

'the 2016 vote for Brexit is a parade example' of the mainstreaming of apocalyptic (p. 321). DiTomasso's contribution also appears in tension with the important observation made by Collins near the outset of the volume, that 'A catastrophic imagination alone is not genuinely apocalyptic' but rather apocalypticism is characterised by 'indomitable hope' (p. 35).

These points aside, each chapter is a significant contribution in its own right and provides a very useful basis for anyone wishing to orientate themselves within the subjects covered. Their value in so doing is enhanced by the limited but apposite footnotes and the suggested readings that accompany each chapter. This collection is far more than the sum of its parts. No one can read it without coming away with their thinking on this much studied subject having been deepened, challenged and, on occasion, transformed.

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

JUSTIN MEGGITT

*Christian Platonism. A history.* Edited by Alexander J. B. Hampton and John Peter Kenney. Pp. xvi+497 incl. 7 figs. Cambridge–New York: Cambridge University Press, 2021. £99.99. 978 1 108 49198 3  
*JEH* (73) 2022; doi:10.1017/S0022046922000719

The title of this book is a little misleading, in that it is a good deal more than a history of Christian Platonism, for, although it includes a section called 'History', that section is not only less than half the book, but is even shorter (though not by much) than the final section, called 'Engagements'. This is inevitable, as the subject – Christian Platonism – is not something easily identifiable. The very first sentence of the first chapter by Lloyd Gerson makes clear one reason why there is Christian Platonism (or maybe, Platonic Christianity) at all: 'By the time of the Council of Nicaea in 325 CE, self-declared Christians who wanted to reflect philosophically on their religion did so almost exclusively within a Platonic context' (p. 13) – because, as Gerson goes on to say, all the other philosophical schools of the Hellenistic period had either vanished, or become assimilated into the victorious school of Platonism. In contrast, a Christian reflecting philosophically in the twentieth century who confesses to being 'unabashedly Platonic' (as Catherine Pickstock does in her latest book) is taking a defiant stance against the more influential trends of twentieth-century thought, whether inspired by Nietzsche, Harnack, Wittgenstein (though the case here is complicated) or, more recently, Derrida. Nevertheless, as this book demonstrates by its very existence, Platonic inspiration is by no means dead, and may well be making a come-back in the twenty-first century.

There is first a question of definition – what is Christian Platonism? This, I take it, is the main thrust of the first section of the book, 'Concepts'. The first chapter, by Gerson, presents an account of how Platonism can be seen to be 'perennial', and it is a Platonism that is, as he puts it, a 'collaborative project, with Plato himself as the guiding light' (p. 22). For Gerson, at the centre of Platonism is its conviction that its subject matter is the intelligible world, at the apex of which is the idea of the Good, soon – and easily – identified with the One, as the ultimate explanatory principle of all that is, with a programme of moral improvement (readily seen as ascetical) freeing the embodied rational soul to ascend to contemplation of the One: an understanding of Platonism gratefully adopted by

Christianity, which brings its own contribution, namely the ‘utterly unique manifestation of the intelligible in the sensible in the Incarnation’ (p. 31), which by no means neutralises the Platonic approach, but introduces a tension, potentially fruitful. The following chapters in the first section explore the notion of the Ideas as God’s thoughts, a development taken further by Christians (Dillon and Tolan), the Platonic background to Christian notions of God as One and Trinity (Radde-Gallwitz), which is particularly valuable for its criticisms of the popular notion that creation *ex nihilo* is distinctive of Christian thought in contrast with Platonism, showing how the uncreated/created divide by no means replaces the Platonic divide between the intelligible and the sensible. This is taken further by Kevin Corrigan in a carefully argued and deeply illuminating chapter that explores ‘Creation, begetting, desire, and re-creation’. Then a chapter on the ‘concept of theology’, by Olivier Boulnois, who derives the medieval Latin use of the term from the Neoplatonists *via* Dionysios, completely overlooking the fact that, while Dionysios is indebted to Procline Neoplatonism in his notion of *theologia*, he is using *theologia* as a term for the doctrine of the Trinity and the divine attributes, a usage already well established in his Christian sources, to whom he is also indebted. The final chapter in this section, on participation and Aquinas’s Neoplatonic sources (Rudi A. te Velde), enrols Aquinas as an undoubted Christian Platonist.

Section II explores the history of Christian Platonism; the chapters are ordered historically, but take very different forms. Mark Edwards kicks off with an elegantly presented discussion of the engagement between the Bible and Christian Platonism, which takes a fresh and compelling look at long-considered issues. J. P. Kenney then covers late antiquity, first discussing pagan Platonism’s theological turn in the period, and then the pre-Nicene Justin Martyr and Origen (with a passing glance at Clement), and the post-Nicene reception of Platonism especially in Gregory of Nyssa and Augustine, both of whom develop the significance of creation *ex nihilo*. Lydia Schumacher discusses the medieval West, focusing on Franciscan theology and seeing there not simply a revived Augustinianism, but the beginnings of engagement with Arab-mediated Neoplatonism, usually ascribed to the Dominicans. Torstein Theodore Tollefsen takes on Byzantium – a huge subject, scholarship on which is growing rapidly – and wisely concentrates on Dionysios the Areopagite, Maximos the Confessor and Gregory Palamas. He makes striking use of a phrase of Dillon’s (in his pioneering and still indispensable book, *The middle Platonists*, London 1977) – ‘metaphysics of prepositions’ – to bring out the influence of the Apostle Paul on Dionysios, but mostly focuses on the notion of participation. Stephen Gersh then has a chapter on Ficino, which is followed by the ‘Northern Renaissance’, taking the story, at a somewhat breathless pace, from Nicholas of Cusa to Jakob Böhme (Muratori and Meliadò). The final three chapters in this section maintain the heady pace, partly because there are so many thinkers to discuss (and so much secondary scholarship to do obeisance to): early modernity is covered by Derek A. Michaud (who restores Berkeley to his proper place in the Platonist tradition, rather than reducing him to the truncated figure of an empiricist between Locke and Hume); the Romantic period by Douglas Hedley, an immensely rich chapter, culminating in Coleridge; and modernity by Joshua Levi Ian Gentzke, a dense chapter envisaging modernity as book-ended by two poets, W. B. Yeats and Allen Ginsburg, and showing how Plato haunts modernity as a not-altogether welcome ghost.

The final section – ‘Engagements’ – explores Christian Platonist engagement with natural science (Davison and Sherman); nature and the environmental crisis (Hampton), ignoring (I suppose inevitably) Philip Sherrard and his Platonically-inspired deep and early concern for the environment; art and meaning (Viladesu); attacks on value, dualism, in the interests of materialism – all understood as anti-Platonic (Taliaferro); Christian love and Platonic friendship (Pickstock) – dense and fitfully illuminating; and, finally, Stephen Clark with a scintillating discussion of multiplicity in earth and heaven. This forms a fitting conclusion to a book that, in its introduction, proclaims ‘the central message of Christian Platonism’ as ‘not an intellectualizing and abstract tendency, but rather a focus on the incarnational, participatory, and sacramental character of being, which calls us back to its motive force in love’. The book is dedicated to Mark A. McIntosh, whose inspiration the volume was, and whose tragic and untimely death has robbed us of a supreme advocate of Christian Platonism, a friend and encourager of many scholars.

DURHAM UNIVERSITY

ANDREW LOUTH

*Weisheit und Alter in der Spätantike. Die Konstruktion von sapientia und senectus bei Ambrosius von Mailand und Paulinus von Nola.* By Caroline Sophia Kreutzer. (KLIO Beiträge zur Alten Geschichte, 33.) Pp. xii + 557. Berlin–Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2021. £91. 978 3 11 070503 4; 1438 7689  
*JEH* (73) 2022; doi:10.1017/S0022046922000744

In the introduction and chapter i of her book (pp. 1–21), Kreutzer uses a text-based, philologically-oriented approach to investigate the relationship between the concepts of wisdom and old age across authors and according to historical, philosophical and religious context from Greek and Latin traditions, later expanding the focus on late antiquity with Ambrose and Paulinus.

In the second chapter of her study (pp. 22–135), Kreutzer gives a text-based overview of the individual stages of the traditional Greek-philosophical, Roman and biblical concepts of wisdom and old age, as well as the connection between the two. Plato classifies wisdom as based on the principle of lifelong striving and learning and as the sole knowledge of the divine ideas, only attainable by gods. Aristotle, on the other hand, points out that the ‘old sage’ is an unrealistic ideal, as wisdom gained with age is only apparent.

Kreutzer then investigates the concept of wisdom throughout Hellenistic philosophy. Neither in the philosophical tradition of Epicurus nor in the works of the Stoics Zeno of Citium and Chrysippus of Soli is wisdom particularly associated with age. The idealisation and unattainability of human wisdom, Kreutzer concludes, do not lead to connections between wisdom and age in Greek-Stoic thinking (p. 43).

In the second part of chapter ii Kreutzer draws a map of the broad semantic spectrum of the concept of *sapientia* in early Latin literature and focuses on Cicero and Seneca. She analyses Cicero’s *sapientia* as practical-political cleverness in *De orator* and letters and as a theoretical concept in his philosophical works. Cicero’s investigation of the concept of old age in *De senectute* and *De officiis* points out a clear dichotomy between ‘young’ and ‘old’, and the generally positive