

Western ways of conceiving rationality and religion are far from universal or even the best way to understand spiritual and material realities in all their richness (chaps. 2, 3, and 5).

If our taken-for-granted conceptual apparatus for analyzing religious experience and practices turns out to be limited in applicability to religious cultures and their expressions, then naturalist arguments against God, miracles, and other spiritual realities are similarly limited in what they can possibly demonstrate. The dismissal of such spiritual realities on the part of naturalism looks more like uncritically assuming “the superiority of our conceptions of reality” than thoughtful, critical assessment and argument (p. 31).

A third feature of modern naturalism, widely shared within Christian circles, is the distinction between belief as intellectual assent to a proposition based on evidence (such as how Christianity is often described as a “system of beliefs”) versus trust or allegiance. Harrison has an extensive discussion of how faith is not treated as cognitive or intellectual assent but as trust in what has been proclaimed about God in Christ and allegiance to God for the first few centuries of the church’s existence.

In the original context, Christians trusted and lived into the *religare*—meaning to bind or re-tie—that united them with God, with each other, and with God’s good. It is later that *religare* gets transmuted into religion as a set of beliefs or doctrinal claims to which one must adhere (chaps. 2 and 3). In their early context, the creeds “are not so much assertions of some truth about the world as the performance of actions that bring into being a new state of affairs” (p. 46). The decrees bring into being a worshipping community as Christians proclaim their trust in the being and promises of the God of the Scriptures.

In continuity with the ancient Hebrews, Christians for the first few centuries of the church focused more on confidence in the biblical proclamation about God in Christ and that God would fulfill these promises. It was only in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries that faith was divorced from belief and knowledge (chaps. 2–4). In modernity, belief and knowledge were transposed into an epistemological framework associated with justified true beliefs and disembodied ways of knowing. Modern naturalism makes much hay using this framework to argue there is no, or only inadequate, evidence for belief in God (i.e., belief in the proposition that God exists).

Contrasting with the modern natural-supernatural distinction, the term “supernatural” first arose in Aquinas’s discussion of how humans are naturally disposed toward “faith”—which he identifies as “trust”—versus what is a gift from God (p. 64). The distinction takes a decidedly modern turn in the 1800s into the two-tiered separated realms modernity assumes. This transition is fascinating

and has far-ranging consequences for how religious faith comes to be viewed in modern times (chaps. 5–7). Now Western societies struggle to conceive of the natural and supernatural as noncompeting causes or modes of activity. In premodern understanding, there is no firm distinction as it was considered “natural” that God works through the very properties and processes of creation to accomplish divine purposes without violating creation’s order.

Many science-faith conundrums could be alleviated by retrieving this older understanding. There is often a false forced choice between either God working apart from the properties and processes of creation, or nature’s processes proceeding apart from any divine influence whatsoever. However, the perspective of Psalm 104 offers an alternative: God working through creation’s functional integrity to minister to creation. For instance, “You let loose the springs in freshets/ among the mountains they go/ They water all beasts of the field,/ the wild asses slake their thirst (Ps. 104:10–11, Robert Alter, trans.).

The psalmist describes a pattern of creation’s operations, such as watering the mountains and beasts, while maintaining that it is God who does the watering and ministering. This pattern recalls that found in Genesis 1 (e.g., vv. 24–25). It is God and creation at work—God working through creation. No false forced choice between the supernatural and the natural. This is the perspective I strive to impart to my students, and *Some New World* gives me encouragement to continue. Although Harrison’s book is dense (there are footnotes on every page) and may try the reader’s patience at times, the richness of his account and analysis will reward the reader’s efforts.

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DOES SCIENCE MAKE GOD IRRELEVANT? by Hans Madueme. Crossway, 2025. 84 pages. Paperback; \$8.99. ISBN: 9781433597992.

Hans Madueme, professor of theology at Covenant College, seeks to dismantle the perceived conflict between science and Christian faith for a conservative evangelical audience committed to the authority of Scripture. While he succeeds in challenging the popular “warfare” narrative and affirming the compatibility of science and faith, his theological framework ultimately constrains a fuller integration by subordinating scientific inquiry to a rigid doctrine of biblical inerrancy.

The author’s goal in writing the book is for young Christians to see that science and evangelical faith can be taken seriously, and that they are intimate friends. He organizes the book around four areas: (1) debunking the

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war between science and faith, (2) Christian assumptions make science possible, (3) science and faith are close allies, and (4) to God alone be the Glory.

Madueme argues that many evangelical Christians have grown up believing that faith and science are inherently opposed. He revisits historical examples such as Galileo and the Scopes Monkey Trial, suggesting how history has been misinterpreted as evidence of conflict, and points to the influential work of John Draper and Andrew White as reinforcing the myth of conflict between science and theology. He further claims that this “warfare” narrative is perpetuated by modern critics of religions such as Christopher Hitchens, Sam Harris, and Richard Dawkins, who portray science as the superior path to truth while dismissing Christianity. Regardless of the historical accuracy of these interpretations, Madueme employs these narratives to dismantle the perceived conflict between science and faith since the persistence of this perceived conflict within Christian communities underscores the need for a more constructive and integrative approach.

In the section on how Christian assumptions made science possible, Madueme emphasizes the empirical nature of science, focusing on the hard sciences (physics, chemistry, and biology). At the same time, he argues that scientific inquiry is never purely empirical, since it rests on theological and philosophical assumptions. Also, Madueme believes that Christians assume that the world is knowable, rational, and dependable: assumptions that are basic to science. Even the Fall is related to science in providing a basis for empirical study rather than philosophically knowing the world.

Madueme then presents a thoughtful and accessible defense of the compatibility between science and Christian faith, particularly for conservative evangelical readers who often encounter the assumption that scientific inquiry undermines belief in God. One of the book’s strongest contributions is its insistence that Christianity historically provided the intellectual foundations necessary for the rise of modern science. Drawing on figures such as Irenaeus, Madueme argues that belief in an ordered, rational, and fundamentally good creation encouraged scientific exploration by affirming that the natural world could be studied coherently and meaningfully. In this framework, science is not independent of theology, but rather, it has emerged from theological convictions about creation and divine order, to God’s glory. This historical argument effectively challenges the narrative that religion and science exist in perpetual conflict and offers readers a constructive vision in which scientific investigation can deepen appreciation for God’s creation rather than threaten it.

The book also succeeds in critiquing scientism, the assumption that science alone can answer all meaningful questions about reality. Madueme repeatedly emphasizes the limits of scientific inquiry, reminding readers that science, like all human endeavors, is shaped by finitude and

fallenness. His discussion of methodological naturalism further clarifies how science operates within the study of the natural world without making ultimate claims about God’s existence. In doing so, he provides a helpful framework for readers seeking to understand how theological conviction and scientific practice can coexist without collapsing one discipline into the other. The book’s final section is especially effective in addressing the common cultural narrative that scientific progress inevitably renders faith obsolete. Madueme persuasively argues that scientific discovery does not make God irrelevant but instead points toward deeper questions of meaning, purpose, and human existence that science alone cannot answer.

At the same time, the book’s theological framework occasionally narrows the range of dialogue surrounding science and faith. Because Madueme consistently places scientific claims under the authority of a strict doctrine of biblical inerrancy, his approach can at times position science in a subordinate role rather than as a fully integrated partner in theological reflection. Readers from broader evangelical traditions, such as the Wesleyan tradition, may find this approach limiting; particularly those who affirm that Scripture is authoritative in matters of salvation while allowing greater flexibility regarding scientific questions. These perspectives often view reason, experience, tradition, and Scripture as cooperative sources for discerning truth, and therefore approach scientific discovery as a meaningful contributor to theological understanding.

This tension becomes most apparent in Madueme’s treatment of evolution and cosmology. In rejecting macro-evolutionary explanations of human origins, he gives limited attention to Christian scholars and scientists who reconcile evolutionary theory with belief in divine creation. Likewise, his critique of multiverse theories largely dismisses interpretations offered by Christian philosophers and physicists who view such theories as potentially compatible with belief in a Creator. Greater engagement with these perspectives would have strengthened the book’s broader argument for integration.

Nevertheless, Madueme’s work provides an important contribution to contemporary evangelical discussions on science and faith, particularly in local conservative congregations. The book succeeds in reassuring readers that Christianity and scientific inquiry need not stand in opposition, while at the same time encouraging thoughtful engagement with the modern scientific world. Although its theological scope remains somewhat limited, its central argument, that science and faith can function as close allies, offers a valuable corrective to the polarized assumptions that often shape these conversations.

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