

known to us, as the living God of Israel and the incarnate God in Jesus of Nazareth'. There is much about knowing God through our participation in the *scala naturae* before we get to this fundamentally important datum, yet the overall metaphysical framework Pabst commends is by no means opposed to evangelical convictions or alien to their tradition.

These criticisms aside, Adrian Pabst's *Metaphysics* is a tour de force. The argument is clearly articulated, the conclusions well defended, and the book as a whole provokes deeper consideration of a problem that lurks in the shadows of much contemporary philosophical, theological and political discussion.

Bruce Pass,
Sydney, Australia

Science, Religion, and the Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence

David Wilkinson

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013; 227 pp, hb,
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RÉSUMÉ

Voilà un excellent ouvrage qui permet d'appréhender une question intrigante se situant à la jonction entre la science et la religion et qui montre de façon exemplaire que la rencontre entre la théorie scientifique et la réflexion théologique peut fournir des résultats fascinants. Cependant, sa plus évidente faiblesse potentielle provient de l'hypothèse de départ selon laquelle on finira un jour par découvrir des formes de vie extra-terrestre. Selon la perspective que l'on adopte, une autre faiblesse vient du fait que l'auteur semble bien davantage à l'aise avec la matière scientifique qu'avec la réflexion philosophique ou théologique.

SUMMARY

This is an excellent book which sheds light on a question on the boundaries between science and theology. It shows in an exemplary way how the meeting of scientific theory and theological reflexion can yield fascinating results. Its most obvious weakness is that it is based on the hypothesis that the search for extra-terrestrial intelligence will one day indeed reveal such forms of life. Another issue, connected to the author's perspective, is that he seems to be more at home in the world of science than in that of philosophy and theology.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Ein herausragendes Buch, das einen spannenden Berührungspunkt zwischen Wissenschaft und Religion beleuchtet und beispielhaft demonstriert, wie wissenschaftliche Theorie und theologische Betrachtung auf eine Weise zusammenspielen, die faszinierende Einblicke vermittelt. Dennoch besteht die offensichtlichste potentielle Schwäche des Buches darin, dass es auf der Hypothese fußt, die Suche nach außerirdischer Intelligenz (SETI) werde

eines schönen Tages außerirdische Formen von Leben ans Licht bringen. Ein weiteres Versäumnis – und dies hängt von der Perspektive des Betrachters ab – liegt darin, dass der Autor mehr in der wissenschaftlichen Welt daheim zu sein scheint als in der philosophischen oder theologischen Materie.

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This is a superb book that elucidates an intriguing point of interface between science and religion and offers an exemplary demonstration of how scientific theory and theological reflection can interact in a way that yields fascinating insights. Given the apparent anthropocentric nature of Christianity, it is sometimes assumed that any discovery of extraterrestrial intelligence would gravely compromise or perhaps even invalidate the credibility of Christian faith. With sensitivity to the nuances of science and theology, Wilkinson follows Wolfhart Pannenberg in asserting that, 'It is hard to see ... why the discovery of non-terrestrial intelligent beings should be shattering to Christian teaching' (169). Moreover, he argues that such a discovery may actually be fruitful for religious belief and present new opportunities for Christian theology to develop a richer understanding of the meaning and significance of crucial doctrines, such as creation and redemption.

David Wilkinson already has a proven track record of producing quality books that combine careful scientific research with thoughtful theological insights. As a former leading astrophysicist and an academic who holds a PhD in Systematic Theology, there are few people as well qualified as Professor Wilkinson to address the profound theological questions raised by the possibility of the existence of extraterrestrial intelligence (ETI).

There can be little doubt that the discovery of ETI would be one of the most important events in the history of humankind, but what would be the impact on the way we as theologians think about the ultimate issues concerning what it means to be human, the nature and destiny of life and our place in the cosmos? If ETI is discovered, is Christ's atonement effective only for the inhabitants of planet earth or does it also apply to denizens of other worlds? If life were to be discovered on other planets and Christ's incarnation, as we understand it, applies only to human beings made in God's image, would that mean that God would need to incarnate himself into the image and likeness of other non-human intelligent life forms in order to render salvation effective for them? In light of these considerations, Wilkinson argues that, 'theologians need to take seriously SETI and to examine some central doctrines of religious belief in the light of the possibility of extraterrestrial life' (3-4).

Acknowledging the difficulties of establishing contact with potential extraterrestrial civilisations, Wilkinson uses humour to emphasise the immense distances that separate us from even our 'closest' galactic neighbours: 'any civilisation in our close neighbour galaxy in Andromeda which beamed a radio message towards

the Milky Way saying, "Hello, is anyone there", would have to wait a couple of million years for the message to be received, and then a couple of million years for a response of "Yes, we are here, how are you?" to make its way back. That does not present the prospect of an exciting conversation' (43).

One of the most intriguing parts of the book is section 8.2, entitled, 'God is an Alien'. Here the author discusses the various theories that have sought to interpret familiar biblical events as instances of extraterrestrial activity. In this section we learn about attempts that have been made to interpret the virgin birth as an instance of artificial insemination by an extraterrestrial being. Moreover, biblical accounts of angels in 'shining garments' are interpreted as aliens in spacesuits and Jesus' ability to walk on water can allegedly be explained by the effect of an antigravity beam. Most humorously, the resurrection was apparently achieved by the advanced medical science of an alien civilisation and Christ's ascension was interpreted as a sanctified version of 'Beam me up, Scotty!' (122). Although Wilkinson rejects such far-fetched theories, the very fact that they have been postulated demonstrates how reflection on extra-terrestrial life can stimulate the ingenuity and creativity of the human imagination. The book is also full of intriguing and humorous statistics, such as the observation that the gas cloud around a newly formed star, known as G34.3, which lies 10,000 light-years from earth, contains enough alcohol in it to make '300,000 pints of beer for every person alive on Earth every day for the next 1,000 million years!' (63).

The most obvious potential weakness of the book is the fact that it is based on the hypothesis that the Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence (SETI) will one day discover alien life forms. Given the nature of the subject, much of the book is devoted to speculative hypotheses, rather than observable phenomena. However, the speculations that Wilkinson makes are always well grounded and clearly extrapolated from the evidence that he skilfully sets out. Furthermore, it could also be argued that these exploratory conjectures have genuine theological value, even if SETI ultimately fails to achieve its objective, because even the speculative hypothesis that ETI *could* exist forces us to address familiar doctrines, such as creation and salvation, from a novel perspective.

Depending on one's perspective, another possible shortcoming is that the author seems to be more at home in the scientific material than in the philosophical or theological material. The book seems to be weighted quite heavily in favour of scientific analysis over theological reflection, as demonstrated, for instance, by the lack of sustained engagement with the thought of leading theologians who have reflected on the nature and significance of those doctrines that supervene on the questions that SETI is seeking to answer.

Nevertheless, this is still an exceptional book that explores with depth, clarity and erudition such complex issues as the divine imagination, the diversity and

unfathomable dimensions of God's good creation, the nature and purposes of God and the role of religious belief and scientific inquiry in the quest to discover what it means to be human. As such, it deserves to be read and discussed widely, not just by Star Trek fans and sci-fi geeks, nor even just by theologians and astronomers, but by anyone in search of fresh perspectives on some of the most decisive questions concerning the nature and destiny of the universe.

Joshua T. Searle
London

Playing God: Redeeming the Gift of Power

Andy Crouch

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RÉSUMÉ

Andy Crouch examine la nature du pouvoir. Son but principal est de montrer que le pouvoir est un don appréciable pour l'épanouissement humain et le développement de la culture ; il s'oppose ainsi au courant de pensée qui prévaut dans les cercles sociologiques selon lesquels le pouvoir n'est qu'un facteur de corruption. Il analyse la culture populaire et critique les théories sociologiques de Friedrich Nietzsche et C. Wright Mills. Il montre en quoi le pouvoir est un bienfait, comment on en a abusé, quelle est la nature des institutions et quelles disciplines spirituelles conduisent à l'exercice approprié du pouvoir. Sa christologie est excellente, mais son ecclésiologie reste trop peu élaborée. C'est là une approche éclairée de la notion de pouvoir vue sous les angles de la sociologie, de la Bible et de la théologie.

SUMMARY

Andy Crouch explores what power is. His fundamental goal is to demonstrate that power is a good gift for human flourishing and the development of culture *contra* the prevailing sentiment in sociological circles that power only corrupts. Crouch analyses popular culture and critiques social theorists Friedrich Nietzsche and C. Wright Mills. He describes 1) how power is a gift, 2) how that gift has been misused, 3) the nature of institutions and 4) the spiritual disciplines that lead to the proper use of power. His Christology is excellent but his ecclesiology remains underdeveloped. This is a well-guided conversation into the sociological, biblical and theological concept of power.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Andy Crouch erforscht, worin Macht besteht. Sein grundlegendes Ziel ist zu belegen, dass Macht eine gute Gabe darstellt, die der Entfaltung des Menschen und der Entwicklung von Kulturen dient, gegenüber der in soziologischen Kreisen vorherrschenden Meinung, dass Macht nur korrumpiert. Crouch analysiert gängige Traditionen und kritisiert die Sozialtheoretiker Friedrich Nietzsche und