

BIOLOGY

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.56315/PSCF9-26Wild>

UNRAVELLING DNA: Applying Christian Values to a Genetic Age by Christopher Paul Wild. GBJ Books, 2025. 278 pages. Paperback; \$17.99. ISBN: 9781068227509.

Unravelling DNA is a book on genetics for a nonspecialist audience that highlights key advances in genetic technology and seeks to equip its readers to assess the impact of these advances, and future ones, within a biblically based ethical framework. Many books and articles have called for Christian engagement on these matters, but none I have read have been as effective as this book in spelling out how to do this. The author, Chris Wild, is a former professor in the School of Medicine at the University of Leeds and a former senior scientist and director at the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) in Lyon, France.

The book is divided into eleven chapters with a detailed table of contents at the beginning and an extensive bibliography for each chapter near the end of the book. An appendix provides further background on how DNA specifies the synthesis of proteins and is replicated and repaired. This is followed by a glossary of key terms and a list of abbreviations used in the book. It would have been helpful if an index had also been included.

Chapter 1 provides a background on the nature of DNA and a brief history of major advances in genetic technology and their relevance to society. Wild notes the challenges of identifying and processing the practical, moral, and ethical implications of these technological advances. He dismisses the idea of relying on scientists to self-regulate their activities, instead calling for the involvement of wider society in assessing the effect of genetic technology, including on those holding Christian beliefs. Then the author outlines a strategy he will use in the rest of the book to inform and equip his readers for this engagement.

Chapters 2 to 5 focus on the application of genetics to diverse aspects of daily life in four specific areas: genetic testing, embryonic cloning, genetic engineering, and genetic data storage. In general, I thought Wild did an excellent job of explaining these technologies in language that anyone could understand, and showing why they are important and relevant by giving specific examples. For example, in chapter 2, he points out that pre-implantation genetic testing (PGT) is not only used with *in vitro* fertilization (IVF) to avoid children with disease, but it also allows for the selection of a child with the necessary genetic characteristics to save the life of an older sibling. In chapter 5, he shows how the patenting of DNA (e.g., the BRCA1 and BRCA2 genes associated with heritable breast cancer) by companies can restrict options for diagnosis and treatment. Wild also raises important ethical and moral questions in these chapters that are considered in more detail later. For example, in chapter 2: Should

genetic profiles be considered in choosing a future partner? And in chapter 4: How far should we go in making changes to the genetic makeup of life on Earth?

Because most of the references cited in chapters 2 to 5 are from 2021 or before, the information feels a bit dated in some areas. More discussion could have been given to precision medicine in chapter 2, induced pluripotent stem cells (iPSCs) and “synthetic embryos” in chapter 3, and gene editing in chapter 4, because of the great strides that have been made in these applications of genetics in the past five years.

Another shortcoming is that the titles for three of these four chapters either do not clearly represent their content or they could potentially confuse nonspecialist readers with the meaning of certain scientific terms. Chapter 3 has the ambiguous title, “Copying the Code: Cloning,” which at first glance might appear to be about molecular cloning; using the adjective “Embryonic” in the title would be helpful in clarifying what form of cloning this chapter is about. The title for chapter 4, “Editing the Code: Genetic Engineering,” could conceivably lead to confusion about how “gene editing” or “genome editing” are different from other applications of genetic engineering. Finally, using the words “Genetic Data” in place of “DNA” in the title for chapter 5, “Saving the Code: DNA Storage,” would make it clear that this chapter is about DNA databases and not about innovations in storing physical specimens of DNA.

The most distinctive segment of *Unravelling DNA* is found in chapters 6–11, which focus on Christian engagement with advances in genetic technology. In chapter 6, Wild introduces the “relationship test,” an approach for examining each area of genetic advance in light of the effects on our communal nature. This biblically based ethical framework focuses on four key relationships that the author believes are important and universal in human experience: self, family, society, and world (environment). Each is considered in chapters 7–10, respectively, in order to examine the areas of genetic technology considered in chapters 2–5. Helpful summaries of the ethical analyses by relationship are given in tables 1–4. Chapter 11 focuses on using this relationship test to scrutinize and question future advancements in genetic technology and to engage in constructive dialogue and decision-making with a broad range of people, including non-experts from across society and experts from outside the field of genetics.

Unfortunately, examining multiple areas of genetic technology within each chapter for a specific relationship made it harder to assimilate the line of ethical analysis for a given area of technology because it was spread across four chapters. Organizing chapters 7–10 by genetic technology, rather than by relationship, and considering the four key relationships in each chapter would have made it easier. Nevertheless, I found hanging Christian

Book Reviews

values on the framework of relationships to be very helpful in thinking about the ethical implications of different genetic technologies. If I were still actively teaching a bioethics course, I would seriously consider using the relationship test described in this book as a model for how to apply Christian values to all bioethical conundrums.

In summary, I recommend this book for any Christian—whether a specialist in genetics or not—who wishes to engage seriously with the moral and ethical implications of advances in genetic technology, and I urge us all to participate in broad-based dialogue with others in providing input into public policy decisions regarding these advances.

Reviewed by Brian T. Greuel, professor emeritus of biology, John Brown University, Siloam Springs, AR 72761.

CHEMISTRY

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.56315/PSCF9-26Abraham>

CHEMISTRY, FAITH, AND STEWARDSHIP: Uniting Biblical Wisdom with Scientific Practice by Liza Abraham, foreword by Sy Garte, Resource Publications, 2025. 142 pages. Hardcover; \$34.00. ISBN: 9798385258062. Paperback; \$19.00. ISBN: 9798385258055. e-book; \$19.00. ISBN: 9798385258079.

How can we inspire young scientists to be passionate about chemistry while also being good stewards of the beautiful planet God has entrusted to our care? Is it possible to remain attentive to creation amid the many pressing challenges that chemistry seeks to address? Can even the most ordinary objects in nature lead us to marvel at our Creator? If questions such as these capture your attention, then *Chemistry, Faith, and Stewardship* will be a welcome, entry-level read—one that deepens appreciation for chemistry while inviting the reader into a wonder-filled experience of God.

The author has the technical background to speak thoughtfully from a chemical perspective, having earned a PhD in physical organic chemistry and previously holding faculty positions at notable universities. This book, however, is not meant to be a highly technical treatment of chemistry. Instead, Abraham weaves together basic principles of chemistry and green chemistry, articulating them through the lens of Christian faith. Each chapter centers on a particular theme and includes a hands-on activity designed to connect scientific concepts with faith, along with reflection questions. While most chapters maintain a clear scientific focus, a few are primarily theological, with little direct engagement with chemistry—particularly those addressing Sabbath, delighting in God’s Word, and living a life anchored in the Bible. Regardless of emphasis, Abraham consistently grounds her claims in Scripture, supplying numerous biblical references that keep the focus on Christian faith.

Although this book is not intended for graduate-level chemistry, it could readily find a place in high school education (including private and homeschool settings) as well as in Christian higher education. Each scientific concept explored in the book is paired with a biblical parallel. For example, in chapter 2, Abraham surveys several prominent trees in the Bible—the shoot from Jesse’s stump, the cross, the healing tree at Marah, and the vine and branches—while drawing attention to the biblical call for Christians to be rooted, as trees are rooted. She follows a similar pattern in chapters on water, precious stones, light, and design in chemistry. Throughout, the writing carries a poetic tone that invites worship.

A strong and recurring theme of the book is stewardship, a topic that is often underemphasized in scientific education. Early in the book, Abraham writes, “We are not the masters of the earth, nor are we called to idolize, exploit, or dismiss it. Instead, we are stewards, entrusted by God with the land, its creatures, and its resources—not as owners, but as caretakers” (p. 2). This statement sets the tone for the remainder of the book, as she explores how science points to God, how Scripture speaks to these truths, and how faithful stewardship becomes an act of worship. The result is an invitation to explore the world meaningfully while keeping God at the center of scientific inquiry.

One distinctive feature of the book is its inclusion of activities designed to connect the scientific topic under discussion with biblical principles, often reinforcing the theme of stewardship: for example, creating bioplastics from milk, making natural mosquito repellent using essential oils, dyeing fabrics with water-soluble dyes, examining stones, performing flame tests on various salts, making soap, observing timed color changes in solutions, and evaluating the components of common household chemical products. Some chapters include less tactile but equally effective practices, such as researching the faith of notable scientists, creating a periodic table of God’s attributes, or engaging in guided reflection through Psalm 119. These are well suited to homeschool and private school environments, where students are encouraged not only to learn scientific concepts but also to integrate them with faith.

Following each activity, Abraham provides reflection questions intended to prompt deeper engagement with the chapter’s themes. For example, in the chapter on light and matter (chap. 5), she asks, “How does the call to ‘walk as children of light’ (Eph. 5:8) challenge or encourage you in your daily life? In what ways can you reflect God’s light to others?” (p. 54). In chapter 9, on chemistry, she asks how the structure and order of the periodic table might reflect both scientific principles and divine intentionality. These questions are not designed to assess scientific mastery but rather to encourage contemplation of how scientific insights intersect with Christian faith.