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McMullin, ed., EVOLUTION AND CREATION

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see themselves as grounded in voluntary decision and not in the proofs of reason, tolerance of others who make commitments different from one's own is morally required.

This conclusion has implications for distinguishing between moral and religious practices. Since morality is universally binding on all, prescriptions that are binding only on a particular body of believers cannot legitimately be considered moral injunctions. De George gives the dietary laws of the Hebrew Scriptures as examples of religious rules as distinct from moral ones. He is more interested in establishing general principles than in ruling on particular disputes. However, a discussion of the application of these principles to the contemporary controversy over the morality of abortion would have been especially illuminating, since on this issue there are vast disagreements among the contending parties. How far ought we go in ruling that an issue is not a moral issue but a religious one, in the face of substantial disagreement? De George does not fully discuss this controversial issue, but the fact that he leads us to raise it in this new way is a strength and not a weakness of his study.

Evolution and Creation, ed. **Ernan McMullin**. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985. Pp. xv and 307. $24.96.

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We have come to have high expectations of Ernan McMullin, and in this volume we are not disappointed. McMullin introduces this collection of essays (most of them presented at the Conference on Creation and Evolution at the University of Notre Dame, March, 1983) with an historical overview of the concepts of creation and evolution. After discussing several early Greek cosmogonies, McMullin notes that while there was no *theory* of evolutionary mechanisms in early Greek thought, the basic *idea* of evolution was widely accepted.

Although the creation narratives found in Genesis played important roles in Hebrew covenantal history, it was Christianity, according to McMullin, that developed the creation concept into a creation *doctrine* by its engagement with Greek metaphysical thought. This point is amply demonstrated and related to the idea of evolution by an extended review of the contributions of Augustine (whose concept of "seed-principles" was open to the idea of evolution) and Aquinas (whose accommodation principle of biblical interpretation left room for incorporating the science of the day into a Christian worldview).

The modern concept of evolution is traced back to Descartes' "genetic" concept of the world's formative history. According to McMullin, Descartes was appa-

rently convinced by the coherence of the relevant physical and theological argumentation that "cosmic history is not just possible: it is a conceptual necessity" (p. 26). But the concept of cosmic evolution did not rest comfortably with the "physico-theology" (or natural theology) of the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries. McMullin outlines the tension between design and development, instantaneous intervention and gradual process, catastrophism and uniformitarianism. The legacy of such tensions, coupled with the tendency to identify divine action with gaps in "natural" explanations, is "to make evolution and creation seem like exclusive concepts" (p. 35). "The opposition which is so often perceived between them today derives in some part from the persistent attempt over two centuries to build a belief in the Creator on the supposed impossibility of an evolutionary accounts of origins. Augustine knew better!" (p. 38).

Problems and questions remain, however, to be adequately engaged. Hence the remainder of the essays in this volume.

In his essay on "Recent Successes and Challenges" in evolutionary theorizing, geneticist Francisco Ayala employs a number of helpful distinctions. The propositions which collectively comprise contemporary theories of evolution, says Ayala, can be subdivided into three sets: (1) the proposition that organisms are related by common descent; (2) propositions pertaining to particular evolutionary histories; and (3) propositions concerning the specific mechanisms by which evolutionary change may occur.

Speaking on behalf of the relevant professional scientific community, Ayala says that proposition (1) has been established to a high degree of certainty—hence the common reference to the "fact" of evolution. The propositions comprising categories (2) and (3) are matters of current investigation; within these categories some theories appear firmly established while others are recognized as highly conjectural. Specific examples are provided by Ayala.

Because I have recently invested considerable time in evaluating numerous claims and theories found in the "scientific creationist" literature, I found reading Ayala's essay most refreshing for its employment of careful distinctions among the various categories of questions pertaining to biological evolution and for its candor in speaking not only of the successes in evolutionary theorizing, but also of the unsolved puzzles that challenge contemporary investigators. Such honesty is expected in professional scientific scholarship; its absence in some arenas of Christian theorizing is regrettable.

In "Modern Cosmology and the Creation of Life" John Leslie explores the merits of a modern version of the design argument. According to contemporary cosmological models, a cosmos having a formative history that leads to life does indeed appear to require a high degree of "fine tuning" in the values of numerous physical parameters. How can this be explained? Is it nothing more than an unavoidable selection effect—that from a large or infinite number of universes

we, as living and rational beings, could naturally exist only in one such as this finely tuned one? Or, on the other hand, is this one finely tuned universe the product of specific design by God?

Leslie rejects the many-universe approach in favor of what he labels "the God hypothesis." He lists and evaluates what various critics view as weaknesses of the design argument and concludes that not only do these objections fail, but they also threaten to impede the very development of science. The anthropic principle, which requires the many universe hypothesis to make the present state of affairs unsurprising, is viewed by Leslie as singularly jejune.

Now, while I join Professor Leslie in recognizing that the existence of a life-containing universe demands some sort of explanation, and while I see some merit in a modernized version of the design argument, I find his particular version of it unsatisfying. When Leslie speaks of the "God hypothesis" he is speaking of God not as an "inexplicably existing *person*," but rather as an impersonal "creative ethical requirement." But what, I would ask, makes the existence of a nebulous "creative ethical requirement" any less inexplicable than a personal God? According to Leslie, his belief is grounded in the "hope that some of my actions do have behind them an authority beyond that of mere desires" (p. 117). To say that such a hope provides a weak base for a very important belief is surely an understatement. But even a modernized design argument that appeals to a personal God as the source of the world's finely tuned design leaves me a bit uneasy. Is the "God of fine tuning" any substantial improvement over the "God of the gaps?" Do not both of these concepts rest their case with a *deus ex machina*?

In "The Question of Natural Purpose," Philip R. Sloan explores the question, Does the concept of evolution necessarily entail or even imply a lack of purpose or direction to natural history? The essay opens with an historical survey beginning at the 17th century. According to Sloan there occurred a shift in the concept of creation from an existence-giving act of God to an activity of teleological ordering. The dependence of ordering on divine action was then weakened by the development of a concept of "nature" as an active, explanatory cause for the development of order. Furthermore, the impersonal character of natural ordering threatens a broad array of concepts in the domain of design, purpose, and teleology.

Against this background Sloan discusses the varied views on purpose expressed by Darwin. It appears that while Darwin rejected an interventionist concept of purposeful evolution in specific lineages, he was unwilling to abandon the idea of purpose and design when considering the universe as a whole.

In an all too brief closing section, Sloan looks at some of the ways that contemporary biology has affected the question of natural purpose. Here Sloan argues that even if one grants that the basic mechanisms of evolution can be accounted for in terms of nonteleological principles, the biblical concept of

creation as an existence-giving act of Yahweh remains vital. The challenges to creation doctrine, says Sloan, have arisen because of the shift from a focus on ontological matters of existence to details of the ordering process. While I am inclined toward the same point of view, it seems to me that we must still face the question of governance as an integral component of God's activity as Creator. More work needs to be done.

Dianne Bergant and Carroll Stuhlmueller collaborated to write a compact essay on "Creation according to the Old Testament." Though the scope of this study was limited, the principal theses strike me as extremely important, whetting the appetite for a more extensive development.

According to Bergant and Stuhlmueller, when the O.T. speaks about creation the primary focus is on the person of Yahweh the Creator, the created world receiving only secondary attention. Furthermore, the Hebrew concept of Creator places emphasis on God's present activity, with its promise for the future, while subordinating attention to the past.

Concerning the creation narratives found in Genesis 1 and 2, Bergant and Stuhlmueller conclude that they should not be viewed as cosmological accounts of formative history; they are concerned neither with *creatio ex nihilo* nor with evolutionary processes, but rather they function to reassure God's people of his ability, as the everpresent and sovereign king, to bring order out of chaos. Though narrative in *form*, these passages should never be viewed as some peculiar kind of eyewitness report; their focus is not cosmological or chronological, but theological. They function as elements in covenant theology, not as mere compressed chronicle. Amen.

Questions concerning the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* are engaged in a direct and articulate manner by David Kelsey in his essay on "The Doctrine of Creation from Nothing." The discussion is conveniently divided into a consideration of the *scope* of the doctrine and an historical overview of what have served as *warrants* for the doctrine. Within the scope of creation doctrine, says Kelsey, are statements concerning God—his world-relatedness—and statements concerning the world—the character of its God-relatedness. Closely allied with these truth claims are personal commitments to act in a certain way as a creature in a God-created world.

Of particular interest to me was Kelsey's development of the distinction between metaphysical and historical claims concerning the world as God's creation. Claims that the universe is intelligible, distinct from God, and radically contingent upon God's continuing existence-giving activity are metaphysical components in creation doctrine. But the doctrine of creation has often been thought of as an historical claim that the world's existence began at a specific instant in time as the product of a divine act of inception. In our day, for example, the creation/evolution discussion, as it is popularly perceived, has degenerated

into a debate concerning whether or when this instantaneous inception event took place. However, Kelsey argues, the metaphysical claims concerning the world's dependent relationship on God as Creator are logically detachable from the historical questions concerning the world's inception, formative development, and duration. In the context of this distinction, the either/or structure of the contemporary creation/evolution debate is exposed for its sheer stupidity. Neither naturalistic evolutionism nor "scientific" creationism deserves any accolades for its perceptiveness on this matter. As I see it, the sooner the Christian community becomes aware of this distinction the sooner it can resume an effective witness to a scientifically well informed world. All segments of the Christian community could benefit from Kelsey's identification of the metaphysical component of the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* as primary, not at all dependent on a particular historical model of the creation's inception, duration, or formative history.

The warrants for the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* have varied through time and have drawn from numerous sources. Appeals to Scripture have been colored by the "spectacles" of creedal formulae through which Scripture is read. Furthermore, the doctrine has been formulated in a variety of polemical contexts; *ex nihilo* has, for example, been employed as a defense against concepts of the eternity of matter and against spirit/matter dualism. Thus the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* cannot be treated as an elaboration of biblical cosmology alone. Once again, this is something that the contemporary Christian community must come to know as a first step out of the swamp of the creation/evolution debate as it is presently structured.

In the essay "God's Action in the World" William P. Alston explores the question of whether God ever personally acts in ways that extend beyond the realm of naturally occurring phenomena (perhaps even contravening the "laws of nature"), thereby producing specific effects in the created world. Alston assumes God to be continuously active in sustaining the world's existence and in governing its regular behavior according to a coherent set of patterns. Against this background of seeing nearly everything as "done by God," or by his created agents, or at least permitted by God to occur in his created world, Alston is concerned to look at those "special" acts that are commonly labelled "acts of God."

What is the nature of these "special acts?" A traditional answer might be that they represent acts of direct divine intervention. Such divine action would be "special" for its circumvention of "natural causes." While Alston readily grants the possibility of this sort of direct divine intervention (he finds arguments against it unconvincing), he goes on to argue that the concept of supernatural intervention is not required to maintain a belief that God actively interacts with his creatures. God's work, says Alston, within the patterns of the "natural order" are sufficient warrant for that belief.

Although such an openness to both possibilities resonates with my own judg-

ment on this matter, I am uncomfortable with some of the (conventional) language that Alston employes here. The term "intervention," for example, suggests the existence of a nearly autonomous "nature" which God must forcibly break into in order to act. Similarly, the familiar natural/supernatural terminology suggests a distinction between (supernatural) phenomena which *do* require God's action and those (natural) phenomena which do *not*. And to speak of God's "use of natural causes" may appear to give these natural causes too high a status—one which overlooks their contingency on divine governance. Alston makes it clear that he does not view "nature" as an autonomous entity, but employing the traditional terms "laws of nature" and "supernatural intervention" does evoke such an image nonetheless. I prefer Alston's references to "direct action" in place of "supernatural."

But can we speak of "special acts" of God without employing the idea of direct intervention? Yes, says Alston. Certain acts of God become distinct from the mainstream of divine action by their power to invoke in us a sense of specific divine purpose in their occurrence. These divine acts become special by our perception of their role in the realization of God's will. An interesting proposition, I would say, but doesn't that place a heavy burden on the accuracy of our perceptions? And how do we evaluate one another's claims to know God's specific purposes? Should the "specialness" of God's action be so dependent on human perception?

While the relevance of a general consideration of God's action in the world may be evident, I would like to have seen this work applied to the specific topics of creation and evolution. How, for example, might we see God purposefully at work in the evolutionary development of species in the created world? If I understand Alston correctly, I suppose he would say that whether or not the introduction of new species required direct divine (supernatural) intervention is relatively unimportant. The more important matter is to discern God's purposes being realized in the formation of creatures capable of knowing him as their Creator and gratefully serving him as their Redeemer. Alston's line of thought raises an amusing question: If our discernment of divine purpose qualifies events or processes as "special" acts of God, do we have here an entirely new way of picturing "special creation?"

James F. Ross asks, "Could humans have evolved, yet be capable of life forever with God?" If so, he notes, "Christians get the best of evolution," which is the title of his essay. Ross argues that intelligent beings are not merely *resultant*, but *emergent* from micromatter, and he explores "some of the conditions for emergent being, which could, of course, appear in nature by evolution," a process he characterizes as "a goal-directed *spread out* way of coming to be from secondary causes." Written in the jargon of the professional specialist, this is not an easy essay to read. Exercising a measure of prudence, I shall leave the evaluation

of Ross's essay to the appropriate specialists.

William H. Austin's essay, "Evolutionary Explanations of Religion and Morality," is a critique of E. O. Wilson's advocacy of scientific materialism as a superior alternative to "traditional religion" as the provider of a credible worldview and as a source of moral guidance. According to Wilson, a sociobiological explanation of religion is capable of discrediting it. While some persons may wish summarily to dismiss this claim, Austin argues that Wilson's program for replacing theistic religion with evolutionary naturalism needs to be seriously engaged. Doing so, he says, will demonstrate the weaknesses of Wilson's attempted explanations, thereby draining the force out of his claims to have discredited religious belief concerning moral principles. Nevertheless, what if one were able to construct a reasonably strong argument that certain religiously based practices survive principally because they are adaptive? Austin explores that possibility, concluding that such an argument, even though it may threaten the claim that a certain practice is the response to divine injunction, may still favor the claim that this practice is good to follow. Finally, Wilson's program, we recall, is to substitute evolutionary naturalism in place of traditional religion as a source of moral principles and ethical guidance. How successful is he? Not too surprisingly, Austin sees very little that Wilson could count as significant accomplishment toward the goals of this program, and little that would serve as a basis for optimism that future efforts would fare any better.

"Production and Prospect: Reflections on Christian Hope and Original Sin" is the title of Nicholas Lash's essay on the relationships between evolutionary views of human origins and Christian doctrines of sin and redemption. Because the essential elements of humanity lie beyond the scope of natural science, it is improper, says Lash, for scientific inquiry to be "anthropically focused." Concurrently, theology, concerned principally with the human/divine relationship, ought not to offer alternative accounts of mankind's *production* (formative history), which is in the domain of natural science, but should focus on the *prospects* for its destiny.

Lash stresses the unity of the doctrines of creation and redemption: from our experience of God as Redeemer we are moved to confess God as Creator. On the question of "beginnings" Lash notes that Genesis 2 and 3 are not about the way things once *were*, but how they *ought* to be and, by God's redeeming grace, *will* someday be. "Original sin" is the way things are: responsible human creatures stand in need of divine redemption.

From what he says in this essay, I am tempted to infer that Lash judges evolutionary theory, because of its inability to speak to the ultimate meaning of the human presence in cosmic ontology or cosmic history, to be irrelevant to the Christian doctrine of creation. I doubt, however, that Lash would place these two concepts in isolation from one another. I wish that Lash had been more

explicit on this point. While the scientific concept of evolution and the theological doctrine of creation do speak to different questions ("production" and "prospect" in Lash's terminology), we still seek the unifying relationship of these concepts.

Having begun with an historical review, this well-integrated series of essays concludes with a consideration of Teilhard de Chardin's vision for the future. Christopher F. Mooney provides us with a congenial and concise summary of Teilhard's lifelong project of uniting the two creation stories: the sacred creation story found in Scripture (a thoroughly Christ-centered story), and the scientific "creation" story of evolutionary development. Mooney closes with an admonition that we should perhaps ask not about the "truth" of Teilhard's propositions, but rather about the coherence and fruitfulness of his prophetic vision for Christian life, Christian thought, and Christian hope for the future—all of these oriented by the experience of God's creative love in Christ.