God in Cosmic History is probably best understood as a manifesto for a comprehensive story of reality that goes beyond big history to include the God question. Whether cosmic history has the potential to develop into a robust new field remains to be seen. If that is the goal, the project of cosmic history might find a receptive audience among those historians—few in number, perhaps—who question the rigid materialism and anti-supernaturalism of an academic history that cannot countenance the notion that "the transcendent has broken into time." At the least, cosmic historians would do well to draw from the considerable literature of believing historians who have wrestled with variations of the God question for decades.

Regardless of how one categorizes the book or assesses the potential of cosmic history, it is an ambitious undertaking from which scholars and general readers will benefit.

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ORIGINS

DARWINISM AS RELIGION: What Literature Tells Us about Evolution by Michael Ruse. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017. 310 pages. Hardcover; $34.95. ISBN: 9780190241025.

Given the title *Darwinism as Religion*, we expect Michael Ruse's latest book to provide a critical, historically based assessment of how Darwinism has, since the publication of *On the Origin of Species*, taken on the forms and roles inhabited by religion—as a source of meaning and a guide to human morality, as a lens through which to view the "big" questions of meaning in life. In his preface, Ruse suggests that he wants to examine "evolution through the lens of literature, fiction and poetry," noting that he is "not using evolutionary thinking to analyze literature but seeing the influence of evolutionary thinking on literature and from this drawing conclusions" (p. x–xi). Later, Ruse asserts that this "is a story about evolution in opposition to religion, the Christian religion" (p. 36). Further, "Darwinian evolutionary thinking … became a belief system countering and substituting for the Christian religion: a new paradigm" (p. 82). While Ruse includes chapters on God, Morality, Sex, and Sin and Redemption, what is meant by "religion" is never entirely clear, although he seems to have in mind some rather generic form of evangelical Protestantism, which is, at times, reduced to caricature. Even so, "religion" frequently goes missing from the discussion for pages at a time, leaving one to wonder: "And what exactly does all this have to do with religion?"

The subtitle, *What Literature Tells Us about Evolution*, adds to the confusion. Does the author mean to suggest that literature can actually help us understand the science of evolutionary theory? Does he want to assess the historical reception of evolutionary theory as evidenced in literature? Or does literature itself provide evidence of an evolutionary process as the human mind comes to grips with the random, pointless nature of existence? The reader is never quite sure. The author apparently feels no obligation to make his argument clear in what he aptly terms a "collage" (p. x) but instead leads his reader on an idiosyncratic journey through the "writings that have filled [his] life with joy and inspiration" (p. xi). His joy seems to have been found primarily in the work of Thomas Hardy, one of the bleakest literary translators of Darwinism, whom Ruse sees expressing

> something in the world without the Christian message of hope. And time is an essential part of this. We are of the Earth. We came from it. We go back to it. That is all there is. Time goes on. There is no meaning, at least not in any conscious, Christian sort of way. (p. 105)

The breadth of Ruse's reading is clearly epic: it appears that he has intimate familiarity with most popular fiction and poetry written in the nineteenth century (in both Great Britain and America), and to a large extent with the transatlantic literature of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. He admits,

> I am absolutely staggered at the amount of material I have found pertinent to my inquiry and hugely impressed at the sophistication and sensitivity of the massive corpus of secondary material. (p. xi)

If nothing else, Ruse leaves the reader feeling similarly overwhelmed. While he does provide frequent plot summaries (which can sometimes seem reductive), in general, Ruse assumes that the reader has a similarly encyclopedic understanding of this material. He dips in and out of novels and poems continually—Browning, Dickinson, Yeats, Huxley, Eliot, Stevenson, Meredith, Norris, Kipling, Twain, Kingsley, Rossetti—returning frequently to major figures, especially Thomas Hardy, in the various subchapters. The result is that we receive no coherent analysis of any one text in its historical context, but instead we find scattered notes, which presumably are connected to the topic named in the chapter title. This constant oscillation among authors adds to the incoherence of the book.

Another persistent fault of the book lies in its inadequate grasp of the principles and conventions of literary analysis. At the most basic level, this involves

providing a context for quotations, especially lengthy block-style quotes, and then following them with an explanation of how the language of the source material supports the claim the critic is making. Unfortunately, not only is Ruse's argument seldom clear, but he frequently fails to provide even minimal introduction to quoted materials. The reader is often at a loss as to whose words and from which source was intended. And then the text is left to stand for itself, as if its meaning clearly supports the obscure argument without further effort from the author.

The prose style is chatty and familiar in tone, as if the author and reader are old friends who share the same opinions and ideas—this may be why the author failed to make a pointed, rigorous argument. An example of his many asides occurs when he treats the work of Marilynne Robinson, noting, "Somewhat ironically, given themes in her fiction, one of her greatest admirers is Barack Obama, the first black president of the United States" (p. 274). Ruse never defines these themes, leaving the irony ambiguous. One is left to assume that he considers Robinson's novels racist, although the plot summaries and quotations he offers do not really support such a view. The reader, it appears, is supposed to accept the opinion uncritically.

The reader occasionally wonders if Ruse feels a vague sympathy with some of his "religious" authors, but by the end of his compilation, it is clear that he finds them deluded. Again, it is unclear whether he is paraphrasing their thoughts or articulating his own. Discussing Amy Clampitt's poetry as an example of an attempt "to make the case for Christianity in a Darwinian world," he notes, "One has another intimation of the theology of Job, of a God who allows and perhaps even commits what we judge evil" (p. 266), and then interjects two stanzas from a Philip Appleman poem which opines, "God has the morals / of a Babylonian butcher" (p. 268). Near the end of the book, he references "Pattiann Rogers, one of America's leading Christian poets," presumably because Rogers uses the term "god" in her poetry, certainly not because she makes any claim to that title (p. 260). While he nods at Marilynne Robinson's neo-Calvinism, a consideration of Annie Dillard is mysteriously absent. By the last page, it seems reasonably certain that Ruse views religion primarily as a set of outdated myths that serve alternately as a panacea for human anxieties and as a spur to meaningless violence: "Finally, will people see the damage that religion does? Will they recognize the evil that lurks at the heart of every faith system?" (p. 268). Of course, such pernicious ideas are best replaced by an acceptance of Darwinian realities suggested to the author by the Book of Job.

To his credit, Ruse occasionally recognizes that both Christianity and Darwinism are complex fields of thought: "It is important to stress these ambiguities in the Christian position, because they are echoed in Darwinism and in the literary responses and interpretations" (p. 129). The book as a whole suggests that Ruse maintained an inadequate critical distance from his materials, the result being more polemics than well-crafted persuasion.

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Science and Biblical Studies

CHANCE IN EVOLUTION by Grant Ramsey and Charles H. Pence, eds. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2016. vii + 359 pages. Paperback; $45.00. ISBN 9780226401881.

Those following the literature on theological responses to the natural sciences will be aware that there is a small industry of books that has appeared in the last few decades responding to the notions of chance and randomness operative in the evolutionary history of the world. On the one side are those in the Wesleyan-Arminian and, more recently, open theistic and process traditions that have advocated a theological vision of divine providence working in and through the chanciness of creation's processes; on the other side are, usually, Reformed thinkers, especially conservative (often Westminster confessional) theologians, who have labored to insist on God's sovereignty sometimes despite but more often over the appearances of fortuitousness and haphazardness in the nature of things. The book under review is by and large unconcerned with adjudicating the theological debates, although there is plenty of historical and scientific analysis here that will be pertinent to theologians devoted to engaging the issues.

The three parts of the book explicate, respectively, historical developments (five chapters), biological processes (three chapters), and history-of-life perspectives (four chapters) related to chance in evolution. The first section is quite interdisciplinary, starting with a historical overview of notions of contingency, chance, and randomness from the ancient through medieval periods and as received in modern biological science (authored by a historian of rhetoric who has focused much of his life's work on the history of biology). The focus then shifts to chance in the development of Darwin's thinking, and its reception since (by a historian of science), and then chance in the modern (neo-Darwinian) synthesis (co-authored by four philosophers). It then segues into Christian