

Letters

of Christ. Lutherans explained that “consubstantiation” occurred: Christ’s real body and blood were present even though the bread and wine looked unchanged, because, as divine, Christ’s body and blood become “ubiquitous” and everywhere present. Calvinists held that the bread and wine remained mere bread and wine but provided true communion with Christ, who is in heaven with the Father. Kepler got into trouble for not embracing the “ubiquity” doctrine of his fellow Lutherans.

On page 147, Einstein:

How was Einstein’s determinism compatible with his well-known devotion to justice, humanitarian ideals, and social responsibility, all of which presume at least some degree of free will and indeterminism in the universe? It is far from clear how Einstein reconciled his espousal of determinism with his social and ethical principles.

The project left Frankenberry with two impressions. First, scientists associated with the scientific revolution were able to interrelate their Christian faith and their scientific discovery seamlessly, but “pockets of perplexity, elements of eccentricity and unconventional forms within conventional Christian faith stand out” (p. ix). Secondly, “in contrast to the historical titans, many of the contemporary scientists ... are moved by fresh visions and alternative forms of spirituality” (p. x).

As a popular-level introduction, this book admirably fills a gap between scholarly anthologies such as N. A. Rupke, ed., *Eminent Lives in Twentieth-Century Science and Religion* (rev. and expanded ed.; Frankfurt, DL: Peter Lang Verlag, 2009) and book-length biographies. Frankenberry sets a high standard. Generally, her commentaries succeed in succinctly capturing the excitement of exploring nature in the context of “faith” and in introducing the perplexities that can emerge in the process. She teaches religion at Dartmouth College, and this shows in the quality of the commentary, as in the thoughtful way she captures the complexity of Pascal’s reflections on faith and reason, explains the three versions of Pascal’s wager, and corrects his caricature as an irrational fideist. There is an occasional flaw, as, for instance, in the passage about Kepler and Communion cited above. It is true that for Calvinists the bread and wine remain mere bread and wine, but they do not provide true communion with Christ, who is in heaven with the Father. Rather, the bread and wine are visible reassurances of the spiritual presence of Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit in the participants. On the side of the history of science, the editor fails to point out that it was the impossibility of Jesus’ physical body to be in more than one place simultaneously, that kept Kepler from agreeing with the Lutheran view. On this point, Kepler’s physics affected the practice of his religious faith.

In her scholarly work, Frankenberry defines religion as “a communal system of propositional attitudes and practices that are related to superhuman agents.” This definition would have excluded most contemporary scientists from her list, as their religion is not related to superhuman agents. So in this book she has replaced it with “faith” which she takes in the broadest possible sense. Two advantages accrue. First, it captures views, attitudes, and

stances that function as a religion while not fitting the standard views of religion. This approach allows her to include the creative, the heterodox, and even the antireligious views of scientists. For instance, it allows her to characterize the science of sociobiologist E. O. Wilson as “akin to faith” (p. 437). Secondly, she avoids the controversies about definitions of religion in academia.

Only major historical figures or public intellectuals were included (p. viii). Their public status introduces the possibility that they were writing for the public and with ulterior motives, rather than about their private beliefs. This is a historiographic concern that has entered certain textbooks, for instance, P. J. Bowler and I. R. Morus, *Making Modern Science* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2005). The editor appears unaware that this situation raises the question of bias. So-called minor figures might have been more interesting to consider for their lack of bias.

An extensive index and suggestions for further reading at the end of each chapter make the book very accessible. Sometimes the reading list fails to include studies of importance to the theme of the book. [See, for example, the chapter “Edward Osborne Wilson (b. 1929)” by Mark Stoll in Rupke’s, book cited earlier]. Highly recommended for anyone who wants to scout what is on offer in science and religion studies, or for students who need an essay topic.

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Letters

A Reply to Lamoureux’s Review of Beale’s *The Erosion of Inerrancy in Evangelicalism*

Lamoureux (*PSCF* 62, no. 2 [June 2010]: 133–8) is, as he says, “quite critical” of the evangelical position on inerrancy maintained by Beale in his 2008 publication, *The Erosion of Biblical Inerrancy*. Over against Beale’s view that the Scriptures must not be held to contain errors of fact, Lamoureux argues, following Peter Enns, that “literary genre *dictates* biblical interpretation” (p. 137, Lamoureux’s italics). Thus, properly, one “treats the ancient science as ancient science, and the ancient understanding of human history as an ancient understanding of human history” (p. 137). Indeed, for Lamoureux and Enns, “under the inspiring guidance of the Holy Spirit, the science and history of the day were employed as incidental vessels to reveal inerrant messages of faith” (p. 136); “God accommodated to the level of ancient humans in the revelatory process” (p. 136). After all, did not the incarnation itself involve accommodation (the “humbling” of Phil. 2:8)?

Let me provide just a few of the many reasons why the Lamoureux-Enns accommodation approach to Scripture is entirely incompatible with biblical inerrancy, as well as being destructive to a meaningful Christian theology.

1. Spiritual facts (“messages of faith”) cannot be placed in an airtight compartment so as to separate them from secular facts (scientific and historical information). This is true in general, since all areas of knowledge interpenetrate each other; it is especially true in the case of special revelation, since the heart of biblical religion lies in God’s revealing himself in the secular realm (as the Creed says, our Lord “suffered under Pontius Pilate”). The question, “Are the death of Christ on the cross and his resurrection *secular* events or *faith* events?” parallels the question, “Have you stopped beating your wife?”—since it should be painfully obvious that the cross and the resurrection are *both historical and spiritual events at the same time*, and, if not historical, of little or no value spiritually. Doubt as to the historicity of biblical events will, logically and inevitably, produce equivalent doubt as to their spiritual value.

2. If the scientific and historical material in the Bible—which can in principle be checked for accuracy—is not reliable, why should anyone accept the spiritual/faith material set forth there—which cannot be checked? If the writers were not preserved from error in human geography, why would anyone trust what they recorded as to heavenly geography (“In my Father’s house are many mansions,” etc.)? A fundamental epistemological theme of Jesus’ teaching is, “If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you of heavenly things?” (John 3:12). Indeed, it is exactly this solid factuality of Christian revelation which gives Christianity its character of “meaningfulness”—in contrast with virtually all other religious positions, cults, and world-views which, lacking in any factual testability (verifiability/falsifiability), suffer from epistemological “nonsensicality” or “meaninglessness” (to use the expressions of contemporary analytical philosophy).

3. Accommodatist approaches to Scripture are never justified by an appeal to *kenosis* (“limitation”) by way of Phil. 2:8. Of course, in becoming man, God took on human characteristics; but this did not include sin or error; had that been the case, one could not trust anything Jesus said about God, since (as Strack and Billerbeck have well shown in their *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*) the vast majority of Jesus’ teachings can be paralleled in intertestamental Jewish writings—so he could well have simply accommodated himself to the fallible spiritual ideas of his time rather than offering fallen humankind eternal verities and the one divinely true way of salvation. Modern theologians such as Rudolf Bultmann and ecclesiastical liberals such as the late Bishop James Pike have gone this route, thereby evacuating not just the Old Testament of meaning by reducing its content to myth, but also destroying the New Testament gospel by demythologizing Jesus’ ministry and existentially dehistoricizing Jesus’ words and work.

Two wee bibliographical suggestions: ponder my essay, “Inspiration and Inerrancy: A New Departure,” included in my *Crisis in Lutheran Theology*, together with the appropriate sections (especially proposition 4.0) of my *Tractatus Logico-Theologicus* (www.ciltpp.com).

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Two Book Interpretation of Revelation

My thanks to Mary Vandenberg for her article (*PSCF* 62, no. 1 [2010]: 16–24) on the two-book interpretation of revelation, nature and the Bible. She traces the use of general revelation through nature back through Calvin to Augustine to Paul in Romans 1 and makes the solid point that Paul sees nature as pointing to God himself (good, loving, just) and not to the details of natural processes—as some scientific creationists might have it. Theirs is a descriptive/causal/hypothetical task and, insofar as researchers come up with convincing evidence, Christians need to be free to rejoice and to see the natural processes as part of God’s creative work.

As a theologian, Vandenberg wants to maintain a “high view” of the biblical text (supernatural revelation) and the distinctive feature of her methodology is, no doubt, teleological—what is the book trying to say to its original hearers and to us today? And what does it reveal about the purposive-redemptive nature of the Lord God? So, in her conclusion (p. 22 and endnote 47, p. 24), she warns against “rushing to reinterpret” the special book every time something seemingly conflicting arises from science.

In keeping with these Reformed commitments, it would be of interest to see her evaluation of a work like John H. Walton’s *The Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate* (InterVarsity Press, 2009) reviewed by Sean M. Cordry (*PSCF* 62, no. 3 [2010]: 227–8). Perhaps she would agree with the following comments.

In Reformed theological language, Walton’s thesis can be reduced to one sentence: To read Gen. 1:1–2:3 as Moses may have intended, don’t necessarily see it as referring to a material creation, but rather view it as an outline of God’s eternal plan for that creation.

Back in my seminary days, I began researching the ancient Near East culture into which Abraham was born in Ur. The seven tablets of the old (2000+ BC) Babylonian creation story (“*Enuma elish*”) had recently been uncovered. As I read them, I could not help but wonder how Abraham reacted to the account of the fighting of the many gods, to the chief male god’s (Marduk’s) killing of the head female deity (Tiamat), his standing on her body and then cutting her in two to make the heavens and earth, and then using the blood of another god he had killed to make humans to be slaves of the deities. What a shock it must have been for him to discover the one and only God who made humankind in his own image, who each “day” added something to creation that would be for the good of men and women, and finally on the seventh day to come and dwell with the people he loved in his holy Temple!

If Walton had played up this sharp contrast on the theological level, his own major points would have been considerably clarified for his readers (for example, his interesting reflections on the seventh day). The differences in cosmology between the old polytheistic and the Hebrew monotheistic one may turn out to be more enlightening than the similarities he concentrates on. In the Babylonian case, for example, Marduk commands the lesser gods to honor him, and they build a temple somewhere in the heavens away from us inferior beings. [Cordry’s contention that the polytheistic deities’ “relationship to people was of utmost importance” (p. 227) was