handle here'. . . Those of a delicate literary stomach may deplore his fashionable street-talk of 'élitist disciples' and 'élites who put the biblical books together', of an inescapably 'gendered reference' to 'Church Fathers', of 'the inside-leg measurements of their god', and of the 'post-modernist magical realism' of *Satanic Verses*. . . . They may not care, either, for his finding *Isaiah* 6.9–10 'very tricky', or his suggestion 'Try reading *John* 8', which also proves 'tricky', or his quick gloss on *1 Thessalonians* 2.14–16 as Paul's