

The Believing Scientist. Essays on Science and Religion

Stephen M. Barr

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D.Th., author of *Paul Ricoeur & Living Hermeneutics. Exploring Ricoeur's Contribution to Biblical Interpretation* (2016); *From Evolution to Eden. Making Sense of Early Genesis* (2015), and many other books.

The Believing Scientist is a collection of twenty-six essays. Barr deals with a wide diversity of issues related to questions about science and religion. Is there a conflict between them? Or, if not, what kind of configuration might be helpful? Does God still have a place in the world or has science made God unnecessary? Should Christians consider evolution as a threat to faith or compatible with it?

Barr, a professor of theoretical particle physics, sets out to respond to some of these types of questions. He interacts with Isaac Newton, Charles Darwin, Albert Einstein, Stephen Hawking, Richard Dawkins, Edward O. Wilson, Francis Collins, and other well-known scientists. The author does a good job of dealing with complex thinkers and ideas in an accessible manner. While the essays in the volume are of varied length; some quite short, each contribution is packed with insight and passion.

“Retelling the Story of Science” is an appropriate introductory essay to the book. Barr dialogues with the biblical text and the historic foundations of science and moves seamlessly between, in particular, the apostle Paul and mathematician Kurt Gödel. He concludes this piece with: “The search for truth always leads us, in the end, back to God.”

The next seven essays deal with the topic of evolution. Barr covers a fair amount of ground here, including the science and religion conflict scenario in the USA, a discussion of the views of Richard Dawkins, a debate with Charles Darwin, and an account of Intelligent Design.

Following on from these contributions there are seven essays on mind and soul. Intriguing subjects including physics and free will, quantum mechanics, matter and mind, and explanatory theories that attempt to explain it all, are discussed in sufficient detail so that the attentive reader can understand the issues and how they pertain to the broader topic of science and religion.

The big bang and creation, the next subject, comprises three essays. The author delves deeply into modern physics and the created world, explores time and theology, and addresses the question of whether or not physics has done away with God. He argues that Stephen Hawking responds to this query with a ‘yes’, whereas Barr contends it is ‘no,’ and he makes a solid enough case for this position.

Barr engages further highly significant issues in the last eight essays of the book. These include the subjects of human genetics, the dangers of science as an idol, Richard Dawkins and pointlessness, the (scientific) case for God, and myths about scientific revolutionaries.

The overarching theme of this book is that science and religion don’t have to be hostile towards each other. This is worked out more specifically from the scientific side than it is the religious one. Barr is a physicist, not a theologian. He rightly leaves some of the potential tensional perspectives that might arise from a close reading of say Genesis 1-3 and evolution

to the side. Those considerations need to take place in a dialogue between the natural world informer and the biblical text informer. Barr is not out to address these controversies. His book, however,

in the subject matter that it deals with is excellent. Barr is doing stellar work that merits a careful reading. Highly recommended.