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Editorial

Both of the main papers in this current Faith and Thought carry implications beyond their immediate topics.

I enjoyed Prof. Davies’s stimulating talk, which introduced us to such modern, ecologically friendly ways of disposing of bodies as Resomation and ‘natural’ burial (which I have seen described elsewhere as ‘composting’ bodies!) One of the most important aspects of his thinking is the way he speaks of Worldviews.

Until recently, I was Chair of our local SACRE (Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education). Every local authority is supposed to have one, to make sure local schools have a religious education syllabus that is relevant to that area and enables pupils to have an understanding of and respect for one another’s beliefs.

In areas such as ours, such beliefs include Humanism. Consequently, our SACRE includes a Humanist, who understands and respects the fact that we all have Worldviews, even if we are not all ‘religious’. There are moves afoot nationally to rename Religious Education as Worldview Education. We should welcome this. It can help expose the falsity of secularists, who criticise the ‘dogmatism’ of Christianity and its ‘privileged’ position, without recognising the privileged position they are claiming for their own dogmatic rejection of religion!

Bob Allaway (Co-Editor)

Dying in the 21st Century - From vile bodies to life celebration: paradigm shifts in worldview, theology, and liturgy.

Douglas J. Davies FBA.

Introduction

Thank you for your invitation to deliver this paper. To give some indication of my perspective let me introduce myself as having trained in both social anthropology and theology with many subsequent academic endeavours developing these outlooks, not least as both Director of the Centre for Death and Life Studies and Professor in the Study of Religion at Durham University.

Worldviews, identity, destiny, and death

One perspective I have pursued over recent years focuses on the issue of worldviews and the way it allows notions of religion, spirituality, atheism, and that of being 'spiritual but not religious', to express humanity's meaning-making propensity (Davies, 2022). This allows for fluidity in people's life-perspectives over time, as once researched for The Sea of Faith Movement where commitments shifted from young adulthood through middle to older age (Davies and Northam-Jones, 2012). One key feature of worldview meaning-making concerns people's engagement with their natural and existential environments as, just now, global warming holds primacy of place, with the 2019-2023 Covid-19 pandemic furnishing an additional scenario.

When dealing with worldviews and death it is worth thinking about how ideas and emotions relate to each other. One way of doing this begins with the obvious fact that the world is full of ideas, that some of these ideas become pervaded by an emotion to generate a value, that some values then help to formulate a sense of identity, and that some such identity-conferring factors sometimes go on to help frame a sense of destiny (Davies, 2022: 33-36).

'Destiny', a word seldom used today, gained unusual currency in the 2023 coronation of King Charles because of the 'stone of destiny' under the coronation chair. More generally, however, we might argue that destiny is important because in Britain today the country might be divided into those who have a sense of destiny and those who do not, with both Christian churches, and even more so Islamic movements, having strong destiny-concerns with what happens beyond death. While, for many, death is deemed final with destiny a redundant category, the very issue of destiny can now be revived as ecology-environmentalism assumes primacy as this world now becomes a 'destiny destination'. People are waking up to this, even the churches are waking up to it, though it has taken some time for this to happen. From this background of emotion-laden ideas, identity, and destiny, and the new demands of environmentalism, let me move directly to issues of death. These encompass a variety to topics, intended as prompts for thought and not as any systematically integrated argument.

Tradition – from vile to celebrated bodies

In the Church of England's 1662 Book of Common Prayer, an example of traditional Christianity, the funeral service speaks of it pleasing almighty God to 'take unto himself our brother or sister', and through our Lord Jesus Christ, of having our 'vile bodies' transformed into a likeness of Christ's 'glorious body'. I doubt whether many people today, Christians included, think of themselves as vile bodies. Still, this tradition adopts an eschatological perspective on the true fulfilment of Christian identity, as the 'last things' of resurrection and judgement lead to a future home with God as an ultimate frame of destiny. All is future-directed and allied with hope.

But by 2023, much has changed in both popular and faith-aligned thinking. Just how and when this has come about is much debated. Some see the 1960s as one catalytic period for 'secularisation. Certainly, for British death rites, this was when cremation became a majority practice. Then, in the mid 1970s people increasingly removed cremated remains from crematoria to do many private things with them, often

associated with sites of private meaning. I have described this kind of practice as a retrospective fulfilment of identity and contrasted it with the eschatological or divine-future fulfilment of identity in the glory of God, two different worldview perspectives (2005:111-129).

Change has also occurred in the liturgical expressions in the Church of England where the 'vile' body becomes the 'body of our low estate', marking a telling emotional and theological re-alignment. Another key change in popular reference to the dead is captured in the motif of 'celebration', or of celebrating a person's life in and through the funeral service. Instead of bodies that are vile, or even of a low estate, we now have celebrated bodies. This funeral trend probably originated Australia in terms of funerals that are seemingly more secular than anything else, as folk gather to celebrate the life of John Smith our dear friend, father, brother or the like, and to affirm what a great person he was. There was, of course, nothing in the Book of Common Prayer about celebrating the life of anybody other than Jesus Christ. Today's celebratory ethos expresses gratitude for what we share with the deceased person, and asserts a largely this-worldly orientation, including a sense of sadness and loss. One issue, here, concerns this celebration of bodies in the context of an ecological-environmental worldview, itself emerging as the prime contemporary grand narrative.

Grand narratives

Just what counts as a grand narrative, and for how extensive its community of acceptance may be, remain moot points. Idiosyncratically perhaps, I have my doubts as to the prevalent acceptance of the notion of postmodernity which has come to serve as its own dominant intellectual narrative in restricted academic circles. It stresses individualism and, ironically, tends to deny the role of grand narratives in culture at large. Unfairly perhaps, I tend to think of small groups of postmodernists who switch gear once leaving the seminar for home and family contexts. Moreover, the contemporary concern with global warming is probably the last nail in the coffin of postmodernism as

ecology and environmentalism certainly constitute a grand narrative of the peril of the world around us.

Historically, Christianity generated its own grand narrative of creation, fall, and redemption, captured in the notion of salvation-history leaving us, just now, with the salvation-history on the one hand, and eco-environmentalism on the other. One question raised by, though not answered, in this paper asks how these grand narratives may be related? That issue becomes all the more acute if eco-environmentalism is framed as a kind of a secular 'salvation history' of the world involving its environmental 'fall', and its potential 'salvation' through ecological shifts.

Media-ting grand narratives

One vital factor affecting all contemporary narratives is the new universal fact of 'communication', the networked connectedness of a large proportion of the world's population through internet and social media. These create their own medium in and through which grand narratives may flourish and compete, as in disputes over 'truth'. This digital world is also significant for numerous modern issues concerning death (Sisto, 2021), with one of my current research ventures on Digital Death being part of an international project led by Professor Johanna Sumiala of Helsinki University, along with colleagues from Aarhus University Denmark, and Bucharest University of Romania. Funded by the European Collaboration in the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (CHANSE Programme) this embraces many dimensions of digital death. I mention it here because of the potential interplay between the explicit grand narrative of environmental ecology and the more implicit yet equally vital global communication, and how this affects human identity and destiny.

One feature concerns the virtual identities of those who have died and who, as it were, may be 'resurrected' or perpetually represented online. One of my former doctoral students who sadly died some years ago occasionally flashes up on my computer screen when I am supposed to congratulate him on some new anniversary that he has achieved.

Tellingly, he has no such anniversaries – he is dead. I imagine many have had similar experiences, as the dead return to us, invited yet, perhaps, not unwelcome. Another aspect of mortality, one that was intensified during the UK's COVID-19 crisis concerns the dramatic rise in the live-streaming of online funerals. This forms part of Durham's research in the Digital Death (DiDe) project where we are archiving the historical rise in death, memorial, and grief related digital platforms, and studying those sustaining these platforms.

One further change in funerary behaviour from about the year 2000 involves the people who conduct funerals, with a swing from funerals conducted by clergy to civil celebrants. These may or may not be of religious persuasion, with the Humanist celebrants obviously not being so. This non-clerical activity now amounts to more than 50% of funerals, and if one is to use statistics to mark the topic of secularisation this might be one good index of it. Moreover, such celebrants often find a sense of new identity for themselves in this work. Clergy already know the affirmation that can come from leading public ceremonies, and this is now being found by many non-clerical people. Serving the bereaved in this way, often by those whose motivation for becoming civil celebrants derived from their own grief experiences, and perhaps by their judgment of inadequate funerals conducted by clergy, brings them a sense of fulfilment, something they want to feed back into those there they serve.

Cremation

Another major change in British funerary life, albeit on a longer timescale, lies with the now dominant practice of cremation which stands close to 80% of all funerals. Environmentally speaking, this is problematic because cremation exhausts are problematic in terms of noxious agents, with many crematoria having to install filtering equipment, not least because of mercury emissions. This is an expensive process but what it does mean is that cremations carry an environmental cost. Yet another cremation issue relates to 'direct' or 'pure' cremation, something extensively advertised on afternoon television in terms of a 'no-fuss funeral'. It operates by collecting and taking the dead away for

cremation, and then returning the ashes. No formal ceremony is necessary, or even expected. This is another index of change and was radically intensified during COVID. Direct cremation probably accounted for around 3%-4% of funerals prior to the Covid period and something like 15%-18% during and shortly after it. To complement these contemporary developments in funerary culture it is worth several sketches of individuals who have brought their own emotional dimensions to the very idea of change in funerary practice.

Historical cameos of cremation's development

Take Dr William Price whose dramatic life spanned the entire nineteenth century (1800 – 1893). One of the youngest doctors to become a Member of the Royal College of Surgeons in London he returned to the South Wales valleys and the very heart of the industrial revolution. Part of the Romantic Movement in Wales and its new ventures in bardic tradition, he is well-known for his invented costume, including his fox-fur headdress. For our purposes he is famed not simply for such things but because when already a very old man he fathered a son whom he named Iesu Grist, Welsh for Jesus Christ, who died months later. Price attempted to cremate the infant on a mountainside on January 13th 1884 only to be arrested and tried in Cardiff by Sir James Fitzjames Stephen and his case was acquitted. The judge had spent time serving the empire in India where he would have been very familiar with the cultural practice of cremation. 'He concluded that there was no positive law against burning bodies, unless the mode of burning produced a nuisance': from letters cited by his brother, Sir James 'was much interested in the quaint old Druid, and was gratified by his escape from the law' (Stephen 1895: 430). This extensive and history-replete judgement moved from classical antiquity to the present. It catalysed members of The Cremation Society, already founded in London in 1874 to advocate for cremation, in their formal cremation practice at their Woking crematorium. The Society's motto 'Save the land for the living' is perhaps even more apposite in today's ecology-minded world than it was in heavily industrialised Britain.

However, in the 1870s not all agreed with this innovation with Sir Francis Seymour Haden (1818- 1910) being but one opponent. In his book *Earth to Earth* (1874) he proposed that no coffin be used, or perhaps some latticework, with burial within forty hours or so of death, then to allow soil with its natural properties to reduce the body to its elements. By contrast he saw cremation as something of a wild project 'driving us into vapour'. Here, different figures of the British establishment opposed each other, still cremation ultimately triumphed.

Then, in its own literary engagement with the burial-cremation debate, we encounter a seldom known book whose current resonance is intriguing. The author is Anthony Trollope (1815 – 1882), whose personal life was not always easy, and the book *The Fixed Period* was published in 1882, but imagined as set in 1980. It depicts an antipodean fictional colonial-like society whose youthful legislative assembly set the age of 65 as the fixed period of life.

'For the human race it is self-evident that at 65 a man has done all that he is fit to do he should be troubled no longer with labour and therefore should be troubled no longer with life.'

Accordingly, they plan a 'College' into which all should enter at age 64, be treated like royalty, then euthanized and cremated at the crematorium built behind the College. Whether tongue in cheek for what was going on in the UK at the time is an open question. With time, of course, these young legislators also age with numerous intriguing consequences which it is best to read for yourself. Suffice it to note a kind of mixed sadness and celebration involved in the anticipated conquest of death as euthanasia is combined with cremation – or not as the case ultimately proved. Today, as we see below, the question of doctor-assisted suicide is much debated, not in imaginative novels but in the harsh reality of serious illness and the legislative curb on 'assisting' those earnestly wishing to die.

Natural Burial

Another innovation, with echoes of Sir Francis Haden, has grown since the mid-1990s, known variously as woodland, natural, ecological, or green burial. This began at Carlisle in the northwest of England under the keen eye of Mr Ken West and in response to a couple of individuals seeking a different form of funeral (West, 2010). This mode of interment has grown into several hundreds of sites that tend to espouse 'green' ideals, encouraging burial in biodegradable containers, not using formal headstones or visible memorials, but always with appropriate mapping of individual graves. This was something I researched under a collaborative doctoral award with the Arts and Humanities Research Council and published along with my then doctoral researcher Hannah Rumble (Davies and Rumble, 2012). One of the motifs emerging from that work lay in some people wanting 'to give something back to nature', an attitude that is only likely to have increased since then and even morphed into seeking to benefit the natural environment. Still, human expressions of memory and loving sentiment can still be found at many woodland sites. One has a child's carton figure of Pooh Bear lodged on a branch of a tree with the message, 'If there ever comes a time when we can't be together, keep me in your heart I'll stay there forever'.

Alkaline hydrolysis (Resomation)

Quite a different process, albeit one that also stresses its environment-friendly carbon-footprint, is that of alkaline hydrolysis that takes the body into a container of a light alkaline solution, heated, and under pressure, which reduces the corpse to its elements in a matter of hours. In the UK this process is associated with the trade name Resomation. This has operated in the USA for a decade or more and is likely to be operating within the UK later in 2023 or earlier 2024. The media have already become familiar with the idea, and I hope that the churches will, sooner rather than later, begin to develop appropriately worded liturgies to accompany services framing this process. Christians always seek to connect grace-aligned words to things as with sacramental bread and wine and baptism water. So, what words might now be suited to these

times as we move from 'vile bodies', or our 'lower estate', to 'celebration' and our dissolution into basic elements through this new process? This calls for creative theological thinking, just how appropriate is the Genesis-derived motif of 'earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust' in this new context? Not least, knowing that the ultimate product of the process is a very white powdery-ash substance, something that could be used just as cremated remains are currently used. Still, the water-based nature of the process could well be echoed in many water-redolent biblical events, often now captured in liturgical contexts. Some Anglican liturgies, for example, already give thanks 'for your servant Moses who led your people through the waters of the Red Sea to freedom in the promised land ... we thank you for your son Jesus who has passed through the deep waters of death and opened for all the way of salvation, now send your Spirit that those who are washed in this water may die with Christ and rise with him and find true freedom as your children alive in Christ forever'. We'll wait to see what happens when those sorts of water words align with ecology in the development of liturgies.

Theological conundrum

In pondering these potential creative moves I seek to highlight a point of life and faith that brings death into close connection with ecology. In theological terms it invokes the motifs of creation-fall-redemption albeit in two rather different keys, one personal and one collective, resulting in something of a liturgical conundrum.

First, it takes us back to our vile bodies, and to the themes of creation, fall, and redemption, highlighting the dynamic role of Saint Paul in Christian culture, notably his linking of death with sin, burial, and resurrection. Paul's theological consideration of death as the result of humanity's fall, with redemption lying in Christ's sacrificial death redeeming mankind, is intimately allied with Christ's resurrection as a paradigm for the future resurrection of believers. Christ's tomb is equated with earth graves and his extensive account in 1 Corinthians 15

is driven by the image of earth, material, bodies and the spiritual bodies of the resurrection. All is framed by sin, salvation, and eschatology.

But, second, we now live in a cultural world where vile bodies compete with celebrated lives, and where 'life' itself is thrown into question through the issue of global warming. How should Christian thinking address these matters? Should the Church of England remove the 'vile bodies' and replace them with both celebrated lives and an engagement with forms of funeral that are more environmentally friendly? The problems are many. Perhaps a theology of creation and 'life' needs emphasis, perhaps the role of the Holy Spirit as 'the Lord and giver of life' merits accentuation, as do the ethics and spirituality of discipleship.

Here, our near contemporary Albert Schweitzer and his dynamic notion of 'reverence for life' may help. He was dismayed as Christian nations blew the living daylights out of each other in the First World War. His considerable theological and philosophical mind, let alone his sense of ethics and missionary work in Africa brought him to his own theological conundrum, one only resolved when the notion of 'reverence for life' dawned on him, almost as its own form of revelation (1948: 184- 188. Also 1974: 108 – 117). This carries strong potential for pondering the ecological crisis. Might it help advocate for Resomation and other 'carbon-friendly' funeral innovations that would help preserve the land mass otherwise needed for burial? Whether in a 'sting' or 'non-sting' version of death much needs pondering, not least since the Pauline-Christian and eco-environmental grand narratives may well be identified as being on a collision course. Yet, both deal with forms of evil and salvation.

Theological creativity is challenging. Take Amber Griffioen's theological consideration of pregnancy loss, and of what it means for a mother to carry a 'dead' foetus prior to its 'birth'? (Griffioen, 2023). She demonstrates how that experience causes a person to rewrite their theology. One of my students read her for a dissertation and came back with her face of beaming, having 'never read anything like that before.' I raise this since it concerns sexual identity, death, life, and theological

writing. Griffioen asks what must God have felt when his Son dies and, given trinitarian thought, how might the Father have 'carried' his dead 'Son'? These are unusual, yet challenging ways of thinking. Similar challenges face us over life, death, and funeral practices.

Ritual mixes, celebration, betrayal and death

The mix of tradition and modernity also pervades the personal choice reflected in contemporary funeral culture where religious, spiritual, and more secular preferences are easily available as options, sometimes overlapping each other. Both harder-line Christian and Humanist officiants often have their own theological and ideological themes to press while the newly emergent variety of Civil Celebrants are open to reflect and give voice to a real diversity of family feelings where 'secular' readings run adjacent to the Lord's Prayer and the like while the motif of 'celebrating life' tends to embrace many of these positions. The 'hard-line' approach seems to be of lower appeal now that public attitudes vary a great deal.

Just how we 'celebrate' life while living, when bereaved, and in the light of impending global disasters is an issue for Christians. Here, the Eucharist as the enactment of Christianity's grand narrative comes into play. And I am not simply thinking of its creation-fall-redemption motif and of the Church as the body of Christ, a community of salvation, but also of its profound subtext of betrayal. While this may sound odd in this paper let me highlight betrayal as a much-ignored feature of contemporary theological thought, yet one with real bearing on issues of mortality, national and international commitments to justice, and to environmental destiny? Are not short-term politics, and the economics of 'growth' not deep betrayals of 'life'? Yet there is even more to ponder: I take but one example.

Betrayal, death, and faith

What, for example, of those who desire medically-assisted suicide but who feel betrayed by the NHS? The NHS looks after us from cradle to grave: we trust it and treasure it, politicians fear gainsaying it, yet even

the NHS 'betrays' these individuals over their desired end. They want to die, and the National Health Service expressly says 'no'. What does it mean to be betrayed by a national institution, to have an apparently obvious wish negated? Choice becomes most problematic when aligned with our mortality, or that of those we love. Though perhaps this may change through legislation before too many years pass in our Neo-liberal society. Here, I must mention my Durham colleague Mathew Guest's new study of neo-liberalism and religion, something worth reading for the issues of choice, freedom, and consumerist society and, indirectly, also for death-choices (Guest, 2022).

What, then, of assisted living – much in the purview of the NHS, and of assisted dying, both in terms of cultural trust? Here, much hangs on how people are prepared to think about their death or prefer to avoid that topic at all costs. In a previous death-focused study I considered how lifestyle is caught up with death-style (Davies, 2015). Some, eco-minded people want to go back to the earth as in woodland burial, others have death as a taboo topic. Just why this might be remains an issue of and for individuals and families. But there is one final question to raise here. Is death itself a betrayal of life? Is this a sensible question? Does it differentiate between 'science-like' and 'religion-like' domains? Certainly, it takes significant form as a question of faith understood as the primal form of trust.

We live with all sorts of issues and then death comes along. Does longevity, not least in youth-oriented cultures of cosmetic perfectibility, lead many to see death as impertinent? I use 'impertinent' to trigger readers into finding a better word of their own, for the reality encompassed in the liturgical assertion – 'in the midst of life we are in death' – is profound. For some it is shocking, especially when we live in a relatively 'safe' society, in a welfare state untroubled by warfare and disaster, contexts that often foster secularisation as Granqvist admirably demonstrates (2020).

The Christian grand narrative of creation-fall-redemption frames that shock: the new grand narrative of eco-environmentalism also heralds it.

And this is where the life of faith, conceived in terms of trust, assumes a deep relevance, something I have previously addressed in my theology of death (Davies, 2008). Let me simply conclude with the paradigmatic Christian reminders of both betrayal and trust in the life of Jesus, captured in the Eucharistic assertion that it was 'in the same night that he was betrayed' that trust was enacted, and in the rhetorical cry from the cross asking why his God had forsaken him that it was completed.

The theological and scientific resources of creation–redemption, and of ecological-environmentalism, exist as dynamic opportunities for what we make of our lives. How to live with reverence for life in ecological-environmental times calls for many a reflection, not least in terms of funeral liturgies.

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Resurrection as Backup

David Instone-Brewer

This article is a reprint of a chapter from *Modern Sciences & the Bible: Interpreting Two Sources of Truth* by Dr David Instone-Brewer (Lexham Press 2020). There is an accompanying website at www.biblecontexts.com

Computer science presents us with a vocabulary for resurrection. Our DNA and body can be reconstructed like hardware, and our memory can be backed up like software. Of course, the backup drive would be huge!

Memory is an illusion – that’s the sad conclusion by neurologists. We remember only a fraction of what happens to us, and then we fill in the gaps. Our brains simply don’t have the capacity to remember everything. And we forget things, because the brain cells that do hold memories are gradually re-used for new ones. It poses a rather interesting question for Christians with a resurrection hope: can we expect to get all our memories back? Computer backup technologies can put new realism into the Christian hope. As for the hardware – the resurrection of our bodies is also now easier to envision thanks to developments in genetics.

We can now envisage God recreating our bodies to be the same as the ones we inhabited, because we are familiar with concepts such as cloning. Former generations thought that God would reconstruct our bodies from our bones. This belief was based partly on the fact that bones can last almost indefinitely if they are kept dry, and partly because of the amazing vision in Ezekiel 37 where God raises up a valley of dry bones as living people. This is why Christians and Jews buried their loved ones, and first-century Jews even scraped remaining flesh off their bones after a year and transferred them to a clean dry ossuary which successfully preserved them to this day. Christians and Jews regarded cremation (which was practiced by Greeks and Romans) as irreligious, and it has only gained acceptance in Christian countries during the last century.

We now take Paul seriously when he said that God provides a new resurrection body that will be very different from our old one – as different as a plant is from a gnarly seed, or the sun is from the moon (1Cor.15.37-41). Jesus said that these bodies will be sexless (Matt.22.30) presumably because they won't die - so having offspring won't be necessary. And if Jesus' resurrection body is any guide, they may also be able to travel by novel means, such as through locked doors! (John 20.19,26). So, these will be utterly new bodies, and not just animated corpses. It doesn't matter if the atoms used by our body have been re-used in the body of a fish which was then eaten by someone else, or in a crop of wheat that fed many people. God can still raise all those people to life using atoms from elsewhere but based on the pattern that our body had.

God could use our genome to reconstruct a virtually identical body. It may not be exactly identical because we now know that clones (which have identical DNA) don't all look exactly identical. We even know that this is true for human clones because, although it is illegal to make them, identical twins are genetic clones and yet they often look subtly different. The Bible implies that God will do more than just create a clone because Jesus' resurrection body bore records of his life history – in particular, the scars of his death which are a permanent part of his glory. So, if a resurrection body is a clone, it will presumably also include parts of our life history that make us recognisable, such as laughter lines and perhaps even pregnancy stretch lines, though presumably we won't have any painful disabilities.

One of Jesus' parables implied that we will recognise our friends (Luke 16.9), though I'm hoping that my college friends will recognise me more easily than recent friends – i.e. it would be nice to look a few decades younger. Interestingly, when Jesus' friends and disciples saw his resurrected body, they didn't immediately recognise him (John 20.14-16; Luke 24.16). This may be a confirmation that God does indeed use our DNA to create our resurrection body so that it may be subtly different and perhaps younger than our old body.

This brings up a difficult and potentially divisive theological question: Was Jesus' resurrection special, or was it the same that his followers will experience? We might initially think that Jesus is special in all kinds of ways, so his death and resurrection may be different. His followers don't go to hell before being raised (like Jesus did - Act.2.31; 1Pet.3.19) and unless they die just before Jesus' return, they are dead for much longer than a couple of days. Jesus was alive again before his body had suffered much decay, so we usually assume that his resurrection body was simply his reanimated corpse. Till recent centuries, most Christians assumed they would be raised from their buried remains, so Jesus' resurrection didn't seem significantly different. But if everyone else gets a brand-new resurrection body, and Jesus gets a reanimated corpse, then Jesus' resurrection is different and (arguably) inferior.

There is also a theological problem: if Jesus' resurrection was different, then was he really the "firstborn of the dead" (Col.1.18, Rev.1.5)? That is, Jesus was born and lived in a fully human way in order to represent us completely when bearing our sin, and he suffered real human death just like us, so that when he rose from that death he was opening the way so that we could rise in the same way (Rom.5.17; 1 Cor.15.47-49). Therefore, if he was like us "in every way" (Heb.2.17) we might expect his resurrection to be like ours too. That is, after he died, we'd expect his Father to give him a brand new body so that those who follow him will be like him (1 John 3.2).

When the theologian David Jenkins raised this question, he was castigated for not believing in the 'real' resurrection of Jesus. People asked: but if Jesus was given a new body, what happened to the original body of Jesus, which disappeared from the tomb? Unfortunately David answered this with a memorable but provocative phrase: "the resurrection is more than a conjuring trick with bones". A former college-friend of his told me that this was typical of the kinds of jocular phrases he liked to use – but this time, no-one laughed. He was no longer a student - by now he was the Bishop of Durham – and journalists picked up this phrase to lambast him with headlines such as: "Bishop says the

resurrection was a conjuring trick with bones!”. And when lightning caused a fire in York Cathedral a few days later, it seemed as though God had agreed with his critics!

This question is worth thinking about, even if we can't come to any definite conclusion. How can Jesus have a new resurrection body, when his old body was apparently re-used? After all, if resurrection bodies can be constructed from any atoms, based on the recorded pattern of DNA plus any significant personal features, then the actual corpse isn't needed. In the case of Jesus however, there was no need to find some atoms that might be available to build his resurrection body. The most obvious available source was his corpse. Just as a brand-new picture can be painted on a previously used canvas, a new body can be constructed from the atoms of an old one. So God could create a brand new resurrection body, with all its improved features, out of the materials of Jesus' old body.

The resurrection of Jesus was, as engineers would call it, a 'proof of concept' – it worked. Of course, God had no doubt that it would, but the physical and demonstrable resurrection of Jesus was important for humans to see, and to tell each other: It really happened!

Actually, making the body may be the easier part of the problem. We almost have the technology do this already – as Dolly the sheep showed¹ – though of course normal clones don't have the superior features of resurrection bodies. The harder bit is preserving and transferring the memories and personality.

Our brains aren't so easy to reconstruct. Making a new body with a perfect skeleton instead of arthritic joints is pointless if the brain is blank. When we get a new laptop, we download all our backups (which we hopefully remembered to make), but how does that work with our memories? We are still trying to work out how memory is encoded in the brain, but one thing is certain: our brains can't hold everything we

¹ <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/05/190502143437.htm>

have ever seen and read and heard – we only have a finite space within our cranium.

Neuroscientists studying the brain of one individual discovered a 'Jennifer Aniston brain cell' (an actress in the famous comedy series "Friends").² During direct neuron stimulation in preparation for brain surgery, they found a single cell that responded whenever they saw her picture or her name, but it didn't fire up for any other images or names. This suggests that a specific neuron in our brains can be devoted to coordinating a particular concept or memory. What happens to that memory if the cell dies, or if it is reallocated to another memory? I'm sure that remembrances of my wife occupy considerably more than one cell in my brain, but we know that Alzheimer's disease can turn these cells into useless amyloid plaques that remember nothing. Are memories lost forever if they disappear from the cells that store them?

How much of our life on earth will we remember in eternity? Will every mealtime conversation be as clear as when you first heard it? Will you recall every raised eyebrow and expression on your friend's face as they spoke? What about the background music or the flavour of the food? And what about the details you didn't consciously notice, such as the face of someone on the edge of your vision or a word spoken while you were thinking about something else? We can't recall this level of detail even immediately after a meal, unless we record everything we see, feel, and experience. However, the memory in our recorder would run out of space in a short while, and even our capacious brains can't contain that amount of detail.

Our brains cope by editing out extraneous details. During sleep we move some medium-term memories into long-term memory, and we discard others. But nothing is permanent. Our brain has a limited number of memory engrams, and although our brains are huge, they are not infinite; so new memories supplant old ones that we haven't used for a

² <https://www.newscientist.com/article/dn7567-why-your-brain-has-a-jennifer-aniston-cell/>

long time. On the whole we don't miss the bits we forget because we are great at filling in the gaps. We remember things that we think about regularly and forget the things we don't think about – so we usually don't notice they are gone.

Will those gaps in our memories be restored in heaven? The storage system needed to record the totality of all our memories would be truly massive. Perhaps it could be recorded 'in the clouds' of heaven. When we refer to computer 'cloud' storage space we mean a computer server somewhere on earth – perhaps a basement in Seattle – but the cloud storage space of heaven can be as endless as the Large Magellanic star-cloud which contains about 10 billion solar systems. Considering the size of creation, there is a great deal of matter that God could use for memory storage – though of course he is likely to have a completely different kind of information storage system of his own that may not require any matter.

Even now, some people wear life-recorders that capture a picture every few seconds along with continuous audio and transmit it to storage by Wi-Fi. I wore video glasses during a holiday in Rome, and reviewing it later I realised how many details I had forgotten. My wife, looking over my shoulder, wanted to know why I was looking at the backside of the woman walking in front of me. I said it was a narrow street, and I had to look somewhere – but she had a point!

This type of equipment is raising privacy concerns, which will become even more pressing in heaven if every memory is resurrected. Jesus has already warned us about this issue: 'There is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed' (Luke 8.17). Paul gives us some minor comfort, when he said that unworthy sections of our life will be burned up at judgement (1 Cor.3.12). I like to think of this like edited segments of film being thrown on a fire, so no-one will ever view them. Part of our salvation and forgiveness means that all those sections of our lives when we weren't living for Jesus will be erased and forgotten. However, this means that some of us won't have many memories worthy of taking into heaven!

The Bible does suggest that we will have infinite knowledge in heaven because Paul said: "I will know fully even as I am fully known" (1 Cor.13.12). This amazing statement implies that we will know everything as well as God does. It is difficult to imagine even a resurrection body that can contain all the knowledge that the infinite God possesses. We have no idea what kinds of bodies we will have, but whatever they are made of – whether it is matter or something else – we can't all have an infinite mind like God himself has. Here too, modern technology enables us at least to imagine what the Bible is describing. Today we no longer need laptops with huge hard-drives – we just need a fast connection to the internet. When we need something that isn't on our drive, it is downloaded, and anything that we add is uploaded, ready for when we need it. Similarly, our resurrection bodies may not need to contain much more memory than we have now, because when we need knowledge, we will be in communication with our creator who knows everything.

The most detailed vision of our future existence at the end of the Bible also sounds like science fiction: we will live in a cube-shaped city made of transparent materials (Revelation 21.9-23). The gold of the city will be transparently thin so that no lights are needed, because the light of God can shine through the whole city (v. 21, 23). I wonder whether this could have been God's way of telling first century readers about the total transparency of mind-to-mind communication? If this were the case, we won't just be in constant touch with God but also with each other, so there will be literally no walls to hide behind. At present I don't like that idea of total openness, but perhaps it won't be so bad in that new world when I won't have so many vices to be ashamed of.

No doubt the reality of the resurrection will be totally different to anything we can yet imagine. But computer science has at least enabled us to *make sense* of Bible passages which previously seemed impossible, even though we cannot yet fully understand them. We now have a better insight into the wonders that God has prepared for us. Our memories in heaven can be limitless, and all the bad bits will be edited out. Everything

that is lovely and done in God's company will be remembered, with all the sin and tears wiped out forever. The pains and evil that we experienced while holding onto Jesus will be recorded as victory rather than suffering, and the sins that Jesus has forgiven won't be recorded at all. This isn't just rosy editing; it is a new reality, bought for us by Jesus' death and proved to be possible by his resurrection.

One Earth, One Love

A report by Bob Allaway

On 26th and 27th April, this year, I attended on Zoom **One Earth, One Love** an interfaith colloquium between Jewish, Christian, and Muslim scholars at Regent's Park College, Oxford, marking the publication of *Loving The Planet. Interfaith Essays on Ecology, Love and Theology*. I do not refer to all the talks I heard, below, but only those where I had made enough notes.

On **Wednesday 26th April** there had been contributions from Jewish and Muslim scholars, but I was not able to attend till the contribution of a Christian: *'Learning to Love Again: Rediscovering the Earth as Sacred'*, by *Celia Deane-Drummond*, Director of the Laudato Si Research Institute, Oxford, and Senior Research Fellow of Campion Hall, University of Oxford

She was highly critical of the way popular evolutionary thought is dominated by ideas of aggression and selfishness. By contrast, she quoted specific examples of palaeolithic individuals whose remains had been found, who had plainly been severely crippled from early on in their lives, yet had lived to an old age. They could not have managed this without the care of their communities.

Both this and evidence from modern anthropology, suggested that there was strong survival value in altruism within human communities, and this altruism now needed to be expanded to the wider creation.

I was not able to attend other talks till that evening, starting with:

'Loving What God Loves: An Agrarian Approach to the Care of Earth', by Norman Wirzba, Gilbert T. Rowe Distinguished Professor of Christian Theology and Senior Fellow at the Kenan Institute of Ethics, Duke University. He was concerned with the change that is brought about when people move from agricultural life to the city, arguing that this led them to move their stress from personal relations to money. In Genesis 2, God invites Adam to share in *his* gardening. We cannot love God if we do not love our neighbour, but should this not also include a love for the neighbourhood that shaped our neighbour? This stimulated strong reactions!

On **Thursday 27th April**, I was able to attend for the whole day. This was marked by discussion between Orthodox and Baptist Christian scholars.

In *"Holy compost": sacrament, matter and love for all creation in the Orthodox tradition'*, Elizabeth Theokritoff, Senior Research Associate and Associate Lecturer at the Institute for Orthodox Christian Studies, Cambridge argued that the ascetic tradition respected the land. Early monastic communities supported themselves from it.

"Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you." *Climate change as a wake-up call: a Baptist perspective'* was by John Weaver, formerly Principal, South Wales Baptist College, Cardiff, and one time Lecturer in Geology, University of Derby. He argued that climate change was disproportionately harming the poorest nations. For example, Pakistan, which creates less than 1% of greenhouse gases, is one of the worst effected by global warming, as with the recent flooding. Yet the wealthy nations cannot ignore these problems.

Melting arctic sea ice was approaching a 'tipping point'. Already, UK flood damage costs were set to increase by 20%. Quite apart from this, the damage to poorer countries would lead to 'environmental refugees' and global unrest.

John spoke of what could be done to take action at a local level. In particular, he referred to the work of a Baptist Church he knew in Wales, "Eden", that had made this a specific ministry.

"The fashion of the world is passing away." Theology after the tipping point.' was the contribution of *Fr. John Behr*, Regius Professor of Humanity, University of Aberdeen and Metropolitan Kallistos Professor of Orthodox Theology at the Vrije Universiteit of Amsterdam. (In later discussion, Fr Behr regretted that the title suggested to some that he thought we had already passed the 'tipping point', which he did not.)

He commended the theology of Irenaeus (something with which I would concur, see my article in the last 'Faith and Thought'). This saw human beings as intended to grow and change; we should be living now as we were intended to become. This world would change, as we would, but it would not cease. Our destiny lay within it, so we should be concerned for it.

In response, *Paul S. Fiddes*, Professor of Systematic Theology, University of Oxford and Principal Emeritus, Regent's Park College, Oxford (Baptist) said that having a purpose is different from having a plan. There could be more than one way to achieve the same purpose.

Also responding, *Peter Petkoff*, Senior Law Lecturer, Brunel University and Director of the Religion, Law and International Relations Programme, Regent's Park College, Oxford, (Orthodox) talked about 'fragmented ecosystems' and the need for different theological approaches.

In "*His tabernacle was around Him: prolegomenon to a symbolic ontology of creation*", *Bruce V. Foltz*, Emeritus Professor of Philosophy, Eckerd College, USA (Orthodox) argued that there had surely been experience of God in the world before it had been given expression in Scripture. Modernism had replaced poetic views of the world, which could connect with this, with a purely scientific one. He praised writers such as Ruskin, McDonald, Hopkins and Florenski, who had sought to bring the earlier view back.

'Towards a priestly ecclesiology: A Baptist vision of ecological hope' was by *Jenny Howell*, Director of the Program for Theology, Ecology, and Food Justice, George W. Truett Theological Seminary, Baylor University (Baptist).

The 'priesthood of all believers' was not just a slogan to attack hierarchy, but a calling on all believers to exercise a ministry of intercessory prayer, including for creation. I found it a pity that she did not give any indication how this might work out liturgically.

She was said to be doing research on Bonhoeffer's view of creation, which interested me, as I had just read his *Schöpfung und Fall*, but she made no reference to this, much to my disappointment.

If you are frustrated by my poor notetaking, you had better buy the book!

Bob Allaway

Responses

We welcome responses from our readers to any of the subjects raised in the journal. Simon Scott's paper on 'Teilhard de Chardin and he Evolving Cosmos' prompted a response which was published last month, and the author has replied below.

Dear Bob

Thank you for your response to my article which I have carefully considered.

I do sense that whilst you are happy to leave Augustine's writings out of consideration on 'original sin' much of what else you discuss is still on a level that Teilhard would describe as an 'error of perspective'. That is, you are attempting to reconcile Biblical and patristic thought with that of modern science on a single plane. To my mind, and I think, that of Teilhard's, this is not possible. These early writings contain theological

and philosophical interpretations of the experiences and history of communities of Israel and early Christians. Whilst there is no denying their importance as witness, and enormous subsequent influence throughout history, it must be recognised that there is no scientific information whatsoever within them. How could this be so from people writing 2000 or more years ago? To attempt to do so can only be to the profound detriment of how we wrestle with and use these texts in the twenty-first century.

So, we must accept, in apparent literal contradiction to Paul's rhetoric in Romans, there never was an Adam, there never was a 'fall', Adam's sin did not introduce death to creation. And regarding your point on entropy and Romans 8:21 – it is not possible that Paul could have written about the fate of the cosmos as understood in a modern scientific sense. To attempt to reconcile his phrase with the 2nd Law of Thermodynamics (a 19th C concept and by no means to be relied on as a prediction of the ultimate fate of the universe) is, to my mind, illegitimate. The two exist in completely orthogonal dimensions with no common language or meeting. Even John Stott in his Commentary on Romans (IVP, 1994), who I took to task in my article for his attempt to merge the Genesis narrative with scientific archaeological findings, does not venture to do so for Romans 8:21. He states "it would not be wise for us to speculate, let alone dogmatize, how the biblical and scientific accounts of reality correspond or harmonize" and "we must be careful not to impose modern scientific categories on Paul..".

Teilhard attempts a reconciliation of the view of the scientifically accepted model of an evolving cosmos with the NT vision of the cosmic Christ. He starts with the evolving universe (at least as it was known in the early 20th C) as a given and wishes to make Christianity, as a faith, coherent with this. His motivations, I suspect, stemmed from a strong desire for personal integrity as a scientist and priest as well as for a plausible apologetic. In this he is perhaps not that far removed from the overall aims of the demythologising programme of Bultmann and others.

To my mind, the one place where Teilhard's vision can be assented to in a meaningful way is in our ethics. I added a question mark to my title because I wish to suggest this to my reader – without the appearance of preaching or being in any way didactic. The assent to his model of an evolving cosmos implies a modification to the basis of traditional Christian ethics which have arisen out of an ancient vision of a static cosmos ending in a sudden, dramatic fashion. Now, we must consider the ethical implications of the values of the Kingdom within an evolving milieu moving to a goal.

Advance Notice – New President for F&T

Our next annual Symposium will be on 11th May 2024, venue TBC, title 'Implications of A.I.' We already have two excellent speakers lined up to address this topical issue.

As usual this will be a hybrid event (online and in-person) and will include the F&T Annual General Meeting. Last year Sir Colin Humphreys stood down as President of the charity and we are pleased to announce that Rev Prof David Wilkinson has been approached and is willing to stand. This will be voted on at the AGM but here is a short bio.

Reverend Professor David Wilkinson, BSc, PhD, MA, PhD, FRAS

David Wilkinson is Professor in the Department of Theology and Religion at Durham University and Director of the project Equipping Christian Leadership in an Age of Science, based at St. John's College. Before working in Durham as a theologian, he was a scientist and then a Methodist minister in inner city Liverpool. David's background is research in theoretical astrophysics, where his Durham PhD was in the study of star formation, the chemical evolution of galaxies and terrestrial mass extinctions such as the event which wiped out the dinosaurs. He is a Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society and has published a wide range of papers on these subjects.

After this research he trained for the Methodist ministry, studying theology at Cambridge. He then served in a variety of appointments, including a growing church in Liverpool and as Methodist chaplain at Liverpool University.

David arrived in Durham in 1999 and held a Fellowship in Christian Apologetics at St John's College, and taught systematic theology in the Department of Theology and Religion. He was Principal of St John's from 2006 to 2023.

His current work involves the relationship of the Christian theology to contemporary culture, from science to pop culture. He has had a long interest in the dialogue of science and religion, especially as it impacts the physical sciences. *Christian Eschatology and the Physical Universe* (T&T Clark 2010) and *Science, Religion and the Search for Extra-terrestrial Intelligence* (OUP, 2014) are examples of that work. His second Durham PhD is in Systematic Theology and explored Christian eschatology.

He is a regular contributor to BBC Radio 4's *Thought for the Day* and takes part in a number of national and local media programmes.

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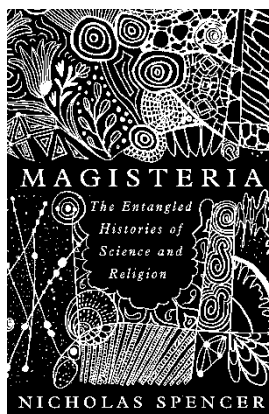
Book Reviews

The following book reviews appear in Science and Christian Belief and are re-printed here with kind permission of Christians in Science for the benefit of our members who have not signed up for online access to that journal. Members of Faith & Thought who wish to access S&CB online for the full content should contact the administrator via admin@faithandthought.org

Nicholas Spencer *Magisteria*

London: One World, 2023. 476 pp. hb. £25. ISBN 978-0-86154-461-5

Nicholas Spencer's new survey of the tangled history of science and religion is an enjoyable and commodious introduction to the field. He relates the stories of the seminal events well, based on recent scholarship and with footnotes referring to the primary sources. Rarely has the tragedy of Annie Darwin's death at the age of ten been more poignantly told, or so well contextualised within Charles Darwin's wider theological struggle. Elsewhere, Galileo's tribulations with the inquisition, the Wilberforce/Huxley



debate and the Scopes Monkey Trial are all carefully picked apart to identify the issues actually at stake. Readers of Science and Christian Belief are doubtless familiar with much of this, but should still admire Spencer's lucid analysis as well as finding his retelling of the key events a useful orientation for students.

There's plenty more that's valuable: for example, a fine explanation of Newton's theology, an exposé of phrenology, and an entertaining discussion of the Soviet Union's institutional atheism. That said, while the scope of the book is certainly wide, it remains largely Eurocentric. There is a chapter about Islam near the start and a look at modern Islamic creationism, as well as a nod towards China when the Jesuits turn

up, but precious little about Buddhism or Hinduism. Through most of the book, 'religion' means Christianity and 'science' means the modern western variety. I expect that Spencer would have liked to include more global coverage but was chaffing against the word limit set by his publishers. It is disappointing that space constraints prevented the inclusion of a comprehensive bibliography.

Spencer is inspired by the complexity thesis of John Hedley Brooke, to whom the book is dedicated. *Magisteria* demonstrates the validity of this thesis many times, showing that science and religion have enjoyed periods of concord and conflict, and more often a kind of creative tension. The conflict myth is efficiently disposed of in the introduction, while the rest of the book provides numerous demonstrations of how contingent the interactions between science and religion have been. Spencer shows that it has been almost as dangerous for religion to rope itself to scientific theories that happen to be current at the time as it has been to exert its authority to oppose them. The title of the book is obviously a nod towards Stephen Jay Gould's non-overlapping magisteria, the inadequacy of which Spencer also notes.

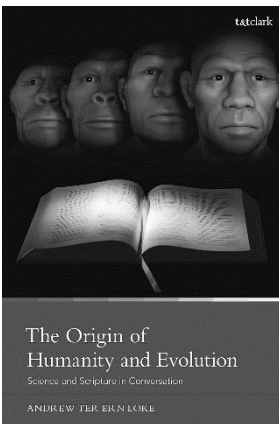
Spencer suggests that the two occasions when matters can get especially fraught are when there is a dispute over who has authority to adjudicate between science and religion and when the debate concerns what it means to be a human being. These sound like sensible sign posts, and they could have been invoked more often in the text that follows. For example, Spencer notes the sad case of Ota Benga, a Congolese pygmy caged with apes in New York's zoo in 1906. This could have been explicitly examined through both the lenses - what is a man and who gets to decide? These were difficult questions in the nineteenth century, with disputes on the question of common descent within the religious and scientific magisteria, as well as between them. Nor can we say such matters are of historical interest only. The row currently in the news - what is a woman and who gets to decide? - would have seemed as incomprehensible to a Victorian as phrenology seems to us.

Many fine scholars have followed the path beaten by John Hedley Brooke in the early 1990s and a considerable body of work has appeared in the intervening 30 years on the historical relationship between science and religion. Nicholas Spencer is to be congratulated for wrestling this material into a coherent account with wisdom and compassion. His book becomes the best introduction to the field, ideal for students and general readers, while even academic professionals will find much food for thought.

Reviewed by James Hannam, the author of *The Globe: How the Earth Became Round* (Reaktion, 2023)

Andrew Ter Ern Loke *The Origin of Humanity and Evolution: Science and Scripture in Conversation*

London: t&tclark, 2022.189 pp. hb. £76.50. ISBN 978-0-567-70635-5



One might hope that a new book on evolution and theology will contribute to an emerging scholarly Christian consensus. Loke, a theologian at Hong Kong Baptist University, covers a wealth of literature on evolution and theology—although he omits the consensus document of Lucas and co-authors [*S&CB* 28 (2016): 74]—and is a prolific author. He argues that there is no incompatibility between human evolution and the Bible, but (to my mind) not in a way that will advance consensus.

Loke rejects *concordism*, the attempt to dovetail scientific and biblical accounts of reality. He prefers a model of *conversation* between science and theology (15). But his efforts to allow that 'Adam' *could be* placed into physical anthropological schemes evinces essentially concordist presuppositions. Loke has sympathies with the postulate of *biblical inerrancy* in addressing the issues of human origins, leading him to deny that the Bible presupposes the science of the day (26-28). He

acknowledges that we must be wary of the errancy of our interpretations (27), and that all reading involves interpretation (14). But is scriptural inerrancy meaningful when we always approach scripture via 'exegetical errancy'?

Regarding the interpretation of Genesis 1 (such as the seven 'days'), Loke argues rightly that the concern of the biblical authors was the revelatory and salvific acts of God, not scientific details (42). But he criticises Daniel Harlow for stating that the authors of Genesis adapted 'sequences, themes and motifs from pagan myths ... to craft new stories with a decidedly different theology' (44). Gordon Wenham concurs with Harlow: these texts provide a 'major theological interpretation of traditional origin stories' (Wenham, *Exploring the OT: The Pentateuch*, 15). It is Israel's *theology*, revealed in sharp relief to that of Mesopotamia, that liberates humanity.

Turning to science, Loke defends the consensus age of the universe, against those who propound 'young earth' ideas or assert that the world could be created with the appearance of age (36). He summarises several notions of, and evidences for, biological evolution. He affirms the compatibility of evolution and creation (70-72)—with the proviso that we allow for God's 'interference' at key points (69). But how can God 'interfere' if God is the continual source of existence, order and fruitfulness? The core of the book considers human evolution and the question of Adam. The author appropriately emphasises new findings, a rapidly changing field, and uncertainties in hominin evolution.

Loke postulates a dualism of body and immaterial soul (107-110)—a surprise for those schooled by Donald Mackay and Malcolm Jeeves. He suggests that souls are transmitted through the gametes, which have 'soulful potentialities' (110). He describes the image of God (*imago Dei*) as the unique *role* to which humans are called and the unique *capacities* underlying that role (98-99). Loke proposes that the first person to possess the *imago Dei* was Adam, created as such from creatures that were products of evolution (106). Adam's parents were anatomically *Homo sapiens* but not fully human (121). After the Fall, the *imago Dei*

was transmitted through Adam's descendants by mating with *Homo sapiens* individuals that did not possess the *imago Dei*. This initially generated separate populations of image-bearing and non-image-bearing *Homo* (128, 150). The localised Flood destroyed the *imago Dei*-bearing group, except for Noah's offspring, who mated with non-*imago Dei* survivors of the flood to repopulate the earth (17-18, 130). As a result, all humans today possess the *imago Dei* and could have a common ancestor (Adam, Noah) even though they descended from a large population of anatomical *Homo* as indicated by population genetics (17, 95, 111-113; 155).

As we attend closely to the inspired Hebrew writers, should we not recognise that they had no concern for physical anthropology. They saw the humanity of their age as called to represent and serve God—without being concerned (*contra* Loke) as to when or how in history God ordained humans as the *imago Dei*. Whether Neanderthals share the *imago Dei* is known only to God, the One whose summons both defines that image and commissions image-bearers to compassionate care for anyone who is marginalised.

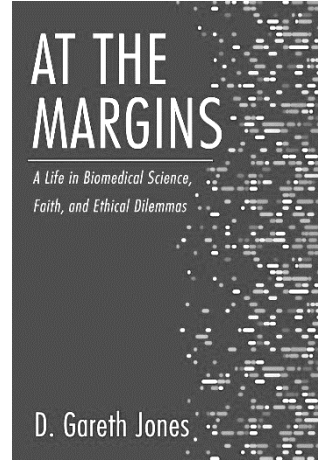
Loke's acceptance of mainstream evolutionary science is a welcome corrective to the apologetic catastrophe of evolution-denial. His close attention to Scripture is admirable, but I found the tone of this book to be relentlessly polemical. The author engages with creationists using their biblicist strategies, which do not take the reader closer to the glory of Israel's God. I am not convinced by his speculative thesis that, despite our evolutionary origins, we are all descended from a historical pair, Adam and Eve (who must have lived before Australia was peopled 50,000 years ago) from whom we inherited the *imago Dei*. Nevertheless, this book could have mediating roles to play in polarised (American?) contexts.

Reviewed by Graeme Finlay, Honorary Academic, University of Auckland, has authored *Genes, Genealogies and Phylogenies* (2013, paperback 2022), *Evolution and Eschatology* (2021) and *God's Gift of Science* (2022).

D. Gareth Jones *At The Margins: A Life in Biomedical Science, Faith, and Ethical Dilemmas*

Eugene, Oregon: Resource Publications, 2022, 198 pp, pb, £21. ISBN 978-1666744712

The name of Gareth Jones will be well-known to many readers of this journal. He has had a distinguished academic career as Professor of Anatomy and Director of the Bioethics Centre at the University of Otago, New Zealand. At the same time he is a highly regarded author and commentator on controversial ethical issues at the interface of biomedical science and thoughtful Christian faith, playing this role for more than 40 years. He is a prolific writer with tens of books to his credit and numerous articles published in international scientific journals, including several in *Science and Christian Belief*.



His latest book, subtitled *A Life in Biomedical Science, Faith and Ethical Dilemmas*, provides a series of thoughtful reflections looking back over more than 40 years of ethical engagement. The book has chapters addressing the ethical dilemmas raised by the use of 'unclaimed bodies' for scientific research, and the skeletal remains of indigenous populations, the Covid pandemic and scientific disinformation perpetrated by various Christian groups, and issues raised by IVF and research on the human embryo. A recurring theme throughout this book is the painful reality that many of Gareth Jones' most strident critics have not been his secular colleagues in New Zealand but Christians from a conservative Evangelical background. He recounts a bruising episode concerning his book *Brave New People*, published in 1984, which led to a flow of critical letters and boycott threats aimed at the American publishers IVP. The book was withdrawn by the publisher although

subsequently republished by another house. Many scientifically trained readers will resonate with Gareth Jones' understandable frustration at the level of scientific ignorance and simplistic ethical thinking which seems common amongst some evangelical groups.

Of all the controversial areas in which Gareth Jones has taken a public stance it is the theological and ethical status of the human embryo which is the most contested. He argues that the conservative theological position that 'life begins at conception' becomes in effect a 'faith versus science' issue, since it makes unacceptable all scientific research into normal and abnormal embryonic development, as well as the extremely common clinical procedures of IVF and pre-implantation genetic diagnosis. The author makes a clear distinction between the embryo (up to 8 weeks gestation) and the fetus (beyond 8 weeks). We should treat the embryo 'with respect' but destructive research is appropriate if it has a worthwhile scientific or humanitarian purpose. He argues that large quantities of spare embryos are being created in IVF procedures around the world and it is good Christian stewardship to use them for the good of humankind. On the other hand, the more mature fetus should only be aborted in unusual and severe cases.

Speaking personally, I have great respect for Gareth's costly integrity, courage and persistence in promoting and defending ethical positions that, whilst thoughtful and scientifically informed, are currently deeply unpopular in conservative Christian circles. Although I find myself in disagreement with his conclusions about embryo research, there is much to learn in this volume about Gareth's principled refusal to shy away from difficult questions and his preparedness to occupy some of the uncomfortable borderlands between biomedical science and biblical faith. The painful reality is that there is a deep fault-line between thoughtful and well-informed biblical Christian believers when it comes to the philosophical and theological status of the human embryo and developing human. Over the period of 40 years that this book covers, the fault-line appears, if anything, to have widened. So there is a continuing need for genuine dialogue and careful 'double-listening' in

this area between scientific and theological specialists. If this book has the effect of encouraging that dialogue it will have made a valuable contribution.

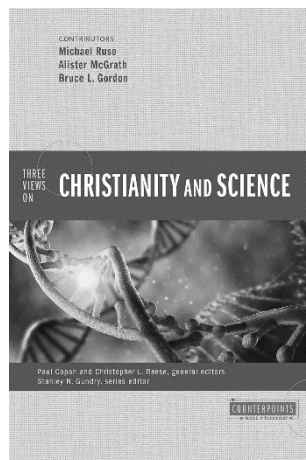
Reviewed by John Wyatt, Emeritus Professor of Neonatal Paediatrics at University College London and a researcher and writer on topics in biomedical ethics, digital technologies and artificial intelligence.

Michael Ruse. Alister E. McGrath, Bruce L. Gordon

Three views on Christianity and Science

Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Academic, 2021. 214 pp. pb \$18.99.
ISBN 978-0-310-59854-1

This book has a logical structure characteristic of the Zondervan Counterpoints series on the Bible and Theology: each of the three protagonists is given the opportunity to lay out his view of the relationship between science and Christianity, to which the other two provide responses, and then the original protagonist writes a rejoinder. The book has an introduction by Christopher Reese and a conclusion by Paul Copan, making a total of fourteen sections, which is certainly a thorough way to make sure each writer has their say. However, including the expression of three views, rather than two, means that it is not clear what conclusions should be drawn, and whether any one view is vindicated over the others.



The three views expounded are the Independence view, by Michael Ruse, who is not a Christian believer and considers belief to be a matter of faith rather than reason, but is positive about the contribution Christianity makes to society; the Dialogue view, by Alister McGrath, who

holds that the two books of nature and scripture have equal importance but different concerns and can critique each other; and a Constrained Integration view, by Bruce Gordon, who is a proponent of Intelligent Design and considers that science should include concepts of divine design in its methodology and nomenclature, and that scientific law is dependent on divine action.

Readers of *Science and Christian Belief* may consider they would identify most closely with McGrath's view, and it was somewhat bemusing to be told by an unbeliever that Christian faith could have no basis in reason. McGrath employs academic terms; Gordon uses Cartesian philosophy to argue for the necessity of the existence of a God and quantum mechanics to argue that regular mechanical "law-like" laws are divine in origin. Ruse's style is the most informal and engaging: he expresses appreciation for McGrath's considered and intellectual approach, while professing himself unable to take the step of faith. While Ruse is emphatic in his rejection of Gordon's arguments for the necessary existence of God, he does not engage with those arguments in any detail, but simply states that he does not feel compelled to believe in God on the philosophical grounds Gordon provides.

In the introduction and conclusion, the editors adopt a conciliatory tone in relation to the debate between the protagonists and pose some interesting questions. They do not attempt to reach a reasoned conclusion, however, nor do they comment on how divine design could be studied scientifically; and the implications for the kingdom of God of defining Christian faith as purely irrational are not explored. Rather, it seems that the purpose of presenting these views is to show that the Christian church contains differing views of science and Christianity which can sit amicably alongside each other, without reaching a conclusion as to which view is preferable, or exploring the consequences of each view for science or Christianity.

This topic is undoubtedly of continued interest, and a future study could seek views from scientists who share the Dialogue view but differ as to how scriptural authority and scientific authority might interact with each

other, for instance in relation to ethics, apologetics, or personal and political morality. It would also be good to hear more from female voices and perspectives from non-Western cultures.

Reviewed by Dr Christina Bigg, a Daphne Jackson Research Fellow at the Energy Safety Research Institute, Swansea University, working on green hydrogen, and a former local group leader for CiS Bristol

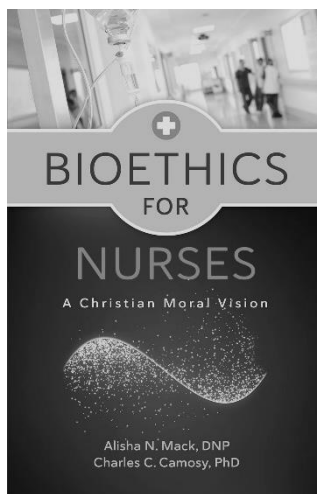
Alisha N Mack and Charles C Camosy

Bioethics for Nurses: A Christian Moral Vision

Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B Eerdmans, 2022. 242 pp. pb US\$ 21.99. ISBN 978-0-8028-7892-2

The authors set out to accomplish exactly what is indicated by the title – a book on bioethical issues for Christian nurses. Any reader, who is not a nurse, will gain valuable insights into the roles, contributions and frustrations of nurses, particularly those who are Christians. Both authors have strong backgrounds in nursing as well as in bioethics. Alisha Mack describes herself as an evangelical Protestant while Charles Camosy is described as a Catholic Christian. Initially I found the preponderance of references to Roman Catholic authorities

unnerving, especially when Roman Catholic tradition is slated as one of the grounds of a Christian vision. The authors acknowledge there are differences in some of their approaches, although these do not distract from the dominant biblically based messages that come through.



Since both authors are American, there is a distinct American flavour to the book, especially when touching (briefly) on medical political issues and the health service. Nevertheless, there is a great deal of wisdom and helpful insights to be gleaned for those practising far away from an American context. A very helpful feature of the book is the generous use of case studies, some of which pose profoundly disturbing ethical dilemmas. The authors make no attempt to present spuriously simplistic answers, grounding their bioethical analyses in real (nursing) life.

The chapter on 'A Christian vision for nursing bioethics' is an exemplar in how to use Scripture to determine theologically based principles for nurses working with patients. The end-result is a set of seven key principles, with the reiterated reminder that, like the Good Samaritan, we are to put aside our selfish interests. Rather, we are 'to see the profound, inestimable value of human life, even when it is injured, sick, fragile, or weak,' and are to totally reject the throwaway culture that surrounds us (65). One manifestation of this is what the authors term 'accompaniment.' Christian nurses are to 'bind up the wounds of patients, and in the spirit of mercy to be physically close to patients in their illness, keeping vigil so they do not suffer loneliness in their final days and hours' (63). The conservative stance of the authors emerges in their emphasis on never being involved in killing at any stage of the life cycle. The challenges raised by such a stance are never downplayed.

The seven principles are returned to in subsequent chapters, touching on being made equal in the divine image; from fertilization to natural death; accepting death and never killing; and a superb chapter on Matthew 25 and human-created distinctions. Some of these chapters cover familiar territory, and yet they remain grounded in real life by the case studies around which they are structured. The authors are prepared to accept that compromise may sometimes be inevitable especially when resources are lacking. They reject an ableist vision as being radically opposed to a Christian vision with its favouring fundamental human dignity and equality even in the face of physical and mental 'deficiencies.'

In dealing with early development, their discussion becomes more theoretical, and it is very clear where their protectionist sympathies lie. And yet they strive to be consistent and practical, even though there are instances where the contribution of nurses will be limited in practice. Similar tensions show through when arguing against killing in a clinical setting. Here the authors use a thoroughly challenging case, that of Dr William Husel. A nurse challenged him over the high levels of Fentanyl he was giving to a patient in an ICU. Its repercussions for her and others were far-reaching, revolving around the doctor's intentions – to sedate or kill. Many other clinical decisions have similar reverberations, as do many outside bioethics, such as in warfare. The authors merely touch on these, a wise decision since they extend beyond the core concerns of the nursing environment.

What shines through is that authentic Christian life is counter-cultural, resisting consumerism and ableism, nationalism that privileges citizens over non-citizens, classism that privileges the successful over the 'takers' and those who have been incarcerated. The relevance of this thinking is then applied to nursing and the availability of resources and medical technology, medical prestige, and above all to being oriented toward serving the least and non-citizens. They also decry our individualism and the longing to be radically free agents, since these are inconsistent with 'a Christian vision of the inherent relationality at the heart of human nature' (141). This leads them to comment that 'nurses care for actual people in the fullness of their human reality . . . this summons nurses out of themselves and into a relationship with their (often very vulnerable) patients' (142).

In returning to general themes, the authors touch on the place of conscientious protection for nurses within the broad framework of freedom of speech, and nurses rightful place in health-care teams. It is impossible to completely get away from COVID-19 and the authors face some of the horrific situations encountered by nurses as they attempted to uphold the full humanity of dying patients in situations characterized by pressures well beyond anything for which they had been prepared.

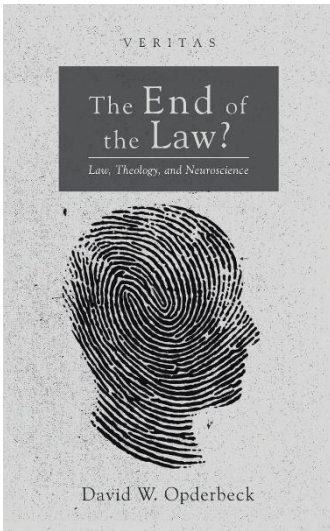
The major value of this book is that it espouses Christian bioethical approaches that, by facing up to the dilemmas of real life, go beyond the theoretical.

Reviewed by Gareth Jones, Emeritus Professor, Department of Anatomy, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand. His latest book is: *At the Margins: A Life in Biomedical Science, Faith, and Ethical Dilemmas*, Wipf and Stock, 2022.

David W. Opderbeck

The End of the Law? Law, Theology, and Neuroscience

Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2021. 248 pp. pb £23.38, ISBN 978-4982-2389-8



Being neither a lawyer nor a neuroscientist I approach this review from the perspective of an interested non-expert. Opderbeck addresses the intersection of law and neuroscience, so-called neurolaw, a new and developing area of the legal thinking. Essentially, the issue is whether the developments in neuroscience should change how people are treated with respect to the law. For example, could a fMRI brain scan be used to determine whether someone is lying in court? The controversial aspect of neurolaw is with respect to the area of

responsibility: *mens rea* (Latin: guilty mind) the intention or knowledge of wrongdoing that is part of the crime committed. Can neuroscience, through fMRI brain scans, determine whether someone should be held accountable, and so punished, for the crime they committed, or in some way absolve them of criminal responsibility because their brains are wired that way. The latter is a deterministic perspective popular these

days where free will is seen an illusion. This goes beyond the standard questions of diminished responsibility or insanity with regard to guilt for a criminal act as it sees all of us as having no choice with regard to our actions.

Opderbeck's book covers a lot of ground, not only law and neuroscience, but the links between theology and science, anthropology and paleo-law, philosophy and theology, and it is not possible to adequately cover all these aspects in this review. The book began life as a doctoral thesis, and this shows to some extent in the style of writing.

The longest chapter is that on Method in Theology and Science (Ch. 5) and I do wonder whether this discussion is necessary in this book. It covers familiar ground for those interested in science and Christian faith issues, but I am not sure what it adds to Opderbeck's arguments regarding the inadequacy of the neurolaw approach to the law, other than point out the limitations of reductive approaches in science generally, and so in neuroscience specifically.

The two most interesting chapters are Towards a Philosophical Critique of Neurolaw (Ch. 6) and Mind, Law, Theology (Ch. 7). Chapter 6 considers various critiques of neurobiological determinism, such as those by Stephen Morse a law professor at the University of Pennsylvania (unfortunately the references to his work seem to have been omitted from the bibliography). Opderbeck ends up with the classical conclusion that, "If consciousness is an illusion, then nothing at all is right or wrong, and anything goes." (154) This, of course, undermines any attempt to seek justice in society, and to live by the rule of law.

In Chapter 7 Opderbeck argues for a neo-Aristotelian account of human persons and this, together with a discussion of the work of four contemporary philosophical theologians in Chapter 8 (The Soul of the Law), allows him to move towards a synthesis of neo-Aristotelianism and theology with regard to understanding the basis for law. He concludes that, "our neurobiology *enables*, but does not *determine* human

actions.” (202) This preserves the idea we are responsible for our actions in the eyes of the law (and, of course, in the eyes of God too).

I enjoyed reading the book while finding some of it quite challenging being, as noted above, neither an expert in law nor in neuroscience. Nevertheless, I did learn much about this topic from the book and found it fascinating. One thing that I had not considered before is that only humans among all Earth’s creatures formulate laws (5) and this, in part, is what makes us distinctively human. The main thing that I took away from the book is that western society and its laws, which were largely based on a belief in a transcendent God, are moving away from that basis and towards a view of people which sees them as possessing no free will and therefore having no responsibilities for their actions. It is difficult to see what justice means in such a setting, and this is clearly at odds with the Christian view that God is a god of justice who hold us responsible for our actions.

Reviewed by Meric Srokosz, an oceanographer at the National Oceanography Centre, Southampton, a former associate director of the Faraday Institute, Cambridge, and the author with Rebecca Watson of *Blue Planet*, *Blue God: the Bible and the Sea*.

April Maskiewicz Cordero, Douglas Estes, Telford Work

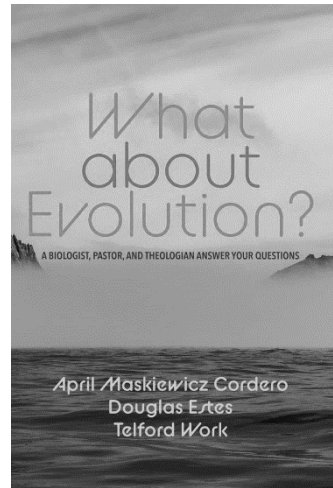
What About Evolution? A biologist, pastor, and theologian answer your questions

Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2022. 106 pp. pb. £18. ISBN 978-1-6667-1294-0

This three-chapter volume is truly collaborative and, as far as I am aware, unique in its approach. Each author’s contribution contains footnotes where the other two authors make comments, including clarifications, caveats and diverging views. I found this format extremely helpful in seeing the dialogue between the disciplines of biology, biblical studies and theology, as well as exposing levels of nuance that are usually

hidden in other multi author volumes. This topic in particular lends itself to this approach, as it exposes the breadth and diversity of views that are held by Christians – even those from very similar traditions.

This is an ideal book to give to conservative evangelicals who have concerns or questions about creation and evolution. The writing style is very accessible, but with a reasonable level of academic detail. The authors are all Professors at US-based Christian colleges (Point Loma Nazarene University, Tabor College and Westmont College, respectively). They are clearly very experienced in taking undergraduate students through the process of encountering evolutionary biology and discovering how it can integrate with deeply held Christian faith.



The authors clearly communicate their high regard for both Scripture and the fundamental doctrines of the Church. They also do the important work of sharing their own faith and struggles on this topic. Cordero also shares her own, and her students', experience of the wonder of science and how it helps faith to grow. The questions covered are ones that in my experience are often asked by this audience, and are fundamentally important for both science and Christian faith. The explanations are clearly well rehearsed, with practical examples, figures and analogies. There are of course a couple of points where I disagree with the authors, but that is unavoidable on this topic, and not enough (in my humble opinion) to spoil an excellent book.

I particularly appreciated Estes' distinction between science (as practiced by scientists) and 'science' (an ideological, scientistic, position), and likewise evolution and 'evolution', Bible and 'Bible'. Like all the authors in this volume, he affirms traditional Christian faith while also calling for

us to engage in the daunting task of unlearning things we know incorrectly.

I was impressed at the combination of sensitivity and authority that each writer shows. They do not try to convert the reader to their own view, but instead make a good case for it, encouraging further honest and open exploration. This approach is ideal for the target audience, and particularly for young people. The one point all the authors express very strongly is that people should not feel they have to choose between Christian faith and evolutionary biology. My main complaint is that this short book is so expensive. It would be ideal for students, or to sell at church-based events, and hopefully will be available at a more reasonable price in future.

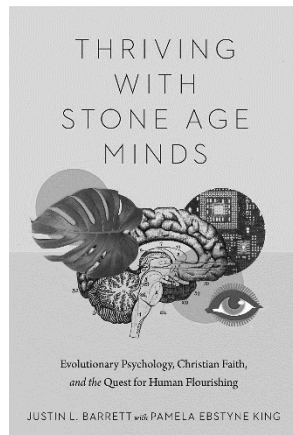
Reviewed by Dr Ruth M. Bancewicz, Church Engagement Director at The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion.

Justin L. Barrett with Pamela Ebstyn King

Thriving with Stone Age Minds: Evolutionary Psychology, Christian Faith, and the Quest for Human Flourishing

Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2021. 160 pp. pb. \$20.00. ISBN 978-0-8308-5293-2

The topic of human thriving has received attention recently in the context of positive psychology’s search for the conditions that promote well-being and flourishing, particularly in a contemporary North American setting. This book explores human thriving from a dual perspective: evolutionary psychology—focusing on the commonalities of human experience across time and across cultures, and Christian theology—focusing on character, virtue, and purpose in life.



The authors are well-suited for this task, with both having a long-standing interest in the science-faith relationship and the conditions for human flourishing. Barrett brings special expertise in cognitive science of religion and evolutionary psychology, while King has a background in human development. Although the book's ideas and narrative text flow from a collaboration between the two authors (with input from several additional colleagues), Barrett as the primary author frequently uses first-person singular pronouns—a style that I found distracting.

The main audience for the book appears to be educated Christians who are uncomfortable with (and perhaps skeptical of) the idea of human evolution. For this audience, the book serves as an introduction to evolutionary psychology and evolutionary explanations for the behavior of contemporary humans. As described in the Introduction, the goal of the book is to demonstrate that 'evolutionary psychology and neighboring scientific disciplines can serve as useful tools in analyzing the challenges to human thriving' while still affirming that 'the Bible, properly interpreted, reveals critical truths about human nature and purpose and what it means to live a life worth living.' (x)

The book attempts to provide a framework in which 'Christian theology and scientific inquiry concerning human thriving can be brought together.' (xii) Ideally, the benefits from this dialogue should flow in both directions, thus strengthening the explanatory power of evolutionary theory by infusing it with theological insights about human purpose and what it means to live a good life. In practice, the bulk of the book's content points in the other direction, 'placing evolutionary psychology in the service of theology.' (10) Only in the final section (Chapters 7 and 8) does the book delve deep into relevant insights from theological anthropology, including the implications of humans as *imago Dei* (created in God's image) and the concept of *telos* as the purpose toward which a meaningful life should be directed. For readers who are already familiar with evolutionary theory, this portion of book may well prove the most useful.

Other readers may find the central portion of the book (Chapters 3–6) more interesting. This section first lays out a Christian understanding of evolution, namely that ‘God created a cosmos with living things that gradually change over time to suit the demands of their environments,’ and then defines human thriving from an evolutionary perspective as ‘fine-tuning our natural capacities to fit our particular niche’—the specific environmental conditions or context in which we live. (26–27) This leads to the basic premise of the book (reflected in the title): Human thriving is threatened by a ‘nature–niche gap’—that is, our physical and social environment (our ‘niche’) has changed so quickly and so dramatically that our ‘stone-age mind’ (our ‘nature’ formed during many thousands of years in hunter-gatherer societies) has not been able to keep up. (47)

In general, the physical and social environments for other animals such as squirrels and sparrows have changed less dramatically. In trying to understand the unique challenges for human flourishing, the book devotes considerable attention to human distinctiveness and the evolutionary development of three distinctive human capacities: an intense focus on social relationships, a deep desire to gather and use information, and conscious, intentional self-control. Apparently, human thriving requires each of us to move toward our individualized *telos* in a way that both employs and satisfies these three characteristics.

Although the evidence for these three distinctive human capacities is derived from research in evolutionary psychology, the book ties them to *imago Dei* and the generalized *telos* common to all humans: ‘These three groups of features make humans the only animals alive today that can image God by exercising His reign over the rest of creation and, most importantly, the only animals that can truly and deeply love God and love each other.’ (8) This is a good example of why, in my opinion, the book is successful in arguing that evolutionary psychology is not necessarily incompatible with Christianity, but instead holds insights that may enrich a Christian understanding of human nature and human flourishing.

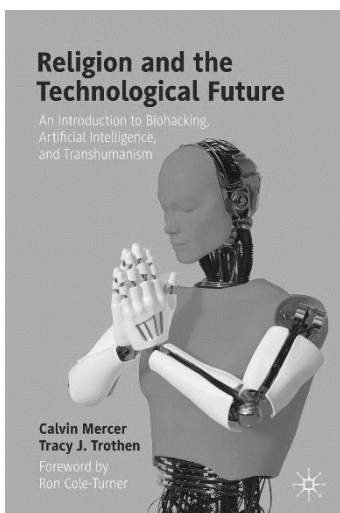
The last section of the book is a brief chapter-by-chapter study guide containing questions for individual reflection or group discussion, which will be helpful if the book is used in a college class or a book discussion group.

Reviewed by Thomas Ludwig, Emeritus Professor of Psychology at Hope College and author (with Malcolm Jeeves) of *Psychological Science and Christian Faith* (Templeton 2018).

Calvin Mercer and Tracy J Trothen

Religion and the Technological Future: An Introduction to Biohacking, Artificial Intelligence and Transhumanism

Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave MacMillan/Springer, 2021. 266 pp. pb US\$ 44.99. ISBN 978-3-030-62358-6



The aim of this book, described throughout as a textbook, is to assess and analyse the immense possibilities opened up by major technological developments for the future of the human body. What makes it stand apart from many other such books is that the authors bring a religious perspective to bear on the topic, repeatedly asking how religious insights can and should influence thinking and how religious traditions will probably be transformed.

The subject matter of the book is nothing if not daunting. The overall framework is that of transhumanism and radical human bioenhancement, with the focus placed on superlongevity, cognitive and moral bioenhancement, and even spiritual enhancement. Special topics touch on cryonics, mind uploading and digital immortality, and superintelligence. These topics will undoubtedly

sound arcane to those with little background or interest in the extravagances of transhumanism. And yet the authors unpack them with skill and a deep understanding of the issues at stake. While appearing to have sympathy with many of the developments under consideration, their realism shines through as they repeatedly question whether the science will work out as suggested, and as they point to the way humans all-too-often abuse technological advances.

These cautions stem from the religious standpoints of the authors, Calvin Mercer being a professor of religion, and Tracy Trothen a professor of ethics. Both are heavily involved in study of human enhancement, transhumanism, and artificial intelligence. From this basis, their aim is to inform people at large about the nature of the changes that are occurring and how these changes will, in their view, intersect with religion. Although they have all religions in mind, their emphasis is on Christianity since the bulk of the writing undertaken to date has been by those within a Christian milieu.

They commence the book with a drastic statement: "The religions of the world will come to an end, or thrive, depending on how they respond to the topic of this book" (3). They want their readers to appreciate that there is a new world coming, and that it is coming much quicker than most people realize. This is undoubtedly true, and their presupposition is that this will be brought about by "biohacking", that is, the radical enhancement of human beings with therapies and technologies currently available or shortly to become so.

The authors are not neutral observers of the debate, although they strive to set out the issues as fairly as they can. Towards the end of the book, they state their position, namely, "that religions can thrive, but only if they skilfully and creatively respond to the impending biohacked world ... and contribute powerfully and positively to humanity's general response to enhancement, making sure the technologies develop on the side of justice, freedom, religious integrity and community" (216-217). In other words, this is a call for theologians to take these technologies seriously, a call that I appreciate. A problem I foresee is that some of the

claims being made by advocates of transhumanism are, for most people, extreme and intensely speculative. This becomes even more pressing when reference is made to TechPlus Theology, where theology is viewed through the lens of enhancement technology.

The authors take religious approaches to bioenhancement very seriously, and always seek to discern how those with a conservative stance or with a liberal stance will respond. At first sight this division appears simplistic, and yet it works out more productively than I had thought. The authors have a very good knowledge of the thinking of these groupings within the church, and their aim is to see how they are likely to respond to forms of radical bioenhancement. In practice, it seems there may be substantial overlap between the respective responses.

When assessing each example of enhancement, the authors first give a description of the nature of the enhancement before turning to religious issues and finally ethical issues. For instance, when dealing with cognitive and moral bio enhancement, their description includes smart drugs, brain biohacking, and the likelihood of morality being delivered in a pill. The religious issues include assessment of the relevance of the Tower of Babel motif, while ethical issues include consideration of the therapy-enhancement continuum, the place of choice and the role of justice. The authors are helpfully prepared to guide readers as to where they come down in these debates.

The textbook description is apt, since the book covers a great deal of ground, and there is much to be learned from it. Not all the procedures are extreme, even if they are set within an extreme paradigm. Several of them are already in existence, and readers are gently reminded that many of us are cyborgs in the sense that we walk around with artificial joints and pacemakers. It also comes as a challenge to those on the conservative side of theology to ascertain how much they are prepared for their traditional interpretations to be extended. The book is extensively referenced, and the authors are very well versed in Christian theological stances.

The more general value of the book is to stimulate Christians and others to reflect theologically and ethically on technological developments, most of which are far less threatening than the ones discussed in this book, and yet with profound consequences for thinking about God and his relationship to the world.

Reviewed by Gareth Jones, Emeritus Professor, Department of Anatomy, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand. His latest book is: *At the Margins: A Life in Biomedical Science, Faith, and Ethical Dilemmas*, Wipf and Stock, 2022.

John Wyatt and Stephen N. Williams (Editors), Justin Welby (Forward)

The Robot Will See You Now: Artificial Intelligence and The Christian Faith

SPCK, 2021, 251 pp, pb £12.70, ISBN: 978-0-281-08435-7



‘Artificial intelligence (AI) is in the air that we breathe.’, so say editors John Wyatt and Stephen N. Williams in the opening sentence of their Editorial Introduction. They are quite right. We are living in unprecedented times where AI in some form is found almost ubiquitously wherever one looks. At a time when we all need to play “catch-up” with wherever technology is seemingly heading, this work shines as a much-needed social, ethical, and theological Christian perspective on robotics and AI.

In fact, this book arrives at an extraordinarily well-timed moment, when AI has, yet again, become the focus of popular debate and discussion in the media, some of it informed, but much of it less so. This collection of 14 articles arose from a recent international research study based at the

Faraday Institute in Cambridge, co-led by one of the editors, John Wyatt. Written by the participants, the articles deal with a whole host of broadly social, ethical and theological issues, opening as it does with a perceptive forward from the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby. Despite the study's academic roots, the editors have clearly taken great care to curate a collection of articles which are both well-written and accessible for a general, non-expert, lay audience.

Although published in 2021, well before the likes of OpenAI's ChatGPT and Google's Bard emerged from the lab, Wyatt and Williams have wisely steered well clear of expecting readers to have any specific knowledge or indeed, any experience of this fast-changing technology stream. The technology-agnostic approach adopted herein ensures that readers need not be overly distracted by technology concerns as such. All that readers need to take away is that AI is real, it exists and will surely impact how we live, whoever we are.

For readers who need further reassurance about what AI is about, there is a short, non-technical introductory article supplying sufficient reference and context to grasp the essentials of what AI technology is (and is not) about. Additionally, this also briefly outlines some of the relevant history and some of the broader concerns, including the following: 'AI is simply the display by a machine of any cognitive process that we would expect to be done by a person.'

Each of the 14 articles is grouped under one of three parts; the first of which is called **What is going on? Cultural and Historical Analysis**. The articles there explore how our culture has already responded to the AI question, certainly in the form of popular science-fiction films and novels, as well as in general philosophical terms, discussing notions such as simulacra and simulation. The second part is called **Theological Frameworks And Responses**, dealing with issues of a more foundational philosophical and theological concern such as the nature of personhood, of human flourishing and exploring how the emergence of AI challenges the nature of what humanity is. The third part is called **Ethical and Social Issues**, and addresses many of the contact points of

AI with modern society - how will AI affect human well-being, the nature of work, the impact of AI on health and social care, and artistic creation in music and painting. The final chapter talks about AI and 'surveillance capitalism', the very active 'data mining' of our behaviour for the benefit of corporations and governments.

From a Christian point of view, the content is positioned in an ecumenically neutral manner, admirably eschewing doctrinal biases as far as I could see – it is conceivably accessible and useful for even a non-Christian, secular audience. It also focuses on issues of what AI is, compared to humanity, confronting head-on what it means to be human. Emphasis is commonly placed on AIs *simulating* behaviour that might normally be ascribed to people. Modern AIs are determined by their training regime and are therefore incapable of acting with an independent *conscience*, neither morally nor immorally – judgement is clinical. AIs behave *neutrally* in a chillingly amoral manner; given any goal, an AI pursues it relentlessly, whatever it is.

Overall, this collection offers many valuable, timely insights into the social, ethical and theological issues concerning AI and is essential reading for thoughtful Christian engagement with AI.

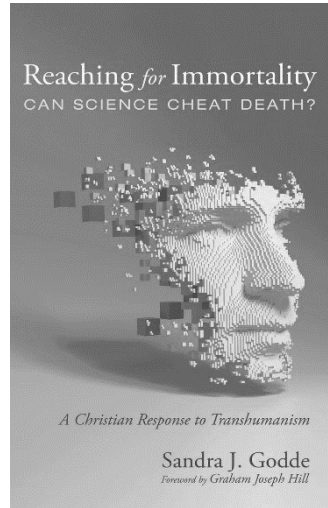
Reviewed by Dr. Brian Monahan a (retired) mathematician, computer scientist and software developer living near Bristol.

Sandra J. Godde

Reaching for Immortality: Can science cheat death?

Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2022, 81pp. ISBN: 978-1-6667-3674-8

Godde’s brief but broad book, addressing the growing phenomenon of transhumanist thinking, seeks to equip ‘Christians to examine and respond to the transhuman agenda regarding death and immortality, considering technological advances and biblical visions of the future’ (xii). Her attempt at this is noble. The scope of transhumanism’s appeal and outreach to the world in popular culture, academia and public debate has grown exponentially in the past decade as scientific development has stepped closer to science fiction. The need for a book like this is timely and well met.



Godde has divided her work successfully into short, easily digestible chapters which are highly accessible to the lay person and succinctly set out the challenges to the Christian faith. She contrasts the transhumanist vision with ‘God’s dream for humanity: for us to be immortalized in Him’ (xiv). She allows this contrast to be demonstrated in each chapter. The table is set early on for each, differing focus given to the challenge of transhumanism when she notes that ‘While the posthuman agenda seeks to immortalise the mind by cheating death, the gospel offers something more than a promise of future, embodied immortality’ (7) The book continues by setting each challenge in turn and comparing it to the Christian promise.

Drawing on technological developments in AI (such as Neuralink) and biotechnology (CRISPR-Cas9) she emphasises that ‘our future entails possibilities where technology will blur the distinction between our

individual persons and machines' (4) which will raise serious ethical challenges. I commend Godde's ability to lay out the environment so well in such a short book, but for those whose appetite is whet, every chapter would need a much deeper dive to explore the issues raised. Only a surface introduction can be given, but this book does a brilliant job at doing so.

The book flows from an examination of pop-culture to technology and academic voices, but throughout successfully keeps the voices of the key players in transhumanism heard. For a brief introduction, it succeeds in familiarising the lay person with the drivers of the movement, both past and present. Godde asks whether 'technology of this scope, scale...potentially be another nail in the coffin of true, embodied humanity?' (18) before going on to argue from Christian tradition that the body 'should be dignified, not sought to be eradicated or superseded' (19)

She explains that "Transhumanism is a philosophical orientation towards 'technological solutionism' and is generally undergirded by a belief that radical technological progress will eventually disrupt society and redefine the very definition of the human being" (20) She helps us by introducing terms like *singularity* and *omega point theory*, mapping out the three prongs of biological, bionic, and virtual immortality clearly for anyone to grasp. When you follow the book, you can draw easy parallels to where you may have seen or heard these ideas in everyday life. As the creeds and doctrines of transhumanism are laid out, so is the underlying philosophy that 'this cybernetic evolution of our species depends upon the premise that life is identified with information alone.' (23) Here we find many more broadly familiar ideas from reductionism and materialism married to their technological outworking. In a vein not far removed from New Atheism, we see Daniel Dennett's ideas that humans are essentially minds, which are fundamentally information, therefore people are essentially algorithms and digital patterns. No free will exists, we are genetically determined, and equal rights are a Christian myth.

Here religion is the enemy because it is unscientific, blind, offering comfort and acceptance of death.

Godde succeeds in exposing the transhumanist's blind belief in progress as both inevitable and good, without accounting for human freedom or moral character. She writes that 'human nature cannot be changed by the augmentation of intelligence' (39) and I was reminded of Richard Feynman's signoff to the Space Shuttle Challenger disaster report that ultimately nature cannot be fooled.

I did question whether all Christians would agree on perhaps transhumanism's more noble ambitions to improve the human condition of health and strength against disease and debilitation. Godde explains that to transhumanists 'our body is the main problem, imposing...intolerable restrictions' (32) and their vision that 'We must wage a technological and medical war against aging and death' (31) which is 'a moral responsibility.' (32) However, as a geneticist well familiar with CRISPR-Cas9, I was reminded of how Nobel laureate Jennifer Doudna has been very candid in explaining how her mind changed on the ethical possibilities of CRISPR. She raised repeatedly the question of when it is more ethical to act rather than not, when the power to alleviate suffering is in your hands. What if Christians end up being the voice of opposition to the practical healing potential of CRISPR, especially when it has already been successfully applied to sickle cell disease?

The book concludes with a concise outline of where the gospel succeeds at the pitfalls of transhumanism: 'An anthropology where the physical body is seen as inherently flawed does not add to a vision of future flourishing.' (66) The Gospel's glorious vision of hope in God's transformation of us is far grander than anything transhumanism has to offer, with its foreshadowing in Christ's resurrection a greater historical example than what science fiction can dream of.

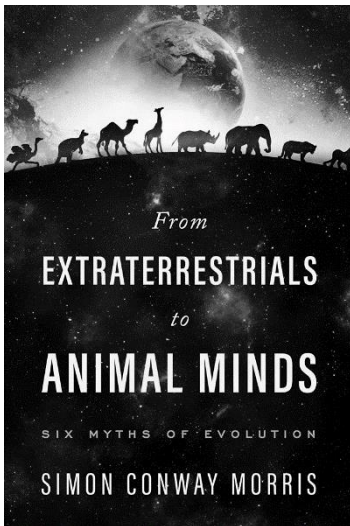
With its strong introduction to the topic, this book is recommended for a lay person as well as for a philosopher. I encourage those interested and disinterested to read it.

Reviewed by Sam McKee, a PhD student in Philosophy of Science at Manchester Metropolitan University. He studied Theology at Chester University and Genetics at Cambridge University, as well as an MSc in Molecular Biology from Birkbeck.

Simon Conway Morris

From Extraterrestrials to Animal Minds: Six myths of evolution

Templeton Press, 2022. 432 pp. hb. £28.37. ISBN 978-1599475288



Simon Conway Morris' latest book is a collection of six inter-related essays on topics ranging from the emergence of evolutionary complexity to the Fermi Paradox. As expected, it is buttressed by a massive bibliography. I promised myself not to look at the bibliography at first, but found myself turning to it over and over again as one astonishing fact after another tumbled across the pages. I should add, as a sort of disclaimer, that I was a PhD student of Simon's, and even back in that antediluvian era he was famous for poring endlessly over

the literature, spending Saturday mornings in the quaintly-named Scientific Periodicals Library and seemingly transferring most of it into a vast card index. Thus, the text moves casually from the Great Molasses Flood to Yorkshire Terriers to Dyson Spheres, and the reader, almost helplessly, is drawn along as if lashed to a bamboo raft heading for some particularly dicey-looking rapids.

Despite the breadth of topics, some overarching themes emerge. The first is that evolution is simultaneously both, more messy, and yet more law-like than popularly imagined. It is messy in that it doesn't proceed along straight lines of "missing links" leading straight from, say, *Archaeopteryx* to pigeons, but rather, some groups tend to repeatedly produce the raw materials of such transitions. Within the theropod dinosaurs, for example, bird-like groups evolved on multiple occasions, so that one is left with a sense that a bird as we would recognise it today was somehow bound eventually to appear. This incidentally, touches on two live scientific topics, the idea of so-called "deep homology", whereby a shared genetic apparatus can lead to the parallel appearance of similar morphological features in different lineages; and the whole problem of detecting convergence. Indeed, as Simon concedes, our ability to detect the patterns of evolution is clouded by our basic inability to know when particular features do and do not indicate common descent.

Another theme taken up is about evolutionary limits – have we reached them, or will evolution in the future simply meander away indefinitely? Simon argues that there are physical limits to functionality, and that many have already been reached. His compelling discussion of sensory systems here is one of the most absorbing of the whole work, and this deep appreciation of the extraordinary outcomes of evolution (as exhibited in a previous work) was what led Richard Dawkins to astonish the internet by tweeting appreciatively about it. Of course, the limits we know of are set by conditions on Earth, and here I perceive the distant influence of a wonderful book that Simon urged me to read when I was a student – *Life's Devices* by Steven Vogel (Princeton, 1988). What about on other planets then? In his final chapter, Simon turns to the Fermi Paradox – why no aliens? And if there *are* aliens, what are they like? Simon's answer to this is the obvious but (to many) unpalatable one.

The animal minds chapter runs strongly against the modern Zeitgeist that animals are basically just like humans, but without the worries of parking tickets or copy deadlines. Simon, following a rather Kantian or

Wittgensteinian line (see e.g. §28 in *Kant's Analytic* by Jonathan Bennett (CUP, 1966)), argues that to be human is to possess a sort of complex framework of intellectual and conceptual abilities that make the question 'I wonder what it would be like to be an aardvark' a meaningless one: if one *were* such an organism, that sort of self-reflective thought would not be possible even in principle. I think this is right, and further reflection along these lines tends to thoroughly support Simon's contention about the vast and unbridgeable gap between our world, and that of all other (known) life. One more example: at one point (240), Simon mentions how listening to *Lark Ascending* instantly transports him to an ancient burial mound on the Dorset chalk highlands. Ah, I know exactly what he means, I thought as I read this – but no, my transport was to the West Kennett long barrow in *Wiltshire*, with its haunting history of a thousand years of reverence followed by sudden abandonment (for reasons why, Mann's *Avebury Cosmos* (Moon Books, 2011) offers some tantalising hints). It is exactly this human ability to depart from one emotive and suggestive point to another, with their almost unbearably rich associations of history, place, culture and religion, that must be entirely lacking in animals. Simon then hints about what might be the meaning of this new space humans have entered, and here one is quite clearly in the world of the Prologue to St John's gospel, entirely orthogonal to the ever-hopeful materialist insistence on "emergence" from complex arrangements of matter. How many of the likely readership of this book will agree with him however remains, I think, to be seen.

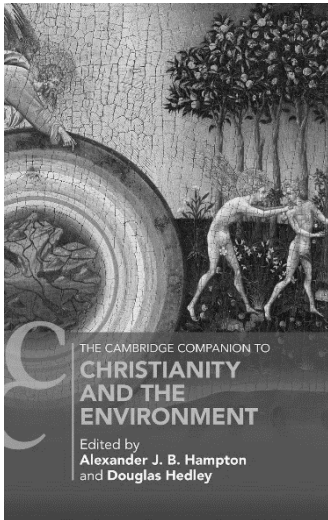
Reviewed by Graham Budd, professor of Evolutionary Palaeobiology in Uppsala University, Sweden, with interests in the origin of animals and other major patterns of evolution.

A. J. B. Hampton and D. Hedley editors

The Cambridge Companion to Christianity and the Environment

Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press 2022, 300 pp, hb £69.99,

ISBN: 978-1108495011



This book is not quite what it says on the cover! The title suggests yet another compilation of essays on Christianity and the environment. There are plenty of those already, many written by a growing group of specialist eco-theologians (myself included I suppose), but this is quite different. Rather, it is a serious academic volume with a specific aim: to give a philosophical, historical and cultural analysis of the relationship between western Christianity and the natural world. It accepts the core proposition that our current ecological crisis arises largely from

Western worldviews deeply influenced by Christianity. However, it problematises and complicates Lynn White's simplistic narrative (White, *Science*, 1967) that Western Christianity is entirely to blame, by demonstrating diverse and dissenting traditions and influences within Western Christianity.

The book is divided into three broad sections: 'Concepts', 'Histories' and 'Engagements'. 'Concepts' looks at issues around naturalism and supernaturalism from ancient to contemporary thinking, including an intriguing suggestion that Teilhard de Chardin's evolutionary approach to science and faith was prefigured in the Epicurean philosopher-poet, Lucretius. Charles Taliaferro, examining the possibility of nonhuman animals possessing souls or even consciousness, makes a crucial distinction between the *scientific naturalism* which leaves no room for explanations beyond the natural sciences and '*broad naturalism*' (49) which allows for insights from social science and spirituality. Robin

Attfield's chapter on 'Anthropocentrism, Biocentrism, Stewardship and Co-creation' gives an excellent synopsis of critiques of the term 'stewardship' and follows Southgate in advocating a role for humans as 'co-creators and co-redeemers' (71-77).

The 'Histories' section has chapters examining environmental philosophies from Ancient Greece, the Mediaeval and Early Modern eras, the Protestant Reformation, Romanticism, and contemporary religious ecology. This demonstrates a more complex history within western environmental thinking than often surmised. For example, Greek philosophy was not simplistically dualist in separating spiritual and material, but also contained seeds of panpsychism and deep ecology in attributing 'soul' to all created entities. The later Christian Neoplatonism of the medieval era so idealised and personified nature as a source of divine wonders and lessons, that the later scientific revolution in seeking evidence-based knowledge swung the pendulum towards a total desacralization of nature. Bacon's and Descartes' mechanistic understanding of nature stood in stark contrast to discerning God's hand at work although some, like John Ray, integrated scientific and theological understandings. Mark Stoll's chapter on 'Protestantism, Environmentalism and Limits to Growth' argues that whilst Protestantism may (*pace* Weber) have given impetus to early capitalism, it is largely Protestant cultures that underlie contemporary environmentalism. Puritan ideas of responsibility and modesty birthed later concepts of sustainable use of natural resources, and the environmentalism of Aldo Leopold and Rachel Carson owes no small debt to Christian understandings of nature as a community of which we are part (reflected today in the writings of Richard Bauckham and the Papal encyclical *Laudado Si'*).

The final section on 'Engagements' is very diverse, ranging from reflections on 'the sublime and wonder' as concepts encouraging humility before nature, to a detailed plea from Michael Northcott for 'conservation approaches which draw on indigenous and religious knowledge as well as natural science' (244), and a chapter by Jame

Schaeffer on sacramental approaches to nature as providing a moral orientation fostering earth-care.

Overall, a brief review cannot do justice to a complex and important book such as this. It's one major weakness is that (with the exception of Northcott's chapter) it largely ignores insights from beyond Europe and North America. It is clear about that limitation, but if Christians are to recover approaches to nature that offer hope for a sustainable future, we need a wider and deeper debate including wisdom from the global Church.

Reviewed by Revd Dr Dave Bookless, Director of Theology, A Rocha International (dave.bookless@arocha.org)

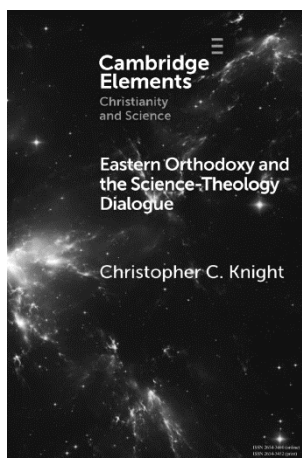
Christopher Knight

Eastern Orthodoxy and the Science-Theology Dialogue

Cambridge University Press: Cambridge UK, 2022, 82 pp, pb £15, ISBN: 978-1009107761

In the background of a vast literature on science-theology dialogue, Christopher Knight, an astrophysicist and Orthodox priest, attempts to outline the ways in which Eastern Orthodox theology can contribute to such a dialogue. The book is not easy to read because it requires a substantial insight into Orthodox theology, as well as good knowledge of hot scientific issues, which challenge traditional theology.

Knight, in spite of claiming a distinctive specificity of Orthodoxy in its relationship to the sciences, positions discussion in the context, which was historically set up outside the Orthodox tradition. He uses the classification of the relationship between science and theology, suggested by Ian Barbour, in terms of



conflict, independence, dialogue and integration. After reading the book one is left with an impression that Orthodox theology cannot follow any of these options. The only option is to treat science and theology as two mutually *complimentary* modi of humanity's activities. Then, one agrees with Knight that the Orthodox tradition offers some 'alternative' pan-Christian vision of the dialogue with the sciences 'providing ways of looking at particular issues that may offer new and important insights' (p. 5).

The author starts with the topic of natural theology. He comes to the point that Orthodox theology with its patristic scope can propose not to build a systematic natural theology, but to bypass it through introducing into its scope a *noetic*, non-descriptive element. Indeed, one can contemplate nature and God's presence on a personal or inter-personal level. Yet, such a contemplation lies outside the scope of the scientific approach to nature. It can contribute to some non-descriptive hermeneutics of nature, but not to the assessment of modern sciences as prescriptive for the physical existence.

In the next issue related to the languages used in science and theology, the author compares the use of critical realism in science and theology (pp. 17-19). Knight appeals to the Orthodox distinction between apophatic and cataphatic ways of theologising in order to compare the former with critical realism. However, such a comparison seems to be overstretched because critical realism in science deals with the phenomenality of objects whereas theology deals with the inaugural events which are initiated 'from beyond space and time.' A conclusion is possible that the languages of science and theology are different but complementary as originating in one and the same man.

Then section 3, devoted to the 'Mind-Body problem' can be qualified as anthropological dealing with the problem of consciousness. Modern neuroscience, research in artificial intelligence, cognitive psychology, all struggle with a fundamental problem of consciousness as specific phenomena, which correlate with the physical states of the brain. The nature of this correlation remains unclear. Theology can only provide its

empirical interpretation. In no way it is capable of advancing any specific description of the psychosomatic unity of man apart from referring to a special act of creation. It seems then that no specific Orthodox insight on the issue, understood scientifically, can be drawn.

The next section 4 discusses the issue of panentheism, that is, the stance on the presence of God in the world as well as of the world's 'place' in God. Knight lists several theological writers on panentheism. Then he considers examples of the seemingly teleological tendencies in modern sciences which 'confirm' panentheism. However, such a move, is not convincing because the inference to the philosophical creator must to be supplemented by the Christological element. Another problem is that any teleology manifests a propensity of the human intelligence to imply purposiveness of everything in order to know it. If Knight justifies panentheism through a teleological insight, this panentheism turns out to be anthropologically inherent.

The next section 5 on *Divine Action* develops a point on how to articulate the Divine presence in specific terms. Knight invokes Maximus the Confessor, as well as other thinkers along the lines of what he calls 'evolutionary Christology' (p. 46). Then he makes a smooth transition to the section *Naturalism and the 'Miraculous'*, where the Divine action is considered through the distinction between laws of nature and 'paranormal' or miraculous phenomena. This distinction necessitates a phenomenological stratification of encounters with the Divine actions which is abundant in patristic sources. Since natural laws and miraculous events manifest themselves in different phenomenalities, no straightforward hierarchy of them is possible.

And finally comes section 7 *An Eschatologically Focused and Trinitarian Understanding* starting its discussion from how to understand nature in the perspective of the Biblically understood Fall. Orthodoxy insists that the Fall has consequences not only to human nature, but to nature at large. However, the pre-lapsarian, paradise-like state of humanity and nature can hardly be conceived in terms the sciences functioning in the post-lapsarian condition. If one promotes an idea that the whole

universe was in a non-physical state before the Fall, one comes to the contradiction with the Incarnation of God in the post-lapsarian flesh of Jesus of Nazareth whose possibility is linked to the evolution of the universe. Here one agrees with Knight, who refers to Maximus the Confessor, that the Fall accompanies creation of the world, so that any actual prelapsarian existence is hypothetical and the Fall-narrative points to a spiritual nostalgia for the intellectually invoked Paradise (p. 55). Indeed, such an Orthodox stance on the Fall is distinctive and logically consistent with the modern scientific view of reality.

In conclusion, the book generates many questions. Scientific advance challenges theology by showing that some of its concepts must be updated in modern terms in order to be comprehensible and existentially relevant. This was not the objective of this book, but this is the conclusion after reading it. Unfortunately, omitted the theology of John Zizioulas, who was the only one able not only to advance Orthodox theology but also criticise it in view of scientific developments. One also notes, that the choice of particular philosophical means of mediation (analytic philosophy, for example) between science and theology is not justified and not appraised in the background of other existing approaches in the continental thought.

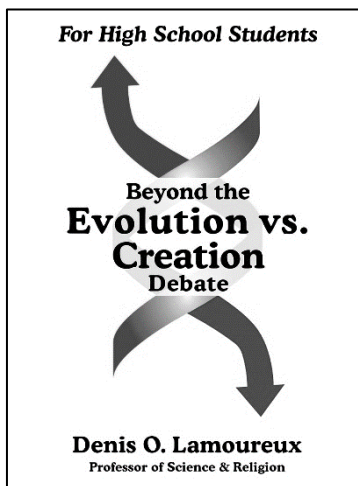
Reviewed by Alexei Nesteruk, who holds PhD in physics and mathematics, as well as DSc in philosophy, currently a visiting lecturer at the University of Portsmouth. His main area of expertise is philosophy of cosmology, Orthodox theology and the sciences, in particular a phenomenological trend in the dialogue between theology and science. He published four books in the field.

Lamoureux Denis O.

Beyond the Evolution vs. Science Debate

McGahan 2021. 130 pp. pb £10.49 ISBN 978-1-951252-11-3

Professor Lamoureux has written a book that is very accessible for a teenage audience while at the same time covering all his points in a



serious way. The main theme is that there are not only the two options normally assumed on origins – i.e. evolution or creation. While he sides very clearly with the evolutionary creation view, he makes it clear that this is entirely up to each reader to decide for themselves and that there are good serious Christians holding any of the three options he cites – (1) young earth creation, (2) progressive creation and (3) evolutionary creation as well as combinations of these. He

deals with deistic evolution and atheistic evolution as well, stressing that these are not options for a Christian belief. Lamoureux spends considerable time speaking about intelligent design and presents this in a loose way – i.e. that God has specific purpose in His creation and while it may have taken billions of years, He designed it to work as a self-assembling enterprise. He does not deal with the ‘Intelligent Design’ lobby that would agree that God designed everything but with a tendency to reject evolution as being part of that design as they regard it as anti-creationist. His book contains considerable detail on cosmology and biology demonstrating that none of the current scientific theories (and I am glad he defined what a theory really is rather than the commonly assumed definition of it as an unproved hypothesis) are contrary to a biblical account. He includes many helpful diagrams to illustrate his points, pointing out very clearly that the science in the Bible is ancient science that would have been meaningful to an audience of the time, rather than modern science. He stresses that this is how God communicates with His people and that the Bible is not about providing answers to modern scientific questions.

I found myself agreeing with him on virtually every point even though the processes he went through to reach his present position are somewhat different to my own. I am not sure that I entirely agree with

him that the 'days' of Genesis 1 were originally understood as 24-hour days, but he may well be right. He still points out that it was dealing with ancient understandings of creation and that the purpose of the passage is to stress that God is responsible for the whole of creation; not to inform us about scientific processes. He shows that the chapter is poetic in its nature, and, to me, poetry is often not meant to be taken literally, but I may not properly understand ancient poetry!

My assessment is that this is a very useful book to use for teenagers who are keen to understand these issues and, in my experience as a science teacher, a large number of teenagers really want to know and understand more about this perceived debate. I would have no hesitation in recommending it for use in schools and for any young person struggling in any way to make sense of how God relates to the creation and modern science.

Reviewed by Neil Laing (retired secondary science teacher; author of 'Is God Really Legit?')

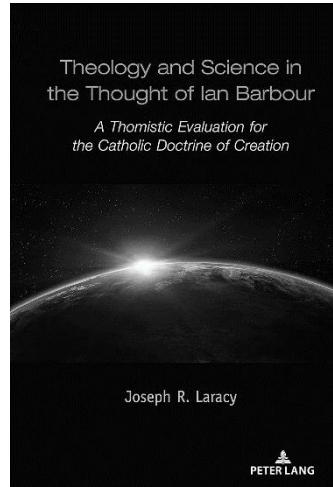
Joseph R. Laracy

Theology and Science in the Thought of Ian Barbour: A Thomistic Evaluation for the Catholic Doctrine of Creation

New York: Peter Lang, 2021. 326 pp. £58.52 ISBN 9781433190056

Professor Joseph R. Laracy offers an in-depth and insightful contribution to the relationship between faith and science in this ecumenical work. His research, likely to be of interest to many evangelical Christians, provides an analysis on how Ian Barbour's thought can contribute to and enrich the Catholic understanding of the interaction between natural science and the doctrine of creation. Laracy's book elucidates the seminal contributions of Ian Barbour, a gifted physicist and Protestant theologian. Laracy examines what Catholic theology can learn from Barbour's approach, which has also appropriated certain aspects of process philosophy.

This book is divided into five chapters that develop from Barbour's life and works to various approaches for the interaction of theology and science. In the end, Laracy proposes paths of integration for the doctrine of creation and natural science. Throughout these chapters, he touches upon apposite topics such as various typologies of interaction for theology and science, origins of the critique of knowledge, Barbour's implementation of Whiteheadian philosophical principles, Thomistic realism and metaphysics, natural theology, and more.



Laracy analyses the personal, philosophical, and theological influences that played a substantial role in the development of Barbour's approach. He highlights Barbour's dissatisfaction regarding the prevailing opinion that the only modality of interaction between Christian theology and the natural sciences was one of conflict. For Barbour, the highest degree of interaction between theology and science is possible when a systematic synthesis is achieved through an inclusive metaphysical system.

The book considers similarities and differences between theology and science according to Barbour from the perspective of scientific materialism, fundamentalism, neo-orthodoxy, existentialist philosophy, and linguistic analysis. In his process perspective, Barbour emphasizes the primacy of time, the interconnection of events, reality as an organic process, and the self-creation of every entity. Barbour believes that 'becoming' is more significant than 'being' because 'transition and activity are more fundamental than permanence and substance.' (101) Barbour's study of science and theology acknowledges the importance of communities and their paradigms.

Laracy carefully examines Barbour's epistemological, metaphysical, and theological principles. We see the points of contact as well as

discontinuity between Barbour's and Stanley L. Jaki's thought. In addition, Laracy explores where and how Barbour's approach can facilitate dialogue and integration between Biblical revelation and the natural sciences. He utilizes Barbour's dialogue typology to explore presuppositions and limit questions in science related to the intelligibility of the universe, its contingent existence, its boundary conditions, the contingency of laws, and the contingency of events. Laracy also investigates methodological and conceptual parallels between theology and science. The book concludes with a discussion about how natural theology, a theology of nature, and a systematic philosophical synthesis of the two fields can realize Barbour's typology of integration.

Laracy's book left me wondering how Barbour's Barthian approach to the analogy of being aligns with his attempt to take a non-reductionistic perspective. On the positive side, despite the fact that Barbour tries to create a novel notion of continuous creation without creation from nothing as traditionally understood, Christians can appreciate Barbour's efforts trying to build his theology of nature upon the doctrines of creation, Divine providence, and human nature. Laracy's account of Barbour's thought is helpful and enlightening as he succinctly captures both his most important contributions and aspects that may still need further evaluation. Laracy underscores Barbour's positive view on the interaction between theology and science, based on methodological parallels, as well as Barbour's principles which are congruent with the Thomistic notions of form and the hierarchy of being.

Importantly, Laracy also points to Barbour's disagreements with traditional Christian theology. He critically engages Barbour when Barbour allows his process metaphysics to 'overwhelm' Biblical revelation. The book is substantial contribution to furthering the interaction of theology and science. It makes clear how creation is utterly dependent on God and all beings participate in God's infinite *esse*. This monograph will certainly be of interest to students and researchers in the theology-science field, evangelical and Catholic alike.

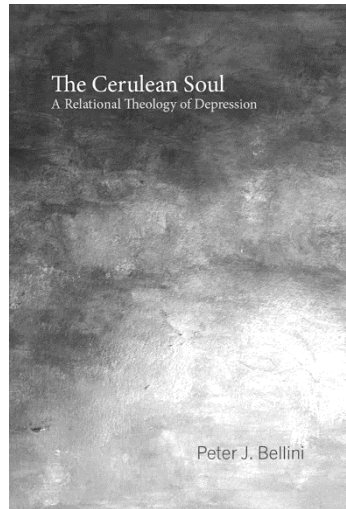
Reviewed by Mr. Ricardo Lozano Cruz, a seminarian of the Diocese of Camden, New Jersey, USA.

Peter J. Bellini

The Cerulean Soul: A relational theology of depression

Baylor University Press, 2021. 212pp. hb. £39.50. ISBN 978-1-4813-1093-2

As Bellini's book identifies, depression is the leading cause of disability worldwide in terms of total years lost due to disability and therefore seems a very worthy topic for thorough academic discussion. Science has never located a biological agent directly causing depression. To quote Bellini, 'The various theories of depression – biochemical, psychological, cultural often reflect one's philosophical anthropology. How one defines the human person is telling in how one defines mental disorder'.



This very deep and profound book argues that if we understand the triune God to be essentially relational at the core of His heart then this will shape our understanding of what it is to be human and therefore underpin the relational nature of depression as we understand ourselves to be theological spiritual creatures, made in the image of God for relationship with Him. Bellini explains that 'despondency serves as a biosocial and spiritual marker for our human weakness, brokenness, and spiritual struggle for meaning and wholeness. Further it is a call to grow, to be restored' and this through 'redemption and transformation, given freely in Christ through the healing and sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit'. He also emphasizes that union with the risen Christ should not be misconstrued as oppressively reinforcing of ableism, and that salvation 'gives new form to all persons, whether "abled" or "disabled"'.

This very dense book, which reads more like a research thesis, could I think be fairly described as a highly scholarly work which intentionally belongs to the world of serious academia, with an inherent beauty and coherent gravitas that I warmed to as I was making progress through it. It is, however, a work which, in its current format, is probably just not accessible to most people as a sufficiently digestible book to be able simply to pick up and read through. I read through the first third of this book whilst on a one-way five and a half hours plane journey, and I went on to regret not having the freedom then at high altitude to look up words (as, to be honest, even with my reasonably good breadth of English vocabulary, and me being a qualified medical doctor with an undergraduate degree from Oxford University to my name!) I was somewhat floundering with the vocabulary being beyond my comprehension several times a page, particularly with Bellini's assumption that his readership would be comfortably conversant with Greek and Latin. Very extensively referenced, readers would benefit from a summary of the key findings alongside this publication.

Bellini's theological understanding is typically aligned with my own and therefore the theology was for me reassuringly very familiar, coherent, and understood; a rich theology that clearly came across as consistent with the reformed protestant biblically faithful tradition. It goes into such depth as a study of the nature of God including God's capacity for deep suffering and compassion that there is then a natural flow towards studying the nature of depression as part of human life experience. Mental illness can be more broadly inferred from this book to be the result of the breakdown of relationships either with ourselves, with others, with Creation, or with the Creator. An alienation and estrangement from God's blessing, mixed with our own depravity, can only predispose us to melancholia. The dizzy uncertainties of apparent freedom when there is unlimited choice without God's boundaries upon our psyche, can only predispose us as human beings to feel overwhelmed and anxious. As Bellini goes on to say, 'God's peace transcends the temporal relief we seek from depressive symptoms', stabilizing and consoling us amidst chaos and calamity with the Christian

community's promised blessings of a cultural worldview understanding the need for forgiveness, radical hospitality, and justice. Rather than simply cure, Christianity points towards the Christ-centered shalom of healing and wholeness. As the Lord promises to ultimately bring meaning from suffering, to bring good from our brokenness, He promises to abide with His people forever, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you' (Hebrews 13:5).

Reviewed by Dr Angharad Gray who works as an NHS community psychiatrist in England and she volunteers as both the CMF Psychiatry Link person and a pastoral care worker for the Christian Medical Fellowship (CMF).

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Are you engaged in or planning postgraduate study of some form into the area of Faith & Thought? Perhaps you're planning a sabbatical or enrolled on a course already. Maybe you work for an academic institution and would like to pursue your own study or research area? We are making available two grants per year of £1000 each to support such work. Maybe you know someone else who would benefit from this? At the 2018 AGM it was agreed that:

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- b) Applicants should be undertaking post-graduate study of some form which addresses the interface between contemporary thought and the Christian Faith.
- c) Applicants are required to submit a brief proposal of up to 1000 words outlining the proposed study regarding aims, questions, methodology and impact of the potential insights gained from this work. This should include details of how the grant might assist the applicant in undertaking this work.
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The Application Form is available on the website www.faithandthought.org We look forward to hearing from suitable applicants.

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