



APOLOGETICS & ORIGINS

NATURE'S CASE FOR GOD: A Brief Biblical Argument by John M. Frame. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018. 124 pages. Paperback; \$11.99. ISBN: 9781683591320.

John Frame is Emeritus Professor of Systematic Theology and Philosophy at Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando, Florida. He has written the Theology of Lordship series, which includes *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (1987), *The Doctrine of God* (2002), *The Doctrine of the Christian Life* (2008), *The Doctrine of the Word of God* (2010); *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief* (2013); *A History of Western Philosophy and Theology* (2015); and many other books. Frame was a professor at Westminster Theological Seminary and Westminster Seminary California until 2002 when he moved to Reformed Theological Seminary. Frame is in the conservative Reformed tradition and the presuppositional apologetics school of Cornelius Van Til. He is considered to be one of the leading interpreters of Van Til.

This little book caught my eye because, surprisingly, Frame seems to be making a case for a form of natural theology. Natural theology is the investigation of God and his attributes and actions apart from the Bible, that is, what is seen in the natural world and in human nature, experience, and reason. Those in the presuppositionalist apologetics camp have resisted natural theology because of *sola scriptura*. They argue that what we believe about God and his works comes from the Bible and that leaving out the Bible in this discussion dooms it to failure. In addition, the Bible clearly speaks about God and his actions. Why do we need a reflection about God divorced from his revelation to us in scripture and in Jesus Christ? Frame discusses this problem and his response in the Preface (pp. 1-13).

There is a long tradition of philosophical (rather than biblical) arguments for the existence of God. Arguments from ancient Greece, such as the cosmological argument or the teleological argument for the existence of God, are arguments from nature. C. S. Lewis in *Mere Christianity* uses the nearly universal sense of right and wrong in human beings to argue for the existence of God. Not only the existence of God but some attributes of God—his wisdom, his goodness, and his purposefulness—are defended by these arguments from nature. Presuppositionalists generally regard these arguments as wrong-headed and useless, even if they are not necessarily wrong. Human beings, as creatures, are not in a position to judge whether or not the Creator exists. Our hesitation to acknowledge God's existence based on what is seen in nature is due to a willful suppres-

sion of the truth. Furthermore, one of the chief places in scripture where a natural theology argument is used (Romans 1 and 2) concludes that even though the evidence is "clearly seen" in things created and in the human conscience, these evidences leave humankind without excuse. They are unsuccessful because of the spiritual deadness of the human heart. "There is no one righteous ... there is no one who seeks God" (Rom. 3:10-11) is the conclusion of it all.

Frame opens *Nature's Case for God* with the reminder, however, that "Scripture itself tells us that God is revealed everywhere and that human beings are therefore under obligation, not only to hear God's word in Scripture, but to obey his revelation in all creation" (p. 4). He appeals to texts such as Psalm 19:1, "the heavens declare the glory of God," and Romans 1:20, "God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made." Frame calls his project in this book a "biblical natural theology," arguments about God from nature based on a biblical worldview. He says, "We should not look at nature autonomously, on the basis of our own reasoning power, but on the basis of God's revelation in Scripture" (p. 17). We look to nature when the Bible invites us to.

This biblical natural theology does not lead to salvation. It is insufficient because it does not include the message of salvation in Christ. But it does prepare the way for the hearing and believing of the Gospel as it is preached. Frame calls it a "prolegomenon" (p. 7). Believers, because their eyes have been opened to the truth of God as Creator, now see evidence for God everywhere. Frame writes, "The natural world, the creation, is a wonderful testimony to believers that God is real and that everything displays his glory" (p. 11).

Nature's Case for God is divided into two parts: The Witness of the Created World and The Witness of Human Nature. Frame does note that human nature is part of the created world (p. 11). Part One has five chapters: "The Greatness," "The Oneness," "The Wisdom," "The Goodness," and "The Presence." These are short chapters, just a few pages each, that highlight the particular attribute of God along with scripture passages that invite us to look to nature to see that attribute. Each chapter is followed by a list of questions for thought or discussion. I found this section to be a delightful and profound meditation on God.

While each chapter is excellent in showing us in nature the particular attribute of God, I will illustrate Frame's method with the chapter on "The Presence," which is also a transition to the second part. Frame cites Psalm 139:7, "Where can I go from your spirit?"; Acts 17:28, "in him we live and move and have our being"; and ultimately,

Book Reviews

the idea of the image of God in humans (Gen. 1:26–27) to point out that God is near. God’s presence is known even by unbelievers, because of creation and especially their humanity. Dominion over the rest of creation as expressed in Genesis 1 and Psalm 8 is the main way humans express the image of God. Interestingly, while some lament humankind’s impact on nature (especially the negative effects of pollution and the human-caused extinction of other species), Frame points to this human trait as a revelation of the presence of God:

Humanity has become the dominant species on the earth, ruling in every earthly environment ... we also know [God] by knowing ourselves. He is closer to us than anyone or anything else. Every part of our mind and body reveals him ... What amazing creatures we are! How much more amazing must be the one who put us together! That one is as close to us as the mirror in which we look each day ... And from his presence we know he exists. (pp. 62–63)

After reminding us about the distortion of this image in myriad ways, Frame points us to Jesus Christ, the perfect, uncorrupted image (p. 67).

Part Two speaks of the human conscience: “The Seared Conscience,” “The Accusing Conscience,” “The Awakened Conscience,” and “The Good Conscience.” Frame examines the conscience at various stages of the human spiritual condition.

The seared conscience is the mind of the bully, the criminal, and the tyrant. People with seared consciences do not seem to be even minimally affected by moral considerations. They wish to inflict their power on others, without any limitations of morality. (p. 79)

Yet, even the seared conscience functions. It may be ignored, but it cannot be completely forgotten (Rom. 1:32). Frame writes,

When I am tempted to betray a friend, I know it is wrong. This is something I must not do ... Betrayal is not merely bad for my friend, or for me, or for the species; it is objectively bad ... only God has the authority to tell me what is objectively wrong. We may do what we can to silence the voice of conscience, even to sear it. But it will not stop speaking to us, accusing us. Within us, it makes its case for God. (p. 82)

The accusing conscience not only accuses ourselves (Rom. 2:14–15), but it accuses and excuses others. The morality of accusers is not always on target (although it often is), but the notion that everyone thinks there is a right and wrong is an evidence for God.

The awakened and the good conscience are the result of the new heart that God gives us. Our awareness of sin leads us to repentance and faith in Christ. Neither is perfect. Frame writes,

Of course, the newly awakened conscience is not perfect ... It needs to be taught and trained. (p. 94)

To say I have a good conscience is not to claim sinless perfection ... however ... the Christian, whose conscience is awakened and directed by the Spirit, is able to behave faithfully ... (p. 101)

As scientists, readers of this journal are interested in the study of creation (nature). As people of faith, they believe that God created and sustains that creation. *Nature’s Case for God* articulates a biblical way of thinking about the relationship between the two.

Reviewed by Terry Gray, Instructor, Chemistry Department, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO 80523.

FRIEND OF SCIENCE, FRIEND OF FAITH: Listening to God in His Works and Word by Gregg Davidson. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2019. 297 pages with bibliography and index. Paperback; \$25.00. ISBN: 9780825445415.

Offering a direct and powerful rebuttal to perspectives that lead to conflict between faith and science, especially those views of young-earth creationism and intelligent design (ID), Gregg Davidson argues, in considerable detail, that scripture and the scientific views on topics such as the age of the earth and evolution are in harmony. This book is an outgrowth of years of intensive study and dialogue with advocates of many diverse views of the relationship between science and scripture. He clearly articulates the underlying principles of these views and provides ample information to support his position that science and Christian faith are in harmony.

Davidson is chair of the Department of Geology and Geological Engineering at the University of Mississippi, specializing in hydrology and geochemistry. He earned a BS in geology at Wheaton College and a PhD in geology at the University of Arizona. In addition to a few books of fiction, Davidson has authored two other books on science and faith. These are *The Grand Canyon, Monument to an Ancient Earth* (coauthored with Carol Hill, Wayne Ranney, and Tim Helble) and *When Faith and Science Collide: A Biblical Approach to Evaluating Evolution, Creationism, Intelligent Design, and the Age of the Earth*, published in 2009, which is a precursor to this work. Davidson is a Fellow of the American Scientific Affiliation.

Friend of Science: Friend of Faith comprises fourteen chapters organized in five parts. In the first part, Davidson sets forth the manner in which he recommends issues of apparent tension between science and the Bible be addressed. He suggests that three questions be considered:

1. Does the infallibility of scripture rest on a literal interpretation of the verses in question?