

structures the discussion (the first two chapters in Part I on human origins and the biological sciences both presume and also establish the basic contours of the debate within an evolutionary environment). Hence, a first consideration of the book gives the impression that the authors have by and large accepted the evolutionary model and therefore sought to fit their work as biblical scholars, theologians, and cultural critics into that theoretical frame. Yet the essayists are also (mostly) established scholars in their respective fields and, when read carefully, can also be seen as working to clarify what the real issues are from their respective disciplinary perspectives, and to show how scriptural and theological commitments may foreclose certain understandings of evolutionary science but not all. In other words, there are nuances introduced, certainly, about how to understand the fall into sin, but there are also explanations of the scientific data as well as implications for ongoing and further scientific exploration informed by theological (broadly considered) perspectives.

Last but not least, consistent with the Colossian Forum's mission to engage the ecclesial world, the project was infused from the beginning with a kind of liturgical flavor creatively adapted for the group meetings, and attentive readers might be invited to think about how some of the chapters of the book have been shaped by these Christian practices, providing the matrix from which theological theory emerges. In fact, this is the key feature of this text and its contribution to the theology-and-science (or religions-and-science) literature: that it is possible to engage the philosophical, scientific, and theological issues, not by avoiding, but by precisely situating in the context of practicing the faith.

So, for instance, one of the chapters ponders how ascetic practices are conducive for the formation of a more distinctively Christian way of looking at the world, so that we are attentive to cosmic fallenness on the one hand, but also imbued with eschatological hope for creaturely flourishing on the other hand. Or think about Eucharistic participation as initiation into the deepest mysteries of the Christian faith, and how such might prompt a poetically and aesthetically shaped vision of reality that then orients us toward the dark chaos of the so-called "first" Adam as well as to the luminosity of the "second" one. What is made explicit in these two essays may be less prominent in the rest of the book, but there are many other instances in which confessional practices and resources can be recognized as in play once the reader is primed to their presuppositional role in this project. As the editors put it in their introductory chapter, a substantively Christian imagination is honed through and fueled by liturgical and other

forms of practices, so how might such practices be cultivated for perspective on these thorny questions of the present era? Put alternatively, specifically Christian thinking about science and faith, even about evolution vis-à-vis a fallen world, cannot but pass through the liturgical moments of faithful devotion.

Those for whom adjudication of the "evolution question" ought to be navigated empirically and scientifically may not appreciate the Colossian Forum's theological commitments and how such impinge on engaging even the scientific sides of such questions. On the theological side, the ecumenical breadth of the contributors ensures that however "the Fall" (in the book's title) is understood, such is irreducible to any dogmatic or confessional position, thus assuring that there is plenty of leeway for the various perspectives to comprehend such a fallenness within an evolutionary frame. It is perhaps also precisely in this vein that advocates of a more Augustinian or especially Calvinist notion of the Fall might object that theological sensibilities are hereby subordinated under currently popular scientific ideas that may turn out to be no more than fads in the long run. Or, of course, the scientific consensus could hold, in which case, the efforts to re-situate theological rethinking in relationship to such developments will continue to pay dividends to the faithful in that longer run.

Those looking for resources to inform faithful Christian engagement with the pressing questions posed by the evolutionary sciences in the contemporary context will come away with a broader sense for how matters are not merely theoretical but involve communities of faith. These can promote authentic Christian worship with and amidst, rather than silencing or purporting to definitively domesticate, such issues. *Evolution and the Fall* can be considered a success, although its use in ecclesial communities will need facilitators who can lay out the broader landscape and invite the group to consider that a variety of strategies are always needed to more adequately engage these complex matters.

Reviewed by Amos Yong, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA 91182. ▲

Letters

The Fine Tuning of Life

In his article titled "The Fine Tuning of the Universe: Evidence for the Existence of God?" in the September 2018 issue of *PSCF*, Walter Bradley describes the extraordinary precision of the foundations of our universe that makes life possible. The amazing facts

that he presents fill us all with awe and wonder at the power and glory of God, the Creator of all things. He asks whether this might be considered evidence for the existence of God. His conclusion is that

The “nature of nature,” especially fine tuning, provides clear and compelling evidence for our all-powerful, loving Creator God, who can be seen through “the things that have been made, so that those who do not believe are without excuse” (Rom. 1:20).

I would like to suggest that rather than providing such evidence, the awesome magnificence of our universe is simply consistent with and understandable within the worldview of God the Creator of all things. I submit the following comments for your consideration.

The phrase “fine tuning of the universe” evokes the impression that the parameters of the universe are adjustable and that some agency is capable of making those adjustments. The question “why is the universe fine-tuned for life?” further presumes that the appearance of life ten billion years after the formation of the universe somehow affected that tuning. Since natural causes cannot anticipate the future, the obvious inference would be that an omniscient, omnipotent agent had an expectation for the appearance of life and adjusted the parameters accordingly. The perceived evidence of the existence of God may be due to the presupposition of the intention of life implicit in the way the question is asked.

However, the remarkable harmony between the universe and life can also be described as the “fine tuning of life.” The question becomes, “Why is life fine-tuned for this universe?” This question has a natural sequence of cause and effect with the obvious answer of evolution. The awesome synergy between the universe and life arises from the evolutionary adaptation of life to this universe. The compelling inference from our observations is not that the universe was tuned for life but that life was tuned to thrive in this universe.

Furthermore, our concept of the origin of the universe is expressed in mathematical models, some of which are described by Bradley. In those models, it is easy to treat the constants as variables and to see what happens when they are modified. In this exercise, it is astounding to see the dramatic impact of even the tiniest variation to the point at which life could not exist. But the models give us no indication whether in nature those constants are in fact variable and could have had other values. We have no knowledge of how those constants obtained their values, whether any are related to each other, or if they could have been or needed to be adjusted by some

agent. It may be only in our models that the values can be tuned. Perhaps the real mystery is centered on the very existence of the universe rather than its precision. We need to acknowledge a large dose of humility in our lack of knowledge of how the constants acquired their values.

The apostle Paul was not thinking of western scientific logic when he wrote the book of Romans. He was not predicting that cosmologists could and would someday discover facts that would provide evidence for the existence of God. Rather, he speaks to the emotive awe and wonder that every human being living in every era can experience in their perception of the world in which we live. That is a universal insight that leads to the inexcusability of unbelief for everyone, not just scientists studying the universe. Paul says that nature shows the eternal power and divine nature of God, presuming that the existence of God is a given. Bradley perceives from nature that God is “loving” though Paul gives no such indication. Only if love is defined as causing something to exist could it be inferred from the observations of our universe.

Instead of seeing the amazing precision of our universe as evidence for the existence of God, I suggest it is the existence of God that helps us understand our universe. Faith comes first and, as the writer of Hebrews put it, is the “evidence of things not seen.” Once we acknowledge the existence of God, the Creator of all things, we can recognize his hand in the beauty of the universe and its amazing precision and mathematical structure. It seems analogous to the well-known quote from C. S. Lewis in *The Weight of Glory*, “I believe in Christianity as I believe that the Sun has risen, not only because I see it but because by it, I see everything else.”

Randy Isaac
ASA Executive Director Emeritus

Response to Letter from Randy Isaac

I appreciate the letter that Randy Isaac wrote in response to my article “The Fine Tuning of the Universe: Evidence for the Existence of God?,” *PSCF* 70, no. 3 (2018): 147–60. While we agree that God’s creation provides some warrant in support of belief in theism, we follow two different paths to get there. I will try to clarify exactly what these differences are without misrepresenting Isaac’s argument. We have been having a cordial conversation on this topic for several years.

First, Isaac interprets Romans 1:18–20 as Paul appealing *only* to the “emotive awe and wonder” that every