

Book Reviews

thored with Massimo Piattelli-Palmarini. Reflecting on these recent brouhahas, Livingstone concludes: “If my suspicions are well founded, I believe it also shows just how pervasive—in one way or another—place, politics, and rhetoric continue to be in dealing with Darwin” (p. 207).

Dealing with Darwin is a book to be read by anyone interested in the reception of Darwin’s account of evolution. We come to learn that the reception of new ideas by a community is far more culturally subtle and complex than we often admit. Could it also be true of the religious communities of which we are a part? As one reads this book, undoubtedly, parallel situations will come to mind since we are naturally embedded in our own unique cultural context.

Reviewed by Arie Leegwater, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, MI 49546.



ORIGINS

LAYING DOWN ARMS TO HEAL THE CREATION-EVOLUTION DIVIDE by Gary N. Fugle. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2015. 308 pages, index. Paperback; \$35.00. ISBN: 9781625649782.

This book calls on conservative evangelical Christians to take seriously the well-supported scientific understanding that all living things are the result of an evolutionary process continuing over millions of years, never disrupted by a relatively recent global flood. The scientific community is also called on to be sensitive to people’s spirituality when science is being taught. The author has excellent qualifications for this task: he is emeritus professor of biology at Butte College, Oroville, CA, with over thirty years of award-winning experience teaching biology, earned his PhD in ornithology at the University of California at Santa Barbara, and is active in his congregation of the Presbyterian Church in America.

After the foreword by Darrel R. Falk, former President of the BioLogos Foundation, which expresses the book’s intent, Fugle opens with his testimony. Having lost interest in church as a youth, he came to faith in adulthood and is now convinced that both creation and evolution are true. Fugle affirms *evolutionary creation* and rejects *spontaneous creation* happening in either a young or old earth, as well as intelligent design, arguing that these concepts can turn people away from faith or prevent believers from understanding science.

Part II argues that an earth created recently but appearing old is deceptive. Fugle also argues that pain and physical death were not absent from the

original very good creation. Spiritual death, not physical death, resulted from the fall of humankind. He uses a variety of writings from Augustine through the Reformers to nineteenth- and twentieth-century evangelicals to support his position. Part III focuses on scientists and science education, arguing that methodological naturalism does not exclude God from life, as philosophical naturalism does. Furthermore, science and faith cannot be non-overlapping magisteria, because the natural world is a subset of all reality over which God is sovereign. Fugle explains why young earth creationism (YEC) and intelligent design (ID) must not be taught as science. However, he asks for religious sensitivity from science educators. Unfortunately, educators outside the church are unlikely to pick up this book and get that message.

Having prepared readers to understand why evolution is important, Fugle describes how homology, fossils, biogeography, molecular genetics, and evolutionary mechanisms are explained by evolutionary theory in Part IV. He argues that YEC lacks this explanatory power. To help those with little background in science, Fugle uses well-known animals—especially whales—as examples. Part V addresses how the scriptural accounts of creation, the fall, and Noah’s flood can be understood so that Christians can avoid being misled by advocates of YEC or ID. He offers as a precedent the way teachings on the heavenly bodies were reinterpreted after science showed that the solar system is centered on the sun. While the early chapters of Genesis can be seen as entirely figurative or symbolic, Fugle believes it is better to consider that historical people and events underlie them, and he favors the option “that Adam was singly taken aside by God from physically evolved humans and the image of God was divinely imparted to him.” Later, humans abused the creation, and its “bondage to decay” (Romans 8:21) relates to their sinful, corrupt actions, rather than to the normal mechanisms of nature, which should not be regarded as dysfunctional. He suggests that the account of Noah’s flood may have its basis in an inundation of the floodplain around the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers and that Sunday school lessons picturing pairs of animals coming from all over the world to the ark are inaccurate and can lead either to mistrust of science or to questioning the foundations of Christian faith. Finally, Fugle closes with a brief Part VI as a summary. He uses three hundred references (nine from ASA sources), and over one hundred scriptural passages are cited. The book includes a six-page index.

Laying Down Arms to Heal the Creation-Evolution Divide is good medicine to apply to a sore area in

the church. Among books advocating evolutionary creation, it has particular strengths: a strong concern for evangelism and pastoral care, practical advice for education both Christian and secular, and a lovingly respectful but firm attitude to readers who may be skeptical. Sensible solutions to difficulties with certain passages in the New Testament are offered. The book focuses on central issues, so that some topics, such as longevity of the patriarchs, are not discussed. Sharing his excitement and joy in knowing God better by understanding the wonders of evolution, Fugle succeeds in showing why evolutionary creation is a “wholly accurate, encompassing and positive view.” ASA members should get this book into their church libraries, and encourage their pastors to read it.

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THE WORLD IS NOT SIX THOUSAND YEARS OLD—SO WHAT? by Antoine Bret. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014. 128 pages. Paperback; \$16.00. ISBN: 1620327058.

There are many complicated background issues that contribute to the ongoing science-religion debates—enough to render simple resolution of disparate viewpoints difficult at best. I have often noted that even when talking with friends whose viewpoints are very similar to my own that we have radically different points of emphasis, foundational assumptions, and ways of communicating our best present understandings. Within the community of believers we have a responsibility to continue the conversation while we follow the advice of St. Peter as we discuss and argue with “gentleness and respect.”

With such a pugnacious title, one might expect Antoine Bret’s book to be a harsh polemic against the young-earth creationist (YEC) perspective. While Bret’s concerns with YEC views are sincere and urgent, the reader will not doubt his genuine desire to “strengthen the faith of many.” Bret, who has held university positions in Spain and France as well as serving as a minister in Madrid, is an excellent writer with a keen intellect and a great knowledge of the content and habits of thought in the field of physics.

This book provides a physicist’s perspective on the narrow question that it considers. Bret makes peripheral reference to scientific issues outside his specialty area but throughout this brief book—whether addressing his conception of science, the particulars of scientific dating techniques, or even his discussion of biblical interpretation—he speaks with the voice of a physicist.

Bret begins by providing a clear confession of his faith, establishing his *bona fides* as a traditional Nicene Creed Christian. He then considers two issues of biblical interpretation before turning his attention to questions of physical law. In the first, he considers passages in scripture that attribute active roles for God in nature to which natural explanations can also be applied, as in the example of Matthew 5:45, “God causes his sun to rise.” In this and many other examples in the Bible, God is said to be responsible for something that can also be explained scientifically. Considering scriptural examples across a range of scientific disciplines, Bret makes a providential case against the “God of the gaps” perspective, saying “the premise that any natural explanation means that God was not involved is *biblically* flawed,” and that “God’s role does not stop when the textbook starts. He is in the textbook as well.”

Chapter two addresses the question of whether Genesis 1 should be read literally. First appealing to writings of early church fathers, including Origen and Victorinus, and then citing examples from both Testaments that are clearly symbolic or poetic, Bret argues that the Bible contains verses that must be nonliteral, and that others “are likely to be so and still others *may* be so.” Sorting out which is which may be difficult, but “the reliability of the Bible is never at stake—only the reliability of its interpreter.”

The third chapter discusses the nature of science in the context of some commonly held misconceptions. Bret’s choice of topics in this section is thought-provoking and illustrative of the deeply personalized approaches to scientific philosophy that one finds among different individuals. He does not directly take on the question of “what is science?” that tends to divide theistic scientists in the YEC community from methodological naturalists, but works his way through an interesting discourse on the laws of nature that emphasizes their progressive development, discussing the principle that “new laws have to *contain* the old ones,” the idea of a “validity domain,” and the importance of the “supervisors” of new scientific developments: logic and observation. By citing examples of misconceptions, Bret defends the objectivity of the scientific community (specifically physicists)—a community that he asserts does *not* have any axe to grind against the Bible, that strives continually to *disprove* its own theories, and that utilizes a literature system that preserves the integrity of the enterprise. All of these discussions are illustrated with well-chosen physics examples along with diagrams and equations that strengthen the presentation.