

Du Toit, C W 2007 – *Viewed from the shoulders of God: Themes in science and theology*

Publisher: Research Institute for Theology and Religion, University of South Africa. 371 Pages. Price: Unknown

Reviewer: Prof Dr Jerome A Stone (Chicago, U S A)

This book covers many of the topics current in the debates about science and religion. Its stance is that we should “accept the multifaceted biological nature of existence without surrendering the values that are essential for the human spirit to survive.” Its orientation “is basically Christian, with due regard to possible approaches from other religious traditions” (p vi).

“The aim of the science-religion debate is not to ‘rescue’ religion from science. The gods don’t need protection, they speak for themselves.” Rather, the goal should be “to clarify humankind’s apparently incorrigible religiosity, and to reconcile the substance of faith and the concomitant expectations with our understanding of the physical functioning of the cosmos.” Further, “to highlight the irrationality of religion – as scholars like Dawkins do – is easy. Pointing out misuses of religion is our duty; ... hushing up scientific findings that appear to threaten religion is dishonest; denying the personal value that religion has for millions of human beings is a fallacy” (p vi).

Topics covered include evolutionary biology, the analogy between human organizations and autopoietic cell systems, cognitive science, the anthropic principle, intelligent design, and neuropsychological models of religious experience. The author does well in exploring religion and science from the point of view of metaphor, narrative, cartography, language, traditions and worldviews, including such key phrases as nature, the *imago Dei* and *natural law*. The discussion of Karl Barth is generally illuminating, as is that of Arthur Peacocke, Hume and Voltaire.

There is an excellent discussion of the proto-logical (not eschatological) literature of Genesis 3-11 portraying the human quest for dominance. Moving beyond Adam and Eve, this section models how Biblical insights can be utilized in a non-literalist fashion in the science-and-religion discussion. There is a brief but most illuminating discussion of the controversy between Robert Boyle and Hobbes about the significance of an air pump. This not only established the value of experimentation, but illustrates “how bias, ideology and worldview influence our interpretation of ‘empirical reality’,” for what was at stake was the nature of science, the relation between matter and spirit, and the democratic social constitution of Restoration England (p 116). There is an excellent discussion of the possibility and need for using the concept of “human nature” (p 136-137). The summary of seven models of the mind-brain relationship (dualism [Eccles, Popper], holistic dualism, reductive materialism [Churchland, Shoemaker], non-reductive physicalism [Murphy, Sperry, Searle], eliminative materialism [Monod, Rorty, Crick, Dennett], emergentist monism [Clayton], and supervenient theories of mind) is helpful, although proponents of these views might question whether their views can be adequately portrayed so briefly (pp 282-289). Treating naturalism (Boyle [sc], Davies, Dawkins) and supernaturalism (Haught, Dembski, Shannon) as a false dichotomy (*contra* Ruse) with Gregersen, Drees and Moltmann in the middle is helpful, though Paley is hardly a naturalist.

This book would be better if it had expounded specific issues in greater detail for readers new to the topics. On the other hand, it needs greater depth of analysis or a clearer viewpoint to be significant for the advanced reader. This reviewer often found it difficult to ascertain the writer’s position in a particular passage, that is, when he passed from expounding a problem to setting forth a proposed solution. On a couple of minor notes, Charley Hardwick is misidentified as a woman (perhaps because of the spelling) and in the

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bibliography Crosby is misspelled. This book covers many of the significant topics in the science and religion area and the bibliography is wide-ranging and covers well the European, South African, and North American discussions. It is a stimulating book, but beginners will need to supplement it.



Fisk, B N 2001 – *Do you not remember? Scripture, story and exegesis in the rewritten Bible of Pseudo-Philo* (Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha Supplement Series 37)

Publisher: Sheffield Academic Press. Hard cover, 375 pages. Price: Unknown.

Reviewer: Prof Dr P M Venter (University of Pretoria)

This monograph deals with historical hermeneutics. The author investigates the methods and principles found in the first century CE book of *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* (LAB), an anonymous chronicle transmitted in the name of Philo of Alexandria bearing the soubriquet *Pseudo-Philo*. This book belongs to the category known as *rewritten Bible*. What we have here as in the case of Chronicles, the Animal Vision in 1 Enoch 85-90, Jubilees, Genesis Apocryphon, 1 Esdras and Josephus' Antiquities, is "an impressive volume of narrative exegesis in which the line between interpreting the ancient text and responding to contemporary culture is largely hidden from view" (p 331).

The outstanding characteristic of LAB is its "imaginative weaving of subsidiary Scriptures into the primary narrative sequence" (p 14). The author deploys Scripture from other, sometimes distant contexts into the Biblical story. Fisk sets out to study the methods and motivations used in this process. Although several studies have been undertaken on the strategies and techniques used for this rewriting, there is still a gap as far as studying the underlying hermeneutical framework of this enterprise is concerned.

In the first chapter (pp 13-53) the author proposes that a study of LAB's hermeneutical strategies and compositional techniques would be best served by analysis on both the synchronic and the diachronic level. LAB represents a trajectory of aggadic traditions parallelizing contemporary interpretive traditions, but at the same time shows exclusive structures and hermeneutical strategies. A comprehensive method of investigation can be developed by establishing a link with previous research done on the intertextual texture of LAB. Three areas have been highlighted: LAB is linked to existing patterns and connections within the Hebrew Bible; it shows significant agreement with contemporaneous Christian exegesis; it shows a clear link with haggadah and rabbinic midrash.

In chapter 2 (pp 54-108) Fisk indicates how a grid can be constructed from these three areas to approach and interpret LAB. Having paid attention to the date and provenance of LAB and the central themes of covenant in the second half of the first chapter, the author dedicates the second chapter to the way in which Fishbane, Hays and Boyarin read texts and identified intertexts. He links each of them to one of the three areas indicated above. Fishbane identified categories and strategies of aggadic exegesis in the Hebrew Bible. He demonstrated how *traditum* and *tradio* correspond. Later tradents not only preserved but also transformed their sacred traditions to reaffirm the past and adapt to the present. Hays indicated how the Christian Paul stood firmly in this same dynamic tradition in his rereading of Scriptures. In his writings he echoed the scriptural theme of God's faithfulness. Hays' theory of scriptural echoes in Paul played a large role in Fisk's later analysis of the contemporary LAB. In Boyarin's publication the author learned about the interaction between the