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## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

**Robin Attfield** is a Quaker, and was a Lecturer in Philosophy at Cardiff University from 1968 to 2012, and a Professor of Philosophy from 1991. He has published *Creation, Evolution and Meaning* (Ashgate, 2006), *Ethics: An Overview* (Bloomsbury, 2012) and *Environmental Ethics* (2nd edn.) (Polity, 2014).

**Peter N. Jordan** is a doctoral candidate in Studies in Religion at the University of Queensland. His research focuses on the intersections of Christian theology and natural philosophy in seventeenth-century England.

**David Knight** is emeritus Professor of History & Philosophy of Science at Durham University, where he has taught since 1964. His books include *Science and Spirituality: the volatile connection* (Routledge 2004), and *Voyaging in Strange Seas: the great revolution in science* (Yale U.P. 2014). He has done four stints as churchwarden at St Oswald's, Durham, over the years since 1972.

**Juuso Loikkanen** is a PhD student in Systematic Theology (and a part-time PhD student in Mathematics) at the University of Eastern Finland.

**Philip Luscombe** trained as a physicist, and taught theology for many years at Durham and in the Cambridge Theological Federation. He now works as a Methodist Minister in Kent.

**David McLoughlin** is senior lecturer in Theology at Newman University, Birmingham. His primary areas of research interest are radical Christian worker movements and Catholic Social Teaching.

**Jeffrey Robinson** studied biochemistry at the University of St. Andrews and gained a PhD in Zoology from the University of Edinburgh. After holding a variety of posts in St. Andrews and the University of Edinburgh, he retired in 2006 and has since been able to pursue his interest in science and religion more fully. He has been the secretary of the Science and Religion Forum since 2011.

## EDITORIAL

2014 has seen some thrilling scientific technological achievements. The most spectacular has to be the Rosetta mission which, after a journey of 6.4 billion miles, landed a probe on Comet 67P with the aim of discovering more about how our sun and planets formed, and about the origin of life. After touchdown the probe found organic molecules in the comet's atmosphere, a discovery that chimes with the finding of iso-propyl cyanide, a complex organic molecule, located earlier in the year in a giant gas cloud at the centre of the galaxy. It seems the building blocks of life are spread out throughout space, a discovery that inches us further away from our long-established theological geocentricism. Things didn't go entirely to plan on the Rosetta mission with Newton's third law of motion causing major problems in the tiny gravity of the comet when the probe failed to anchor itself properly.

Rosetta's grappling with the reality of this law brings to mind our most recent conference on the theme of Laws of Nature: Laws of God? which was held in Leeds in September of this year. Hilary Martin and Neil Spurway kindly contribute a report of the proceedings and we look forward to the printed volume of this thoroughly enjoyable event. I am pleased to report too that the book based on our conference from the previous year, *Chance or Providence: Religious Perspectives on Divine Action* published by Cambridge Scholars Press is out now.

Our reviews cover a stimulating variety of subjects this time. Jeffrey Robinson prompts us to think about the value of myth in his discussion of Rowan Williams' *The Lion's World*. The book serves as a guide to the spiritual messages implicit in C.S. Lewis' Narnia chronicles and Robinson introduces us to some often missed and overlooked themes, reminding us that the stories are intensely theologically challenging: as much for an adult readership as for children.

David Knight provides our article review for this issue. His contribution is a critical engagement with Andrew Steane's *Faithful to Science*, which incorporates elements of Romantic thought in a rebuttal of naturalism while drawing us towards alternative models of creation such as that of making music. Through his review, Knight raises important questions about the nature of natural theology; a theme continued in Robin Attfield's review of Alister McGrath's *Why God Won't Go Away*. Attfield offers some exacting challenges to McGrath's idea of a human 'homing instinct' for God and his treatment of the Cognitive Science and Religion while warning us about accepting too readily McGrath's suggestion that Big Bang cosmology can be easily harmonised with the Christian doctrine of creation.

Peter Jordan's review of Michael Hanby's *No God, No Science?* raises some pertinent questions for Hanby's account of creation. Hanby's charting of a dramatic change in this doctrine in early modern theology leads him to endorse a vastly different natural theology to that proposed by Paley - one which rejects the positioning of

doctrines of creation in opposition to scientific explanations. David McLoughlin reviews both of Ernst Conradie's *Creation and Salvation* volumes, giving a helpful account of what are two comprehensive and valuable texts on the subject. The theme of natural theology is again picked up by Juuso Loikkanen in his review of Roger Scruton's *The Soul of the World*. Scruton presents a way of rediscovering the sacred and 'making room for the religious worldview' that can encompass both science and our aesthetic experiences.

In our final review, Philip Luscombe presents an incisive account of David Wilkinson's *Science, Religion and the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence*, encouraging us to face some of the theological implications raised by the attempt to find life beyond our own planet. The very search itself has a profound impact on our conceptions of creation and redemption and Luscombe's review encourages us to think about an often overlooked area at the interface of science and theology. Wilkinson's book is particularly timely given the historic Rosetta mission. It is doubtful that the mission itself will raise much novel theological debate but it reminds us that what might be called the theology of space travel has much scope for development. Doctrines of incarnation and creation, and theologies of human nature and uniqueness have much to gain from conversation with this thrilling scientific enterprise. The following reviews will, I'm sure, provide some inspiration.

## CONFERENCE REPORT

### **Laws of Nature, Laws of God? Leeds Trinity University, 4th-6th September, 2014.**

REPORT BY HILARY MARTIN AND NEIL SPURWAY

This was the theme of the Forum's 39<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference. The venue was Leeds Trinity University, a delightful modern campus in quite rural surroundings on the edge of the city. Originating in the 1960s as separate men's and women's Catholic teacher training colleges, Trinity only achieved full university status in 2012. Accommodation was A1, food most pleasant, and every member of staff extremely friendly. Despite shaky WiFi, it must surely be short-listed, among those we have visited, as a contender for the title "the venue with the mostest"!

The first evening's talks were reflections on scientific law by philosophers of science. Michela Massimi (Senior Lecturer in Philosophy of Science, Edinburgh) described how Kant, in his early writings, responded to Newton's understanding of the 'Laws of Nature'. Newton's view was seen as 'top-down', being grounded in the Judeo-Christian sense of God as 'Law-giver' in both the governing of society and the operation of the physical universe. The progression of thought is thus from universals to the states of affairs that exist in the natural world. Laws, for Newton, necessitated such states of affairs by prescribing how nature should behave.

Kant, although a massive admirer of Newton's achievement, formed a different view of laws. He

adopted a 'bottom-up' approach, with physical necessities grounded in nature's capabilities and their causal powers. He saw events as the manifestations of forces and the mechanisms of causality. Scientific laws did not prescribe but describe these operations.

Nancy Cartwright, FBA (Professor of Philosophy, Durham, UK and San Diego, California) came next, as the Gowland Lecturer. She presented a model which was clearly closer to Kant's than to Newton's. Laws, for her, are grounded in 'nothing but empirical facts about this world': they are not 'governing' or causal agents, so they do not make things happen. Nevertheless, they are not simply empirical generalisations about 'just one bloody thing after another', as Hume had urged. In a way which corresponded more closely to Aristotle's thinking than to Hume's – despite the apparent risk of reneging on the Scientific Revolution! – she contended that events occur by means of powers in nature. Scientific laws describe some of the 'rough and ready regularities' which result from these powers, but it is the mechanisms which are central, not the laws.

The next day's main speakers were both physicists. Eric Priest, FRS, Professor Emeritus in the School of Mathematics and Statistics, St Andrews, presented a vividly illustrated account of his work on the sun, and linked this to his religious life which is largely grounded in the beauty and elegance of creation and the rational laws which underlie the processes of the physical world. This was a distinct move to a more Platonic approach to the laws of nature. Drawing upon the deep questions of

why things are as they are, Prof Priest pointed out that no mathematical system contains a proof of its own consistency – there are always un-provable propositions. In our personal beliefs we can only ask whether God's existence is more consistent with our observations and experience than not. In science and religion, most questions asked are not scientific. Calling for a humble, open and non-dogmatic approach to science and religion, he affirmed the importance of intuition, imagination, beauty and wonder in scientific as well as religious understanding.

Tom McLeish, FRS, is Professor of Soft-Matter Physics and Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research, Durham. He brought together the worlds of science and religion with reference particularly to the Book of Job. The move from ignorance and fear, through to reconciliation with nature and matured wisdom has been a theme in both science and religion, making science, in this approach, a deeply religious activity. He illustrated this tradition with some fascinating material on the 13<sup>th</sup> century bishop and scientist, Robert Grosseteste. A reappraisal of science culturally, theologically and anthropologically is possible if we see science as part of the long story of 'participative reconciliation' of our minds with the world. In a true 'Theology of Science' both the destructive and the constructive understandings of nature would figure, the path to wisdom being one which recognises a balance of order and chaos, and the role and work of love, in the human response to nature.

The last morning was devoted to historical studies. John Henry, Professor of the History of Science, Edinburgh, described how the modern concept of 'Laws of Nature' began in theology, not science, and had been used as such in a vague way since Ancient times. The modern notion, of laws capable of explaining and defining specific physical phenomena, was first developed by Descartes in the first half of the 17th century and triumphantly established as a defining feature of scientific knowledge in Newton's *Principia* of 1687. Here the laws were seen as secondary causes, necessarily dependent upon the primary cause, God. This way of conceiving natural laws, as causative and explanatory features of the physical world, continued in the conceptions of devout scientific thinkers until the 19<sup>th</sup> century. By contrast, thinkers who wished to deny any role to a divinity at work in the world were obliged to develop a different concept of laws of nature – the concept we had already met that they were merely shorthand ways of referring to regularities in nature.

In the final plenary talk Dr Jon Topham, Senior Lecturer in the History of Science, Leeds, gave us a case study – the Bridgewater Treatises (1833-40), eight series of lectures 'On the Power, Wisdom and Goodness of God, as manifested in the Creation'. One lecturer, Whewell, couldn't understand why everyone didn't see that Laws of Nature were consilient with divine action. The geologist, Buckland, gave a wholly historical account of events in deep time, but represented them as the unrolling of a Divine Plan. However, not all the lecturers

adopted this kind of Natural Theological stance: Prout, for example, considered inexplicable phenomena and vital forces more supportive of religion. Even on the side of the angels, there has always been diversity.

There was much meat among the Short Papers too. Dr Fraser Watts (Cambridge) spoke on 'Lawfulness, Biological Contextuality and a Theology of Interdependence', and Rev Dr John Emmett on 'Laws of Nature, Laws of God: Perceptions and Pitfalls'. Those two speakers are, of course, long-established senior members of the Forum. Another senior but less well-known figure, Dr John Lockwood (Leeds) asked 'How does Prayer fit into Laws of Nature, Laws of God?', while a welcome newcomer, also from Leeds, Dr Richard Gunton, wondered whether 'Fine-tuning Arguments for the Existence of God' were 'a Shot in the Foot?' Most welcomingly, however, we also had three Short Papers from overseas. Mr Juuso Loikkanen came from Finland to ask: 'Intelligent Design and Methodological Naturalism – are they Really Not Compatible?'. Dr Gavin Hitchcock, who joined us in 2007 while lecturing in Zimbabwe, is now at the University of Stellenbosch; his topic was 'Laws of Mathematics, Laws of God?' And we had the pleasure of hearing another paper from our most regular overseas visitor of recent years, Dr Fabien Revol (Lyon); he spoke on 'The Link between the Concepts of Laws of Nature and Continuous Creation'. Most satisfyingly, Fabien was subsequently welcomed onto the Committee of the Forum, though this was at the expense of saying

'Fairwell' from that body to its longest-standing member, Rev Dr Paul Beetham.

Yet one more delight remains to be mentioned. Short, but not a paper, Emeritus Prof Geoffrey Cantor (Leeds) spoke after the Conference Dinner, implicitly on the poet's line:

'An undevout astronomer is mad'.

Many treasures in a splendid venue. If you missed it, make sure you come next time!

### **THE ARTHUR PEACOCKE PRIZE 2014**

The Committee members of the Science and Religion Forum are pleased to announce that the 2014 Peacocke Essay Prize has been awarded to Danielle Adams of the University of Leeds for her essay 'God and the Laws of Nature: Can the Problem with John Foster's account lead us towards a better theory?' Many congratulations go to Danielle for her excellent essay, the abstract of which is printed below. In recognition of the high quality of their submissions, honorary membership of the Science and Religion Forum goes to Michael Ashfield of the University of Southern California, Michael Hayes of the University of Kansas, Hans van Eyghen of the University of Amsterdam, Benjamin Page from Oxford, Deb Shepherd from Fuller Theological Seminary, Steve Miller of KCL, James Orr of St. John's, Cambridge and Sarah Lane of the University of Edinburgh. Congratulations go

to all our prizewinners and we welcome them to the Forum.

**Danielle Adams, *God and the Laws of Nature: Can the Problem with John Foster's account lead us towards a better theory? (Abstract)***

Many patterns of regularity hold across space and time. There are uniformities in the way objects behave in the world. Many find it intuitive that there must be an *explanation* for these causal regularities. The explanation most commonly cited is that particular laws of nature hold and govern the behaviour of objects. Traditional theism, however, maintains an additional principle regarding natural explanation, viz. the Sovereignty Thesis (ST). ST maintains that God is the creator of all existence, and that all that exists is under God's guidance and control. It follows from ST that God must somehow be responsible for any regularities and natural laws existing in our universe. Therefore, the theist needs an account of the relation between (i) regularities, (ii) laws of nature, and (iii) God. In this paper, I critically examine one such account, given by John Foster in *The Divine Lawmaker*. Foster holds a realist, antireductionist account of laws. I argue that this aspect of his account is problematic since it is in tension with ST. However, the insurmountable challenges Foster's account faces point us towards a more promising account, one that endorses dispositional essentialism. I end by discussing some potential lines of objection to my proposal, and show that each of these can be met.

## A BOOK THAT MADE A DIFFERENCE

**Rowan Williams, *The Lion's World*, London: SPCK, 2012.**

REVIEWED BY JEFFREY ROBINSON

When the SRF conference took place in Oxford in 2011 Blackwell's Bookshop kindly agreed to mount a book exhibition in their Broad Street shop. The exhibition was supposed to feature books relating to the conference theme, but fortunately, as it turned out, it was much more wide ranging than that. By the time I visited the exhibition, late on the second day of the conference, many of the books relating to the conference theme had gone, and I spent more time looking at the other books on display. That is how I came to discover a book by Rowan Williams called *The Lion's World*. This is a smallish book in terms of number of pages, but a large book in terms of content. Reading it was for me like a breath of fresh air.

*The Lion's World* sets out an analysis of the Narnia stories written by C.S. Lewis, although it also relates to key themes in Lewis's other novels (which include, somewhat surprisingly, a trilogy with a science fiction theme) and in his life and work. For those of you who are not familiar with C.S. Lewis's novels the *Chronicles of Narnia* are about the magical land of Narnia and the adventures of the children who by accident or desire enter it (not the same children in each novel). The novels can be read on different levels, and whilst they might appear at first sight to be straightforward fantasy adventure stories they have a number of underlying

spiritual themes. The key figure in these novels, and the only one to appear in all seven, is the Lion, Aslan. Aslan's nature is difficult to determine, but he is the son of the 'great Emperor-beyond-the-Sea' and might therefore appear to be a representation of the Son of God. However, Williams suggests that there are indications that the Lion may be an image of the Trinity, but he also says that it is probably unhelpful to speculate too much on Aslan's exact nature. Aslan is certainly wise and powerful and, in common with the other animals in Narnia, has the power of speech. The animal world is of particular importance in Narnia stories and Williams suggests that Lewis was trying to write about a world in which humans are not the only intelligent actors 'in a theatre of providential and theologically meaningful events'. The children who visit Narnia enter through a wardrobe in their uncle's house in the first of the novels to appear *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, but different ways of entry appear in the other stories which might be taken to indicate that faith may be approached in a number of ways.

I read the seven stories making up the Chronicles of Narnia to my children when they were young, and whilst they were hugely enjoyable for reading aloud, I was at that time concentrating on the stories rather than the underlying Christian themes. I think that I was not all that taken with the idea of incorporating spiritual themes in children's stories, and it was only on reading *The Lion's World* that I realised just how cleverly this is done and how powerful Lewis's stories are. Williams, does an

excellent job in extracting the theological themes from the novels and analyses them in detail. In this way they appear to have much greater impact than when embedded in the stories. On the cover of *The Lion's World* there is a short synopsis that says that the author 'explores the moral landscape of the seven (Narnia) novels in the series, and offers an astute guide to their spiritual subtext'. In the preface Williams confesses to 'being repeatedly humbled and reconverted by Lewis in a way that is true of few other modern Christian writers'.

There seems to have been considerable speculation about whether Lewis had an overall scheme in mind when he began to write the stories. Lewis denied that he had a plan in mind when he began writing the novels, and Williams refers to a letter written in 1957 in which Lewis in discussing the best reading order for the novels denies this explicitly. The question of an overall plan seems to me to be bound up with the question of whether the stories were intended to be allegories. Lewis also repudiates this idea, suggesting instead that 'they answer the question of what sort of Incarnation and redemption would be appropriate in a world like Narnia'. Whilst it may be true that overall the stories were not intended as allegories there are many instances where the writing has a clear sub-text. Michael Ward has recently published a book (referred to by Williams) presenting a convincing argument that each novel is influenced by imagery associated with the characteristics of one of the seven mediaeval planets, and that there is therefore a clearly discernible plan. More specifically, Williams also says that

the first book to appear is on one level about the redemption of human beings, and represents a 'vivid reworking, in terms of another, imagined world, of one of the more dramatic theories of atonement'.

In *The Lion's World* Williams indicates his intention of showing how the theological themes in the stories hang together, and identifies these themes as

- 'a concern to do justice to the difference of God, the disturbing and exhilarating otherness of what we encounter in the life of faith;
- a relentless insistence on self-questioning, not so as to understand ourselves in the abstract or as 'interesting' individuals, but simply to discover where we are afraid of the truth and where we turn away into self-serving falsehood;
- a passion to communicate the excess of joy that is promised by the truth of God in Christ'.

Williams also explains his further aim of capturing something of what 'Lewis is trying to do in communicating to a world that frequently thinks it knows what faith is – the character, the feel, of a real experience of surrender in the face of absolute incarnate love'. He goes on to say that 'what Lewis is after in the Narnia books is getting his readers 'to experience what it is that religious (specifically Christian) talk is about, without resorting to religious talk as we usually meet it'. In a similar way, he also suggests that in dealing with topics such as the doctrine of Last Things Lewis is implying that 'some matters are better dealt with through

narrative and imagination rather than through attempts at systematizing'.

Amongst the theological themes which he identifies in the novels there is, according to Williams, one element of the Narnia stories that has tended to be overlooked. Aslan promises 'meaning' (and as Lewis himself makes clear 'meaning can be menacing for some') but what is promised is something subversive and rebellious. Williams says later that this is a consistent theme in Lewis's writing: 'the truth of God is found in rebellion against the oppressive clichés of the world'. He also refers to the way that when Aslan engages in conversation he is often made to engage in terms of strong endearments suggesting that when read by an adult this might appear to give something like an erotic charge to these interchanges. He is not, however, suggesting that Lewis is advancing an erotic mysticism. This and the physicality of some of Aslan's encounters he says is Lewis's way of evoking 'a world in which the profoundest physical enjoyment is one of the best and clearest images of what it is to meet God'. Somewhat strikingly, he suggests that 'erotic satisfaction fully enjoyed is one of the most powerful glimpses we can have of what union with God is like'. This is not a comparison I have encountered before but according to Williams it is 'entirely consistent with a great deal in the tradition of Christian contemplation'.

Williams points out that Aslan's wildness is an important element of the stories. It emerges as a threatening invitation to a commitment that cannot

guarantee anything, and he illustrates this with a memorable quote from *The Silver Chair*. One of the two children featured in this story has just arrived in Narnia, and is alone and desperately thirsty. She arrives at a clear stream, and in front of the stream is the Lion who says that she may drink if she is thirsty. The child is naturally wary and asks the Lion not to do anything to her if she does decide to drink, to which the Lion replies that he can make no promises. The paragraph which follows represents a powerful piece of writing:

‘Do you eat girls?’ she said.

‘I have swallowed up girls and boys, women and men, kings and emperors, cities and realms,’ said the Lion. It didn’t say this as if it were boasting, nor as if it were sorry, nor as if it were angry. It just said it.

‘I daren’t come and drink,’ said Jill.

‘Then you will die of thirst,’ said the Lion.

‘Oh dear!’ said Jill, coming another step nearer. ‘I suppose I must go and look for another stream then.’

‘There is no other stream,’ said the Lion.’

Taken in isolation, as it is in *The Lion’s World*, this seems not only to indicate in a refreshingly forceful way that nothing is guaranteed but it also has an element of shock about it in implying that when it comes to faith there is only one way forward.

What Williams has done in his analysis is in effect to mine these nuggets from the underlying bedrock of the stories and to present their message in a clear and unequivocal way. These are challenging themes for any

reader but make one think that although Lewis wrote the novels for children he had in mind that they would also be widely read by adults. Also, Lewis is on record as saying that 'a children's story is the best art form for something you have to say'.

For anyone not familiar with the Narnia stories Williams's book provides an excellent introduction to what they contain. They provide a wonderfully accessible introduction to Christian thought as well as offering a deeply satisfying experience. Above all they are surprising and for non-believers of the Christian faith may serve to surprise people 'into a realisation that they have never actually reckoned with what Christianity is about'.

## REVIEW ARTICLE

**Andrew Steane, *Faithful to Science: the Role of Science in Religion*.** Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014, pp. vii+255, £19.99 Hbk, ISBN 978-0-19-871604-4.

REVIEWED BY DAVID KNIGHT

'Science is the organized application of reason, joy and hope to the empirical exploration of the natural world. If those are eliminated, then so is science along with them' (p. 116): that is not how it is always presented, though it is certainly how practitioners feel about it when actually doing it. Andrew Steane's very readable and accessible book builds upon his experience as a physicist and as a Christian, and thus an explorer both in the laboratory and as a follower of the Way, full of wonder at what he finds. It is a timely addition to the writing and thinking about the engagement of science and religious belief, where ignorance and dogmatism of one kind or another are so common; and its message, good-humoured but serious, ought to be spread. He has a positive message about faith, and a target, Naturalism: seeing science as encouraging both belief and atheism, he has little time for William Paley's cumulative quasi-legal argument for God the watchmaker, setting out to prove His existence beyond reasonable doubt on the basis of evidence sifted and accumulated. Faith for Steane is not about such 'proof'; nor is it about, or just about, Design; it is personal, faith in the person Jesus, and to do with love, forgiveness, justice and delight. Thomas Huxley portrayed life as a game rather like chess: our hidden

opponent played completely fair, but to avoid coming to grief in this bleak world we had to work out the rules as we went along; and in the end, in death, we lost. For Steane, God may be a sparring partner, and he admires Jewish readiness to argue with Him; but primarily He is a loving parent – and in Jesus' life and teaching we have been given those rules.

Steane follows the example of another eminent physicist, Galileo, in expounding and interpreting Scripture. Talk of Design for him is unbecoming: God is not 'a god', the First Cause of Deists, a watchmaker writ large, but is deeply 'other', best approached through the *via negativa*, parables, and Socratic dialogue. Taking the Bible seriously does not mean taking it literally. The psalms and Wisdom books, and the first chapters of *Genesis* tell us how deeply 'other' God is, that He brings order out of chaos, and that he is One. The strange and troubling story of Job is deeply attractive to modern scientists: for Tom McLeish in his *Faith and Wisdom in Science* (Oxford, 2014) it is the summit of all Creation accounts, while for Skeane it represents a crucial thought-experiment, a genre familiar in the sciences. Moreover, although some see mankind as invited to master nature, for Steane 'Genesis has the truer insight. God is not primarily about power or control or even creativity but the capacity to love and to suffer compassionately. The implication of male and female humanity being "in God's likeness" is that the creative process has not stopped but now continues in a new way, through ourselves. Far from being forbidden from "playing God", "playing God" is

exactly what we are meant to do all the time – as long as we understand that this means serving one another, not lording it over one another' (p. 183). It is up to us to show that the world is not dead, cold and pitiless: we must warm it up by loving it as God does. For Steane, and surely for us all, the story of Adam and Eve is a rich drama, inviting interpretations. Their 'fall' is for him essentially a loss of true personhood; and he retells their story and *Genesis* 1 as imaginative science fiction to demonstrate that dominating rather than stewarding nature should have no place in Judaeo-Christian thought, and how serious is a loss of trust in God's parenting, making people resort to buck-passing and squabbling. In a world where free choice is real, good and evil are everywhere side by side, just as in Eden the two trees (of life and knowledge) were side by side.

Steane is, like almost everyone engaged in science, a 'critical realist', believing (in the strong sense of living by it) that there is a real world, and that finding truth about it is a reasonable objective, and indeed a religious quest. He compares investigating a phenomenon to meeting a person: science is a normal human activity, difficult but not utterly *sui generis*; and he takes from Carl Sagan a pithy account of its methods, not perhaps so different from Huxley's 'trained and organised common sense' (those adjectives being very important). It advances through working models, that have to gain acceptance as more deserving of faith than their predecessors, from one provisional position to another: the search for truth means the discarding of errors, some

of them venerable. We all know how science gets out of date: the chemistry I learned half a century ago has come a long way, and explanations and lines of inquiry that seemed very promising have been long abandoned. Facts and observations, like cold fusion and Martian canals, turn out to be mistaken; and laws of nature, like Boyle's and Ohm's, limited in their range: nature is full of lawbreakers and investigating them has often proved profitable.

Humphry Davy persuaded Wordsworth that science, in his case, the dynamical science of electro-chemistry, was or could be a creative activity, illuminating the elective affinities that had fascinated Goethe and deepening human experience; but whereas Wordsworth's poetry continues to delight us, physicists don't actually read Galileo, Newton or Faraday, but find their work drily tidied, reinterpreted and updated in textbooks, monographs and papers. It is nevertheless surprising that an activity so self-critical and provisional should have apologists so dogmatic: for in science truth is the distant city set upon a hill, and as the circle of light increases so does the circumference of darkness. In science, as in moral and religious life, whenever we fall we have to get up, dust ourselves down, and press on. Thomas Kuhn focussed in 1961 on the role of dogma in science teaching: students are not encouraged to debate or weigh alternatives as they are when history, for example, is well-taught; they have to avoid error and get the right answers in what is something like basic training and drill in the army, so that when in action they won't panic or do

something silly. They must be disabused of the notion that the Sun goes round us, or that heavy things fall faster, and be furnished with ideas of what is and what is not possible in Nature. Any of us who have had a scientific education will be familiar with this, even if we do not go along with the paradigms and revolutions that form the basis of Kuhn's position.

Responding to the proclamations of the 'new atheists', Steane is clear that many important questions do not have scientific answers. He believes that moral sense is real and objective; his foe is Naturalism, a term popularised by Arthur Balfour in his *Foundations of Belief* (1895), the book that Huxley was struggling to answer on his deathbed. For Balfour, if Naturalism with its pitiless glare 'be the whole truth, then is morality but a bare catalogue of utilitarian precepts; beauty but the chance occasion of a passing pleasure; reason but the dim passage from one set of unthinking habits to another' (p. 77). Dignity, value, freedom, responsibility, conscience, devotion, sympathy, noble deeds and generous ambitions become simply devices for securing a competitive advantage in the struggle for existence. So for Steane, such bad, reductive science remains a domineering abuser, sneeringly telling us that our thoughts are 'nothing but' biochemistry or inherited instincts honed by natural selection, confusing levels of discourse and understanding, and leading to a cynical materialism, a culture of suspicion from which we all suffer. True religion is not a comfort that adults should have outgrown, but a serious business concerned with love,

forgiveness, justice and delight, with being known, with living generously rather than judgementally and selfishly, and with prayer leading to action. Human life is ultimately defined by empathy rather than by curiosity and understanding: 'nothing buttery' reduces us as persons, making us into inhabitants of the inanimate cold world of Coleridge's 'Dejection Ode'. Coleridge saw the way out (stanza IV):

O Lady! we receive but what we give,  
And in our life alone does Nature live:  
Ours is her wedding-garment, ours her shroud.

Steane, calling for generosity, empathy and creativity, makes the same point.

Balfour was no captious critic of science: he presided over the BAAS in 1904 when he was also Prime Minister, was seriously canvassed for President of the Royal Society at the end of the First World War, and became in effect Minister for Science in the 1920s. He admired Darwin; and Steane delights in the interplay of randomness and regularity that has led to the evolution of the 'one vast miracle' (p. 63) that is the universe. He has no time at all for Creationism, which has lost the plot of *Genesis* in a way that would have been puzzling to medieval scholars. Literal readings of Scripture became prominent with the Reformation and Scientific Revolution, catching out Galileo whose Augustinian exegesis was as sound as his science. Suspicion of allegory, metaphor and wit, and admiration for plain language, led too many to read the Bible, newly available in vernacular, as a kind of textbook rather than a rich

mass of stories and poems requiring sensitive interpretation.

Prosy unease about metaphor can be a fruit of a narrow and dogmatic scientific education; but scientists have in fact always relied upon analogy and metaphor, and Steane delights in it. He sees too many of us nowadays as unimaginative and uneasy in recognising metaphor and hyperbole when we see it; he himself describes our genes as 'eager' rather than selfish (p. 65), and compares the Creation to making music. He is in a tradition going back to the Romantic Age of Wonder, when the divine epithet 'creative' began to be applied to humans: for Coleridge, if one assumed the existence of God the harmony and fitness of the physical creation corresponded with and supported such an assumption; but to set about *proving* the existence of God that way would have been a mere circle, a delusion. Coleridge elsewhere remarked that Scripture was a religious not a physical revelation, to make us know ourselves and be good moral agents, not to be well-informed and knowing about the world without effort to find out. His friend Davy, addressing the Royal Society as President in 1822, when geological evidence seemed to confirm the Deluge, similarly declared that 'the more we study nature, the more we obtain proofs of divine power and beneficence; but the laws of nature and the principles of science were to be discovered by labour and industry, and have not been revealed to man; who, with respect to [natural] philosophy, has been left to exert these god-like faculties, by which reason ultimately approaches, in its results, to

inspiration' (*Works*, VII, p.41).

Steane concludes that 'The truth is that science is more faithful than people realize, and religious faith need not be (and indeed must avoid being) irrational' (p. 233). His book has a bibliography and judicious appendices about Galileo and Huxley, but it is, as befits his faith, personal rather than detached or 'academic', and he ends it with a picture of a string quartet happily creating music. We might have seen Creation as a drama, with playwright, director and actors creating each performance; but music does more justice to the harmony of the spheres. Even when fully scored, Steane reminds us, every musical performance is full of creative improvisation that may be the analogue of providence and inspiration; which form not a series of tiny unrelated things, but a 'single, respectful and coherent influence' (p. 96).

## REVIEWS

**Alister McGrath**, *Why God Won't Go Away: Engaging with the New Atheism*, London: SPCK, 2011, £6.99, pp. i +118. ISBN 978-0281063871.

REVIEWED BY ROBIN ATTFIELD

This is one of at least three books published by the prolific McGrath in 2011, others being *Surprised by Meaning: Science, Faith and How We Make Sense of Things*, and *Darwinism and the Divine*. This particular volume ably depicts and evaluates 'the New Atheism', which comprises the recent works of Sam Harris, Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett and Christopher Hitchens, plus related websites and gatherings, and the (currently dwindling) related community.

In *The End of Faith* (2004) Sam Harris claimed that terrorism such as that of 9/11 is to be blamed on religion in general, and supported the forcible suppression of at least some religious beliefs. Richard Dawkins holds back from these conclusions, but in books like *The God Delusion* (2006) agrees that religion is intrinsically irrational and thus dangerous, and employs the (widely discredited) theory of memes to explain its persistence. Daniel Dennett, in *Breaking the Spell* (2006), attempts to supply an evolutionary explanation of religion, cannot resist invoking memes, and interprets Darwinism as a 'universal acid' that explains traditional beliefs away. Christopher Hitchens, in *God is Not Great* (2007), holds that religion poisons everything (including human

progress), and along the way represents Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Martin Luther King as not really Christians.

While these works are competently appraised here on the whole, McGrath seems not to recognise that Dennett's work forms a serious contribution to the Cognitive Science of Religion, albeit of the school that equates explaining religion with explaining it away. This equation has been well contested in the recent writings of other contributors to CSR, including Justin Barrett, Aku Visala, David Leech and Michael Murray.

Readers of *Reviews* may well be interested in McGrath's comments on religion and on science. With regard to religion, he has little difficulty in arguing that, far from being intrinsically violent, many forms of religion are characteristically non-violent. Also that participants in religion are widely open to reason, evidence and argument, while dogmatism and irrationality are as typical of the New Atheism as of religious believers. However, he seems mistaken over the Greek theorist who pioneered the view that the gods resemble the human beings who create them (pp. 63, 108); this was not the pious fifth- and fourth-century historian Xenophon, but the earlier iconoclastic sixth-century poet Xenophanes.

As for science, McGrath has a helpful chapter which shows that, contrary to the claims of some followers of the New Atheism, it too involves belief. Scientism (the view that science can answer all questions) is properly dismissed, and the rise and fall of the warfare model of

the relations of science and religion is skilfully narrated (pp. 80-84). As he also remarks, discoveries about universal constants being fine-tuned for life have recently changed the scientific climate to one more congenial to theism.

However, his claim that Big Bang cosmology 'resonates strongly with the Christian doctrine of creation' (p. 85) should be treated with caution. On the one hand, Big Bang cosmology is consistent with there having been a previous period of cosmic contraction, possibly itself preceded by a yet earlier period of expansion (and so on). On the other hand, it is not only what begins to exist that has a cause, but whatever happens to exist, even if from all time, provided that an explanation of its existence is possible. So theists are ill-advised to represent the Big Bang as a directly due to divine creation, and are wise to refrain from making the universe's having a finite origin an article of faith. Big Bang cosmology admittedly makes it easier than it used to be to introduce people to talk of creation; but the issue remains one of whether the universe is self-explanatory or not.

On page 52, McGrath reconstructs an argument of Hitchens as follows:

Major premise: religion is evil and violent.

Minor premise: the Soviet Union was evil and violent.

Conclusion: the Soviet Union was therefore religious.

But it is unwise to ascribe to others invalid arguments like this one even when their conclusion is so

implausible. The validity of the argument can be restored by changing the initial premise to:

All evil and violent states are religious.

But while this is what Hitchens would need to claim for his argument to succeed, its intrinsic implausibility brings out even more clearly the weakness of his reasoning.

In his remarks on rationality, McGrath suggests that the New Atheists' appeals to reason pay insufficient regard to the work of Marx, Freud and Darwin, and their claims that our thinking is largely conditioned or determined by social structures, psychological forces or evolutionary pressures. But if this consideration throws Enlightenment reasoning into question, does it not also cast doubt on that of McGrath himself, and thus on his replies to the New Atheists? Here, I suggest, we can and must reject deterministic versions of Darwinism, and adopt, if at all, one or another non-deterministic form, as I have argued in 'Darwin's Doubt' (*Philosophy*, 2010) and in *Creation, Evolution and Meaning* (2006). This allows us to retain respect both for truth and for reason. If so, then different replies to the more questionable conclusions of Enlightenment reasoning will be needed.

In a passage of his chapter on rationality (pp. 62-65), McGrath criticises New Atheist bloggers for blaming God for human moral degeneracy when in their view God is a delusion. For no delusory being could cause anything. Here it is surely likely that at least some of them mean that it is *belief* in God that maps onto moral degeneracy. If so, the reply should surely be based not merely on logic,

but on evidence (partly about Mother Teresa, Dietrich Bonhoeffer or Martin Luther King, and the behaviour motivated by their forms of belief).

The same ambiguity is relevant to the book's main title, 'Why God Won't Go Away'. To judge by the concluding chapter, the reason is that human beings 'possess, and are meant to possess, a homing instinct for God' (p. 97). In the title phrase, the word 'God' seems, accordingly, to mean 'belief in God' (although McGrath's claim also presupposes that it was God who put this instinct in place); and the answer seems to be of an anthropological character, plus a commentary on cultural trends. But the question seems underlyingly to be about God. If so, perhaps the answer is that if God was ever present in the first place, the passage of time can reliably be held to make no difference to her or his whereabouts.

**Michael Hanby, *No God, No Science? Theology, Cosmology, Biology*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013, pp. xvii+435, £72 Hbk, ISBN 978-1-4051-5801-5.**

REVIEWED BY PETER N. JORDAN

At the risk of oversimplifying what is a dense and complex book, Michael Hanby's *No God, No Science?* can instructively be described as an extended historical, philosophical, and theological reflection on a single insight: that modern science has made it almost impossible to see the world, and thus to know it, as it truly is. In Hanby's view, the world in which we find

ourselves presses on us in ways that reflect its ontological structure, and the task of human knowing is to comprehend this reality and contemplate it in its fullness and glory so that our thinking about the world might match as closely as possible the world as it is. *No God, No Science?* is simultaneously a story of the gradual development of intellectual accounts of the cosmos in the medieval period that in Hanby's judgment best reflect reality as it presents itself to us, a narrative of decline from these achievements resulting from late-medieval and early-modern theological and philosophical blunders, an indictment of Darwinism in its early and late forms insofar as it perpetuates these mistakes, and a presentation of a speculative doctrine of creation that purportedly remedies these errors. Only a proper understanding of creation, according to Hanby, can allow the sciences properly to be themselves and can rescue whatever should be salvaged from evolutionary theory, because only a proper understanding of creation can preserve "the mystery and the being and the truth" (90) of the world that we actually encounter.

Hanby structures his narrative of the rise and fall of the doctrine of creation around a small cadre of figures. Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus were the first to speculate fruitfully about the nature of the cosmos, and each contributed essential philosophical insights that Christian thinkers subsequently picked up and modified. As a result of the incarnation and ensuing debates about its meaning, Christians fulfilled the "cosmological aspirations of the Greeks" (85) in ways that the Greeks

themselves could not, because it was only through the incarnation that the world's difference from God, and thus the mutual integrity of each, could fully be appreciated and described. Many medieval thinkers—Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas among them—articulated their theologies in ways that maintained these hard-won insights, with any differences between them representing variations on a theme rather than completely new compositions. Like many other recent commentators, Hanby sees the rot beginning to set in with William of Ockham and the *via moderna*, although to his credit Hanby does not place all of the ills of modernity on Ockham's shoulders alone. With Galileo, Bacon, Descartes, and Newton, the "unthinking [of] the orthodox doctrine of God" (112)—and thus of the doctrine of creation—gathers more steam as a result of the transformation of natural philosophy that they and others wrought. Their revolution is a dramatic one: truth is no longer about comprehending what something is, but instead is equated with utility; the distinction between nature and artifice characteristic of Aristotelian scholasticism collapses; and causality becomes mere "transaction of force" (119). These fundamentally new ways of imagining how the world is structured and works had negative consequences for theology, for as we are regularly reminded throughout the book, conceptions of God and conceptions of nature are intrinsically related. By interpreting the doctrine of creation in terms of the ontological assumptions associated with these natural philosophies, early moderns developed a "defective"

doctrine of God, one that distorted the traditional meaning of creation (134).

Many elements of this story of the seventeenth century have been told before, not least in one of the works to which Hanby himself is greatly indebted, Amos Funkenstein's *Theology and the Scientific Imagination from the Middle Ages to the Seventeenth Century*. One of Hanby's major accomplishments is his extension of this kind of analysis to later centuries, demonstrating in particular how William Paley is a direct heir to the natural philosophical assumptions and the corresponding theological distortions of the early moderns, and how, through Paley, Charles Darwin and subsequent theorists of evolution are too. Hanby's chapters on Paley and Darwin are the best in the book, for they show both how difficult it is to think well about organisms in light of the mechanistic ontology of the seventeenth century, and how thoroughly both men—and their own intellectual heirs—rely upon a theological understanding of the world that little resembles traditional Christian teaching on the topic. Despite his reliance on just a few representative thinkers to tell such an expansive story, Hanby's presentation of the implicit philosophical and theological premises of modern science and evolutionary theorizing especially is nevertheless thorough and compelling, although further work needs to be done to establish how well other thinkers fit into, or challenge, this account.

To demonstrate just how far conceptions of God and creation have strayed from traditional teachings, Hanby

draws heavily on Dionysius the Areopagite, Aquinas, Hans Urs von Balthasar, and others to offer a contemporary constructive account of the doctrine of creation. Hanby's account envisions creation not as competing with scientific explanation and exploration (an assumption, he points out, often made by those who believe Paley to be the epitome of Christian thinking on the topic), but instead as making the latter possible. While Hanby would be the first to admit that there is nothing new about the contents of his doctrine of creation, what he does offer is something that relatively few theologians trained in the classical teachings of the Christian tradition (until recently, at least) have offered: an account of the doctrine that gestures toward its implications for science, and for evolutionary theory in particular. A proper understanding of the doctrine of creation is in Hanby's view a gift to science, because it supplies an "adequate metaphysics and theology" which science needs in order to avoid "reductively falsifying its own objects" (324). Put another way, for Hanby the doctrine of creation is crucial because it allows one to see the world as it really is, and therefore allows one's scientific assumptions and pursuits better to match the reality that one is investigating.

Perhaps the only real disappointment of what is otherwise an immensely insightful and challenging book is that Hanby gives little indication of what a doctrine-of-creation-informed science might look like. The book contains numerous statements like the following—"To ask Darwinians and other scientists to acknowledge

creation is not to ask biologists or physicists to give up on science; it is to ask them to relinquish their bad theology in exchange for a better one, and thus to reintegrate their science within a more comprehensive conception of reason and an order of wisdom" (404)—but these claims tend to be long on suggestiveness and short on detail. Maybe this is to be expected given his expertise as a theologian and philosopher rather than as a practicing scientist. But if Hanby's suggestions are to gain any traction among those very scientists and intellectuals whom he believes to be so fundamentally mistaken on matters philosophical and theological, something more than rather vague gestures about what the pursuit of science might look like would have gone far to make concrete what are otherwise rather abstract ideas.

Given the disciplinary divisions of the contemporary intellectual world, it is unfortunately the case that few scientists will likely have the philosophical and theological training needed to comprehend the significance of everything Hanby has to say. At the same time, Hanby has not made the book's prose particularly straightforward, and the abstractness of the ideas and the high level at which they are presented can make the book heavy going at times. Nevertheless, *No God, No Science?* is well worth the effort, and its analysis of the doctrine of creation and its relations with modern science deserves the widest possible audience.

**Ernst M. Conradie (ed.), *Creation and Salvation***

*Volume 1: A Mosaic of Selected Classic Christian Theologies.* Zurich and Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2012; pp. 230, £19.99 Pbk. ISBN 978-3-643-90136-1.

*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 DAVID MCLOUGHLIN

These two volumes are respectively number five and six of a nine volume series of works commissioned under the title *Studies in Religion and the Environment* by the European Forum for the Study of Religion and the Environment, between the years 2009 and 2013. The series represents a genuinely international attempt to address the major contemporary issues on the environment and, in particular, humanity's place within it and impact on it.

Volume 1 offers a series of well-constructed, substantial, essays, by mature scholars, exploring the relationship of the themes of *Creation and Salvation* in the relevant patristic material East and West, Irenaeus, Athanasius, Gregory of Nazianzen, Augustine and Maximus the Confessor, the medieval contributions of Aquinas, the female mystics Hildegard of Bingen and Julian of Norwich, the Franciscan tradition of Francis, Bonaventure and Scotus, and the classical, and distinct, Reformed approaches of Luther and Calvin. The essays are expository, exploring what each of the thinkers or

traditions or movements have to say about the related themes of Creation and Salvation and in each case exploring the thinkers critical engagement with movements that would separate or underplay the relationship of the two themes e.g. Augustine's refutation of his former Manichaean view of the material world and Aquinas' affirmation of its goodness and willingness to engage and use the best science of his time. The essays all conclude with some reflection that links to contemporary discussions or issues, not in any facile attempt to find answers in ancient texts to modern questions but rather as a stimulus to continue the critical engagement of the original authors. Each shows a familiarity with the wider contemporary scholarship on their subjects and each provides an excellent bibliography for further research.

Volume 2 continues the exploration into the modern and contemporary era. However the format is rather different. Instead of extensive critical essays over fifty authors from some twenty-four countries provide digests of approximately 2500 words on theologians, movements, or regions which have, and are, providing significant material for the contemporary debate around Creation and Salvation. Although short, these essays are magisterial in the manner in which they survey and summarise the work of major scholars and movements.

The second volume is broken into fourteen sections nine of which (Eastern Christian Thought; Roman Catholic Theologies; North Atlantic Lutheran Theologies; West European Reformed Theologies; Nordic Theologies; Science and Theology Discourse; Process and Relational

Theism; Western Ecofeminist Theologies; Latin American Theologies) consist of mini surveys of the thought of key thinkers e.g. Dimitru Stanilouae, Edward Schillebeeckx, Paul Tillich, Jürgen Moltmann, Gustav Wingren, John Polkinghorne; Catherine Keller, Grace Jantzen and Leonardo Boff. The selection of voices, so well-chosen and truly representative of the best of each tradition, is a considerable editorial achievement in itself. After surveying the contribution of each theologian there is a select bibliography for further reading and at the end of each section there is a short two page reflection on further developments from within the specific tradition that has just been surveyed with an additional short bibliography for further reading.

The further five sections (North American Perspectives from the Margins; African Theological Perspectives; Asian theological Perspectives; Oceanic Readings on Creation and Redemption; Global Ecumenical Theology) focus less on individual voices but rather try to give a contextual, regional, reading out of which environmentally aware theologies are emerging. The essays on Africa, Asia and Oceania are particularly useful to those of us who have been formed in a North Atlantic framework as they offer real insight into modes of reflecting, especially the Korean and Chinese, that will be unfamiliar to many. Again short reflections on further developments and suggested reading make the surveys current, and provide a help for those encountering the material for the first time. The range of reference is enormous and very few institutions, with standing

libraries, could provide access to so wide a range of resources. Volume Two is an accessible and reliable guide to all the relevant work of the past century that makes this area of theology so exciting and so full of potential for further development. Editing so disparate a text must have been challenging and Ernst Conradie, from the University of the Western Cape, South Africa has done an excellent job and his introductory essays, to both volumes, are particularly helpful.

A further future volume which allowed Scientists, rather than Scientists-turned-Theologians, to respond to some of these issues would provide another level of criticality in the discourse. The danger with some of the emerging material is that too easily becomes too speculative.

These two volumes provide easy access to the widest possible range of ideas, from within Christianity, for the contextualising of the theologies of Creation and Salvation within an environmental framework. They gradually open up and go beyond the anthropocentric and patriarchal frame of the western Christian tradition in a way that is truly sensitive to, and engaged with, the new global sensibility. They are excellent resources for students at any level working on this subject or for the general reader who wants to engage with these themes. Both are priced reasonably and would be an excellent addition to any library of Theology or Religious Studies. This whole project is eminently worthwhile.

**Roger Scruton**, *The Soul of the World*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014, pp. viii+205, £19.95. ISBN 978-0-691-16157-0.

REVIEWED BY JUUSO LOIKKANEN

In our postmodern Western society that seems to have lost almost all sense of the sacred, Roger Scruton is a welcome counterforce. Scruton is one of the few contemporary philosophers who refuse to accept Nietzsche's declaration that 'God is dead' and who believe that things like 'faith', 'love' and 'beauty' could actually mean something. This is why, for me, it is always a pleasure to get a chance to read one the writings of Scruton. His most recent book, *The Soul of the World*, makes no exception. In the book, Scruton offers a defence of the sacred against the prevailing secularism and scientism of today – and does this in a rather eloquent and convincing way.

*The Soul of the World* is based on the Stanton lectures delivered by Scruton at the University of Cambridge in 2011 (and, to a lesser extent, on some of his earlier work on aesthetics), and covers an enormously broad range of topics from politics and law to religion and ethics, from marriage and love to art and music. Although the scope is wide, Scruton manages to maintain a common thread throughout the book, that of 'making room for the religious worldview' (vii). According to Scruton, 'the real question for religion in our time is not how to excise the sacred, but how to rediscover it' (23).

During the last two centuries, the religious worldview, in general, and Christianity, in particular, has been opposed loudly by the so-called New Atheist movement. Richard Dawkins, for instance, is sure that there is 'no design, no purpose, no evil, no good, nothing but pitiless indifference' in the universe (*River Out of Eden*, 133), and that religion is merely 'a placebo that prolongs life by reducing stress' (*The God Delusion*, 195). Scruton strongly rejects this idea of – using a term coined by Mary Midgley – 'nothing buttery' (39). There is more than 'pitiless indifference' to the world. Human persons are more than just animals, altruism is more than just a successful genetic strategy, and the *Mona Lisa* is more than a spread of pigments of canvas.

Scruton's view of the world is based on cognitive dualism, meaning that 'the world can be understood in two incommensurable ways, the ways of science, and the way of interpersonal understanding' (34). These two ways of understanding, which can also be described as 'the way of explanation' and 'the way of experience,' are both needed to fully comprehend the world. To put it yet differently, the objective world described by the natural sciences and the *Lebenswelt*, 'lifeworld' (a term introduced by Edmund Husserl), which can only be grasped through subjective experience of humans, together form the reality in which we live.

Scruton writes particularly passionately about music, dedicating an entire chapter (the longest one of the eight in the book) to 'the sacred space of music' (140). He gives the example of the opening theme of Beethoven's Third

Piano Concerto, which can be understood either as a series of pitched sounds (the way of explanation) or as a 'movement in musical space' (153) (the way of experience). To really understand music, we need to appreciate both of these ways.

In Scruton's thinking, the world of nature is 'ontologically prior' (36) to the *Lebenswelt*. That is to say, the order of nature is the foundation from which the *Lebenswelt* emerges. Yet, the lifeworld is irreducible to the natural world, giving rise to novel phenomena like 'reason' and 'meaning.' And it is reasons and meanings, not 'scientific facts', that make life worth living. 'Within the envelope of nature there are only causes,' Scruton writes, 'but for the eye of faith the envelope has a *telos*, a reason for its being as it is.' (191)

There is a special role reserved for humans, because we are the only creatures that are able to see through 'the eye of faith.' We are, of course, made from the same elementary particles as everything in the universe, but at the same time, we are much more. We are self-conscious persons. Scruton explains it like this: 'the person is not a special kind of object but an object to which we can respond in a special kind of way' (49). We are able to engage in subject-subject relationships, to have I-You encounters with other persons, as well as with God.

What is interesting is that Scruton does not really take up the issue of God until in the last chapter; most of what precedes can be read without any particular religious or non-religious presuppositions. Furthermore, as also Scruton himself makes clear, while attempting to make

room for the religious worldview, *The Soul of the World* stops short of defending any particular religion. It is, indeed, not difficult to agree with Scruton's claim that 'many people who might call themselves agnostics or even atheists, live the life of faith' (192). Surely, for Christians, God is the Soul of the World, 'the answer to the question "why?" asked on the world as whole' (184). For others, it is something else.

*The Soul of the World* stands out for its ability to build connections between various seemingly remote phenomena, seeing them as aspects of the same reality which is best understood through cognitive dualism. To be sure, the book does not offer great surprises for those already acquainted with Scruton's thinking: echoes from his previous works are clear. In a way, *The Soul of the World* offers old Scruton in a new package. The package, however, comes in a more coherent and comprehensive form than ever before.

Scruton's aim in *The Soul of the World* is to convince people to find the 'space at the edge of reason' (192), where rational theorisation meets its limitations and where faith has room to flourish. The book certainly takes the reader one step closer to that edge. Perhaps there is still a place for faith and religion in our contemporary society. Perhaps God is not dead after all.

**David Wilkinson, *Science, Religion, and the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence*.** Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013; pp. 227, £25 Hbk. ISBN 978-0-19-968020-7.

REVIEWED BY PHILIP LUSCOMBE

As writer of this review I must confess a personal interest. It was at a Church study group twenty five years ago arranged by David Wilkinson that I first heard Sir Arnold Wolfendale explain the scientific basis for the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence. Wolfendale was eloquent on the topic and helped a lay audience understand many of the key problems. Now he has handed on the task, and provides a brief foreword commending Wilkinson's study.

Most readers of *Reviews* will be familiar with the Drake Equation, which tries to estimate the probability of contact with extraterrestrial civilisations, and the Fermi Paradox ('why aren't they here?'). One of the great attractions of writing about the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence (SETI) is that it gives the opportunity for all the great scientific questions to come into play: what is it that we are looking for? How should we look? Where is the most likely candidate for success to be found? Not only that but a rounded treatment cannot avoid the philosophical questions: what does the act of searching, and any possible result, say about humanity's place in the universe? Or about whether the universe itself has any meaning? Then there are the religious questions: Does the existence of other intelligent life threaten Christian doctrine? Will the Little Green Men be Christian? Sadly

there is no index entry for LGM, Little Green Men, but they crop up from time to time in the text as a reminder of the fairly basic sense of humour exhibited by physicists.

David Wilkinson clearly relishes the opportunities that SETI provides for him to work through each of the different aspects of the subject in a measured and comprehensive way. Although there is a proper sense of development through the book, Wilkinson doesn't keep his readers in suspense. It is clear from fairly early that he doesn't see any great problems for theology if extraterrestrial intelligence (ETI) is discovered. It is also clear that he is doubtful of the possibility of human contact with ETI. The final chapter title: 'Be not so positive' sums up Wilkinson's approach. Amazingly the phrase comes from a 1765 comment on the topic by John Wesley, whose wide-ranging interest in science is often forgotten by today's Methodists. Despite sharing Wesley's pessimism about intelligent life, Wilkinson is much more sanguine about the possible discovery of other primitive life forms.

This book provides a comprehensive and well-structured account of the different disciplines relevant to SETI. Wilkinson is not afraid to begin by bringing together science, science fiction, popular accounts of the possibilities of ETI and the religious dimensions of the search. All that in the first chapter! The next two chapters helpfully map the historical context and the twentieth century changes that have transformed our understanding of the universe. These first three chapters

(only forty pages between them) provide a splendid platform from which Wilkinson then explores the discovery of exo-planets – his chapter title ‘The Daily Planet’ is only a small exaggeration of the rate of planetary discovery – and the biological context of SETI.

Wilkinson next discusses with great subtlety the problems of SETI (‘Looking for a Needle in a Haystack’) and the depressing persuasiveness of Fermi’s paradox: if aliens exist why haven’t they visited? One of the delights of Wilkinson’s style is that he carefully introduces each new issue in such a way that readers can understand enough of its force to begin to ask their own questions. So, against the Fermi paradox, it has been argued that the aliens have indeed visited but their existence has been covered up either by human intervention, or because they wish to remain concealed. Or perhaps they want to treat the earth as a zoo, or a Star Trek style non-intervention zone. Or perhaps they are too far away, or simply too lazy to travel. Wilkinson notes Webb’s 2002 survey which gives fifty arguments against the Fermi paradox; but, in the end – like Webb – he finds Fermi’s arguments hard to counter. There may be other life in the universe but if it’s intelligent then it is too far away to make contact; and if nearer then it probably isn’t intelligent enough to be able to venture outside its own environment.

In the final chapters of the book Wilkinson returns to perennial philosophical and theological themes: design, creation and redemption. SETI can freshen up our perspectives: ‘It is a field which drags theologians outside

their comfort zones and beyond the inevitable anthropocentricity of much thinking' (173). He has no difficulty in demonstrating that few of the issues which surface are novel. Anyone who doubts this should remember that Augustine had problems with the antipodes, literally the places where those with feet opposite to us live. For once the wide ranging imagination that Augustine usually displayed failed. God could not possibly relate to creatures living on the other side of the globe; therefore, Augustine concluded, if the earth was a globe then there could not be any sentient creatures in the antipodes. As Wilkinson notes, this is to rehearse a familiar argument about SETI fifteen hundred years before its time.

What SETI provides is a fresh perspective, a new way in to arguments which have sometimes become stale. So SETI can help us to tease out a properly rounded picture of humanity. For Wilkinson, the key biblical emphasis is not on the human difference from other creatures, but on the gracious possibility of a relationship with God (144-5). Thus he concludes helpfully, 'I suggest that God's care is never exclusive. Humanity may be unique in its relationship to God. However, uniqueness does not imply exclusiveness' (146). Wilkinson reminds us that the view that humanity sits at the centre is always sinful!

These chapters are rich in theological questions. Ironically, the one place which lacks the theological subtlety of the remainder of the book is Wilkinson's initial description of the significance of Jesus. Admittedly this section immediately follows his careful summary of

the 'God is an alien' hypothesis peddled by Eric Von Däniken and others in books such as *The Spaceships of Ezekiel*. This hypothesis is crazy enough to provoke the most measured of writers. It is disappointing, however, that this first discussion of Jesus lacks the openness and wide range which characterises the book. Don't be put off, once he begins a detailed consideration the material returns to the rich and diverse texture of the rest of the book. On the Incarnation, for example, Wilkinson is well aware of the enthusiasm with which some theologians push their own closed solutions. If Jesus is unique then there can be only one cross on which he died for the sins of the whole *universe*, runs a standard Protestant critique. On the other side of the argument lies the approach of 'Every star shall sing a carol' which, treated carelessly, can lead to speculation of endless copies of the Son of God dying regularly in different galaxies. Wilkinson is circumspect and judicious. 'The Christian conviction is that the God who is encountered in Jesus will do what is necessary' (169).

Wilkinson is also good at demonstrating the hubris of today's scientists. He quotes the leading SETI researcher, Jill Tarter: 'I realised that I was part of the first generation that did not have to ask a priest the "Are we alone?" question' (125) - as if such a response answered any of the philosophical riddles. He is equally dismissive of the certainty of many theologians, who do not see why they should be bothered with SETI.

All in all Wilkinson provides a good read, and a stimulating one. Given the range of disciplines covered

almost all readers will learn something new, but the real merit of the book is in allowing the reader to explore a wide range of perspectives and in the end to make up their own mind.

## SHORT REVIEWS BY THE EDITOR

**Johannes Zachhuber, *Theology as Science in Nineteenth-Century Germany*.** Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013; pp. xii+318, £75 Hbk. ISBN 978-0-19-964191-8.

This book is Johannes Zachhuber's second monograph, and it is an impressively scholarly piece of work. Dealing with the project of theology as science as conceived by German history, the book is divided into two parts: Part 1 is focused on the Tübingen School, with particular attention to its founder, Ferdinand Christian Baur, whose historical-idealist conception of theology as science dominated historical theology until the mid-nineteenth century. It is with the unique contribution of the Tübingen School Zachhuber argues, not that of Schleiermacher or Hegel, that the concept of 'scientific theology' was developed. Part 2 is concerned with Albrecht Ritschl and the school of his name. Despite the differences, Zachhuber is keen to point out the continuities between both schools, most importantly the internal tension brought about by the attempt to blend 'scientific' historical research into theology which ultimately destabilised the project. The book makes a

noteworthy contribution to the history of theology but many of Zachhuber's conclusions will also be of wider interest to those working in the fields of religious studies, philosophy and ethics. The richness of Zachhuber's study and his attention to detail mean that the reader has to work hard but the effort is well worth it.

**Ilia Delio, *The Unbearable Wholeness of Being: God, Evolution, and the Power of Love*.** New York: Orbis, 2013; pp. xxvi+230, £12.99 Pbk. ISBN 978-1-62698-029-7.

Delio is right when she says we have still not yet grappled fully with evolution. We have still, she says, to accept change in nature as integral to life in God or in regard to the nature of God (p.xx). This latest contribution to her growing body of work in the field of evolution and Catholic theology is a call for 'a revolution of evolution' and an attempt to show what such a sea change might look like. It is an invigorating read and although her focus is primarily the Catholic tradition, this book is to be recommended for anyone with an interest in evolution and theology.

The revolution is underpinned throughout by the theme of interrelationality; what Delio means by the wholeness of being. The living world is not mechanical but rhythmical. The arrow of evolution is pointed towards integral wholeness, and as human beings we must consciously evolve by orientating ourselves towards new life and growth. Wholeness is exhibited by the natural world and by the conscious life of human beings through the nature of love and the nature of God.

Building on the theology Teilhard de Chardin, and in conversation with Raimon Panikkar and Paul Tillich, she envisages an innovative model of the God of evolution: dynamic, energetic and infinitely loving. God's love is unruly, creative and spontaneous, and a stark (and refreshing) contrast to the more familiar ideal of the unmoved mover. Wholeness demands a rethinking of human nature. We are not defined by an innate capacity such as intellect but by our relationality: we know ourselves as loved and being-in-love (90). Delio's Christology develops Teilhard's conception of cosmogenesis as Christogenesis: Christ is present in the entire cosmos. Christification is thus the personalisation of the universe through the movement of love towards wholeness and consciousness. The latter part of the book explores the ethical implications of the theology of wholeness: technology develops our collective consciousness but it is not our telos - instead, we should be focused on deepening our capacity to love.

Delio's book is enjoyable to read and richly rewarding. There were times when it would have been interesting for her to engage with dialogue partners who, like her, endorse models of relationality but who reach very different ethical conclusions (Ted Peters is one who springs to mind). All round, however, this book is clearly a valuable contribution to its field.

## **PUBLICATIONS BY MEMBERS OF THE FORUM**

Philip Bligh, *Fragments* (Worthing: Loxwood, 2014).

Rodney Holder, *Big Bang, Big God, A Universe Designed for Life?* (Oxford: Lion Hudson, 2013) and *Longing, Waiting, Believing: Reflections for Advent, Christmas and Epiphany* (Abingdon: BRF, 2014).

David Knight, *Voyaging in Strange Seas: The Great Scientific Revolution* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2014)

Roger Pullin *Free Thought, Faith and Science: Finding Unity Through Seeking Truth* (Outskirts Press, 2014).

## **BOOKS AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW**

Philip Bligh, *Fragments* (Worthing: Loxwood, 2014)

Rudolf Brun, *Science, Art and Christianity: Contribution to a theology of nature for our time* (Brun Publishing, 2014)

William A. Dembski *Being as Communion: A Metaphysics of Information* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014)

Robert M. Geraci, *Virtually Sacred: Myth and Meaning in World of Warcraft and Second Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014)

Ronald Green and Nathan Palpant (eds.) *Suffering and Bioethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014)

David Knight, *Voyaging in Strange Seas: The Great Scientific Revolution* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2014)

Ellen L. Idler (ed.) *Religion as a Social Determinant of Public Health* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014)

Tom McLeish, *Faith and Wisdom in Science* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014)

J. David Pleins, *In Praise of Darwin: George Romanes and the Evolution of a Darwinian Believer* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014)

Ignacio Silva (ed.) *Latin American Perspectives on Science and Religion* (Pickering and Chatto, 2014)

Mitchell Stephens, *Imagine there's no Heaven: How atheism helped create the modern world* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014)

Fraser Watts and Léon Turner (eds.) *Evolution, Religion and Cognitive Science* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014)

Michael Welker (ed.) *The Depth of the Human Person: A Multidisciplinary Approach* (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2014)

The Editor welcomes offers to review these publications. Please contact her on [L.Hickman@newman.ac.uk](mailto: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.