

**SPORTS AND CHRISTIANITY: HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES.** Edited by Nick J. Watson and Andrew Parker. New York: Routledge, 2013. Pp. xi + 299. Hardback, \$125.00.

Watson and Parker seamlessly weave together a tapestry of synergistic scholarship in this edited text by drawing upon the wisdom of both contemporary Protestant and Catholic intellectuals whose areas of expertise have largely contributed to the ongoing and ever-rapidly expanding dialogue concerning the intersection of sports and Christianity—“these two cultural stalwarts.” Divided into two parts, the first explores the history of debates surrounding the sport–religion relationship including the development of thought regarding the merger between religious experience (particularly from a Christian perspective) and the sporting experience. The editors open the discussion in their coauthored chapter 1, which serves as a sort of “field map” guiding readers through a spectrum of predominately recent interdisciplinary contributions and research trends that reveal both explicit and implicit links between the two universally human experiences. From this point, individual chapter contributions chart the historical musings and origins of Christian thought pertaining to sport—ranging from a discussion of St. Paul’s use of athletic metaphors in the NT (chapter 2) to the emergence of tensions and unions between religion and sport in England (chapter 3) and the United States (chapters 4–5). The second part of the text brings into the discussion more philosophical and ethical perspectives focusing on inclusivity in sport for those with disabilities (chapter 6), the place of modern technology in sport (chapter 7), and the ways in which sport serve in the holistic development of human persons in terms of character, education, and spirituality (chapters 8–10). To select one chapter from among the collection as most compelling would be, in the opinion of this reviewer, intellectually irresponsible as each contributor provides force and foundation to the arguments of the others. In their introduction, Watson and Parker explain that this text was born “out of a sense of urgency,” and such a sense cannot be understated as, despite its recent expansion in published literature, the field of study in this area remains somewhat neglected. A warmly welcomed contribution to academic and lay practitioners of religious studies alike, this text is seminal in topic, scope, and is an enormously valuable resource to researchers in this field.

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## Religion in Culture

**IN PARADISE.** Fiction. By Peter Matthiessen. New York: Riverhead Books, 2014. Pp. 256. Hardcover, \$27.95.

Professors of Buddhism likely know Matthiessen’s classic *The Snow Leopard*, and while this book lacks the

poetry, the explicit reflection on, and the formal engagement with Buddhist thought, it will prove useful for students wrestling with Buddhist philosophy and practice and will be of use, too, for courses on the Holocaust and the memorialization of such events. A fictionalized account drawing on Matthiessen’s participation in Bernie Glassman’s Zen Peacemaker retreats to Auschwitz, *In Paradise* addresses the death camp as tourist destination while exploring the range of emotions—anger, guilt, voyeuristic desire, even a variety of masochism—elicited by the camp. The characters serve as talking heads and foils for each other. A token Palestinian, some survivors, a cynic, and quite a few Catholics as well as Buddhists and Jews make up the “spiritual retreat” at the death camp, and Matthiessen allows their opinions and stories to compose his book, a weave of narratives and testimonies, counterbalanced by a narrator whose stance, at least at the start, is that silence is the only appropriate response to the Holocaust. The group stays at the camp, meditating, reciting lists of the names of the murdered, even, for lunch, eating “chunks of dark bread and a plain broth . . . using mouth and fingers in memory of those whose daily ration was foul watery gruel with a hunk of moldy crust” (82). But is this “bearing witness” of grotesque commodification, empathy, or trivialization? I have taught short pieces by Glassman in Buddhism classes, asking my students to consider what it might mean to fly to Poland to chant names or (as also described here) to dance, experiencing joy, at the site of such a tragedy. Glassman insists on identifying with those killed as well as their killers, on a meditative practice of *becoming* “the terrified people getting off the trains, the indifferent or brutal guards, the snarling dogs, the doctor who points right or left, the smoke and ash belching from the chimneys. . . . We are nothing but all the elements of Auschwitz,” he writes. The camp “is an amazing teacher.” Students react strongly to such claims, and the discussions that follow have been some of the most engaged and critically astute. This book will broaden those discussions in Buddhism courses as well as courses on Holocaust and memorialization.

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**SUPERGOD.** Graphic novel. By Warren Ellis. Rantoul, IL: Avatar Press, 2011. Pp. 128. Paper, \$12.78.

The opening panels of this outstanding graphic novel, which collects all five issues of the comicbook series *Supergod*, finds a scientist brooding in post-apocalyptic, scorched-earth environs. “The whole of religious history is about us trying to build amazing creatures that will save the world. . . . We’re hardwired for the need to fashion gods,” he opines. But this need propels a religious arms race in *Supergod*, which envisions both the dangers of creating gods through science as well as the catastrophic implications of treating science itself as (a) god. Here the