

The style is dense and I found it hard going. For example: 'Because an amino acid solution is many things, not one, the multiple reagents of the solution are not self-ordering. These multiple molecules order each other according to their nature's chemical finality. Given the internal necessity of their chemical structures, they interact predictably' (38). And 'Even the largest plants manifest no sensitive operations or sense organs. Because these powers and their organs are the highest and most useful in animals, they operate continuously. This invisibility is inexplicable because such operations and organs can be detected in even the smallest animals' (44). I think that I understand what he is getting at, but this is certainly not the language we are used to or can usefully converse in.

Throughout he writes as a philosopher, in a particular philosophical and religious tradition. He says of himself: 'As a philosopher, I am not directly concerned to determine the exact moment the human natural species first appears. I am concerned to ascertain criteria appropriate to such determination, especially because many natural scientists tend to err in this regard owing to unconscious, but mistaken, philosophical presuppositions' 109). I am sure that this is true but the gulf between his mode of thought and mine is so great that rarely could I grasp what he wanted to say. Too often a series of authors are quoted, one after the other, leaving me reeling and wondering what the author concludes; I rarely knew, so although there is much worthy effort here, I cannot recommend this book.

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David Wilkinson

The Message of Creation

The Bible Speaks Today Bible Themes series, ed. Derek Tidball

Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2002. 296 pp. pb. ISBN 0-85111-269-2

Adding to the wealth of literature already published about creation, evolution and the surrounding debate is not a task to be taken lightly. In this book, refreshingly, David Wilkinson does not attempt to do so, relegating it to a summary of the main positions in an appendix. Instead, he draws us to look at creation as a whole; not just what happened at the beginning of time, but the entirety of all that has been, all that is and all that ever will be, and what it reveals to us about the creator.

This is not to say that the author is unqualified to comment on the creation/evolution issue. As a former research astrophysicist and the fellow in Christian Apologetics at St John's College, Durham, he compellingly weaves together the wonder of the scientist studying God's works with that of the theologian studying God's words. However, it is above all his qualifications as a preacher that come across in this book. The lucid theology to be found in each chapter is accompanied by helpful illustration and thorough application, making a whole which is easy to read and yet not lightweight.

Covering a theme which appears in so many different forms throughout the Bible requires a selective use of passages, which are here grouped into five main areas. The first of these is entitled 'the beginning of creation' and reads most like a traditional commentary, as it works steadily through Genesis 1-3. This is followed by 'the songs of creation,' giving us highlights from Proverbs and the Psalms, 'the Lord of creation,' looking at the relationship between Jesus and creation explored in the New Testament, 'the lessons of creation,' taking examples from Noah, Job, Isaiah and Paul, and 'the

fulfilment of creation,' showing how a biblical perception of creation informs our eschatology. All the passages which appear are aptly chosen and if any strong candidates for inclusion are omitted, it is difficult to see what could have been left out in order to fit them in.

The diversity of the material means that each chapter reads very much as a self-contained exposition of a passage. Detailed discussion of textual features is generally avoided; the commentary focuses on how the text is understood and applied. The writing style is informal and engaging without losing clarity in the theology being discussed, which is evangelical throughout. Despite the episodic nature of the chapters, they each contribute to an overarching picture of the Creator, His creation and the interactions between the two. Although the book ends neatly with the arrival of the new creation in Revelation 21, an additional summary chapter might have been helpful to bring this big picture into sharper relief.

However, this is a very minor criticism of a compelling and thought-provoking read. As the author himself points out, 'The Bible never discusses creation as purely an intellectual interest' (167), and his survey of the subject never lapses into a purely academic study. The practical impact of grasping and applying this doctrine is not only described in the content of the book, but also displayed in the warm enthusiasm that the author brings to his subject throughout; a strong testimony to its significance.

In conclusion, therefore, anyone who wants to understand the Bible and Christianity more deeply will find plenty to encourage, excite and challenge them in this book. It is both accessible enough for the informed lay person to enjoy, and detailed enough for the theology student or minister to learn from. And for scientists, whether Christian or not, it shows a view of the universe that complements and enhances the rationalistic perspective.

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T. Kelly & H. Regan (eds.)

God, Life, Intelligence & the Universe

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This book represents a response to some very contemporary challenges to the Christian faith emerging from the discipline of Artificial Intelligence and the search for other intelligent life forms in the universe. The task of the authors is to examine the nature of intelligence and the uniqueness of human beings in the light of these developments. Now that these issues are taken very seriously, and extraterrestrial intelligence reckoned by many to be a real possibility, there is certainly a need for a serious theological response. Written by people deeply involved in both science and theology, the book is quite accessible and will certainly be of interest to those who are concerned with debates between science and religion.

Anne Foerst's opening section emphasises the human need for meaning and our tendency as humans to 'tell stories' to make sense of our existence. We construct 'Mythos' statements to fulfil this need, religious discourse, not surprisingly, being the exemplar of this tendency. But because this existential need will *not* go away even in the post-Enlightenment world we inhabit, science itself falls into the trap of creating its own myths to meet this need, though not always conscious that it is doing so; its main brainchild being the myth of 'scientific objectivity'. Because the human mind is every bit a part of the natural order, Foerst concludes: 'The scientific mind as objective, reasonable and rational entity, cannot exist' (7). Yet conversely, religious apologists make the similar mistake of taking religious