

Based on his dissertation (2009), Andrew Peh argues for a more nuanced understanding of American Methodist mission and British colonialism in Singapore between 1885 and 1910. In his first chapter, Peh lays out his key theoretical framework and research questions, and then in the next chapter reveals that British imperialism's goal was commercial trade with a formal *laissez faire* policy toward evangelization but intensely opposed Christian mission among the Malays. Peh explains why early Methodist missions in Singapore generated a speedy and receptive response among the multilingual population. He explores how pluriform mission via education, medicine, compassion, and evangelism acted as important agencies providing access for the disenfranchised, contrary to exclusion and exploitation. Following this, Peh highlights a symbiotic relationship (mutually beneficial, commensal, and parasitic) between British governance and American Methodism. Peh has impressively engaged a great variety of sources. However, the book could have further investigated American Methodist missionaries' reluctance to challenge organizational structure, political economy, colonial ethnic ideology, or to develop indigenous church autonomy. Peh does, however, speak of a mutual transformation. In what ways did American Methodism impact British imperial rule? Most importantly, how did the local Christian community (Malays, Chinese, Indian, and Babas) interact with both British imperialism and American Methodism? The book could reduce some lengthy quotations and clarify a misuse of a Chinese proverb *Wangzi chenglong* (hoping one's son to become a dragon). A corresponding proverb is *Wangnü chengfeng* (hoping one's daughter to become a phoenix). Both proverbs indicate parents' hopes for their children to succeed and have no reference to the preference of a male offspring. Peh's book provides in-depth analysis of British colonial context and highlights the women missionaries' work and Methodist creativity. It adds value to students and scholars in mission history of Southeast Asia.

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THE MATURING OF MONOTHEISM: A DIALECTICAL PATH TO ITS TRUTH.

By Garth Hallett. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019. Pp. vi + 211. Hardcover, \$114.00. In ten chapters, Hallett presents a compelling case for the reasonability of monotheism. Decidedly ecumenical in his focus, he argues that the names *Yahweh*, *Allah*, and *God* refer to the same transcendent reality, and that this transcendent reality is "arguably the supreme object of human aspirations and the terminus of human hopes, both individual and collective." Part of building a positive case for monotheism involves a response to various challenges facing monotheism by seeking a *via media*. Reality, he argues, is inherently mysterious, and science and theology should aim to probe these mysteries with proper epistemic humility. As such, Hallett takes monotheism seriously on both explanatory and experiential grounds and invites readers to consider doing

the same. Far from alleviating the mysteries of conscious experience, reductive materialism contains its own set of internal puzzles that demand non-circular explanations. For Hallett, the truth of metaphysics on this front probably exists somewhere between the extremes of Cartesianism and a closed physical system. Similarly concerned about possible self-implicating objections for naturalistic determinism, Hallett prefers a "dynamic" account of human freedom more conducive to religious dialogue. He goes on to address the merits of moral objectivity in the face of moral nihilism, followed by concrete considerations of the problem of evil, the possibility of the afterlife, and the limits of temporality. The final two chapters offer a modest and experientially sensitive "holistic alternative" to classical monotheistic proofs. This volume combines a charitable tone, philosophical rigor, and extensive engagement in secondary literature in such a way that it represents a valuable contribution to contemporary conversations in religious studies, theology, and philosophy of religion.

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GOD AND HUMAN FREEDOM. By Leigh C. Vicens and Simon Kittle. Cambridge Elements: Elements in the Philosophy of Religion. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2019. Pp. 73. \$18.00.

Vicens and Kittle's book constitutes an excellent addition to Cambridge's Elements in the Philosophy of Religion series. Like other books in this series, *God and Human Freedom* provides a concise, well-organized, and balanced introduction to a central topic in the philosophy of religion. In this case, the focus is two interconnected topics: the problem of reconciling human freedom with divine foreknowledge and the problem of reconciling human freedom with divine providence. The book is divided into two sections, one on each of these problems. Each section begins with a concise introduction to the problem, followed by subsections that discuss, one-at-a-time, different attempts to resolve the problem and important objections confronting each of these proposed solutions. Three features of the book are especially worth highlighting. First, the authors strike an admirable balance between, on the one hand, avoiding unnecessary technical language and, on the other hand, conscientiously introducing their readers to terminology that they will need to know if they wish to read more on these topics. Second, the authors provide readers with very useful entry-points to the literature: references to specific pages in influential books and articles are thoughtfully positioned throughout the main text – an excellent resource for readers who want to dig deeper into a particular issue – and yet are sparse enough to avoid overwhelming more casual readers. Third, the authors accomplish their broad-ranging introduction in just 65 pages of well-paced, highly readable prose, the kind of prose that gives readers exactly what they need to confidently participate in a serious conversation about divine foreknowledge, divine providence, and human freedom.

Indeed, the easily navigated organization of the text is perfect for enabling readers to understand the existing landscape and locate their own ideas within that landscape. In short, this is a superb introduction, accessible for independent readers interested in these issues and yet also ideal for use in an undergraduate or even graduate course.

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RELIGION AFTER SCIENCE: THE CULTURAL CONSEQUENCES OF RELIGIOUS IMMATURITY. By J.L. Schellenberg. Cambridge Studies in Religion, Philosophy, and Society. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2019. Pp. ix + 143. Cloth, \$99.99; paper, \$29.99.

The science/religion debate often delivers only a portion of its grand title, such that the “science/theism” debate would be more apt, or at best the “science/religion-as-understood-so-far” debate. However, as Schellenberg emphasizes, religion itself is bigger than theism, and it is bigger than all its manifestations so far on earth. Schellenberg envisions the “religion project” as a species-level investigation—like science in that respect—into whether there is a transcendent reality that has the features of both deep intrinsic worth and instrumental worth for human flourishing. So understood, the goal of the religion project is immense. Yet, both sides of the religion/science debate often assume that we have before us the final word (or near enough) of the religion project. Add a small dose of evolutionary time scales, and this assumption appears suspect. Mammalian species average about one million years on earth. *Homo sapiens* have been around for only about 300,000 years. So, barring catastrophe, we have 700,000 years of development still before us. Consider now that current religions date no older than 10,000 years. Given the magnitude of the religion project and the small fraction of time we have been pursuing it, perhaps we are a long way from religion’s final and best results. Moreover, both proponents and opponents of current religion often manifest a litany of intellectual vices. In Schellenberg’s terms, we are “doubly immature” in religious matters: both in terms of developmental age and in terms of behaving in ways we ought not. The final result is a manifesto for pursuing the religion project with genuine clear-headedness and a rigorous investigatory spirit. As to the details of how this investigation proceeds, I must leave those to the book itself. It is a highly recommended read that targets both scholarly debates and our current zeitgeist. All the while, it is written in a style that is approachable to undergraduate audiences and thinking persons beyond the academy.

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IS GOD INVISIBLE? AN ESSAY ON RELIGION AND AESTHETICS. By Charles Taliaferro and Jil Evans. Cambridge: Cambridge, 2021. Pp. ix + 179. Paper, \$28.99.

Does it make sense to believe in the reality of an invisible, non-physical God? How could one encounter such a reality? Believers and skeptics alike have struggled with the

implications of divine invisibility. But by exploring the relationship between aesthetics, ethics, metaphysics, and religion in eight concise yet rich chapters, Taliaferro and Evans invite us to rethink our access to the divine. Reflection on aesthetics and aspects of our ordinary experience of persons indicates that experiencing invisible, transcendent realities might not be as strange as some think. The authors defend “aesthetic personalism” through a phenomenological exploration of our aesthetic experience of persons and the application of this to experience of a transcendent divine reality. The argument includes a trenchant critique of reductionistic views of persons and consciousness which eliminate the non-physical dimension of persons. If we regularly experience persons, whose reality cannot be reduced to what is visible, it is not so far-fetched to think of experiencing a divine reality. This is an ambitious and wide-ranging work which embraces the “big questions” traditionally associated with the Good, the True, and the Beautiful. The authors probe aesthetic experiences and values in five major religions, as well as secular naturalism, in an effort to illustrate “cognitive apertures” into a transcendent divine reality. A properly nuanced “God’s-eye point of view” is presented as grounding aesthetic and ethical realism and in making sense of the very idea of truth. This is an important and creative work which suggests fresh ways to think about how the invisible – whether human or divine persons – can be encountered through what is seen.

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CHRISTIAN PLATONISM: A HISTORY. Edited by Alexander J. B. Hampton and John Peter Kenney. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. Pp xv + 497. \$130.00.

It is widely thought, especially amongst theologians, that traditional Platonism—with its denigration of the body, belief in eternal forms, and the doctrine of immortal souls—is at odds with Christian theism. Of course, as stated by Plato and his followers, many of these doctrines needed reformulation by Christian thinkers. But there is little doubt after reading Hampton’s and Kenney’s work of the centrality of Platonic thought within the history of ideas in general, and Christian theology in particular. Plato’s influence is *pervasive*, as the nine chapters on the history of Christian Platonism demonstrate, and overwhelmingly *positive*, as the six chapters on Platonic concepts and theology demonstrate. Moreover, as the six chapters on contemporary engagement make clear, Christian Platonic thought is relevant today, providing a fertile soil for addressing contemporary problems in science, art, and ethics. The participatory ontology of Christian Platonism was discussed by almost every contributor to this volume. This suggests that perhaps Plato’s greatest contribution to Christian theology is its tight connection between the sacred and natural orders via participation. Given contemporary disenchantment along with the dominance of neo-Humeanism in the academy, a volume dedicated to Christian Platonism is both timely and instructive, providing a way for Christian academics to re-envision yet again, God, the world,