

The volume's articles on the Eastern churches in the modern period are of better quality, but as contributions they belong in a separate volume. S. Peter Cowe's two essays ("The Armenians in the Era of the Crusades 1050–1350" [404–429] and "Church and Diaspora: The Case of the Armenians" [430–455]) are examples of what good articles on Eastern Christianity are: historically and theologically astute, comprehensive, yet with a keen sense for how history and society fit together. Anthony O'Mahony's two articles, one on Coptic Christianity and one on Syriac Christianity, as well as Donald Crummey's on the Ethiopian Tewahedo Church, are also good introductions. Again here, it would have been a worthwhile goal for the editor to have challenged all of the contributors to produce articles that were more nuanced, including with respect to social religious history.

The remaining articles in the volume are quite engaging. Overall, the copyediting of the volume was conducted with care (only a few copyediting problems, including one on p. 237, in the last sentence of the first paragraph, could be spotted). The volume will be of interest for acquisition by librarians. The price prohibits wider circulation and distribution, it would seem. A reader will benefit from consulting a recent special issue of the *Bulletin of the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies* (7:2 [2005]) on Christians in the Middle East, guest-edited by the late Avril Makhoul and titled *Christianity at the Crossroads of Civilization*, alongside the present volume.

**Robert R. Phenix, Jr.**  
Saint Louis University

doi: 10.1017/S0009640708001005

***Religion and the Challenges of Science.*** Edited by **William Sweet** and **Richard Feist**. Aldershot, U.K.: Ashgate, 2007. xii + 237 pp. \$99.95 cloth.

This is a collection of essays, most written especially for this volume, exploring the relationships between religion and science. They are written from a Christian perspective, meaning that the aim throughout is to make a place for religion in this age of science. Anyone who wants to advocate a red-blooded atheism will find little comfort here. The editors as well as many of the contributors are Canadian, and without wanting to profile too deliberately (and speaking as a fellow Canadian) there is something of the aura of that country and its culture about the whole enterprise. The volume is serious and decent and informed, and a little bit dull.

There are four sections. The first focuses on evolutionary theory and reeks somewhat of desperation, as though the editors did not really have enough linking material and so searched around for padding elsewhere. There is something on Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, something on Darwin and religion, something reprinted from the writings of the late Arthur Peacocke arguing that Christian theology is really evolutionary but no one realized this until Darwin came along, and something that I honestly don't think fits in at all on a declaration on science and faith made by a number of scientists after the Origin was published in 1859. The piece on Darwin and religion (by the Canadian, evangelical dentist Denis Lamoureux) is a good example of my frustration. It is true that in the *Descent of Man* Darwin in his discussion of religion is meticulously careful not to make avowals of non-belief, but really! Does anyone truly think that a man who likens religious belief to the emotions of his dog, disturbed at seeing a parasol shaking in the wind, has a great deal of respect for Christianity?

We move on next to a section on physics, mainly on the so-called Anthropic Principle. This is the claim that the physical constants of the universe are so precise and necessary for human existence that they cannot have come about by chance. There must be something—or Some Thing—behind it all. I confess that this argument has always struck me as an appalling appeal to ignorance. How can anyone say that some kind of intelligence could not have appeared in some different system? The biologists took the whole of the nineteenth century to get the argument from design out of our system, and then in the twentieth century some physicists insisted on bringing it back. Except, of course, not all physicists would. Why is there not discussion of someone like Steven Weinberg, who is witheringly scornful of the Anthropic Principle? I would have thought his opinion as a Nobel Prize winner in physics would merit attention.

The third part is on naturalism and why we should avoid it if possible. I am not quite sure where the Human Genome Project fits into all of this, and Job Kozhamthadam's contribution to the topic did not leave me greatly further ahead. And so we get to the fourth and final section, on "Conceptual Issues." Leslie Armour tackles the question of whether science can give evidence for metaphysics. The answer apparently is "yes," but of course it all depends on what you mean by "science" and what you mean by "metaphysics." Then one of the editors, William Sweet, cleans up with a piece on intelligent design theory, that claim that the only way to understand life's history is by supposing that a god (better known as the Christian God of the Gospels) intervened occasionally to create things.

This final piece shows, I think, some of the problems with this whole volume. The author knows full well that intelligent design theory is bad science and bad theology. And yet he has a sneaking sympathy for the

proponents. At least they are sticking out against their atheistic opponents like Richard Dawkins and Dan Dennett. Sweet ends up making silly claims about intelligent design theory not being about religion at all. Of course it is, though. The proponents claim that they are producing science, but really what they are trying to do is get around the U.S. Constitution's separation of church and state. If they presented their form of biblical literalism raw, as it were, they would run into immediate trouble. So they call it "science," hoping to get away with it. Fortunately in the one court case so far, in Dover, Pennsylvania, where the school board tried to insist on intelligent design theory in the schools, the federal judge ruled firmly against it, precisely on the grounds that it is religion and not science.

I should mention that the book finishes with a swipe at me. Sweet assures his readers that he is not endorsing "the recent quasi-scientific view of religion of Michael Ruse (where certain claims, often held to be religious beliefs, are given purely naturalistic explanations)" (232). It seems to me that Sweet ought to have explained what he finds objectionable. One possible "quasi-scientific view of religion" would be simply to explain all religious claims away in terms of science—the parting of the Red Sea was caused by a comet, and that sort of thing. I agree that if that is all there is to it, and the conclusion is drawn that this finishes religion, there is little reason a Christian should be drawn to such an approach.

But the view I thought I was proposing was one that uses science to foster a deeper understanding of religious claims. Take original sin. Having had five children, I am as convinced as Saint Augustine that original sin is a real phenomenon. But there are clear theological problems with trying to impose a literalistic—Adam ate the apple—notion of original sin on an evolutionary account of human origins. Not to mention the theological issues, such as, "Why should I be tainted because of something Adam did?" But if you turn to biology—specifically to evolutionary psychology—which suggests that all humans are torn between thinking for themselves (selfish genes) and thinking for others because of the advantages of living in groups (altruism), then it seems to me that you can start to make some sense of original sin in a real Augustinian way. This idea may be wrong, but it is surely more than merely giving naturalistic explanations of religious beliefs.

Even with a subsidy from the Canadian government, the price of this book is outrageous. I suspect that for connoisseurs of cracks against Michael Ruse, no price is too high. For the rest of us, spend your money—and that of your library budget—elsewhere.

**Michael Ruse**  
Florida State University