

conclusion that Mendelssohn is an abiding resource for contemporary Jewish religious renewal.

Assuming the function of a performative theology, Jewish ritual practice obviates the danger of religious symbols becoming idolatrous surrogates of transcendent truths. F. suggests that for Mendelssohn biblical language is a primordial language of action rather than a vehicle of abstract truth. Judaism exemplifies that idolatry need not be countenanced as an inevitable vice. But what seems to elude F. is the apparent inconsistency between Mendelssohn's endorsement of the principle of religious tolerance and his notion of the "mission of Judaism" to secure "pure monotheism" against idolatry (80, 200). The implied negative judgment concerning the capacity of other religions to resist the temptation of idolatry, however, remains open to discussion.

The interpretation of ritual as a "language of action" (18) anticipates the concerns of contemporary comparative religion that parts ways with the (Protestant) definition of religion as principally confessional. Yet, ironically, F. detects in Mendelssohn's criticism of "real symbols," typical of Catholicism, a "protestant aspect" (183). Whether we understand ritual as a form of communication (Mary Douglas) or as ceremonial law whereby religious symbols function to promote an "adequate human response to the divine" (227), religion indeed lives in the tension between ritual and belief. By arguing that the criterion of adequacy is the methodological presupposition of Mendelssohn's approach to religious representation, F. extends the notion of idolatry beyond its common restriction to false objects of devotion and renders it a heuristic principle to examine not only Judaism but all religions as semiotic systems.

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LA RAGIONE DELLA STORIA: PER UNA FILOSOFIA DELLA STORIA COME SCIENZA.  
By Gianluigi Pasquale. Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2011. Pp. 302. €18.

"What is the meaning of the events that happen (to me)?" This question is the starting point of Pasquale's inquiry, as he states in his preface. The question arises and plays itself out at a *personal* and *existential* level addressing explicitly one of the most urgent issues in one's life. Subsequently, P. provides a *philosophical* version of the initial question ("Are historical events rational?") and a *theological* version ("Is there, within history, a 'reason' for my salvation?"). Finally, P. presents a complementary epistemological side of this multilayered problem: only if history displays an *intrinsic* meaning can we have "a philosophy of history as a science," as the book's title suggests.

P. addresses this complex set of problems as he works his way through the philosophy of Hegel and the work of Hegel's interpreter Wolfhart

Pannenberg, a contemporary Christian theologian with “strong philosophical interests” (21). Thus, we have multiple layers of the problem at stake—the historical presence of an existential *meaning*, of an “objective” *rationality* in history, and of a personal *salvation*—and a threefold hermeneutic perspective, namely, the author’s perspective unfolding through Hegel’s and Pannenberg’s.

Pannenberg takes Hegel’s thought as enabling a description of the relationship between the Christian God and history. He is perfectly aware that Hegel had recast Christian categories in a secular meaning and integrated them in a purely philosophical perspective; however, in so doing, Hegel was able to spell out the philosophical implications of the Christian religious experience. There is always a visible tension, then, in Pannenberg’s reading of Hegel’s work, between the *philosophical interpretation* of religious categories, which is intended to be thoroughly respectful of Christian theology, and a *secular reduction* of said categories. According to Pannenberg, this is a risk to be taken in order to attain a scientific philosophy of history.

In Pannenberg’s view, Hegel gives us the philosophical paradigm necessary to conceive of the Christian divine revelation beyond the opposition between the finite and the infinite. The main implication of this idea is a new perspective on the relationship between the Absolute and history: “Nobody, before Hegel, had such an exact feeling that history is the very self-manifestation of the Absolute—of God, in a theological language—, and that therefore scientific knowledge of the Absolute, as philosophy considers itself, cannot help being historical knowledge and knowledge of history” (42). Hegel, then, according to Pannenberg, is the first thinker who determined the essential and original bond between the Absolute and history, thus making clear that complete knowledge of the Absolute requires a transition *through* history, which becomes the “insuperable” field of inquiry. In this sense, the Hegelian concept of “the end of history” (*das Ende der Geschichte*) is key: if the Absolute is originally tied to history, only at the end of history can we have full knowledge of the Absolute. According to Pannenberg, this idea is decisive for the Christian interpretation of the nature of history: only in light of the future fulfillment of history can we embrace reality as a whole and therefore grasp its meaning, thereby determining the meaning of each of its parts. At the same time, the end of history will reveal what is already “at work” in the present.

At this point, the problem is how precisely to determine this “end”: is it just the fulfillment of an immanent process that coincides with the Absolute itself, or, as Pannenberg claims, is it the final and definitive reconciliation between finite and infinite, immanence and transcendence?

Pannenberg reinterprets Hegel’s idea of the end of history in terms of *eschatological ontology*, according to which the end of history is the *salvation* of every single (created) being and not just the overcoming of the limits

toward a perfect and homogeneous totality. For Pannenberg, the full understanding of the totality of being, made possible by the end of history, is the full expression of every particular being, within the embrace of the infinite Being. Everything, in Pannenberg's interpretation, is rooted in Christ's resurrection, which anticipates the end of history, thus initiating the salvation of the world. This is the crucial idea that distinguishes him sharply from Hegel: Pannenberg sees Christ's resurrection precisely as that moment of history in which the final reconciliation between time and eternity begins, that is, the moment *of* history in which the *end* of history begins. In a sense, Pannenberg's effort could be summarized as the attempt to present in a philosophical fashion, on the basis of Hegel's thought, what the poet T. S. Eliot had written in his Chorus VII from *The Rock* about the Incarnation:

Then came, at a predetermined moment, a moment in time and of time,

A moment not out of time, but in time, in what we call history: transecting, bisecting the world of time,

A moment in time but not like a moment of time, a moment in time, but time was made through that moment: for without the meaning there is no time, and that moment of time gave the meaning.

Throughout his informative book, P. shows how, paradoxically, Pannenberg sets out to use Hegel's philosophy against Hegel, in order to gain a deeper understanding of some fundamental elements of a "classic" Christian view.

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CREATOR GOD, EVOLVING WORLD. By Cynthia Crysdale and Neil Ormerod. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013. Pp. xiv + 168. \$18.

Written for the "ordinary person in the pew" (xiii), this book addresses the apparent incompatibility between science and religion to the end of "expanding [the] faith vision" (xiv) of the generally educated and, presumably, believing reader. The work that Crysdale and Ormerod have produced elicits as many scientific insights as it does theological insights; common conceptions of both God and the cosmos are exposed in a nuanced and fairly accessible manner. In their view, the debate between science and religion presents not only a false dichotomy but also a false choice that the ordinary person feels compelled to make. To resolve the issue, C. and O. construct a single worldview—based primarily on Bernard Lonergan's transposition of the theology of Thomas Aquinas—that is consistent with both core Christian beliefs and the best of modern science.

After a first chapter that surveys the relevant elements from the history of the relationship between (mostly modern) science and religion, the