

a result of an experience during a Yom Kippur liturgy in 1913. In this experience was something, one might have thought, that transcended the jargon of German idealism—indeed, that transcended all concepts.

As if written directly to such readers, Pollock's new book argues that the common story of Rosenzweig's near-conversion is simply not true. Rosenzweig did not have some experience of the divine presence in 1913 that showed him the truth of Judaism; rather, as Pollock painstakingly shows, Rosenzweig had already realized some days before Yom Kippur that he could remain a Jew. By the time Rosenzweig realized this, he was no longer in thrall to the writings of the second-century Christian thinker Marcion. By rooting the story of Rosenzweig's near-conversion in his long grappling with Marcionist themes, Pollock is able to give more precise (and more compelling) readings of much of the early Rosenzweigian corpus. Moreover, he is able to show that Rosenzweig's concern in these early writings—to affirm both the love of God and the love of inhuman others—is part and parcel of his desire (which Pollock explicated clearly in his 2009 book) to have the idealist notion of system explain how knowledge of the One and All is possible.

Pollock's story begins with a reconstruction of the contours of a key conversation between Rosenzweig, his cousin Rudolf Ehrenberg, and their friend Eugen Rosenstock in Leipzig on the evening of July 7, 1913, which led to a suicidal depression and intellectual crisis on Rosenzweig's part over the next three months. Pollock treats at length the book that gave rise to that conversation (Selma Lagerlöf's *The Miracles of Amichrist* [Boston: Little, Brown, 1910]), an unpublished play by Ehrenberg, and several pieces of Rosenzweig's juvenilia. In his analyses, Pollock shows that Rosenzweig in his twenties was consumed with the question of whether Marcionism—here understood as the sense that humans needed to be redeemed from worldly existence, and that "God requires that the human being negate his own worldly existence" (32)—was true. By the time of the July 7 conversation, Rosenzweig was a thoroughgoing subjectivist who saw inner faith, and not worldly history, as the locus for meaning. As a result of that conversation, Rosenzweig indeed planned to convert to Christianity, but this was because Rosenstock had convinced him that Christianity was able to realize meaning in history by laboring toward the Kingdom of God on earth (62). Such a path of realization, however, was impossible for Judaism after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in 70 CE.

Rosenzweig's way out of the temptation to convert to Christianity, and his decision to remain Jewish, is tougher to reconstruct, especially given Rosenzweig's explicit denial that religious experience had anything to do with that decision. Basing himself primarily on a fascinating series of notes from 1916 known as "Parallipomena" as well as on Rosenzweig's correspondence from 1913, Pollock argues (in his second chapter) that Rosenzweig went far down the path of thinking that a God who demands acknowledgment from humans is a God who gives humans the freedom to decide for the redemption of the world, in and through that acknowledgment of divine sovereignty, and to act in history on the basis of that decision. This demand for redemption in history is not addressed to Jews; it is addressed to Christians. However, Rosenzweig decided to remain a Jew because he thought that Jews, simply by existing as Jews, were all that could possibly keep Christians from thinking that the world was *aharatzah* redeemed, and that their labor was therefore unnecessary.

Pollock's reconstruction of the spiritual and philosophical crisis of Rosenzweig's twenties seems to be correct. But what kind of resolution did Rosenzweig really offer? Pollock claims (114) that Rosenzweig was converted to an affirmation of the election of the Jewish people. Yet such an account of election, at least in terms of Rosenzweig's 1913 understanding, is thin. The content of that election is not nearly as important as the fact of that election itself, which serves only to keep Christians from the sin of pride. To what extent is this an account of Jewish existence that any Jew would want

to affirm, given the fact that it is yet another account of Jews existing for the sake of Christians, and not for themselves?

Pollock's last chapter is a long commentary on certain sections of the 1921 *The Star of Redemption* that clears up many interpretive difficulties by rooting the text back in the existential crisis that Rosenzweig experienced in his twenties. Yet given how well Pollock has shown that Rosenzweig's Jew of 1913, who merely anticipates the future and does not act to bring it about, resembles Rosenzweig's Marcionist (122), the 1921 passages from the *Star* that are supposed to describe both Jewish and Christian action (e.g., neighbor-love) seem to be better descriptors of Christian action than of Jewish action. As Pollock notes, it appears strange "for Rosenzweig to embrace a world-denying Judaism as part of his overcoming of a world-denying Marcionism" (188), and it appears just as strange after Pollock's explanation that Rosenzweig's Jew exists "already at the goal" and thus prays in opposition to the world at this historical moment, and not in opposition to worldliness in general (188–90). But it is enough that Pollock has clarified a muddy thinker who has not always been served well by the secondary literature; to ask Pollock to justify Rosenzweig would have been to ask the impossible.

MARTIN KAVKA, *Florida State University*.

PRAMUK, CHRISTOPHER. *Hope Sings, So Beautiful! Graceful Encounters across the Color Line*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2013. xxvi+238 pp. \$19.95 (paper).

In this book about interracial "graced encounters," white Catholic theologian Christopher Pramuk begins by sharing a variety of experiences that have raised his race consciousness and brought him into relationships with persons of color. From the deep impact of learning African American spirituals in college, teaching in a white Catholic school while simultaneously working with a predominantly black Catholic youth choir and bringing the two groups together, along with time spent in Haiti and his adoption of two Haitian children, his experiences clearly display exposure to racial and cultural difference. While exposure to difference is no guarantee of racial transformation, his does not come across as a kind of tourist approach. What is most helpful is Pramuk's resulting recognition of the crucial role of ongoing interracial relationships for changing biased social imagination.

Pramuk explores different avenues into the topic: what he terms academic approaches to race, the state of nonwhites in global reality, and the world of African American spirituals. While it is difficult to identify this book in terms of standard genres in religious studies or theology—it draws a bit on history, fleshes out stories, as well as expressions of music and art—it is fair to say that it attends to a wide variety of contexts still shaped by residuals of racial and ethnic brokenness in order to discern and invoke gracious change.

So-called white color blindness as the posture that does not see race has been criticized for its avoidance of acknowledging white privilege and the need for conversations and relationships that alter our racial inheritances. Whites claim color blindness to pretend that desegregation laws fixed everything. While Pramuk does not employ sociological or psychological research on race relations, his theologically framed proposals and experience of addressing our deep-seated problems resonate with sociological literature, indicating that a change in our deeply ingrained social imagination and relationships is still needed and imperative. He indicates this with his call for the breaking of our silences and the "interruption of the status quo" (2). However, he criticizes the focus on confessing white privilege, and this may be tricky to interpret. While I believe that he supports the crucial need for honest and

trustworthy relationships, it is interesting that he offers a brief critique of the white confession that entails acknowledgment and denouncement of white privilege. I take his point to be that respectful relationships are ostensibly diminished by the white confession because it is about taking all the blame. What he promotes instead is dialogue as "mutual vulnerability, self-disclosure, and risk, person to person, across the color line" (4). Thus, his critique of simply an academic focus on critiquing white privilege is ordered toward how we create contexts where ordinary whites can participate with a passion for such engagements. In short, he seems not to be promoting avoidance, but rather the conditions in which significant forms of accountability and enhanced respect can develop, what he calls "graced encounters." Getting these to happen, of course, is itself a huge challenge.

Pramuk's theological approach is fascinating. While theological framing that refuses to employ other academic disciplines to authenticate its claims can be suggestive of a kind of conservative Christianity, that is not at all what Pramuk is about. Indeed, what is really powerful about the book is the way in which its theological framing artfully organizes the chapter topics. Thankfully that framing avoids a rigid account of doctrine to characterize what is theological. Pramuk tells of different social situations in which what he terms "graced encounters" occur between persons of different colors, pointing out the importance of taking context seriously. The situations range from African American, Native American, and Hispanic experiences to the story of a Jewish woman murdered at Auschwitz. Employing a flexible theological logic of sorts, he foregrounds ways in which blindness, challenges, and willingness to change characterize very different situations. Broken relations are to be found all over the world, as he continues to illustrate with stories from a number of global locations. Given what he terms the incarnational vision of "finding God in all things" modeled by Ignatius of Loyola (xxiv), the radical nature of his theological vision is importantly displayed in his finding of God in places outside of Christianity.

Pramuk does an excellent job of expanding images for the divine to reflect racial and gender differences (although not LGBTQ). He is explicitly antiesentialist in his theological approach. He invokes a vision for the church that honors all people, transforms the marginalizing factors that have functioned to exclude and diminish groups, and does so not in terms of a secular inclusionary liberal approach, but as the Christian vocation. More on that distinction would be helpful, given his radical vision of divine presence.

By employing the theological theme of hope to frame the huge topic of ongoing racial brokenness in the United States, the author offers a constructive way to take seriously possibilities for change without romanticizing what has been accomplished—especially in the white world. Appeals to hope can sometimes function to avoid recognizing and naming the inevitable partiality and blindneses that come with finitude. However, Pramuk connects hope to grace such that actual possibilities for changing the "biased social imagination" (1) are displayed without being oblivious to these limitations. The image of African American woman Ruby Green on the cover is a helpful way to visualize this imagination. Complete avoidance of obviousness is, of course, impossible, especially when one is a white male, the dominant race and gender. However, it is certainly important to give it a try. Pramuk foregrounds the biblical story of the blind man of Bethsaida, who was still partly blind after Jesus's initial attempt at healing, to helpfully symbolize the situation of race relations in the United States as an ongoing and complex reality of stumbling, to put it mildly (xvii–xviii). Pramuk's honesty is quite constructive, or at least appears so to this white reviewer, because from the beginning he acknowledges the particular limitations attached to his own worldviews.

MARY MCCLEINTOCK FULKERSON, *Duke University Divinity School*.

SEALES, CHAD E. *The Secular Spectacle: Performing Religion in a Southern Town*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013. xi + 238 pp. \$24.95 (cloth).

The Secular Spectacle opens with the fabulously unforgettable line: "Southern secularism is a greasy pig" (1). And although his subject proves to be as slippery as this metaphor suggests, Chad Seales manages to wrangle and wrestle with it with considerable success over the course of this insightful and well-written book. This is local history of the highest order. Through the particular history of Siler City, North Carolina, Seales theorizes the contours of the religious and the secular in ways that will be of interest to a wide range of scholars in religious studies and beyond. And without suggesting that Siler City represents the entire South, he uses its story as a lens into the larger worlds of a region that, despite a growing body of relevant scholarship, remains very much underrepresented in the larger field of American religious history.

In Seales's account, the production and performance of Southern secularism had everything to do with race. With detailed accounts of Siler City's religious and civic performances, its local projects of industrialism and reform, and its shifting configurations of space and place, he demonstrates how its residents actively produced the religious and the secular to deeply racialized regional specifications. Chapter 2 offers a convincing reading of Siler City's Fourth of July parade, a major local event until the 1960s, as a public ritual that employed the symbols of the Lost Cause to sanctify and naturalize white supremacy. The next chapter highlights the story of an early 1960s shooting of a young black man by a white police officer in Siler City to show how the Southern culture of civility, forged in and through the language of Christianity, served as a bulwark for the local racial order. The town's white authorities, Seales argues, used the codes of civility to effectively shut down any challenge to their defense of the officer as a good citizen whose violence could only have been accidental.

Seales's argument that Southern secularism was spatially defined contributes significantly to our theoretical accounts of secularism. In Siler City, he argues, the religious and the secular were performed in particular spaces, forged and distinguished in and through performative acts such as parades, picnics, country clubs, and worship services. On this basis he proposes that in the South, the religious and the secular exist not so much on an ideological continuum in which the secular might compete with or threaten to eclipse the religious, but as complementary spheres spatially marked through performance, working together to reinforce (and sometimes to challenge) the constructed racial order of Southern life. Importantly, Seales does not argue that his spatial model necessarily works as a universal account of secularism everywhere. Rather, building on recent scholarship that theorizes "secularisms" as a plural concept with distinctive contours around the world (see, e.g., Janet Jakobsen and Ann Pellegrini, *Secularisms* [Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008]), he is proposing a model of regionally distinctive secularisms within the United States. Yet Seales's work implicitly challenges scholars of secularism everywhere to think in new ways about themes of performance, the cultural articulation of space and place, and the interesting formations of race, religion, and the secular.

The Secular Spectacle is occasionally hampered by an argument that can be as slippery as its subject. It is sometimes difficult to grasp what counts as secularism in Seales's account, or how he is defining and deploying the terms "secular" and "religious." Regional renewal was the religious promise of secularism," he writes (25). But what makes this a "religious" promise? Is he exploring how the residents of Siler City themselves constructed and deployed these concepts, or are these his own labels for what he observes? In other words, do religion and the secular operate as first- or second-order