

Same God, Other God: Judaism, Hinduism, and the Problem of Idolatry. By Alon Goshen-Gottstein. *Interreligious Studies in Theory and Practice.* Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan. 2015. Pp. x + 265. \$100.

Goshen-Gottstein is the Director of the Elijah Interfaith Institute in Jerusalem, and a well-respected leader in the work of dialogue and interfaith understanding, in Israel and globally. A rabbi and trained in Rabbinic thought, G. writes from a deeply informed and articulate Jewish viewpoint, and makes it possible for the reader (such as this reviewer) not expert in Rabbinic thinking to begin to appreciate, learn from, and think with the complexities and subtleties of that thinking.

As the title suggests, fundamental ideas about God are at issue in this book. Specifically, G. explores the opportunities and constraints on Jews as they think about Hindus and Hinduism, a religion often portrayed by Jews and others as polytheistic and idolatrous. G. makes use of the concept of *avoda zara*, idol worship, an idea with deep roots in Jewish tradition, a tractate of the Talmud. In chapters of historical theology, we hear the views of Maimonides (1135–1204), the foremost Jewish philosopher–theologian, who offered a very influential interpretation of idol worship as an error that over times becomes deep-seated and stubbornly defended, ending in a grievous forgetting of God. G. turns then to Nachmanides (1194–1270), a less studied figure who found a way to value non-Jewish worship as fitting to the capacities and knowledge of those worshippers, and even beneficial for them. For Maimonides, the expectation that the true God alone be worshipped is universal, and idolaters merely fail to do what all should do. For Nachmanides, the differences among religions and their ways of worship is in accord with the divine will, even if defective compared to Israel’s worship.

G. deals also with *shituf*, a category marking real but defective worship which turns to more than one deity but which need not be condemned as *avoda zara*. By *shituf* reasoning, non-Jewish worshippers may be assessed more leniently than Jews, as long as they continue to grow spiritually and toward true understandings of God. In God’s greater plan, idolaters can be judged accordingly to the options before them: from those to whom less has been given, less is expected. A final resource G. introduces is the theology of Rabbi Menachem Hameiri (Meiri; 1249–1310). G. considers Meiri’s work a best resource for a Jewish theology of religions today, since he went beyond legal rulings, to fashion a promising theology of religions. Religions progress, and some are ahead of others in terms of maturation; idol worship is too often accompanied by defective moral standards and practices that pose a graver danger than the worship itself.

G. has done a wonderful job in learning Hinduism by reading widely, and by the fruits of his many friendships and contacts. That he has gained so good a feel for lived and living Hinduism shows us how the great daunting challenges posed by interreligious learning can be mitigated by taking advantage of “ordinary life” opportunities available to all of us. The desire for perfect expertise several times over ought not be allowed to hinder the real learning that can indeed occur.

The last part of the book asks constructively whether Hindus and Jews worship the same God. Because G. thinks that there is no substantive bar to thinking that Hindus do worship one God, albeit in myriad forms and by many names, he answers in the affirmative. Here, I think, more can be said. A good complement to his study might then be a more nuanced appreciation of some Hindus' adamant polytheism. Of course too, granting that Hindus do not merely or mindlessly worship many deities, even those who glimpse a divine oneness behind the plurality may still not be worshipping one God in the way Jews or Christians do.

G. is seeking a clearer and less fraught relations with Hindus, and he is appealing to his Jewish colleagues, to honor and extend the categories of his own tradition to new situations. He is also exemplifying how deeper and better informed fidelity to a tradition's own categories may facilitate rather than hamper deeper interreligious relations. For those of us unfamiliar with rabbinic ways of thinking, G.'s book is eye-opening, as new ways of engaging the religions of Asia suddenly emerge. Christian theologians of religions can be grateful too, relieved of the burden of thinking that all the intellectual work of understanding pluralism is ours to do.

Francis X. Clooney, SJ
Harvard University

Heidegger's Pauline and Lutheran Roots. By Duane Armitage. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. Pp. xii + 199. €96.26.

This book delivers more than the title promises, because so much of it is devoted to Heidegger's overall theology; but it also delivers less, because so little of it is focused on Heidegger's discussions of Paul and Luther. Armitage maintains that his book has two major parts; the first part is devoted to some of Heidegger's earlier lectures and to *Sein und Zeit* while the second part is focused on his later writings: particularly on the *Beiträge zur Philosophie: Vom Ereignis*. And actually, it has a third part: the final chapter entitled "Heidegger and Postmodern Philosophy of Religion." Whether A. is successful in his defense of Heidegger here against some of the more recent critics remains questionable.

The second part will appeal the most to people interested in Heidegger's later thinking. While A. mostly overlooks Heidegger's writings from the beginning of the 1940s, he concentrates primarily on some unpublished writings from the thirties. A. suggests that many scholars contend that the *Beiträge zur Philosophie* equals *Sein und Zeit* in importance, yet he does not provide a list of these scholars nor does he offer a fully convincing account for this claim. Furthermore, A. admits that the *Beiträge* has a peculiar structure and is written in an "enigmatic language," and thus is extremely difficult to comprehend (129, 133). Nonetheless, A. intends to offer a clear and "jargon-free" introduction to this work because he contends that it contains some of the crucial features of Heidegger's later philosophy: his call for a new beginning and a new way of thinking. But, A. contends that these are also important for Heidegger's later