

Book Reviews

One puts the book down with a sense of the personality of William Lane Craig or Richard Dawkins, not just their ideas.

But the personality that pervades the entire text is the author's own. And this is what turns a good book into an absorbing and compelling tale of personal faith, for Schneider intersperses his historical narrative with the story of his own faith journey, including his conversion to Catholicism and his continuing, lingering questions even as a person of faith. The autobiographical content is, like the historical narrative, respectful of the reader. Schneider's approach strays from the self-indulgent; these are not Facebook posts of "why I believe and you must also." There seems to be little in the way of overt agenda; the book is not written to convince anyone of belief or unbelief. If anything, the intent may be to assist those who have drawn battle lines on this issue to understand each other better, to regard each other with more generosity of spirit and to offer each other more hospitality in the debate over ideas.

The book has its oddities. The slightly off-beat index at the back of the book (arranged chronologically, not alphabetically) lists nearly one hundred individuals who have "proffered proofs about the existence of God" and who are discussed in the book (complete with page numbers). It is an impressive and eclectic list that includes Plato, Ibn Rushd, Maimonides, Aquinas, Spinoza, Pascal, Voltaire, Hume, Kierkegaard, Kurt Gödel, Bertrand Russell, C. S. Lewis, Henry Morris, Alvin Plantinga, Richard Swinburne, John Polkinghorne, William Dembski, Richard Dawkins, William Lane Craig, Bill O'Reilly, and Kirk Cameron, among others. Inexplicably missing, however, are several significant individuals familiar to readers of *PSCF*, such as Francis Collins (former head of the Human Genome Project), Owen Gingerich (former professor of astronomy at Harvard) and even Alister McGrath (scientist, turned noted theologian).

He redeems these absences with a very handy "table of proofs" for and against the existence of God, divided into eight categories (cosmological, dialectical, historical, ontological, phenomenological, sociological, teleological, and transcendental), each with its own subset (e.g., teleological includes "from fine tuning," "from intelligent design," "from language," "from providence," and "from unintelligent design"), and each subsection includes a brief summary and the relevant page numbers from the text. It is both handy and helpful.

After discussing mostly ideas for 230 pages, Schneider closes the book by reminding us that this topic is about more than that in the end. Ultimately, there is a deep mystery at work whenever one attempts to know about God, much less know God, and it is obvious that Schneider's faith is not merely intellectual assent to the idea of God. He has what Michael Polanyi called "personal knowledge." He has had experience with this deep mystery, and there is a knowing in such experience that can be understood only by others who have gone there themselves. Schneider thus concludes by offering his own proof, or something less than a proof but perhaps the best that can be done by finite, imperfect humans contemplating Infinite Perfection—that knowing God is a special kind of sight, a gift even. "The proofs can be explained and taught and respected from a distance, yet there still remains the fact that you either grok it or you don't, and that's that" (p. 229). And that is not terribly far removed from the admonition given by Flannery O'Connor: "Keep asking for it, and leave the rest to God."

Reviewed by Anthony L. Blair, President and Professor of Church History, Evangelical Theological Seminary, Myerstown, PA 17067.



SCIENCE & BIBLICAL STUDIES

READING GENESIS 1–2: An Evangelical Conversation by J. Daryl Charles, ed. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2013. xxi + 240, with scripture index. Paperback; \$24.95. ISBN: 9781598568882.

Origins questions continue to generate controversy today, particularly among conservative evangelical Christians. Unfortunately, an adequate understanding of the interpretive issues involved in reading the early chapters of Genesis rarely informs popular debates. *Reading Genesis 1–2: An Evangelical Conversation* brings careful, deeply informed, and leading biblical scholarship to bear on identifying and analyzing such issues, and is thus a welcome contribution.

The book presents five views on interpreting Genesis 1–2, each of which receives a chapter-length treatment written by a representative Old Testament scholar followed by brief (typically 2–4 pages) critical responses from the other four scholars.

Richard A. Averbeck presents the first view, which he calls the "literary day, inter-textual, and contextual reading." His view is "literary" because it seeks to pay close attention to literary features such as grammar, genre, and discourse; it is "inter-textual"

because it seeks to read the creation account in light of the entire canon (he devotes considerable space to reading Psalm 104 and the days of Genesis 1 in light of each other); and it is “contextual” because it seeks to account for the ancient near eastern (ANE) historical context within and against which God spoke. Averbeck’s overarching view is that Genesis 1–2 describes the actual creation of the cosmos *expressed analogically*. Genesis 1 focuses on the universe as a whole and describes the creation of its parts phenomenologically in terms that ancient people could observe and understand. Its purpose is to teach the people of Israel to understand their lives as framed by the God who created and ordered the world. Genesis 2 then provides a more standard literary narrative which, unlike Genesis 1, contains recognizable historical markers (e.g., the Tigris and Euphrates rivers; Adam and Eve as historical individuals).

The second view is a “literal approach” endorsed by Todd S. Beall, which interprets Genesis 1–2 as a historical account of God creating the world in six literal twenty-four-hour days. Beall argues, first, that we should not use two different hermeneutics for reading Genesis (chaps. 1–11 vs. chaps. 12–50), but employ one hermeneutic consistently (he does not recognize that one consistent hermeneutic can identify various forms of literature in Genesis). Second, we should not separate the first two chapters of Genesis; both are narrative accounts, not poetry (the respondents point out that narratives can be fictional yet true, e.g., parables). Third, Genesis 1 does not represent an ANE worldview and admitting otherwise would compromise the uniqueness of scripture as God’s Word. Fourth, the New Testament writers refer to Genesis as a literal account of actual history. Finally, nonliteral views are motivated by a desire to capitulate to modern scientific theories. Beall fears that figurative approaches initiate a slippery slope of reinterpreting the Bible in light of modern biases.

The third view, presented by C. John Collins, seeks to read Genesis 1–2 “with the grain” and accordingly treats the six days of creation as *analogical days*. Collins reads Genesis 1–11 as “prehistory,” which involves recognizing historical features of the text but “without undue literalism.” Genesis 1:1–2:3 forms a preface to the book written as “exalted prose narrative.” Its chief (but not sole) observation is that GOD made us all! Specifically, God made all things: (a) from nothing; (b) by the word of his power; (c) in the space of “six days” (representing the pattern of a human work week); (d) very good; (e) so that creation bears God’s imprint; and (f) as the right kind of place in which we live out our story as human beings and as God’s people. Collins argues that we should

read Genesis 1–2 together and presents evidence that the two accounts are coherently linked (citing the immediate context, rabbinic tradition, and the broader biblical canon).

In his chapter, entitled “What Genesis 1–2 Teaches (and What It Doesn’t),” Tremper Longman III offers the view that “the main purpose of Genesis 1–2 is to proclaim in the midst of contemporary counterclaims that Yahweh the God of Israel was the creator of everything and everyone.” Further, the Bible does not intend to explain *how* God created the cosmos or human beings (the Old Testament presents multiple, differing descriptions of creation). Longman suggests that Genesis 1–2 is “theological history” written as “high style literary prose narrative.” For example, it teaches that the Lord of Israel is the GOD who created all things; that God is other than, yet involved with, creation; and that human beings are a part of creation, yet also have a special relationship with God and serve as God’s representatives. Longman also offers very helpful theological reflections on the relationship between science and exegesis, the doctrines of the perspicuity and sufficiency of scripture, and how to interpret Adam and Eve in light of modern science (biblical inerrancy does not require the affirmation of a historical Adam).

John H. Walton presents the fifth and final view, which reads Genesis 1 as ancient cosmology. He begins with some comments about what it means to read the Bible competently, ethically, and virtuously. He then proceeds with his thesis that Genesis, being an ANE text sharing an ANE cosmological worldview, should be interpreted in light of a functional rather than a material ontology (in a functional ontology, “to be” is to have a function and place in an ordered cosmos). In light of this reading, days 1–3 of creation record God creating the basis for the functions of time, weather, and food; days 4–6 describe God establishing functionaries to rule over or govern the functions created in days 1–3. Genesis 1 is a temple text, culminating with day 7, and thus the cosmos is a temple in which God “rests” (indwells and rules). Genesis 2 should also be interpreted functionally. The point of the story is not to record the material creation of Adam and Eve, but to depict their function in the cosmos with respect to God, each other, and the world. Thus, the story is archetypal rather than literal—which is not to say nonhistorical (Walton affirms Adam and Eve as historical individuals).

Among the five contributors, Beall is unique in rejecting the significance of the ANE context, excluding modern science from having any bearing on reading the text, and denying figurative features of the narra-

Book Reviews

tive. The other four authors hold much in common, but have different perspectives on how to use ANE literature, the relation of Genesis 1:1 to 1:2, the precise meaning and function of *bara'* (create) and *'asah* (make/do), whether to harmonize Genesis 1 and 2 (all agree on the unity of Genesis 1–2), and the significance of a historical Adam to the theological teaching of scripture.

Reading Genesis 1–2 is an excellent book. Each author treats his subject matter with care and detail and the book's general tone is congenial and constructive. My one disappointment was with the final reflection chapter written by Jud Davis, which seems overly dismissive of the significance of current scientific consensus and its relevance for biblical interpretation. It would have been more fitting to conclude a volume of this kind with a summary and constructive analysis of the key issues. That aside, readers of *PSCF* will find the book helpful for clarifying their own understanding of Genesis, as they seek to maintain faithfulness to the Bible *and* integrity in their scientific work.

Reviewed by Patrick S. Franklin, Providence University College and Theological Seminary, Otterburne, MB R0A 1G0.



MODELS OF ATONEMENT: Speaking about Salvation in a Scientific World by George L. Murphy. Minneapolis, MN: Lutheran University Press, 2013. 145 pages. Paperback; \$18.00. ISBN: 9781932688856.

George Murphy ought to be no stranger to those who have been working at the theology and science interface for any length of time. With a Johns Hopkins PhD in physics and ordination as a Lutheran pastor, he has authored at least four other books at this crossroad. The present work builds on his *The Cosmos in the Light of the Cross* (T&T Clark, 2003), especially the theology of the cross motif central to the Lutheran theological tradition.

Whereas until relatively recently much of the Christian theological work written in the religion and science arena involved more generically Christian perspectives, more confessional or tradition-specific approaches are appearing, including specifically Orthodox, Wesleyan, and even Pentecostal contributions, to name some. Murphy is one of a few in the Lutheran tradition who has engaged in these matters by drawing deeply from the wellsprings of his own ecclesial resources, especially Martin Luther's theology of the cross theme. If "the cross tests everything,"

as Luther insisted, then theological reconstruction in a scientifically explicated world also ought to run the gauntlet of this cruciform criterion. Five middle chapters of this volume thus reconsider classical theological loci—including theological anthropology (human nature), the traditional doctrine of the Fall (the present sinful human condition or the creational problem), the drama of redemption (involving the renewal or reorientation of creation from its misdirectedness), the Christ-event (incarnation and passion, especially), and the doctrine of salvation (soteriology, especially justification, regeneration, and sanctification)—all in the light of the cross of Christ. The cross and resurrection thus, for instance, are understood as exerting *fiduciary influence*—not merely moral influence, as one particularly prominent strand of atonement theory avers—even for contemporary human beings, in generating the faithful response required for experiencing divine redemption in a world gone wrong. This is consistent, of course, with the Protestant emphasis on salvation by grace through faith, albeit inflected, in the Lutheran tradition, through emphasis on the centrality of the cross.

Murphy helpfully and clearly indicates that his goal is not specifically a scientific theology, as if traditional formulations would be revised utilizing scientific categories, but a restatement of biblical and historic Christian orthodoxy for twenty-first-century scientifically informed faithful. As such, he works diligently with both biblical and historical material, careful to clarify what carries over and how it carries over in the contemporary context. More precisely, as the title of the book indicates, Murphy is motivated to render coherent Christian understandings of salvation in a time when science has been understood by many to be salvific in its own right. The result is a primarily theological, even soteriological, work, not exactly a work in theology and science.

Yet scientifically literate believers wanting substantive theological reflection will find this book helpful and rewarding. The decision to publish this volume with Lutheran University Press is certainly understandable, although the importance of the cross for Christian faith in general means that the book's treatments of these historic Christian commitments ought to be of concern for those across the evangelical, ecumenical, and catholic (universal, that is) spectrum. As a book of relatively modest size covering as many central Christian doctrines as it does, no doubt some readers will want more extended discussions about this or that topic, even as those more to the "right" or "left" of the "great tradition" of Christian orthodoxy will also be dissatisfied that some moves are too "liberal" or too "conservative." But those desir-