

Goldstein, Clifford. *Baptizing the Devil: Evolution and the Seduction of Christianity*. Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2017. 256 pp. Hardcover. USD 24.99.

Clifford Goldstein's latest book, *Baptizing the Devil*, argues that since scientific insights are "influenced by inescapable subjectivity . . . Christians shouldn't compromise such a foundational belief as origins just because science, or rather the claims of some scientists, teach something contrary" (16). Goldstein successfully surveys a number of philosophical problems, for example the problem of induction which emphasizes the limits of scientific knowledge, and communicates its essential ideas to a popular audience. He writes as an experienced author and editor, artfully weaving in numerous quotes from scientists and philosophers, along with engaging anecdotes and illustrations. Throughout, Goldstein maintains a provocative tone that is similar, yet more polemical, than his former titles, such as *God, Gödel, and Grace* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2003) and will be familiar to those who follow his regular column "Cliff's Edge" in the *Adventist Review*.

There has been a recent wave of popular books emphasizing the limits and contingency of scientific knowledge, such as E. Brian Davies, *Why Beliefs Matter: Reflections on the Nature of Science* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014) and Noson S. Yanofsky, *The Outer Limits of Reason: What Science, Mathematics, and Logic Cannot Tell Us* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016). This theme gives focus to *Baptizing the Devil*, but also drives a one-sided analysis. For instance, while Goldstein offers anti-realist critiques that apply well to theoretical objects, such as strings and the multiverse—purposed, undetectable entities that lack scientific consensus—he fails to balance these critiques with scientific, philosophical, or theological defenses of realism. Skeptical questions, such as "Who can be sure that raw observation reveals anything but the brain's own subjective construction of what's out there?" (131), are left unresolved. While the author has described himself as a critical realist, the reader fails to find an adequate defense of this position, perhaps instead be leading one to embrace a far more radical anti-realism perspective than the author intended.

Goldstein's critique of scientific knowledge is in service of the book's purpose to warn Christians against dancing with Darwin. Often brief musings are interjected to remind the reader of this central concern. On one occasion, he asks, "If a host of questions remain about whether the color red, for example, is real, how dogmatically should we accept what science tells us about how tortoises supposedly evolved their hard shells millions of year ago?" (54). The veil of time is suggested as reason to be particularly skeptical about events that purportedly happened millions or billions of years ago, "events that from this side of such a vast chronological divide can be merely speculated about" (69). This argument, though, is left undeveloped and is not invoked throughout most of the book.

The reader is assured that science does "reveal insights into reality" (16), but no criteria is given to determine when science is, indeed, giving reliable information. Moreover, the author's stated confidence in science is in tension

with his extended critiques against the scientific method, and our ability to discriminate between science and pseudosciences such as astrology. Ultimately, having not focused his work on the particulars of universal common descent, Goldstein's defense against theistic evolution may be read as a case for epistemological skepticism toward the entire subject of science.

It is surprising that Goldstein does not attempt to recover greater confidence in the findings of the natural sciences. After all, as Peter Harrison has argued in *The Bible, Protestantism, and the Rise of the Natural Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), the conviction that we can study and understand nature comes out of the Protestant hermeneutic and its insistence on a historical reading of the Genesis creation account. Moreover, the postmodern critiques that *Baptizing the Devil* employs to depict scientific findings as theory-laden and culturally contingent are ultimately hostile to Christianity. The position that "Words are mere arbitrary signs that, at their core, have little relationship to the reality they point to" (189) threatens not only the authority of science, but also the authority of scripture. Goldstein briefly recognizes this weakness, but since such critiques make up a significant part of the work, his writings would benefit from further reflection on how the Christian should regard them.

This is not to say, however, that Goldstein's assemblage of critiques is without merit. Similar to David Berlinski's *The Devil's Delusion: Atheism and Its Scientific Pretensions* (New York: Basic, 2010), *Baptizing the Devil* offers a compelling demonstration of the overreach of new atheist scientist celebrities such as Richard Dawkins, who portray scientific progress as having made belief in God an outdated hypothesis. Goldstein quotes mathematician John Lennox, who observes that they commit "a very elementary category mistake when they argue that because we understand a mechanism that accounts for a particular phenomenon there is no agent that designed the mechanism" (177). Holding to an agent explanation that involves divine activity does not compete with a naturalistic scientific explanation, so there is no need to believe that scientific discovery leads to an ontological naturalism that denies the existence of God.

Goldstein is too quick to represent ontological naturalism as broadly advocated for by "the scientific authorities" (176). Rather, the *Religion Among Scientists in International Context Study* has found that professional scientists tend to recognize that questions about the existence of God are outside the scope of science and that even atheist scientists tend to look unfavorably upon Richard Dawkins for his misrepresentation of the boundaries of science (cf. David R. Johnson, Elaine Howard Ecklund, Di Di, and Kirstin R. W. Matthews. "Responding to Richard: Celebrity and [Mis]Representation of Science," *Public Understanding of Science* [2016]: 1–15).

Moreover, while Goldstein engages with an impressive range of material, often elegantly, some important topics are inadequately presented. For instance, *Baptizing the Devil* cites Gödel's incompleteness theorems, claiming they demonstrated that knowledge "of even simple mathematics remains incomplete, and so one can never be certain that the axioms of

arithmetic will not contradict each other” (146). The reader should be informed that there are multiple proofs of the consistency of the axioms of arithmetic. And while it is true that Gödel showed that no such consistency result can be derived from the axioms of arithmetic alone, such a proof would be worthless anyway, for it would assume the consistency of the system that it sought to prove consistent. Rather than undermine our confidence in the consistency of arithmetic or suggest that “formal mathematical proof comes to an end” (146), Gödel’s work is an insight into the incredible richness of mathematics, demonstrating the inexhaustibility of mathematical discovery. Unfortunately, such misrepresentations of Gödel’s work are commonplace, as chronicled in Torkel Franzén, *Gödel’s Theorem: An Incomplete Guide to Its Use and Abuse* (Natick, MA: Peters, 2005). But, the handful of such technical misstatements in *Baptizing the Devil* should be regarded charitably in light of the book’s intended popular audience and survey nature.

A particular strength of *Baptizing the Devil* is its analysis of historical episodes that have often been employed as evidence of inherent hostility between Christianity and science. For instance, the opening chapters contain an engaging account of Galileo’s conflict with the Roman Catholic Church. Goldstein argues compellingly that the tension arose not from a commitment to Scripture, but from Augustinian influence that colored the Church’s reading of the biblical text. This episode, then, serves as a powerful warning against biblical interpretation being dictated by prevailing scientific doctrine.

Goldstein also argues that the geocentric understanding of the cosmos is not addressed in the Bible, showing that those passages that speak of a fixed earth and moving sun are either “metaphors in a poem” (32) or speaking in the language of appearance. He also explains that a passage can have a theological purpose rather than a physiological or cosmological one. Additionally, he shows that any fears that the abandoning of the geocentric view would compromise the gospel were unsubstantiated.

This analysis closely parallels arguments that are used to advocate for readings of the Genesis creation account that are accommodating of the evolutionary model. Deborah and Loren Haarsma consider several such arguments in *Origins: Christian Perspectives on Creation, Evolution, and Intelligent Design* (Grand Rapids: Faith Alive, 2011). Goldstein, however, judges theistic evolution to be irreconcilable with Scripture. He devotes the final chapters of *Baptizing the Devil* to critiquing the inherent philosophical and theological problems that follow from uncritically embracing the evolutionary model, including objections over theodicy, free will, God’s relationship with creation, and the nature of resurrection and new creation. These critiques effectively show that reading the evolutionary model into Scripture comes at the heavy cost of necessary reinterpretation of “the Cross, the reliability of Scripture, the origin of sin and death, the character of God, and the unique nature of humanity” (232).

*Baptizing the Devil* is to be commended for emphasizing the important role philosophical reflections should have in the church’s thinking and teaching on origins. A greater emphasis on the positive history between Christianity and science could have helped frame the debate and moderated what may

be perceived as anti-scientific rhetoric. Though, rather than understand Goldstein to be devaluing the scientific enterprise at large, one can read his work as showcasing the absurdity of substituting scientific knowledge for the word of God, be it by scientist celebrities or Christian theologians. Whatever one makes of the polemical nature of *Baptizing the Devil*, one hopes it will encourage church members to appreciate and pursue scientific study with the conviction that “the more science reveals about nature the more it reveals about the God who created that nature to begin with” (179).

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Goudzwaard, Bob, and Craig G. Bartholomew. *Beyond the Modern Age: An Archaeology of Contemporary Culture*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017. xii + 313 pp. Softcover. USD 30.00.

An archaeology of *Beyond the Modern Age* might identify its source in the classroom where Craig Bartholomew had invited Bob Goudzwaard to teach a course that had him “rushing down to the library each evening after the class to find books by the authors discussed in that evening’s lecture!” (ix).

Through questionnaires prompting the reader to explore their own sense of tension between the exalted promise and profound cynicism of life in late modernity, the authors attempt to foster a similar classroom mind-space, allowing the reader to bracket basic assumptions about public life and the common good, for the sake of more truly understanding how we got here and formulating a Christian answer toward where we ought to go. Goudzwaard, professor emeritus of Economics and Social Philosophy at Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam, with “considerable experience in the ecumenical movement” (x), and Bartholomew, a theologian and professor of Philosophy at Redeemer University College (Hamilton, Ontario, Canada), work toward that very end, engaging with a wide range of disciplines through the ideas of well-known (and also perhaps less well-known) thinkers. *Beyond the Modern Age* encapsulates their work to uncover and critique the origins of modern existence (pt. 1), reconstruct a viable social theory that accounts for political theology (pt. 2), and point toward the practical implications of the same (pt. 3). While the book is lacking in some ways, due to the scope of their ambition, what the authors are able to assemble in just over 280 pages is impressive both in terms of breadth and organization.

The first chapter introduces modernity as it would feel in distinction to the lived experience of a fourteenth-century Italian tradesman. This historical distancing is directed toward the narration—via the ideas of Max Weber, Karl Polanyi, and Umberto Eco—of the emergence of modernity in a tragic tone. It is presented as the overturning of a meaningful, socio-religio-economic-politically integrated way of life for a comprehensive, but conflicted, “worldview that tries to combine personal or individual freedom with the maxim of achieving more income or wealth for all” (34). The “malaises” (Charles Taylor) and contradictions inherent in this “classical” modern worldview will be more fully explored in the fourth chapter, but for now, they are hinted at in