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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Sam Berry is Emeritus Professor of Genetics at University College London. He is a Vice-President of the Science & Religion Forum.

John Hedley Brooke is President of the Science and Religion Forum. He has published widely and his most recent book, *Science and Religion around the World* co-edited with Ronald L. Numbers, was published in 2011.

Michael Marsh holds a professorial position at Wolfson College, Oxford. His thesis on out-of-body experiences is published in the Oxford Theology Monograph Series (OUP, 2010).

Hilary Martin has been a member of the Forum for 26 years. She worked in medical physics and teaching, retiring in 2003. The book reviewed provided the inspiration for her MA dissertation on nature and divine grace in the theology of de Lubac and Rahner, completed in 2007.

Keith Fox is Professor of Biochemistry at Southampton University, Chair of Christians in Science, and the former Editor of *Science and Christian Belief*.

Bethany Sollereeder is a PhD candidate at the University of Exeter, UK. A Canadian, she studied for her master's degree at Regent College in Vancouver.

Chris Wiltsher taught religious studies, philosophy and ethics in University Adult Education and for the Open University. He was a long-standing member of the Science and Religion Forum and served on the ESSSAT committee for many years.

EDITORIAL

March this year brought the stunning news that primordial gravitational waves have been detected (albeit indirectly). Although unconfirmed at present, this promise of a remarkable scientific development gives us an insight into the first moments after the big bang and takes us a step further towards unifying the theories of modern physics. Unanswered questions about ultimate origins, especially of space and time, and about the possibility of many universes still prevail, however, and the sense of wonder induced by the contemplation of the dawn of the universe is rather more increased than dimmed.

The advancement in the knowledge of our origins is an appropriate backdrop to this edition's article review of Russell Re Manning's edited *Oxford Handbook of Natural Theology*. Sam Berry, in his review, highlights the diversity of approaches to natural theology and explores the suggestion that it is currently enjoying a resurgence. Metaphysical questions are left untouched by developments in our cosmological knowledge but Berry shows that the space where natural theology meets natural religion is rich with possibilities.

Hilary Martin contributes our Book that made a Difference feature, explaining how Fergus Kerr's mode of self-transcendence had a profound impact on her theology of our relationality with the natural world.

This brings me to our section of original book reviews, and here I must say first that it was with great shock that I learned of Chris Wiltsher's unexpected death in April.

Chris was a Forum member for a great many years, making a valuable contribution to the Forum itself and to the wider academic community, not least through his dedicated service to ESSSAT which lasted for over a decade. He was an exceptionally popular and well respected man, and his loss will be felt dearly in the Forum. Shortly before his death, Chris had contributed a review of the second volume of Ernst Conradie's collection on creation and salvation. Chris reminds us that any convincing theological exploration of these subjects is inseparable from considerations of ecojustice and the need for theology to respond to people's lived experience.

Many of our other reviews this time are also concerned with evolution. John Hedley Brooke reviews J. David Pleins' *The Evolving God* which explores Darwin's interest in religion and his naturalistic explanation for its development. Bethany Sollereeder contributes two reviews both of which focus on evolution. Her discussion of Ronald Osborne's *Death Before the Fall* highlights the political aspects of the various understandings of creation. Both Osborne's book and Armstrong's *Christianity in Evolution*, the subject of Sollereeder's second review, contribute to the debate about theodicy while Armstrong's use of psychotherapy in his Scriptural exegesis points to an under-explored point of contact between science and theology.

Michael Marsh's review of David Gushee's most recent book explores the distinction between the sacredness and sanctity of human life, suggesting a way

in which Christian theology can make a unique contribution to our appreciation of the value of life. Our final review is a reprint of Keith Fox's review of Blackwell's important recent anthology, *Science and Christianity*. As always I am extremely grateful to all our reviewers and also to Andrew Robinson for his assistance in preparing the journal for publication.

I am saddened to report that Ian Barbour passed away in December. I know that his work will be familiar to you all and that many of you knew him personally. Words cannot do justice to the immense contribution he made to research in the area of science and theology. Our field is enormously enriched by his scholarship and he will be greatly missed.

Before I wrap up this editorial there are three things I would like to draw your attention to. Firstly a new journal that has recently been launched; *Science, Religion and Culture*. It is open access and I'm sure its interdisciplinary nature will stimulate much fruitful dialogue in the area of science and religion. Secondly, this year's Arthur Peacocke essay prize. Please be encouraged to circulate details of the competition to any students you might know. Thirdly, our 2014 conference in Leeds Trinity University, *Laws of Nature, Laws of God?* More details can be found below; it promises to be a thought-provoking and stimulating event!



Science and Religion Forum

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Chairman: Rev Canon Dr Michael Fuller

2014 Annual Conference

Leeds Trinity University, 4th-6th September 2014

'Laws of Nature, Laws of God?'

Plenary speakers include—

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Nancy Cartwright FBA (Durham)

John Henry (Edinburgh)

Michela Massimi (Edinburgh)

Tom McLeish FRS (Durham)

Eric Priest FRSE, FRS (St Andrews)

Jonathan Topham (Leeds)

Professor Nancy Cartwright will be giving the Gowland Lecture, 'How *could* laws make things happen?'

Fees: SRF members and spouses £250; Non-members £280; Students £125.

To register, please contact Hilary Martin hilarymartin@lineone.net. The closing date for conference applications is 31 July 2014.



THE ARTHUR PEACOCKE STUDENT ESSAY PRIZE CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

On the theme of ‘Laws of Nature, Laws of God?’

In memory of its founding President and former Chairman, the Revd Dr Arthur Peacocke, the Science and Religion Forum offers a prize for an essay directly relevant to the theme of its annual conference. This year’s conference (4th–6th September 2014 at Leeds Trinity University) has the theme of Divine Action. For further details, see the Forum’s website:

www.srforum.org

The prize is open to all undergraduate and post-graduate students in full or part-time education. The prize will consist of a cash award of £100, free membership of the Forum for one year, and the UK travel and accommodation costs (or equivalent) of the winner’s participation in the Forum’s 2014 conference.

The essay should not exceed 5000 words in length, including footnotes but excluding references. It should be preceded by an abstract of no more than 250 words, and should be submitted as an email attachment in Microsoft Word format, no later than midnight 31st July 2014 to Dr Louise Hickman: l.hickman@newman.ac.uk. Dr Hickman will answer any questions about the prize. All submissions will be acknowledged within 1 week of receipt.

The essay should be the original work of the applicant – unacknowledged quotation from the work of others will automatically disqualify the entry. Copyright in the essay will remain with the author. Each submission should be accompanied by a statement from the author’s Supervisor or Head of Department, confirming the author’s student status and indicating awareness that the essay has been submitted. The adjudicators reserve the right not to award the Prize if no entry of sufficient standard is received. Their decision will be final, and no correspondence about it will be entered into.

A BOOK THAT MADE A DIFFERENCE

Fergus Kerr, *Immortal Longings: Versions of Transcending Humanity*, London: SPCK, 1997.

REVIEWED BY HILARY MARTIN

The value of this book lies in its particular focus upon an area which stands at the interface of science and religion: the boundary between the physical world and metaphysical ideas. It examines the way in which human thought extends beyond ordinary concepts associated with earthly reality to address the nature of ideals and absolutes. This extension of thinking and its consequent entertaining of spiritual ideas is termed 'self-transcendence'. The book is transcribed from Fergus Kerr's Stanton lectures delivered at the University of Cambridge in 1994-5. The themes addressed are important for philosophy today, which often assumes itself to be operating in a post-metaphysical age. What is seen as humanity's natural inclination to transcend the limits of human finitude is considered in the works of a number of recent philosophers and one theologian. Those chosen are the American philosophers Martha Nussbaum and Stanley Cavell, Karl Barth, Martin Heidegger, Iris Murdoch, and the Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor. Kerr examines their various responses to the realities of finite earthly life and limited human understanding. Although some of these seek to address the theme of self-transcendence without recourse to religion, Fergus Kerr perceives, even in philosophy's secular form, religious

motifs which arise when human thought reaches those boundaries which highlight its own limitations.

Kerr first presents Nussbaum's Gifford Lectures of 1993 in which she views self-transcendence as running counter to an affirmation of humanity. Arguing for an acknowledgement of the reality of the imperfections of everyday life, she calls for humans to abandon both an ascent to ideals of perfection and the desire to transcend human limitations which, in her view, result in feelings of inadequacy. She charges the notion of original sin as being responsible for both an alienation of humanity from the physical body and an undue emphasis upon the need for redemption: 'we can be redeemed only by ending the demand for redemption.'¹ However, elsewhere Nussbaum has viewed original sin as causing the positive characteristics of remorse, responsibility and illumination and she admits that there is no clear dividing line between those ideas which, in her view, bring about dehumanisation and those that cultivate moral responsibility.

Kerr then presents the thinking of Karl Barth who, in stark contrast, embraces human finitude as 'a mighty beneficent promise'². In his solidly Christological approach, Barth goes to the extent of regarding as a root of evil the lack of a thankful acceptance of finitude as a part of God's good order. All philosophies which address human transcendence from the point of view of

¹ Quoted from Martha Nussbaum, 'Love's Knowledge' in 'Essays on Aristotle's De Anima' Clarendon Press 1992. p 370

² Quoted from Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics III/2, p. 563

humanity miss, in Barth's opinion, 'the Archimedean point given us beyond humanity'³, the ontological determination of man in Jesus Christ. Barth shows sympathy for the natural perception of finitude as a threat: 'beating angrily against the barrier set up by the fact that time is allotted'⁴ but he cites the possibilities unfolded when human nature and finitude are seen in the light of the life of Christ. Finitude seen as freedom is a perspective that the other thinkers do not have and Barth's approach poses the question of whether the normal response to human limitations is overly self-centred and subjective.

Kerr then looks to Heidegger whose focus upon self-transcendence rests upon human subjectivity in relation the world. These themes include the notion of 'cosmos' as man and creation, the moral agent active in the world and an incarnational linking of the world and the divine. Heidegger calls for humanity to turn from being disengaged observers of the world to that of a state of dwelling poetically within it. He advocates a re-conception of the world freed from the conditioned desire to categorise: 'the human will to explain just does not reach the simple unity of the world.'⁵ Thus he reflects Nussbaum's charge of dehumanisation in believing that, by looking beyond the world, we fall short of what it is.

³ Quoted from Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics III/2*, p. 132

⁴ Quoted from Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics III/2*, p.556

⁵ Quoted from Heidegger, *Lecture: 'Poetry, Language, Thought'*, 1935.

Iris Murdoch is presented as recognising the need, in a world without God, for moral self-discipline and an intuitive knowledge of an authoritative and sovereign idea of good. In what is often considered to be a post-religious culture with its challenges from moral relativism, Murdoch presents a Platonic ideal of 'good' discovered through knowledge and intuition. This, in her view, guards against the blurring of a distinction between right and wrong. Advocating a demythologizing of Christianity with the value element preserved, she is positive towards Don Cupitt's anti-realism and believes that we can maintain the expressive language of a religious age to celebrate life and find the 'divine' in the depths of human understanding. Murdoch calls goodness 'a magnetic but unexhaustible reality'⁶, believing that humans are naturally drawn towards a metaphysical background to morals, the ideal of 'good' being 'the object of our best thoughts'⁷. Kerr fails to make the point that her very words display a wrestling with an unavoidable transcendent idea and he does not use the opportunity to question the nature of that towards which Murdoch believes human beings are drawn.

Kerr presents the thinking of Stanley Cavell who considers the desire to escape from human limitations as natural. However, Cavell believes that in attempting this we may, according to Wittgenstein, feel 'chaffed by our

⁶ From Iris Murdoch, 'The Sovereignty of Good', Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970, p. 40

⁷ From Iris Murdoch 'Metaphysics as a guide to Morals', Chatto & Windus, 1992, p. 428

own skin'⁸. Faced with the consequent uncomfortable reality of human finitude, Cavell considers the remedies themselves as contrary to human nature: Pascal's staying quietly in one's 'own chamber'⁹ or Cupitt's resigned acceptance. Cavell comes down on the necessity to adopt a position between a religious and a secular view. In line with those thinkers who seek non-religious ways of addressing this issue, he avoids any response that would entail a loss of self-sufficiency or any recourse to a non-human authority. Kerr notes Cavell's interest in religion and his appreciation of its impact upon society, culture and literature, highlighting an inconsistency between his liberal individualism and the value he places upon religious concepts. Kerr concludes that Cavell has failed to avoid religion in his attempt to define a secular response to humanity's desire to transcend the limits of its own understanding.

Kerr then describes Charles Taylor's opposition to scientific naturalism and his optimistic belief that the moral intuitions of individuals exist apart from social conditioning. Taylor joins forces with the thinking of Murdoch in the Platonic idea of the 'good' and proposes its extension to an examination of our moral ontology, through which the differences between our authentic and our conditioned responses are revealed. His perception of human nature appears optimistic in his affirmation of the

⁸ Quoted from Cavell, 'The Availability of Wittgenstein's Later Thought' In *The Philosophy Review*, 1962

⁹ Quoted from Pascal, '*Pensées*', tr. A.J. Krailshaimer, Penguin Books, 1966

ordinary life, the worth of the individual and an ancient inner nature which points us to a greater, transcendent reality: 'Men are led to define themselves in terms of some more ultimate reality'¹⁰. He interprets the unstructured spirituality of today as a reaction to the de-sacralization of nature and society. He assumes that nature has a purpose and that ultimate goals exist towards which human beings are drawn.

Kerr develops this theme in his final chapter by focusing upon what he considers to be central to humanity's desire to breach the limits of finitude and move towards a transcendent 'other', summed up by Balthasar as '... a point, a gravitational pull, external to itself, that mysterious Absolute that lies beyond the purview of merely human reason...'.¹¹ The problem he highlights, as an obstruction to this process, is the separation of God and nature in both theology and in Enlightenment humanism. Summarising the historical progression of the relationship of nature and divine grace, he presents the thinking of Henri de Lubac whose writings sought to remedy this separation by pointing to the idea of a natural desire for God, later developed in Rahner's metaphysical anthropology. Rahner sees the ordinary human experience of the world as drawing humanity 'beyond his comprehension into the silent

¹⁰ Quoted from Charles Taylor, 'Culture and Revolution', Sheed & Ward, 1968

¹¹ Quoted from Hans Urs von Balthasar, 'Explorations in Theology' p. 194

mystery of God.¹² The inner orientation of human beings to some transcendent 'absolute' makes Christianity, to Rahner, an articulation of something deep within us. By drawing the question of human self-transcendence into the relationship between nature and divine grace, Kerr reveals the possibility of their greater union through the notion of a sense of the divine within the human and of Jesus as a response to humanity's reach for the 'absolute'. It may be argued that, for this reason alone, *Immortal Longings* has important things to say about the human being in its relationship with God and with the natural world.

¹² Quoted by Rahner from Wittgenstein's 'Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus', 1922

REVIEW ARTICLE

Russell Re Manning (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Natural Theology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, pp. 632, £95 Hbk, ISBN 978-0-19-955693-9.

REVIEWED BY SAM BERRY

Is natural theology real? Is it worth bothering about? Chambers Dictionary wrongly conflates 'natural theology' with 'natural religion', defining them together as 'religion derived from reason without revelation'; the *Oxford Companion to Christian Thought* limits natural theology to 'the attempt to prove the existence of God using only natural reason'; the IVP *New Dictionary of Theology* is more ambitious, 'the attempt to attain an understanding of God and his relationship with the universe by means of natural reflection, without appealing to special revelation such as the self-revelation of God in Christ and in Scripture'; James Barr in his Gifford Lectures *Biblical Faith and Natural Theology* has it as 'the capacity for an awareness of God anterior to the special revelation of God made through Jesus Christ'; John Macquarrie, writing in the *Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Modern Christian Thought* is very precise, 'there is a knowledge of God accessible to all rational beings without recourse to any special or supposedly supernatural revelation'.

There is clearly no simple definition. Perhaps sensibly, Russell Re Manning in his magnificent collection of essays on the subject shies away from any attempt to set boundaries to the concept. He introduces his volume by

asserting that the lack of a fixed definition is 'due in part to its inherently interdisciplinary character and the inevitable limitations on definitions that belong firmly within particular disciplines'; one of his main aims is 'to provoke engagement ... with the rich diversity of approaches to and definitions of natural theology.' He is probably wise. The *Handbook* has 38 authors (and chapters), made up of (very roughly) 13 philosophers, 11 theologians, 8 historians, and 6 scientists. The classification is 'very rough' because many of the contributors straddle more than one field; they are truly multidisciplinary. Each chapter has a list of references, which can be regarded as useful guides to further reading.

The book is divided into five sections: history (with seven chapters); theology (Jewish, Islamic, Eastern religions, [Roman] Catholic, Protestant and Eastern Orthodox, plus a theological critique of them all; ten approaches from different 'schools' of philosophy; eight chapters from the sciences; and six from the 'Arts' (aesthetics, imagination, literature, music, images and film). Chaos or cornucopia? It is certainly wise of Re Manning not to attempt any synthesis or conclusion. Can one draw any generalities from more than 600 pages of analysis? The answer is likely to be that the message will depend on what one wants to hear. It seems improbable that many people (particularly those reading a review in a Forum devoted to Science and Religion) will side with Karl Barth and agree that faith is intrinsically antithetical to reason, that neither evidence nor reason can lead to

faith. It is even less likely that William Paley's appeal to detailed design in the whole of the natural world will attract many. Where are we? Do we have to go down the Ditchkins (Terry Eagleton's term for the 'new atheists') route of extreme naturalism, that nature cannot reveal God for the [assumed] reason that science has shown there is no God (or, to be fair, that God's non-existence is highly improbable, although it cannot be proved)? Or what?

It is often assumed that Darwin removed the possibility of any purpose or design in the natural world. In his *Autobiography* he wrote 'the old argument from design in nature, as given by Paley, which formerly seemed to me so conclusive, fails, now that the law of natural selection has been discovered. There seems to be no more design in the variability of organic beings and in the action of natural selection, than in the course which the wind blows.' But this gap troubled him: he wrote to his Harvard botanist friend, Asa Gray, 'I see no reason why a man or other animal may not have been produced by other laws [than natural selection] & that all these laws may have been expressly designed by an omniscient Creator, who foresaw every future event and consequence. But the more I think, the more bewildered I become'. A century later, Arthur Peacocke was less bothered. He was fond of quoting the Oxford theologian Aubrey Moore who wrote that Darwin 'under the disguise of a foe did the work of a friend' by destroying the credibility of deism (in Moore's words, 'representing God as an occasional Visitor') and hence forcing us to

think of God as active in His world, sustainer as well as creator.

Tom Torrance may perhaps be regarded as a more recent advocate of Moore's notion. He wrote, 'Natural theology cannot be pursued in its traditional abstractive form as a prior conceptual scheme on its own, but must be brought within the body of positive theology.' John Polkinghorne has continued the same theme. He believes that 'natural theology is currently undergoing a revival, not so much at the hands of the theologians (whose nerve, with some honourable exceptions, has not yet returned) but at the hand of the scientists. There has grown up a widespread feeling, especially among those who study fundamental physics, that there is more to the world than meets the eye.'

Do Re Manning's contributors take this any further? Re Manning himself points out that some of the most powerful criticisms of natural theology have come from the Reformed tradition; in contrast, Denis Edwards emphasizes the more positive tradition in western Catholicism ('Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth,' John Paul II in *Fides et Ratio*); while Chris Knight recalls the much stronger emphasis on natural theology in the Orthodox Churches; Robert Morrison gives a useful introduction to Islamic beliefs on the subject. The philosophers seem less sure of how views of natural theology mesh with reality and how they should be developed. Perhaps I am biased; William Schweiker's treatment of 'Morality and natural theology' certainly

deals with topical issues. Rodney Holder's chapter on 'Natural theology in the twentieth century' was more informative and stimulating to me than the essays from the professional philosophers, although he was writing in the 'history section'.

Commenting in detail on all 38 chapters in the book could lead me close to the length of the book itself. It seems more helpful to stand back, as it were, and let the book's contents wash over one. The eight contributions in the section on 'Scientific perspectives on natural theology' spoke more powerfully to me than most of the other essays in the book. As a scientist, I am no doubt prejudiced (or perhaps blinkered), but I would maintain that this section is the key core of the subject matter: after all, natural theology is where theology meets the natural world, and the natural world is the sphere where scientists operate. The historians in the first major section of the book prepare the way for the scientists in chapters 25 to 32. Michael Ruse on 'Natural theology: the biological sciences' is particularly relevant (and readable). He reviews 'design', 'the problem of evil', and the 'place of humans'. He concludes, 'There is little support for definitive proofs of the nature and existence of the Christian God. However, notwithstanding arguments to the contrary, there is nothing in modern Darwinian evolutionary theory that makes impossible a belief in a traditional form of Christianity.' Ruse's chapter is followed by chapters on other sciences - physics, chemistry, mathematics, ecology, psychology, and sociology.

The final section of the *Handbook* is 'Perspectives on natural theology from the arts', with essays on aesthetics, imagination, literature, music, 'images', and film. They are inevitably each complete in their own right and separate from each other, but they all should be thought provoking to the normal habitués of natural theology discussions.

Where does all this get us? Do they add up to the 'revival in natural theology' claimed by John Polkinghorne? Alister Hardy set up a 'Religious Experience Research Unit' in Oxford to test if 'religious experience' which he defined as including 'the numinous, the love of nature and the inspiration of art', could be shown to be objectively provable. The results were suggestive but fragile. More positively, in the *Limits of Science* Peter Medawar, a non-believer (he recorded his personal regret concerning 'my disbelief in God and religious answers generally, for I believe it would give satisfaction and comfort to many in need of it if it were possible to discover good scientific and philosophic reasons to believe in God'), while professing no doubt that, while 'there is no limit upon the power of science to answer questions of the kind that science *can* answer', nevertheless science has 'limits shown by the existence of questions that science cannot answer and that no conceivable advances of science would empower it to answer. ... It is not possible to derive from the axioms and postulates of Euclid a theorem to do with how to cook an omelette or bake a cake'. Notwithstanding, 'metaphysical (i.e. abstract or supernatural) questions are not nonsense

nor bunk; they can be and have been a source of scientific inspiration and of fruitful scientific ideas.'

It seems that the experience of 'awe' is an apparently universal experience. In *Unweaving the Rainbow*, Richard Dawkins claims that, 'The feeling of awed wonder that science can give us is one of the highest experiences of which the human psyche is capable. It is a deep aesthetic passion to rank with the finest that music and poetry can deliver. It is truly one of the things that make life worth living and it does so, if anything, more effectively if it convinces us that the time we have for living is quite finite.' It can be difficult to distinguish between awe as a sort of Romantic abstraction and as something more basic, perhaps an innate biophilia which links us to the rest of creation and to the Creator himself. Ian Bradley has ascribed the poetry and artwork of the Celts to an 'exuberant celebration of creation derived from their knowledge of the Bible and their pre-Christian inheritance, arising from living so close to nature and having the time and temperament to study and contemplate its variety and beauty.' This is territory where natural theology meets natural religion, but it is nonetheless real.

Unsurprisingly, several of the *Handbook* authors refer to the 'anthropic principle'. Thirty years ago, Hugh Montefiore in *The Probability of God* wrote a characteristically enthusiastic account of the anthropic principle, taking natural theology back to one of its roots as a 'proof' of God's existence. But the bishop was not completely carried away. He concluded, 'natural

theology only permits us to view God from afar. We are, as it were, out of range of his voice, too distant to recognise more than his bare outline. That is why we need so badly his further self-disclosure. But it is an enormous leap forward to be able to believe on grounds of reason and after study of the evidence that the existence of God is very, very probable.' We need to recognise that this is as a crucial apologetic step. For vast numbers of people – particularly young ones – science has 'disproved' religion, which religion is therefore discarded without examination. Those of us who call ourselves Christians have the hard but essential task of arguing, as loudly as we can, that science and faith are not incompatible, that in Paul's words, God has not left us without some clue to his nature in the benefits he bestows, sending rain from heaven and the crops in their seasons (Acts 14:17); indeed, ever since the world began, [God's] invisible attributers have been visible to the eye of reason, in the things he has made (Rom 1:20). Natural theology is more than an interesting idea; it is part of our mission.

The chemist Robert Boyle, one of the founders of the Royal Society, after a conversion from a nominal, unthinking Christianity to a committed faith, stressed the need for what he called 'an examined faith'. That sounds very like Francis Bacon's call for all to 'endeavour an endless progress or proficiencie' in God's Book of Works as well as his Book of Words, words reprinted at the beginning of the *Origin of Species*. Is not this urging us to study natural theology? I would like to think that Russell

Re Manning is helping us on this task with his magnificent compendium, albeit unhelped by its cost – but that is not his fault. He hasn't given us a simple 'how to' handbook, but he has provided us with considerable material to 'read, learn and inwardly digest.' He deserves out thanks.

REVIEWS

J. David Pleins, *The Evolving God. Charles Darwin on the Naturalness of Religion*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013; pp. 171; £18 Pbk. ISBN 978-1-6235-6247-2

REVIEWED BY JOHN HEDLEY BROOKE

On the subject of religion, Charles Darwin once wrote, ‘what my own views may be is a question of no consequence to anyone but myself.’ He was wrong of course. Given the damage he inflicted on conservative Christian theology, his own views on religious matters were potentially of great consequence and inevitably attracted curiosity. Despite Darwin’s diffidence, and despite the difficulties he experienced in articulating his private beliefs, we know there were many times during his life when, in his own words, he had ‘thought much about religion’. In his outstanding new book, David Pleins demonstrates just how much that was. From the early 1830s, when the voyage of *HMS Beagle* brought him face to face with the natives of Tierra del Fuego, Tahiti and New Zealand, until his death fifty years later, Darwin made a penetrating study of the origins of religion and its development. Better known as a proponent of biological evolution, Darwin becomes for Pleins the author of an empirically grounded theory of the evolution of religion.

For understandable reasons, curiosity about Darwin’s views has often been directed towards his own religious beliefs, how they were affected by his science and how

they changed with time. Did the young man who once owned at least a nominal Christianity, and who went to Cambridge with a view to becoming an Anglican clergyman, eventually become an atheist, having passed through various shades of deism and agnosticism? If so, what did he mean late in life when willing to describe himself as a 'theist'? Pleins provides answers to these questions, none of which is as simple as religious or anti-religious polemicists might hope. But these are not the issues with which he is primarily concerned. Indeed, he argues that Darwin's biographers have been too inured to a 'loss of faith' narrative, thereby missing something more important: 'What is consistently overlooked is that everywhere during his voyage Darwin encounters clues about religion as a human phenomenon and religion's probable evolution.' The question of how humans *became* religious was to stand 'at the heart of Darwin's intellectual quest', eventually finding public expression in *The Descent of Man* (1871). There he focused on the evolution of the moral sense and the role of religion in its evolutionary refinement. From Pleins' sensitive reading of the primary sources, Darwin the naturalist emerges as instigator of the natural history of religion.

We first follow Darwin on his voyage of discovery as he encountered a diversity of cultures at different stages of development, and with different degrees of sophistication in the expression of a religious sensibility. Pleins suggests that the superior standards of civilisation visible among the Tahitians compared with the New Zealand Maoris and especially the Fuegians provided

Darwin with concrete evidence that human traits once thought to be God-given were actually the products of the evolution of human societies. Darwin's experience of the sublime in the rain forests of South America and his first-hand experience of natural disasters (an earthquake that destroyed the cathedral in Concepcion) encouraged him to locate the origins of religion in experiences of wonder and terror, and in responses to mysterious phenomena that did, after all, have a natural explanation. A second chapter traces the sources of Darwin's disillusionment with traditional biblical religion and with concepts of revelation in general. There are rewarding pages here on the poignant exchanges between Charles and Emma Wedgwood, just before and just after their marriage, when Emma was already worrying that the rigorous appraisal of evidence, characteristic of a life in science, might take its toll. By the late 1830s when Darwin was making extensive notes on the transmutation of species, we also find him as the secretive author of metaphysical speculations, at which time his incipient theory of natural selection was already embracing human evolution. It is well known that in these metaphysical notes Darwin accuses himself of being a materialist and it is in this context, Pleins suggests, that the possibility took hold of a materialist theory of religion.

A fourth chapter explores the enthralling subject of Darwin's reflections on the moral sense and the extent to which the possession of an educated conscience might still be said to differentiate humans from other animals. Pleins rightly emphasises that, far from wishing to

relativize moral values, Darwin upheld the Golden Rule as the highest ethical principle. His distinctive contribution was to explain how it could have evolved naturally, given an instinct for sympathy and a deep human need for the approbation of others. Finally, with recourse to Darwin's correspondence in later years, Pleins considers the question with which Darwin struggled until his death: whether his naturalistic account of the origin and development of religion led to atheism, agnosticism or a new kind of theism. Darwin would say that his judgment 'often fluctuates', but Pleins sees enough evidence to affirm, *pace* Richard Dawkins, that Darwin made it possible to be an 'intellectually fulfilled theist'.

For a thoroughly researched and readable account of Darwin's thinking about religion, this is a book that could hardly be bettered. It is authoritatively and attractively written. Darwin scholars will be familiar with most of the material, but it is recast with original insight and to good effect. The author has a searching eye for detail, as in his account of the contrasts Darwin drew between the baleful impact of Catholic missionaries in parts of South America and the more successful civilising influence of the English missions in the South Pacific. A detail such as the decision Emma and Charles took not to have godparents for their children, since 'we both disliked the statement of believing anything for another', nicely brings out how, for both, reason was not to be denied a place in religion. On the vexed question of human uniqueness, we discover the delightful detail that

Darwin considered many birds to exhibit a better taste in music than humans. Critically, and seriously, Darwin believed that, 'with the more civilised races', the conviction of the existence of an all-seeing Deity, had been 'a potent influence on the advancement of morality'. Pleins sees an irony here, adding that Darwin placed 'the founders of beneficent religions' on a par with 'great philosophers and discoverers in science' as aiding in the 'progress of mankind in a far higher degree by their words than by leaving a numerous progeny'. In another nice detail we are shown Charles rescuing his grandfather Erasmus from the charge of atheism, reminding us that, for all his insight into the evolution of religion from its animalistic and savage roots, Charles denied ever having been an atheist himself.

Are there grounds for criticism? Some readers might find the author's claims for originality a touch overbearing. Even the most highly respected Darwin scholars, such as Janet Browne, Adrian Desmond and James Moore, do not escape censure for having missed the key to Darwin's abiding interest in religion as a phenomenon with its own evolution. Scholars who have already emphasised Darwin's early incorporation of humankind into his evolutionary scheme, are reproached for missing the fact that Darwin was even earlier at work on the evolution of human religiosity, between January and September 1837, as he prepared his book on the *Beagle* voyage for publication. It is almost as if Pleins, who is Professor of Religious Studies at Santa Clara University, USA, would have liked to show that Darwin

took his inspiration for the evolution of species from the evolution of religion. The pivotal word 'evolution', which Pleins rather takes for granted, can be a trap here. At the time it usually referred to the development of an embryo and it was not a word that Darwin favoured in his *On the Origin of Species*. Moreover, Darwin scholarship is accused of other sins of omission. 'Most scholars', Pleins reports, do not notice that just prior to his reading of Malthus, Darwin came across Auguste Comte's three-stage division of human history, which offered a compelling account of the rise and development of religious belief to which Darwin could immediately relate. In fact, scholars such as Edward Manier and S.S. Schweber were, in the late 1970s, already pointing to Comte's probable influence, Manier in his book *The Young Darwin and his Cultural Circle* (Reidel 1978), Schweber in a series of papers in the *Journal of the History of Biology*.

Darwin's putative debt to Comte does, however, raise a more fundamental question. How does Darwin's contribution to the academic study of religion compare with those of other social theorists and anthropologists of religion who were simultaneously developing their own models of cultural evolution? Pleins does indicate what Darwin eventually learned from John McLennan, Edward Tylor, Herbert Spencer and John Lubbock, but we are not given an evaluation of how their respective models, Darwin's included, have stood the test of time. This is, however, a minor cavil when set against such an accomplished study. Darwin once said that to gain the approbation of one's fellow men is the 'highest pleasure

on this earth'. On the strength of this book, it is a pleasure that Professor Pleins should certainly enjoy.

Ernst M. Conradie (ed.), *Creation and Salvation Volume 2: A Companion on Recent Theological Movements*. Zurich and Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2012; pp. 405, £29.95. Pbk, ISBN 978-3-643-90137-8.

REVIEWED BY CHRIS WILTHER

This book is a resource book intended to support and encourage Christian reflection on, and engagement with, environmental concerns. It offers a snapshot of theological thinking and writing on the relationship of creation and salvation, which is seen as a central issue in developing Christian responses to environmental issues. The book draws on theological work of the last hundred and fifty years, with an emphasis on work in recent decades. Another volume in the same series (*Creation and Salvation Volume 1*) offers a picture of classic Christian thought on the same relationship.

The starting premise for both books is that Christian responses to concerns about the environment must take account of Christian doctrines of creation and salvation. A doctrine of creation is significant because that doctrine underpins Christian reflection on the relationship between human beings and the world they inhabit; a doctrine of salvation is important because that doctrine underpins Christian reflection on overcoming the results of human sin in relating to the world we inhabit. The editor of this volume, Ernst Conradie, suggests in his

introduction that Christian theologians struggle to do justice to both central doctrines together. The material collected in this book supports this view.

The book consists of an introduction and fourteen chapters. Each chapter covers one strand of Christian tradition. Each is edited by one or more experts in theology of the tradition concerned. In each chapter we are given an introduction by the chapter editor(s), a number of short articles, and a conclusion which directs our attention to more recent developments in the tradition. The introduction, conclusion and articles all have short lists of recommended reading to help the enquirer go further.

In ten of the chapters the articles are overviews of the work of particular authors. Forty-five authors are reviewed in this way, and the spectrum includes many of those who would figure on any list of leading Christian theologians of modern times: for example, Lossky and Zizioulas, Rahner and Schillebeeckx, Tillich and Pannenberg, Barth and Moltmann, Aulen and Wingren are reviewed, with others in their particular theological traditions. More recent strands of thought which cross older boundaries are represented: six authors are reviewed under the heading of 'Science and Religion Discourse', three under the heading 'Process and Relational Theisms', five in a chapter headed Western Ecofeminist Theologies and three under the heading Latin American Theologies. Other movements are represented by articles which offer broader reviews of theological thought rather than reviews of the work of

specific authors. We have chapters on North American theologies from the Margin, African theological perspectives, Asian theological perspectives and Oceanic Readings. The final chapter explores the idea of global ecumenical theology.

In any collection of this kind it is easy to quibble with the selection of work reviewed and with the reviews. For this topic, the selection seems to be as representative as is possible in one volume covering theological movements across the world. Judging by the reviews of authors whose work I know, the writers are fair in their representation of the work concerned and judicious in their judgements. The writers of review articles and the editors of the chapters have done a good job in compressing complex thought into a small space, giving salient points without too much detail. With the reading lists, these chapters provide a comprehensive but manageable resource, as was intended.

In addition to being a resource for those who wish to explore what thinkers in, for example, Lutheran or Roman Catholic traditions, have said about the relationship of creation and salvation, the book should also serve as a provocation to think more widely. The review articles highlight aspects of the work of the thinkers concerned which may easily be overlooked. Moreover, insights are offered into current thinking and developments in traditions which many readers of this journal do not readily encounter. The book certainly gave me areas for further exploration, and raised many stimulating questions.

Among the questions is: what do we mean by the 'salvation' of the planet (or the cosmos). Ernst Conradie raises this question in his introduction to the volume: none of the work represented here addresses it. There is much consideration of how Christian thought can provide resources to help us save the planet from the depredations of human beings, and provide 'environmental justice'. Important though that is, even vital for human survival, this is a narrow and anthropocentric view of the theological issue. If God's creation is good, and salvation is concerned with redemption from sin, why does God need to save the planet, as distinct from creatures such as human beings? How is the salvation of all creation related to salvation through Jesus Christ?

Another question for me is: where is the interaction of science and theology in this discussion? Science and religion dialogue is represented here, but the reviewers agree that the writers discussed do not address the link between creation and salvation in any depth. Yet science should be an important partner in this discussion. For example, science describes for us a dynamic planet which changes independently of humanity as well as in response to human activity. Is this not relevant to discussion of creation and salvation?

Thirdly, I wonder about the link between the calls noted in this volume for Christian involvement in conservation of the natural world and 'ecojustice', which I support, and the daily lives of millions of people on this planet. When all the oppression has been overcome, all

the consumer greed fought, millions of people will still want to leave the land and the subsistence life of their forebears to enter the perceived paradise of urban living with modern conveniences. Apart from condemning their aspirations as manifestations of human greed, what does Christian theology say to them about creation and salvation?

I found this book heavy reading in places – there is much use of theological jargon – but I suspect most users of the volume will dip into it for specific purposes. For me, the effort of working through the whole book was very stimulating, and I recommend this to those with time on their hands.

The book is volume 6 of a series under the umbrella title *Studies in Religion and the Environment*, published by LIT Verlag on behalf of the European Forum for the Study of Religion and the Environment. The editors and publisher are to be congratulated on an exemplary product: for example I noted very few typographical errors.

Ronald E. Osborn, *Death Before the Fall: Biblical Literalism and the Problem of Animal Suffering*, Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014, pp. 179, £15 Pbk, ISBN 9780830840465.

Ralph H. Armstrong, *Christianity in Evolution: Discovering the Harmony of Science and Faith*, Los Angeles: Cathedral Center Press, 2011, pp. 336, \$18.99 Pbk, ISBN 9780982758410.

REVIEWED BY BETHANY SOLLEREDER

In the highly-acclaimed *Death Before the Fall* Ronald Osborn has produced an often brilliant and sometimes deeply puzzling book.

The brilliance is amply demonstrated in Part 1, 'On Literalism', devoted to a multi-faceted critique of literalistic readings of Genesis held by young earth and young life creationists. After a brief reflection on being part of the Seventh Day Adventist community, in which evolution is a highly contested issue, Osborn begins by presenting a skilful reading of Genesis 1 & 2. The next eight chapters point out literary and social issues that emerge from trying to read Genesis literalistically. Osborn shows extremely ably how young earth readings are based upon foundationalist and rationalist presuppositions. Tracing the Enlightenment roots of these philosophical positions, Osborn points out the inherent and self-referential problems such approaches take. Yet he does not stop with philosophical critiques, but traces how these philosophical and hermeneutical choices affect

the theological, spiritual, and pastoral worlds of their readers. Fear and either/or mindsets begin to dominate, not just Scriptural interpretations, but whole community identities. Particular readings of Genesis become shibboleths of community belonging, and lines of authority emerge which then in turn politicise the Bible. 'The heart of modern creationism,' Osborn writes, 'is not a doctrine but a method' (75). It is this method that Osborn uncovers so convincingly in the first part of this book.

The scope of these chapters is extremely broad. One moves with dazzling rapidity from philosophical discussions of modernity to discussions of how the self-understanding of the scientific endeavour (referencing Popper, Kuhn, and Lakatos) rules out young earth creationism as a progressive scientific paradigm. Then one is plunged into psychological discussions of identity foreclosure and then on to gnosticism. The material is engaging, and the argument is often punctuated with personal reflections that keep the discussion from becoming too abstract. However, the book is heavy with philosophical terms, includes occasional untranslated Latin terms, and has references familiar to an academic crowd but which might leave many readers scratching their heads. One example is a reference to Ivan Karamazov's 'ticket' in Dostoevsky without explaining the context in which Ivan returns it (152). So at times the discussion might be difficult, but the pace and engrossing style keep this book accessible to most readers.

The second part of the book is devoted to the question of animal suffering, which Osborn takes to be the most powerful argument against accepting evolution. I found that many of the puzzling aspects of the book emerged in this section of the book. Part 2, 'On Animal Suffering,' begins with the tenth chapter showing how if non-human animal suffering is a problem for those who accept evolution, it is equally a problem for young earth creationists. In a young earth creationist world we end in one of three situations: a world stuck in stasis because nothing dies, a world where God has inserted the appearance of age and decay (making God seemingly deceptive), or a world where God causes billions of animals to suffer innocently due to a curse they did not earn. None of these are theologically satisfying.

In chapter 11 Osborn spends a great deal of time laying out C.S. Lewis's view that animal suffering is the result of demonic corruption, calling it a 'midrash' of Genesis. This is puzzling because Osborn's own reading of Genesis leads him to the conclusion that there is 'not a hint' of any such cosmic battle or corruption (34). Actually, Osborn critiques Lewis's position so thoroughly one is led to wonder why so much time is spent on it. Chapter 12 investigates the divine speeches in Job, where Osborn comes to the conclusion that the world is 'mysteriously, terribly and wondrously God's own' (152) and that such an untamed creation will never make full sense to us, or be tidied into neat theological categories.

Osborn does not end on such an apophatic note, but attempts to sketch in chapter 13 an approach derived

from the kenosis of God. God's action in Christ, in both incarnation and death on the cross, leads us to understand that God does not control or coerce—does not rule by overpowering subjects—but by enabling them in love. By extending this same concept to the natural world, we can understand the suffering of animals as a result of their own growth process and the freedom of love given to the natural world to develop along its own—often violent—lines. While this is the most valuable chapter in this section, I found it puzzling that Osborn engages with so little of the literature available on animal suffering. Of the two most important books, Christopher Southgate's *The Groaning of Creation* (2008) and Michael Murray's *Nature Red in Tooth and Claw* (2008), there is no mention at all. Nicola Hoggard Creegan's *Animal Suffering and the Problem of Evil* (2013) is perhaps too recent to be mentioned, but many other prominent theologians one might expect to hear from are silent, including Holmes Rolston III, Jay McDaniel, Denis Edwards, Philip Clayton, and Michael Lloyd. Osborn's case is built essentially on work from John Polkinghorne and John Haught alone. The result is a disappointingly thin treatment of half the book's title question.

Osborn's final chapter is a short reflection linking together the concepts of Sabbath and animal rights. Sabbath invites us into a sacramental drama of rest, renewal, and justice which can concretely change the way we live toward the rest of creation. Osborn ends with a strong challenge to reflect on how Christians who have

been so caught up in arguing over how the creation began are ignoring its present murder.

Death Before the Fall is personal, engaging, and has many important things to say about the scope, logic, and impact of biblical literalism. The things that Osborn misses, particularly in reference to animal suffering, do not undermine the value of the book although readers will likely find the first part of the book a more valuable resource than the second.

Ralph Armstrong sets out to discover the harmony of science and faith in this ambitious book. As a psychiatrist, he applies his knowledge of self-conflict and pastoral counselling to the questions of science and faith, seeking to find an explanation for the claims of Christianity in light of modern learning.

The first half of the book is a description of the natural world, spanning from the development of prokaryotes and plant behaviour to primates. Filled with beautiful pictures and accessible descriptions, this section contains many wonderful and awe-inspiring panoramas of the natural world, and is an excellent introduction to various sciences, from palaeontology to genetics. However, the effectiveness of this section is somewhat compromised by bold theological statements that are often appended to the end of sections without proper integration or exploration. A good example of Armstrong's application of theology to science comes in chapter 6, where he speaks about the self-conflictual nature of life. After pages of fascinating and helpful descriptions of how our DNA is in a constant battle with viruses and other

transposable elements that seek to prey upon our body's resources, Armstrong claims 'This chapter is, of course, a discussion on a biological level of what is known in Christianity as "sin"' (188). The reader is taken aback, since the descriptions so far have not extended beyond basic biological descriptions. Then, in the next paragraph, Armstrong claims 'God saw that everything he made was good (integrated, self-cohesive, inherently constructive.' (188). The footnote placed after this sentence simply says 'Genesis 1' without any indication of how he arrived at this very specific definition of good: a definition which would be certainly contested by biblical scholars. Throughout the book, large theological claims like this are made constantly without support by adequate exegetical or theological explorations.

The second half of the book deals with Scripture and the Christian life. One of the most interesting and innovative parts of this book is the application of a psychotherapy technique called 'Mentalizing' as a hermeneutical lens for Scripture. A type of narrative criticism, it involves an empathetic reading of the characters of Scripture, asking questions of intent, motivation, and character particularly in reference to shame and self-conflict. Perhaps able to be construed as a 21st century, scientific version of *Lectio*, Armstrong's approach offers an interesting approach for exegetical work. While the theological reflections in the second half of the book will have little to offer scholars, Armstrong's thoughts on prayer, meditation and healing are intricately bound up with his own story of struggle and

growth. This adds a compelling human dimension to the section, and invites the reader into the author's hopes, fears, and conflicts. The author's narrative section invites the reader to 'mentalize' his journey, and so to learn the very skill he advocates for a wider reading of Scripture.

The last two chapters look at the question of suffering and the goal of the Christian life. The last chapter in particular is a history and defence of attachment-based psychotherapy, blended with the themes of prayer, forgiveness and servanthood. Once again, the process of mentalizing takes front stage as Armstrong outlines how it is a key to overcoming self-conflict. Since self-conflict is also Armstrong's definition of sin, he can claim 'the end result of effective mentalization is communion with one another and with God. This is salvation.' (336) Theologically problematic as this stand-alone claim is, the concept of mentalizing—'attending to mental states in self and others' (321)—is perhaps not so unique to Armstrong's approach as he may think. Compare it, for example, to Simone Weil's insight that 'prayer consists of attention. It is the orientation of all the attention of which the soul is capable towards God.'¹ Armstrong suggests that the same attention turned towards our neighbour is a form of prayer and an act of love, that helps to heal childhood trauma and bring the believer to wholeness.

As an exploration of the Christian faith from the vantage point of psychotherapy, this book offers some helpful insights, such as the practice of mentalizing as a

¹ Simone Weil, *Waiting on God* (London: Fontana Press, 1951), 66.

form of prayer. Armstrong's approach is warm and accessible, and the illustrations from his own life bring depth and colour to his points. However, as a more general guide to integrating science and faith, the book lacks clarity and theological precision. While Armstrong offers genuinely helpful descriptions of scientific realities and an interesting approach to the blending of psychology and hermeneutics, his theological and methodological simplicity often fail to do justice to the complexities at hand.

David P. Gushee, *The Sacredness of Human Life: Why an Ancient Biblical Vision is Key to the World's Future*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2013, pp. 461, £23.99 Hbk. ISBN 978-0-8028-4420-0.

REVIEWED BY MICHAEL MARSH

So, why another book about the *sacredness* of human life? And why not just the common or garden *sanctity* of more everyday, common parlance? And, come what may, is it not true that each of these terms over recent times have become mere politico-religious slogans pulled out of storage when either abortion or end-of-life issues are in the rhetorical lime-light? – meaningless baggage which, in fact, actually turns out to jeopardise 'the ancient moral tradition which affirms the sacred worth of each and every person' (2).

It is from this perspective that David Gushee, Distinguished Professor of Christian Ethics and Director,

Center for Theology & Public Life, Mercer University (Atlanta, GA) sets out his stall to investigate the antithesis and hence to reclaim the age-old biblical tradition of the *sacredness* of human life. He regrets the 'crass utilitarian' stance of our present culture in what passes for 'public moral reflection', instead calling for the 'sturdiest possible understanding of the sacred worth' of all of us (3-4).

For a moment, it is very worthwhile revisiting his etymological foray (Chapter 1) into the meanings of sanctity, sacred, sacredness, in addition to dignity. The Latin idea of *sanctus* derives from be(com)ing holy, pure, hallowed or pious. Conversely, sacred has another separate derivation from the (Anglo-Saxon) verb 'sacre' meaning to render someone or something, that is, to consecrate, to worship, or to dedicate. Thus, rather than to be taken as synonymous, as frequently done in casual speech, Gushee suggests that sanctity implies a moral connotation as a condition *achieved* by the subject while sacred, viewed within this more subtle distinction, more strongly reflects an *ascribed* status, a status given and thus received from another through an act of consecration. In that sense, he sees all humans as having been consecrated to a special status by means of divine intervention, and which thus defines the Christian understanding of the sacredness of all human life (17ff).

Originally, dignity meant elevation, rank or nobility, as Jeremy Waldron has recently pointed out [*Acta Juridica* 1 (2008), 72], and is not biblical, but Greco-Roman in origin, although often associated today with sanctity of the body.

Legally, dignity now commonly is associated with the grounding and content of 'rights' and its implied relationship to the worth of human beings and thus how they should be treated. Curiously, the idea of a secular *respect* for human life, as also an established facet of dignity, is not far removed from an assertion of the sacredness of human life – and of all individuals – whatever their status in the world. And that sacredness, declares Gushee (25), can only be conferred from beyond humanity by God, as through his revelation of Jesus, as the divine Word. Historically, he also finds that the assumptions about all these terms is not a contemporary phenomenon, but one based throughout time on biblical reference.

In tracing that referential biblical heritage, we are introduced to Numbers 5:6-7 where damage done to another is regarded as a sin, and therefore no mere human interaction. And from that referential frame, Gushee evinces four principles: that God is creator of all; has compassion on humanity, particularly suffering humanity; that legal edicts underpin those assertions, thereby lastly confirming a prophetic vision of creation's wholeness. The biblical declaration is that God is Creator, Sustainer, Liberator, Law-maker, Judge and Deliverer (Chapter 2, 37-8), each of which is further developed throughout this chapter.

In the life of Jesus and in his inclusive ministry here on earth, as depicted throughout the gospels, there is a re-affirmation of those principles (Chapter 3). That inclusiveness was manifested through an unwavering

demonstration of a universal hospitality – towards women; in welcoming the stragglers on the margins of society as children of God – as against local exclusive readings of the scriptures; in sitting down with ‘sinners’ to show that divine love and forgiveness could easily reach all people; in the blessing of children as images of the Godhead; and in touching lepers he again revealed that the ill and dying are not to be excluded from care and respect. Jesus did not come as a revolutionary to overturn what prevailed in contemporary society, but demonstrated against all pervading mores and customs that what was important was to show, in his behaviour, paradigms that all people are of value, and hence sacred objects of divine love (88ff). The Incarnation – of Man for man – is the exemplary demonstration, par excellence, of that divine love for the created world and those living within it. And that moral vision was practised by the earliest formed ‘churches’ (Chapter 4), as against the accepted norms of the Greco-Roman empire.

Those attitudes are exemplified in the writings of the early Fathers against war and taking part in militia forces; in urging followers of Christ not to engage in abortion, or the killing of young children, especially females; in denouncing all forms of killing, including gladiatorial tournament and the eating of slaughtered animal flesh; and to be at peace and to offer love towards everyone. Thus Lactantius, who viewed any such behaviour as unlawful against anyone ‘willed by God to be a sacred animal’ (128-9). And there is no doubt that this was what was practised, as seen in much

disinterested Roman literature of the time: 'Christians' were seen to do things and to live in sharp contrast to the common ways of life that were in vogue while experiencing, as a result, relative social marginality. This was a true living in the shadow of the Kingdom, and Jesus was not just another person, but a Buberian 'Thou' (p 139) who was loved, adored, worshipped and cherished, and whose second coming was awaited with great expectation.

In the ensuing 'fateful transition to Christendom' (Chapter 5), the now fully established Church would achieve – through its converts a numerical and politically-based power – the 'Constantinian transition'. And with the absence of the expected Second Coming, the idea of the church had to be transposed into newer vistas, but with a loss of the earlier church's sense of moral vision (163). That loss of moral vision is explored (Chapter 6) through three horrifying, chilling case-studies as exemplars of the corruption, aggressiveness, and inhumanity to other human beings which progressively have arisen and flourished in abundance. The Crusades with their bloodshed and savage violence (this 'holocaust' – [sic], 186) against the infidel and the pacifying role of S. Francis: the Colonisation of Africa, the Americas, and Caribbean involving mass slaughter, enslavement, torture, rape and much more evil (188) and the sorrow of Las Casas; and Christian anti-semitism, from which the contempt phrase – *adversus Judaeos* – grew up.

We see, in particular, the increasing influence of the Baptist dissenter Richard Overton (209-212) who declared that all non-christians, in view of their God-derived worth and status before God, and, because of their basic rights as individuals, should never be coerced into another belief system, such fundamental ideas concerning religious liberty and freedom ultimately becoming part of the US First Amendment (212). The moral ground of early Christianity was progressively replaced by philosophical and political 'rights' thinking, through Locke and Kant (Chapter 7) and although some semblance to Christian values was asserted, its ethic was sheared from its theological premises: reason trumped over revelation and bible.

This concept of universal rights and dignity, modified by Darwin's erosion of human uniqueness, the social norm of 'survival of the fittest', emerging scientific rationalism, Marxist ideology and Nietzschean 'Death of God' proclamations (chapters 8, 9) led to much cleansing of undesirables during the 20th Century, with over 100,000 million people killed (305) as human worth and value were unashamedly de-sacralised. Post-war reconstruction (Chapter 10) sought to reverse some of the worst trends, together with rights declarations, and specific rights for women, the gay communities, animals, and emerging concern for the global environment and the continuing dismissive attitudes from governments downwards towards these particular issues. More recently, there have been entrenched debates about abortion, nuclear stockpiling, progressive abolition of the

death penalty, and concern over biomedical technologies all of which, in their various ways, have articulated concerns not only for people, but specific groups – especially those unable to speak up for themselves. These ongoing debates are, in the book, listed rather than extensively evaluated.

But Gushee warns against the narrow, self-interestedness of a purely sacredness-of-human-life ethic, realising that such an exclusiveness blunts the ontological realities between humans, other mammals, and the rest of creation, and, our stewardship of the world as against its vicious exploitation of resource and its fecundity (Chapter 11). Using the Genesis model, he asserts that dominion is not the way forward (as it has been in the past) but a Jesus-based humble service (393-9) towards what we have been given, and given warrant in its use and supervision: all this must be seen as a God-given directive as Creator of all. Rather like the Noahide Ark, the survival of Creation and ‘all that therein is’ is subject to divine fiat (Psalms 8; 104). Our challenge is to work within, and for, a sacred universe of moral obligation (409). We only need to look around for evidence which encourages that viewpoint, and to know that our duty is the outcome of that challenge.

This is a serious examination of the precept, not of mere human sanctity, but of *sacredness*, a word which pulls us up somewhat in our recognising that not only human beings, but the world and all other living creatures within it, demand a divinely-inspired moral respect. It is this survey and the accompanying due

respect for that paradigm which makes this book special and one which focuses the attention on these important issues, as they have been treated throughout history. It is well worth buying and reading, and would make a useful present for all thinking men and women – everywhere.

REVIEWS REPRODUCED FROM ELSEWHERE

J. B. Stump and Alan G. Padgett (eds.) *The Blackwell Companion to Science and Christianity*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2012. 644pp. hb. £120.00. ISBN 978-1-4443-3571-2.

REVIEWED BY KEITH FOX

This review first appeared in *Science and Christian Belief* 25:2 (2013), 167. Reproduced with kind permission from the author and editor of *Science and Christian Belief*.

This edited volume consists of fifty-four chapters, each written by a different author and assembled into eleven sections, and covers the breadth of dialogue between the Christian faith and science. The various sections cover: history, methodology, cosmology, evolution, natural theology, human sciences, bioethics, metaphysics, the mind and theology. The editors state that they have chosen to consider the subject from a philosophical and historical perspective.

The authors come from a wide range of theological and scientific perspectives, and the editors make no attempt to endorse or comment on one or another position. Chapters offering contradictory views are therefore juxtaposed without comment (e.g. intelligent design alongside theistic evolution). Surprisingly, for a volume with this title, one finds that some of the authors are neither Christians (some are atheists) nor scientists. Indeed to the question 'Does the Universe need God?' Sean Carroll answers 'no'. The uninformed reader could

therefore be left confused by such a pot-pourri of ideas, though of course the specialist academic might find this a useful resource. Each chapter is only ten to twelve pages long and includes references and further reading. The short length of each chapter does not leave any space for elaborate introductions and each time the reader is thrown in at the deep end. Some chapters stretched my mind, while to be honest, as a biochemist, I found others incomprehensible, though doubtless other specialists will prefer a different selection. A few chapters were frustrating from a Christian perspective and appeared to deny some fundamental tenets of orthodox belief. Rather a large number of chapters were written by philosophers, using their specialist jargon.

While some chapters are rather abstract or only remotely connected to the subject (sociology, economics, and feminist views for example), there are some notable omissions, with relatively minor discussion of topics such as anthropology, consciousness and neuroscience, and only one chapter considering ecology and the environment.

The final section considers the views of six contemporary writers on science and religion (de Chardin, Torrance, Peacocke, Barbour, Pannenberg and Polkinghorne). 'Contemporary' is an odd word here as the first three are deceased! Nonetheless these have all had an impact on science and religion over the past eighty years and this section provides a brief summary of the different ways that they have engaged with the debates, though the authors of these chapters are not

entirely sympathetic to the views of the people they are describing.

This is not a reference book for the faint hearted and it is clearly intended for the upper end of the academic audience. There are some excellent nuggets hidden here, some of which are written by regular *Science and Christian Belief* contributors, but they are buried among a morass of others. This is a book to recommend for the reference section of the college library, but hardly one for your personal collection or bedtime reading!

PUBLICATIONS BY MEMBERS OF THE FORUM

Robin Attfield, *Environmental Ethics: An Overview for the Twenty-First Century*, second edition, fully revised and expanded, (Cambridge: UK, Boston: Mass., Polity, 2014).

Rodney Holder, *Big Bang Big God: A Universe Designed for Life?* (Lion Hudson, 2013).

BOOKS AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW:

Gregg D. Caruso *Science and Religion: Five Questions* (Automatic Press, 2014).

P. D. Hemsley, *The Big Picture: An Honest Examination of God, Science and Purpose* (eLectio Publishing, 2013).

Barbara Nicolescu, *From Modernity to Cosmodernity: Science, Culture and Spirituality* (SUNY Press, 2014).

Roger Scruton, *The Soul of the World* (Princeton University Press, 2014).

The Editor welcomes offers to review these publications. Please contact her on L.Hickman@newman.ac.uk

NOTE: This Journal aims to publish original and reprinted reviews of books published in the science-religion area. The Editor regrets that she is not able to publish, or enter into dialogue on, original articles not tied to a book in the field.