

tensions and changes in China were not the only challenges facing MEP Fathers in this period. Guo's French-language essay (ch. viii) explores contestations within the early field of French sinology through the libel case of the MEP Father Paul-Hubert Perny. The volume is interestingly drawn to a close. Rather than offer a summary or synthesis, Ernest P. Young's conclusion offers four biographical anecdotes which draw out the themes of the collection in an entertaining and personalist fashion. Following this, MEP Father Jean-Paul Charbonnier's appendix provides a twenty-three-page chronological narrative of MEP activity in China.

As with almost all edited volumes, this collection has its highs and lows. While offering valuable insights, Chen's and Xiang's contributions get bogged down in archival conundrums. Likewise, the inclusion of two French-language pieces – while perhaps fitting for a book on a French society – slightly undercuts the stated goal of advancing MEP scholarship in English. These small critiques aside, the highs of the volume make up for any deficit. Li's editorial introduction masterfully frames the importance of studying the MEP. Likewise, the contributions from esteemed scholars like Young, Wiest and Charbonnier condense decades of experience and provide a valuable starting place for future research. The volume would be a valuable addition to the bookshelves of advanced graduate students, scholars of Christianity in China, or any library with a focus on modern East Asian history.

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*Callings and consequences. The making of Catholic vocational culture in early modern France.* By Christopher J. Lane. (McGill-Queen's Studies in the History of Religion Series Two, 91.) Pp. xviii + 178. Montreal & Kingston-London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2021. £24.99 (paper). 978 0 2280 0855 2  
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This concise work examines the case for a Catholic culture of vocational diversity dating not merely from the post-Vatican era of the 1960s, but as far back as the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. From that more distant period, and in France in particular, Christopher Lane considers abundant evidence for Catholic 'vocations' understood not only as pertaining to priesthood and religious life, but as including a call for every baptised person, whether it was to marriage, or to some form of celibate life. Lane suggests that Max Weber was quite wrong in celebrating lay vocations as exclusively Protestant.

The author's sources include the Council of Trent (1545–63) and its insistence on an individual's vocational freedom of choice among three options (layperson, most likely married; priest; member of a religious order). Trent did not accept parental consent as necessary for any of these choices. Turning to the era after Trent, Lane's sources are mostly clergy and male members of religious orders, such as Bishop Jean-Pierre Camus (1584–1652), an extraordinarily prolific author of some 250 books, among them pious novels that might feature the courage of those who 'left the world' to enter religious life; the preaching and other works of Bishop Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet (1627–1704); the diocesan priest Charles

Gobinet (1614–90), whose works were reprinted into the nineteenth century; and the writings of the Jesuit Etienne Binet (1569–1639), and several other members of the Society of Jesus. But some women are also prominent among Lane's sources, such as Angélique Arnauld (1591–1661), abbess of Port-Royal, a centre of Jansenist sympathies, and Jeanne-Françoise Frémyot de Chantal (1572–1641), who founded the Visitation order, with some help from Francis de Sales (1567–1622), who, though not French, was a Francophone bishop resident in neighbouring Savoy. De Sales dealt with vocational discernment in his writings, at some length in his *Treatise on the love of God*, and in his bestselling *Introduction to the devout life*, where he insisted on marriage as no less a 'devout' state of life than that of other vocations.

All of these voices insisted on the reality of a call, in God's providence, of every Catholic, to a particular state of life. And thus every young Catholic, male or female, was viewed as having an obligation to discern what that vocation was, and to act upon the fruit of a good discernment. Not only for Jansenists, but even for some Jesuits, such as Louis Bourdaloue (1632–1704), there was an urgency that such discernment be made, and be made with much care, lest a mistaken, even disastrous choice be made. Due in large part to the founder of the Society of Jesus, Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556), and his Spiritual Exercises, Jesuits were seen by many as masters of discernment, and as skilful spiritual directors, not because they would tell directees what choices to make, but because they sought to help them to pay attention to God's will, and to obey it, even if it meant contradicting parental (this usually meant patriarchal) efforts to make vocational choices for them. Such choices, when made for offspring, may have had little to do with God's will and much more to do with family strategies for financial and other advancement in this world. Lane points out the tension between canon law and civil law in France: canon (church) law insisted on the freedom of the individual to choose a vocation, while civil law required parental consent. For some writers of works on vocational discernment, disobedience to parents regarding a vocational choice could be not only allowable but even saintly.

A 'good' discernment was thought to be a prayerful one, one aided by a prudent spiritual director; it was a discernment free of worldly motivations such as a greedy desire for a large benefice that might be available to a priest, or ambition for the social advantages of marrying a certain person, or of entering a prestigious, upper-class convent. God's will was what mattered; Ignatius of Loyola had insisted on vocational discernment through a kind of humble 'indifference' to everything but God's call, whatever it might be. Those that did not engage in a 'good' discernment could make a vocational mistake, a mistake that could have dire consequences, especially for someone who became a priest without such a vocation. In an era when fear of hell was taken very seriously, the unhappy results of a bad discernment were thought to be potentially worse and longer lasting than misery merely in this world.

In his conclusion, Lane argues persuasively that the approach to vocations he has demonstrated shows a kind of modernity in the Catholic Church that was not belated or later than that found among Protestants or other groups. The Catholic individualism he has documented challenges simplistic narratives that see Catholicism as always behind the times, and as stronger on conformity to

institutional norms than on any individual freedom. Lane's work could be even more significant if it were expanded to see if other Catholic countries in the early modern era were similar to France in their approaches to vocational choices.

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*Religion, enlightenment and empire. British interpretations of Hinduism in the eighteenth century.* By Jessica Patterson. (Ideas in Context.) Pp. xii + 355. Cambridge–New York: Cambridge University Press, 2022. £90. 978 1 316 51063 6

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Book titles which begin with a string of spacious abstract nouns can be dangerous things. They project ambition and relevance: who works on the eighteenth century that does not have an interest in (at least one of) religion, enlightenment or empire? In many cases, however, the proclamation of these grand categories can turn out to mask highly specialised studies, perhaps above all in books-of-the-thesis like this one. So jaded readers might open Jessica Patterson's monograph primed for disappointment. But any anxieties will rapidly melt away. Her monograph is not only an extraordinarily scholarly, rich and persuasive piece of intellectual history, but it also has important points to make about each of its three overarching themes. It ought to attract very general interest.

The book deals with British scholarly writing on Hinduism between the 1760s and the 1790s. Specifically, it is a study of five writers, all of whom were connected in different ways with the East India Company. These figures are John Zephaniah Holwell, Alexander Dow, Nathaniel Brassey Halhed, Charles Wilkins and, much the best-known of the bunch, the celebrity Orientalist William Jones. Each man gets a chapter to himself, though these individual treatments include extensive discussion of the relations between the men's major works. They are complemented by an opening chapter on wider European intellectual contexts, and one halfway through the book on the protagonists' contemporary British and European reception, which includes further analysis of some of their principal texts.

Patterson's book has well-defined arguments to make about its subject matter. It wants to show that the most authoritative scholarly treatments of Hinduism in the later eighteenth century were British, and associated with British power; that they projected a 'philosophical' rather than an 'anthropological' understanding of the religion, focusing on texts and theologies instead of practices and ceremonial; that these conceptions changed over time, gradually detaching themselves from the influence of religious heterodoxy and coming to provide firmer support to British supremacy in India; and that shifting understandings of Hinduism affected seminal Enlightenment debates about civilisation, religious truth and the social effects of religion. On each of these points, the book is compelling. It is equally persuasive in the more specific claims it makes, too many to enumerate here, about how its mostly relatively well-known protagonists have been misrepresented or misunderstood in earlier scholarship. Here Patterson has clearly cultivated an encyclopaedic knowledge.

The most striking characteristic of the book, however, is its unyielding embrace of intricacy. In recent years, the wider fields of modern intellectual history and the history of political thought have started to become increasingly attentive to the