

**Not Just Science:
Questions Where Christian Faith and Natural Science Intersect**

Edited by Dorothy Chappell and E. David Cook
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Questions about Christian faith and natural science seem to be always with us, whether it is public debates about human origins and the age of the earth or private discussions among academics regarding the limits of technology. A common impression is that faith and science have been for centuries “at war” with each other. Especially with the recent wave of “new atheist” books, this idea seems firmly implanted in the minds of many in North America.

In this context it is refreshing to find a volume such as this, namely, a collection of essays by thoughtful Christian teacher/scholars well trained in the natural and applied sciences. These authors, most of whom teach at Christian liberal arts colleges, refute the belief that natural science is necessarily “at war” with the Christian faith. Indeed, beyond refuting such a view the authors show how Christian faith and natural science, as the subtitle indicates, intersect in fruitful and mutually beneficial ways.

Also in keeping with the subtitle, the book is organized around questions. Indeed, not only is each chapter title a question, but each chapter is internally organized according to questions. So, for example, the fine chapter by Ray Lewis on species extinction is entitled “Why should we care about the extinction of species?” and includes within it questions such as “Are species going extinct at an increasing rate?” (Answer: yes) and “Is extinction a natural process?” (Answer: yes, but current extinction is mostly human caused). Or the informative chapter by Loren Haarsma on physics, entitled “What are matter and energy at the most fundamental level?” includes responses to questions such as “What is entropy and is it a bad thing?” and “Does God play dice with the universe?” Using questions to organize the book is a real strength, especially if used by undergraduates.

After an initial section dealing with historical and philosophical issues, most of the volume addresses specific questions in agriculture, astronomy, biology, chemistry, computer science, engineering, geology, mathematics, nursing, and physics. Indeed, one positive feature of the book is the wide range of scientific disciplines that are included. Another strength are the “Suggested Reading” lists at the end of each chapter. Many of the most important writers are included in one or more of these bibliographical lists—indicating to readers whom to read to go deeper. Yet another strength of the book is its

emphasis on creation care or stewardship of the earth, e.g., in chapters by Clark, Cook, DeHaan, Lewis, VanDragt, Vos.

As expected with an anthology, the chapters are uneven in quality, with some more clear and/or compelling than others. While all authors show competence in their scientific field, some are more knowledgeable about Christian theology and some more aware of the various issues in the “integration of faith and learning” literature. Also, while there are many helpful charts, graphs, and even color plates, some of the them are incomplete (p. 122) or seem only tangentially related to the essays (plate 11). One final criticism is that some terms, e.g., positivism, are not explained soon enough or well enough for some readers.

All in all, this is an informative and helpful book. *Not Just Science* would be especially useful for Christian teachers or students in the natural sciences who wonder how their faith intersects with their science or who worry that their science conflicts with their faith. At the very least, this book should contribute to the rightful demise of the view that Christian faith and natural science are at war.

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