

In this issue (full contents on next page):

A BOOK THAT MADE A DIFFERENCE

- Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*. 9
Reviewed by Michael Fuller.

REVIEW ARTICLE

- Michael J. Dodds, *Unlocking Divine Action: Contemporary Science and Thomas Aquinas*. Reviewed by Peter N. Jordan. 13

REVIEWS

- Charles Camosy, *Peter Singer & Christian Ethics: Beyond Polarisation*, Reviewed by Michael Marsh. 23

- Stephen R. L. Clark, *Philosophical Futures*. 29
Reviewed by Chris Wiltsher.

- Aku Visala, *Naturalism, Theism and the Cognitive Science of Religion*. Reviewed by Jonathan Jong. 33

- Steve Jones, *The Serpent's Promise: The Bible Retold as Science*. Reviewed by Peter Colyer. 39

- Herman Philipse, *God in the Age of Science? A Critique of Religious Reason*. Reviewed by Louise Hickman 42

REVIEWS REPRODUCED FROM ELSEWHERE

- Rodney Holder, *The Heavens Declare: Natural Theology and the Legacy of Karl Barth*. Reviewed by David Girling. 48

CONTENTS

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS	3
EDITORIAL	4
THE ARTHUR PEACOCKE PRIZE 2013	6
CONFERENCE REPORT	7
A BOOK THAT MADE A DIFFERENCE	9
REVIEW ARTICLE	13
REVIEWS	23
REVIEWS REPRODUCED FROM ELSEWHERE	48
PUBLICATIONS BY MEMBERS OF THE FORUM	51
BOOKS RECEIVED FOR REVIEW	51

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Peter Colyer is a Research Fellow at the Centre for Christianity and Culture, Regent's Park College, Oxford, and a former Secretary of the Science and Religion Forum.

Michael Fuller is the current chair of the UK's Science and Religion Forum. An Anglican clergyman, he has served in churches in the dioceses of Oxford and Edinburgh, and he currently runs the ministerial training programmes of the Scottish Episcopal Church.

David Girling is a Medical Research Council Senior Medical Scientist (retired) and a Licensed Lay Minister at Great Saint Mary's, The University Church, Cambridge.

Jonathan Jong is an experimental psychologist at the Institute of Cognitive and Evolutionary Anthropology, University of Oxford. He is currently working on the role of ritual participation in human sociality, the interaction between emotion regulation and religious cognition, and the philosophical implications of psychological science for religious belief.

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

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).

Chris Wiltsher taught religious studies, philosophy and ethics in University Adult Education and still teaches part-time for the Open University. A long-standing Forum member, he is also treasurer of the European Society for the Study of Science and Theology.

EDITORIAL

November's edition continues some of the themes of our most recent conference. The conference itself was an immense success and grateful thanks must go to all those involved in its organisation, particularly to Michael Fuller, Hilary Martin and Jeffrey Robinson.

Any consideration of chance and providence is tightly linked to broader themes in natural theology including the concept of God and religious language. All these are explored in Peter Jordan's review of Dodds' *Unlocking Divine Action*. Dodds offers an account of divine action based on a concept of causality that draws on Aristotle and Aquinas, which makes it very different from the more familiar accounts of Philip Clayton, Keith Ward, Arthur Peacocke and Nancy Murphy. Teleology is vital for Dodds' Thomistic account of action and the question of human ends is continued by Chris Wiltsher's review of Stephen Clark's *Philosophical Futures*, which brings to the fore the difficulty of describing what it is that makes us human. Our imaginings of the future rest to a large part on our imaginings of our present and our past.

Some different issues are identified in Michael Marsh's review of Charles Camosy's book, which highlights some of the unlikely alliances between Peter Singer's ethics and Catholic Social Teaching. Jonathan Jong's review of Aku Visala is a rigorous engagement by an experimental psychologist with Visala's exploration of some of the metaphysical and philosophical assumptions of the cognitive science of religion. Peter Colyer's review draws

out some important questions about theology and the Bible from Steve Jones' *The Serpent's Promise*.

Herman Philipse's *God in the Age of Science?* presents a highly analytic approach to natural theology and offers a challenge to certain conceptions of God, including some more recent theistic accounts of divine action. This edition also sees a reprint of David Girling's review of Rodney Holder's recent defence of natural theology based largely on Bayesian probability theory. Both Philipse's and Holder's approach offer a stark contrast to Dodd's philosophical theology, and these two traditions are representative of the contrasting accounts of religious language and argumentation about God that largely dominate the debate in natural theology today.

I am saddened to report the death of Professor Colin Russell in May. Russell was Professor Emeritus at the Open University in the Department of History of Science and Technology. He will be remembered by Forum members for his contributions to the science and religion conversation through his various publications, his lectures and his broadcasts. He was a past president of Christians in Science and past vice-president of the Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship.

Finally, let me warmly encourage all readers to contact me if there are books that catch your eye for review. I am always keen to accommodate requests if I can!

THE ARTHUR PEACOCKE PRIZE 2013

The Committee members of the Science and Religion Forum are pleased to announce that the 2013 Peacocke Essay Prize has been awarded to Melanie McConnell of Howard College of Arts and Sciences, Samford University for her essay 'A Theodicy of Chance: Scientific Perspectives on Pain and Providence'. Membership prizes have also been awarded to Danielle Adams, Martin Sticker and Luke Wilson in recognition of their excellent essays. Congratulations go to all our prizewinners and it gives me great pleasure to publish Melanie's abstract:

Melanie McConnell, A Theodicy of Chance: Scientific Perspectives on Pain and Providence.

Many Christians resist consideration of the role chance plays in the world because of their beliefs about how God must work. Yet a world consisting of apparently random pain and suffering does not always seem compatible with a loving God. Science may provide insight into divine providence where classical theology cannot. Although science cannot make philosophical claims because it deals strictly with empirical data, it reveals truths about God's creation. Evolution, for example, may help us understand how chance is instrumental in our world, and how God uses pain and suffering. The existence of chance may enable our free will while protecting God's sovereignty. A relationship that respects the respective differences and benefits of science and religion could help us explore these concepts.

CONFERENCE REPORT

‘Chance or Providence? Religious Perspectives on Divine Action’, 5-7th September, University Of Chester

The 38th annual conference of the Science and Religion Forum was particularly notable for its convivial atmosphere in one of Britain’s most archaeologically rich cities. The event was opened by the SRF Chair Michael Fuller who drew attention to the theological emphasis of the conference. He pointed out that hitherto much of the literature discussing divine action has focussed on *scientific* perspectives on divine action – indeed, this was the subtitle of the justly-celebrated series of CTNS Symposia addressing the subject of God’s action in the world. In contrast to this, the aim of the Chester meeting was to see what light may be cast by coming at this topic from an alternative, religious perspective. In addition to this, he pointed out the inter-religious character of the conference, created by the presence of speakers from the faith traditions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

The discussion was launched by Mark Harris’ paper which looked towards resurrection (described as a ‘miracle of hope’) as the possibility of a new reality which was contrasted with the predicted bleak ‘freeze or fry’ future of the universe. Philip Clayton presented the backdrop against which theological thinking about providence must take place and gave a six-fold model of the forms which such thinking might take. He described how in the non-law-like nature of the mental, God can ‘lure’ thought without setting aside natural laws: God can

act on the minds of people and thus influence people without being responsible for evil.

Chris Knight revisited the distinction between general and special divine action and drew on Eastern Christian traditions in his proposal of an alternative naturalistic model of divine action, while Rabie Abdel-Halim gave an exegesis of the Qur'anic texts dealing with the importance of rational thinking. Gordon McPhate discussed near-death and out-of-body experiences in the light of his own very moving personal testimony to such experiences. A number of progressive Jewish thinkers were explored by Daniel Langton who explained how each attempted to reconcile traditional conceptions of providence with their understandings of organic evolution; in the process generating radical reformulations of Judaism. The topic of theodicy was examined in detail by Bethany Sollereeder who offered a theology of providence grounded in a consideration of the nature of love. Her thought-provoking images of fractals and mosaics illustrated a partnership of teleology and providence in which death has its meaning since the value of all creatures lies in the legacy of their past life and its contribution to the overall good of the creative process. The conference's short papers were many and varied and inspired much fruitful discussion. They helped to make our meeting a great success and one that will be remembered for a long time to come.

Michael Fuller and Hilary Martin

A BOOK THAT MADE A DIFFERENCE

Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, 1866.

REVIEWED BY MICHAEL FULLER

Grateful as I was for the invitation to undertake it, choosing a single book in fulfilment of this brief struck me as an absolutely impossible task. Like other contributors to this series I have been hugely impressed by Iain McGilchrist's 'The Master and his Emissary'. 'Classic' texts in the area of science and religion have been important to me: I remember reading T. S. Kuhn's 'Structure of Scientific Revolutions' when I was a doctoral student and being bowled over by it (it is, I think, the book that initiated my now ingrained habit of going through texts with a pen and marking, in slightly idiosyncratic ways, passages that I feel are important for different reasons). One of the finest short stories I've ever come across, Karel Čapek's 'The Footprint' (from the 'Wayside Crosses' collection), I re-read with no diminution in my relish of it. But if I'm honest, there's one book that really does stand out as life-changing, even if it's hard now even for me to understand all the reasons why that should have been the case.

It is another book that belongs to that time in my life when I was a doctoral student in Oxford. I had friends in Cambridge whom I would visit from time to time; and one day in the early summer of 1986 I was making my way from my lab to Gloucester Green coach station to

catch the coach to Cambridge (cheaper than the train, and meant one didn't have to schlep across London). I had nothing to read with me, so I stopped off at Blackwell's to buy something. I hadn't any particular idea of what I wanted, but it needed to sustain me through the return journey (some eight hours all told, as I recall). I saw a book I'd vaguely heard of by an author I vaguely recognised, which wasn't too expensive, and I bought it. It was some 550 pages of small print (less a problem then than it is now!). That, I thought, would do nicely.

Reading on a coach tends to be regularly interrupted, but I even so was some 120 pages in by the time we reached Cambridge, and I was absolutely hooked – I simply couldn't put it down. I carried on reading that evening, as my friends chatted around me. The next day was sunny, so I went to the botanics and spent much of it reading. Propriety dragged me away from the book for most of the following day, though I continued reading in the evening. I finally finished the book on the coach journey back to Oxford the next day, and for some time thereafter I made regular trips to Blackwell's until I'd devoured all the writings I could by this author who wrote like nothing else I had ever encountered before. He was Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky, and the novel that gripped me on that trip to Cambridge was 'Crime and Punishment'.

What was it I found so gripping?

First, there was the prose style. Dostoevsky's passion, his urgency, the mixing in of dream sequences – all this was very new to someone whose reading of fiction at this

stage was pretty limited. Second, there was his psychological acuity. The gradual derangement of the murderer Raskolnikov was told in a way that made such perfect sense. Although 'polyphony' was a word I only heard applied to Dostoevsky's fiction much later, I realised at the time that there was a constant shift of narrative perspective going on, which again served to reinforce the basic truth of the piece. Third, and related to this, there was a very un-English weirdness to it all. When Sonia tells Raskolnikov to go to a crossroads, bow down, kiss the earth against which his crime has offended, and confess to all around him that he is a murderer – and when Raskolnikov does so – well, when all's said and done, it's not the sort of thing a Jane Austen or Arthur Conan Doyle character would do. *But it makes sense.*

And fourth, there was the theology of it. When I read passages like Marmeladov's vision of the Last Judgment I was absolutely knocked sideways. In brief: Marmeladov, a drunkard who has ruined his own life and those of his immediate family, describes Christ summoning before him all those who, like Marmeladov himself, are the very dregs of humanity – and pronounces his forgiveness of them. He is asked why they are being forgiven: and he replies, 'because not one of them ever thought himself worthy of it'. That passage stirs me profoundly to this day every time I re-read it. 'Crime and Punishment' broadened my outlook immensely, and set me on a path of theological reflection that I travel to this day. It was, I suppose, simply the right book at the right time for a

mind that was greatly in need of a broader perspective than had hitherto been presented to it. And I'll always be grateful to whatever impulse it was that made me pull it off the shelves in Blackwell's twenty-seven years ago.

REVIEW ARTICLE

Michael J. Dodds, O.P., *Unlocking Divine Action: Contemporary Science & Thomas Aquinas*. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2012, pp. ix+311, £59.50 Hbk, ISBN 978-0-8132-1989-9.

REVIEWED BY PETER N. JORDAN

In a 2003 issue of *New Blackfriars*, the Dominican philosopher of religion Brian Davies published a letter to his recently deceased friend and fellow Dominican, Gareth Moore. Davies tells us that the Europe-based Moore had often asked him what American philosophers say about God, and as a tribute to Moore, Davies finally provides an answer. While recognising the complexity of the American scene, Davies nevertheless identifies a strand in recent American philosophising about God in which God is seen as ‘something very familiar. He is a person. And he has properties in common with other persons. He changes, learns, and is acted on. He also has beliefs, which alter with the changes in the objects of his beliefs. And he is by no means the source of all that is real in the universe.’ Davies is bewildered by this development—one whose genealogy he traces to William James—not least because this way of speaking about God would be utterly foreign to practically every pre-modern Christian thinker.

As Davies recognises, not all American philosophers writing about God have followed the trend of turning God into something like a creature. Some have retained the capacity to ‘talk excellent sense about God,’ which for

Davies emerges from a right understanding of the classical Christian distinction between God and the creatures God creates. These writers are modern proponents of a kind of speech about God that retains the 'learned ignorance' Davies believes necessary for properly discussing God, a quality which for Davies is best exemplified in the writings of the medieval Dominican Thomas Aquinas.

Among the handful of American authors whom Davies identifies as reliable sources for sound thinking about God is yet another Dominican, Michael Dodds. Davies points specifically to Dodds' 1986 book *The Unchanging God of Love*, in which Dodds seeks to interpret the traditional Christian doctrine of God's immutability for those who struggle to make sense of the teaching or who roundly reject it because of the image of God that it supposedly portrays. In that book Dodds analyses and explicates the writings of Aquinas to demonstrate how the doctrine of divine immutability should be understood. From the vantage point of Aquinas' exposition of the doctrine, Dodds criticises many of his interlocutors both for their erroneous exegesis of Aquinas and for their flawed proposals for reconfiguring or replacing the doctrine. Were Davies to rewrite his ten-year-old letter today, he would no doubt point to Dodds' latest book, *Unlocking Divine Action*, as another example of the determined effort to speak sensibly about God, this time by showing how Thomistic conceptions of divine action can help contemporary thinkers free themselves

from viewing God as little more than a very large and very powerful creature.

In his new book, Dodds is concerned with the characterisations of God propagated within the scholarly study of science and religion. In particular, Dodds has in his sights the vast literature about God's action in the world written within the past few decades, much of which emerged from the 15-year-long *Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action* project based at the Centre for Theology and the Natural Sciences in Berkeley, California and at the Vatican Observatory. (Dodds' own Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology is located less than a mile away from the Centre.) One person who frequently appears in Dodds' pages is Philip Clayton. The task Dodds sets himself is to sift through this literature with a fine-tooth comb to identify those elements of contemporary thinking on the subject of God's action that should be retained and those that should be discarded.

In order to know what to keep and what to eliminate, one must possess some standard according to which everything can be measured. As the subtitle of Dodds' book indicates, his standard-bearer for reflection upon God remains the thought of Thomas Aquinas. A key reason why Aquinas is so important for Dodds is because Aquinas relies so heavily on the rich account of causality found in Aristotle's philosophy. As Dodds notes in his introduction, all talk about God's action relies on prior conceptions of causality; that is, how one thinks about causality will indelibly shape how one conceives of God's

action in the world. What Dodds believes Aquinas offers to recent discussions of divine action is in part a broader view of causality than most participants in the discussion have countenanced.

The restricted view of divine causality that Dodds sees operative within many recent contributions to the discussion of divine action finds its roots in the narrowing of how causation is conceived following the advent of modern science in the seventeenth century. Aristotle's fourfold scheme of formal, material, efficient, and final causes became restricted to efficient causation alone, and this was further reduced to physical causation. As Dodds notes, as a methodological strategy this limiting of causality for the purposes of studying certain aspects of the world is perfectly acceptable; indeed, it is in part what led to the success of modern science. But this methodological ignorance of causes other than physical ones tended to become a metaphysical denial of causes other than physical ones.

This narrow, "locked" view of causation, and the associated views that flowed from it—mechanism, determinism, the universe seen as a closed causal nexus, and naturalism, which together have given rise to scientism—is now being challenged (or in Dodds' preferred parlance, "unlocked") by the recent recognition within the natural sciences themselves of the need for a more sophisticated account of causation. Dodds points to the phenomenon of emergence, and to the complex behaviour of objects studied within the realms of quantum mechanics, cosmology, and evolutionary

biology, as pressing the sciences to acknowledge that the modes of causality operative within the world are more diverse than merely physical efficient causation, even if these other modes of causation are not immediately amenable to measurement or quantification. It is Dodds' conviction that the fuller account of causation to which these findings point is strongly reminiscent of the kinds of causality operative within Aristotle's thought.

Given the intimate connection between views of causation and views of divine action, Dodds is able to trace a parallel "locking" and "unlocking" within corresponding conceptions of divine action since the rise of modern science. Those who have embraced the narrower causal paradigm of early modern science have struggled to find meaningful ways of speaking of God as acting, not least because God's activity has to be given a place within a mechanistic and causally closed world of physical efficient causation. If only one kind of cause is seen to exist, then God's action within the world must take the same form. Dodds identifies various modern theological movements—theologies of divine interventionism, deism, liberal theology, process theology, and theologies of divine limitation—as ultimately unsatisfactory responses to this constricted ("locked") view of divine activity. For Dodds these movements erroneously concede, rather than challenge, the limited view of causation.

A richer view of causality (commensurate with findings in contemporary science) points to other possibilities for conceiving of how God acts in the world.

This broader view of causation informs the majority of recent contributions on divine action. Drawing on scientific theories of emergence, indeterminism, and design, scholars no doubt familiar to many readers of *Reviews in Science and Religion*—Clayton, Keith Ward, Arthur Peacocke, John Polkinghorne, David Bartholomew, Robert Russell, and Nancy Murphy, among others—have utilised these new theories to speak of God as acting in a causally complex world. Yet Dodds is critical of many of their efforts because they still tend to conceptualise God as one causal force alongside others. Even though the causal structure of the world may be recognised as more complex than early modern science led us to believe, Dodds is convinced that most contemporary thinkers nevertheless subscribe to the view that the integrity of science requires that God not break the laws of nature or interfere with natural causes. But that view assumes that God *could* violate those laws, something that is only possible if God is seen as operating on the same level as other causes. It is this assumption, Dodds believes, that has fuelled the recent focus on indeterminacies within quantum mechanics as a possible site of God's action: an objective indeterminacy in the world (according to certain interpretations of quantum mechanics) becomes a place where God can act without disturbing pre-existing causal arrangements of the world. Yet the desire to find a place—to find room—for God to act assumes that God's activity must look just like creaturely activity. It is this assumption that Dodds' book confronts.

Just as Davies found in Aquinas an exemplary case of proper speech about God in the midst of a philosophical milieu that tended to bring God down to the level of creatures, so Dodds turns to Aquinas to inform his account of divine action in the midst of what turns out (if Dodds' critique of existing thinking on divine action is right) to be a very similar context to the one Davies describes. The fact that Dodds believes that the rich causality of the world is reminiscent of aspects of Aristotle's views of causality only strengthens Aquinas' appeal, given Aquinas' reliance on Aristotle's fourfold causal scheme. Yet for Dodds, a sufficiently textured account of causation such as one finds in Aquinas clearly is not alone sufficient to ensure that one will speak well about divine action. So then what else, in Dodds' view, does Aquinas get right that contemporary scholars miss?

Dodds' answer is simple: divine transcendence. Only an account of divine transcendence such as that offered by Aquinas can purportedly ground a view of divine action wherein God is not competing with creaturely causes, and therefore can conceive of the relation between God and creatures in a manner that is both intellectually satisfying and consonant with the dominant strands of the pre-modern Christian tradition. The latter half of the book accordingly explicates how Aquinas' theological vision of God allows one to apprehend the ways in which God acts, how the creatures created by a transcendent God retain the ability to act freely, and what the implications of this understanding of God are for such

matters as necessity, contingency, chance, providence, prayer, and miracles.

Dodds' work presents a direct challenge to the work of many scholars who have been central to the science and religion community in recent years. In some ways, it is surprising that a book like this has not appeared earlier, given that the backbone of Dodds' work—the manner in which divine transcendence and immanence are conceptualised and the transformations of these conceptions in the early modern and modern periods—has been the subject of considerable discussion in Christian theological circles over the past twenty-odd years, not least in the work of Robert Sokolowski, David Burrell, Kathryn Tanner, and William Placher. Perhaps the major contribution of Dodds' book, therefore, is the extension of this discussion to the realm of science and religion.

The success of Dodds' project might in part be measured by his presentation and critique of those with whom he disagrees, and his exegesis and application of Aquinas' views. In terms of the former, Dodds gives a thoroughly even-handed presentation of prevailing views on divine action, in many instances allowing the holders of those views to speak directly through lengthy quotations in the main text or footnotes. One of the strengths of Dodds' treatment of his interlocutors is his unwillingness to pigeonhole any of them; the perceived virtues of any given thinker are displayed just as readily as their vices, a fact exemplified by Dodds' willingness to approvingly quote from the writings of William Dembski

when Dodds thinks Dembski says something particularly insightful, even though Dodds disagrees with Dembski's overall position on intelligent design. The impression one takes from Dodds' work is that the author does not have an axe to grind against any of his interlocutors.

Similarly, those sections of the book devoted to explicating Aquinas' views are liberally sprinkled with direct quotations from a vast number of Aquinas' works, a feature that is extremely helpful for those who want to see for themselves how Aquinas talked about whatever point Dodds is trying to make. The complexity of Aquinas' thought means that those who want seriously to understand Dodds' alternative to the prevailing views will have to spend considerable time working out the basic principles of Aquinas' theology, a challenging task for those not well versed in Aristotle's philosophy. Yet this would seem to be precisely what Dodds would want his readers to do if they are to understand Aquinas properly on his own terms, and to comprehend his significance for contemporary discussions of divine action.

Dodds has identified a way of thinking about God that pervades much contemporary writing about divine action, a way that seems not to comport with much pre-modern Christian thinking about God. The extent to which Dodds' alternative theology of divine action will convince those who have a stake in this conversation will at the very least depend on their willingness to see Aquinas as a viable theological option. Whether Aquinas will emerge as a fruitful dialogue partner within

contemporary science and religion circles remains to be seen, although Dodds' book and its emphasis on those aspects of Aquinas' thought that are meritorious and applicable may well contribute to that emergence. Given the conceptual distance between (to use Davies' categories) seeing God as personal and God as transcendent, and all of the associated convictions corresponding to each of these views, it is impossible to predict whether Dodds' work will change the minds of those who come to his book with competing notions of God. At the very least, *Unlocking Divine Action* will introduce newcomers to a variety of positions commonly held by established scholars, and ideally will prompt long-time contributors to reexamine their theological convictions.

REVIEWS

Charles Camosy, *Peter Singer & Christian Ethics: Beyond Polarisation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, pp. viii+278. £18.99 Pbk. ISBN 978-0-521-14933-4.

REVIEWED BY MICHAEL MARSH

‘Mind the Gap!’

This would be an apt description of Camosy’s recent book: in other words, be very attentive to the differences. But what differences? Specifically the divide between Peter Singer’s ethics and the Christian perspective as based, to large extent, on Catholic Social Teaching [CST].

Singer has been the *bete noire* of much ethical deliberation due to his supposedly outrageous – even iconoclastic – positions which encourage unredeemable antithetical stances. Camosy’s commendable approach asks, with measured academic coolness, how Singer actually differs from others’ ethical positions. By clearing away the points upon which little, or no, disagreement is demonstrable, Camosy is then able to employ those remaining differences as catalysts for further informed debate as revealed by his methodology, in respect of his chosen categories.

We might, first of all, be very grateful for the short biographical cameo. Singer originates from distinguished Jewish pedigree, his matrilineal forebears having occupied positions of notable rabbinical importance in 18-19th Century Europe. The Holocaust claimed three

grandparents from anti-semitism, and his parents escaped Vienna with him and his sister for a future in Australia. The immediate family ambience was non-religious, and Peter refused his *bar mitzvah* induction. During an education in a Presbyterian-based school, he discovered the most evil passages in the Bible (the accursed fig-tree, for example). Later, as a member of the university's Rationalist Society, he became acquainted with all the arguments against God. Yet it was the problem of evil – borne of vivid recollections of Nazi extermination policies and of the impossibility therefore of taking seriously the notion of an omni-benevolent, omni-potent creator – which seemed inimical to adherence to any logical belief in, or due obeisance towards, such a Person.

And so to the book, whose plan is quite straightforward, comprising a series of chapters examining the issues with abortion (1); euthanasia (2); non-human animals (3); duties to the poor (4); and an exposition of ethical procedure (5), followed by a final look at Singer's current (?changing) position (6). I should re-iterate Camosy's imprimatur: his is not a systematic treatise on ethics but an attempt to wrest out of apparent polarised, and hence stalled debate, a logical dissection of the differences and from which proposals – as to how informed, rational thinking could ensue – are enunciated. That is the crucial point to have borne in mind in considering this book.

Chapter 1 deals with abortion and infanticide: Singer declares that women's needs outweigh that of embryo-

foetus: and that killing is justified since fetuses and infants lack valuable preferences. Rome, conversely, regards such reasons as totally unacceptable. The impasse, Camosy suggests, rides on (i) tribalism, (ii) fatigue from polarised debate and (iii) confusion over issues, the latter involving the permissibility of abortion, whether such policy is publicly feasible, and how women's legal/ moral rights might be compromised, noting however that Singer and church forbid killing *persons*; and that resorting either to private resolutions (*Roe v. Wade*); or exposing people to mortal danger (e.g., Catechism or Thomson's violinist) is unacceptable.

This leads to the conclusion that the ethical divide rests on the moral status of the embryo-foetus (noting that abortion and infanticide were linked by the early church – despite differing ethical and practical stances). Singer regards the current division as 'speciesism', that we eat animals but preserve infants, thus rejecting the Christian sanctity/sacredness of the flesh idea. Exit church – problem gone! *H. sapiens* offers biological significance only. Singer notes the historical church erred on slavery, racism (and now battles with sexism and marriage) and contra church, rejects her argument about potential for sentience and self-awareness – or future interests and their actualisation. There lies the divide.

In moving to Chapter 2, Singer's opposition to those desiring 'respect' for people at the end of life is examined: their whole edifice, according to Singer, is threatened with extinction – but that was in 1996. If there is change, it will be by slow attrition, not an acute fall.

Again, Camosy sees less antithesis here with the church. The difference, as with the foetus, hinges on (a definition of) personhood and moral status. Camosy employs three examples to underpin his approach: a) a completely brain-dead but hydrated subject; b) someone in the less well-defined position of 'persistent' vegetative state (these days, persistence is not entirely certain); and c) a terminal case of cancer, with pain and (apparently) less than 6 months to live. Given that Singer believes a person should be rational and self-aware, few would doubt the propriety of pulling the plugs on a category (a) subject – as rightly performed with Tony Bland (ten years post-Hillsborough): the church would agree that these subjects are, in fact, dead.

Other problems arise with terminal illness, and especially the difference between a dead person, and one pronounced (only) to be 'brain dead', as with category (b – or a). Singer is scathing of the Harvard medical criteria for brain death, which have permitted removal of organs for transplantation. We probably all imagine the spectre of a neurologist giving that verdict while a line of surgeons queues outside the ward, awaiting their chance to divest this warm, pulsating body of its heart, lungs, pancreas, kidneys, and liver, after which, the remains are confirmed dead and the certificate issued. For Singer and for the church, death should mean death, and not a fudged pronouncement seemingly favouring the transplant lobby. That is, regarding ecclesial moral judgement, it is not death of a brain, but of the body that is required, thus to maintain personal dignity to the end.

Moreover, the church would not demand medical efforts to be continued against clinically irrevocable cases, or where resources are unavailable or constitute a mere unbearable assault on the subject. So there would be agreement with Singer here, although for differing reasons. For a cancer patient (c) the problem is different. If the issue was solely pain, and incapable of pharmaceutical capture, Singer would have no qualms about suicide, or assisted killing. The church, however, would want palliative care to be extended for as long as possible, given a purpose to life: and the double effect would be available in such painful (albeit rare) cases.

In chapter 3 we again catch up with speciesism: but as Camosy indicates, Singer is probably commendably responsible for the growing movement of animal rights, and that 'sacredness of life' is by no means an exclusively human attribute. Camosy argues against Singer's views on speciesism, and his use of Genesis onwards. But clearly, there is much general agreement, in that both church and Singer espouse a sincere, deeply held approach to the dignity of animals and to creation, generally.

Both agree that we should all be very circumspect in our eating of animal flesh. That may be an ideal position, but the incompetencies of governments and other agencies have dismally failed to alleviate the world's starving and hungry: perhaps we should not give up meat too quickly. Nevertheless, our approach, to pay regard to this value-ethic, or the biblical covenant, should

temper the use and misuse of the animal kingdom, if not the entire eco-system within our reach.

So to Chapter 4 and our duties to the poor. Here there is much more agreement. Singer's gripe is the accumulation of wealth, post-Enlightenment (but don't forget philanthropists – Rowntree, Cadbury, Lever Brothers: Carnegie, Ford, Rockefeller etc). Four problems are evaluated: lack of a universal solution to poverty (Singer wants to escape local action which could damage recipients); 'I earned it' type of attitudes; help usually given to family and close people (Singer resists parochialism and over-indulgence); and over-population (that's a fallacy) – since the poor are poor, as Singer proclaims, as a result of poor production and distribution of produce. Both Singer and CST demand help, resistance tantamount to indirect homicide.

This is not the easiest of books: at times the text and argument can be dense, more suited to those with deeper interests in ethical agency and its outcomes. Chapters 5 and 6 are the most exciting because there we find a glint of change in Singer's preceding hard, ideological stance. Now, he appears to recognise the need for human flourishing through moral action in the long-term: happiness obtained for ourselves through actions towards others. These are objective and quantifiable, because they are grounded in those specified actions, a teleology which almost points metaphysically to a theistic conclusion.

Is it too soon to expect a possible late conversion? Well, to discover Camosy's conclusion you have to read

the book. Get a copy, be richly edified in the process, and find out!

Stephen R. L. Clark, *Philosophical Futures*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2011; pp. 247, £41.90 Hbk, ISBN 978-3-631-63020-4

REVIEWED BY CHRIS WILTHER

This book is a collection of essays exploring ideas of the future for the human species and the world we inhabit. The starting point is the claim that the world as we know it is not only changing but cannot last in anything like its present form. So what might the future be like? Drawing on a wide range of sources, Clark sets out on a 'conscious and conscientious imagining' (24) of the future.

Imagining the future involves thinking about how humankind might change, willingly or unwillingly; how the environment we inhabit might change or be changed; how the machines we produce might develop and become independent of us; and how we might relate to anything encountered as we attempt to explore the extra-terrestrial cosmos. Imagining the future for Clark also involves looking at the past and the present, and seeing how our current imaginings of the future are shaped, and limited, by our understanding of past and present.

We are given an introduction and eleven further chapters, each consisting of a previously published paper revised for this collection. The original publication dates

range from 1990 to 2009, though some of the papers have been revised and presented on more than one occasion. Whatever revision has been undertaken for this volume, the author clearly is aware of recent developments in science in particular, and engages with current theories and understanding.

Successive chapters consider the status of religion; the impact of machines; genetic engineering; the end of time; biology and ethics; the shaping of the natural world; the shaping of human beings through engineering; moral and social relationships in a non-human environment; and the values to be carried forward into the future. The discussion is informed by critical analysis of a wide range of writings from the ancient past, the near past and the present.

In its author's eyes this book is not primarily a philosophical book, despite the title; but familiar philosophical problems lurk throughout. What is 'reality', and how might we know that we are discussing the 'real' world? What does it mean to be 'human'? Are human beings merely physical entities, driven by chemical interactions, deluded into thinking that we have free will and control of our destiny? What is the relationship between humans and other living creatures? The basis of ethics, the nature of time, the idea of a 'world' beyond what we can perceive: all these, and other ideas, hide beneath the surface discussion.

Implicit and sometimes explicit in the discussion is a commitment to Platonism as a living way of viewing the world. In this book Clark does not discuss in detail or

defend Platonism, rather he draws on a sympathetic reading of Greek philosophy to challenge some of the reductionist and even dismissive approaches of current philosophical thought. He is also unfashionably unapologetic in making use of ideas drawn from religious sources (mostly Christian) to inform criticism of modern and, particularly, 'post-modern' thinking and envisioning of alternative futures.

The kind of imagining the future depicted here has for long been undertaken by writers in science fiction. Clark is happy to declare his interest and delight in this genre, and he clearly knows the field well. One chapter of the book is devoted to a careful analysis of the work of the American author C.J. Cherryh. Throughout Clark's book, the works of science fiction writers of different periods provide illustrations for his discussion, but also stimulus to his own imagination. Science fiction is treated seriously as not only a pleasurable read, but also a partner in a conversation about possible futures and their links with the present.

Religion, broadly conceived, is another partner in the conversation, and is discussed explicitly in one chapter. Here the underlying suggestion is that we need religion of some kind if we are to understand and manage 'nature' or ourselves. This suggestion becomes explicit at the end of the chapter, but is neither articulated nor defended in the chapter. Instead Clark explores the idea of a 'global' or 'world' religion'. He offers a critical and cogent analysis of current and past 'religions', which uncovers greater similarities and fewer differences

between religions than their adherents might wish to admit, but shows, in Clark's view, that no current religion has the attributes necessary for a truly global religion. Clark's own preference is for a global religion which is 'decentralised, faith-holding, non-humanist, eternalist' (42); but he is clear that this is not the only possibility, and that there may even develop a 'new' religion, which would necessarily be linked to a new metaphysics, a new science, a new vision of technology. The question not addressed is: if we have a new metaphysics and a new science, do we need a new religion, or any religion?

This explicit discussion of religion shows Clark's approach in this book. Platonic ideas of a timeless realm of beauty transcending our world and our existence provide a framework within which modern thinking about the present and the future is critically surveyed and found wanting. In Clark's view many modern writers on science, technology and the future have become seduced by their insights into forgetting the limitations of all human thought. He reminds us clearly and consistently that the future is always more strange than we think, and that current heavily 'rational' and 'scientific' theories may easily become blind to important aspects of human experience.

The assumptions underlying Clark's approach are not made explicit nor discussed: that would turn this book into a work of philosophy, with a very different tone.

However, if, for the sake of the argument, we accept Clark's premises, this book has much to offer. In

particular it raises significant questions about the casual acceptance of much that is written about the implications of scientific and technological developments, and the inevitability of aspects of the future.

The book is published as volume two of a series entitled *Beyond Humanism: Trans-and Posthumanism*, but offers a challenge and an antidote to the sloppy writing about the future found in much current material under this broad umbrella. Clark demonstrates through careful analysis that what makes us 'human' is neither easily described nor readily discarded. He also shows convincingly that imagining the future sheds light on living humanly in the present. The author's fluent and readable style makes the book a pleasure to read. I recommend this stimulating book to anyone who wants to think seriously and widely about the future for humankind.

Aku Visala, *Naturalism, Theism and the Cognitive Science of Religion*, Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2011, pp. 228, £55 Hbk, ISBN 978-1409424260.

REVIEWED BY JONATHAN JONG

Speaking as a cognitive scientist of religion, Aku Visala's *Naturalism, Theism and the Cognitive Science of Religion* comes as a welcome contribution to the field, providing as it does a critical view on aspects of our work to which we are generally inattentive. This review is, as it were, an insider's perspective on an outsider's

perspective, and should be received as such. Rather than focussing on the philosophical merits or otherwise of Visala's forays into the philosophy of science (e.g., the nature of explanation) and the philosophy of mind (e.g., the mind-body problem), I shall evaluate the implications Visala's work might have for those of us who work within CSR and those outside CSR who seek to understand CSR.

Books on nascent scientific fields risk becoming obsolete the moment they hit the press. Indeed, much has happened since the publication of this book. Many of Visala's protagonists—Scott Atran, Pascal Boyer, Harvey Whitehouse, et al.—have moved on in various directions, largely turning to non-religious phenomena, albeit arguably using the same conceptual tools they deployed in their previous work. Visala's caution that 'we should resist the temptation to describe CSR as a "tightly-knit" paradigm ... [and] also bear in mind the provisional nature of CSR theorising' (51) has thus proved sound. Be that as it may, much of Visala's response to CSR remains relevant; the philosophical dangers to which he alludes are ever present, even if, as I shall argue, Visala exaggerates their influence in practice.

Chapter 1 puts CSR in its historical and intellectual context, discussing CSR's repudiation of hermeneutic and other humanistic approaches to religion, its enthusiastic embrace of cognitive psychology, and its diverse wrestlings with evolutionary approaches to human behaviour. Those of us who come to CSR from the natural sciences will find Visala's discussion of CSR's reaction

against other approaches to religious studies particularly enlightening. Chapter 2 provides good sketches of the main hypotheses in CSR—the biased transmission of minimally counterintuitive concepts, the exploitation of agency detection and Theory of Mind cognitive mechanisms, etc.—most of which still provide the impetus for active research programmes. Though Visala's presentation is clear and concise, neophytes to CSR may be puzzled by the use of words like 'intuitive', such that human beings can simultaneously be described as 'intuitive theists' while religious entities like God are minimally *counterintuitive*. If so, they are in good company; some insiders find such apparent inconsistencies baffling too. It is admittedly somewhat surprising that concepts like 'intuitiveness' and 'naturalness' were not more critically probed given the well-developed philosophical literature on nativism (e.g., Griffiths, 2002; Mameli & Bateson, 2011; Samuels, 2007), but perhaps this goes too far beyond the remit of the book.

The substantive philosophical work begins in Chapter 3. CSR, Visala argues, is 'usually embedded and presented inside a certain metaphysical and methodological framework' (87)—*strict naturalism* (SN)—which includes such commitments as the causal closure of the physical world, the reducibility of all phenomena to physics, the rejection of intentional and supernaturalistic (e.g., theistic) explanations, universal Darwinism, and the causal-mechanism (CM) model of explanation (CM); furthermore, philosophical

assumptions like SN 'almost never get discussed in the field', but are rather 'implicitly assumed' (12). It is at this point that many CSR researchers like myself will begin protesting. In the first place, it is unclear what it might mean that we implicitly assume SN, or that we usually embed and present our work within SN. The fact that most of us have never thought about how our work is related to physics seems irrelevant to Visala, but what does he make of our explicit denials of these philosophical positions? Justin Barrett, for example, is himself a theist who, as Visala himself points out, denies the importance of Darwinism for CSR. Similarly, Visala credits Bob McCauley with a commendable explanatory pluralism antithetical to the explanatory fundamentalism that is meant to characterise CSR. Perhaps these two founders of CSR are, their protestations to the contrary notwithstanding, anonymous strict naturalists. Visala's claim that CSR implicitly assumes SN might mean that the central tenets of CSR, whatever they might be, imply or entail SN. But Visala is at pains to deny this; indeed, the main thesis of his project is to argue that *broad naturalism* is preferable to SN in CSR. Indeed, an examination of *broad naturalism* sheds more light on the aspects of strict naturalism that Visala finds most problematic.

The latter half of Chapter 4 is, in effect, a defence of personal or intentional explanation, sometimes referred to as *folk psychology*. It is, furthermore, a defence of the independent integrity personal explanation, such that personal explanations are not reducible to purely

physical explanations. This is all well and good, but again it is unclear that CSR can legitimately be accused of rejecting the irreducibility of intentional explanation, even if some of the less careful statements by its practitioners and fans can be read as such; very few of us are philosophers of science, after all. Indeed, we seek to explain ‘belief’, a folk psychological concept if ever there was one, and we sometimes do so in terms other folk psychological concepts (e.g., feelings, such as existential anxiety). It may be true that some of us believe that psychological states are ultimately reducible to brain states, but this has hardly led us to abandon psychological methods for neuroscientific ones. Indeed, Visala himself admits that ‘there is nothing wrong with what the CSR theorists are actually doing, but rather the problem is what they (and certain others) *think* they are doing’; I would modify this to state that the problem is what a few of us (and certain others) *say* that we are doing. Appealing as he does merely to a handful of statements by a small group of CSR insiders—namely, Ted Slingerland, Don Wiebe, and Scott Atran (only the latter of which he previously identified as a central figure in CSR)—Visala risks constructing a straw man. But perhaps it is a straw man worth constructing, if only because CSR can easily be interpreted in strict naturalist terms. Seen this way, Visala’s work provides a case against uncritically *adopting* SN for those of us who might be tempted to do so.

Chapter 5 finally brings *theism* into the picture. While CSR researchers are sometimes careful to point out that to

explain religion is not to explain it *away*, they are also quick to say that religious beliefs are ‘illusions’ (Bering, 2011) or ‘counterfactual’ (Atran, 2002). Yet, Visala’s evaluation of the situation here is much less pessimistic than his view of our tacit acceptance of strict naturalism, concluding that ‘CSR researchers themselves have not reached consensus on the subject’ (157). Looking beyond CSR researchers themselves, philosophical opinion is somewhat predictably divided (cf. Dawes & Maclaurin, 2013; Schloss & Murray, 2009), and Visala joins in the fray to propose the *religious relevance thesis*, according to which CSR is compatible with the core claims of restrictive theism, but may be inconsistent with (or, conversely, supportive of) auxiliary sectarian religious claims (e.g., of Christianity). From a CSR perspective, this view is *prima facie* a sensible one. After all, our *piecemeal* approach to religion denies that ‘religion’ is a unitary and coherent construct that is either true or false (Boyer, 2010); blanket statements about the truth or falsity of ‘religion’ or even ‘religious truth claims’ are therefore antithetical to our own methodological commitments. Furthermore, CSR is typically uninterested in *theism* if by that we mean the theological systems designed by and allegedly believed by professional theologians. This is not to say that there cannot be a cognitive science of theism, but just that there is not currently one. Still, philosophers are rarely dissuaded by such actualities. In any case, Visala systematically constructs a series of arguments *against* theism from CSR, only to point out serious flaws in each other them; he also discusses the use of CSR by Reformed

Epistemologists *for* theism, but concludes that this argument too is thin. I would be less charitable, pointing out that while theists might want to argue that CSR demonstrates the naturalness of theism, we might equally say that CSR demonstrates the naturalness of theological incorrectness. As John Calvin might say, the human mind is, from its mother's womb, an idol factory, producing minimally intuitive anthropomorphic god concepts willy nilly. Still, Visala's careful analyses are a breath of fresh air from the cavalier remarks CSR researchers and our fans are prone to make on the implications of our research for the lives of religious people.

Steve Jones, *The Serpent's Promise: The Bible Retold as Science*, Little, Brown, 2013, pp. 448, £25 Hbk, ISBN 978-1408702857.

REVIEWED BY PETER COLYER

This is an informative but also a frustrating book. It includes many illuminating accounts of recent scientific progress, especially in the fields of genetics and heredity. But as a contribution to the dialogue between science and religion the book is superficial and disappointing.

The first error is in the third sentence of the flyleaf: 'The Bible was written as a handbook to understand nature'. Perhaps not a complete error, but let's say a 95% error. Steve Jones himself may not have written this part

– he does recognise (3) that the Bible has many other purposes.

The second error is the title: by aligning science with the serpent's promise 'You shall be as gods' in the story of Adam and Eve, Jones locates science as an enemy of God and perpetuates the myth that science and religion are in permanent and inevitable opposition. This view is historically inaccurate and philosophically unnecessary. As Galileo wrote, 'the Holy Scripture and nature derive equally from the Godhead.' It is worth noting that the serpent offered the humans the chance to be as gods because they would 'know good and evil'. Such moral perception is one characteristic that science has spectacularly failed to deliver.

The third error is in the subtitle: 'The Bible Retold as Science'. In fact the book takes a limited and arbitrary selection of themes in the Bible as uses them as loose pegs on which to hang explanations of some aspects of modern science. For example: the Bible's interest in genealogies is used as the basis for a discussion of heredity and the relationships between humans on a worldwide scale; the reported great age of some of the Old Testament patriarchs opens up the theme of ageing and the genetic prospects for longer lives; the presence of sex in several Bible stories leads to descriptions of the amazing nature of reproduction in the animal as well as human kingdoms; the place of meals, both liturgical and everyday, in some Bible stories provides the opportunity for an explanation of the importance of cooking as an aid to the limited digestive capacity of the human stomach.

These and other similar topics do not amount to a scientific retelling of the Bible story. There is no serious engagement with the bigger themes of religion, or even with the theological meaning of the themes selected.

In fact Jones is not interested in such engagement. In a brief comment on the possibility that science and religion may not, after all, be in opposition he writes: 'The notion that science and doctrine occupy separate, or even complementary, universes and that each provides an equally valid insight into the world seems to me unconvincing *and is pursued no further here*' (5, my italics). A few well-aimed lobs at fundamentalists and a series of gratuitous side-swipes along the way are all that Jones is willing to venture.

Among these cheerful insults are the description of the Old Testament God as 'implacable' (7) or 'unforgiving' (394), the statement that in comparison with the scientific method 'faith is a vice' (15), and his view that internal religious persecutions are a 'fine biblical tradition' (246). If you read this book you will probably update yourself on some aspects of modern biology, but make sure there are no loose objects near you as you may be tempted to throw them around.

His use of the KJV for all his biblical quotations has the effect of making the Bible appear obscure and old-fashioned. Since all English Bibles are translations, why rely on one which for all the beauty of its cadences is often quaint or even unintelligible? (The William Blake images at the head of each chapter carry the same message – Christianity belongs in the past). Another

popular atheist writer (Matthew Parris) has also recently advocated the use of the KJV in all references to the Bible – is there a plot here? At the same time Jones is remarkably literalistic in some of his interpretations of biblical material, for example when discussing Adam and Eve and the soul. No doubt his style includes a large element of tongue-in-cheek.

Nevertheless there is a faint wistfulness in the book. Jones dedicates it to his great-grandfather who was a Welsh preacher, and admits that he has found humanist funerals unsatisfying (400). His choice of the Bible from which to select his themes may also be significant, when he could equally have found them in a Shakespeare play or a modern novel. If he were to accept the possibility that science and religion could be compatible he would make a more valuable contribution than those of the more aggressive opponents of religion.

Herman Philipse, *God in the Age of Science? A Critique of Religious Reason*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012, pp. xvi+372, £40 Hbk, ISBN 978-0-19-969753-3.

REVIEWED BY LOUISE HICKMAN

The primary focus of Philipse's volume is indicated in his subtitle: the book is concerned purely with rational arguments for God's existence. More specifically it is a rigorous and detailed critique of Richard Swinburne's cumulative case for God's existence. Philipse's thoroughness and his careful attention to the details of Swinburne's natural theology make this work a valuable

contribution to analytic philosophy of religion. The narrow focus, however, means that the book will have less appeal to those whose interests lie outside the analytic field. Philipse would contest this because he asserts that Swinburne presents the 'toughest case' and the 'most sophisticated' natural theology available today, which means that if the arguments of theism's star defender fails (which Philipse thinks they do) we should all embrace atheism. For Philipse, the deficiency of Swinburne's arguments demonstrate the meaninglessness of theism and its lack of predictive power with regard to the existing evidence. The empirical arguments against theism, he insists, outweigh the arguments that support it.

The options that Philipse sets before the theist are narrow. The first choice is between cognitive and non-cognitive interpretations of religious language. The latter is dismissed swiftly: most religious believers past and present have treated God's existence as a factual hypothesis (xiv) and such a view is too reductive for the age of science (87). Wittgensteinian approaches of the sort D. Z. Phillips advanced are therefore rejected with little discussion. The only other option Philipse countenances is a cognitive approach, which is why he favours engaging with Swinburne's attempt to present God's existence as a factual proposition open to the demands of 'our scientific age', demands which commonly require 'a public and persuasive validation of methods of research' (xv). Endorsing a cognitive account however forces a further choice: between justifying one's belief

with evidence and/or reasons, or refusing the need for such justification (such as the approach adopted by Alvin Plantinga and other Reformed epistemologists). Any attempt to do away with justification is rejected for being useful only for those who never doubt in the first place (thereby promoting the possibility of bigotry and dogmatism) (42).

Philipse's small inventory leaves rational analytic philosophy looking like the only valid option. Having divorced faith and reason, he argues for the indispensability of rational justification for religious belief. Revealed theology, he argues, contains too many internal contradictions and there are too many passages in scriptural revelation that modern advances in science show 'are not true, at least if taken in their traditional interpretations' (8). Philipse might be right about literal interpretations but this is not strictly true of some 'traditional' – which include metaphorical – interpretations of biblical scriptures. An opportunity is missed here to explore more profound questions about how science and the 'age of science' are being defined. The scientific 'method' is not an unproblematic term, nor is it so easy to accept science as dealing purely with straightforward factual hypotheses. If complexities in the philosophy of science come to the fore, it becomes harder to see the four options Philipse presents to the theist as 'an exhaustive inventory' of the options available for those who wish to be reasonable and conscientious (342).

Part I sets out arguments for the importance of the rationality of belief. In it, Philipse dismisses the reformed

objection to natural theology: a world of incompatible religious creeds and rival secular explanations means that all religious believers should embark on apologetics in order for their beliefs to be rational, justified or warranted. Here he sets down his definition of rationality in terms of the evidential epistemic sense of the word (66). Religions are defined as systems of beliefs based upon factual claims or presuppositions about hidden powers which cannot be discovered by biological research although they influence natural events and resemble human persons (80). His interpretation of natural theology gives rise to a problem (Philipse calls it a tension) for the rational theist. The methods of philosophy of religion must pass the same tests of validation as scientific methods (84) otherwise those methods would be so different that they cannot be validated at all, meaning that religious belief would not be respectable. However, the rationality of natural theology cannot entirely resemble scientific rationality because if it did it could only fail: religious hypotheses would be superseded by scientific ones, as has happened in the past to the god-of-the-gaps (90). Swinburne is notable for his attempt to circumvent this tension, which is why his natural theology forms the focus of Parts II and III.

Part II takes issue with Swinburne's argument that theism has enormous predictive power. Whereas Swinburne insists that if God exists it is likely that humanly free agents (and thus a physical universe) will exist, Philipse makes reference to Charles Darwin and

Michael Ruse and argues instead that Swinburne's assumptions are anthropomorphic projections. The probability of God intending to create human agents cannot be determined which means theism must lack any predictive power at all (160). Also, if religious hypotheses are completely indistinguishable from scientific ones, then the danger of the god-of-the-gaps presents itself. One way around this danger might be the suggestion that religion answers the questions 'too big' for science to answer (including perhaps the very fact that the universe exists). For Philipse there are problems here too. Those questions currently regarded as 'too big' may become smaller and the risk of the god-of-the-gaps pervades. Consequently, theists 'who want to avoid the risk of God-of-the-gaps should not claim that theism is an ultimate explanation of anything in the universe, or indeed of the existence of the universe itself' (198). Missing here, however, is any consideration of so-called layered explanations. Taking God's existence as a propositional fact and analysing religion by using a scientific methodology means that Philipse regards all explanations as of the same type and disregards any consideration of metaphysical explanations.

Part III critiques Swinburne's use of Bayes' theorem and presents probable evidence against theism. The hypothesis of a bodiless spirit, Philipse argues, is implausible given research in biology and neuroscience has shown that mental life depends on brain processes and physical neurones. Philipse also rejects Swinburne's use of simplicity. It is far more complex than Swinburne

acknowledges which means it cannot be claimed that theism is very simple with enormous scope. The cosmological argument, Philipse insists, cannot raise the probability that theism is true. The universe might be infinitely old meaning there is no room for the hypothesis that God caused its existence (236) and arguments from fine tuning smack too much of the God-of-the-gaps. Moral arguments too are rejected and the existence of prima facie pointless evil makes the existence of God less likely (302). All this means that the probability of God creating a complex universe containing the human species is not roughly half but negligible (245) so we should all become 'disjunctive strong universal atheists' (343).

Phlipse approvingly quotes William Abraham's assessment of Swinburne's importance as 'a kind of new Aquinas' (29) and this assessment largely justifies using the philosophy of the Emeritus Nolloth professor as the focus of Philipse's book. The veracity of Abraham's claim won't become apparent for another few hundred years at least but Swinburne's assumption that science and religion should work by the same scientific method dictates the terms of Philipse's arguments and shapes his reading of the theistic tradition. Aquinas, for example, is treated as proposing purely rational arguments, an assumption widely contested by Thomist scholars. It is not so clear, however, that all religious believers either do or should treat God as a hypothesis in the way Swinburne does, nor is it clear that science itself adopts the scientific method that Philipse ascribes it: the result is

that the choices for the theist are not all that narrow. This is undoubtedly an important book in the field of analytic philosophy of religion but the need for analytic philosophers to engage with traditions beyond their own remains pressing.

REVIEWS REPRODUCED FROM ELSEWHERE

Rodney Holder, *The Heavens Declare: Natural Theology and the Legacy of Karl Barth*. Templeton Press, 2012. 286pp. pb £12.00. ISBN 978-1-59947-396-3.

REVIEWED BY DAVID GIRLING

A version of this review was first published in *Science and Christian Belief* April 2013, 25: 59-60. Reproduced with the kind permission of the publisher and the author.

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands (Ps. 19:1). John Macquarrie has defined natural theology as the knowledge of God ... accessible to all rational human beings without recourse to any special or supposedly supernatural revelation.

The debate throughout the centuries has been concerned with the relative importance of natural theology and revelation in guiding our thinking and determining our beliefs about the existence and nature of God. In this book, Rodney Holder provides us with an outstandingly helpful, clear and comprehensive account

and critical discussion of this debate. Separate chapters are devoted to the twentieth-century theologians Karl Barth, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Wolfhart Pannenberg, Thomas Torrance and Alister McGrath, but other theologians and many philosophers are not neglected.

Karl Barth provides a relevant starting point because of his vigorous opposition to the whole idea of natural theology. For him, the self-revelation of God in Christ as attested in Holy Scripture was all-important: uniquely and exclusively so. Indeed, he went so far as to imply that any reliance at all on natural theology amounted to a denial of the revelation of God in Christ. In his critique of this extreme view, Holder acknowledges the primacy of God's revelation but insists that God as creator has necessarily left evidence of himself in the natural world, and that the biblical writers attest as much. He makes a compelling case that Paul in his sermon on the Areopagus in Athens, as related in Acts 17, preached naked natural theology. The point here is that Paul was preaching to non-believers, albeit thoughtful and philosophically sophisticated non-believers. He had to start with them as they were. Such an approach is surely essential in our own Christian apologetics.

And so, starting with the antagonistic legacy of Barth and his disciples, Holder guides us through to the renaissance of natural theology, championed, particularly in recent years, by John Polkinghorne. The case for this renaissance is persuasively made, involving, as it does, a critical and well-informed analysis of such matters as the nature of revelation, how we interpret scripture, the

limitations of human reason, post-modern relativism, militant secularism, the value or otherwise of various types of 'evidence', and the importance of trust in the Creator. The faith of Christians is not blind, irrational faith, but faith in a God of order and reason. Nevertheless, natural theology has to be allowed to be itself, and Holder rejects the stance taken by, for example, Alister McGrath in claiming that natural theology can only be done legitimately from within the framework of Trinitarian Christian dogmatics.

A valuable emphasis in this book is on the desirability of expressing traditional arguments in probabilistic form. Those who have read the author's *God, the Multiverse and Everything* will be familiar with this approach. For us scientists there is a necessary provisionality about our conclusions and most of us must warm to the honesty of 'inference to the best explanation' as the appropriate way of handling such provisionality. Arguments for God's existence are not knockdown arguments but are based on the balance of probabilities. We learn and grow in faith, not by subscribing to dogma but by honest exploration from within the fold of the faithful, including open dialogue between science, philosophy and theology. Bayesian probability theory helps to confirm us in our beliefs in a cumulative way of confirmation by a process of formulating comparisons with competing alternatives. Here, natural theology has a fruitful part to play.

It is a pleasure to recommend such an accomplished account of the story and place of natural theology in our thinking and ministry.

PUBLICATIONS BY MEMBERS OF THE FORUM

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

David Wilkinson, *Science, Religion and the Search for
Extraterrestrial Intelligence*. Oxford University Press, 2013.

BOOKS AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW

David S. Barkley, *The Only Real House of Mirrors*. N. Simonson
& Company, 2013.

Lloyd Geering, *From the Big Bang to God: Our Awe-Inspiring
Journey of Evolution*. Westar, 2013.

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

Rebekka A. Klein, *Sociality as the Human Condition*. Brill, 2013.

J. David Pleins, *The Evolving God: Charles Darwin on the
Naturalness of Religion*. Bloomsbury, 2013.

J. B. Stump and Alan G Padgett, *The Blackwell Companion to
Science and Christianity*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.

David Wilkinson, *Science, Religion and the Search for
Extraterrestrial Intelligence*. Oxford University Press, 2013.

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.