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‡ BOOK REVIEWS ‡

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Bogdan, Henrik and Martin P. Starr, eds. *Aleister Crowley and Western Esotericism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012. 432 pp. ISBN-10: 0199863091

One of the most famous occultists of the twentieth century was Aleister Crowley. He was known as the wickedest man in the world (p.35), primarily because of his outright rejection of Christianity and his total embrace of magick, particularly of the sexual variety. This “magick” was not traditional stage performance, but a ritual magic that utilized the energy of the universe to enable a person to reach his or her “True Will,” (p.340). or ultimate destiny, without the interference of social dictates. With his creation of the spiritual system Thelema, Crowley changed the face of Western esotericism. Henrik Bogdan and Martin P. Starr provide a new, complex perspective on Crowley in their anthology, *Aleister Crowley and Western Esotericism*, which features for the first time an in-depth critical analysis of the controversial figure (p.3). The collection, which is divided into fifteen essays, features larger topics such as Crowley’s intellectual interests, his spiritual involvement in Eastern and Western traditions, his inspirations, and the impact he had on new religions. Bogdan and Starr’s goal is to show that “he was an influential twentieth-century religious synthesist. His esotericism was not a reversion to a medieval worldview; instead, in its questing for a vision of the self, it was a harbinger of modernity” (ibid). Crowley sought to bring occultism into the new century.

This anthology features a wide range of prestigious academics whose areas of expertise include Western esotericism, spirituality, paganism, and the study of both old and new religious movements, all of which adds new depth to our understanding of Crowley’s occultist legacy. Several themes emerge from the anthology. It becomes clear that Freud’s concepts of the id, ego, and superego were a basis for Crowley’s ideas, enabling him to be at the forefront of the modernization of magick. He was a spiritual explorer who embraced both Eastern and Western esoteric traditions. For example, he incorporated the Eastern practices of yoga and tantra into magical orders such as Ordo Templi Orientis (p.10), and, though Thelema was overtly anti-Christian, he was also influenced by Western

apocalyptic and millenarian ideas rooted in Christianity. In addition, he may have been influenced by little-known sources such as the Kurdish religion Yezidism.

The anthology's contributors elaborate on Crowley's relationships with other groups (e.g. the Free Masons) and individuals (e.g. A. E. Waite). These relationships reveal Crowley's desire both to maintain his respectability within English society and to be involved in magick (p.272). However, Crowley was unable to balance the two as effectively as Waite. The anthology also explores Crowley's relationships with deceased people; for example, he was fascinated by leaders like Joseph Smith, the founder of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Crowley saw many "extrinsic" similarities between Smith and himself: both founded new religions, felt persecuted for their new religious ideas, and received their texts mystically (ibid). Lastly, Crowley became an influential figure for new religions of the twentieth century such as Wicca, Scientology, and Satanism. Interspersed among these central themes are narratives of Crowley's experiences, which provide the reader with a glimpse into the thought process of this mysterious figure. Each of the authors tries to present Crowley in a manner that reveals more dimensions of his practice of magick and moves beyond the image of Crowley as a wicked man to a more nuanced portrait of a modernist who tried to reinvent religion for a new age.

The book is significant not only for its portrayal of Crowley himself but also for its exploration of his legacy. Crowley not only inspired many countercultural figures but also generated innovative concepts that provided a structure for spiritual systems outside of a monotheistic context. Hugh B. Urban's chapter on L. Ron Hubbard's Scientology is particularly striking: one would not imagine that so modern a movement as Scientology would have taken a cue from Crowley's writing. This anthology offers powerful confirmation that religious traditions do not develop in a static vacuum but rather are constantly influencing and being influenced by other faiths and beliefs. Without Crowley's Thelema, religions such as Wicca would not have had any foundation.

On the whole, the book's scholarship is excellent. The articles make use of primary archival sources from the Warburg Institute and the University of Texas Harry Ransom Center. The authors could have made greater use of other archives, such as those at the Pennsylvania State University and University of Virginia libraries, but archival material relevant to Crowley at these other libraries is admittedly less comprehensive.

Readers should bear in mind that this anthology is geared toward scholars who have a working understanding of Western esotericism. The lay reader may wonder how the authors define Western esotericism. A footnote at the end of the introduction implies that there are multiple definitions (p.13). Esotericism may be identified with what Crowley calls "occultism," but his description of occultism as the "demonic 'other'" only indicates that it is "dark" in relation to Christianity. Since the anthology does not discuss Crowley's biography extensively, before reading this anthology readers would benefit from an introductory biography such as Richard Kaczynski's *Perdurabo: The Life of Aleister Crowley*.

Though Aleister Crowley's aura of mystery does not dissipate after reading this anthology, the reader will certainly gain a greater appreciation of the development of Western esotericism in the twentieth century.

ALLISON SCHOTTENSTEIN
University of Texas-Austin

Howard, Thomas Albert. *God and the Atlantic: America, Europe, and the Religious Divide*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. 272 pp. ISBN 9780199565511

In 2004, German essayist Peter Schneider weighed in on the growing “trans-Atlantic religious divide.” Among other colorful indicators, he cited “a majority of respondents” in the United States who “told pollsters that they believed in angels, while in Europe the issue was apparently considered so preposterous that no one even asked the question.”¹ Magnified by U.S. foreign policy, the disparity between European and American religiosity, with its attendant divisions on political and social questions, has increasingly agitated cultural commentators in recent years. But agitated European discourse on American religiosity has deeper historical roots.

Enter Thomas Albert Howard, Stephen Phillips Chair of History and Director of the Center for Faith and Inquiry at Gordon College. Howard sets as his task the recovery of a “substrate of prior cultural and religious factors” that haunts our perceptions of contemporary “trans-Atlantic realities” and informs, however invisibly, contemporary anti-Americanism in Europe (p.4). Howard recovers valuable nineteenth- and early twentieth-century commentators on American religion from Tocqueville’s shadow, organizing them broadly into two camps: a host of America’s cultured despisers in Europe and an immigrant and an émigré (Philip Schaff and Jacques Maritain), both turned apologists, in America.

Criticisms of the American religious scene came from the right and the left—a Traditionalist and a Secularist critique. Within the former, Howard identifies three particular streams of thought. To British Anglicans (including Frances Trollope, Charles Dickens, and Matthew Arnold), voluntarism produced social chaos, sectarianism led to theological indifference, and “the democratization of American Christianity” fostered rampant supernaturalism. For Continental Romantics, like Schlegel, Schopenhauer, and Heine, “worldly practicality” was the “true religion” of Americans, and

¹ Peter Schneider, “Across A Great Divide,” *New York Times*, March 13, 2004.

“money...their only almighty God” (p.53). The succeeding generation of German scholars saw America’s *Geistlosigkeit* (spiritlessness) typified by the likes of Billy Sunday, while Heidegger bemoaned the culturally catastrophic amalgamation of American democracy and Christianity. Finally, Catholic ultramontanes viewed American religion as a reflection of the French Revolution, the revolutions of 1848-49, and Protestant private judgment—cumulatively the Church’s very antithesis. Interestingly, for all of the above Mormonism epitomized the disastrous results of American religion—the end product of democratized and uneducated religious impulse or a Catholic parody posing as panacea for Protestant divisiveness.

Perhaps more enduringly influential have been the Secularist critics. Their various camps have shared a developmental view of historical progress that precluded the persistence of primitive religion. Purveyors included early French social scholars, from Condorcet to Saint-Simon and Auguste Comte, as well as “the influential trajectory of thought from Hegel to Marx” and its myriad offshoots. A third group was the republican anti-clericals who “felt that realizing the Revolution’s full potential entailed a relentless assault on ecclesiastical influence” (p.87). Fleeing to the U.S. after the failed 1848 revolutions, they were horrified by the enduring influence of disestablished religion in America. Howard argues that each of these camps helped turn the “secularization thesis” into a “monopolizing master narrative about modernity.” Drawing from Charles Taylor, Howard sees the “secularization thesis” as a “social imaginary”—an unexamined background assumption, neither pure theory nor pure experience—with enduring power to construct social realities as a self-fulfilling prophecy (p.88).

Howard’s foray into the secularization and modernity debate perhaps helps explain his selective focus on Schaff and Maritain. Prophets of secularization from Condorcet to Heidegger, perplexed by America’s divergence from their meta-narrative of modernization, spoke ill of American religiosity while largely eschewing empirical observation. Schaff and Maritain both spent decades in America and Europe and became convinced that American religion “too often had been subjected to

misapprehension and caricature” by European intellectuals (p.138). In Howard’s reading, their pure experience thus belied the “social imaginary” of the “secularization thesis.” Chapters four and five provide brilliant syntheses of Schaff and Maritain, their views on American religion in relation to their broader intellectual trajectories, and their vocal defenses of American religion and culture at home and abroad.

Howard’s concluding concern is to broaden myopic analyses of contemporary Trans-Atlantic divergences. Current policy differences do not explain themselves. Rather, long-standing elite discourse on American religion has “left a sizable mark on the formative presuppositions” of Europeans in the modern era (p.200). Howard’s impressive command of such a large sweep of intellectual history convincingly demonstrates that history’s continuing and pervasive presence in contemporary dialogue.

But make no mistake; this is an intellectual history of *elite* discourse, which begs at least two further inquiries beyond the scope of Howard’s volume. First, to what extent were elite portrayals of American religion reactions to popular European philo-Americanism? Tantalizing glimpses of popular perspectives often surface in Howard’s narrative, as when Tory intellectuals offered the effects of American voluntarism as evidence of the unreasonableness of dissenters’ demands for disestablishment in England, or when later figures like Rilke decried the increasing Americanization of European culture. What would a narrative of European perceptions of American religion look like if voice were given to the masses? Second, how might the elite discourse narrated here illuminate the making of religion itself? Out of functional necessity, Howard adopts an admittedly problematic and fluid definition of religion as, at times, “efforts to relate to the divine,” and, more often, “evangelical Protestantism” (pp.9-10). But Religious Studies scholars with their own set of inquiries might find useful vistas here for exploring the layers of discourse that have defined, rather than merely denigrated, religion in the modern West.

Howard's work is vastly informative, persuasively argued, carefully organized, beautifully written, and increasingly relevant. It is intellectual history at its best and opens up as many pressing and perceptive questions as it helps to answer.

BRADLEY KIME
Utah State University

Faxneld, Per, and Jesper A. Petersen, eds. *The Devil's Party: Satanism in Modernity*. New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2013. 289 pp. ISBN 9780190779246.

In *The Devil's Party*, Per Faxneld and Jesper Petersen compile essays from twelve of the top scholars in the field of Satanism. The goal of the book is not to exhaustively cover the topic, nor is it to persuade the reading audience that Satanism is good or evil. Rather Faxneld and Petersen choose to present an unbiased, academic overview of Satanism as a religion, and in that manner they are entirely successful.

The fact is that the word Satanism is, itself, enough to invoke a range of emotions in the average person. Some people are strangely drawn to the idea, while others are blatantly repelled by it. These feelings are the result of an intricate combination of one's theology, worldview, education, and many other factors. Faxneld and Petersen suggest that these emotions "need to be put to the side. Satanism, like all other religions, can and should be studied in a detached manner" (p.3).

The first point on the authors' agenda is to distinguish between Satanism as a "social and cultural phenomenon" and a "religious and philosophical one" (p.4). In many ways, Satanism in popular culture is an entirely different entity than that of the religion adhered to by many today and throughout history. Faxneld and Petersen make clear that their intentions are to present an overview of Satanism as religion, while filtering out the perceptions that popular culture has imbedded in the minds of many.

Following a brief overview and outline, the book is separated into four distinct sections, each containing three essays by different scholars. Faxneld and Petersen chose to take a very methodological approach in compiling the book, as these sections are arranged in both a chronological and thematic fashion (p.4), which helps the book to flow smoothly. Together these sections present a very impressive and holistic overview of the religion of Satanism, but each could stand on its own as a thoroughly interesting read as well.

The first section, titled “The Question of History: Precursors and Currents,” covers the earliest roots of recorded Satanism. Tracing such a belief system, which to this day does not have a consensus definition, is a difficult task. As Faxneld admits, “who is and is not a Satanist is of course a matter of definition and time specific conceptualizations of terms” (p.19). Nevertheless, these essays trace the religion back to early Swedish literature and history, and then discuss its evolution in the nineteenth century, which Faxneld sees as “a turning point in the history of modern religious Satanism” (11). Finally, Faxneld’s own contribution to the book introduces Polish author Stanislaw Przybyszewski, whom Faxneld claims to be a pioneer of modern Satanism, in that he “formulated what is likely the first attempt ever to construct a more or less systematic Satanism” (74).

The second section, “The Black Pope and the Church of Satan,” presents a trio of essays covering Anton LaVey, who founded the Church of Satan in the 1960s and is by far “the most iconic figure in the satanic milieu” today (p.79). These essays allow the reader a glimpse into the mind of a very unique man by attempting to address the various ideologies he developed. In the first chapter, Amina O. Lap offers an analysis of LaVey’s early writings. Eugene Gallaher then takes a closer look at the most notable of those works, *The Satanic Bible*, easily “the most popular and recognized book on Satanism today” (p.12). Gallaher offers some interesting and surprising insight into LaVey’s masterpiece. Finally, Asbjorn Dyrendal takes a look at some of LaVey’s later writings from the 1990s, examining the role that conspiracy theories played in his ideology.

The book then moves on to “The Legacy of Dr. LaVey: The Satanic Milieu Today.” The particular focus of this section is how the practice of Satanism in today’s contemporary society differs from the Satanism of the past. The prevalent factor in the development of modern Satanism is the invention of the Internet and the continual advance in technology (p.141). These developments have added a whole new dimension to the study of this faith, which is now more readily available and less mysterious to people everywhere.

Finally, the book closes with a section entitled “Post-Satanism, Left-Handed Paths, and Beyond: Visiting the Margins.” The focus here is on discussing groups that “display a fairly prominent use of satanic symbolism” but “do not self-designate as Satanists” (p.205). Kennet Granholm proposes the terms “left-hand path” (p.212) and “Post-Satanism” (p.214) to designate such groups.

Ultimately, Faxneld and Petersen have done an admirable job of collecting centuries of information on the topic of Satanism and presenting it in an organized manner. However, a conclusion from the editors would have been beneficial in summarizing the combined value of the four sections, but overall this book is an important and innovative work in that it is one of the first to really approach the study of Satanism from a purely academic and unbiased perspective.

CHRIS VERBRACKEN
Bethel Seminary

Bilici, Mucahit. *Finding Mecca in America: How Islam is Becoming an American Religion*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012. 257 pp. ISBN 9780226049571.

In his inaugural book, Mucahit Bilici, assistant professor of sociology at John Jay College, City University of New York, strives to answer this question: “How is the...nearness of the perceived intruder transformed into the...familiarity of a fellow inhabitant?” (p.10). Utilizing his specialties in cultural sociology and social theory, Bilici analyzes the transformation of Islam and Muslims from foreigners to countrymen in the American cultural landscape. His approach scrutinizes, personalizes, and humorizes this transition through vehicles both theoretical and practical, exploring everything from civilian rights to comedy as he tells the story of the “cultural settlement of Islam” (p.63).

Bilici’s argument revolves around the transition through the eyes of Muslims (p.63). The first half of his book, labeled “Cultural Settlement,” deals with “the orientations, translations, and cultural fine-tuning that take place at the interface of Muslim life and American forms” (p.30). Here, Bilici highlights the logistical changes necessitated by Islam’s spread to America. He first argues that disparate Muslim communities continuously aim for unification, a goal embodied in the reorientation of qibla lines in American mosques, in accordance with technical, rather than “organic” conceptions of space (p.61). He then details the adaptation of English as a Muslim language, as Islam adopted English translations of Arabic words and English accommodated the new Arabic terminology. Finally, Bilici shows America’s transformation from a “land of chaos” to a “land of Islam” as immigrant Muslims adopted America as a permanent homeland, not just a land for a temporary missionizing effort. This organization allows Bilici to show a process of cultural adaptation: unification of the foreign group, mutual change on the part of both cultures, and final acceptance of a new homeland.

Bilici builds on this framework to develop the second part of his book, which covers individual citizenship and the growth of Muslim immigrants into their new civil and popular identities. He discusses Muslims’ new roles as bearers of American rights, members of interfaith communities, and

creators of a new manifestation of ethnic comedy. In these chapters, Bilici makes Muslim assimilation more personal and changes its definition from loss of cultural identity to loss of “stranger” status (p.190). He argues that new generations of American-born Muslims are assisting in a shift toward unity of both cultures as Muslims become more “American.”

Throughout this book, Bilici explores the tensions of cultural acceptance. He probes the battle between a distinct Muslim identity and followers’ eagerness to alter their separatist image amongst 21st century Americans. He shows a strain between generations and nationalities, some of which favor exclusion, and others which seek inclusion. He illuminates the difficulty of creating a new homeland for a religion which is intrinsically tied by culture and practice to its geographic origins. Thus, Bilici frames the difficulty of assimilation not in getting “in” with American society, but rather in Muslim communities’ and individuals’ struggles to overcome their conflicting goals and desires. This depth of insight not only brings such turmoils to light, but works through them conceptually, elucidating concepts and doctrines which deftly bridge the gaps between various groups.

Bilici’s strengths lie in sociological analysis. He frequently cites social theory giants, like Georg Simmel and Martin Heidegger, and turns to thorough discussions of concepts such as language and home. Though the vocabulary is heavy for the uninitiated, his analysis strengthens his arguments on how a new Muslim identity develops. He is creative in his use of evidence, which is particularly apparent in the chapter on ethnic comedy which provides a much-appreciated lightness but also a fascinating insight into American-Muslim popular culture. Bilici is adept at handling these unique perspectives, revolving the entire ethnography around the shift in culture through the eyes of Muslims, which alone sets this book apart from other scholarship. However, Bilici struggles to define what “American” identity truly is while still painting the nation as a connected whole from which others are excluded. Additionally, he occasionally fails to extend the discussion beyond immigrant

perspectives by including an ever-growing population of American-born Muslims. Regardless of these small oversights, his argument and approach remain strong.

Finding Mecca in America provides a relevant look at cultural change and immigrant nations. The principles which Bilici lays out in this book, from the steps of broad cultural acceptance to individual assumption of new roles and identities, extend beyond the borders of Islam to all those labeled “other” in an American mindset. He guides them toward realization of home as a way of orienting the self to grow into a place or culture. Bilici states that “s human being’s nature [home] is his culture, which he creates as he moves along,” and demonstrates that through such creation, one can find home in a new and extended self (p.216). By so doing, Bilici earns an important place in the discussion of American Islam, social theory, and personal identity.

KELSEY SAMUELSON
Brigham Young University

Stowe, David W. *No Sympathy for the Devil: Christian Pop Music and the Transformation of American Evangelicalism*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011. 304 pp. ISBN 9780807834589.

No Sympathy for the Devil is a fine book on a crucial juncture in the history of religion and music, worth studying for anyone interested in either subject.

Stowe's thesis is that Christian rock originated when the countercultural strains of the 1960s were combined, by a few committed evangelicals, with apocalypse-focused, biblically literal Christian doctrine that claimed the reality of spiritual gifts, such as tongues and prophecy, and viewed the world as a battleground between God and Satan. Thus, the sound and the feeling of the hippy movement, complete with communal living experiments and giant music festivals, fostered a new brand of evangelicalism that resonated with many young Christians, helping make evangelical Christianity a major social and political force through the 70s and 80s.

Stowe presents his case primarily in the form of anecdotes from the lives of musicians, preachers, organizers, politicians, new converts, and lapsed Christians, showing their spiritual experiences, attempts to define their faith and art, struggles against temptation, and the role that new Christian music played in it all. His descriptions bring the Jesus Movement to life. He also ably (and at times dizzyingly) analyzes the songs, from rhythms to lyrics, and the movies and musicals that brought Jesus onto center stage.

To provide context for the rise Christian rock, Stowe addresses not only evangelical performers, but also fellow travelers including Billy Preston and Aretha Franklin, who, while never part of the Christian rock scene, were deeply influenced by their religious upbringings. He also draws in counterpoints, from Santana to Cat Stevens and Marvin Gaye, reminding readers that there were many spiritual options for musicians outside of Christianity.

Unfortunately, Stowe's focus on personal experiences, while providing a human perspective of the motivations of those making Jesus music, provides little detail about how a mass of listeners

across the nation responded to the music, or how it came to be assimilated into evangelical churches across the country despite opposition from those evangelicals who viewed all rock as “worldly.” This leaves a hole in Stowe’s argument about the cultural impact of Christian rock. He tells us much about those who lived in the movement, went to Explo ‘72 or Godstock, or made the music that was played there. This gives us insight into how rockers were born again, but little about regular listeners who stayed at home and listened to the records while attending regular suburban churches with none of the “hipness” or “showiness” of the California hippy or show-business churches Stowe describes.

The book’s other main weakness is that it is a story all about sound—and the sound of the music, vital to understanding its impact, is poorly expressed on the printed page, even with Stowe’s skilled descriptions. As I read, I found myself repeatedly wishing that the book came with an accompanying CD with a representative selection of key tracks, or at least an appendix with chapter by chapter listing of all referenced songs. Difficult as that may be given the nebulous and difficult nature of copyright and distribution management in modern America, it would certainly have added a great deal of force to Stowe’s otherwise compelling arguments.

MATTATHIAS WESTWOOD
Brigham Young University

Moreland, J. P., Chad Meister, and Khaldoun A. Sweis, eds. *Debating Christian Theism*. New York, Oxford University Press, 2013. 574 pp. ISBN 9780199755448

In *Debating Christian Theism*, editors J.P. Moreland, Chad Meister and Khaldoun A. Sweis have put together a work that is both relevant to our times and intellectually compelling. The anthology contains two major sections. The first is composed of philosophical debates about the plausibility of theism in general, such as the fine-tuning argument, the problem of evil, and issues with omniscience. The second deals with specifically Christian issues, such as the Incarnation, the Resurrection, and the Trinity. Both of these major sections are subdivided in order to present two opposing views on topical controversial issues, which are usually authored by an atheistic/agnostic philosopher on the one side and a theistic philosopher on the other.

In the first section of the work, titled “Debates About God’s Existence,” introduces the philosophical issues regarding the possibility of the existence of the classically defined God. While some of these debates, such as the discussion of omniscience, may require some prior metaphysical training, they are for the most part fairly accessible, getting straight to the point and only using the most cogent examples. Some of the essays in this section give new perspectives on old arguments, such as William Lane Craig’s “The Kalam Argument,” which concisely lays out one of the oldest arguments for God, arguing that the universe cannot have existed infinitely in the past and must have had a beginning. In addition to familiar arguments, there are also some fairly original ideas presented in the first section, such as Kevin Corcoran’s “Humans are Material Persons Only.” In it, Corcoran goes against mainstream Christian philosophy by embracing materialism over mind body dualism. While this position might be rare amongst Christian philosophers, Corcoran makes a strong case for the Christian materialist.

Joseph Bulbulia’s essay in the first section of the book, titled “Bayes and the Evolution of Religious Belief,” stands out as a particularly intriguing argument. In it, he asserts that, when

applicable, Baye's rule of statistical probability should be applied to the debate on the existence of God. If we can assign rough probabilities to the hypothesis that God does or does not exist, then we can adjust this belief accordingly when presented with evidence that either supports or undermines this position. Bulbulia uses the evidence that our belief in a god or gods would exist even if God did not exist because of evolutionary pressures. If the theist uses the conviction of God as evidence for his hypothesis, his belief should be adjusted accordingly. Bulbulia does not assert that his argument completely undermines the possibility of a God, merely that it should influence how a decision maker might adjust his views in light of the evidence. This method provides a good framework for discussing the multitude of issues in the debate over the existence of God.

The second section of *Debating Christian Theism*, titled "Debates About Specific Christian Beliefs," delves into arguments concerning the plausibility of some essential concepts of Christianity and the historicity of certain biblical events. Just as in the first section, the last group of essays contains both new looks at classical arguments and some more recent developments in the debate on Christianity. Katherin A. Rodgers, for example, develops an interesting argument for the Incarnation based on Anselm's work concerning the subject, in which she likens the Incarnation to a person playing a video game. Paul F. Knitter, on the other hand, develops a relatively new position in the debate over religion that Christianity is but one of many correct paths in life in his chapter called "There Are Many Ways to God." While these chapters may come from a wide historical range, they are woven together to address the multitude of issues surrounding Christian theism.

Although the text is overall well done, some small issues exist. Depth is often sacrificed for brevity, but this does not take away from the work as a whole as these essays are more of an introduction to the debates than an exhaustive treatment of them, and the authors still manage to make their arguments effectively. The issue of free will, which seems to be an important topic regarding the existence of God, is absent from the work, save for a brief mention in Julian Baggini's

“Science is at Odds with Christianity” (p.315). Finally, in some of the last few debates regarding specifically Christian issues, such as the historicity of the resurrection, both sides are represented by writers from a Christian perspective. Even though there is a benefit to this author choice, in that it shows the reader that Christians may have conflicting ideas on very crucial topics, it seems as though the perspective of a historically skeptical atheist/agnostic would strengthen the debate.

Despite these minor issues, *Debating Christian Theism* remains a comprehensive body of work. Unlike many other works that deal with the philosophical issues of religion, it covers an enormous range of topics and presents the views of both theists and non-theists alike. Moreover, the range is enhanced by the use of both classic and modern viewpoints, which captures the breadth of the debate throughout history. Even though debates on these issues can often become heated, the authors remain respectful to their opponents and the editors have compiled their work in a fair manner. The short, yet informative, articles will give new students a strong entry into the broad range of current scholarship on religious issues and seasoned scholars will find some new insights in some very old debates.

MICHAEL COHEN
University of Delaware

Gschwandtner, Christina. *Postmodern Apologetics? Arguments for God in Contemporary Philosophy*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2013. 352 pp. ISBN 9780823242740

Post-Modern or Continental Philosophy often has the reputation of being esoteric and impenetrable. Many prominent thinkers within the movement at times employ dense, difficult prose that scares away many readers. Christina Gschwandtner's *Postmodern Apologetics? Arguments for God in Contemporary Philosophy* attempts to provide an introduction to religious thought and/or apologetics within Continental Philosophy that covers many important Post-Modern philosophers in an accessible manner.

The book starts by examining religious elements in the works of Martin Heidegger, Emmanuel Levinas, and Jacques Derrida. While she concedes that these philosophers are not apologetic in nature (and are often hostile to traditional theology), Gschwandtner covers how these thinkers employ religious imagery and themes at various points in their work. She explains how Husserl and Heidegger introduced the phenomenological approach to philosophy, which called for a return to basic perceptions and appearances, and hermeneutics, which advocated moving from a basic starting point to understand the world. Heidegger also moved away from what he called "onto-theology" (traditional metaphysics and proofs for the existence of God), which he felt reduced God to a conceptual supreme being. She next covers how Levinas examined the infinite and irreducible nature of individuals who demand total service and obedience with their unfathomable appearance. Gschwandtner shows how Derrida explores the implications of this phenomenology of the Other ("the face of the Other") for the possibility of gift-giving, hospitality, and religious experience, particularly through the lens of Abraham and Isaac. Indeed, she notes that Derrida seems to think that the infinite and thus unquenchable call of the Other drains traditional religion and theology of all meaning because they try to put limits on someone (God) who is not limited.

In the second part of her book, Gschwandtner explores how the French philosophers Paul Ricoeur, Jean-Luc Marion, Michel Henry, Jean-Louis Chretien, Jean-Yves Lacoste, and Emmanuel Falque have used elements from Heidegger, Levinas, and Derrida to study religion and the divine. While many of these thinkers do not make traditional arguments for the existence of God, she asserts that they all in one form or another deal with questions of transcendence and meaning with the help of phenomenology (particularly in regards to the Other), hermeneutics, or both. Furthermore, she notes that the relationship often goes the other way, in that these philosophers employ religious texts or themes (particularly Christian and Catholic) to inform their phenomenological and/or hermeneutical studies. Indeed, according to her account, these thinkers find themselves in and operate out of a particular tradition. Instead of offering logical proofs or scientific evidence for the existence of God, she argues that they legitimize religious belief and experience by demonstrating a sort of internal cohesion and depth within certain religious traditions (which she believes is in line with early patristic apologetics).

The final portion of Gschwandtner's book covers three English-speaking thinkers (Merold Westphal, John Caputo, and Richard Kearney) that have co-opted elements of the French continental tradition in various ways. She reads Caputo as a disciple of Derrida who has done much to introduce him to the English-speaking world, while Westphal and Kearney attempt to incorporate many of the insights from Continental Philosophy without completely undermining all traditional religious or Christian beliefs.

Gschwandtner's study covers an impressive variety of thinkers and manages to explain the religious elements (or at least the religious implications) of their work in a clear and concise manner. Her chapter on Levinas is especially good in this regard. Levinas' phenomenology of the Other is critical for later Continental Philosophy, but his prose is often difficult. Gschwandtner manages to provide a lucid description of this challenging philosophical concept. While secondary sources cannot

replace primary ones, this book would be ideal as an introduction or accompaniment for undergraduates hoping to study certain religious strains within Continental Philosophy. Furthermore, because each chapter focuses on a particular philosopher, students could read sections independent of the rest of the book if they wanted to study one or more of the thinkers Gschwandter examines.

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