

explains how both the authority of Scripture and the integrity of the scientific method can be maintained.

With accommodation, we simply accept that God never intended to reveal scientific truths in the Bible that transcend culture, but rather kept all revealed scientific knowledge within the context of cultural beliefs. Therefore, we shouldn't expect God to fill the Bible with scientifically relevant trivia so that every generation of man, regardless of his scientific progress, can perform some objective test that confirms the truth of Scripture. Instead, we believe that God naturally accommodates his revelation to the scientific worldview of the original audience.

As a biology professor teaching at a Christian university, I am often struck by how difficult it is to present current scientific models and theories while upholding biblical authority in a manner that is credible and does justice to both. I have successfully used these video lessons in my undergraduate biology courses to broaden my students' perspectives on both the nature of science and the various interpretations of the history of life as revealed through God's creation. Although some of the ideas and interpretations presented are controversial among Christian believers, I commend this series as a venue for those who are seeking to construct a framework for integrating modern science with a Christian worldview.

The series is available for download at www.beyondthefirmament.com/videos/Education/

To purchase DVDs of the series, contact Gordon Glover at contact@beyondthefirmament.com.

Reviewed by Jane Beers, Assistant Professor of Biology, John Brown University, Siloam Springs, AR 72761. ♦

Letters

Book Review Response Letter

I appreciated Rolf Bouma's willingness to review my book, *Dominion Over Wildlife? An Environmental-Theology of Human-Wildlife Relations* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2009) published in the March 2010 issue of *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* (p. 62). Reviews constitute a gift of time and as such are to be treated with respect.

By the same token, reviewers have a responsibility to be sure their comments are accurate and in accordance with the goals of the book under review. Unfortunately, some of Bouma's statements failed to inform readers of the contours of my argument as well as the volume of evidence presented in support of my view on human-wildlife relations. I will highlight a few examples. First, he insinuated that I was unfair by calling my description of the Christian animal rights position, a "caricature." That is quite a claim, given that I engaged the Christian animal rights activists' evidentiary appeal to three separate intellectual domains, namely, Scripture, ethics, and science. In which section(s) did I mischaracterize their

view? Unfortunately, Bouma did not say, nor did he provide one specific instance. Second, his assertion that I failed to appreciate Linzey's "the greater serves the lesser" argument completely missed the point of my findings (which involved a detailed analysis of his interpretation of Scripture), namely, that Scripture provides no support for such a position. In fact, I go to great lengths to show that Christ, the perfect example of what it means to be a godly and obedient human, never served animals in a manner Linzey suggests. Third, Bouma's final paragraph leaves the reader with the impression that my Shepherdist position does not countenance limits on the human use of animals (despite my previous statements affirming my support for the protection of species). Such is clearly not the case as anyone who reads the final chapter would understand (cf. p. 172). I contend that Christians are obligated to treat animals in a way appropriate to their owner, namely, Christ. Ultimately, Bouma's suggestion that I engage the thought of Rolston's theocentric view failed to consider that if my exegesis, ethical reasoning, and use of scientific evidence was correct, then obedience to God's will as revealed in Scripture and nature is about as theocentric a view as any Christian could hope to obtain.

Regrettably, Bouma seems to have been caught up in reacting to theological labels rather than in assessing my treatment of the biblical evidence, the only infallible source for Christian doctrine. Maybe that is why he considered my book more of an apologia rather than a theology. Apparently, he skipped chapter 1 (p. 14f), in which I explained why the book focused on the consumptive uses of wildlife: (a) it avoids anachronisms and speculation because the Bible speaks of these activities; and (b) if humanity's consumptive use of wildlife violates God's perfect will, as the Christian animal rights activists claim, then a whole host of human uses of animals are in danger of being immoral as well. To my knowledge, very few environmental theologies provide such a sustained review of the morality of a concrete, real-world practice (namely, hunting, trapping, and fishing) followed by suggestions on how Scripture's answer to consumptive use of wildlife may provide guidance on how humans should utilize the environment. Bouma certainly has a right to disagree with my evaluation of Scripture, ethics, and science (he offered no comment concerning the third); I just wish he had taken the time to provide some concrete examples of where he saw error.

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Humans: The Mean between Science and God

Mary L. VandenBerg, in "What General Revelation Does (and Does Not) Tell Us" (*PSCF* 62, no. 1 [2010]: 22), wrote,

The first issue mentioned was how much concordance there is between what the Bible and science tell us about the nature and operations of the physical world. The second issue, and the focus of this article, was how much concordance there might be between what the Bible and science tell us about God.

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VandenBerg indicates that science is the study of the physical aspect of nature; consequently, its subject matter is data that can be collected, in principle, with the aid of purely physical devices. Schrödinger discovered for himself that Democritus of Abdera already understood this state of affairs in the fifth century BC, prior to the advent of the sophisticated instrumentations of today.¹ Experimental data is subsequently generalized into laws of nature. Additionally, theoretical models are constructed that lead logically to such laws and make predictions that can be experimentally tested.

Schrödinger also indicates that we construct the real world around us out of our “sensations, perceptions, and memories.”² In fact, once the “data” have been obtained, one is dealing with logical mental constructs that are assumed to be related in a faithful manner to that which is real. However, knowledge is to be contrasted to information, which is purely physical.³ For instance, neuroscientists can detect brain waves via purely physical devices. However, that physical information cannot decipher the knowledge-content underlying nonphysical human thought, which can be understood and communicated only by other conscious beings.

Humans are physical/nonphysical/supernatural beings. This is quite consistent with the Christian notion of humans as body/mind/spirit (Matt. 6:22; Rom. 12:2; 1 Cor. 2:11). Therefore, the study of humans that goes beyond the physical aspect and ventures into the nonphysical/supernatural is tricky, owing to the difficulty of obtaining unambiguous and consistent data. Note that in the biological, psychological, sociological, and economic sciences, one is relying more and more on a quantifiable description of humans; this is tantamount to emphasizing the physical over the more important aspects of humans. The Bible deals with humans in historical contexts, which are not amenable to generalizations into scientific laws. In fact, the importances of the Bible are the truths it provides of the nonphysical/supernatural aspects of humans.

On the second issue, knowledge of the physical aspect of nature tells us nothing of God. Schrödinger considers the following scientific metaphysics:

- (a) the assumption that the course of natural events can be understood (hypothesis of comprehensibility)
- and (b) exclusion of or dispensing with the cognizing subject (from the understandable world-picture aspired to), who step back into the role of an external observer (objectivation).⁴

This scientific worldview is compatible with the metaphysics implied by theology. The metaphysics underlying science does not regulate all means of knowing and, so there can be no conflict between science and theology. Therefore, one must emphasize, when considering the first issue, that the subject matter of science and the argument of the Bible overlap only in the physical aspect of nature, since nature itself is a physical/nonphysical/supernatural entity owing to the existence of humans. Gould’s “nonoverlapping magisteria,” namely, science and religion, can be understood only in this sense.⁵ In addition, the Bible deals with ontological, rather than experimental issues.

The question of existence is biblically understood in terms of a Creator that continuously upholds his creation (Gen. 1:1; Heb. 1:3). Humans, created in the image of God, use their creative power to observe, reason, and attempt to understand the whole of reality. The ancient Greek aphorism, “know thyself,” is best approached by biblical truths of revelation, not by scientific knowledge. In fact, it is knowledge of Jesus the Christ that reveals who humans truly are, and that reveals his redemptive power over sin, which science can never even address.

Notes

¹Erwin Schrödinger, *What is Life? with Mind and Matter and Autobiographical Sketches* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 163.

²*Ibid.*, 118.

³Rolf Landauer, *Physics Today* 44, no. 5 (1991): 23–9.

⁴Erwin Schrödinger, *What is Life? and Other Scientific Essays* (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1956), 182.

⁵Stephen Jay Gould, “Nonoverlapping Magisteria,” *Natural History* 106 (March 1997): 16–22. www.stephenjaygould.org/library/gould_noma.html

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More on the Two Books Approach

Mary VandenBerg’s article, “What General Revelation Does [and Does Not] Tell Us,” (*PSCF* 62, no.1 [2010]: 16–24) is in my opinion another attempt to discredit the “Two Book” interpretation of Scripture. For many years, I have been interested in the discoveries of science and how it all relates to biblical knowledge. In this quest, I have read many books on this subject, and attended lectures such as “The Epic of Creation” series, sponsored by the Zygon Center. All of these were interesting and informative, however, it always seemed that something was missing. Finally, Hugh Ross, founder of Reasons to Believe, began his concordant approach (*PSCF* 59, no. 1 [2007]: 46–50). This study relies on testable scientific detail from the biblical creation texts and the book of nature. The Bible is clear on the fact that God’s word includes both the words of the Bible and his words written in the heavens and the earth. For example, Ps. 19:1–4 tells us “the heavens declare the glory of God”; Ps. 85:11, “truth springs from earth and rightness looks down from heaven”; and Rom. 1:20, “For since the creation of the world his invisible attributes—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.” Such studies are never complete because new discoveries in science continue. However, in my opinion, the two-book approach is very powerful in convincing unbelievers, especially scientists, in the saving knowledge, of our Creator Jesus Christ.

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