

Book Reviews

The final two chapters make Bret's scientific case for an old earth. Rather than comprehensively considering the many arguments and pieces of data in their totality, Bret has prudently restricted himself to a more in-depth scientific treatment of just two issues, explaining that

I won't review every single one of these evidences, for two reasons: first, I want to keep this book short, and second, I don't want to leave my area of expertise and so risk being inaccurate.

The two dating methods that he considers are starlight transit and radiometric dating. For a reader seeking knowledge about the science involved in determining the age of the earth, these final chapters provide a wealth of information—lessons taught by a master physics teacher whose instructional approach is entertaining and enlightening. Data is wielded, diagrams are marshaled, and the physics is illuminated. Being familiar with the YEC arguments in these areas, Bret addresses the question of whether the assumptions necessary for the veracity of the two methods, i.e., the constancy of light speed and radioactive decay rates over time, are valid or not. Along with reviewing the procedures used to determine astronomical distances, he argues that as we look back into the past that comes to us from distant starlight, we can observe the constancy of these values—because the values are intimately associated with the laws of electromagnetism and nuclear physics which can be seen to be proceeding then as now.

There is much detail to consider in Bret's scientific discourse—some of which is reserved for two appendices. Any scientific popularization must necessarily choose a level of presentation and some will find this book a daunting read in spite of the author's best efforts at clarity. It is for this reason that many who contemplate this debate within our Christian community end up trusting the authority of one author or another, probably identifying and agreeing with those with whom they feel a kinship. Bret has made a good effort to frame an objective presentation of these physical results, and it would be difficult to find many trained physicists who would question the technical merits of the presentation.

A brief but dense conclusion to the book makes it clear that Bret fervently wishes to change minds, hoping that believers are "able to look freely at the teachings of science on any topic without feeling that our faith is being threatened." While young-earth creationists have sincere concerns that naturalistic origins theories pose a threat to Christian faith, the motives of the old-earth group are likewise authentic, as Bret explains:

In a similar way, thousands of people this year will commit spiritual suicide for nothing. They will read a book, watch a documentary, or go to college, and be confronted by the evidence for an old universe. Then they will remember the young universe theology they were taught and relegate the Bible to the level of an interesting fairy tale, at best. Thousands this year will lose their faith because no one has told them that both "God causes his sun to rise" and "the sun rises because the earth rotates" are *true*.

Perhaps some will read this quote as a contradiction of my earlier point about whether this book is a "harsh polemic," or may question the degree of "gentleness and respect" on display. But the YEC community must allow that Bret and other old-earthers are no Richard Dawkins, bent on stamping out Christian belief and other "harmful superstitions," but fellow children of God who want the best for their people—even as do they. The dialogue is difficult, but I would recommend this book to interested readers, regardless of whether they already agree with Bret or would be seeking out the other side of the argument.

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PHILOSOPHY & THEOLOGY

FROM TEILHARD TO OMEGA: Co-creating an Unfinished Universe by Ilia Delio, ed. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2014. 256 pages. Paperback; \$30.00. ISBN: 9781626980693.

When Pierre Teilhard de Chardin died in New York City on Easter Sunday, 1955, the 73-year-old priest-paleontologist-philosopher was out of sorts with his church. The Vatican had repeatedly forbidden the publication of his philosophical works, and would continue to do so for decades to come; they further forbade the inclusion of his already-published books in Catholic libraries and bookstores. It is therefore doubtful that he or any of his close associates would have anticipated the degree of respect his name now generates, or the amount of scholarly work conducted, both inside and outside the church, to explore his ideas. Teilhard seems to be even timelier in the twenty-first century than he was in the twentieth, and is attracting a new generation of readers and fans.

From Teilhard to Omega: Co-creating an Unfinished Universe picks up a number of threads of Teilhard's ideas and attempts to advance them more fully. Issued by a respected Catholic publishing house,

written by a slate of respected Catholic scholars, and edited by the accomplished Ilia Delio, this embrace of Teilhard comes from within his own church. Delio is Director of Catholic Studies at Georgetown University and previous Professor and Chair of Spirituality Studies at Washington Theological Union. Much like Teilhard himself, Delio crosses the professional divisions between science and religion (holding dual doctorates in pharmacology and historical theology) but may be best known for her writings on spirituality. A lay Franciscan, she is a colleague and occasional copresenter with Father Richard Rohr, a New Mexico-based Franciscan spiritual teacher with a broadly ecumenical reach.

This volume is organized around the central Teilhard dictum that “the universe is still coming into being.” It is Teilhard’s evolving cosmos that is the focus here, along with the end to which it is evolving and the God who guides this process. For those unfamiliar or only casually familiar with Teilhard’s arguments, the first chapter (“Teilhard de Chardin: Theology for an Unfinished Universe” by John F. Haught) lays a scholarly but accessible groundwork for Teilhard’s evolutionary consciousness. Bemoaning a faith still moored in a premodern or early modern perspective, Teilhard sought to create a “metaphysics for the future” that encouraged a departure from static or even pessimistic visions of the future and instead offered the promise of an “omega point,” where all things converge into each other and into Christ. Teilhard the scientist, Teilhard the historian, and Teilhard the theologian all looked forward “with hope and love” because the cosmos had a purpose toward which it was being continually created.

Part One of this collection of thirteen essays explores this union of “theology and evolution” and includes not only the chapter by Haught, but also explorations of “Sophia: Catalyst for Creative Union and Divine Love,” “Evolution and the Rise of the Secular God” (by the book’s editor), “Teilhard’s Vision as Agenda for Rahner’s Christology” (which explores the influence that Teilhard had on the influential mid-twentieth-century Catholic theologian), and “Humanity Reveals the World.” As noted, the first chapter is both foundational and accessible.

Part Two addresses Teilhard’s philosophical vision. The first chapter explores the relationship between the thinking of Teilhard and that of Bernard Lonergan, a Jesuit philosopher-theologian. The second chapter in this section explores the relationship between metaphysics and morality (particularly in the political realm) in Teilhard’s thought, and the third defends him from the critiques raised by Sir

Peter Medawar, the mid-century British-Brazilian Nobel Prize-winning biologist and atheist.

Part Three turns to “Spirituality and Ethics for a New Millennium.” It includes chapters on “An Evolving Christian Morality,” “Teilhard de Chardin and the New Spirituality,” and Teilhard as “The Empirical Mystic,” which might now be my favorite description of this unique polymath. But it may be the title of another chapter in this section that best captures the personality and, indeed, the life goal of Teilhard: “The Zest for Life: A Contemporary Exploration of a Generative Theme in Teilhard’s Work” (by Ursula King).

Part Four consists of a single chapter: “Teilhard de Chardin: New Tools for an Evolutive Theory of the Biosphere” (by Luduvico Galleni), which attempts to deliver on the promise that the book be not merely a review of Teilhard’s thought but also an extrapolation of it into new arenas and questions pertinent to our own generation.

It is doubtless true that fewer volumes of essays by multiple authors are being published these days, as they are often of uneven quality and lack thematic coherence. This volume does not suffer from those flaws. While I have called attention to certain chapters (and believe some are more germane to a discussion of Teilhard than others), the contributions here are surprisingly uniform in terms of the quality of their research and insights. There is an occasional hagiographical tone but one expects this from a volume dedicated to the thinking of a particularly influential individual. If one is looking for a biography of Teilhard, a review of his writings, or a general summary of his ideas, other previously published volumes will do that better. This one does what it purports to do: it examines Teilhard’s themes to explore and extrapolate how we might continue to cocreate the unfinished universe in our own time.

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ADAM, THE FALL, AND ORIGINAL SIN: Theological, Biblical, and Scientific Perspectives by Hans Madueme and Michael Reeves, eds. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014. 352 pages. Paperback; \$26.99. ISBN: 9780801039928.

The debate over the historicity of Adam is well underway within evangelical circles, as witnessed by the *Christianity Today* cover article entitled “The Search for the Historical Adam” (June 2011 issue), Peter Enns’s 2012 Baker book *The Evolution of Adam*, and Zondervan’s publication of *Four Views on the*