

Reviews

Katharine Dell

Who Needs the Old Testament? Its Enduring Appeal and Why the New Atheists Don't Get It

London: SPCK, 2017. 257 pp. pb. £9.99.
ISBN 978-0-281-06504-2

This book is distinctive among those countering the arguments of the New Atheists in so far as it is written by an Old Testament specialist specifically to address the dismissal and ridicule of this ancient anthology by authors such as Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens. Dell does not engage with questions of science, then, but of theology, sharing her considerable insights into the canon of books in the Old Testament. Although New Atheism provides an important impetus for the writing of the book, Dell also perceives a need to address the widespread ignorance of the Old Testament even among Christian worshippers, who may have a scant idea of the narrative flow of the whole and may be familiar only with the selection of readings heard through the lectionary. A third issue that Dell seeks to address is the increasing trend within Old Testament scholarship towards reductionism and the dismissal of its traditions as a source of reliable historical evidence. In many ways, then, Dell's book serves as an introduction to the Old Testament for those who may be doubtful of its worth or unsure of its contents, yet it maintains a freshness which distinguishes it from a textbook by its very focus on these issues.

Another distinctive aspect of Dell's approach is her perspective, coming from the mainstream of UK biblical scholarship. There are many paperbacks seeking to defend the Old Testament from its critics from an evangelical standpoint, arguing (often very adeptly) that even the passages that seem most offensive to modern readers are nonetheless edifying

and reveal a God whom we can recognise as consistent throughout the Bible. Dell, however, is ready not just to advocate for the Old Testament but also to acknowledge openly where it presents difficulties. She is therefore able to counter the views of Dawkins and Hitchens not just by being better informed and revealing their misunderstandings of the texts with which they engage, but also by her readiness to allow that the Old Testament can genuinely present problems which cannot always be removed by exegetical sleight of hand. Instead, she places problematic passages in a broader context, and indeed draws attention to the extraordinarily limited corpus from which such critics draw in levelling criticisms against the Bible, opening her readers' eyes to much that is profound, enlightening and engaging in the Old Testament.

The book is divided into two main sections. Dell initially meets Dawkins and Hitchens on their own ground, discussing the texts that they consider in their writings as relevant to their perspective. In engaging with the New Atheists' arguments, and reading the passages they discuss within their original cultural, theological and literary contexts, Dell exposes the selectivity, misunderstanding and misinterpretation, as well as the superficial rhetoric perpetrated by these writers. Challenging the supposition that one might read an ancient text as if it were a direct source of modern morality (we can't), she instead proposes a more nuanced approach which allows for intelligent engagement with narrative and for the development of ideas over time as well as for the possibility of a Christocentric reading.

The second, more substantial, part of the book initially offers a survey of the Old Testament, engaging with the broad

sweep of its literature. A chapter is devoted in turn to the Writings, the Prophets and finally the broader picture offered by the Pentateuch and historical books. Inevitably, Dell's survey is selective and in discussing certain passages in preference to others she acknowledges that she has chosen some of the more helpful parts of the Old Testament as a counterweight to the tendencies shown by the New Atheists. She portrays a literary collection that is complex, varied, engaged with the realities of life in all its extremes and diversity, and worthy of serious attention even where we may profoundly disagree with some of its cultural assumptions or with the conduct of certain key characters (including, occasionally, God).

The penultimate chapter addresses skepticism within the academy. Acknowledging the tendency in some circles to 'an active agenda for the dismantling of faith perspectives from an analysis of the scriptural texts themselves' (187), Dell outlines some influential debates in Old Testament studies, including minimalism, the place of archaeology and the competing claims of 'high' and 'low' chronologies. She subjects the more sceptical approaches to a firm critique, highlighting their weaknesses and suggesting that they may be as value-laden and 'biased' as the more naive readings of the Bible that preceded them.

Turning finally to the place of the Old Testament in the Church, Dell identifies a number of challenges, including the contrasting stereotypes of the picture of God in each Testament, and the tendency towards 'over-sanitisation' (whereby the Old Testament is read as a 'supplement' to the New and challenging texts are marginalised), as well as the gulf between pulpit and academy. For Dell, the solution lies in an understanding of the Old Testament in its own right. This is an anthology whose perspectives unfold over time, through relationship with God, and whose ideologically-driven

message is expressed in different genres, and it therefore has to be read as having a distinctive voice of its own. Dell makes a persuasive case that, despite being complicated and contradictory, the Old Testament is ultimately like an old friend, 'challenging and contrary' (220) but able to speak to us if only we will listen.

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Joshua Moritz
Science and Religion: Beyond Warfare and Toward Understanding

Winona MN: Anselm Academic, 2016. 317 pp. pb. £23.94 ISBN-10:1599827158

As managing editor of the journal *Theology and Science*, Joshua Moritz is thoroughly familiar with the extensive literature on the science and religion interface. His new book is an excellent choice as a teaching text for courses on that topic. It is written with that purpose in mind; chapters begin with outlines and end with study questions, reading lists and internet resources. The focus is on Christianity but with some comparative discussion of other faiths. The book is not intended to break new ground and Moritz seldom writes at any significant length in his own voice except for the introductions and conclusions of chapters. Most paragraphs include numerous quotations from secondary sources; this results in a somewhat choppy style, but the references are valuable and are conveniently provided in footnotes rather than endnotes. Moritz does not highlight the views of any single school of theology; he is more interested in facilitating discussion than in advancing a detailed agenda. He directs the conversation through his choice of topics and sources; when he

does introduce his own views, he does so clearly but not heavy-handedly.

The book develops in two phases. The first four chapters explore historical and philosophical boundary issues. The subsequent six chapters explore subjects where extensive interactions between science and religion have occurred and can be expected to continue: big bang cosmology, Darwinian evolution, human nature, miracles, suffering, and the end of the world.

As is obvious from his book's title, Moritz rejects the warfare thesis that there is an intrinsic conflict between science and religion. Rather than relying upon strict definitions of these categories, Moritz follows the lead of historians such as Peter Harrison to describe their gradual development. In his opening chapter he accurately uses Christopher Columbus, Galileo and the Scopes trial as examples of how the warfare thesis has been erroneously advanced through misleading appeals to inaccurate history. Chapter Two addresses examples where religious faith has contributed to scientific progress. As an important example, Moritz calls attention to the ancient and medieval contexts in which nature's regularities were attributed to God's rule, providing a fertile ground for the emergence of the laws of nature that became essential to science. Moritz is perhaps too eager to find the modern concept of laws of nature among early Church fathers such as Basil. He anachronistically even has Basil using the concept of momentum (42). Many historians of the early modern period, such as John Henry, put more emphasis on Descartes and the distinctly mathematical form that laws of nature took during the seventeenth century. Moritz also alleges that philosopher of science Nancy Cartwright was 'motivated by atheistic faith assumptions' (56) to reject the notion of natural laws because of their traditional linkage to theism. But it should be noted that the unity of science

based upon laws has been rejected by philosophers for much more than atheistic reasons. More constructively, Moritz uses old-earth geology, Darwin's belief in the genealogical unity of humanity, and early receptivity for big bang cosmology as examples of how religious presuppositions eventually generated empirical evidence and scientific acceptance. In these discussions he sometimes blurs the distinction between philosophical beliefs and faith assumptions (52), although he certainly makes the case that there are theological origins for many of the philosophical presuppositions that make modern science possible.

Taking up the demarcation problem in his third chapter, Moritz quickly rejects logical positivism and generally agrees with Thomas Kuhn in ascribing non-empirical shaping principles to science in addition to its reliance upon empirical data and the search for explanatory theories (66). He does not analyse the nature of scientific theories in any detail and he does not bring up the topic of methodological naturalism. Non-realist or operationalist conceptions of scientific theory are not addressed. Metaphysical presuppositions of science are stated, including the contingency of the laws of nature, and the reality and unity of the natural world (69). Moritz convincingly argues that these presuppositions had origins in antiquity and the Judeo-Christian tradition.

Taking the title of his fourth chapter from Alvin Plantinga's 2011 book, *Where the Conflict Really Lies*, Moritz eschews both scientism and fideism, ideologies that deny limits for either science or religious faith respectively. In the case of fideism, Moritz finds fault with adherence to biblical literalism in the face of extensive contradictory scientific evidence. He uses this occasion for a discussion of young-earth creationism, a movement that Moritz sees as a conspicuous refusal to recognise the shortcomings of a rigid scriptural interpretation.

Chapter Five is the first of six chapters in which Moritz discusses areas of interaction between science and religion. He begins by discussing cosmological origins through a comparison of the *Genesis* account to Big Bang cosmology, including the fine tuning of nature's constants and arguments over the so-called anthropic principle. In Chapter Six the distinction between primary cause and secondary causes is implicitly applied to the gradual creation of the universe and its evolution up to the origin of consciousness. As the predominant theory of evolutionary change, the history of Neo-Darwinism is treated at some length, including recent extensions into domains such as developmental biology. The role of contingency and chance is discussed in conjunction with the possibility of 'guided mutations' as a means of supernatural direction. Moritz interprets recent research on biochemical constraints for protein evolution and cases of morphological evolutionary convergence to be scientific evidence that evolution is 'directed toward certain ends' (170).

In Chapter Seven Moritz takes up the issue of what it is that makes the human species unique. From a scientific perspective, he emphasises the difficulty in isolating a trait or capacity that is essentially unique to *Homo sapiens* rather than being simply a difference in degree. This ambiguity stands in contrast to the *Genesis* account in which humans alone are created in the 'image and likeness' of God. Moritz discusses structural, functional and relational theories of this concept before summarising his own preference for an interpretation in which *Homo sapiens* is a uniquely chosen species elected by God for providential purposes, an idea Moritz has developed more fully in other publications. He does not address issues associated with how the 'human' category should be defined or whether it should include species other than *Homo sapiens*. This topic has received recent attention due to genetic evidence that interbreed-

ing took place among Neanderthals, Denisovans and early *Homo sapiens*.

Moritz takes a historical approach to miracles in Chapter Eight and emphasises their nuanced relationship to laws of nature. The twentieth-century rejection of strict determinism due to the statistical nature of quantum mechanics allows for non-interventionist notions of miracle or special providence that were not available to earlier theologians. The topic of Chapter Nine is theodicy, or the problem of suffering, another subject Moritz has treated in other publications. Moritz discusses both moral evil and natural evil in the context of theistic efforts to understand God's provision for free moral agents in a universe constrained by physical law. The issue of free will is introduced as central to morality but with perhaps too little rebuttal from those materialists who reject it. Darwinian evolution receives special attention due to the central role of natural selection and the painful process of evolutionary change. The final chapter treats eschatology by contrasting scientific predictions of the eventual end of the physical universe with theistic expectations of a new creation.

Instructors for classes on science and religion will find in this book a very clearly-written and useful text even if no single compendium can satisfy all relevant interests. For example, aside from one very brief reference (151), there is no discussion of the intelligent design movement or of the concept of 'design' in general. Nevertheless, Joshua Moritz has very successfully provided an excellent foundational text.

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Gerard M. Verschuuren

Aquinas and Modern Science – A New Synthesis of Faith & Reason

Kettering, OH: Angelico Press 2016.
240pp. pb. £14.50. ISBN 978-1-62138-228-7

Gerard M. Verschuuren is a Dutch semi-retired academic and consultant, human geneticist by training with a doctorate in philosophy of science, and a very well read Catholic Aquinas-enthusiast. In this volume he presents his views on how Aquinas' philosophy and theology can help us to understand how to relate contemporary science to religious belief, and thus to eliminate the seemingly perennial mythical conflict between science and religion. He has of late been focusing on this matter, writing on evolution and theology, on neuroscience, on cosmology and eschatology, on genetics, and on the Galileo Affair among other topics.

Verschuuren begins with a short, lively biography and profile of Thomas Aquinas, setting the Dominican philosopher and theologian in his medieval context, and suggesting how scholars today can appropriate his thinking and ideas to improve their understanding of the relation between faith and reason in general, and science and religion in particular. The following four chapters are devoted to Aquinas' philosophical principles, starting with an argument in favour of metaphysics as the discipline that 'ultimately determines what we can know and do know in science' (17), moving through the notions of being, essence, substance and the four classical Aristotelian causes (material, formal, efficient and final). The volume continues with an analysis of Aquinas' epistemology and the author's, perhaps too optimistic, take on Aquinas' ideas of the powers of reason. After these first five chapters, in which Verschuuren offers a traditionally Thomist structuring of Aquinas' ideas, he moves to the proper topic of the book: the relation between each of the particular sciences and

Aquinas' principles of philosophy and theology. The first science with which the author deals is Big Bang cosmology, followed by classical and quantum physics, genetics, evolutionary biology, neuroscience and a final chapter devoted to some social sciences (sociology, economics and political science).

I will not delve into the details of each chapter. Suffice it to say that the author suggests strong arguments in favour of a Thomistic interpretation of the natural sciences that allows for a mutually beneficial coexistence of these sciences with Aquinas' theology. As a simple example, when dealing with Big Bang cosmology, the author makes use of William Carroll's famous distinction between origin and beginning to argue for the continuous and perpetual origination, that is, dependence upon God for its being of everything that exists, regardless of whether everything that exists does so from eternity (meaning from an infinite time in the past), or had a beginning in time (meaning something like the Big Bang). In the chapters on genetics and evolutionary biology, Verschuuren draws upon the four Aristotelian causes to explain the phenomena with which these sciences deal, an original way of offering a Thomistic solution to the issues they might present to theology.

There are, however, a few minor points in the author's understanding of some of Aquinas' doctrines that a reader might want to bear in mind while enjoying this certainly interesting volume. As examples, I will present two of these issues. Perhaps the most striking is the conflation of Aquinas' fifth way from teleology with the argument from design. The author states: 'In the Argument from Design, also known as the Teleological Argument, he [Aquinas] argues that the intricate design and order of existent things and natural processes imply that a Great Designer exists.'(53) The difference between an argument from

teleology, inspired by the philosophy of Aristotle, such as Aquinas employs, and an argument from design, such as Paley's argument, has been widely acknowledged in the literature. These differences basically point to the fact that an Aristotelian argument sees order and *telos* in nature (which could certainly be created, in Aquinas' argument) as immanent, while a Paley-like argument assumes that the design is extrinsic to nature, and thus requires a designer. If this is the case (I do not have the space to expand on this idea here), then even Darwinian evolution (by means of random mutation and natural selection) is, to a certain extent, favourable to the Aristotelian argument. Even if later on Verschuuren is quick to reject intelligent design from a Thomistic perspective (169-172), he continues to ascribe design to Thomas's arguments. The problem is that Aquinas does not speak of design; he speaks of *telos*, that is, immanent natural ends.

A second point I would like to highlight is to do with our way of knowing the world. Verschuuren describes Aquinas' ideas on the principles of nature as if they were the principles of human knowledge (that the author enumerates as 'essence and existence, act and potency, matter and form, substance and accidents, five-fold causality and primary and secondary cause' (32)). On the previous page he affirms that '[The principles of nature] come *before* we can experience anything else; without them, there are just no experiences.'(31) This claim means that Aquinas is something of a precursor of Kant's philosophy, for whom we have *a priori* categories that order our experiences. Aquinas is certainly as far as he can be from this philosophical position, acknowledging in good Aristotelian fashion that all our knowledge (particular and universal) passes through our senses first. This matter might seem like a detail in understanding Aquinas' epistemology, but it is rather important to distinguish Thomas's realism from any sort of a

priori doctrine of knowledge if we are to understand his thought thoroughly.

A final, methodological, issue with this volume is its lack of referencing: with the aim of favouring shortness of sentences and readability, the author 'decided not to use citations or notes with references' to his sources (5). Although this might be a good goal, one feels that, at times the author could have acknowledged his sources better: even when the author quotes someone else, no reference to the original source is given. William E. Carroll, Stephen M. Barr, Ed Feser, John Knasas, Anthony Rizzi and Francisco Ayala are all acknowledged in the preface but probably would have welcomed a more careful referencing of their academic work.

Overall, *Aquinas and Modern Science* is a good, short, introduction to the thought of Thomas Aquinas in reference to modern scientific disciplines. While an expert on Aquinas' thought might find some of the author's affirmations alien to the spirit of Thomas, a layman will find in these pages a useful tool to approach Aquinas for the first time and progress in the study of his philosophical and theological thought.

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Philip Bligh
Picking up the Pieces

Worthing, UK: Loxwood Press, 2016. 310 pp. pb. £14.99. ISBN 978-908113-16-0

While cataloguing specimens from his recent Beagle voyage Darwin wrote in his new 'M' notebook, 'Origin of man now proved - Metaphysics must flourish...' (p 84 16 Aug 1838). He had insights into the end of his intellectual journey even as the bulk of his work of study, reflection and dialogue lay ahead of him. In this second

but much more substantial collection of scientific articles and widely sourced quotations, Rev Dr Philip Bligh presents us with a comparable 'notebook' in which he has collated and more-or-less carefully arranged a selection of resources to guide and assist present-day thinkers engaged in negotiating science and Christianity. In some ways this collection presents the secure conclusions Bligh has settled on since his training as a physicist in the 1950s – he is brief but forthright in his rejection of young-earth creationism, for example. Yet in other ways he recognises what Darwin asserted, without referencing Darwin directly – there is much still to be puzzled over beyond the remit of science. 'Picking up the pieces' (a reference to the collection of left-overs by Jesus' disciples after the crowds have been miraculously provided for) is a different kind of work to that usually produced in this field; much more scrapbook than textbook, and while perhaps a little too light on commentary, pithily presents a potent range of relevant resources. Organised around edited excerpts from around fifty recent articles from 'New Scientist' and the like, Bligh demonstrates how he has negotiated life both as a continually reading scientist and as a thinking teacher of the faithful Christian life. With sustained reflection the reader of this book is enriched through reference to and some explicit reflection on scientists old and new, including but not limited to 'New Atheist' popularisers. Interwoven through the collection are about sixty references to literature and a wide body of poetic sources. The rich veins of philosophical thinking available from William Blake, Graham Greene, W. H. Auden, Oscar Wilde and T. S. Eliot are brought to our attention. We also get news cuttings from Bligh's ongoing surveys of the Christian Press and Bible reading guides, and embedded in this 'dessert trifle' are over a hundred segments of what might be termed 'Christian philosophy' as provided by Malcolm Muggeridge, Keith Ward and Philip Yancey, amongst many others.

Bligh offers a generous layer of cream to aid the digestion, with a liberal variety of 'preachers' quotes and jokes' and accessible nuggets of history and accounts of twentieth century activists, who remind us of the call to work out our faith in very practical and perhaps ultimately costly ways.

What is Bligh's contribution in all this? Beyond the chapter headings which follow traditional Christian categories of flawed human life and the offer of salvation in Christ, Bligh is very quiet regarding his aims, but (169) he reflects on McGrath's 2011 book, *Why God won't go away*, and says that beyond learning about science and the challenges of atheism, ultimately we must decide for ourselves how the life of faith could affect our living in the world today – and whether we will improve the world as we find it. Bligh has obviously gleaned much from McGrath over the years; Polkinghorne, Barbour and Lennox also get mentions, but there are only a few links either to *Science and Christian Belief* or the leading lights who have contributed to this journal, although reference to R. 'Sam' Berry on the historical Adam does appear. What Bligh does well is to present, from across nearly all the main disciplines, a view of the world – of *reality* – that is well informed by the collective insights of the ever-broadening scientific project. It is *this real world* that Bligh considers as a thinking Christian, and it particularly strikes this reviewer that while Bligh mentions Einstein and the quantum world, he spends much more time reflecting on the implications of science for psychology and understanding the human mind. I am provoked to find out much more about Victor Frankl and Simone Weil because Bligh has demonstrated by example how his wide reading has led him to reflect on these authors.

Philip Bligh is therefore leaving us signposts, or dots for us to join, rather as we will. There are some hundred

scripture references from across both Old and New Testaments, and some valuable reflections on their interpretation, suggesting that it is perhaps only through the exercise of the informed and renewed Christian mind that John Donne's lament could ultimately be answered: 'Tis all in pieces, all coherence gone' (from the frontispiece). Indeed, I appeal that this worthy bedside reader is thoroughly spell-checked and given a better binding before further reprints are issued.

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Denis Alexander

Genes, Determinism and God

Cambridge, UK and New York, USA:
Cambridge University Press, 2017. Viii
+ 385 pp. Pb £26.99. ISBN 978-1316-
50638-7; DOI 10.1017/9781316493366

I wonder how many of our readers find themselves from time to time shouting back at the TV or radio. Such behaviour is elicited in me when I hear that 'scientists have discovered a gene for x or y, where x or y are particular behavioural or personality traits. I want to reply, in the manner of an audience at a pantomime 'Oh no they haven't.' It is a too-often repeated failing of media reporting of genetics that findings are presented in a simplistic form and in a way which implies that we are 'determined' by our genes. I call it the 'genefer' (i.e. gene for) model in which human personhood can be described in terms of a 'genefer this and a genefer that.' Unfortunately such ideas about genetic determinism are quite widespread, not least because they are also promoted by some well-known commentators on science, for example: *DNA neither cares nor knows. DNA just is. And we dance to its music* (Richard Dawkins, *River Out of Eden*).

This brings us to Denis Alexander's book, *Genes, Determinism and God*. It is based on the Gifford Lectures that he gave in 2012. I note in passing that this is the third 'Gifford book' that I have had the privilege of reviewing and I do not use the word 'privilege' lightly. This is an excellent book which, as the well-known (to UK readers) advertisement says 'does exactly what it says on the tin'. This is a true tour de force. It starts with an overview of the changing views through history of heredity in relation to human personhood. It then covers our modern understanding of genes and how they work and the role of that new understanding in influencing our ideas about what it is to be human. The 'nature or nurture' debate crops up quite quickly but the author shows the naivety of pitching one against the other. In particular he introduces us in Chapter 4 to the concept of DICI (pronounced 'dicey') – Developmental Integrated Complementary Interactionism which makes regular appearances through the rest of the book.

Moving on, Chapters 6 and 7 are pivotal; the author discusses the methods and approaches of behavioural genetics in some detail, highlighting their strengths and weaknesses and therefore what may be legitimately inferred from the results of different types of investigation. These then form the backdrop to Chapters 8 to 11 which cover the discussions about the roles of genes in intelligence, religiosity, socio-political views, criminal behaviour, sexuality and in our understanding of free will. The final chapter, 'Made in the image of God? – a conversation between genetics and theology', brings the whole debate specifically in the religious context.

Overall, this is a very timely and useful book. It is thoughtful and very scholarly, based on an amazingly wide range of research with an extensive bibliography. Other writers have written on this topic from a Christian perspective but *Genes*,

Determinism and God makes other contributions, including my own, seem very superficial. The author writes about deep and complex subject matter with admirable clarity and for the most part the contents will be accessible to most readers with an interest in the subject (although I need to say that being a biologist, and especially a geneticist will help in getting the most of the text). However, despite the accessibility, I do not want to imply that this is a soft read. Scholarship and discussion of this quality needs attention; it must be read carefully and properly. It is not a book to read on the beach, unless you are capable of constructing a very distraction-proof bubble around yourself.

In summary then, this is an excellent scholarly book which makes a very major contribution to the discussion of the roles of genes in human personhood. I am very pleased to have a copy and will, I am sure, refer to it many times in the coming months and years.

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Kenneth Francis
The Little Book Of God, Mind, Cosmos And Truth

London: St Paul's Publishing, 2017. 136pp. pb. £8.95. ISBN 978-1-910365-25-0

In his *The Little Book Of God, Mind, Cosmos and Truth* Kenneth Francis attempts to show the reasonableness of belief in God by arguing that God's existence explains various facts about reality in a way that naturalism cannot. In a brief 136 pages Francis includes arguments from morality, consciousness, fine-tuning, cosmology, the inconsistency of atheism and more. The brevity of the book, which can easily be read in a couple of hours, and breadth of topics covered, means that

none of the arguments are dealt with in detail but rather represent an overview of a family of apologetic arguments. The book also includes several sections on theology which can, at times, feel more like a polemic against rival views on theology, and a critique of secular society, rather than a defence of the existence of God.

Those with a particular focus on Science may find the beginning several chapters of most interest. Francis opens the book by making the case that our human consciousness is not material, and therefore cannot be explained by materialism but requires a deity. He then proceeds to argue that the cosmos itself points to a deity, both because its beginning requires a first cause (the cosmological argument) and the fine-tuning necessary for life is best explained by an intelligent designer (the teleological argument). The issue of whether the universe could ever be completely self-explanatory, or whether nature requires a mind as its ultimate explanation, is one that has often been at question in the philosophy of science. Francis draws on a diverse range of subjects to make the case that a divine mind is the only possible explanation for the universe we find ourselves in, leaving naturalists with a broad list of problems for naturalism. He also argues that the best candidate for the deity is the Christian God by examining the historical reliability of the resurrection accounts, concluding that the bodily resurrection of Jesus is the best explanation of the historical facts.

As the title *The Little Book* suggests, the aim is not to provide a full, in depth, analysis of the various sides of the arguments presented. Rather it provides a quick and accessible argument that 'God is the best explanation for the creation of the universe and objective moral value'. As a result the various arguments, many of which have been defended at much higher levels of academia and are respectable

theistic arguments, are dealt with fairly quickly, and unfortunately conclusions can sometimes be asserted rather than argued to. Rather than setting out arguments as lists of premises and conclusion, Francis presents the arguments in a more narrative fashion, often drawing on other arguments from throughout the book. The result is an interesting overview of the integration of certain problems which are faced by atheism, relating questions of consciousness and morality to questions of teleology and cosmology. This provides a refreshingly cumulative approach to questions which are often treated as separate. Francis also includes an interesting section arguing that humans cannot truly and consistently live with the entailments of atheism because they contradict fundamental aspects of what it means to be human, such as the need for morality. Whilst he does not deal in depth with any secular humanist responses to this charge, these arguments have been defended in more detail elsewhere and taken at face value are enough to at least challenge those who do not believe in God to examine the basis of their beliefs in morality and purpose.

Francis also includes several chapters with a more theological bent, attempting to address objections to Christian belief such as claims that the Bible is unreliable, a good God wouldn't send people to hell and the problem of evil. The latter chapters seem to lose focus from the intended argument of the book. Rather than focusing on the atheist objection that a good God couldn't send people to Hell, much of his chapter on Hell seems to focus more on arguing for a particular theological approach to Hell which is unlikely to persuade those who don't already share that particular theological outlook.

Given its length this book is not for those looking for an in-depth examination of any of the arguments given, but might prove of interest for anyone looking for a brief presentation of vari-

ous aspects of reality which theism can explain well but present a challenge to a naturalistic world-view. As mentioned many of the arguments presented are defended in much more rigorous detail elsewhere and so, although presented briefly in this book, they are not fringe arguments without substance but rather are substantial arguments given in an accessible and quick to read manner.

Joshua Fountain did his undergraduate degree in Physics at Imperial College London. He has recently completed both a Masters and an MRes in Philosophy at Heythrop College as well as a Certificate in Theology from St Mellitus College.

Arnold Benz
Astrophysics and Creation: Perceiving the Universe through Science and Participation

New York: Herder and Herder, 2016.
201pp. hb. £17.50. ISBN 978-0-8245-2213-1

Arnold Benz, a brilliant Swiss scientist who is also a believer, brings fresh insights to our understanding of the relation between science and religion in a superb book that is very strongly recommended. It will appeal to the many practising scientists who are methodological naturalists and also provides new helpful answers to the perennial question from students and others: how can you possibly be a scientist and a Christian? The book is motivated by two complementary aspects that lie at the core of the life of modern scientists, namely, scientific logic and a sense of wonder.

Benz takes issue with the suggestions by Karl Barth that dialogue between science and theology is futile and that they should be radically separated. For Benz science and religion constitute a unity at a deep unfathomable level, but they start

from different perceptions of one reality. This includes quantitative observations, measurements and mathematical modelling on one side and subjective, non-measurable religious and existential experiences on the other. The book adopts the commonly held claim among readers of *Science and Christian Belief* that science and religion are indeed compatible, but its aim and main contribution is to show explicitly just how they are compatible for a practising scientist and how they interact with one another.

As an astrophysicist, Benz has a thirst to understand the universe using the methods of science, but he also experiences a sense of wonder and amazement as he contemplates the majesty and intricacy of the universe, and this provides a totally different perspective that is not in competition with physics. He describes in a fluent and easy-to-read style a variety of interesting astronomical topics from the beginning of the universe to its end, using his insightful understanding of many complex physical processes, but at the same time in a natural way, he weaves in threads that take the reader beyond the science and into the religious realm.

The book consists of three groups of four chapters. The first four chapters discuss astronomical origins, including stellar and planetary formation, starting with the formation of molecular clouds. These clouds act as star-forming nurseries and glow in the infra-red, so that a snake looking up into the night sky would clearly see the molecular clouds that are invisible to human eyes. Isaac Newton's basic idea that stars form by gravitational collapse remains correct and his approach of seeking answers to scientific questions from nature remains the way scientists view their task. However, whereas Newton invoked God as a repairman to keep the Universe running properly, modern scientific explanations mean that Benz, like Laplace, 'has no need of that hypothesis' for that purpose.

He regards the fine-tuning of the universe as amazing but so far inexplicable and no proof of God, since it does not necessarily require a 'fine-tuner' or 'intelligent design'.

Enigmas are not necessarily fingerprints of a divine mind, since they may well be solved scientifically in future, so that most scientists never invoke God to explain an unsolved scientific problem. Furthermore, previous fears that science will eventually explain everything in this life are for Benz unfounded, since new discoveries usually lead to new levels of questioning. Indeed, questioning is key, so that he agrees with Feynman that 'I can live with doubt and not knowing and uncertainty. It's much more interesting to live not knowing than to have answers that might be wrong.'

He describes some of the complexities of star formation, on which thousands of astronomers are currently working, and shows how simple theories of Kant and Laplace have been developed. This leads to a discussion of truth values, where he feels that referring to the 'truth of a theory' is going too far. Scientific theories are neither true or false, but they can be good or bad, in the sense that a good theory can explain many observations and inspire new measurements. 'Since we know only that portion of reality that we have observed, the scientific method leads to an adequate description of a scientifically observable reality, but never to a true theory.'

When describing the Big Bang and black holes, he refers to them as boundaries in, respectively, time and space, and suggests that it is pointless to look for God in the realm before the Big Bang or inside a black hole. On the other hand, there is another boundary between two types of real human experience (objective scientific measurements and poetic or mystical experience), which is discernible from a perspective outside science and which is vital for a dialogue between

science and faith.

Benz regards Creationism and Intelligent Design as flawed, however, since they confuse scientific and theological explanations of reality. For him, Creation is concerned with a reality that is perceived not on a scientific plane but on a different plane where beauty and wonder may be experienced.

Chapters 5-8 move on to discuss the subsequent evolution of the universe with its inevitable decay, which does not necessarily mean that objects disappear into nothingness. The Earth is a unique place in the solar system, a well-protected island where life may flourish amid the solar storms, but Benz is critical of the concept of design, since the notion of continuing creation without a predetermined plan is more suited to describing the universe that we observe in the making.

Chapter 7 gives further helpful insights into the different levels of reality and how they confront us in diverse ways. The sciences give different planes of reality in which knowledge is gained through objective scientific measurement, but scientism is an impoverished and myopic viewpoint, since there are many other planes of reality and perceptions that lie beyond the limits of science and do not fit the criteria of physics. These other realms of reality can be revealed by what he calls 'participatory perception', in which the human being is the measuring device. In spite of being subjective, these different planes of reality are not merely fanciful, subjective or illusory, since their effects on the person bear witness to their reality. By participating, the person experiences artistic, religious or mystical perceptions, feelings of love, grief or wonder, as they perceive themselves as part of something larger. Humans may be deeply moved by a starry night sky, a piece of art or a mystical experience, and, even though the experiences depend on the person and are not reproducible (as

required by science), they are real since they can act to shape a person's life, feeling and thought. Together the different kinds of perception constitute our window onto reality.

For Benz, 'exterior' reality is explored by scientific measurements and 'interior' reality is found by participatory perceptions. For him God will never be found by scientific methods or His existence proved or disproved by science, since science lies on a different plane. Also, science and theology are not competing explanations about the formation of the universe or the evolution of life. Rather, it is a multi-layering of perception that allows us to sense the depth of reality.

These lead Benz to a detailed discussion of the methods of interpretation and the difference between scientific and theological statements that spring from the different perceptions of reality. He critiques the narrow views from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries of a clockwork universe or a purely rational universe, invoking Gödel's incompleteness theorem and suggesting that reality possesses mysteries and a depth that will not be revealed by science. More appealing for him is the idea of our universe as a divine creation embedded in an all-encompassing transcendent reality.

The final group of four chapters examines the consequences of interpreting the universe as a divine creation in a way that can logically coexist with the perspectives of science. Here he answers in a helpful way the questions: do we exist as a tiny speck in a huge bleak universe that is doomed to decay or is there meaning and hope behind it all? Why did the highly complex processes of star and planet formation occur, culminating in the formation of life and human consciousness?

Benz starts by describing a 'creative principle', the astounding property that the universe doesn't just change but possesses a property of continual creation,

in which completely new entities form as old ones decay and pass away. He discusses likely steps in the formation of life and the possibility of life on other planets. He shares a vision for a religious way of thinking about creation and how this may be translated into a language that is consonant with a scientific world view and relates to the cosmic reality observed by astronomers. For Benz, if we do not have a 'reverence for development' to guide the continuation of life on this wonderful planet, then 'how barren a universe this would become without the presence of conscious beings to admire the stars'.

The central message of Christianity is hope, in which decay and death do not have the final word, and in which the Creator of the present universe will also create a world of the future. The resurrection of Jesus is crucial, since it signifies a change more decisive and cosmic than the resuscitation of a corpse. The resurrected Christ is a new and radically transformed being, a new Creation, so that creation itself is set free and anyone who is 'in Christ' is part of this 'new creation'. Furthermore, Revelation envisions an enthroned and glorified Christ who presides over a 'new heaven and a new Earth' declaring that 'Behold, I am making all things new'. These New Testament narratives encourage a sense of hope in the face of crucifixion, death and decay.

For Benz, the Big Bang and the formation of stars and planets act as icons serving as cracks through which one can glimpse a deeper reality and perceive in such acts of creation the realisation of a divine will or idea, reminding us of the transcendent foundation of reality. Continuous creation suggests that genuinely new things, such as stars, will continue to form in future with no design fixed billions of years ago. They are part of the sustained all-encompassing process of cosmic creation.

By talking in this way, Benz is aware of

the two planes of perception, theological and scientific, and the fact that questions referring to God or the meaning of existence can only be described on the former plane, while the universe and its objects can be addressed on both planes. Of course, part of the problem is that much of modern society lacks a deep familiarity with religious ways of thinking and so cannot appreciate these complementary ways of discussing creation, unless scientists like Benz make efforts like the present book to help them.

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Petri Luomanen, Anne Birgitta Pessi and Ilkka Pyysiäinen (eds.)
Christianity and the Roots of Morality: Philosophical, Early Christian and Empirical Perspectives

Leiden: Brill, 2017. 313 + xii pp. hb.
£119.00. ISBN 978-90-04-31232-6

Does morality in some way depend on religion? Are religious people more inclined to behave in morally-reputable ways than the irreligious? These are hardly new questions, but recent research into the possible evolutionary origins of both religious and ethical behaviour inevitably raises fresh issues surrounding them. The present book offers a richly diverse set of papers addressing such issues, originating in a conference organised by the Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies in 2011. A range of academic disciplines are represented – philosophy, systematic theology, biblical studies and empirical sociology.

The book is organised into three sections, reflecting the diverse interests of the contributors: 'Morality and Religion – setting the Evolutionary and Philosophical

cal Scene', 'Morality and Early Christianity' and 'Morality and Christianity in Everyday Life'. As with all symposia of this kind, different readers will doubtless be stimulated by different papers. I found particularly interesting Petri Ylikoski's penetrating critique of the idea, currently popular among some Cognitive Science of Religion theorists, that 'supernatural surveillance and punishment' (SSP) played an important part in the development of human cooperation. Ylikoski discusses two versions of this theory, and concludes that one is 'simply wrong' and that the other 'lacks evidence' (40). Among the papers drawing on biblical resources, I was struck by Lauri Thurén's comparison of the methods of argumentation used in 1 Peter and Romans, which notes that for the authors of both these texts, 'the addressees' faith in Christ and their proper behaviour at bottom belong together' (178). The three papers which offer empirical sociological findings – Nancy T. Ammerman's on moral behaviour among religiously-affiliated and non-religiously-affiliated contemporary Americans, Kristen Monroe's on 'rescuers', 'bystanders' and 'supporters' of the Nazi atrocities, and Anne Birgitta Pessi's on religiously-motivated behaviour within the Finnish Lutheran Church – are each valuable summaries of lengthy and thought-provoking research programmes carried out by these authors. There are some attempts to draw conclusions from this research: for example, Ammerman's observation that 'religious participants have a fuller vocabulary of moral concerns and a more active engagement in pursuing those concerns, as compared to non-participants' (235), or Monroe's suggestion that 'Our moral choices reflect our basic sense of who we are in relation to others ... identity is more basic than conscious choice' (250) (although this of course raises the question, articulated later by Grace Davie, 'what is it that determines identity?' (290)). However, the juxtaposition of these papers perhaps

serves as an indication of just how many parameters need to be considered in thinking about issues as complicated as religious belief and ethical behaviour, and the consequent difficulties in drawing general conclusions regarding them. (Indeed, authors like Ilkka Pyysiainen are at pains to stress how difficult it is to offer simple definitions of concepts like 'religion' (54ff).)

The sheer variety of perspectives offered in this volume, whilst stimulating, inevitably make for a rather disjointed read. The papers reproduced here often bear little relation to one another, and operate with a variety of methodologies, assumptions and vocabularies, so that there is sometimes the impression that the authors are 'talking past' one another. The editors are therefore to be especially commended for including a couple of short 'comments' at the end of each section of the book, presumably by participants at the original conference, on the papers just presented. These comments serve not only to summarise and critique those papers, but to offer some further relating of their arguments to wider theological and philosophical concerns.

When considering present-day expressions of religion and its relation to ethical behaviour, a judicious response to the basic question being addressed in all these papers – 'what (if any) link is there between religion and morality?' – is offered in Risto Saarinen's 'comment' on the empirical papers of part 3:

one should keep the distinction between 'reasons' and 'causes' in mind when reading interview-based conclusions. Religious people obviously give religious reasons for their moral actions when asked about them. But how do we know whether the actual causes of these actions were religious in the first place? Analogically, non-religious people most likely give non-religious reasons for their moral actions, but this proves nothing more and nothing less

than that they want to give coherent narratives of their life stories when being interviewed (284-5).

When considering the broader questions of how religion and ethics originate and interrelate, Ylikoski's comments are worth noting: 'What we call 'religion' contains a heterogeneous collection of very diverse elements ... Religion also shows significant historical and cultural variance' (41). Given such diversity and variance, it is inevitable that no straightforward answers to these questions are likely to be forthcoming. But there remains much food for thought in the various papers collected here.

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Douglas J. Moo and Jonathan A. Moo

Creation Care: A Biblical Theology of the Natural World

Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA: Zondervan, 2018. 144 pp. pb £15.99. ISBN 978-0-310-293743

Creation care is one of those topics that tends to divide Christians: on the one hand many see it as a distraction, or worse, from the task of proclaiming the gospel and seeking the lost. On the other hand, many put it as a top priority, above all else, in seeking to fulfil the command to care for the needs of the poor and the disadvantaged. This book by father and son team Douglas and Jonathan Moo helpfully binds the two strands together by careful examination of biblical texts and application to the calling to live fruitful Christian lives in our communities. As they write, 'we cannot ... truly love our neighbours, especially the poor, if we do not care for the creation of which they

and we are a part. We care for creation first and last because of our love for God' (235). The book is rich in clear biblical exegesis of the inter-relationships between God the creator, his creation and us his creatures. The overall message of the book can be summarised in two quotations: 'creation care is part of the gospel itself, and creation care can never be separated for Christians from the transformation of people that is central to the gospel' (172); and 'For the Christian, creation care is part of our worship of God' (221).

The book sets the scene for developing this theme by two thoughtful chapters on how to think biblically, theologically and scientifically about creation. At the end of the day, 'there can be no final conflict between science and our Christian faith' (41): but that isn't to say that we don't have to work at both our understanding of current science and the interpretations of biblical scholars and theologians. At the very least, science can highlight the dangers we face from our degradation of planet earth and likely future paths, and help theologians to set priorities in working out practical ways of living out biblical values. But science can do much more than that: the founders of the Royal Society clearly saw their work as being a means to give glory to God by understanding the natural world for the good of humankind. As Moo & Moo observe 'If we are to rule wisely and well in creation, we need to learn all we can about the earth and other creatures for whose care we bear some responsibility' (80).

The central core of the book explores the major biblical themes that bear on how we should live in this created order. It starts, as we always must, with God's act of creation in speaking into being a material world which right from the beginning he pronounced as being very good. Humans, who themselves are part of this created order, are then commanded to be rulers and keepers of this

creation. Creation care is 'about becoming who we have been created to be as God's image bearers in the community of creation, living as God calls us to in all of life' (86). But sin has broken the relationship between humans and God and also between humans and the rest of creation, and we live daily with the consequences of that. This book is a great resource for digging into the bible verses that address that tripartite relationship between God, his creation and his creatures. It draws out the importance of the land in the social and religious life of Israel and the way in which their laws enabled just and sustainable living. But it also opens up the way in which a fundamentally good creation has been subjected to frustration by the sinful acts of humanity. 'The whole earth therefore suffers the ongoing results of our broken relationship with God and our sinfulness, injustice, and failure to be the people God calls us to be' (112).

The only way out of this sorry, broken set of relationships was through the incarnation of Christ, his death and then his resurrection which confirmed for all to see his sovereignty over the created order. 'In Christ, we see the breaking in of God's kingdom on earth, a kingdom in which old enmities are abolished and peace is established between God and humanity, humanity and the earth, and human beings and each other' (125). That of course is the heart of the Christian gospel. As they say 'In the incarnation of Christ, we have the strongest confirmation possible of the goodness of creation' (125). And it set the frame for the ultimate new creation. Creation and the new creation bookend the whole history of the universe. Moo & Moo are extremely helpful in expounding the significance of Jesus in creation, and of the new creation to come which should frame how we live today in the world.

The final section of the book discusses practical issues on the state of the world

today and how Christians might live in a way that glorifies God. A theme running through this is that we have a responsibility to become informed about the world in which we live and then to act on that information for the sake of others and as part of our worship of God. I don't think it will be a spoiler if I repeat the book's final acronym which is a memorable way to help live out a biblical theology of creation care: AWAKE (inspired by the Apostle Paul's call for us metaphorically to be 'awake and sober' (1 Thess. 5:6). A – Attentiveness to the community in which we live and the environmental, societal, spiritual and political aspects of it; W – for Walking to remind us of the inevitable cost to the environment of all forms of transport; A – Activism to influence our society for good; K – Konsumerism, maybe a silly mis-spelling as the authors acknowledge (231), but therefore memorable; E – Eating, our choices in which can have a huge impact on the environment and global climate, when every calorie of food consumed in the USA has used on average an estimated 7-10 calories in fuel to fertilise, harvest, process and ship to our homes.

This book is a goldmine of biblical wisdom and practical common sense for all who seek to live out their lives in obedience to Christian priorities and imperatives. Read it, be challenged by it, and do it!

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Kevin S. Seybold

Questions in the Psychology of Religion

Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2017. 234 pp.
pb. £24.00. ISBN: 978-1-4982-3881-6

In *Questions in the Psychology of Religion*, the author presents an accessible, well-written perspective on significant religious topics from the perspective of evolutionary psychology and cognitive science of religion. Seybold also draws upon social psychology and neuroscience to support his approach to answering psychological and religious questions about mind, soul and morality and their social and political implications. Rather than focus simply on traditional topics in psychology of religion—like development of belief in God, conversion, or religious experience—Seybold aptly identifies underlying constructs of mental processing in an evolutionary context, characterises them using psychological and biological research findings, uses that foundation to examine broader concerns of interest to evangelicals and other Protestants, and explains the theories in a way readily accessible to undergraduates.

Unfortunately, Seybold also presents the evolutionary psychology and cognitive science of religion research uncritically, makes claims about highly controversial theories being 'broadly accepted today' (9), and presents straw-man characterisations of neuroscience by atheist philosophers (88-93) to criticise from an unsupported sociobiological perspective. Incorporating evolutionary biology and the cognitive sciences into psychology of religion is an extremely valuable endeavour, but the field of evolutionary psychology (EP) has been heavily critiqued as both bad evolution and bad psychology, and the field of cognitive science of religion (CSR) has relatively little overlap with cognitive science as an area of study and is arguably more broadly known for its numerous critiques than for the impact of its findings.

Chapter 1 introduces the field of psy-

chology and the religious themes to be considered with a succinct and insightful perspective on where additional areas of psychology are relevant for a broader interpretation of psychology of religion. The section on EP and CSR (16-20) clearly and uncritically introduces the standard CSR position that the foundations of religious beliefs held by modern, Western Protestants are 'natural' and thus compatible with increased evolutionary fitness for humanity. The section on research methods (20-23) is exceptionally well written and succinctly thorough.

Chapters 2 and 3 present EP and CSR, respectively, and augment those clear overviews with additional findings from social psychology (40-42, 54). Chapter 3 also introduces the significant debate within CSR between atheists who argue religion can be dismissed because it is a natural product of mental processing and theists who argue that the naturalism of religious beliefs may even suggest theistic fine-tuning for the capacity for such beliefs (70).

Chapter 4 on neuroscience of religion is both the most typical chapter for a psychology of religion text with its treatment of religious experience and also the most innovative in that respect with the thorough incorporation of highly relevant neurotheology findings. It does fall short of being a neuroscience of religion by omitting the important contributions of neuroscientists such as Antonio Damasio and Joseph LeDoux on the self and focusing instead on the somewhat philosophical claims of New Atheists (91).

Chapter 5 is generally an excellent treatment on the soul for a psychology audience from a broad evangelical Protestant perspective except for the minor uncritical claims for the naturalism (117) and predominance (118) of dualistic beliefs and the spurious conflation of monism, non-reductive physicalism, and property dualism (128). The chapter incorporates neuroscientific findings

relevant to discussion of free will and volition (100-109) and moral decision-making (109-115) and omits perspectives relevant to Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and non-Christian traditions.

Chapter 6 on moral psychology incorporates findings from neuroscience, social cognition, and behavioral economics, though limits the general treatment of moral psychology itself to Jonathan Haidt's moral foundation theory and omits discussion of virtues and moral identity, which could have strengthened other treated topics. However, moral foundation theory is expanded and combined effectively with discussion of in/out-group from social cognition in Chapter 7 to examine the current, highly relevant political polarization in America between liberals and conservatives.

Overall, the text mixes clear, concise and accessible contributions from empirical psychology and neuroscience with the uncritical incorporation of EP and CSR. Although that severely limits the book's applicability outside of an evolutionary psychology of religion or cognitive science of religion course, Seybold does contribute well to that niche and succeeds in presenting accessible scientific evidence applicable to a psychology of religion that eschews atheist and reductionist world-views. A common response of EP and CSR practitioners to their critics is that criticisms of those fields only apply to the old ways of doing EP and CSR but do not account for the new findings. Unfortunately the book misses the opportunity to describe and refute those criticisms and leaves the reader with viewpoints that are easily countered by straightforward questions from other disciplines and rudimentary literature searches, which does a disservice to those wishing to counter atheist interpretations of science and/or build upon the more rigorously supported science also incorporated into the text.

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Meric Srokosz and Rebecca S Watson

Blue Planet Blue God: The Bible and the Sea

London: SCM Press, 2017. 255 pp. pb
£19.99. ISBN 978-0-334-05633-1

Every year I attend a 'Sea Sunday' service, where the church remembers those whose livelihoods are connected to the sea and the unique pressures associated with such a lifestyle. I usually find myself sat alongside a number of official representatives from military and civic life, for whom this is one of the few times that they set foot inside a church. How does the Christian faith relate to the experiences of such people? What can we say to identify with 'those in peril on the sea', as the familiar hymn puts it. Moreover, how do we as Christians approach this awesome, but sometimes distant, part of God's creation? *Blue Planet Blue God* is a book that tackles such questions, showing that the Bible, and indeed God, has much to say about humanity's relationship with the sea.

The part of the book that looks at 'travel and trade on the sea' certainly provides a comprehensive resource for those planning Sea Sunday services or working with maritime communities, but it would be wrong to think of this book as *only* addressing such people. The co-authors, Meric Srokosz (a marine scientist) and Rebecca Watson (a theologian), set out a rich variety of biblical perspectives on the oceans, exploring themes such as the sacred space of the sea, its chaotic nature (in both the scientific and common sense) and our relationship to the dazzling array of marine creatures that inhabit the oceans.

Blue Planet Blue God is intended for a non-specialist audience (a comprehensive academic treatise will also be published) and aims to motivate readers to change the way they live in relation to the environment. The book is more than a biblical commentary and sets out prescriptive ethical guidance, informed by biblical principles. Each chapter finishes with 'Reflection and Discussion' and 'Action' sections to guide the readers. The chapters also discuss complementary works of poetry alongside the biblical texts, reinforcing humanity's deep relationship with the sea. While of most relevance to Christian individuals or study groups, the book would also serve as a useful reference for others seeking to understand Christian attitudes towards the marine environment.

One brilliant aspect of this book is the way that it continuously shows how the ocean, more than any other part of creation, has the ability to humble humanity. Whether it is the marine animals that we cannot control, or the chaos of complex seas, or the frightening vastness of the ocean; the sea challenges the traditional notion of human 'dominion' over creation. The authors refrain from an exhaustive review of the ways to interpret Genesis 1:26, 28 ('let them have dominion over the fish of the sea'), but point out a wider biblical perspective that 'invites the recognition of a real responsibility in relation to the rest of the living world'. Just because we cannot control the oceans and its denizens does not mean that we do not affect them though.

A large part of the discussion is centred on Christian approaches to stewardship of the marine environment. The vastness of the sea has masked our impact upon it; arguably more so than the land. In each chapter, scientific understanding is brought to bear on the issues raised by different Bible passages in the form of bite-sized, well-referenced summaries suitable for general audiences. For exam-

ple, one chapter on the vast vulnerable sea gives a rundown of global warming, ocean acidification and water pollution in three pages. These passages serve to impress on the reader the scale of the impact that humans have had on the planet, far beyond anything the biblical authors could have imagined.

Indeed, it is intriguing to consider just what biblical authors understood about the sea and its inhabitants. However, it is not until chapter 3 (43) that we get a discussion of how the sea(s) fit in to the geographical world-view (i.e. cosmology) of the biblical peoples. This is very helpful in contextualising subsequent biblical passages and (in my view) would have warranted a stand-alone section in the introduction because it is so important in taking us from biblical texts to a modern environmental ethic.

The view that the oceans could provide an unlimited supply of fish for human consumption persisted well into the twentieth century, even in scientific circles. Yet, Srokosz and Watson argue that biblical writers had some sense of the finitude of the sea's bounty and that we would be wise to live accordingly. Such a reading may seem somewhat anachronistic, but when taken in the context of the ancient world-view, it is possible to derive a Christian position on such topics. It is imperative that we do make this effort. Recently, a secular environmentalist who was working in a developing country complained to me that Christian fishermen there were deluded. Speaking of a dwindling fish stock, they had told her that God put the fish there for them and he wouldn't possibly let the fish die out. *Blue Planet Blue God* shows why this is not a biblical attitude and provides the resources for Christians to arrest such dangerous thinking.

A recurring argument made by Srokosz and Watson is that we too often take an anthropocentric view of creation, forgetting God's grander view. In a fascinating

study of the 'great sea creature' Leviathan, for example, the authors point out God's pride and delight in this aspect of his creation, quite independent of humanity. Such a great beast actually represents a dangerous threat to us humans, but God declares 'I made [him] just as I made you' (Job 40:15) and boasts of the superior qualities of Behemoth and Leviathan. The seas are not here just to fulfil our desires. They have intrinsic value to God.

In this and many other examples, we are challenged to ensure that our values and actions towards the rest of creation are aligned with those of God as revealed in Scripture. To this end, *Blue Planet Blue God* more than fulfils its intended aims. It provides a stimulating examination of all the ways in which we are blessed by the sea and a much-needed reminder of our obligations towards it.

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Barbara Brown Taylor
The Luminous Web: Faith, Science and the Experience of Wonder

London: Canterbury Press, 2000, 2017.
80pp. pb. £10.99. ISBN 978-1-84825-965-2

This brief popular-level book is a thought-provoking take on the science and faith discussion from the point of view of a non-scientist theologian. Barbara Brown Taylor is a best-selling author and priest who left full-time ministry to focus on teaching and writing. In four short chapters, based on a series of lectures she gave at Princeton Seminary in 1998, she covers the relationship between science and faith, evolutionary biology, quantum physics, and the limits of scientific knowledge.

The overall tone is accepting of mainstream science, probing the limits of both

science and Christian faith. The author represents the more liberal strand of US Christianity, and has been somewhat scarred by the evolution debates of the last few decades. Her writing is – as I suspect all her books must be – very lyrical and beautiful to read.

I found myself disagreeing with some of Taylor's take on evolution and the philosophy of science but that didn't detract from the overall aim of the book, which is to put forward the idea that science and religion have more in common than some might think. She describes a two-way dialogue, with scientists raising questions about religion, and Christians finding that science can provide a sense of awe that feeds into their faith in God.

Taylor's own theology has a strong sense of mystery, drawing on ideas from panentheism and her experience in parish ministry. I appreciated her perspective on the blurring of the boundaries between science and faith, with both involving awe, a search for truth, openness to surprises, and likelihood of error which – if sides are taken – is a reminder of the need for humility on each side of the discussion. Also, for practitioners of both science and religion, the limitations of human language hold each back from explaining important concepts to the other. Unless one can learn mathematics or experience God for oneself, it will be difficult to see eye to eye.

The price might put some off from buying this slim volume, and as it was originally published in 2000 the science is inevitably somewhat out of date, but no doubt S&CB readers who enjoy a broader more poetic approach to the science-faith discourse will find something here to stimulate thought and discussion.

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Michael Peterson and Michael Ruse

Science, Evolution and Religion

New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. 276pp., pb, £27.99, ISBN 978-0-19-937937-8

Michael Peterson and Michael Ruse are two distinguished philosophers, and their jousting in this book is stimulating and enlightening. Peterson comes from a background in the philosophy of religion, having played a part in its rebirth as a central topic for philosophy in the United States. Ruse is well known for his work in the philosophy of biology, and in particular on the influence and significance of Charles Darwin. The book comprises a genial debate about fundamental issues concerning the relationship of science and religion, with articles responding to each other on different crucial issues. We are led from the very existence of the universe, and the fine-tuned structure of physical reality, to the nature of rationality, morality and personhood. Each of the authors has a distinct style. Ruse is more relaxed, and at times verges on the flip-pant. Peterson appears more rigorous in his arguments, sometimes excessively so, when he imagines that he makes an argument clearer by putting it in symbolic form. The whole lays out the ground very clearly for anyone wanting a philosophically sophisticated examination of apparent conflicts between science and religion.

Ruse argues as an atheist, although one who is respectful of religion and recognises the limitations of science. In an interesting observation (34), he admits that science could not answer four questions. They are: Why is something rather than nothing? What is the justification of morality? What is sentience? What is the ultimate meaning of it all? Ruse admits that this makes his position incomplete, but it does not prevent him reaching a very bleak conclusion. He says (225): 'There is nothing, or if there is something,

you cannot know it and should not hope for it.' This, literally hopeless, nihilism is in stark contrast to Peterson's belief in a theistic universe that (236) 'intrinsically possesses meaning because it is created and guided by God'.

Ruse claims to espouse 'naturalism', which concentrates on a physical reality that can be known only by science. He says (33) that 'the root metaphor of modern science is that of the machine'. Yet the idea of the world as clockwork has long been superseded, and it is unclear whether the idea of a mechanism provides an adequate description of the world of quantum physics. In addition, Ruse takes an explicitly empiricist line in defining science (26) 'as an attempt to understand the world of experience'. This makes science very anthropocentric. Human abilities then determine the limits of our world. *Our* world, however, is not *the* world, or universe, and we should not define reality in terms of our limited understanding of it. Ruse (23) sees things in terms of the philosophy of David Hume, brought up to date by Charles Darwin. That is an anti-metaphysical philosophy, which Peterson strongly repudiates, arguing for both an epistemological and an ontological realism.

Ruse's empiricism sits uneasily with the naturalist (and in fact metaphysical) claim that the only reality is physical and accessible to science. Indeed, he even says something more radical, namely that, as he puts it, science (28) is 'a human construction, with its feet in the culture of the day'. That gives his view a much more relativist, anti-metaphysical, slant. It would not find favour with many scientists who think that they are in the business of discovery, not construction. Peterson uses Ruse's anti-realism effectively against him in their discussion about evil and suffering. It is a well-worn argument that a good God could not allow evil. Yet, as Peterson points out, the very idea of evil does not fit into a naturalist

world-view. Moral repugnance to evil and suffering suggests a belief that the world is not as it should be, an intuition that materialism cannot embrace. As Peterson says of naturalist critics of theism (2016), 'their reactions to evil are better than their philosophy'

There is much that is provocative and insightful in this debate. It covers a wide philosophical area, at times rather quickly. For example, Peterson espouses what he terms an emergent dualism about the mind, but seems to suggest that the mind is not separable from the brain, even though it can, he says, produce 'top-down' causation. Yet if the mind is not nonmaterial, it seems odd that it has causal powers to act on the brain. How far is emergent dualism different from a 'non-reductive physicalism'?

The main message of the book is that the apparent clash between science and religion is a clash between two different world-views. It is not a question of science disproving the existence of God, but of the battle between atheist naturalism, and a theistic world-view. Either can govern our interpretation of reality, but this book gives a good survey of the reasons each side deploys in its defence.

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Graeme Finlay

The Gospel according to Dawkins

London: Austin Macauley Publishers Ltd, 2017 - 288pp. hb £16.99. ISBN 9781786124098

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Dawkins will be well known to most readers of this journal, and the focus of Finlay's attack is some of the claims Dawkins made in his book *the God Delusion* from 2006. In my review of that book for this journal, I noted that it provided an opportunity for a substantial defence of the faith. One must note the amount of time that has passed since Dawkins's book was published and that Finlay's book is quite a lot more focused on the Gospels than Dawkins's was. Specifically, Finlay is not directly responding to Dawkins's claims that the case for God's existence is weak, nor to his claims that, for example, the God of the Old Testament is deeply immoral. Furthermore, Finlay is not directly addressing the relationship between specific scientific theories, such as Darwinian evolution, and Christian faith.

Though I think Finlay's title might suggest his book has a wider remit than it does, it nevertheless addresses issues relevant to this journal. Finlay makes an exact comparison between Christian debunking of evolution and Dawkins debunking of Christianity. Both are hostile, rhetorical and do not deal with the data responsibly.

Finlay offers an account of faith that is much more related to evidence than Dawkins's caricature of it and relates this to the trust that scientists have in scientific method and in the consistency and rationality of nature. He also tackles claims that Christianity has inhibited science, arguing that the biblical world-view, rather than polytheism or even classical philosophy, better supports scientific enquiry. He cites many examples of how medieval Christian thinkers chal-

lenged the dominant Aristotelian natural philosophy and pioneered important concepts in modern science, like astronomical motion.

Having laid out an alternative account of faith and reason to Dawkins, Finlay then attacks various controversial claims Dawkins makes about the Gospels: that maybe Jesus did not even exist; that the Gospels were written long after the alleged events; that their texts are hopelessly corrupted; that they were selected without historical reason from a large number of very different accounts with similar claims to historicity; and that when Jesus said 'Love your neighbour', all he meant was 'Love your fellow Jew.' We get detailed rebuttals to all these claims, along with endnotes and bibliography. In his preface Finlay recommends FF Bruce's *The New Testament Documents*, Paul Barnett's *Is the New Testament History?* and *Gospel Truth*, and I could see the influence of all of these on the apologetic offered here. Following Richard Bauckham, Finlay offers a case for the traditional authorship of the gospels. Although Finlay does not overstate the certainty of this case, I did wonder if he spends too much space on it in comparison to examining objections many scholars make to it and so risks appearing an uncritical camp follower of Bauckham.

The section on sin brings in contemporary concern for global poverty and the environment in an interesting and important way. Finally, there is a detailed case for the resurrection, in the spirit of NT Wright.

There are areas where I suspect more needs to be said, even given the specific focus of the book. The Gospels and New Testament do seem to think in terms of divine revelation having a key role in the life of faith (e.g. Mt 16.17, 1 Co. 2.14-16) but Finlay emphasises empirical evidence and reasoning in faith without discussing such ideas. Is Christian faith being trimmed to fit with natural sci-

ence's methods? Another issue touched on by Dawkins is the role of Adam in New Testament theology and how this clashes with scientific understandings of human origins. Dawkins claims that a merely symbolic Adam undermines traditional teaching about sin and salvation. Finlay does not even mention the problems of the historical Adam.

Nevertheless, Finlay does assemble a useful collection on the basic historicity of the Gospels, but, as a minor gripe, though there is an index, there is no table of contents at the front, slightly reducing its ease of use as a handbook. Overall, though this book is not a general rebuttal of Dawkins's antireligious views, it does offer a useful corrective to misleading claims Dawkins made about the Gospels that sadly retain currency today.

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Chris Doran

Hope in the Age of Climate Change: creation care this side of the resurrection

Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2017. 247 pp. pb. £24.00. ISBN 978-1-4982-9702-8

In recent years there has been a plethora of Christian environmental writing in both North America and the UK, so it is important to frame this review by asking two key questions:

Who is the intended audience? Does this book contribute anything new in content, emphasis or quality to the literature?

In terms of audience, Chris Doran is Associate Professor of Religion, at Pepperdine University, Malibu, California and the book is dedicated 'to my students who hope for a better tomorrow' (v.). The

book has developed, at least partially, from university courses taught by Doran complemented by sabbatical research, so it is fair to judge it is aimed at the intelligent but not necessarily specialist reader.

The focus on climate change in the book's title is also a pointer towards the intended audience. Although the subtitle speaks more widely of 'creation care', debates around what should be an uncontentious biblical moral injunction have become polarised by the politicisation of responses to climate science in the USA – and Doran's Protestant American readers are clearly his primary audience. Although, in a globalised world, issues of climate, consumption, economics and food affect us all, the way they are framed here sometimes seems alien to a European reader. Doran is deliberate in his focus: one chapter is entitled 'The American Association with Food' and generalisations are prefaced by remarks like 'In an American context especially ...' (3). This does not make the book irrelevant to European readers because American attitudes affect us all, but it does make the book more informative than practically helpful.

A final comment on audience is Doran's disappointing lack of serious engagement with those Americans whose theology and politics lead them to be sceptical around climate change and creation care. As an outsider I would have hoped, perhaps naively, both for a more sympathetic understanding of why so many God-fearing, Bible-believing evangelicals see climate change as a left-wing atheistic plot, and also an attempt to lead them gently and biblically towards the theological and scientific consensus. Instead, if I were a conservative, climate-sceptic Christian reading this, I would feel attacked and misunderstood. Perhaps this simply reflects how deep the chasm is within American Christianity, that it has become almost impossible to enter into each other's mindset? Thus,

whilst I would happily give this book to a thoughtful student or pastor grappling with the issues or somebody seeking to understand American thinking, I think it is unlikely to persuade anybody to change from a fixed position.

Returning to the structure, content and style of *Hope in an Age of Climate Change*, its scope is impressive. The first three chapters give a theological framing to what follows, looking at the ecological implications of belief in Creation, Redemption and Resurrection. Doran affirms the innate goodness of all creation, God's covenantal care for all creatures – not just humans – and the implications of Christ's incarnation for the whole material order. He encourages 'Protestants' (a description he repeatedly uses) to move beyond their theological comfort zone in embracing a sacramental understanding of creation. The chapter on redemption says surprisingly little about the Cross and focuses especially on justice as an expression of God's love, and how this is worked out particularly towards the poor and oppressed, and the land itself. Christ's redeeming work is applied not only to humanity but to the whole creation (with some nice quotes from John Wesley).

It is in the chapter on Resurrection, however, that Doran's most important contribution to the debate is found. Building on N. T. Wright, he defines hope, as distinct from optimism, as 'a confident expectation of a good and novel outcome delivered by God' (62). Because of Christ's resurrection, the seemingly impossible becomes plausible, and both presumption and despair are banished. In the light of climate change and wider environmental apocalypse, hope enables accepting bad news yet with the imagination to act in the light of a promised, different future.

Having constructed solid theological foundations, Doran spends two chapters examining humanity's role, following

other contemporary scholars in arguing that 'stewardship' is an inadequate metaphor in the context of climate catastrophe, because it encourages anthropocentrism (we're in charge and can sort this out). He rejects any single symbol for humanity's role, preferring to focus on virtues or 'attributes' (96) particularly humility leading to repentance and ecological conversion.

The rest of the book contains pairs of chapters looking in turn at economics, food and the role of the church. In each case, Doran uses biblical hope as a means of finding a way out of current disastrous behaviour. Rather than the idolatries of greed, growth and consumption embodied in neoclassical economics and leading to despair, he seeks 'an economy of hope' (127-144) which provides for all and values frugality. This section is one of the best theological engagements with ecological economics that I have encountered and is worth reading on its own. The section on food is also excellent, painting a diabolical picture of the injustice, poisoning, excess and wastefulness in the modern American food system (and not so different in Europe) and calling for a Eucharistic understanding based on community, reconciliation, dependence and, centrally, hope. There is also a substantial and balanced engagement with issues around meat and vegetarianism.

I read the two chapters on 'The Church as a Beacon of Hope' (190-219) with great anticipation, as ecological ecclesiology is a neglected subject. Doran argues Churches should be beacons of hope where 'Christians must model creation-care thinking and behavior that is central to the hopeful witness of living this side of the resurrection.' (191). He gives six main suggestions, focusing on political action, seeking justice, identifying climate denial as sin, supporting science, 'sacramental contemplation' (210-214) and rethinking our relationship with technology. Readers of 'Science and Christian Belief' will

no doubt give a loud 'Amen' to his appeal for churches to support science, where he quotes Thomas Aquinas: 'Any error about creation leads to an error about God' (209). I also appreciated the section on sacramental contemplation, which balances the rational analysis of science by encouraging attitudes of wonder, awe, fascination and surprise, and see good potential for this in a church context. I was disappointed, however, with the lack of practical advice for ministers and congregations of how to integrate creation care more effectively into the worship, teaching and mission of local churches.

Overall, *Hope in the Age of Climate Change* is a valuable contribution to the growing literature in this area. It has its weaknesses, including a narrowly American focus, a lack of genuine engagement with climate sceptics, or with existing Christian responses in this area, and a general preoccupation with the theoretical over the practical. However, it is widely-researched, well-referenced and readable. Its most important contributions are its focus on hope resulting from Christ's resurrection as the central motivation for creation care today, and working this out in relation to economics and food. Despair and escapism abound, and hope is a scarce and valuable commodity. This book encourages readers towards a new theological imaginary, recovering long-lost biblical insights regarding our human calling, and focusing on the implications of Christ's resurrection for the whole creation. As such it is well worth reading.

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Abby Hafer

The Not-So-Intelligent Designer: Why Evolution Explains the Human Body and Intelligent Design Does Not

The Lutterworth Press, 2016, 229 pp. pb.
£18.50. ISBN 978-0-7188-9420-7

Based on the title, I had hoped that this would provide a clear scientific and theological rebuttal of the so-called 'Intelligent Design' (ID) movement. I was disappointed! While I agree with the authors conclusions that ID is not proper science, the tone of the approach and the depth of analysis in this book was lacking. Its style is jeering and polemic and it is derisory of IDers, in a way that I did not find at all helpful. These people are indeed wrong, but treating them all as idiots in a knock-about style is not helpful. It is clearly written for lay audience, rather than an academic one. Although she mentions in passing that ID is a 'broad church' the book makes several sweeping assumptions about ID beliefs, many of which are exaggerated. Her arguments are based on the assumption that ID claims that *all* biological systems must function optimally. But that is not the basis of most ID arguments, which (erroneously) claim that *some* biological structures can only be explained by inferring the actions of an intelligent agent.

On the positive side, Hafer uses her specialist knowledge of human biology to demonstrate that many aspects of our anatomy, physiology and biochemistry have arisen from evolutionary make-do solutions and are far from optimally designed. Hafer cites some excellent examples of human anatomical imperfections, which should have been a powerful platform for expounding the explanatory power of evolution, but instead these are only used as rant against the implausibility of intelligent design. The book's subtitle is 'why evolution explains the human body...' yet she misses the opportunity to explain the evolutionary mechanisms themselves. Some of her examples are

trivial and introduced to make the reader titter (I wonder if the author has ever asked a man whether he is concerned about the location of his testicles!).

The book consist of a series of 35 short chapters in the space of 185 pages. It meanders between descriptions of human anatomy and physiology and the more theoretical critiques of ID. It is repetitive with the chapters arranged in a muddle that move back and forth from anatomy to biochemistry to general refutations of ID in an uncoordinated and random fashion.

While correctly debunking Intelligent Design, Hafer offers nothing in return. This is an entirely negative book, that doesn't even provide the proper evolutionary mechanisms for the types of non-intelligent design that she is describing. She repeatedly states that so-called Intelligent Designer is really another word for God (thereby introducing Christianity via the back-door), but says nothing positive about the Christian God.

Some parts are clearly written for popular appeal (such as arguments about the location of testicles). Some of her comments about religion are unnecessarily provocative, bombastic and offensive, such as describing the Designer as 'the world's biggest abortionist!' It does provide a useful collection of examples of the imperfections of our bodies, but overall this book is preaching to the non-scientist choir and I doubt that it will change many minds.

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Robin Attfield

Wonder, Value and God

London: Routledge, 2017. 180 pp. hb.
£115.00 ISBN: 9781472457189

What is the meaning of life? What sort of value does life have? Does life or the universe have value in itself, or is value necessarily linked to an evaluator? Robin Attfield's philosophical work explores the concept of value, how it is imbued in the universe, and what sort of metaphysical claims can be made on account of the value-laden world discovered.

Attfield begins with the beauty of the natural world and its power to call forth wonder from human beings. The 'way of wonder should not be neglected' (11) as a way both to appreciate the natural world and to foster a deeply human response to the world around us. Wonder has diverse effects and can stand as a foundation stone for ecological concern and action and also a source for theistic beliefs. Wonder springs from value, which he defines as 'not what is actually valued... but what there is reason to value'. (17) Therefore value can exist in the absence of a valuing subject—an important philosophical gain for deciding whether objects can be intrinsically valuable or not.

For Attfield, the valuable world we find ourselves in points towards a value-loving creator. This is not by any means a path toward the God of the Christian tradition; Attfield is not defending a traditional Christian position, still less is he defending the renewed Paleyan scheme of the Intelligent Design movement. Yet, contemplation of wonder and value, the apparent purposefulness of the world and the existence of morality and beauty and meaningful work all provide consistency with the philosophical thesis that the universe is the creation of a value-loving God.

Any consideration of value must also confront the disvalues of the world, especially in any theistic context. Attfield does

not disappoint on this score. He explores how disvalues are core to objections to theistic belief, and then runs through the standard lines of argument: nomic regularity is better than a world of frequent pain-saving divine interventions, humans are directly responsible for much evil, and a world where evil is possible is necessary for soul-making. But Attfield also acknowledges a wide range of disvalues that cannot be tied up into these traditional theodicies. He moves on to defend the necessity of natural laws, and to point out (drawing on Holmes Rolston's work) the deeply interconnected ecosystems that produce diversity and interdependence and value. A world without predation would be possible, but not without sacrificing consciousness. Autotrophs could not thrive alone, but depend on animal-produced carbon dioxide.

Attfield defends package deals and rejects the possibility of a better system that relies on different natural laws. Instead, he takes fine-tuning arguments as an indicator that a better world system than the actual world is not plausible. Perhaps the most original part of the chapter is the appendix considering whether such a theodicy is satisfying. Here he interacts with Christopher Southgate's work, dismissing many of Southgate's moves, and defending his consequentialist position whilst excusing God from consequentialist calculations. Attfield carefully avoids a weigh-scale approach to theodicy: 'While there may well be a preponderance of intrinsic value over intrinsic disvalue in the world, this abstract balance is not to be regarded as the overarching aim, as opposed to the fostering, through as well as despite the disvalues, of flourishing life and lives of creativity' (89) Still, I was not convinced that Attfield's approach could do without the theologically-oriented moves Southgate makes, but his defence (though brief) goes as far as it reasonably can without more robustly theological approaches.

The second half of the book explores value in particular contexts: in nature, in society, in morality, in art and inspiration. Perhaps the most unexpected turn is a discussion of theosis in the last chapter, where it is tied into an environmental ethic and combined with Maximus the Confessor's view that all of creation should be treated with the same care as the crumbs of the Eucharist. The discussion of Maximus offers 'both an understanding of the purpose of human existence, and the view that respect for the rest of creation... is involved in the performance of that purpose'. (164) The overall arc of this book, then, complements and expands upon Attfeld's previous work on environmental ethics.

Attfeld has produced a wide-ranging book, addressing value and the human response to value in nature, music, art, gardening, work and worship. He takes on contested issues such as the existence

of objective morality, panentheism, directionality and progress in history, and the meaning of life. These ambitious goals are pursued within careful definitional boundaries and a close and generous reading of interlocutors. Because of the breadth of the work, there were occasional places where I thought discussion was brought to a premature conclusion in order to move on to the next subject. Yet, the many facets of wonder and value explored give the book an expansive and hopeful outlook that opens up rather than shuts down further reflection and conversation. The book would be appropriate for a graduate level philosophy class, and individual chapters could be useful as case studies for undergraduate study.

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