

Book Reviews

talist branches” (p. 106). This claim makes it appear that Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Shinto, and other “traditions” are really all talking about the same thing when it comes to the idea of God. This assertion provides another doubtful claim, but it is part of the book’s commitment to the notion of a perennial philosophy, according to which there are “deep mystical traditions shared by the world’s largest religions” (p. 38). Once again, readers can judge for themselves whether the particulars of a given religion (e.g., traditional Christology) are disposable accretions artificially attached to the universal, mystical core that lies at the heart of every religion—or at least the largest religions.

Who should read this book? Christians with conservative beliefs who read it will get a good sense of the current state of liberal theology. Liberal Christians will find a clear articulation of typical liberal beliefs and modes of argumentation.

Reviewed by Samuel Powell (PhD), former professor of philosophy and religion and Dean of the School of Theology and Christian Ministry at Point Loma Nazarene University, San Diego, CA. Powell’s publications include Participating in God: Creation and Trinity (Fortress Press, 2003).

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.56315/PSCF12-25Keathley>

FAITH AND SCIENCE: A Primer for a Supernatural World by Kenneth D. Keathley. B&H Academic, 2024. 160 pages, including subject and Scripture indices. Paperback; \$21.99. ISBN: 9781087771434.

In his latest book, Kenneth Keathley, professor of theology at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, demonstrates that Christian faith and science possess two compatible perspectives of the world. The subtitle of the Introduction, “This Is Our Father’s Supernatural World,” generates interest through the juxtaposition of a beloved hymn title and the term supernatural. The hymn title refers to Keathley’s love of Christian tradition and his deep faith. Supernatural indicates his take on how these two subjects, which many find contradictory, work together to help Christians understand both the world we live in and our Christian faith. This well-researched book progresses through a basic introduction of science and Christian faith (chaps. 1–3), includes an extended treatment of God at work in the origins of life (chaps. 4–8), and concludes by “inviting young believers [to consider] a future in one of the STEM fields” (p. 2). It is written in an accessible style suitable for students and those first encountering the topic.

Keathley starts by discussing how faith and science relate to each other. Following ancient Greek philosophy, he uses an illustration of building a house and

clearly shows that *why* something happens, both the formal planning (the blueprints) and the underlying motivation (desire for a home), provide an understanding of causation that proves different from *how* something happens, including both material resources (the supplies needed) and dynamic/efficient causation (the construction workers). Science tells us *how* God created and sustains the world, and theology tells us *why*. Keathley notes three primary models that govern the faith and science relationship: the Enemies models, the Strangers model, and the Friends model. The author states that Christianity does not tell one everything about everything, but neither does science tell one everything about everything. Keathley debunks two misunderstandings about the church’s interaction with science. First, the Galileo affair did not describe the church against science but rather one faction of the church against another. Second, the Scopes Monkey Trial occurred more as a publicity stunt to discredit Christianity. Keathley also mentions Christians who have been major contributors to science throughout history.

This preliminary overview leads Keathley to his definitions of how God works in the world that serve as a key framework for his argument. Since Aquinas’s time, Christians primarily believe that God works either through general providence, God’s sustaining of all parts of the world in a moment-by-moment basis, or through special providence, God’s working in the world through extraordinary ways (known as miracles). Keathley introduces supernatural events, in which God employs natural law and phenomena in extraordinary ways, the point at which general providence and special providence cross. The author identifies biblical events, which many consider miracles, and re-defines them as supernatural events.

Next Keathley discusses science related to the beginning of the universe and development of life, detailing that he believes many of these happenings remain supernatural. Although many Christians today worry that the Big Bang is contrary to biblical teaching, Keathley shows that the Big Bang provides evidence for the existence of God. The fine tuning of the universe, alongside the intricate craftsmanship of the existing earth, reveals God’s care in crafting a place perfect for human life.

Keathley’s dive into biology and evolution is perhaps the most challenging section. Some Christians feel that evolution undermines their faith, but Keathley describes evolution in a less threatening way, including the definition that it simply means biological change over time. He discusses young-earth creationism, the idea that God

created the entire universe in six days, less than 10,000 years ago, and points out some surprising models from this approach; then evolutionary creationism, also called theistic evolution, with God as being fully involved in sustaining the universe through the scientific processes of the Big Bang and evolution. The author postulates that, before God started the Big Bang, God planned out the entire progression of the universe through the development of planets, life, and its evolution to human life. Finally, old-earth creationism (a view Keathley admits to holding) claims that the universe was created 13–14 billion years ago, and everything evolved with God’s help using hypernatural means as needed.

Keathley ultimately discusses old-earth creationism and evolutionary creationism in tandem commenting that the only real difference between the two is seen when God employs hypernatural activities, versus *when* “special divine action” occurs (p. 119). In evolutionary creationism, all adjustments occur before the Big Bang, and in old-earth creationism the adjustments are made as time passes. From a human point of view, these two ideas can be distinguished, but since God exists outside of time, one can imagine God looking at the consequences of each and adjusting things, making the difference between these two views potentially quite miniscule from God’s viewpoint. Keathley makes a point that these two approaches possess many similarities. Perhaps using hypernaturalism to explain God’s working in the world helps those Christians who remain uncomfortable with the idea of evolution.

Finally, Keathley emphasizes that the concept of *Sola scriptura* proves vital. He asserts that the Bible tells us everything we need to know about theology’s major themes. God created the universe, humankind sinned, and God’s common grace “works in tandem with God’s general providence to enable damaged, dysfunctional humans to still reflect flashes of the One who created them” (p. 129). However, science remains congruent with Christian faith and provides an important way of learning about God’s creation.

As a theologian, Keathley is sometimes lacking in scientific detail. In his discussion of the complexity of the cell, he observes that the more we learn about the cell, the more complex it becomes, and therefore he is not certain we will ever totally understand the workings of the cell. However, as science progresses, it is possible that humans will fully understand cells. Regardless, such discoveries should not affect a Christian’s faith; God still created cells, hypernaturally according to Keathley, and God sustains cells through general providence.

In a similar vein, Keathley asserts that “the fossil record does not support gradualism” (p. 113) and this perspective serves as one reason why the author believes that God acted in hypernatural ways to create the many life forms on Earth. However, scientists have discovered transitory species. For example, Francis Collins concludes, “The distinction between macroevolution and microevolution is therefore seen to be rather arbitrary.”¹ One cannot rely on a lack of current scientific knowledge to make a place for God. Keathley would agree with this view but could state more strongly in his book that new scientific discoveries do not negate God acting through general providence *and* hypernaturally.

Although *PSCF* readers may be familiar (and perhaps disagree) with the concepts addressed by Keathley, this book nevertheless provides a readable review of the science-faith relationship and may be especially relevant for those needing a nonthreatening introduction to this topic. Christians can understand that the two fields prove to be complementary, telling us different things about our world, and we should accept and study both to understand God’s good creation.

Note

¹Francis Collins, *The Language of God* (Free Press, 2006), 132.

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.56315/PSCF12-25Brownnutt>

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ON SCIENCE AND CHRISTIANITY by Mike Brownnutt and Keith R. Fox, eds. Langham Global Library, 2024. 296 pages. Paperback; \$26.99. ISBN: 9781839739880.

Global Perspectives on Science and Christianity offers a timely and compelling contribution to the science-and-faith discourse—a field long dominated by Western voices and paradigms. The editors, both respected figures in science-religion scholarship, have assembled contributors from six continents, each addressing specific intersections of science and Christianity from within their cultural and institutional settings. This review assesses editorial vision, thematic coherence, methodological insight, and the book’s contribution to both academic theology and church praxis.

The volume opens with a foreword by historian David N. Livingstone, who introduces the idea of the “glocal” turn—a conceptual framework that critiques the universalizing tendencies of both science and theology. Instead of treating either domain as monolithic, Livingstone outlines a guiding triad that structures the