by that we mean they have the tendency to capacitiate themselves toward practicing religion. This does not mean that all persons and cultures are religious. What it does mean is that we should “not expect human societies to become thoroughly secularized on any long-term basis.” One of the best features of Atheist Overreach is Smith’s attention to outlining the distinct approaches that atheists have used to resolve certain dilemmas. Although he does not provide the reader with a theistic alternative, he succeeds in showing the implausibility of various attempts that seek to reconcile many theoretical and practical concerns of atheistic philosophies.

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Religion and Law


By contrast to his 2007 and 2009 works on French Islam, John R. Bowen underscores the uniqueness of British Islam in terms of its diversity, creativity, and conformity. On British Islam testifies to the flexibility and adaptability of the Islamic normative teachings (sharīʿa) to the British values when “there is no state-mandated jurisprudence.” It addresses the ways in which the Muslim urban concentrations within British locations facilitate collective and institutional nostalgias and conservatism. It demonstrates how these “concentration effects” make the construction of new forms of religious reasoning and justification possible. Bowen observes that through its shared history, ideology, or origin, these concentrations contributed to building connections with their countries of origin instead of their neighbors through transcontinental marriages. In thirteen succinct chapters, Bowen discusses (1) the “pathways” that Muslims took to relocate themselves in Britain, to establish their institutions, and to participate in religious and political domains; (2) the shariʿa councils’ “practices” in handling divorce cases; (3) the “variants” of Muslim practices due to the different doctrinal convictions, namely, Sufism, Salafism, conservatives, and progressives; and (4) the “boundaries” of the application of shariʿa in Britain. The book contributes to our understanding of the function of Islamic law within the “tolerating” “loosely structured” British contexts through examining how Muslim British urban considerations negotiate between their normative understanding of their faith and the imposing social constraints of the welcoming soil of Britain. The book succeeds to address the puzzling question that if the shariʿa-based councils’ decisions carry no effect in the English law, why would the diverse British Muslim communities continue to consult them? It is a remarkable historical and ethnographic work that explains the development of Islamic institutions and the everyday function of shariʿa in concentrated Muslim communities in Britain meticulously.

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Doctors on trial for the murder of children during the Nazi euthanasia program in 1945 showed no sense of guilt or remorse. For French historian Johann Chapoutot, their unflinching recitations of Nazi ideological tenets—even as they faced judgment—are not surprising. His recently translated The Law of Blood analyzes the worldview espoused by these physicians in the words of their originators. Chapoutot works from a “continent” of writings by Third Reich ideologues, intellectuals, and leaders as sources for “study of the norms [Nazism] established and the normative thought it upheld.” The author’s consistent refrain is a warning that scholars must take seriously what the Nazis said and wrote. The ideas Chapoutot lays bare were not empty propaganda—they were convictions that motivated war and genocide for true believers. Readers will notice an organization in this book from “Genesis” to “Millennium” that is more than reminiscent of the Christian metanarrative. In nine chapters divided into three parts—“Procreating,” “Fighting,” and “Reigning”—the author underscores how a National Socialist ideology rooted in “blood and soil” became a faith in open competition with Christianity. In so doing, Chapoutot adds to our understanding of Nazi ideas and their results by excavating the “moral universe” from which myriad atrocities emerged. Though a worthy addiction to scholarship for this and other interventions, Chapoutot’s belief that inquiry into the cultural and intellectual history of Nazism does not predate 1995 is notable. The late historian George L. Mosse pioneered this sort of work in a succession of books including the 1966 volume Nazi Culture. Though Chapoutot nowhere cites Mosse, they share much in common. In another curious divergence from the historiography, Chapoutot dismisses psychological explanations of Holocaust perpetration and Browning’s treatment of ideological training in Ordinary Men. The present volume, however, has numerous benefits despite these quibbles. The author advances Mosse’s cultural and intellectual lens and offers deeper interpretation of Nazi ideology and its resultant horrors. Chapoutot’s discursive analysis contributes new tools for the overall understanding of National Socialist ideas and actions that have relevance for scholars of the Shoah, intellectual and cultural history, and religious studies.

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This is a book against police, against the practices of property that police protect and that, according to the argument here, necessitate both racialization and policing. Police are a “lethal force . . . charged by the state with managing poverty, patrolling the color line, and ruthlessly protecting establishment and economic interests,” or, as the authors put it more tersely, “Ain’t no colonialism and ain’t no capitalism without cops.” Such vernacular swagger contrasts with the