

Christians interested in the history and philosophy of science related to male homosexuality will not be disappointed by this book. It is in depth and even handed in its treatment of research and competing theories. I would not describe it as anti-religious in its presentation of ideas and historical context. In fact, the authors do not really engage religion as such; rather, they engage some of the ideas derived from or contemporaneous with religious thought at the time, particularly if those thoughts were evident in science, but, again, they do so in a measured way. They primarily engage arguments and the conclusions derived within science (e.g., genetics, zoology, psychiatry) itself.

Notes

¹M. A. Yarhouse and D. C. Haldeman, "Introduction to Special Section on Current Advances in the Intersection of Religiosity/Spirituality and LGBTQ+ Studies," [Editorial], *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* 13, no. 3 (2021): 255–56, <https://doi.org/10.1037/rel0000438>; and M. A. Yarhouse et al., *Listening to Sexual Minorities: A Study of Faith and Sexuality on Christian College Campuses* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press Academic, 2018).

²See W. H. James, "Biological and Psychosocial Determinants of Male and Female Human Sexual Orientation," *Journal of Biosocial Science* 37, no. 5 (2005): 555–67, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021932004007059>.

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NATURALISM IN THE CHRISTIAN IMAGINATION: Providence and Causality in Early Modern England by Peter N. Jordan. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2022. 218 pages. Hardcover; \$99.95. ISBN: 9781009211987.

How should religious conviction shape scientific thought? This is the question many early moderns asked themselves, and which Peter Jordan explores in his book. In a close analysis of prominent early modern English theologians and scientists, Jordan weaves together a coherent intellectual outlook that provides important commentary on the relationship between science and religion.

Jordan's selection of early modern Protestantism will not be new to those interested in the relationship between science and religion. Jordan's PhD advisor, Peter Harrison, who oversaw the dissertation from which this book developed, has left his mark on this topic for the last three decades in books such as *The Bible, Protestantism, and the Rise of Natural Science* (1998), *The Fall of Man and the Foundations of Science* (2007), as well as *The Territories of Science and Religion* (2015). As a consequence Jordan's guiding assumption, that Christian thought created a context within which early

modern science was explained, is not anything novel. What is unique is his recognition that early modern theology was not entirely static or homogenous in its relationship to science. By focusing on shifting ideas of the Christian doctrine of providence, what Jordan highlights is the way in which certain thinkers accommodated the doctrine of providence to embrace new scientific developments, such as mechanism and atomism. As a result, this work reminds us that the area of early modern science and religion, while well studied, still has areas of investigation that may bear important fruit.

The book itself, which contains an introduction, conclusion, and five chapters, is organized into four parts. The first part introduces his analytical term of "providential naturalism," by which he means a perspective on the natural world that integrates Christian commitments to providence and explanations of the natural world. It is because he is analyzing the doctrine of providence that his selection of English Protestants makes sense. As he explains in chapter two, English Protestants developed a well-structured formulation of providence, which explained the wide variety of ways in which God acted within the world, activities which could contain—though were not entirely constrained by—the natural world. The important implication of this, which Jordan explores later in the work, is that the newer developments of science, which did not fit the expected patterns of Aristotelianism, and hence of the expectations of how the natural world should function, could nevertheless find an articulation within a world that was believed to be fundamentally controlled and shaped by God.

The second part provides important contextualization for the development of the theories of providence. In a work looking to interrelate theology and science, this section is particularly interesting because it serves as a reminder that the doctrine of providence itself was influenced by unanticipated aspects. The topics he addresses here are chance-based games, such as dice and lots, as well as prodigies. Both games and prodigies provided frequent opportunities for early moderns to develop their definitions of providence. Games of chance became popular in the early modern period; they raised all sorts of questions about how providence related to the natural world, and whether all outcomes, including games of chance, were necessarily providential.

Similar questions about the boundaries of providence show up in John Spencer's thoughts on prodigies, which Jordan analyzes in chapter four. Spencer, a clergyman at the University of Cambridge, became quite critical of the large number of prodigies that were believed to occur on a routine basis within the world. In Spencer's estimation, while it is indeed the case that nature com-

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municates the will of God, the supernatural existence of prodigies occurs less frequently than many of his contemporaries assumed. As a consequence Spencer, who assumes that God maintains an ordered universe, is slow to ascribe divine inspiration to prodigies; instead, he looks toward ways in which presumed prodigies could be interpreted with natural explanations.

The third part applies the question of providence to some of the more prominent new developments within science—that of atomism and theories of the earth. As he notes, oftentimes these new scientific developments are heralded as a shift toward a mechanistic and deterministic cosmos. What Jordan contends, however, is that this was not necessarily the case. For instance, with regard to atomism, Jordan analyzes the Epicurean Walter Charleton and shows how Charleton simultaneously upheld atomism and God’s providence. Among many important points, Jordan highlights Charleton’s view that God providentially moved atoms in creation to establish an order to the universe which operated according to the patterns that God desired. The task of the natural philosopher, then, was to interpret God’s ordered universe. A similar emphasis of establishing God’s providence in the created order is noticeable in Thomas Burnet’s explanation of creation, in which Burnet minimizes the miraculous nature of creation, opting instead to emphasize the providential foresight which God had from the beginning.

In the final part Jordan offers his conclusions. It is here that one clearly recognizes the merit of Jordan’s work, as he articulates a significance for the study that locates it not merely within the world of the seventeenth century, but also today. For, as he explains, the explanations of providential naturalism that he analyzed in the early modern period challenge contemporary notions that science and religion exist as two distinct subjects. Instead, as his book argues, naturalistic explanations flow from an understanding of providence, which depends on who God is and how God maintains the world. As a result, this book will prove useful not merely to specialists in the history of early modern science and religion, but also to those interested in the same questions today.

In a book of such merits, and there are many, it is worth noting one important limitation: the scope of the study. As mentioned above, the question of providence and science proves particularly interesting among English Protestants on account of the importance of the doctrine of providence for this religious group. Yet, the world of early modern science and religion was diverse, and it is important to remember that this book provides a window into only one part of this world, but by no means the entirety of it. So, while the topic of providence

proved influential in early modern England, it should be remembered that this line of thought does not necessarily represent all early modern thinking on the topic of science and religion. As a consequence, it is hoped that future research will pursue Jordan’s framework across geographical and denominational divides to determine the degree to which his general thesis might be extended even beyond early modern England.

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MAKING SENSE OF DISEASES AND DISASTERS: Reflections of Political Theory from Antiquity to the Age of COVID by Lee Trepanier, ed. New York: Routledge, 2022. 248 pages. Hardcover; \$170.00. ISBN: 9781032053950. E-book; \$47.65. ISBN: 9781003197379.

Political theorist Lee Trepanier has assembled a collection of scholars to address the political—and human—questions that arise from what he describes as “liminal events” such as pandemics, natural disasters, and the like. In this book, “disaster” includes not only natural but humanly generated disasters, such as the Sack of Rome. Such liminal events can generate considerable political uncertainty, significant social change, and even political collapse. Trepanier states that “These events offer us lessons about the nature of political order and illuminate what political theory can offer in our understanding about politics itself” (p. 1). How do societies respond to these events? Do these events create (or reveal) solidarity or the lack of it? Do governments gain or lose legitimacy based on how they handle these events? More deeply, what do these events reveal about human nature and human behavior when political structures are under strain or broken? Trepanier and contributors work with an expansive, more classical conception of politics; in this conception political theory explores the broad questions of how we live together and how the political order both reflects and shapes our human nature.

The book is organized into Trepanier’s introduction and four sections. Section I, “In the Time of COVID,” engages the recent pandemic. Section II, “Modern Solutions, Modern Problems,” moves to the early modern period with studies of key figures such as John Locke and Francis Bacon. Section III, “God, Plagues, and Empires in Antiquity,” moves to the ancient world engaging authors such as Augustine, Thucydides, and Sophocles. The final section, “Reflections on Surviving Disasters,” brings us forward again to the present day with studies of how contemporary authors grapple with early twenty-first century disasters such as the Fukushima Earthquake of 2011 or Hurricane Katrina.