

all times and the language used is often inflammatory, nevertheless, the intent behind this book is well-founded, and its message should be heeded. As such, I deem it a profitable read.

*Reviewed by Bradford McCall, Regent University, Virginia Beach, VA 23464.* ✕

## Letters

### The River Pishon Flows Again?

I received an interesting e-mail from a Saudi Arabian who read my article "Garden of Eden: A Modern Landscape" on the *PSCF* website (*PSCF* 52, no. 1 [2000]: 31–46). Here is what his e-mail said:

I read your article on the Pishon River – this totally amazed me as something interesting happened recently. Just in November 2008 there were very heavy rains in northern Saudi Arabia – the heaviest in 70 years. There was so much water that the desert turned into lakes (still there, and people are jet-skiing in these waters!). The flow cleared a lot of dust and sand from an ancient riverbed that nobody cared much for. This is Wadi Rumma (or Rimah as per the map in your article). I did go there a week later and saw the water was still flowing. Unfortunately my camera conked out on me but I do have pictures taken by others.

This e-mail helps support the idea that the Wadi Rimah-Wadi al Batin was the ancient Pishon River of Gen. 2:11–12, and if climatic conditions were right, it could flow again!

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### Chasms in Gaps

Ronald G. Larson, in "Revisiting the God of the Gaps" (*PSCF* 61, no. 1 [2009]: 18), wrote:

If we apply methodological naturalism to the history of Christianity, and avoid GOG thinking, are we not led to seek the origin of Christianity entirely naturalistically, and so assume that the early church came to believe in the resurrection of Jesus through error, fraud, or legend?

This question tragically assumes that methodological naturalism is philosophical naturalism, dogmatically equivalent to scientism and materialism. But an empirical method does not determine philosophical and theological outcomes. It only provides that science is limited to what is empirically testable, whether directly or indirectly. The resurrection of Jesus is outside of the scope of science, first, because it is unique; second, because it is ascribed to a Power outside of nature. Larson's question involves an egregious error.

A second error that permeates the paper is the unspoken assumption that the explanations filled by God

of the Gaps arguments represent places where natural explanations are impossible. It is, for example, the dogmatic assertion that the Almighty God could not have created a universe where natural processes produced life. Is Larson competent to place this limit of the wisdom, knowledge and power of God? The "Summary and Final Thoughts" (pp. 20–21) indicate that he is not aware of the tension between the body of his paper and classical theology.

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### Natural Explanation but Half the Story: No Room for God There

The wide-ranging article "Revisiting the God of the Gaps" (*PSCF* 61, no. 1 [2009]: 13–22) by Ronald G. Larson made me uncomfortable because of how often the phrase "argue for the existence of God" appears. I wonder whether a scientific (natural) explanation trumps a Christian explanation. Let me make three points.

First, here is a situation which makes plain that there are always two explanations (if not more). A plane crashes. The first question: Was it pilot error or a system failure? Science deals with things like the system of this plane and the system of the world. The question of pilot error shows that there can also be an explanation in which the agent responsible for the flight made a mistake. Although in this case we have alternative explanations, they are not of the same type.

Consider the following scenario: I walk into a room and see the kettle boiling. I ask, "Why is the kettle boiling?" A wise-acre in the room tells me that electrons running through the heater wires collide with irregularly placed atoms and make them vibrate violently. These vibrations pass to water molecules and when they vibrate with sufficient energy some molecules leave the liquid phase. We say the water is boiling. Of course, I was expecting another explanation, "we are making tea." Here we have two valid explanations, at least two that will always exist when humans do something.

Second, a God-of-the-gaps explanation will always fail if it is offered at the level of science, because proper scientific explanations do not invoke an agent as a factor in the phenomenon considered. The examples of the boiling kettle and the plane crash make it plain that this material kind of explanation is complete in itself.

Since the Christian faith is so utterly materially based (the Creator's choice), I do not think it impossible that there will be a scientific explanation found for everything to which we pay attention. But as Polanyi in *Personal Knowledge* makes clear, both choice and moral questions enter into the doing of science: thus the explanation of even scientists' actions can always be made in terms of the agent's purpose.

Third, since without invoking an agent one cannot discuss design, let us go to a level where both kinds of explanation can be used. At this level, when observing