

arguing that Darwin's move from a formal faith into a loose deism occurred due to there being "no other viable theological model to which to turn" (p. 78).

After these—at times harrowing—accounts, Cain embarks on an extended discussion of what he considers to be a more suitable philosophical and theological response to suffering (chap. 6). He generally follows the arguments of theologian Thomas Jay Oord, walking the reader through various theological approaches to the question of divine action and suffering, settling on the ways in which a deeper understanding of love can not only define God's person, but also help us to define the ways in which God is present and powerful (or not) in the world.

Throughout the text, Cain does an admirable job of dealing with a challenging and ever-present conflict. Indeed, in the tradition of process theology from which Cain writes, the question of suffering contributes both a driving and a troubling factor. Since process theology appears well suited to critically engage modern science, some interpreters in this tradition employ an evolutionary approach to human and nonhuman suffering, leaning into the co-created and co-evolutionary nature of the world. Such approaches tend to minimize the suffering of the present for the promises of the future, linking temporal perfection with divine perfection, the challenge of "suffering on the way." For example, people born with disabilities can be too easily cast off as biological and theological imperfections, and questions of eugenics—the intentional selection of healthier and smarter people over others—can too easily be supported. If theological growth is linked to time and biology, then suffering often becomes a bump in the road to perfection.

However, following tightly in Oord's and fellow theologian Catherine Keller's footsteps, Cain does not fall victim to the same mistake; instead, he faces the question of suffering head-on. He does not offer a new theological argument, but the writing provides a well-argued and well-contextualized treatment in our postpandemic global situation. Even if the reader does not necessarily subscribe to Cain's theological approach by the end of the book, all readers can appreciate the clarity of thought and the straightforward approach to challenging and controversial questions.

When it comes to deep theological questions for scientists and ministers, there remains no shortage of answers. However, a book that addresses a modern context, while presenting clear arguments, is always a welcome find. I recommend the book to all who wish to study the question of suffering and the nature of God in this postpandemic world.

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Letters

Against Undefined Naturalism

Joshua Lee Harris's article "Against Restricted Methodological Naturalism" (*PSCF* 78, no. 1 [2026]: 27–37) points out problematic aspects of an understanding of science sometimes adopted by Christians to help resolve tensions between science and faith. He addresses the intelligibility and truth-seeking of restricted methodological naturalism (RMN), but unfortunately neglects two more-pernicious and influential problems, namely the meaning of "nature" and of "science." To define "natural" circularly as "not supernatural" (in Harris's words) alerts us to the first of these problems.

The scientific revolution was undergirded by a decision to regard the nature in "natural philosophy" as "the established order or settled course of things," as Robert Boyle put it,¹ and not the seven other varied meanings of nature that he cited. This decision is a commitment that natural philosophy (as science was then called) studies the reproducible aspects of the world, revealed by experiment and repeated observation. They are what enable technology, the practical "relief of man's estate" that Francis Bacon had advocated. Since the world has many other aspects that are not reproducible or settled, attributing to science epistemological commitments such as methodological naturalism (of any type) is unnecessary. And doing so confuses the topical concerns of science with an ontological commitment that there is nothing beyond nature: this is the common implication of naturalism.

The meaning of the word "science," which replaced the expression "natural philosophy" in the early nineteenth century, is even more vexed today because it is routinely confused with what was once called (in Latin) *scientia*, which meant, roughly speaking, any rigorous systematic study. That confusion feeds scientism: the belief that science is all the real knowledge there is, which not only certainly problematizes Christian faith, but also misrepresents and pollutes all the other nonscientific disciplines.²

That the meanings of "nature" and of "science" are problematic seems to me a more fundamental critique of invoking methodological naturalism than those Harris addresses. But he and I agree on opposing that invocation.

Notes

¹Robert Boyle, *A Free Enquiry into the Vulgarly Received Notion of Nature*, ed. Edward B. Davis and Michael Hunter (1686; Cambridge University Press, 1996).

²These, and many related considerations are explored in my book *Monopolizing Knowledge* (Fias Publishing, 2011), <http://monopolizingknowledge.net>.

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