
Citation for published version:

Digital Object Identifier (DOI):
10.3828/mb.2022.15

Link:
Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer

Document Version:
Peer reviewed version

Published In:
Modern Believing

General rights
Copyright for the publications made accessible via the Edinburgh Research Explorer is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy
The University of Edinburgh has made every reasonable effort to ensure that Edinburgh Research Explorer content complies with UK legislation. If you believe that the public display of this file breaches copyright please contact openaccess@ed.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.
The Cambridge-based Faraday Institute for Science and Religion was founded in 2006, and is devoted to improving public understanding of religious beliefs in relation to the sciences. To that end, from 2007 onwards it has published a series of ‘Faraday Papers’ addressing various important topics in the science and religion field. These are academically rigorous, but are addressed to the general public: overly-technical language is eschewed, and reference to specialist literature is kept to a minimum. Twenty of these papers, some of them lightly revised, have now been brought together in this book. It offers an excellent introduction to aspects of the science and religion field, by some of the most eminent scholars in their respective scientific and philosophical disciplines.

The format is extremely user-friendly: each paper is about 10 pages long, and is prefaced by a short summary. Between them they cover a rich variety of scientific, philosophical and historical topics, including the ways in which science and religion may relate to one another, understandings of creation, evolution and design, reductionist approaches to nature (and to human beings), and environmental issues. Some re-tread what are now fairly well-established paths (R. J. Berry on ‘Creation and Evolution’, Denis Alexander on ‘Miracles and science’, John Polkinghorne and Rodney D. Holder (separately) on the anthropic principle and the appearance of design in our Universe), whilst others explore some less-traversed but equally interesting byways (Colin Russell on ‘Science and Faith in the life of Michael Faraday’, Peter G. H. Clarke on ‘The Libet experiment and its implications for conscious will’). Some chapters are excellent summaries of recent scholarship (Clarke again, and Ernan McMullin on ‘The Galileo Affair’). I found the concluding chapters on climate change (John Houghton, ‘Why care for the environment?’).
and bioethics (John Bryant, ‘Ethical issues in genetic modification’) particularly stimulating: the latter left me with a number of questions, but that can be no bad thing in a volume of this kind.

A number of contributions return, directly or obliquely, to two themes: the interpretation of the opening chapters of the book of Genesis, and the rhetoric of the recent ‘new atheist’ movement. Responses to the former eschew creationist approaches, whilst those to the latter are robust and refreshing. The theological approaches of these authors are generally conservative, their engagement with the theological literature is fairly minimal (with the notable exceptions of the papers by Rodney Holder and Ernest Lucas, on ‘Natural Theology’ and ‘Interpreting Genesis in the twenty-first century’ respectively), and there is little in the way of references to faith traditions other than Christianity (although Bryant helpfully extends his arguments across all the Abrahamic faiths). Nevertheless, the skill displayed by these authors in presenting complex scientific ideas in approachable ways makes the publication of this collection a valuable and helpful project.

I shall have no hesitation in recommending this book as a ‘primer’ for students who are interested both in the central issues of the science-and-religion debate in recent decades, and in potential ways in which it might develop in the future. It will also be valuable for the general reading public, at whom the papers published here were originally aimed, to have them conveniently gathered together in this volume.

University of Edinburgh

Michael Fuller