



Book Reviews



ANTHROPOLOGY & ARCHAEOLOGY

JESUS AND ARCHAEOLOGY by James H. Charlesworth, ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006. 740 pages. Paperback; \$50.00. ISBN: 080284880X.

The chapters in this book, in the words of the editor, “disclose how New Testament scholars learn from archaeologists, who are expert stratigraphers of archaeological sites, and how archaeologists garner knowledge from New Testament scholars, who are experts in the stratification of texts” (p. xxiii). They focus on this question: how do archaeological discoveries help shed light on the world, acts, and teachings of Jesus?

This book contains lectures that archaeologists delivered in Jerusalem to celebrate the new millennium. Some presenters came to speak directly from sites where they were carrying on excavations. The thirty-one authors write about locations (i.e., Bethsaida, Mount Tabor, Mount Zion), people (i.e., Pilate, Judas, Antipas), places (i.e., cemeteries, the temple, synagogues), practices (i.e., exorcism, spirituality, baptism), and theology (i.e., John’s Gospel, the resurrection, the historical Jesus). The contributors come from Israel, the Netherlands, the United States of America, Ireland, Canada, Australia, and Switzerland.

The editor, James H. Charlesworth, is George L. Collord Professor of New Testament Language and Literature and Director of the Dead Sea Scrolls Project at Princeton Theological Seminary in Princeton, NJ. He has edited other volumes, among them are the *Old Testament: Pseudepigrapha* volumes 1 and 2, *Jesus’ Jewishness* and *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls*. In this book, he wrote the preface, the first chapter (“Jesus Research and Archaeology”) and conclusion (“The Historical Jesus and Biblical Archaeology: Reflections on New Methodologies and Perspectives”).

The book’s many helpful features include (1) a list of academic affiliations of all the authors; (2) some black-and-white photographs; (3) a glossary; (4) selected bibliography; (5) geographical, scripture, and ancient text indices; and (6) nine pages of abbreviations for modern publications, ancient documents, ancient writers, apocryphal writings, and pseudepigraphal writings.

Charlesworth, in his conclusion, summarizes some findings of archaeology: (1) a vineyard, winepress, walls, Mary’s well, and towers have been found in or near Nazareth; (2) the locations of Cana and Bethsaida may have finally been discovered; (3) findings at Sepphoris shed light on culture and rabbis; (3) many synagogues have been located; (4) Caesarea Maritima and Sebaste in Samaria are being excavated; (5) light is being shed on Jerusalem, the temple, Pilate, Caiaphas, Simon of Cyrene, and the practice of crucifixion.

No book in the world is more studied and revered than the Bible, and the most important person in the Bible is

Jesus. This book describes the methods, results, and implications of digging into the past, and it explains in an interesting and informative way how this all relates to Jesus. The price of *Jesus and Archaeology* seems reasonable when its length is considered. Those who might purchase this book include professionals, libraries, churches, and interested laypersons. I recommend they buy it.

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



ENVIRONMENT

SERVE GOD, SAVE THE PLANET: A Christian Call to Action by J. Matthew Sleeth. White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2006. 216 pages. Hardcover; \$25.00. ISBN: 1933392010.

Sleeth writes with a convert’s zeal about how he and his family gave up their wasteful American lifestyle for what at times seems like an obsessive pursuit of a more Earth-friendly way of life. Sleeth was a successful physician when he heard God’s call to creation stewardship. He now works full-time to convince Christians that caring for creation should be a priority. This book (and his website servegodsavetheplanet.org) is a distillation of what he advocates in his ministry.

While examples are woven into the book, it does not give a systematic account of environmental degradations. Perhaps Sleeth assumes readers are already aware of pollution, global warming, etc. Instead, he starts with an exhortation for individuals to become agents of change for God’s purposes. This is followed by a chapter about why Christians should care for God’s creation, providing good answers to common questions and objections.

Most of the chapters concern specific areas of life, using the experiences of the author and his family to describe how we can be better stewards of creation. Topics include excessive consumption, our need for physical work and Sabbath rest, television, raising children, food choices, household habits, holidays, energy use, medicine, and population. A final chapter reminds readers that all must be done in love, and that part of loving our neighbors is caring for the planet we all share. Useful appendices contain a personal energy audit, practical advice regarding appliances, and a “Let it begin with me” prayer list with suggested ways to ask God to help us change things for the better.

There is much that is good about this book. It is written in an engaging and accessible style, and it is full of practical advice. The author does a good job of walking the fine line of conveying the seriousness of our problems while encouraging readers that there is hope and that God’s people can make a difference. A more difficult line is the one between conviction and guilt; the book is so effective (at least for this reader) in revealing our selfish, wasteful lives that some readers might be overwhelmed by guilt. To his credit, Sleeth mostly takes an encouraging tone rather than promoting guilt trips. Finally, unlike most environmental books (even Christian ones), its evangelical bent is clear throughout. Many Christians will listen to this creation-care message who would never listen to Al Gore.

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Nevertheless, I hesitate to recommend the book because it seemed like every few pages I noticed an erroneous statement, a sweeping unsupported assertion, an oversimplification, or a dubious biblical interpretation. For example, unsubstantiated assertions are made about “chemicals” in the environment being responsible for increased cancers in humans and pets. Sleeth repeats the nonsense that life contradicts the Second Law of Thermodynamics. He says that the Book of Revelations predicts nuclear weapons and television.

As I was shaking my head at this, I was reminded of Rick Warren’s *The Purpose Driven Life*. Both books are sometimes shallow, make sweeping overstatements and generalizations, and sometimes use Scripture in questionable ways. Then I thought about how many people read Warren’s book. Maybe *Serve God, Save the Planet* is not for readers who value nuance, careful argument, and learned exegesis. But it may well reach a mass audience, and it is the masses who will need to change if the church is to be a positive force in creation care. If just half the people who read *The Purpose Driven Life* would read this book and be moved to live differently, the positive impact on God’s Earth would be substantial.

Reviewed by Allan H. Harvey, 1575 Bradley Dr., Boulder, CO 80305.

DANCING AT THE DEAD SEA: Tracking the World’s Environmental Hot Spots by Alanna Mitchell. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2004. 239 pages, index. Hardcover; \$25.00. ISBN: 0226532003.

Mitchell was formerly an international award-winning senior features writer at the *Globe and Mail*, Canada’s national newspaper. In 2000 and 2001, the World Conservation Union and the Reuters Foundation cited her work as the best environmental reporting in North America and Oceania. In 2000, both organizations named her the best environmental reporter in the world. She currently lives and writes in Toronto, Ontario, where she is working on her next book.

Dancing at the Dead Sea is the product of her three-year journey to several of the world’s most environmentally endangered areas. The journey begins at an international conference on conservation in Amman on the Jordanian bank of the Dead Sea. In a later chapter, Mitchell describes the successful reintroduction of the Arabian oryx to the Jordanian desert. In contrast to this positive symbol of conservation, she also documents the diminishing water levels of the Azraq oasis and the Dead Sea due to unbridled irrigation and industry. This pattern is repeated throughout the book as disturbing descriptions of environmental degradation are contrasted with inspiring examples of conservation.

Examples of environmental problems include the rampant deforestation on the island of Madagascar, the thinning of the sea ice in the Arctic region of Canada, and the loss of biodiversity on the Galapagos Islands. More hopeful examples of conservation come from the country of Suriname, where about 90% of the rainforest in the country remains intact, and from Iceland, which intends to do away with fossil fuels in favor of harnessing geothermal energy and the energy of hydrogen.

The book, however, is more than just a description of a few conservation victories mixed in with a number of environmental problems. At each location, Mitchell introduces the reader to scientists and conservationists who are trying to protect these environmental hotspots. She also describes the dilemmas that people face as they utilize natural resources in ways that not only diminish biodiversity, but also threaten the future existence of local human populations and cultures. Mitchell raises concerns about extinction rates, global climate change, and the worldwide exploitation of natural resources. She also raises questions about the future viability of the human race if we continue on our present path of population growth, overconsumption, and environmental degradation.

The main purpose of the book is to challenge the belief that the earth will keep providing no matter how we stretch its means. The process of changing this “legend” of the earth’s inexhaustibility is compared to the difficulties that Charles Darwin faced as he developed and published his ideas about evolution. Just as the people of his day were reluctant to change their thinking about the fixity of species and the compromised status of human beings that evolution implied, so people today are not easily convinced that the earth’s resources are finite. Mitchell spends an entire chapter comparing the society of Darwin’s day with our own. She writes:

I am convinced that my modern society is facing the same seismic challenge to legend that Darwin’s society faced in 1859 when he published *On the Origin of Species*, that in some ways, the modern debate about ecological crisis still revolves around the place of humanity in creation (p. 20).

She firmly believes that just as past attitudes were changed as a result of Darwin’s publications, present attitudes can also be changed as people all over the world come to grips with the reality of our planet’s exhaustibility.

This book is not only an ecological travelogue to some of the world’s environmental hotspots, it is also an impassioned plea for worldwide conservation and sustainable economic development. Above all, it is a challenge to our present, human centered way of thinking. It is a book that will be applauded and appreciated by anyone who is already concerned about the current worldwide ecological crisis. Hopefully it will also be read by many others who presently do not share this concern.

Reviewed by J. David Holland, Biology Instructor, Springfield College in Illinois, 1500 North Fifth Street, Springfield, IL 62702.

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP: Critical Perspectives – Past and Present by R. J. Berry, ed. New York: T & T Clark International, 2006. 338 pages, index. Paperback; \$49.50. ISBN: 0567030180.

Berry is a professor emeritus of genetics at University College, London. This book contains twenty-six essays. The core essays are updates of papers from a 2000 conference to explore “the Christian approach to the environment” at Windsor Castle. Berry wrote a very useful introduction in which he states that stewardship is about caring. For some, the idea of a steward is wholly negative, suggestive of subservience and hierarchy, absentee land-

lords and exploitation. This distaste is echoed in some of the essays in this book. Other contributors seek to avoid such negative associations by exploring alternatives: trustee, agent, companion, priest. The authors make clear that "steward" has come to have a very restricted meaning in public relations and much church usage. Commonly it is nothing more than an unconscious synonym for the unavoidable interactions between humans and the physical, biological, social, and cultural environment that surrounds them.

Berry asks if we can improve on this. Some writers insist that a firm theology must underlie any ethic of stewardship while other contributors concentrate on what may be called enlightened self-interest. Berry notes that at this point we could be sidetracked into the range of apocalyptic enthusiasm that could lead some to neglect environmental care—he names James Watt, the US Secretary of the Interior in the early 1980s—but he has resisted a discussion of various forms of premillennarianism.

Stewardship is often used as little more than a formal response to environmental situations, and it is often equated with asceticism and denial, or with diligent recycling. The concept of stewardship involves much more. Several essays are concerned with practical stewarding. Some of the contributors are devotees of stewardship; others are less convinced for a variety of reasons. But there are common themes. One is the recognition that stewardship is the key link between economy and ecology which produces sustainable development.

But the implications of stewardship extend into apologetics and soteriology. The Anglican and other churches have extended their definition of mission to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

Berry writes that creation care is more than pragmatic witness and evangelistic possibility; it is fundamental to our faith in God who is Redeemer and Sustainer as well as Creator. Good theology and good science are essential complements. To ignore God, claiming that stewardship is an option for the few but irrelevant to most Christians, is to misunderstand and endanger people's purpose here on earth. It is sin.

The book contains many riches. I mention two chapters that I found particularly rewarding.

1. H. Paul Santmire contrasts the creation theology in the priestly and Yahwist stories with those in the book of Job. He says that the Yahwist story, with its small-scale agrarian setting, exemplifies what sensitive care for the earth can mean. In this theological drama, the land is a character in its own right. The human's relationship to the animals is depicted in terms of tangible solidarity rather than intervention. Santmire notes that in the Bible there is no doctrine of "cosmic fall." The soil remains innocent; the divine curse rests on it because of the disobedience of humans and because of the fruits of violence that grow from that disobedience. The promise is that, in Christ, with the deep human fault healed and the curse removed, humans can begin to live in Eden again. In contrast, in Job we are led into the experience of a wilderness. We see noble wild creatures nurtured by God, celebrated precisely because they resist human domestication. No longer is conquering and controlling nature part of the equation

for discerning human dignity. Instead there is a complex and rich biblical theology of partnership among God, humans, and all other creatures.

2. Murray Rae goes further in developing a theological framework for human responsibility for the environment. He says that humans cannot make do with a merely secular meaning of the term stewardship or whatever; language must be filled with attentiveness to the action of God through Christ and the Holy Spirit. It is God who is finally responsible for bringing the creation to its fulfillment. Christians look forward in hope, not simply to the maintenance of this present order, but to its transformation.

Reviewed by Donald Nield, Associate Professor of Engineering Science, University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand.

SCIENCE, SOUL, AND THE SPIRIT OF NATURE: Leading Thinkers on the Restoration of Man and Creation by Irene van Lippe-Biesterfeld. Rochester, VT: Bear & Company, 2005. 303 pages. Paperback; \$18.00. ISBN: 1591430550.

Irene van Lippe-Biesterfeld, princess of the Netherlands, believes that humans are alienated from nature and must rediscover their connection to the cosmos. She is involved in ecology by managing a nature reserve. This book is the outcome of her visits to twelve visionary thinkers who are involved in ecological issues.

The questions she asked the environmentalists related to how they defined nature, the practical aspects of their love of earth, and the measures they regarded as necessary to prevent further damage to the ecosystem. The environmentalists think anthropocentric beliefs result in overconsumption of nonrenewable resources. In their views, there has been an unacceptable extermination of living things through the destruction of habitats, devastation of wetlands, overgrazing by stock, mismanagement of water reserves, deforestation, and the pollution of the air, rivers, and the sea.

Counteracting these deleterious effects by humans, these ecologists believe that there is a growing number of people who are actively engaged in lobbying governments to bring about a change in attitude. Sometimes greed of individuals, especially those in positions of power, forestalls their efforts.

Accompanied by van Tijn, a journalist, the author interviewed Credo Mutwa, an oral historian and Zulu healer of minds and bodies, who has no place for the Christian God. Credo considers that even inanimate things have feelings and that water can be made alive. Jane Goodall, also interviewed, emphasized the importance of developing sustainable lifestyles and having contact with nature through science. Her studies of chimpanzees indicate that they show emotions and have the ability to think. Her views gained a listening ear only from the child psychiatrists and psychologists; otherwise, her findings met with hostility within the University. Goodall considers humans in the main unfaithful trustees of nature, and she emphasizes the education of children in the care of creation.

The final interview was with Patricia Mische. Her approach is pantheistic where human well-being is linked with the health of the earth community. Patricia thinks

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religion is important and that Christianity has not separated itself from nature. She considers love the strongest power exercised by humanity.

Whereas one can fully support the message of this book that human well-being is linked to the health of the earth, some of these visionary thinkers have illusions which cannot be accessed by scientific means. However, the views of those interviewed do support the author's premise that humans in the main have been unfaithful trustees in their care of nature. The book will be useful to ecologists who will be challenged in assessing different and sometimes nebulous viewpoints.

Reviewed by Ken Mickleston, a member of A Rocha Aotearoa, New Zealand, of Epsom, Auckland.

LIVING THE GOOD LIFE ON GOD'S GOOD EARTH by David S. Koetje, ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Faith Alive Christian Resources, 2006. 85 pages. Hardcover; \$9.50. ISBN: 1592552927.

This book results from a 2003 workshop on "Christian Environmentalism With/out Boundaries." Its ten chapters by ten different authors give practical advice, as foreword author Ronald Sider notes, "on what we should eat, what clothes we should wear, and even what kind of house we should live in" (p. 7). The authors also write about Christians' relationships to energy, vegetation, work, rest, and enjoyment. Each chapter has questions for reflection and discussion. There is also a list of books for additional reading.

The book's intention is to demonstrate that authentic Christian faith is not anti-ecological, involves caring for the earth, and is demonstrated by living a life of ecological obedience and thanksgiving to God. The authors believe that Christians who live as God intended will experience joy, freedom, and shalom.

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



FAITH & SCIENCE

QUARKS, CHAOS AND CHRISTIANITY by John Polkinghorne. New York: The Crossroads Publishing Company, 2005. 122 pages. Paperback; \$14.95. ISBN: 0824524063.

Polkinghorne hardly needs an introduction to ASA members. The former theoretical physicist and has now been an Anglican priest for about twenty years was knighted in 1997 and awarded the Templeton Prize in 2002. He has written about twenty books in the last twenty years aimed at a general audience mostly on the relation between science and Christianity.

The author describes this book as an "overview" while many of his other books offer more detailed discussions of aspects of the science/religion topic. This book contains no equations or figures and provides some suggestions for further reading, including other books by Polkinghorne.

The content of the book is indicated by the titles of the eight chapters: Fact or Opinion, Is There Anyone There? What's Going On? Who Are We? Can a Scientist Pray? What About Miracles? How Will It End? and Can a Scientist Believe?

In explaining the parallel approaches to truth, Polkinghorne points out that science does not address the "whole truth" and religion involves necessarily a "leap into the light, not the dark," i.e., faith. Furthermore, God is not subject to experiment.

In supporting the idea of God, he details, as in many current books, the idea of the "impossible universe," the need for incredible fine tuning in cosmology and biology for our universe and humankind to appear. He quotes Paul Davies in a surprising claim that "it may seem bizarre but, in my opinion, science offers a surer path to God than religion." (This brings to mind Rom. 1:20.)

Polkinghorne quotes Hawking's challenge that if the universe has "neither a beginning nor an end then what place for a Creator?" and answers "Everyplace. As the Ordainer and Sustainer of all that is going on." "God of the whole show—not just the beginning." He recognizes the troubling problem of evil and the mystery of suffering of innocent people and resigns himself to the appreciation of this enigma by the Almighty in allowing Jesus to suffer the ignominious end of life on this earth with profound theological meaning.

In "Who Are We?" he presents perhaps the most prominent idea in the book, namely that "chaos," as understood in recent scientific studies, is a powerful tool in rebutting the reductionist (mechanistic) view that we are merely the sum of our parts to be completely explained by the deterministic laws of science. Instead "chaos" with its idea of unpredictability and yet creation of orderly patterns through collective effects, points to emergence of properties, from wetness to possibly "consciousness" and allows God, perhaps, to interact on earth through "information input." (A "top-down physical process" vs. the bottom-up reductionist mode.) However, "Divine action will not be demonstrable by experiment though it may be discerned through the intuition of faith."

Polkinghorne points out that some of the miracles in the Bible may have scientific basis but others are beyond science, e.g., turning water into wine. Still he finds the testimonies of witnesses convincing. He does not reject the controversial thesis that God may not completely know the future (which depends on actions of agents with free will), but is confident in the resurrection of believers because "God will remember the pattern in which we are made and recreate us."

This book discusses many reasons why a scientist may be led to a belief in God. The one point of possible importance that is not given prominence by Polkinghorne is that of religious experience and the vacuity of science as a source of help when someone, even a brilliant scientist, is in the throes of a profound human trauma—like illness, death, crime victim, betrayal, etc. Still one must applaud Polkinghorne for this book and his whole life of service to his God as scientist as well as priest.

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

WONDER AND WISDOM: Conversations in Science, Spirituality, and Theology by Celia Deane-Drummond. West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Foundation Press, 2006. 165 pages, notes, bibliography, index. Paperback; \$19.95. ISBN: 1599470918.

Celia Deane-Drummond, a professor of theology and the biological sciences at the University of Chester in the United Kingdom, addresses the complex relationships between religious experience and the natural sciences. She begins with a discussion of the emotion of "wonder," and segues into the Wisdom of God, arguing that incorporating these two can result in a deep spirituality which brings science and theology together.

The author has many useful insights, but her writing style is difficult to follow. The book reads much like lectures. Many times sentences begin with "But," or "Yet," or "However," and she has an irritating (to me) habit of introducing a topic and then saying "I will say more about this later." I found reading the book, at times, quite painful; that is unfortunate because her ideas are worth consideration. Perhaps it is the UK academic writing style; for an American audience, it could have used a good editor.

She does well in tying together wonder and wisdom under the term "imaginative intellect." Focusing on the sometimes neglected human faculty of "paying attention," she observes that elimination of any aspects of teleology from scientific "wisdom" almost necessarily eliminates the wonder of it all. An obsessive devotion to wisdom, she claims, is almost bound to fail as a viable worldview.

A companion book to this, *Wonder* by Robert Fuller, was reviewed by Richard Ruble in *PSCF* 58, no. 3 (2006): 251. From that review, I conclude that Fuller's book is probably the better of the two.

With all the criticism above, the book is recommended for its exploration of novel ideas in the contemporary science-theology dialog. It will remind the reader of the days of childhood when "wonder" was a constant companion. That is not altogether a bad attitude to take.

Reviewed by John W. Burgeson, 36633 Road P.8, Mancos, CO 81328.



GENERAL SCIENCES

WORLDS OF THEIR OWN: Insights into PseudoScience from Creationism to the End Times by Robert Schadewald. Excelsior, MN: SangFroid Press, 2006. 240 pages plus references, appendices, and bibliography. Hardcover; \$21.95. ISBN: 0917939158.

Schadewald, who passed away in March 2000, was a science writer and former president of the National Center for Science Education. Bob was also my friend. He spent his career writing about various offbeat views. His articles span the range from perpetual motion machines to creationism, the flat-earth theory, and Velikovskisms. This book is his first and is posthumously published.

The book covers a wide range of topics in pseudoscience, beginning with a review of the Immanuel Velikovsky affair. In the early 1950s Velikovsky, a medical doctor, wrote a book which attempted to explain the

miracles in the Old Testament by having the planet Venus ejected from Jupiter and then careening around the solar system causing havoc and producing manna eaten by the Israelites. Unfortunately, contemporary scientists suppressed the book causing Macmillan Publishing Company to sell the bestseller's rights to another publisher. This action made Velikovsky's book sell even better. Schadewald conducted the very last interview with Velikovsky one week before his death.

The book then turns to perpetual motion flim-flam men. Schadewald begins with an April Fools' article he wrote for *Science Digest*, but people took it seriously. Becoming interested in the area, he traced the history of these machines back into antiquity, following their development to the present. The book covers such scams as the Keely Motor, the Jeremiah 33:3 machine, and the 1916 case of Louis Enricht who convinced people he could run a car with water as the fuel. The gullibility and greed of humanity shines through in this section. Many inventors not only obtained patents on their devices; they also raked in millions of dollars from investors before the enterprises collapsed.

The flat-earth section is probably the most fascinating. Presenting several of the flat-earth arguments, Schadewald surprises his readers with how difficult it is to answer some of their arguments. The book is worth buying and reading for just this section. He tells of the Bedford Canal swindle in which Alfred Russell Wallace, co-discoverer of natural selection, defended the round earth, picking up £500 prize for showing the earth's surface was spherical, but then costing him years of lost reputation and legal expenses. The flat-earth belief then jumped the Atlantic, landing in Zion, Illinois, where it was against the law to own a globe or teach children that the earth was round. The Bible, it was said, forbade such nonsense. Schadewald brings the Christian face to face with the fact that the flat-earth movement was a 100% Christian movement with arguments not only brought forth from nature but also from Scripture. In this respect, it appears that the flat-earth movement is analogous with young-earth creationism, even leading to the teaching of the flat-earth theory in the public schools.

Schadewald keeps the reader interested by constantly relating anecdotes. In order to get the flat-earth journals, Schadewald had to join the society. After he wrote articles critical of the flat-earth view, he was thrown out of the society for having "spherical tendencies." Some time later, however, Schadewald was allowed back in, eventually being asked to become its president, which he declined.

There is a section covering young-earth creationism which compares it with the way other advocates of pseudoscience ignore data, make up data and otherwise twist the world to fit preconceptions.

Normally, appendices are not worth reading. This is not the case with this book. Often pseudoscientists claim that the future will vindicate them. They cite Alfred Wagner's advocacy of continental drift as a case in point. Schadewald examines this claim by comparing Velikovsky's *Worlds in Collision* with Wagner's ideas of continental drift. Initially, science rejected both, but came to accept continental drift. Schadewald explains why. Understanding this case gives one counter-arguments to this

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old chestnut in which the nut claims that the future will be kind to him.

The book is entertaining, well written, and full of anecdotes useful for the dinnertime raconteur.

Reviewed by Glenn R. Morton, 10131 Cairn Meadows Dr., Spring, TX 77379.



ORIGINS & COSMOLOGY

CREATION AS SCIENCE by Hugh Ross. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress Publishing Group, 2006. 288 pages. Hardcover; \$21.99. ISBN: 1576835782.

This book provides a comprehensive coverage of all issues related to origins, and it also presents a new model, called the RTB (Reasons to Believe). The purpose of this effort is to show that the RTB model is testable and therefore acceptable as a scientific theory. The manuscript contains a wealth of information on the creation-evolution controversy. The only way I can describe it is to label it as Hugh Ross's *magnum opus*!

In a unique way, Hugh Ross uses a multidisciplinary approach for building the RTB model, by factoring in phenomena from cosmology, astronomy, planetary science, geophysics, archeology, and paleontology. These approaches are in addition to the traditional evolutionist one from morphology, biochemistry and genetics. The bottom line of this monumental work is to demonstrate that a scientific model for creation can be developed and tested. To that end, Appendix E gives a comparative analysis regarding the predictive capabilities of the RTB model, the Naturalist model, the Young-Earth model, and the Theistic Evolution model.

The book starts with introductory remarks on the current conflict between creation and evolution as a clash of worldviews, methodology, and politics. Ross then presents his major thesis which is "the uncompromising harmony between facts of nature and the words of Scripture." The book is divided into twelve chapters: chapters 1 and 2 describe the most publicized creation and evolution positions, including strategies used, legal concerns, and public education; chapter 3 compares the "explanatory success of various models for the origin and history of the universe, Earth, life and humanity"; chapter 4 develops the biblical foundations for the RTB creation model and brings out its scientifically testable features; chapters 5-9 cover the latest scientific findings about origins (universe, solar system, life, and *Homo sapiens*). These are covered in great detail and the information provided is encyclopedic, worthy of any ASA-er's library. The purpose here is to examine the RTB model in light of the above findings; chapters 10-12 look to the future to anticipate how the RTB model and other creation-evolution models will fare under careful scrutiny. The goal here is to explore how one can remove or reduce obstacles between the various creation-evolution models. The final chapter attempts to facilitate a more productive pursuit of truth and to engage the public in constructive dialogue on both "scientific and religious enterprises."

The book is very well researched with extensive footnotes and references. I do have a few concerns. Ross tends to stretch the interpretation of some scriptural verses beyond their intended meaning. For example, Ross uses Ps. 104: 28-29 in justifying the mass extinction of species in the animal world during the evolution/creation process.

A second concern is that in his desire to resolve knotty issues in creation, Ross fails to emphasize the fact that God often works in mysterious ways which we cannot and may never comprehend. This is especially true as Ross tackles difficult "why" questions (see chapter 9) that continue to trouble scientists, philosophers and theologians. Some of these concerns are the existence of parasites, deadly microbes, cruelty in the animal world, and large scale extinctions of species. Some people may attribute all of these to an "evil design" that attempts to undermine God's original plan for creation.

After all is said and done, however, I find the RTB model intriguing and salute the RTB team for their carefully researched work, bringing together insights from all disciplines, pertinent to the question of origins. Only time will tell what percentage of scientists, who reject the supernatural, will be willing to give the RTB model a fair hearing.

I recommend this book to every *PSCF* reader. Even if they disagree with the model itself, the detailed information on origins given in chapters 5-9 will serve as a great source of readily accessible information.

Reviewed by Kenell J. Touryan, PO Box 713, Indian Hills, CO 80454.

PERSPECTIVES ON AN EVOLVING CREATION by Keith B. Miller, ed. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003. 526 pages. Paperback; \$36.00. ISBN: 0802805124.

"Controversies over evolution excite every bit as much passion early in the 21st century as they have ever done." So say Mark Noll and David Livingston and so say we all! We have plenty of experience of the issue of origins—biblical and scientific—causing an uproar among believers in Jesus. This is a book that I would call "state of the art" in this controversy. The editor, Keith Miller, a geologist, has been deeply engaged in this struggle much of his life. Here he has recruited contributors to the discussion from all the relevant sciences, from history and from theology. Most are ASA members. True, there are no young earth creationists or "ID" (intelligent design) perspectives, but it is an argument encompassing the best thoughts from the perspective of what the book's title suggests: "evolving creation."

The contributors range from astronomers through biochemists, biologists, paleontologists, environmental scientists, historians, geologists, theologians, and psychologists. Indeed, I would say that whatever questions you have had about the origins issue in terms of science-biblical interface have been addressed here. I must confess some of the answers strike me as very speculative, and with some I personally disagree, but I believe they are bravely facing every issue you could think of raising.

It covers the whole of Genesis 1–11, but primarily the creation of the universe, of life on earth, and of human beings in the first relationships with God.

Some of this is quite consonant with a volume of biblical studies on Genesis 1–11 by Henri Blocher, *In the Beginning* (InterVarsity Press, 1984), but *Perspectives on Evolving Creation* is mostly from a perspective of science, very technical in some places, full of good illustrations and tables and references. This book would make an ideal text for a semester or year-long course at the university level. A beautiful feature is that interspersed between the chapters are brief devotionals offered by the various writers of the chapters, many of them focusing on the Psalms but with works of art, photographs, and other opportunities for the eye (as well as the words for the brain), giving us an invitation to lift our hearts and minds to God in the context of what we read.

Here follow some quotes to whet your appetite. From the excellent biblical, theological study of the first chapters of Genesis, this from Conrad Hyers:

When we examine the Genesis account of origins in its own terms and its own historical context, it becomes apparent that we have something that is considerably different from that of the natural sciences. It has a theological agenda aimed at affirming a monotheistic reading of the cosmos and rejecting the prevailing polytheistic reading. None of its phrasing or organization or use of numbers corresponds to the methods and materials of the natural sciences. This does not imply that Genesis is to be seen as unscientific or antiscientific or even prescientific, as if superseded by better methods of understanding the world. The materials of Genesis 1 are nonscientific; they offer a different kind of map of the universe and our place within it (p. 32).

In his chapter, Loren Haarsma comments on the discussions over “methodological naturalism” and has this to say on the general principles:

Is it possible to scientifically prove that God superseded natural laws in a particular event? Or does science rule out any possibility of such things? A practical understanding of what science can and cannot do should warn us against either extreme. Scientists seek to understand puzzling events and puzzling processes. When faced with a particular puzzling event, science can neither prove nor disprove that natural laws were superseded. What can science do? Science tries to build a quantitative, empirical model of the event using its understanding of natural laws plus information about the physical conditions before, during, and after the event (p. 84).

The following interesting footnote responds to some of the comments of the Intelligent Design movement writers. Terry Gray and co-chapter writer Loren Haarsma comment:

...Whatever might be said, good or bad, about the scientific and theological arguments of Intelligent Design theory, we are troubled by the appropriation of the word “design” to exclude evolution. Intelligent Design theory, the way it is typically presented, seems to offer the following choice: either modern life forms evolved or they were designed. That is

a false choice. Christian theology says that modern life forms were definitely designed by God, whether God used ordinary evolution or superseded it” (p. 289, Footnote 2).

The book concludes with two chapters dealing with evolution and original sin and with evolution, cognitive neuroscience, and the soul. In order to be well informed, I recommend that you read this book, pass it on to others, and prayerfully and thoughtfully interact with the many references and arguments contained in it to shape your own perspectives on this issue.

Reviewed by Terry Morrison, Director Emeritus, InterVarsity Faculty Ministry, PO Box 7895, Madison, WI 53707-7895.

A BIBLICAL CASE FOR AN OLD EARTH by David Snoke. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2006. 195 pages plus appendix, references, and index. Paperback; \$14.99. ISBN: 0801066190.

David Snoke is a physicist at the University of Pittsburgh. This book is his first on apologetics, having previously written *Basic Concepts of Condensed Matter Physics* and having edited *Physics and Science Fiction*.

The chapters cover the scientific case for an old earth, animal death, the balance theme in Scripture, the Sabbath, concordistic science, Noah’s flood and how to interpret Genesis 1–2. The book is an easy read, and the author is a good writer, explaining his concepts well. Snoke believes in an old earth but not in evolution, which he emphatically tells his readers on several occasions.

The strength of the book is that it is a good review of the major arguments against the young-earth (YEC) position, but there are no truly novel arguments presented. He raises the usual argument that YEC would make God deceptive, that geologic features are hard to explain with a global flood, and that, biblically, animals had to die before sin. Most of his arguments are theological rather than scientific, and maybe this is what they need to be. One interesting observation he makes is that YEC may take Christianity into an anti-knowledge, anti-expert position in which anything an expert says is automatically rejected. I fully agree with that assessment.

The major weakness of the book lies in the major weakness of Intelligent Design (ID). While rightly chiding the YEC to accept observational evidence in the interpretation of Scripture, this book only allows such external data to go so far and no further, giving an air of hypocrisy. On pages 189–90, Snoke criticizes Setterfield’s declining speed of light theory and notes that anyone who knows physics would find the arguments “laughable.” Yet, Snoke ignores data that make his view of creation and the Flood equally laughable.

One unfortunate mistake is the dual claim that human-kind appears in the archaeological record merely 30 kyr years ago (it is 150 kyr) which logically would mean that the Flood was after that time, and the claim that his local flood killed all but eight people. These claims raise huge problems. It ignores the existence of a religious altar at the *H. erectus* site of Bilzingsleben, Germany dated at 425 kyr and the 47 kyr Neanderthal altar at Bruniquel in which

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a bear was sacrificed deep in a cave where even bears could not live. Who were these nonhuman worshippers?

Snoke also ignores the genetic evidence for an ancient humanity. He tells the YEC not to ignore how deceptive God would be if, on the day Adam was created, Adam had memories of his mother and a house Adam had built earlier. Snoke also notes that it would be equally deceptive if those first trees had tree rings. But Snoke seems not to realize that the human genetic code is much like tree rings, providing its own dating technique for the genome and that the genetic history of humanity cannot fit within the 30,000 years time frame he claims. Thus, Snoke has his own "Adamic memory" problem with an equally deceptive God, in which God makes the human green opsin gene appear to be 5.5 million years old when in fact it is no older than 30 kyr.

In one physics error, Snoke argues against the global flood by claiming that the added weight of water in a global flood would make the continents sink. Since they did not, he claims that the YEC's flood views are wrong. However, this would be true only if the water were piled above the continents alone. Given a flat water surface, more water weight would actually be added over the ocean basins than on top of the continents (hint: think of continental elevation). Telling others to accept observational data, while not doing so oneself, creates problems when writing apologetical books.

One of the big disappointments was that there were actually no positive evidences of the Bible teaching an old age. I had expected that there would be a discussion of *qedem* or *olam* which are Hebrew words for old/ancient used to describe the age of hills and mountains. All of the arguments were basically against YEC theology and because of that, I would recommend this book. It can be of help in dealing with the flaws of YEC theology and an anti-science stance.

Reviewed by Glenn R. Morton, 10131 Cairn Meadows Dr., Spring, TX 77379.

ORIGINAL SELFISHNESS: Original Sin and Evil in the Light of Evolution by Daryl P. Domning and Monika K. Hellwig. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006. 213 pages. Hardcover; \$89.95. ISBN: 0754653153.

Domning is a paleontologist at Howard University in Washington, DC. He begins this book with a defense of Darwinian evolution, explaining how it works and answering fifteen common objections to it. From this base of understanding, he deduces two theologically relevant facts:

1. "[T]he Adam of the Fall was not responsible for introducing physical suffering and death into the order of nature ... those were well established among evolving organisms long before his and our advent" (p. 139).
2. "[T]he Church has long claimed to know something about our beginnings that it did not know" (p. 190).

Scriptures intended to teach us about original sin, he explains, have been misapplied, as if they are statements about our historical origins.

Catholic theologian Monika Hellwig (at Georgetown University), who died while this book was at press, used her brief portion of the book to explain Adam's story as myth—in the best sense of that term. "People who shape myths are not naive," she writes, "they are using analogical reasoning" (p. 11). She contributes a helpful six-page background on the classic teaching on original sin. She gives even briefer responses at the close of each of Domning's major sections.

In the first section, Domning cites evidence against monogenism, the view that all humanity is descended from a single couple. In her response, Hellwig outlines the history of how the Catholic Church became committed to this doctrine, but how its theologians more recently came to view Adam's Fall as the story of how each of us fails morally—and of how we enter a society already filled with temptations.

While dealing with original sin in the sections that follow, Domning lauds Teilhard de Chardin and his followers for bringing evolution into theology, but notes that few have attempted to integrate into it the doctrine of original sin. While the popular "cultural transmission view" explains sin as the result of a sinful human society, it fails to explain where *society's* sinfulness came from. Domning's "original selfishness" model explains why we are sinful by nature (our animal nature) and not just by imitation, thus avoiding the charge of Pelagianism.

Domning defines original selfishness (his preferred term) "biologically as the innate imperative to perpetuate and benefit oneself whatever the cost to others, and theologically as that need for salvation by Christ which is universal to all human beings and acquired through natural generation" (p. 183). He notes that his model fulfills both these requirements, since it excludes no one and is transmitted through natural descent from a common ancestor. This ancestor, however, takes us far deeper into the past than a literal Adam: it begins with the origin of life itself.

The universality of selfishness is explained by our common origin with all life (since natural selection programs each organism to be self-centered), starting with the first living thing; and its moral character is explained by the free choice of each human since moral awareness began.

But does this make God the author of evil? No, argues Domning, evil came into existence only with the free choices made by morally aware, autonomous creatures. Life in the natural world before that certainly behaved selfishly, but this was the necessary condition to bring about those autonomous creatures. Anything other than this evolutionary selfishness would not have been capable of producing God's intended result in us and would not have been "good."

Still, readers will wonder if all the redness in tooth and claw was really necessary. Why not a different system? Domning answers that a universe in which animals did not suffer or die would be impossible under the physical laws we know. Separating animal suffering from a good creation involves a logical contradiction.

After all, Jesus came to join us in the reality of a suffering world for the greatest purpose of all. And Domning reminds us of Jesus' assurance: "You will suffer in the

world. But take courage! I have overcome the world (John 16:33)" (p. 170).

Anyone concerned about reconciling early Genesis (and Romans 5) with a modern understanding of paleontology will find in this book a well-reasoned solution that deserves to be considered.

Reviewed by Fred Heeren, Day Star Research, Olathe, KS 66061.

THE COUNTER-CREATIONISM HANDBOOK by Mark Isaak. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2005. 368 pages, index, bibliography. Hardcover; \$65.00. ISBN: 031333305X.

Isaak has long been associated with the moderated Usenet discussion forum, Talk.origins, and the TalkOrigins.org website, basic components of a twenty-year running debate between mainstream science and creationism. The leaders of the group find common purpose in explaining the theory of evolution, critiquing the claims of the anti-evolution and Intelligent Design movements, and defending the integrity of science and science education.

Isaak has degrees in biology and computer science and additional college-level education in physics and psychology. He has written "Five Major Misconceptions about Evolution" (www.talkorigins.org/faqs/faq-misconceptions.html), "What is Creationism?" (www.talkorigins.org/faqs/wic.html), and "An Index to Creationist Claims" (www.talkorigins.org/indexcc/index.html). The latter have provided the template for this book. *The Counter-Creationism Handbook* is aimed at those who need help in countering creationist claims in the sciences, philosophy, and the Bible.

The major sections of the book are Philosophy and Theology, Biology, Paleontology, Geology, Astronomy and Cosmology, Physics and Mathematics, Miscellaneous Anti-evolution, Biblical Creationism, and Other Creationism. Some 400-plus creationist claims are rebutted under various headings within the major sections. A thorough index takes one quickly to the pertinent material. An introduction provides sage advice about reaching out to anti-evolutionists one-on-one and for public venues such as school board hearings and debates.

While the book contests all *creationisms*, it is the Christian creationism based on particular interpretations of the Bible that receives the most attention. Isaak finds methodological naturalism to be the only "objective standard" for the study of nature, but does not rule out the supernatural, observing however that it "has never led anywhere" (p. 28). The ASA is not mentioned in the index nor is PSCF used as a resource in the 50-page bibliography except to reference the work of Glenn R. Morton.

Having said this, does the book have value for the ASA reader? Yes. First, it offers a broad picture of the arguments that one may encounter. Second, it deals effectively with scientific issues. Third, it provides useful debating strategies for various settings. At the same time, the religious and philosophical arguments may not ring true for the Christian.

One might ask what effect the *secular* effort to counter creationism has had on the creationist movement. Counter

counter-creationist websites, blogs, and ministries continue to appear with great frequency, and the movement goes on unperturbed by "truth." Yet, groups of scientists have joined together at times to successfully counter attempts to include creationist materials and points of view in public schools. The debate over the place of faith in the marketplace whether by symbol or the written word continues.

PSCF has long offered articles countering dubious scientific and biblical claims by these fellow Christians with mixed results—surely the tide has not changed. *Truth* seems trumped by *mission*. Sadly, evangelical leadership provides little encouragement for those who would build a worldview that takes the "two books" seriously.

The Counter-Creationism Handbook will appear in a paperback version in 2007. Give it a look for your personal library.

Reviewed by J. W. Haas, Jr., Emeritus Professor of Chemistry, Gordon College, Wenham, MA 01984.



PHILOSOPHY & THEOLOGY

CREATION SET FREE: The Spirit as Liberator of Nature by Sigurd Bergmann. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005. 406 pages, index, bibliography. Paperback; \$38.00. ISBN: 080282224X.

Bergmann is professor of religious studies at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim, Norway. The author and editor of numerous books, he is also a member of the Royal Norwegian Society of Letters and Sciences and an ordained minister in the Church of Sweden. This book was first published in German in 1995. It is a part of an ecumenical series of books sponsored by the Christian Theological Research Fellowship that are grouped under the heading *Sacra Doctrina: Christian Thought for a Postmodern Age*. This series is designed to reap the wisdom of Christian tradition and Scripture while proposing fresh insights that are relevant for the contemporary church.

In the preface, Bergmann describes two important influences which led to the writing of this book. The first relates to the 1968 ecumenical movement's confession in Uppsala, that proposes it is the world that offers the agenda for the church. This confession, along with Jurgen Moltmann's insight into the suffering of the Trinity in *The Crucified God*, fueled Bergmann's interest in building a bridge between the environmental movement and the Christian interpretation of life. The second influence was the writing of the fourth-century Cappadocian theologian, Gregory of Nazianzus. Gregory's central thesis, that love for the poor is the best criterion for the believer's love for God, is expanded by the author to include the suffering creatures of the present day global environmental crisis. This influence is clearly summarized in the subtitle of the earlier German edition of this book, *The Trinitarian Cosmology of Gregory of Nazianzus in the Horizon of an Ecological Theology of Liberation*.

Two groups of texts provide the primary materials for Bergmann's book. The first is the written legacy of the

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early church theologian, Gregory of Nazianzus. The second includes a number of monographs published in the field of systematic theology between 1972 and 2003. All of these monographs attribute theological significance to the ecological problems of our age. Contemporary theologians cited by Bergmann include John Cobb, Jr.; Gunter Altner; Gerhard Liedke and Ulrich Duchrow; Christian Link; Jurgen Moltmann; Sallie McFague; and Rosemary Radford Ruether. Missing from this background material is any reference to the writings of contemporary evangelical theologians. Also, missing is an in-depth study of the biblical text and its potential contribution to the formulation of an ecological theology.

The book is divided into three main parts. Part one, which consists of a single chapter, introduces the present day ecological challenge to theology and the Cappadocian theology of Gregory of Nazianzus. Part two, with two chapters, summarizes Gregory's doctrine of the Trinity and his vibrant pneumatology. One key feature of Gregory's theology is his incorporation of the entire creation into salvation history. As far as he is concerned, no part of creation goes untouched by the Creator's work of redemption. The relationship between God's suffering and the suffering of creation is explored and the role of the Holy Spirit as the liberator of creation is examined in detail. Part three is subdivided into three chapters. Chapter four examines how studies from late antiquity and late modernity are related to the problems of ecological discourse and to each other. Chapter five examines how the understanding of God and nature during these two periods relates to liberation theology. In conclusion, chapter six reflects upon the limitations and possibilities of the method of correlation employed throughout the book. In this chapter, Bergmann attempts to show how connections can be made between the fourth-century theology of Gregory and the theology of a variety of contemporary theologians. His main goal is to connect classical patristic theology and contemporary liberation theology in ways that will further the development of an ecological theology from a Christian perspective.

While Bergmann goes to great lengths to connect the patristic theology of the fourth century with the ecological theology of the twentieth century, his connections exhibit several weak links. One problem with his approach centers upon a difference in starting points. While the theology of Gregory of Nazianzus is developed from a biblical foundation, the perspectives of the twentieth-century theologians cited in the book are more heavily influenced by contemporary science. Another problem is that Gregory never developed anything close to an "ecological" theology. His references to justice for the poor and his belief that all of creation shares in God's redemptive activity are extended by Bergmann in ways that Gregory may not have intended or even contemplated. The connections between Gregory's social understanding of the Trinity and twentieth-century ideas regarding the sociality of nature are also rather tenuous. While Bergmann's connections are certainly thought provoking, in the end, they are not completely convincing.

The summary on the back cover suggests that this book (and others like it in the *Sacra Doctrina* series) will appeal to "thoughtful pastors, educated laypeople, theological students, and scholars in a quest for faithful understand-

ing of the Christian message." I question whether pastors or laypeople will want to wade through the book as its content is geared more for scholars. Anyone with a particular interest in historical theology or the development of contemporary ecological theology should take the time to read this book as it does contain a wealth of information and interesting insights. Those who are not so inclined should probably leave it for the scholars and theologians to debate.

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RELIGION & BIBLICAL STUDIES

CHRISTIANITY AND THE SECULAR by Robert A. Markus. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006. 112 pages. Paperback; \$15.00. ISBN: 0268034907.

This book looks at the role the secular plays in Christianity. The author disdains describing social, religious, or cultural trends. Rather, "my aim will be only to contribute to an understanding of the place occupied by the secular in Christian history and within a Christian understanding of society" (p. 4). The crux of this book is that "Christian tradition has a legitimate place for the autonomy of the secular ... despite the perpetual undertow of what we have become accustomed to call 'triumphalism' in Christian political and cultural attitudes" (p. 9).

Markus examines the concept of the secular in the New Testament and traces its development as Christianity emerges as a popular religion and eventually becomes the one adopted by the Roman Empire. In early Christianity, believers saw themselves as separate and distinct from society. However, as this new religion eventually spread throughout the West, Christians were faced with coping with the secular.

The difference between the sacred and the profane, writes Markus, was understood in the first century. The sacred related to the gods, cults, belief, practice, and religious institution. The profane, or pagan, was what occurred outside the religious institution, or in "the sphere of ordinary life" (p. 5). The "secular," identified by Christianity, was a new concept. It was what was shared by all of society and not necessarily antagonistic to religion.

According to Markus, Augustine of Hippo, in the fourth century, was the impetus for the idea that there is a place for the secular in the Christian idea of the world. While the secular was eclipsed by the spread of Christianity during the Middle Ages, it was rehabilitated by Pope John XXIII and the Second Vatican Council who thought Catholicism needed to be freed from its "cultural ghetto" and see the secular world as autonomous and co-extant with religion (p. 11). "With the Blessed Pope John XXIII the Church has come to embrace the secular and to acknowledge its value, its autonomy, and even, if I may add what may seem paradoxical, its sacredness or holiness" (p. 91).

Robert A. Markus, professor emeritus at the University of Nottingham, has also written *The End of Ancient Chris-*

tianity and Gregory the Great and His World. He has been preoccupied with the church's relation to the secular for forty years; his erudition has produced this compact, meaty, and insightful volume. This book will appeal to church historians, sociologists interested in religion, lay Christians interested in the relation of their faith to society, and theologians concerned with ecclesiology. It may also be of interest to church leaders, namely evangelists and pastors, who seek to determine the church's role in culture and politics.

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

THE END OF FAITH by Sam Harris. New York: W. W. Norton, 2005. 350 pages. Paperback; \$13.95. ISBN: 0393327655.

LETTER TO A CHRISTIAN NATION by Sam Harris. New York: W. W. Norton, 2006. 100 pages. Hardcover; \$16.95. ISBN: 0307265773.

Harris has written a book which has caused quite a stir in the erudite and lay world. It has appeared on the *New York Times* bestsellers' list, was the winner of the 2005 PEN/Martha Albrand Award for Nonfiction, and has been widely praised and criticized. It is entitled *The End of Faith* and its subtitle describes its content: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason.

This volume is in the genre of Thomas Paine's *The Age of Reason*. Like Paine, Harris thinks religions are irrational, based on falsehoods, anti-scientific, intolerant, and with a notable exception, contradictory. Religions "are in perverse agreement on one point of fundamental importance, however: 'respect' for other faiths, or for other views of unbelievers, is not an attitude that God endorses" (p. 13).

Harris also thinks that the taboo on criticizing religions puts them beyond the scope of rational discourse. That is why, he writes, the religious motive of the suicide bomber is always discounted in favor of economic, personal, or political ones. Technological advances, writes Harris, have made religion a threat to humanity's survival. Harris labels as a myth the belief that religion is the *sine qua non* for goodness. To summarize, Harris rejects religious claims of inspired books, miraculous acts, incarnate messiahs, or a blissful after-life.

Harris complains that various religious beliefs "are all equally uncontaminated by evidence," that exclusivity claimed by a religion "requires an encyclopedic ignorance of history, mythology, and art," that religious myths "float entirely free of reason and evidence," that religious faith is "a desperate marriage of hope and ignorance" and that religious beliefs "should not survive an elementary school education" (pp. 15-17, 21, 25). Additionally, writes Harris, "It is time we admitted ... that there is no evidence that any of our (religious) books was authored by the Creator of the universe" (p. 45). Interestingly, even with such dramatic statements, some atheists have attacked Harris for not being aggressive enough in his denunciation of religion, especially spirituality.

What would Harris substitute for religion? He explains: "It is nowhere written, however, that human beings must

be irrational ... Seeing this, we can begin to divest ourselves of many of the reasons we currently have to kill one another" (p. 43). Harris thinks moderate religionists, because they serve as a cover for extremists, advance evil. Harris argues for a rational world view based on science. "Science will not remain mute on spiritual and ethical questions for long. Even now, we can see the first stirrs among psychologists and neuroscientists of what one day may become a genuinely rational approach to these matters ..." (p. 43).

After Harris wrote *The End of Faith*, he got a lot of mail. He explains its content:

Thousands of people have written to tell me that I am wrong not to believe in God. The most hostile of these communications have come from Christians. This is ironic, as Christians generally imagine that no faith imparts the virtues of love and forgiveness more effectively than their own. The truth is that many who claim to be transformed by Christ's love are deeply, even murderously, intolerant of criticism. While we may want to ascribe this to human nature, it is clear that such hatred draws considerable support from the Bible. How do I know this? The most disturbed of my correspondents always cite chapter and verse (p. vii).

His answers to theists, mainly Christian conservatives, are contained in his follow-up volume entitled *Letter to a Christian Nation*.

Christian apologists from the earliest days of Christianity (e.g., Justin Martyr, Tertullian) have defended Christianity against its critics, and there are many active today (check the Internet for a long list). For believers who like to engage in cognitive pugilism with an adversarial text, Harris's books will provide all the material that is required. Readers may find some of Harris's criticisms of religion right on target. More likely, however, religious readers will find a lot to debate and many assumptions to question. For instance, Harris thinks, considering the history of the world, religion has done far more bad than good. At any rate, readers will have exposure to what a contemporary, secular humanist thinks of religion, science, and the future of humankind.

Harris, a Stanford University graduate, has studied philosophy, religious traditions, and spiritual disciplines. His pursuit of a doctorate in neuroscience focuses on the neural basis of belief, disbelief, and uncertainty.

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

GOD FROM THE MACHINE: Artificial Intelligence Models of Religious Cognition by William Sims Bainbridge. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2006. 179 pages. Paperback; \$24.95. ISBN: 0759107440.

The author intends to simulate religious behavior in a city simulated within a grid, like a chessboard, of 44,100 squares, each square representing a household/person (apparently, in this city each person lives in a separate house). The book describes a series of simulations with purportedly an increasing level of complexity.

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In a simple simulation, an existence of two groups, P and C, is assumed. For each randomly selected square/person, the person moves to another location if, in his immediate neighborhood (= up to 8 squares surrounding him), the majority of the neighbors belong to the opposite group. The new location is chosen randomly, and the person moves to the new location only when outnumbered in his current location and not outnumbered in the new location.

This simple simulation indicates the problems with the entire approach. Groups P and C can represent anything: Protestant and Catholics, Puerto Ricans and the Chinese, potato-and-cheese consumers. The author does not justify why his simulation should relate to religious behavior.

The author relies heavily on random numbers in his simulations. Do people choose their abodes by closing their eyes and throwing darts onto a city map? The use of random numbers is defended with the statement that with them "a hint of free will" is modeled (p. 3). However, the idea that free will can be reduced to randomness is, to use the author's apt phrase, "faintly ridiculous" (p. 13). Also, do people try only one new location and immediately give up the quest after detecting that they would be outnumbered in the new place? Incidentally, total separation, to which the strategy described here leads, is not inevitable if two columns of the simulated city are occupied by C's, then two columns by P's, and so on, interchangeably. But such an orderly arrangement is unlikely to emerge when random numbers are used to determine choices.

A "more intelligible" simulation simulates proselytizing (p. 37). In one version, initial dwellings are selected randomly and when a member of P finds a member of C in his neighborhood, the former gets converted and becomes a member of C, but not vice versa (p. 42). Why even discuss this simulation when it is obvious that C's will outnumber P's in this unrealistic setting? In another version, a new inhabitant counts the number of different denominations in his neighborhood and converts to the most numerous (p. 49). One may wonder what this simulation has to do with the way people accept faith in the real world. It assumes an extreme feeble-mindedness of people since every time a new group becomes more numerous, each person joins this group.

A small ingredient of artificial intelligence is used in chapter 5. Each person is simulated with a neural network with four binary inputs, four hidden units, and a binary output. By trial and error alone, the networks adjust internal weights so that particular inputs give output 0 or 1. It is, however, unclear what would be a real world counterpart of a supervisor that adjusts weights in the process of teaching a neural network.

In an "especially ornate simulation" (p. 120), the author assumes that each person has fifteen memory cells. The persons seek groups that have goods sought by the persons. The persons should guess how many groups there are and which group has the desired good. However, it is puzzling why a person who assumes that there are two groups would seek the good from the third group. Either the assumption should be abandoned right away after not finding the desired good in the group other than one's own or any search should be abandoned since presumably there is no other group that can offer the good. It is also

unclear how the author generates "supernatural numbers" to choose the group representing gods (p. 133).

The book is largely disappointing. Simulations offered are generally so simplistic that they can hardly be considered as shedding any light on social processes. They are certainly enjoyable to do and provide good ideas for an introductory programming course, but, on the whole, it is difficult to treat them as a significant contribution to the sociology of religion.

Reviewed by Adam Drozdek, Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, PA 15282.



SOCIAL SCIENCE

STUMBLING ON HAPPINESS by Daniel Gilbert. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006. 280 pages. Hardcover; \$24.95. ISBN: 1400042666.

This book deals with affective forecasting, which is predicting how you will feel—happy or sad—in the future. The author claims that people often make false predictions on how they will feel. When asked how a person finds happiness, he responds: "People have been writing books that promise to answer that question for roughly two thousand years, and the result has been a lot of unhappy people and a lot of dead trees." So this book is not a self-help book on achieving happiness. It is about how well people can imagine and predict which future they will most enjoy. And Gilbert does not take a high view of happiness, anyway: "If someone could offer you a pill that would make you permanently happy, you would be well advised to run fast and run far."

Gilbert gilds his research with humor. On the finding that on successive occasions of an experience, people find it less pleasurable, Gilbert comments: "Psychologists call this habituation, economists call it declining marginal utility, and the rest of us call it marriage."

Gilbert writes that some past psychologists have been proved wrong by their contentions that human beings are unique from (other) animals in using language or tools. However, Gilbert has his own suggestion about human-kind's uniqueness: "The human being is the only animal that thinks about the future." And Gilbert will defend this sentence: "Until a chimp weeps at the thought of growing old alone ..." (p. 5). And, "There are many good things about getting older, but no one knows what they are" (p. 196).

The author presents many amusing and some surprising tidbits. For example, most people are unrealistically optimistic about their futures (p. 18); cancer patients are more realistic about their futures than are healthy folk (p. 18); conjoined twins almost always desire to remain together (p. 30); over half of Americans, during their lifetimes, will suffer a rape, physical assault, or natural disaster (p. 152); and the City Council of Monza, Italy, because they thought goldfish in bowls suffered, banned them ... the bowls, not the goldfish (p. 171).

Gilbert, a Harvard College professor of psychology, short-story writer, and frequently published writer, walks

to work in Cambridge, MA. David G. Myers, ASA member, author of *The Pursuit of Happiness*, and an outstanding social psychologist himself, labels Gilbert one of the most talented contemporary social psychologists. This talent shines through in this very insightful, interesting, and empirically researched book. It does not touch on the role religion or Christianity plays in happiness.

This book has received high praise from a Nobel Prize winner, the author of *Freakonomics*, and the author of *All Marketers Are Liars*. An interesting topic, presented from a scientific viewpoint, authored by a skillful writer, this book will prove a worthwhile purchase. Readers will be informed, entertained, and perhaps stimulated to action, or inaction. Whatever their reactions, they will have better insight. If happiness is not coming down the pike, perhaps there is some consolation in knowing why.

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ENDING POVERTY: A 20/20 Vision by Nancy Maeker and Peter Rogness. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2006. 112 pages. Paperback; \$10.99. ISBN: 0806680032.

In the Preface, the authors state that the measure of a people and a faith is how well they care for those living in poverty. Therefore, "The first question to be asked and answered before making any decision—either personal or public—is this: 'How will the decision or action affect those living in poverty'" (p. 9).

This book examines the principles contained in "A Common Foundation: Shared Principles for Work on Overcoming Poverty" agreed upon by thirty-four leaders from Jewish, Christian, Muslim, and Hindu faiths in Minnesota. These leaders committed themselves to work so that no person is forced to live in poverty. They believe that each person has dignity and value and an inherent right to share in things producing a healthy life including food, shelter, meaningful work, safe communities, health care, and education (p. 19).

The Global Policy Forum published these findings in 1999: (1) The wealth of the three wealthiest individuals is greater than the GDP of the 48 least-developed countries; (2) A four percent levy on the world's 225 wealthiest people would provide essentials for those in developing countries; (3) those in well-to-do countries, compared to those in the world's poorest 20 percent, were 31 times better off in 1968, 61 times better off in 1996, and 82 times better off in 1998; (4) In the USA, the wealth of the nation's top one percent was greater than the bottom 90 percent (p. 21). These wide disparities should be addressed so that the poor share in the world's goods, according to the stated principles.

Additional stats about the USA show that 37 million people are in poverty and the number is increasing; Blacks (25%) and Hispanics (22%) have the greatest groups in poverty; 46 million are without health insurance; New Mexico, Mississippi, and Arkansas have 17% of their populations living in poverty.

This book contends that labels such as "bleeding-heart liberal" or "compassionate conservative" are pejorative

and insulting to people of faith who seek to address poverty. "No sector, no part, no economic theory stands isolated from the person of faith" seeking to end poverty (p. 22). While eliminating poverty is not the sole responsibility of government, it is essential that government play a part.

This book is directed at those who want to become involved in ending poverty. It can be used by individuals or groups within or among congregations. The four chapters discuss how poverty can be dealt with by different kinds of churches in different locations. The appendix describes what has been done and can be done by mobilizing and engaging congregations in the work of eliminating poverty.

The authors are both associated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and have served as pastors. Maeker has been Dean of Students at Luther Seminary and Rogness is bishop of the ELCA Synod of St. Paul.

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AMERICAN THEOCRACY: The Peril and Politics of Radical Religion, Oil and Borrowed Money in the 21st Century by Kevin Phillips. New York: Penguin Group, 2006. 394 pages, notes, index. Hardcover; \$26.95. ISBN: 067003486X.

Phillips, a political and economic commentator for *Harper's Magazine*, *Time*, and the *Los Angeles Times*, is the author of thirteen books over the past thirty years. This book makes three claims: (1) America began the Iraq war because of oil; (2) Radical fundamentalist religion (Christian) is driving current foreign policy; and (3) The USA is existing on borrowed money, with future expenditures much more than are affordable. His conclusion is that a crunch is inevitable, that current tax rates are necessarily going to rise sharply, and perhaps even a Value Added Tax (VAT) is coming. It is somber reading; the claims of impending bad times are well reasoned.

Phillips, a one time Republican Party strategist, contends that every world-dominating power has ultimately failed, sunk by a combination of global overreach, fundamentalist religion, debt that can never be repaid, and exploited resources. This book is not partisan, both Democratic and Republican administrations come under scrutiny for our country's policies—or lack of them.

In Part I, Phillips contends that the US went to war because of oil. This was not because certain politicians wished to get rich, but because the White House genuinely thought that without Iraq back in the oil business, the country would find itself short. "Control energy and you control the nations," said Henry Kissinger. The age of oil has also been the age of US hegemony and both are collapsing, says Phillips. With global oil production peaking, and oil demands continuing their upward trend, energy prices (and probable rationing) are inevitable.

Radicalized religion is Phillip's second focus. In Part II, he discusses this as a major problem. In a land where over 60% of the population (ABC poll, February 2004) disbelieves evolution and thinks humanity co-existed with



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dinosaurs, radical theories of “the end times” are prevalent, even among some members of Congress. America is becoming “Southernized,” Phillips argues. By that he means fundamentalist worldviews are influencing public policy. The Republican Party is already a “church” in Texas (their 2006 platform explicitly rejects church-state separation), and a theocratic country is one of the many possibilities Phillips sees looming on the horizon. Using the word “evangelical” as synonymous with “fundamentalist,” he writes that evangelicals believe that the “world is at most ten thousand years old ... In considering stem-cell research ... depleting oil or melting ice caps ... (they) have at best limited openness to any national secular dialog” (pp. 66–7).

Part III, 120 pages long, is the most frightening. We may yet solve the energy problem (not without severe dislocations) and the fundamentalists will probably split ranks, for fighting with one another has been their history. But Phillips sees no solutions to the US’s soaring debt; he speaks to history’s “unlearned lessons,” and sees doom and gloom in the future—the near future. Every year foreign bond and stockholders own more of our country. There will come (there has to come) a tipping point. Today, America dominates the world. We do so on the backs of those who came before us; we are squandering our inheritance. It is only a matter of time until catastrophe arrives. The rich become richer while the poor get poorer and the middle erodes. There is no happy ending.

On page 315, discussing the erosion of America’s manufacturing capability, he quotes Randall Isaac, former vice president of IBM Technology and current ASA executive director: “You cannot do effective R&D if you do not have the manufacturing to insure that the R&D is actually relevant. If the United States loses its manufacturing lead, it will lose everything else with it.” I do not recommend this book for light reading—only for serious study.

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Author Corrects the “Science or Sience” Article

I thank an astute reader for pointing out two errors in my article, “Science or Sience: The Question of Intelligent Design Theory” (*PSCF* 58, no. 3 [Sept 2006]: 226–34), on p. 233, second column, first full paragraph.

I meant to say that humans have one LESS chromosome than other primates, not the other way around. The general reasoning is still correct, however. If you karyotype their chromosomes and arrange them next to one another as in the picture below, you’ll notice a strikingly similar banding pattern between human chromosome 2 and two primate homologs. You may notice the remnants of a second centromere in the G-banding pattern of the human chromosome corresponding to the centromere of one of the primate chromosomes. There is also evidence of

pretelomeric sequences as well as inversion sites, where for example instead of 5’ (TTAGGG) it switches to 3’ (CCCTAA), which is what you would expect in the fusion of two telomeres. A relevant citation is:

J. W. Ijdo, A. Baldini, D. C. Ward, S. T. Reeders, and R. A. Wells, “Origin of Human Chromosome 2: An Ancestral Telomere-Telomere Fusion,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences USA* 88, no. 20 (1991 Oct 15): 9051–5.

As for the question of genomic differences between humans and chimpanzees, reports provide differences, ranging from 1.2% to 6% and everywhere in between. This number changes depending on what you are looking for, be it single-base measurements, coding region sequencing, inclusion or exclusion of gene duplications and deletions, etc. Regardless, at a minimum, the difference between the human and chimpanzee genome is at least 1.2%, not 0.012%.

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Life and Energy Are Siblings Entities

Jerry Bergman’s article (*PSCF* 58, no. 4 [2006]: 303–9) on “The American Scientific Affiliation Booklet Controversy” is most revealing, amazingly timely, and tells us that when the ASA leadership approached the nation’s science teachers they really hit the nerve of spokespersons for the atheistic regime. It is time to remind these teachers that we appreciate their efforts to convey the miracles and mysteries of what it is that tells us a newborn will breathe, a grain of wheat will germinate, a dog will return our affection, a stem cell will show differentiation, and all such events that require the presence of the life entity.

There are other good reasons for giving biology teachers a leg up. The courses they teach are generally required and thus may be the final chance to produce a citizenry that has the ability and is inclined to rely on the logic and methods of science when facing problems and making decisions. In this, today’s teachers face intense competition from interests who can afford the services of experts in influencing what people believe and how they arrive at their decisions. It is little wonder that these experts find ways to put down the teaching profession and thereby deny teachers the respect, guidance, and support that this nation provided so abundantly during the first half of the previous century.

It is time to help the teachers of the life sciences to enjoy the success of their compatriots in the physical sciences. Their subject matter is similar. In the physical sciences, the focus is on the properties of the energy entity and the role of these properties in the inanimate world. In the life sciences, the focus is on the properties of the life entity and their role in the animate world. Actually, both life and energy are so similar as to suggest they are sibling entities. Both entities propagate themselves as far as possible in every direction.

Neither entity can be experienced absent interaction with some form of matter. Neither entity can be destroyed and it is equally probable that neither can be created anew.