

concepts to Britain itself. “National identity” and “Englishness” are thrown around with particular promiscuity as if simply deploying the words in a variety of quite different historical contexts demonstrate the existence of something more concretely “national” and continuous than an awareness of the political geography of the English state.

At the outset, Black guards against the raiding of history in the service of nationalist mythology. And yet in arguing for the relevance of England’s “deep history,” Black (consciously or not) is offering us a history not just of nationalism, but one infused by it—albeit of a liberal variety. If consciousness of “being English” or that “England exists” (194) over the thousand-year span of the book was limited to certain populations at different times, imagined and reimagined according to historical contingency and circumstance, and always complicated by dynastic, regional, linguistic, religious, and other social identifications—which in effect is what the book quite reasonably shows—then *why* should we accept that the “deep history” of the English state is in any way relevant to more recent evocations of English national consciousness? Black even concedes as much in his preface with the assertion that while Scottish nationalists make use of the deep past, like the battle Bannockburn (1314)—the frame of reference for current English nationalism is much more recent and ironic, such as *Britain’s* “finest hour” in 1940.

The point for Black seems to be that contemporary Englishness *should* be based, or find meaning in, England’s deeper past. But that is a historian’s wish: as historians we all want our subject matter to be found relevant and important. More particularly, in the way this book is structured and presented it is an English nationalist’s wish. For it is implicit, and sometimes explicit (177), throughout the book that Black views the nation-state as a strong, welcome, and even necessary basis for group identity, and the English currently lack such a nation-state. And that is a proposition that many historians and analysts of nationalism will find deeply problematic—regardless of what they think of the current Brexit crisis.

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TIMOTHY ROSENDALE. *Theology and Agency in Early Modern Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018. Pp. 290. \$100 (cloth).  
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In his introduction, Timothy Rosendale focuses on free will and unfree will, discussing Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar* and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, along with Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. He raises a crucial question: “What can I do?” This question can be read actively—what course of action can I take now?—or passively—what, after all, could I possibly ever do? Rosendale then links these two senses of the question to the difficult relationship of grace and predestination, as he presents cogent accounts of the treatment of human agency in ancient and early modern literature and thought, with examples ranging from the Bible to Sophocles, to Augustine, Aquinas, Hume, and *Hamlet*. Rosendale organizes the rest of the book into a history of agency in Christian thought, with examples of the conflicts over agency playing out in Marlowe, revenge tragedy (Thomas Kyd, Shakespeare, and John Ford), George Herbert and John Donne, and John Milton.

The first chapter starts by considering the biblical debate between Paul and James over the relative values of faith and works for salvation, noting that “even outside the Pauline writings, the Bible seems to declare quite clearly that all meaningful saving agency is in the hands of God” (33). However, as Rosendale argues, “there is an equally prevalent strand of biblical discourse that seems to teach precisely the attainability of human righteousness” (34). Rosendale

suggests a fundamental incommensurability at the root of the debate before moving on to Augustine and Pelagius on the possibility of free will. Pelagius argues for the necessity of human cooperation with the divine will (and thus for a form of free will), while Augustine argues for a view of human will as entirely enslaved to sin. Rosendale traces, through Aquinas, the way seemingly defeated Pelagian arguments never really disappeared. As Rosendale notes, if “Augustine gives us a picture of humanity as we fear we are, Pelagius offers us a portrait ... of what we hope we are” (49). Rosendale then moves on to the early modern versions of the Augustinian argument, the debates between Luther and Erasmus, and Calvin and the anti-Calvinists of the sixteenth century.

In his second chapter, Rosendale turns to Christopher Marlowe, identifying the great pleasure of experiencing characters like Barabas, Tamburlaine, and Faustus as “the thrill of following a single, vital, spectacularly solipsistic human will” (80). Rosendale suggests that arguments reading *Doctor Faustus* “as a direct critique of soteriological determinism” (85), never really demonstrate their case: “virtually all of the evidence in the play that is typically taken to indicate determinism is arguably suspect” (86). For Rosendale, Marlowe’s play “is not a tragedy of fate, but of choice” (92), in which “God has not excluded [Faustus]; [Faustus] has excluded God” (94).

In his third chapter, Rosendale argues that revenge tragedy demonstrates “the problematic conditions, limitations, and responsibilities of human action” (109). Rosendale reads Kyd’s *The Spanish Tragedy* as a conflict between a “Christian and providentialist understanding” and a “bloody, activist and materialist impulse” (111), illustrating Elizabethan “conflicts regarding the wrongness of private revenge” (114). Rosendale sees *Hamlet* as being “about the ... implications of willed action” (127). This perspective leads to a consideration of Hamlet’s “will” as expressed in his first soliloquy; his use of the play within the play; and his speech to Horatio on “will” and “divinity” just before his final revenge, which Rosendale characterizes as a usurping of “the absolute prerogative of God” (136). The most valuable point in this section may well be the recovery of an “older, explicitly religious reading” of the play, against the plethora of modern readings which see Hamlet as a “fragmented,” or “decentered” or “alienated” and even “poststructuralist” character (142). In contrast, Rosendale reads Giovanni, from Ford’s *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, as an anti-Hamlet, almost Faustian in his insistence on his own will and desires. Giovanni “operates in the context of the divinity he explicitly denies” (146), and Hamlet’s problem is that he “lacks ... a confident belief in the proper relation of human and divine agency” (147).

In his fourth chapter, Rosendale argues that George Herbert “suggests ... that productive human volition is almost entirely generated ... by God’s sovereign will” (148) before returning to a discussion of Luther and Calvin. Rosendale then argues that John Donne’s poetry often “reserves the option of soteriological self-fashioning” (162), and displays a “mistrust of grace” while asking powerful “questions regarding the justice and even goodness of God” (163). Rosendale ends by noting Donne’s own comparison, in *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*, of himself to the biblical character Job (183).

In his final chapter, on Milton, Rosendale maintains that “the God of Christianity and the Bible is fundamentally understood as being uniquely eternal, omnipotent, and purely and infinitely good” (185), before turning to a discussion of Milton’s *Paradise Lost* colored by that problematic argument (understanding that *when*, *where*, and by *whom* are only the first of the questions one might raise). In this discussion, Rosendale’s critical leanings become most evident. He does excellent interpretive work on Satan and his relations to and self-negotiations over will and agency (204–14). Before that, however, Rosendale surveys the frequently covered territory of the arguments over the poem. Rosendale describes Stanley Fish’s take on the poem as “monomaniacal” but also “truer to the poem and ... less interpretively arrogant or violent than ... Empson, Shelley, or Blake” (198). In that line, an academic critic describes the take of *poets on a poem* (Empson was a poet as well as a critic) as “interpretively arrogant.” While there is much valuable work here, that moment in the long-developed argument gives

me pause. How might that view color the treatments of poetry in the rest of the book? Nonetheless, *Theology and Agency in Early Modern Literature* has much to recommend it, perhaps more specifically for its work on intellectual history than for its readings of the literature itself.

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KATHARINE GERBNER. *Christian Slavery: Conversion and Race in the Protestant Atlantic World*. Early American Studies. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018. Pp. 280. \$39.95 (cloth).  
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In her first book, *Christian Slavery: Conversion and Race in the Protestant Atlantic World*, Katharine Gerbner explores the ways in which Christianity, specifically Protestantism, contributed to the continuation of slavery in the Protestant Atlantic world and the development of a white racial consciousness among slave owners. According to Gerbner, Christian slave owners initially resisted the idea of their slaves being converted to Christianity out of fear that they would become rebellious and desire independence if they were religious equals with their masters—a position Gerbner refers to as Protestant Supremacy. Over time, Gerbner contends, this emphasis on Christianity as the distinguishing factor between enslaved people and slave owners gradually gave way to focusing on race, specifically whiteness, as that which gave slave owners the right to rule over slaves. However, even this racial designation was still dependent upon religious rhetoric and ideology, leading to a construct that both enabled slaves to be Christians but maintained the mastership of white Protestants—a construct that Gerbner refers to as Protestant Slavery. Gerbner's thesis, while competing with other works exploring similar ideas, still adds nuance to a broader conversation regarding race, religion, and slavery by focusing on Protestant missionaries and slave owners in the north Atlantic and by looking almost exclusively at Quakers, Anglicans, and Moravians. *Christian Slavery* is also significant in that it emphasizes the conversion of slaves to Protestant Christianity prior to the great revivals of the eighteenth century.

The book is laid out into eight chapters that are relatively brief but dense with information. The flow of the book begins with Gerbner's focus on the ways in which white Christian missionaries worked to convince slaves to convert to Christianity and slave owners to allow this conversion. However, Gerbner quickly moves the narrative to discussions of the slave's perspective in this process. Herein lies *Christian Slavery's* most beneficial contribution to the continuing discussion of slavery and religion in the transatlantic world—the use of primary sources from slave populations. Gerbner quotes extensively from the journals of missionaries and slavers who both transcribed and summarized their discussions with slaves over the issue of religion. These discussions reflect that enslaved African understood the significance of Christian rites, but not always in the same way that white Protestants did. This allows for a fascinating discussion on the nature of conversion, and Gerbner does an excellent job of balancing theoretical approaches with primary-source evidence on the process by which African slaves came to see themselves as part of the same Christian communities of which the missionaries and their owners were a part. This was largely achieved by missionaries preaching a message that reconciled Christianity and bondage, drawing at times upon the Christian scriptures themselves to promote a Protestant faith that reconciled both belief and bondage.

*Christian Slavery's* contribution to the field of transatlantic mission work to slave populations therefore helps not only to broaden the scope of scholarship about previously under-examined denominations, but also to show that the context of most missionary-based histories