Book Reviews

ENVIRONMENT

THE BLANK SLATE: The Modern Denial of Human Nature by Steven Pinker. New York: Viking, 2002. xvi + 509 pages, appendix, notes, references, index. Hardcover; $27.95. ISBN: 0670031518.

In his newest tome, psycholinguist, Pulitzer Prize nominee, and Massachusetts Institute of Technology professor Steven Pinker has taken up the sword against Environmentalism and dealt it a blow from which it is not likely to recover. Approaching his subject matter from both philosophical and empirical pathways, Pinker's aim is to dismantle Environmentalism's main premises: John Locke's Blank Slate theory, Dryden and Rousseau's Noble Savage notion, and Descartes' idea of a Ghost in the Machine. He contends that as much as both academicians and the popular press tout these politically-correct philosophies, they hold little empirical support and people should no longer regard them as valid approaches to understanding humanity.

Pinker's main theme is that human beings are not born with a *tabula rasa*, malleable to the whims and wills of the environment. Instead, people come into this world with a host of predispositions, characteristics, and traits already formed. The environment does not shape the person; the person shapes the environment. Pinker knows his ideas are counter-intuitive and highly controversial, so consequently he backs up his suppositions with a wealth of data from cognitive science, genetics, and evolutionary biology. Almost as if he can foresee objections to his ideas, Pinker systematically breaks down and refutes arguments against his stances before they can even arise.

The book has five parts (six if you count his concluding chapter). The first is devoted to explaining the history and systems of the Environmental theories, and why studies in the cognitive, biological, and genetic sciences have given good cause to refute the Environmental notions. The second section is devoted to explaining the politics surrounding the Environmental theories, why they became so popular in the first place, and why they remain dogma in most universities despite their lack of supportive evidence. Pinker uses the third section to alleviate any fears that might be associated with replacing an Environmental explanation of human nature with a more a materialistic one, and compliments this section with the forth, which aims to show why any moral stance that makes itself contingent on a Blank Slate philosophy is doomed. In his fifth section, Pinker writes of how malfeasantly Environmentalism has crept into current "hot" topics (e.g., politics, violence, gender, children, the arts) and how only through an accurate knowledge of the role and function of biology and genetics can people begin to repair the damage.

Pinker's book presents no new data, but does an excellent job assimilating a large portion of what others have written. It is obvious that he is quite knowledgeable about genetics, biology, and psychology, and his erudition shines throughout the entire book. Even though he has written his book for the laity, he meticulously cites references that support his arguments, which should satisfy any scholar reading the text. He approaches his content from a strong evolutionary perspective, a point-of-view that both fits his analyses well and makes for interesting reading.

To the book's detriment, he takes a few unnecessary swipes at Christianity, believing all who adhere to its tenets are blind, sycophantic disciples of the Religious Right. Moreover, it becomes obvious throughout the book that Pinker has his favorite topics and sometimes spends a little too long on his soapbox preaching about them. Fortunately, his attacks on Christianity are few and his soapbox rantings are infrequent enough that they do not take away too much from the cogency of the book.

Overall, Pinker has done an excellent job in his latest literary work. His argument for the potency of genetics and biology (and against the influence of the environment) is logical, well documented, thorough, and convincing. While those working in the biological or social sciences might especially find this tome of interest, almost anyone with a penchant for understanding human nature should find the book appealing. Pinker travels a path many in academia might fear to trod, but his journey is highly insightful and any who read this tome will be more enlightened because of it.

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YOU'VE BEEN HAD: How the Media and Environmentalists Turned America into a Nation of Hypochondriacs by Melvin A. Benarde. Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002. 308 pages, index; notes. Hardcover; $28.00. ISBN: 0813530504.

This is an important book for ASA members, most of whom probably have an "environmentalist" bias while few have the "pro-technology" bias as I do. Benarde has impeccable environmentalist credentials, e.g., former director of the Environmental Studies Institute at Drexel University and author of nine books like *Our Precarious Habitat* and *Global Warning/Global Warming*. He is the latest in a series of environmentalists since 1990 who have written exposés and criticisms of excesses and myths promulgated by the environmentalist movement. The most prominent is Bjorn Lomborg whose book *The Skeptical Environmentalist* has provoked widespread condemnations by doctrinaire environmentalists but has been lauded by pro-technology scientists.

In a press release accompanying the release of *You've Been Had*, Benarde says he expects a similar attack on himself, because, he says, both Lomborg and he "show that environmentalists have overstated their case-if they ever had a case." He says that case was the myth that "technology in the form of a military/industrial complex is the noxious cause of high death and illness rates"(p. 262). Some pro-technologists, however, notably Julian Simon, have shown over and over again that "things are getting better"—longer life spans, lower infant mortality, more wealth, higher standard of living, and so forth. Further-

more, environmental catastrophes related to pollution and toxic waste predicted by many, e.g., as reported in George Gallup, Jr., *Forecast 2000* (New York: William Morrow Co., 1984) have not happened.

Now, Benarde, in reviewing an array of environmental issues, tends to side with the optimistic technologists. Thus, for example, in addressing the subject of "Genetically Modified Foods" his review includes statements like: "Once again the Luddites are at the gates." "Are gene-altered plants the 'Frankenstein Foods' they have been labeled by environmentalists or are they the foods of the future?" "Following established practice, environmentalists and their handmaidens, the media, failed to provide the public with a full measure of issues surrounding these new foods." In a similar manner, he attacks classical views of doctrinaire environmentalists on the pesticide-cancer myth, hazardous waste ("Toxic waste"), food irradiation, Three Mile Island, Love Canal and the dioxin myths from the Agent Orange and Times Beach stories.

Benarde, however, maintains strong concerns about several environmental problems. The first is global warming followed by tobacco and air pollution, particularly as related to fine particulates from auto exhaust. These concerns all become connected in discussion of new energy sources to replace fossil fuels. Benarde retains an environmentalist's zeal in a tutorial on global warming—beginning with an early (1801–1882) prediction by Marsh that "the earth can be modified by human activity." The basic causes of global warming, can be classified, according to Benarde, into three categories: (1) use of fossil fuels, (2) the production of cement and (3) land use issues, e.g., deforestation.

Benarde's solution for global warming comes as a surprise—namely nuclear power. He reviews the history of nuclear phobia and the role of the media in distorting the Three Mile Island incident. He credits Tyler, of the *New York Times,* however, for a balanced reporting of the Chernobyl crisis. He states that environmentalists believe "wind, solar, hydro and tidal power are the natural and only ways to achieve the energy needs" today. He rejects "their impractical message" and believes nuclear power is one answer to global warming. He reviews with some detail the science of ionizing radiation hazards and often cites risk comparison for perspective, e.g., that exposure to ionizing radiation, cosmic rays, while on airplanes, far exceeds most earthbound exposures, whether environmental or occupational. He decries (p. 205) the fact that the media failed to publicize a $10 million epidemiological study which found no significant elevated health effects in workers subjected to high levels of ionizing radiation exposure. But in that case the investigator seems not to have promoted publication. He thus contributed to "publication bias" ("effects" are reported but not "no effects").

Before the end of the book, Benarde presents a mild criticism of creationism, which is probably milder than that of many in ASA. He closes with a grand plan for introducing "scientific literacy" into society beginning with proactive steps by key university professors to initiate a radical change in educational philosophy and curricula. This grand plan is laudable and I hope it comes about and that ASA can play a role in it.

Reviewed by John M. Osepchuk, Full Spectrum Consulting, 248 Deacon Haynes Road, Concord, MA 01742.

THE ART OF THE COMMONPLACE: The Agrarian Essays of Wendell Berry by Norman Wirzba, ed. New York: Counterpoint Press, 2002. xx + 330 pages. Hardcover; $26.00. ISBN: 1582431469.

Because I find Wendell Berry's poetry to be beautiful and thoughtful, I was attracted to the possibility of reviewing a book of his essays. His poems embed a commitment to Christian belief amid the grittiness of daily life. These essays elaborate that orientation more explicitly and explore his ideas at greater length. The introductory material by Norman Wirzba provides a helpful guide to Berry's thought.

The book is organized into five parts: A Geobiography, Understanding Our Cultural Crisis, The Agrarian Basis for an Authentic Culture, Agrarian Economics, and Agrarian Religion. Berry's thinking is grounded in his family history and the place in which his family has lived (hence a geobiography). On this grounding, the essays broaden out to address various aspects of the present condition, always returning to the importance to Berry of the land. "I am talking about the idea that as many as possible should share in the ownership of the land and thus be bound to it by economic interest, by the investment of love and work, by family loyalty, by memory and tradition."

These reflections are also firmly based on a commitment to Christianity, and tied to Berry's reading of the Bible. "The soul, in its loneliness, hopes only for 'salvation.' And yet what is the burden of the Bible if not a sense of the mutuality of influence, rising out of an essential unity, among soul and body and community and world? These are all the works of God, and it is therefore the work of virtue to make or restore harmony among them." These ideas form the backdrop for considerations of racism as violations of community, of economic globalism and of technological development, much of which makes Berry uncomfortable.

The underlying ideas of the importance of the land, and of the essential unity of the created order, including both the animate and the inanimate and especially humanity, are easy to affirm. Some of Berry's specific conclusions about the importance of agrarian practice are perhaps not as easily scalable to a planet populated by the billions who will live on it during our children's generation. This book is both stimulating and challenging.

Reviewed by David T. Barnard, University of Regina, Regina, Canada.

Origins & Cosmology

EVOLUTION AND MORMONISM by Trent D. Stephens, D. Jeffrey Meldrum with Forrest D. Peterson. Salt Lake City, UT: Signature Books, 2001. 238 pages. Paperback; $19.95. ISBN: 1560851422.

The book's thirteen chapters have an eleven-page bibliography and a few illustrations relating to biological evolution. Here is the main point from each chapter: (1) the universe is billions of years old, follows natural laws, and was created by God for mortal existence; (2) Mormon leaders say leave the theology to theologians and science to sci-

entists; (3) many Mormons think biological evolution false but science and Mormon theology cannot conflict; (4) Mormon leaders' 1909 statement did not reject evolution; (5) science is based on facts; religion on faith; (6) fossil evidence and DNA data support evolution and Neo-Darwinism but some evolution is directed by God; (7) DNA evidence links all life forms, but God created human's physical and spiritual natures on different time lines; (8) Joseph Smith said God created humanity's spirituality before physicality; (9) organic evolution is the honest result of scientists explaining the evidence; (10) oldest fossil bacteria in rocks are 3.5 million years old; (11) Genesis is compatible with evolution; (12) evolution may be partly random and partly non-random; (13) biological evolution is one step in the process of eternal progression from humans to gods.

The book's main point is to present modern biological evolution as established fact and to make Mormon theology compatible with it. In the past, Mormons opposed evolution. The book weaves evolution with Mormon belief that God was once a man and that he evolved into God. (But if God created the universe, where did he live as a man before creation?)

The book's main strength is its excellent portrayal of biological evolution. Its main weakness is not clarifying the numerous contradictions between Mormon theology and science. For instance, DNA analysis is used to show physical man's relationship to other primates, but the authors are silent on the use of DNA to show that North American Indians are descended from East Asians and not from Hebrews, as Mormon theology demands. Also, modern dating methods show that American Indians came here 12,000 or more years ago, not 600 BC, as stated in the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon states that honey bees, various animals, and seeds of crop plants were brought to the new world by the Hebrews in 600 BC from Jerusalem. Yet none of these were found here until post-Columbian times.

The book's three authors have ties with the Mormon tradition. Stephens, professor of anatomy and embryology at Idaho State University, has coauthored ten books and is a Mormon bishop. Meldrum, associate professor of anatomy and anthropology at Idaho State University, is co-editor of a series of books on paleontology and a Mormon priesthood instructor. Peterson, a writer and movie producer, is an elder and teacher of Mormon doctrine. Although the book is written primarily for Mormons, ASA members may find it useful to study the unbiblical, polytheistic theology of the Mormon Church.

Reviewed by Melvin N. Westwood, Professor Emeritus, Oregon State University, Corvallis, OR 97331.

PATTERNS IN THE VOID: Why Nothing Is Important by Sten F. Odenwald. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2002. 270 pages. Hardcover; $27.00. ISBN: 0813339383.

An astronomer at Raytheon, Odenwald has published over 50 popular and scientific articles. His previous books include *The 23rd Cycle* and *The Astronomy Café*. He also writes a regular online column at www.theastronomycafe.net.

This book is about the immense areas of vacuum that comprise everything that exists, from deep space to atoms. The subtitle is intentionally provocative. The book does *not* claim that there is not anything that is important. It rather claims that nothingness (the void) is important. It was from the void that the universe sprang into existence, and the overwhelming majority of the universe is still comprised of void rather than matter. This book is about the author's scientific struggle to make sense of existence and find some meaning to it all, especially in consideration of the void. It was not that long ago that science believed that space was not really empty but rather consisted of an ether. Although we now know that space is empty, it still "contains" things such as gravity, electromagnetic forces, and virtual particles that flash into and out of existence.

This book touches on the anthropic principle at several points. For example, life could exist only in a universe with four space-time dimensions. Also, the generation of matter and antimatter at the beginning of the universe resulted in only one particle of matter for every 30 million pairs of particles that annihilated and became light. "We can measure the likelihood of the miracle that is matter, and we find it is almost literally one in a million" (p. 226).

The author's physics-based explanations and speculations are often difficult for a layperson to follow, but mixed in with his technical explanations are some fascinating and poignant personal meditations about what existence and death means for him and those he loves. He also discusses the creation stories of various religious traditions, noting that they all state that the universe was created out of nothing, or out of darkness. However, he does not view any religious creation stories as valid in the same sense that science is valid. "Scientific and religious descriptions of Creation are not the opposite sides of the same coin but complementary views that reinforce the essential mystery of existence" (p. 219).

At the end of the book the author tries in vain to find the meaning of life, existence, consciousness, and death. He admits that his science has "fully prepared him to meet the Void in all of its technical splendor, but it has failed miserably to provide me with the inner emotional strength needed to face death and darkness." This book is recommended for those readers who are well versed in physics or astronomy.

Reviewed by Dan Simon, Assistant Professor of Electrical Engineering, Cleveland State University, Cleveland, OH 44115.

SCIENCE AND CREATION: An Introduction to Some Tough Issues by Wayne Frair. St. Joseph, MO: Creation Research Society Books, 2002. 77 pages. Paperback; $6.00. ISBN: 0940384256.

BIOLOGY AND CREATION: An Introduction Regarding Life and its Origins by Wayne Frair. St. Joseph, MO: Creation Research Society Books, 2002. 84 pages. Paperback; $6.00. ISBN: 0940384272.

These books are the third and fourth "in a series of introductory readers." The intended audience is not specified. Because of their brevity and level of dealing with the subject matter, I guess that they are designed for church

members wanting to know a little about the issues. There are glossaries, indexes, notes (nine pages in *Biology and Creation*, less in *Science and Creation*) suggestions for further reading and a list of "Creationist Periodicals," not including this journal. Most of the books listed for further study are written by young-earth creationists, but Behe's *Darwin's Black Box* and Phillip Johnson's *The Wedge of Truth* are included.

These books advocate young-earth creationism, although an attempt was evidently made to present other views fairly. That attempt did not fully succeed. In *Biology and Creation*, ASA member Frair states that "the term 'young-universe' or 'young-earth' is used for these proponents because they affirm that the universe was created about six to ten thousand years ago" (p. 50). However, like so many other writers, Frair uses *creationist* inappropriately. He implies that those who may believe that the universe was supernaturally created several millions or billions of years ago are *not* creationists. In *Science and Creation*, he writes "The word creation may be utilized in a broad general sense, but as used here it excludes theistic evolution, which is the view that God created living things by the process of evolution" (pp. 56–7).

Science and Creation introduces what science is, and devotes more pages on the relationship between science and theology. It points out that Christianity set the stage for the development of science, and that Christianity "Favors Good Science." The book explains that God is supernatural, not natural, and deals briefly with miracles. It closes with a brief history of creation-evolution thinking. Intelligent Design is referred to occasionally.

Frair explains the first law of thermodynamics as indicating that energy/matter cannot have come from nothing. I was, therefore, surprised that he did not go on to say that, if the first law has always been true, then the second law cannot have always been true. If both had been true, the universe would be in a state of total entropy, which implies that there was some definite beginning to the universe, which would be expected if God had created it. I was also surprised to discover that Frair referred to Hebrews 11 without mentioning Hebrews 11:3.

Biology and Creation explains such topics as exobiology, the origin of cells, convergence, Intelligent Design, and the Anthropic Principle. Frair writes that believers should not oppose scientific research, even research into the topic of pre-biotic evolution, unless there are ethical or moral problems with the research. He also says that "I am not suggesting that the evidence of God can be proved scientifically. Nobody can do this. Neither can anyone prove that God does not exist" (p. 33).

Frair writes that "When the parent-offspring relations (genealogies) particularly in the Old Testament are studied, a scholar can place time of the original creation at about six thousand years ago" (p. 51). Evidently Frair does not accept the view that the genealogies were intended to show continuity and not to establish timing.Both books are easy to read and free from technical errors. Neophyte readers will come away with a superficial understanding of the issues and be led to believe that Christians are, and should be, united in believing that the earth is but a few thousand years old.

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HEALTH & MEDICINE

MAD IN AMERICA: Bad Science, Bad Medicine, and the Enduring Mistreatment of the Mentally Ill by Robert Whitaker. Cambridge, MA: Perseus Books, 2001. 334 pages, tables, notes, bibliography, index. Hardcover; $27.00. ISBN: 0738203858.

The first moral-treatment asylum opened in America in 1817. It took until the early 1800s for Americans to embrace the idea that "the ultimate source of recovery lay in themselves, and not in the external powers of medicine." Medical journalist Robert Whitaker uncovers the secret underside of the psychiatric establishment in this thought-provoking book. It is his premise that American psychiatry has excelled throughout the nation's history, but doctors and drug manufacturers have profited far more than psychiatric patients.

Whitaker's articles on the mentally ill and the drug industry have won several awards, including the George Polk Award for medical writing and the National Association of Science Writers' Award for best magazine article. He was named a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for a Boston Globe series he co-wrote in 1998.

Whitaker's research has shown that the schizophrenics in the U.S. are less likely to recover than in a Third World country where the recovery rate, or ability for one to regain sanity, is surprisingly exponentially more likely than in America. As stated by the author, "the medical failure [in America] is a profound one." Millions of Americans suffer from mental handicaps but too many end up in prison, homeless, or shuttling in and out of psychiatric hospitals.

In a quest to understand the therapeutic failures of the actions taken since the seventeenth century to the present, Whitaker analyzes in a disturbing exposé the cruel and corrupt business of treating mental illness in America. In *Mad in America: Bad Science, Bad Medicine, and the Enduring Treatment of the Mentally Ill* Whitaker concludes, "modern mistreatments for the severely ill are just old medicine in new bottles …" He traces the history of experiments, theories, and nonsensical remedies to "cure" the mentally insane.

Whitaker summarizes cruel and unusual physical treatments including ice-water immersion, bloodletting, electroshock, lobotomy, and drug therapy. He relates how physicians have struggled to match medical practice with "cost for care" in an attempt to heal the psychologically sick. Another conclusion Whitaker makes is that mental illness has become profitable. It is good business for drug companies to make bad medicine in treating schizophrenia, a compelling indictment against the relationship between modern medical businesses and the American Psychiatric Association.

The story starts on a positive note, with the establishment of proper medical wards for the insane in Pennsylvania Hospital, around 1800. The "medical approach" was followed by a period of "moral treatment" between the 1840s and the 1880s when patients were treated with compassion and respect. However, overcrowding of psychiatric wards and lack of dedicated personnel led to the

restoration of the medical model resulting in widespread inhumane treatments including prohibition of marriage among the insane and compulsory sterilization. By the 1930s prefrontal lobotomy had become the norm.

One might think that the advent of anti-psychotic drugs in the 1950s would have marked the beginning of a positive approach to therapy. However, Whitaker's conclusion is that neuroleptic drugs make patients worse, rather than better and he proves this by repeatedly comparing treated and untreated patients from different institutions, with differences in referral patterns and severity of illness.

Mad in America reveals a great deal about the society that attempts to "cure" the patients, for the treatments for the severely mentally ill quite accurately reflect the societal values of the day. Whitaker faults the skewed studies employed by drug companies in the 1980s and 1990s as an attempt to prove the "effectiveness" of a drug all the while ignoring dangerous side effects. The archaic treatments of the past and the ineffective ones of the present are telling. Whitaker has presented a book well worth a look. In short, it is a dose of reality and makes one wonder about the state of the nation's mental health system.

Reviewed by Dominic J. Caraccilo, Lieutenant Colonel, US Army, Vicenza, Italy.

PHILOSOPHY & THEOLOGY

BY THE WATERS OF NATURALISM: Theology Perplexed Among the Sciences by Andrew P. Porter. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2001. 137 pages. Paperback; $17.00. ISBN: 1579107702.

Porter is an adjunct instructor at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California. He is also a consultant in physics at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. He has earned one doctoral degree in computational physics and another in philosophical theology and hermeneutics. His theological interests include the philosophy of religion as well as the differences between history and naturalism.

It is the latter of these two interests that is the primary focus of this book. In the first two chapters, Porter briefly discusses the attempt by some theologians to defend religion in an age of science with ideas from recent developments in physics. He cites one early example of this approach from William Pollard's 1958 book, *Chance and Providence*, in which Pollard suggested that "quantum uncertainty supplies just the indeterminacy that is needed to give God room to act." Porter then argues that this "God of the gaps" approach is a futile attempt to locate acts of God within the inner workings of the natural world. He summarizes his argument by stating: "to locate God within nature on nature's terms is to compromise the transcendence of God, to turn biblical religion into yet another variety of nature worship" (p. 8). After discussing why naturalistic ideas are not very helpful in making sense of biblical religion, Porter goes on to explain in chapters three through nine why it is better to search for "acts of God" from within the context of human history.

While Porter's criticisms of naturalistic religion are well argued, he fails to adequately interact with more recent publications in the field of science and religion. Out of the thirty-five sources listed in the "for further reading" section at the end of the book, only a few of them have anything to do with the relationship between science and religion. One of these citations is the 1958 book by Pollard, while the only two recent sources are a 1997 article by Robert John Russell, and the 1995 *Chaos and Complexity* edited by Russell, Nancey Murphy, and Arthur Peacocke. Although Porter states in his acknowledgment page that he is indebted to the writings of Russell and Peacocke for the key ideas in his book, there is little, if any, interaction with their publications. The ideas of physicist-theologians John Polkinghorne, Ian Barbour, and other recent contributors to the field of science and religion are also missing from Porter's book. The only other book of this genre that is cited, and the one that appears to have had the greatest impact upon Porter's thinking, is the 1949 *The Myth of the Eternal Return* by Mircea Eliade.

While many theologians would agree with Porter that is better to base one's religious beliefs on history rather than nature, the type of history described and defended in this book is first-person history rather than third-person history. According to Porter, third-person history is "external" history in which the one telling the story (the historian) is mainly interested in getting the facts straight. In third-person history, time is quantitative, a matter of dates and sequences. In contrast, first-person history is "internal" history which describes "what the events meant for the people who experienced them and for the people who identify with those historical actors after the fact, now, in the present" (p. 49). While third-person history is "they" history, first-person history is "we" history which often uses figurative language to show how things felt or what they meant in the lives of people then and now. First-person history, like modern-day movies and advertisements, uses special effects in ways that audiences can apply them to their own lives without being troubled by the fact that these are nonliteral, subjective interpretations of past events. The biblical accounts of past events are, according to Porter, primarily examples of first-person, "internal" histories.

It is clear from Porter's writing and resources that his view of the Bible is heavily influenced by liberal theology, biblical criticism, Kantian philosophy, and historical relativism. He clearly states that his own ideas have been molded by the writings of Ernst Troeltsch, Richard Neibuhr, and Edward Craig Hobbs. He argues that the real watershed in the history of religions is the Exodus event which transformed nature religion into a religion that was shaped and formed by history. He goes on to explain how the Gospel stories are a parody of the Exodus, with Jesus as the new Israel. However, in both cases, the stories are to be understood as examples of first-person history in which the subjective interpretations of the storytellers are of much greater value than the historicity of the events themselves. These events have been turned into advertisements for faith, but the faith that is called for is faith in an invented religion that has little, if any connection to actual, historical events.

While liberal theologians may find this book to be entertaining and enlightening, those who take the historic-

ity of the biblical narratives seriously will not find much that is helpful and should probably by-pass it altogether.

Reviewed by J. David Holland, Associate Professor of Life Science, Nyack College, 1 South Blvd., Nyack, NY 10960.

RELIGION & CHRISTIAN FAITH

PAUL: The Founder of Christianity by Gerd Ludemann. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2002. 292 pages. Paperback; $22.00. ISBN: 1591020212.

Ludemann thinks Paul was Christianity's founder and most successful missionary. The author explores this view, espoused by many previous writers, with "painstaking historical research." Paul created Christianity's theology by combining Hebrew and Greek ideas which resulted in a belief system quite different from the one preached by Jesus, according to the author. His view is "my historical thesis" and my "assertion." He seeks "to present Paul as impartially as possible, and strictly on the basis of the sources critically tested." In addition, he wants "to present Paul with the utmost empathy." Ludemann is professor of history of early Christianity at the University of Gottingen, Germany.

Ludemann's research has led him to some conclusions questioned by evangelicals, namely: (1) "James criticizes Paul's doctrine that salvation comes by faith alone …"; (2) "Paul's religious claims about God and his plan belong in a museum and cannot be accepted by modern man in the light of today's knowledge"; (3) Paul's experience on the road to Damascus pushed him "into the world of hallucination …"; (4) "… it is impossible to believe as Paul did that Jesus rose bodily from the dead." To Ludemann, the doctrine of Jesus' resurrection is a "canard."

Why read Ludemann's book? One, he introduces many illuminating but unfamiliar ancient texts translated into English. Two, he provides informative quotes from many scholars and includes a succinct bibliography for further study. Three, he interacts with many biblical texts and gives a reasoned argument for his position. Fourth, he provides a contemporary, readable, and widely-held view. To refute his perspective calls for a sturdy evangelical apologetic.

Reviewed by Richard Ruble, John Brown University, Siloam Springs, AR 72761.

SOCIAL SCIENCE

FOR A CHRISTIAN AMERICA: A History of the Religious Right by Ruth Murray Brown. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2002. 309 pages, index, resources, notes. Hardcover; $28.00. ISBN: 1573929735.

Brown passed away in May 2002, just before this book was published. A professor of political science and sociology at Rose State College, Brown spent twenty-five years in researching the history of the Christian Right. This included in-depth interviews with key figures such as Phyllis Schlafly, Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, James Dobson, Tim LaHaye, and Beverly LaHaye.

The Religious Right began, argues Brown, with a grassroots movement which rallied to defeat the Equal Rights Amendment in the 1970s. By the end of the century, the movement became a formidable cultural and political force. Henry Morris and the Institute for Creation Research are part of the story, but other parts, such as abortion, public school prayer, and homosexuality, play a much larger part.

Part I describes the early years of the Religious Right, with emphasis on Schlafly and the Eagle Forum. Part II is concerned chiefly about how the other players (Falwell, Dobson, the LaHayes) became part of the coalition. Part III is about the issues that define it. The book concludes with Brown's assessment of the movement, and how she expects it to play out in the early twenty-first century. Whatever happens to the present organizations, she writes: "… the Christian conservative movement still has its base in the growing membership of the conservative churches … [it will] continue to be a significant interest group …" (p. 282). She continues with a discussion of how this movement, through its schools, media, and institutions, is contending for the very soul of America. How successful it will be is a question she did not address.

It is apparent that Brown did not approve of the values and goals of the people she interviewed and subsequently analyzed. But despite this, unlike many books and articles on the movement, which tend to either praise or condemn, her book appears to be objective, balanced, and fair. Readers from both sides of the political/religious spectrum will find it to be an insightful look into the events, personalities, and issues of the last third of the twentieth century. It is well written, readable, and scholarly. I recommend it highly.

Reviewed by John W. Burgeson, 2295 E. Iliff Ave. #101, Denver, CO 80210.

INTUITION: Its Powers and Perils by David G. Myers. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002. 322 pages. Hardcover; $24.95. ISBN 0300095317.

David Myers, a renowned psychologist, has been a member of the American Scientific Affiliation since 1975. He is Werkman professor of psychology at Hope College in Michigan. His books include popular texts in social psychology and introductory psychology. In addition, he has produced scientific books on such topics as happiness, affluence, hearing loss, and hope.

Intuition receives strong recommendations from two presidents of the American Psychological Association and the chairman of Gallup Research. Its main point is that humans have two kinds of memory or attitude: "One is above the surface, in our moment to moment awareness; the other is below, operating the autopilot that guides us through most of life" (p. 51).

Myers' mission is to make what science reveals about intuition relevant to daily life. He thinks "… psychological science reveals some astounding powers and notable perils of unchecked intuition … creative yet critical thinkers

will appreciate both." Although science often inhibits us from thinking we know something we actually do not, it cannot provide meaning to life. This allows for spiritual intelligence which may produce "epistemological modesty" and aid in daily living.

Myers gives illustrations to support both the bane and blessing of intuition. The bane involves showing readers that confidence in their knowledge is often misplaced. For instance, most people think Reno is east of Los Angeles, Rome south of New York, and Atlanta east of Detroit; they are not. The blessing involves being able to do hundreds of things like walking, driving, and talking without thinking much about them.

Myers' thirteen chapters investigate a variety of intuitive tendencies including social, sports, investment, clinical, interviewer, risk, gamblers' and psychic. Fifty-six pages of notes and thirteen pages of indices are helpful for further study.

This is a superb book—informative, absorbing, insightful—and I highly recommend it. While full of results based on scientific research, it is nevertheless faith friendly. Its information will enable the reader to better grasp reality and move in the direction of much needed empirical intuition.

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Letters

Thomas Aquinas and RFEP

On the surface, the notion of a Robust Formational Economy Principle (RFEP), proposed by Howard Van Till (*PSCF* 54 [2002]: 232–9) appears to be compatible both with the scientific enterprise and Christian faith. It is essentially an agnostic position; one that makes a minimalist and negative claim about divine action (it is not necessary for God to act in a certain way), and avoids conflict with the working assumptions of scientific investigation. In other words, it is a friendly, non-threatening, comfortable position to take.

Such a view, however, serves neither science nor Christianity. It says nothing new to the majority of scientists who hold to either philosophical naturalism (or in Van Till's terminology, "maximal naturalism") or methodological naturalism. Neither does it offer much to Christians, who are all called to be "salt" and "light" to the world. How can it? A perspective of indifference to the question of divine action, other than placing a limit on God's ability to act in a certain way ("form-conferring intervention") is at best, interesting but without implications for personal response, apologetics, and evangelism.

Perhaps, a better alternative to RFEP is not ID, which posits the "form-conferring intervention" that RFEP denies, but a return to a more ancient understanding of creation and change as argued by Thomas Aquinas.[1]

Both Van Till and Aquinas would agree that any account of the physical world in the natural sciences is *not* inherently incomplete, contrary to ID and those who search for divine agency in the indeterminism of chaos theory or quantum theory. Aquinas, however, did not stop at that point. For him, although there are real and "amply equipped" natural causes (what he referred to as secondary causes), God is the complete and ultimate cause of the physical world. The secondary causes apply only to the world of changing things. Anything that changes requires an underlying material reality. Creating, however, is an action peculiar to God alone. To create is not to act on some already existing material, but to cause something to come into existence and to preserve its state of existence. To create, therefore, is to give existence. Anything separated from the cause of its existence would cease to exist. For Aquinas, God's act of creation is a constant, ongoing, and intimate event. Creation, however, is not mingled with the secondary operations of nature, but is presupposed by these operations. Interestingly, Aquinas saw no problems with an eternal universe because such a universe, would nevertheless, depend on God for its existence. In fact, there can be no conflict between creation and any scientific theory, because the former deals with creation and the primary cause, while the latter deals with change in preexisting material and secondary causes. The radical dependence of all things upon God as the cause of being is fully compatible with the scientific discovery of causes in nature. So, even though God is the immediate cause of all existing things, the material in the natural world is its own true cause of effects.

In what way is this Thomistic view superior to RFEP? First, it does not attempt to limit divine agency to certain modes and not others. God can and has acted in direct ways in the natural order (i.e., "form-conferring interventions") by bypassing secondary causes so that he himself produces either their natural effects, or possibly even effects beyond their power (what we would call miracles). That is not to say that nature is lacking in the power to bring about certain natural structures, but it is to say that the Author of nature has the power to override secondary causes if he so chooses. Second, a proper understanding of the Thomistic view (which my brief account of it in this letter is wholly inadequate in imparting) allows for Christians to maintain the historicity of unusual (or supernatural) biblical events, rather than resort to "new" interpretations. Thus, in spite of nature's completeness, there are certain events that nature was never meant to accomplish (s.a. creation, salvation, endowment of God's image upon humankind) and were never within nature's powers. RFEP would simply deny their historicity, or force natural scientific explanations upon them. Third, it is explicitly and uniquely Christian in its form, employing the concept of creation out of nothing and inextricably binding it with the God of Christianity. For Aquinas, creation is God's way of sharing and reproducing His inherent goodness. Fourth, because it is explicitly Christian, it opposes philosophical naturalism, and demands personal responses from Christians. We, as creatures, are true causes in our own right, and our actions have real consequences in the world. We understand how we *should* act because we now have an account (albeit incomplete given our inherent limitations) of how and why God acts. RFEP simply avoids the question of divine agency.