

and an extensive bibliography enable the reader to trace the steps taken by Cunningham in the construction and presentation of his ideas. This is a book for the serious scholar of Wesley's theological thought and spiritual system. It is a volume that merits close study and that may well change the direction of thinking about some hitherto familiar aspects of Wesleyan theological expression.

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Philosophical Religions from Plato to Spinoza, Carlos Fraenkel, Cambridge University Press, 2012 (ISBN 978-0-521-19457-0), xxvii + 328 pp., hb £59.99

This well-crafted work traces the trajectory of 'philosophical religion' from Plato's *Laws* to Spinoza. This trajectory includes the work of Philo, Clement, and Origen of Alexandria as well as al-Farabi, Averroes, and Maimonides in addition to the titular philosophers. Naturally, given the two millennia scope of the monograph, more questions are raised than answered. However, in taking up a topic that has not been studied previously, Fraenkel has made a great contribution to the history of philosophy and religion that is sure to inspire additional research for years to come.

While providing important insights into his many sources, the greatest contribution here is Fraenkel's formulation of 'philosophical religion' itself. The standard account of the subservience of philosophy to the requirements of religion is directly challenged here. Fraenkel effectively reverses the famous image of philosophy as 'handmaid' of theology associated especially perhaps with Thomas Aquinas. For authors in this tradition, it is religion that serves the ends of philosophy.

Central to the entire project is the 'Platonic model' found in the *Laws*: a prescription for the use and reinterpretation of religion in the service of the philosophical life and thus the well-being of the state. For Plato, the ideal life is that of the philosopher who develops their intellect as the best way to conform to, and worship, God. The result is the rational self-governance of the philosopher. Because God is Reason, moral autonomy is also theocracy in so far as the philosopher orders themselves and their society according to rational principles. However, no one is born a philosopher capable of their own rational self-rule, and not everyone in society is ever capable of philosophical thinking. It is precisely at this point that religion, with its laws, stories, and rituals, becomes useful. Religious injunctions serve to inculcate a degree of rational behavior in the majority of the population. With social order established on the basis of piety, the philosopher is freed to reinterpret religion's true allegorical meaning,

which is the content of philosophical reflection. Thus, religion serves as the handmaid of philosophy for Plato. This 'pedagogical-political program' is the basic approach of all Fraenkel's advocates of philosophical religion.

To this point, the argument bears a clear resemblance to the work of Leo Strauss. However, unlike Strauss, who accepted the fundamental incompatibility of religion and philosophy, Fraenkel argues persuasively on the basis of a careful reading of the sources that medieval philosophers especially were certain of the ultimate agreement of religion and philosophy (pp. 33–35). This agreement is disclosed, however, only through the properly philosophical, that is, allegorical, interpretation of religious texts and practices. As Maimonides asserted, the Hebrew prophets were actually philosophers with highly developed moral and intellectual habits and faculties (p. 179–180). If one comes to prophetic texts trained in philosophy, their seemingly irrational statements are revealed to be merely the literal mask of allegorical truth. Thus, philosophy and religion are not at all opposed. Indeed, given the practical necessity of the popular expression of rational principles in religious guise, 'the projects of reason and religion cannot be meaningfully distinguished at all' (p. 5).

The details of Fraenkel's exposition go beyond the scope of a brief review, but it is particularly strong when laying out the Jewish and Islamic tradition of philosophical religion that influenced Spinoza in the early modern period. The argument is complex and rewards careful reading in its entirety, but essentially, the idea is that Spinoza was both attracted to the project of philosophical religion and highly critical of some of the central features thereof. Spinoza was self-assured that he had arrived at the truth with his equation of God and nature (*Deus, sive Natura*). Moreover, like other advocates of philosophical religion, Spinoza was eager to reinterpret scripture philosophically. But, in response to Dutch Calvinism, Spinoza also offered a blistering critique of religion, pointing out that the biblical prophets were not 'philosophers' at all and that much of what they say about both God and the world is simply wrong. Despite the tension between these aspects of his thought, 'the concept of a philosophical religion plays a prominent role' for Spinoza. He was both 'an astute critic of this concept' and 'its last major representative' (p. 37).

For Fraenkel, Spinoza initiated an 'impasse' for this tradition (p. 282). He remained committed to the 'pedagogical-political program' outlined earlier. However, in Spinoza's critique of religion, 'he rejects the empirical claim that the historical forms of a religious tradition are a pedagogical-political program designed by philosophers for the guidance of non-philosophers'. Spinoza's way forward was to embrace the suggestion from Plato's *Laws* to construct 'a philosophical reinterpretation of Christian beliefs, practices, and institutions' (p. 283). But the cost of so doing was inconsistency with his own critique of religion. Spinoza's was not a unique solution to this particular conundrum however as Fraenkel makes clear in his discussion of Lessing, Kant, and Hegel (pp. 282–293).

Moreover, the example of Friedrich Schiller illustrates, albeit all too briefly, the prospects of art as a replacement pedagogical-political program (pp. 293–294). Finally, Fraenkel brings his monograph to a close with a discussion of the ‘main challenge to the concept of a philosophical religion’ for us today, the modern ‘moral-political paradigm’ according to which ‘all human beings are equally able to rationally rule themselves’ thus making a ‘pedagogical-political program’ superfluous (p. 295).

Fraenkel’s choice to largely ignore the later Platonic tradition is, as he acknowledges, the most significant weakness in the work as a whole (p. 25). Renaissance and early modern Platonism especially would have helped to fill in the chronological gaps between antiquity, the middle ages, and modernity. Indeed, John Smith, a seventeenth century ‘Cambridge Platonist’ (less well-known than he deserves to be), expressly followed the lead of Origen and Maimonides in much of his philosophical theology, bringing together otherwise disparate strands in Fraenkel’s history.

Given the massive scope of Fraenkel’s project, there are, of course, many areas that are disputable as our author well knows. For example, the treatment of Origen is perhaps less than fully convincing. After all, notwithstanding his frequent recourse to allegorical interpretation, he still insists that some parts of the scripture are literally true (e.g., the Divine Logos can be read directly out of the Gospel of John). If Origen is an advocate of ‘philosophical religion’, we should expect him to have to reinterpret the texts of his religion in order to disclose philosophical content. But, the New Testament contains material from the ‘same intellectual milieu as Philo’ (p. 123 n. 60). Thus, there is ‘philosophy’ in the religious texts of the Christian faith that does not itself require philosophical exegesis. I am not sure that Fraenkel gives this the attention it is due on the basis of his sources. But, matters of specialist interpretation and scholarly debate such as this do not detract from what remains an important contribution to the history of philosophy and religion. Rather, Fraenkel is to be celebrated for giving so many of us (philosophers, theologians, historians, etc.) something to think about with him.

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The Original Ending of Mark: A New Case for the Authenticity of Mark 16:9–20, Nicholas P. Lunn, James Clarke, 2015 (ISBN 978-0-227-17527-9), xii + 378 pp., pb, £26.50

When did you last read a new book in biblical studies that was not a collection of articles or a minimally revised doctoral thesis? A book moreover that was substantial, systematic and lucid? A book that