

itself should be considered miraculous if one considers this is a survey of the entire continent. Kalu might have taken head-on the post-structuralist approaches of such scholars as Jean and John Comaroff and Ruth Marshall on Pentecostal churches in the neo-liberal moment. Another concern is his lack of attention to Lusophone Africa and his limited engagement with Pentecostal churches in Francophone countries. Members of mainline Protestant and Catholic churches might also be a bit put off by occasional playful jabs at their expense. Yet these minor criticisms should not dissuade anyone from appreciating this creative and extremely well-supported work.

It is imperative that this book reach a wide audience. Any undergraduate, graduate student, scholar, or layman that seeks to know the history and the beliefs of African Pentecostals must read this book. It should be mandatory reading for any graduate class on Pentecostalism or African religion. Its trenchant and provocative prose is extremely easy to follow without sacrificing any complexity in the process. For undergraduate courses, the length probably would preclude use of the entire book. The bibliography alone is worth the price of admission, let alone the brilliant analysis that can only be covered briefly in this review. It is rare to read a book that will shape academic discussion of a topic for decades to come.

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*The Theological Origins of Modernity*

Michael Allen Gillespie. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.

ISBN 9780226293455. Pp. xiii + 386.

Reviewed by Arthur Williamson, California State University

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Historians from nearly all schools have long agreed that the rise of the modern world involved a transition from teleology to time, a vast temporalization of cognition, quite literally the validation of the saeculum against the timeless, the other-worldly. From the new categories that made time meaningful and development cogent, emerged political culture, public life, and social theory, as well as the program for science and the dynamic of discovery and validation. Not so, claims Michael Allen Gillespie. Temporality is “the modern project’s” self-description, and it is an illusion. For temporality “only becomes meaningful for us against the background of eternity.”

Instead, Gillespie insists, modernity finds its sources (and, for him, its current predicament) in the atemporal “Nominalist Revolution” of the fourteenth century. Nominalism overthrew the integrated universe of the earlier scholastics. The terms that had organized all the multiplicity of things we perceive comprised no more than human inventions, and thereby the world lost its rationality, causal connections, and coherence. Concomitantly, the Nominalist God became boundlessly powerful,

utterly arbitrary, and radically remote. Gillespie is uncertain about the effects of Nominalism on revelation: it threatened to overthrow revelation, yet it seems to have strengthened its authority. Still, space, not time, became the hinge to the modern.

Why this enormous intellectual upheaval? The matter barely interests Gillespie. It sprang from the disasters of the later middle ages, and Gillespie briefly lists a series of such traumas—the Black Death, the Great Schism, the Hundred Years War, the invention of gunpowder, and even the Little Ice Age—all of which are deemed inherently and sufficiently explanatory. No effort whatsoever is made to identify what specific problems Nominalist thinkers, such as William of Ockham, might have sought to address. Their world simply evaporates before generalized catastrophe.

All subsequent intellectual and cultural history, Gillespie tells us, comprises a response to the intellectual and moral crisis precipitated by Nominalism, literally from the Renaissance to the Reformation, to the Scientific Revolution, to Rationalism, to the Enlightenment (and, if less immediately evident, even to the contemporary moment). None of them ever challenged the Nominalist ontology. At issue, Gillespie maintains, was the “ontic” relationship of the various elements within this fragmented Nominalist universe. That is, the priority given to human agency (the power of language and rhetoric), or to the searing authority of this limitless, unknowable, and crushingly awesome God (focused on the transcending experience of grace), or, subsequently, to the order of nature seen as independent of both.

The humanist “project” sought to offer one way out of the Nominalist problematic through Petrarch’s formulation of the autonomous individual. Gillespie is exercised to distinguish severely between civic humanism and the Christian variety. The former with its emphasis on the community, the public good, and the *zōon politikon* is portrayed as marginal to humanist preoccupations, and Gillespie airily dismisses the claims of John Pocock and Quentin Skinner that these values are defining. Individualism and ultimately “Prometheanism” prove decisive within Gillespie’s Renaissance. This dismissal of the temporal and the political leads to a very odd reading of the European past. In his view medieval Europe experienced “nationalism” and apparently had a genuinely political culture as well as a “secular” dimension (45). By contrast Gillespie sees modernity as “intensely private and apolitical.”

The confrontation between Desiderius Erasmus and Martin Luther proves foundational. Each drew on varying faces of the Augustinian legacy. Yet Erasmus enjoined Platonist middle school skepticism and promoted human agency, while Luther relied on classical Stoicism and promoted divine sovereignty. Neither rejected the Nominalist frame and its assumptions, but each strenuously contested its ontic priorities.

The Erasmus-Luther face-off, Gillespie tells us, resurfaced in altered form a century later with the confrontation between René Descartes and Thomas Hobbes. Both prioritized nature rather than either God or human capability, but the issue of the irrational Nominalist deity remained in place. Descartes “solved” the Nominalist problem by quantifying concepts of infinity. Finite man and infinite God joined through mathematics, through measurement of things fundamentally the same—sameness being the only attribute that mathematics can measure. Descartes’ man became deified as a result, and the ensuing consequences for Gillespie have ever since proven “monstrous.”

Thomas Hobbes constructed, in Gillespie’s view, nothing less than a naturalistic reprise of John Calvin. His frame was no less mechanistic than Descartes’, but in a cosmos where spirit was merely a refined form of matter, causality could only be predetermined and Calvinist predestination inexorably triumphed.

According to Gillespie, this ongoing fissure within emerging modernity achieved its most articulate and also most concealed form with the eighteenth-century European Enlightenment. The Enlightenment fully embodied the mathematical-naturalistic fault-line, for it resolved the Nominalist problematic by denying the possibility of ultimate truth, final answers, and first principles through its rejection of the poisonous *esprit de système*. There would always exist, Condorcet insisted, a gulf between what we knew and what we wanted to know. That gulf would be filled through man’s fabrications, which was human enough, but the problem lay in their sanctification. Therein arose the great obstacle to human progress and freedom. The eighteenth-century answer to the problem was thus to deny its existence. But Kant, Gillespie assures us, knew better. The philosopher’s great antimony between causal sequence and human freedom spelled out the irremediable tension within modernity. That tension provided the spine of virtually all subsequent thought, as Gillespie argues in a brief excursus through late modern philosophy that concludes the volume. The Nominalist God remains very much with us. The theological, metaphysical, and spiritual dilemmas of the fourteenth century that gave rise to modernity continue to haunt us. Gillespie’s purpose is to make us confront them and their implications.

But do they? Gillespie is highly selective in his theology, largely discounting eschatology and completely ignoring Jewish spirituality—accordingly, neither “Judaism” nor “Jews” appear in his index. For Gillespie the apocalypse is either simply a despairing terminus or an engine for fanaticism and violence. The millennium appears merely a metaphor or a malign mindset. They neither possess a history of their own nor entail a cultural dynamic of any consequence. Similarly, on Gillespie’s telling, the Hebraic traditions generally altogether failed to shape modernity. Long ago John Pocock observed in an essay about Hobbes that scholarship had suffered from a fixed unwillingness to give the Hebrew and eschatological elements in seventeenth-century thought the enormous significance

they held for contemporaries. Inevitably Gillespie's resolutely atemporal and anti-political account of modernity will prove skewed and drastically distorting.

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***Roman Imperial Identities in the Early Christian Era***

Judith Perkins. Routledge Monographs in Classical Studies. London/New York: Routledge, 2009. ISBN 9780415397445. Pp. x + 209.

Reviewed by Meredith Warren, McGill University

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In *Roman Imperial Identities in the Early Christian Era* Judith Perkins examines the early Christian emphasis on the body and bodily resurrection expected by some early Christians. For Perkins, the body is an indicator of elite and non-elite identity and was for this reason embraced by early Christians. Perkins uses ancient Greek Romance novels, long known to be witnesses to the elite values of the ancient Mediterranean, as a foil to early Christian texts such as apocryphal acts and martyrdom texts. Perkins convincingly argues that the emphasis on corporal punishment in Christian texts reflects a rejection of an unequal justice system and the expectation of a future, egalitarian one.

Perkins' focus on the novels limits her to the Greek-speaking world of the Eastern Empire, where, conveniently, Christians made up a noticeable part of the population. Perkins is explicit about her attempts to break down an artificial division between Christians and pagans in the ancient world, and acknowledges that in doing so she introduces another, more indigenous, dichotomy: elite/non-elite. For Perkins, Christian identities in the ancient world say more about class than they do about religion; Christian identity formation makes use of the body in order to define itself against *elite* (rather than pagan) modes of justice.

In chapter one Perkins notes similarities in constructing both Christian and Greco-Roman identities through cultural activities. Roman and non-Roman elites found common ground in embracing Roman education and other practices; Christians formed a universalizing identity by denying the body's vulnerability to pain and death, after the model of Jesus (41).

The importance of the Greek novels for early Christianity is well-known—in chapter two, Perkins emphasizes that fiction reflects a common attempt to negotiate cultural and social identity. The body in the novel defines its owner's chastity. The protagonists' bodies are constantly threatened, but as elites, no physical harm can come to them; likewise, their identity as elites in the Roman Empire remains intact. For Perkins, this highlights the Greek elites' relationship to the authority of Rome and its justice system. Like low-status characters in the novels, Christians are at risk for gruesome deaths, and just as for the social outcasts in the novels, death is