

Reviews

Religion, Intolerance, and Conflict: A Scientific and Conceptual Investigation.

By Steve Clarke, Russell Powell, and Julian Savulescu. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013. xviii + 282 pp. Hardcover £30.00/\$55.00

Based on a conference held May 17–19, 2010, as part of the “Science and Religious Conflict” project at Oxford University and organized by the volume’s three editors, all of whom are current or former members of the Faculty of Philosophy there, this book contains 13 original papers by 24 authors. Ten of these contributions are based on presentations given at the said conference but have been “significantly revised” (p. xi). The others have been specially prepared for the edited volume. The goal of the publication is clearly stated in its subtitle, namely to provide a scientific and conceptual investigation of religion, intolerance, and conflict, which the editors want to be “of the highest quality” (p. xi).

A Preface, the Table of Contents, and Biographical Notes on Contributors (pp. v–xviii) precede the opening chapter by Powell and Clarke entitled “Views from across the Disciplines” (pp. 1–35). This piece with its comprehensive bibliography serves as general orientation to the current discussion in the disciplines represented at the said conference, that is, evolutionary anthropology, experimental psychology, and analytic philosophy. Presentations by evolutionary anthropologists come first (chapters 2–4, pp. 36–87), followed by contributions from experimental psychologists (chapters 5–7, pp. 88–145), and, finally, the bulk of the book, six chapters by analytic philosophers (chapters 8–13, pp. 146–252), each one with notes and references. Two “Commentaries” in smaller typeface (pp. 253–272), followed by indices of names and subjects (pp. 272–282) conclude the volume. Space here allows for some general observations only, not for discussing the many topics dealt with by the authors.

As is to be expected with multi-author publications, the content, style, and quality of chapters vary considerably. However, studying this book, even if one is somewhat experienced in the dialogue with so-called “New Atheists” and their derision of anything religious—after all, Richard Dawkins was one of the brains behind this conference (see p. xi; p. 234)—leaves one not a little surprised when encountering certain highly questionable, even disgusting phrases; the gravest of such the reviewer noticed in chapter 13 (I. Persson/J. Savulescu, “The Limits of Religious Tolerance”), where the authors repeatedly refer to circumcision and sacrifice as “torture or mutilation of innocent children for fun” (pp. 246–248; six times!). Such language certainly cannot claim to be of “the highest quality” of scholarship nor of philosophical reflection either. It shows exactly the opposite, that is, it shows disdain for responsible, serious reflection. No doubt, rigorous and unrestrained inquiry is the staple of genuine science; yet, rigorous scientific inquiry without intellectual integrity is anything but serious scholarship.

The editors, in their attempt to present a somewhat balanced view, also included a paper by the philosopher of religion Roger Trigg (“Freedom, Tolerance, and the Naturalness of Religion,” pp. 163–178) and a “Critical Commentary” by the two

Oxford theologians John Perry and Nigel Biggar (pp. 253–265). Trigg emphasizes that “theology and atheism, epistemology and scientific theorizing . . . have to talk to each other, and can only do so in an atmosphere of freedom” for “it is only in this way that harmful and benign aspects of religion can be distinguished and the former controlled” (pp. 176–177). Perry and Biggar frankly articulate their criticism of much of what is said in the book. They especially bemoan the lack of shared concepts of the core terms “religion,” “tolerance,” and “intolerance” by those involved in the project. Noticing that the “confidence of . . . assertions about religion” made by various contributors “so often outstrips the carefulness of their argumentation” they ask: “What explains the overreach?” and conclude: “Since the answer cannot be reason, it must be prejudice” (p. 260).

There are other serious limitations as well, as for instance the almost total loss of the historical dimension when authors discuss mental concepts, social forms, and cultural habits. Such amnesia renders their findings somewhat suspicious; these tend to be nothing more than the product of the ingenuity of individual theorists. Further, no attempt is made to sufficiently differentiate between various kinds of religion (theistic, nontheistic, animistic, spiritualistic, etc.), between lived and institutionalized religion, between personal piety and general religious concepts, between faith and dogma. Such differentiation would have had a serious impact on the conceptualization of the questionnaires collecting empirical data. Also—and much more disturbing—there is a complete absence of any reference to the host of classic studies in the field by scholars of religion and theology. Even though these disciplines do not qualify as scientific, the material collected, screened, and processed over centuries in these disciplines deserves adequate scrutiny by anyone claiming to do serious study in matters religious. Conscious, intentional ignorance of this material in scholarly pursuits on religion cannot pose as methodological prerequisite to avoid bias; rather, it is a serious omission, substantially impacting, even distorting the findings. It, actually, is also an expression of bias itself.

In their somewhat redundant concluding remarks, “Practical Implications for Social Policy” (pp. 266–272), Clarke, Powell, and Savulescu repeat what they already stated in the preface (p. v), “that religion promotes social cohesion and heightened tolerance within social groups but also . . . intolerance and hostility between social groups” (p. 271). While this does not come as a surprise, the final statement does. The editors, who all teach practical ethics, point out that “awareness of the tendency of religions, under certain conditions, to generate out-group intolerance, hostility, and prejudice leaves us better prepared to anticipate and ameliorate these tendencies where they arise, and perhaps even prevent them from arising in the first place” (p. 272). This remark not only corresponds to the opening sentence of the whole collection which makes reference to the “events of 9/11” (p. v); this comment also reveals the underlying agenda of the entire project while—at least for now—implicitly admitting its failure in succeeding to identify precisely the particular conditions under which religions generate intolerance and hostility. This failure might very well have to do with the inadequacy of the approach and the methods of inquiry used.

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Darwin and Lady Hope: The Untold Story. By L. R. Croft. Preston, UK: Elmwood Books, 2012. x + 153 pp. Hardcover £12.99.

In the mid-1870s, Charles Darwin decided to write an autobiography destined for his family. In 1887 one of his sons, Francis, published three volumes of *Life and Letters of Charles Darwin*, which contains extensive fragments of the document. At his mother's request, he excluded some statements concerning his father's religious views. The full version of Darwin's *Autobiography* was published by Nora Barlow (the scientist's granddaughter). Numerous scholars have expressed opinions about Darwin's religious views. For many he was an atheist (Bylica 2008, 262–64; Jodkowski 2010, 59–74; Malec 2012, 67–85) or an agnostic (von Sydow 2005, 150–53; Ruse 2008, 242; Spencer 2009, 120). L. R. Croft claims that Darwin renounced his theory of evolution and died a Christian. For many readers, Croft's views may seem surprising. One may expect that Croft has good arguments to support his thesis, but as this review will show—he does not.

In 1982, *New Scientist* published Irving Stone's article "The Death of Charles Darwin." Stone took an interest in the story of "alleged conversion" of Darwin. In Stone's opinion there "was not iota of truth" in the idea that Darwin died a Christian (Stone 1982, 92). Croft writes that he soon began his own research. He emphasizes that Lady Hope is the common denominator of all stories about Darwin's conversion—but, as he also claims, nobody knew who was hiding under this pseudonym. Croft claimed to have determined her identity and wanted to publish his results in *Nature*. He received a refusal, and decided to publish his results in his almost finished book *The Life and Death of Charles Darwin* (Croft 1989, 109–20). In the book under review Croft writes: "I believed I had embarked on a search for truth, but in reality I had opened up a can of worms and unleashed the forces of historical distortion" (viii). He continued his research on Darwin's conversion, but he delayed the publication of his next findings for more than 20 years. Here is the final version, called *Darwin and Lady Hope: The Untold Story*.

The Lady Hope story, ostensibly written by herself, was published in the Boston Baptist journal *Watchman-Examiner* (Lady Hope 1915) as "Darwin and Christianity." Croft claims that "no one seemed to be able to identify this lady" (vii). However one of Darwin's biographers, Ronald W. Clark, in 1984 wrote: "Lady Hope [was] the widow of Admiral of the Fleet Sir James Hope and an evangelist who appears to have preached in Downe during the last years of Darwin's life" (Clark 1984, 199; see also Freeman 1977, 19). Clark's book was published five years before Croft's earlier work. One might suppose that Croft did not know about Clark's book, but in *Darwin and Lady Hope* he writes that Clark "correctly identifies Lady Hope" (42). Croft devotes two chapters to a biographical sketch of Lady Hope, further identifying her as Elizabeth Reid Cotton.

In the preface Croft states that he believes "that the results of my twenty-year search for the truth should be published and the facts made known. I hope I have looked at the evidence objectively and so reached the historical truth" (x). The most important chapter is Chapter 9, where Croft presents six arguments with which he wants to convince his readers that Darwin "returned to Christianity" on his deathbed (88):

1. I believe she was a woman of absolute integrity.

Croft repeatedly emphasizes that Lady Hope was an evangelical Christian and, as he seems to believe, we should not gainsay certain stories which she believed to be true. For example, Croft quotes a story concerning big turtles, which indeed lived in Mauritius. Croft concludes that the truth of this story proved her “complete reliability” (89).

2. The denial of the Darwin family is unreliable.

Darwin’s family denied that Darwin “returned to Christianity” on his deathbed. In Croft’s opinion, this objection is irrelevant, as Darwin’s children could not have been in Down House at the time of Lady Hope’s visit. Even if Croft is right, it does not constitute a proof of the conversion, but only suggests a possibility of a meeting between Lady Hope and Darwin. If the main aim of Croft’s book is the proof that Darwin “converted,” then this argument is worthless.

3. There is a “ring of truth” about Lady Hope’s story.

Croft underlines that Lady Hope knew about certain details which she could not have known if she had not visited Darwin. Croft gives six examples: the view from Darwin’s bedroom; his clothes; his behavior; the fact that Darwin had a summer-house; that singing could be heard in Darwin’s room; and that Darwin rested at 3 o’clock and could hear this singing. Nevertheless, there are also several mistakes in Lady Hope’s account; for example, she wrote that Darwin “was almost bedridden for some months before he died” (Lady Hope, 1071)—which is not true. This again does not require any further comment because this argument, like the previous one, indicates merely some probability that Lady Hope met Darwin.

4. She stuck to her story for the rest of her life.

In Croft’s opinion, this fact is “significant” (100). It is hard to say how this can be convincing of anything. The fact that Lady Hope maintained her story does not prove that Darwin really changed his views on religion. Croft’s faith in the words expressed by Lady Hope is unshaken. Evidently, for the author of *Darwin and Lady Hope*, the best arguments for the truth of Lady Hope’s words are the words of Lady Hope.

5. There is independent support for her story.

This “independent support” is presented as the opinion of Darwin himself, who allegedly declared: “How I wish I had not expressed my theory of evolution as I have done” (106). This supposed statement was published by Leonard Fawkes in a letter to the *Bromley and Kentish Times*. Fawkes heard about Darwin’s words from Alfred Nicholls—who was 97 years old at the time—who in turn had heard a report from “the lady who had nursed Darwin” (105). Croft is not sure who that lady was, but thinks that she may have been Mrs. Evans, a woman who “also had converted.” Croft does not explain whether Mrs. Evans heard these words directly from Darwin or from somebody else. He writes: “I am not an advocate of conspiracy theories” (vii). The reader must judge whether this account is a conspiracy theory or not.

6. Darwin's conversion is not surprising.

Croft tells how Anthony Flew, a philosopher and an atheist, accepted the existence of God at the end of his life. The author of *Darwin and Lady Hope* says that, if Flew could change his views, "why should Darwin have been any different?" (109). (Croft also fails to mention that the conception of God ultimately accepted by Flew was not theistic, but deistic.) Unlike Flew, many atheists do not change their views. If so, why should Darwin have been any different?

Aside from all this, Croft's book is a skillfully written story: In his youth Darwin was a Christian; later, when he began to be an evolutionist, he lost his faith, but when he was on his deathbed he returned to Christianity and rejected his theory of evolution. Darwin confided this change only to Lady Hope, and she published his conversion story many years later. Darwin's family denied her statement because they did not know about Darwin's conversion. Croft feels this should suffice. But Croft does not have any good arguments on the basis of which he can support his story. James Moore's *The Darwin Legend* (1994) contains a great deal of painstakingly collected historical detail about Darwin's personal life. His comprehensive research shows clearly that the story published in the *Watchman-Examiner* has not a shred of evidence to support it. Lady Hope might have visited and spoken with Darwin, but their conversation was unlikely to be what she claimed (Moore 1994). Eighteen years later, Croft's book does not bring anything new. The only thing that Croft can indicate is that there is some probability that Lady Hope could have visited Darwin. This is just another story.

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The Faith of Biology and the Biology of Faith: Order, Meaning, and Free Will in Modern Medical Science. By Robert Pollack. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2000 (paperback edition, 2013). xix + 125 pp. Softcover \$22.00.

This brief but powerful book is a work of confession. It exposes the gifts and challenges of a life of faith, medical practice, and scientific discovery woven together. The author, Robert Pollack, has combined medicine and science with great success in his professional career, but he is critical of the currently reigning modes of practice in both professions. His critiques are shaped by his deep Jewish faith and his commitment to his patients and to the communities in which he works. His 2000 book is poignant and is substantially sharpened by the preface added to the 2013 paperback edition here reviewed.

Pollack writes from his position as a highly regarded leader in several areas of cell biology. From his central vantage point he learned, in 1971, of a plan to splice the DNA of the tumor virus SV40 into a bacterial virus *Lambda*, which is easy to replicate and whose natural residence is the human gut bacterium *Escherichia coli*. “[T]his experimental protocol seemed to me capable of generating a recombinant DNA molecule from a tumor virus that would live in the genome of a bacterium that lived in the gut, and therefore create a new agent with a novel, unpredictable, and possibly malignant infectivity.” The head of the laboratory which proposed this work, Paul Berg, was not concerned about this possibility “nor was he able to answer my concerns, so he did the honorable thing and helped the National Institutes of Health set up experiments” which showed the recombinant was safe. However, raising this red flag led to the Asilomar Conferences, which created structures of bioethical caution in recombinant DNA research work. But, writes Pollack, “I called Paul Berg in 1971, more than four decades ago, and since then there have been no reports [that] I’ve seen of any scientist, in any field, precipitating an internal moratorium on any line of active basic research, ever.” “Why not?” Pollack asks. With Sherlock Holmes, he wonders why this dog has never barked. Then Pollack responds to his own question with deepest honesty from his own life story, “I was aware that fears—my own fears and the fears of others around me—were expected to be kept from the daily discourse of the lab, and even then I knew that was wrong.”

Pollack wants his readers to ponder the realization, beginning at least with Einstein if not earlier, that the moments of insight in science and events of revelation in religion are fundamentally the same phenomenon. This theme is revisited with profound effect throughout the book. That insights come unbidden and reveal an understanding of the previously unknown or unthought is a topic, which has fascinated many authors. They peer into the moment of creative realization, which may be very simple (for instances, the joy at “discovering” how to tie one’s shoelaces) or earthshaking. These “aha moments” are the thoughts that change lives, medicine, science, and religion. The most diligent application of the scientific method or the most ardent study of ancient texts do not in themselves create these moments of contact, though they may prepare the student for them. When the moment of insight or revelation comes, some will choose to bask in the

insight and explore it, while others may simply ignore or mistrust it, writing it off as a mere dream. Pollack quotes Einstein: “Science can only be created by those who are thoroughly imbued with the aspiration towards truth and understanding. This source of feeling, however, springs from the sphere of religion.”

Alertness to the unbidden voice is essential—for Pollack and for all of us—to the diagnoses of the deepest problems of our world and for progress toward healing and real solutions. Pollack worries that modern science and modern medicine are so committed to the minute results produced by adherence to scientific method, or are so hedged about with management protocols, that we miss both insights and cures, that we stumble across the landscapes of our lives with mental eyes and ears closed to anything that cannot be counted or parsed.

The Faith of Biology and the Biology of Faith is a testament to a life of attentive faith and service. Accounts of bringing the faiths of religion and science into dialogue are rare, and Pollack’s book is a landmark. Its honesty reveals the deep personal struggles of an individual who is both a brilliant scientist and a committed person of faith. Pollack’s confessions are a gift to all.

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From Big Bang to Big Mystery: Human Origins in the Light of Creation and Evolution By Brendan Purcell. New York, NY: New City Press, 2012. 365 pp. Softcover \$34.95.

This book reflects many years of research and reflection by a seasoned Christian philosopher. It complements well the literature in this field. The author retired as a professor of psychology and philosophical anthropology at University College Dublin in 2008. He is now an adjunct professor in philosophy at Notre Dame University, Sydney, Australia.

Purcell has a very good knowledge of the current state of the natural sciences concerning human origins. Among other things, he considers some significant recent findings in paleontology and genetics. While he thinks “survival of the fittest” is still an important factor in evolution, he thinks an understanding of evolution today also needs to include notions of punctuated equilibrium, *evo-devo* (internal genetic factors), evolutionary convergences, “and for some authors, the recognition of the role of animal consciousness in evolution” (107). Purcell acknowledges Darwin’s theoretical greatness in developing a diachronic (over a period of time) context for biology. He thinks Darwin, however, “lacked the intellectual tools . . . to differentiate the different and complementary roles of natural science, philosophy and revelation” (115).

While criticizing “scientism” and “reductionism,” Purcell advocates the complementarity of natural science, philosophy, and revelation. He presents quite

a comprehensive understanding of human nature, referring to a wide variety of sources from ancient myth and Greek philosophy to contemporaries such as Eric Voegelin, a philosopher of anthropology and history. Among others, he applies Bernard Lonergan's insights on emergence, development, understanding, and freedom to the data of the natural sciences and human experience. Purcell speaks of Lonergan as a contemporary Thomist who thinks God "the Creator shares his existence and creativity with his created, secondary causes" (140).

Purcell neither provides a detailed exegesis of the biblical creation accounts found in Genesis nor takes a literalist approach. He thinks any attempt at "concordism," trying to fit the text of Genesis with contemporary scientific evidence is "a complete misreading of the text" in its context (71). Rather, he endorses Stanley Jaki's view that Genesis communicates "that God has created all that is in the world" (70) and Joseph Ratzinger's view that creation through God's word in Gen. 1 expresses "the truth that the universe" is the product of "intelligence, freedom, and the beauty that is identical with love" (70–71). Purcell embraces the Judaic-Christian faith, which "is rooted in a belief that everything depends upon God, or better, all is a gift from God" (119).

Adapting Thomas More's "theeward," he speaks of the person as intrinsically relational or "youwards" and if "self-giving is reciprocated, we become persons-in-communion, moving from youwardness to wewardness" (295). Purcell understands these in the light of Martin Buber's *I and Thou* and New Testament *agape* personal and interpersonal love, which involves participation in the friendship of God.

While clearly embracing our physical continuity with the rest of the universe and life, Purcell explores at some length what makes us humans unique as compared to other primates and hominids, including our capacities related to symbolization, language, understanding, and freedom, and our limitless orientation to beauty, meaning, truth, and goodness. Among other things, he explains unique features of the human brain and vocal tract as the material basis for language and understanding. Related to explicating certain questions of truth, goodness, and evil, he uses some poignant concrete examples, such as Socrates, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Jewish Auschwitz victim Etty Hillesum, and leading Nazi Albert Speer. In the light of an interdisciplinary approach this book makes the case that we are not only quantitatively different from other forms of life, including other primates and hominids, but also qualitatively different. I recommend it.

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Altruism in Cross-Cultural Perspective. Edited by Douglas A. Vakoch. International and Cultural Psychology Series. New York, NY: Springer, 2013. xvi + 180 pp. Hardcover \$129.00.

When one of the first sociologists, Auguste Comte (1798–1857), coined the term “altruism” in 1851 to describe selfless concern for the benefit of others, he did so to replace erstwhile well established terms like “love,” “care,” and “compassion” that were fraught with religious, mainly Christian connotations, while at the same time contrasting it with the selfish behavioral attitude of “egoism.” Beginning with Pitirim A. Sorokin’s study of *Altruistic Love* (1950), altruism became a research topic in its own right, notably in the Altruism, Morality, and Social Solidarity Section of the American Sociological Association, with a remarkably large body of literature, to which the book reviewed here belongs, as one of the most recent publications.

Based on a symposium on the same theme held in connection with the 34th Annual Conference of the Society for Cross-Cultural Research, February 23–27, 2005, at Santa Fe, NM, and convened by the volume’s editor, the book contains contributions by 21 authors of different nationalities in 13 chapters, 7 of which are based on papers originally presented at this conference. While a “Foreword” by senior cross-cultural psychologist Harry C. Triandis (vii–xi) aptly leads into the subject matter, the “Afterword” (chapter 13, pp. 159–63), by Steven G. Post and Matthew T. Lee, concludes that “other-regarding behaviors are without exception endorsed in all major world religions and in the world cultures that have grown up around them” (p. 159) which allows us to assume that altruism is “a universal value” indeed (p. 163). (Post is a physician and Lee a sociologist, and both are engaged in the Institute for Research on Unlimited Love, Stony Brook, NY.)

The first three chapters discuss with impressive critical awareness methodological aspects of altruism research in general (Juris G. Draguns, chapter 1, pp. 1–16) and in cross-cultural contexts in particular (Sandi W. Smith et al., chapter 2, pp. 17–29; Kathryn Coe, Craig T. Palmer, chapter 3, pp. 31–44). Other chapters of the book demonstrate the cross-cultural existence and validity of altruism in various ways, be it by analyzing altruism in folktales (Alexandra Arkhipova, Artem Kozmin; chapter 5, pp. 57–70), or the practice of spirit healers in Puerto Rico (Joan Koss-Chioino, chapter 10, pp. 123–37), by studying altruistic aspects in sponsorship of village festivals in Mexico (Garry Chick, chapter 11, pp. 139–49), the helping behaviors of adolescent youths in Guatemalan Maya communities (Judith L. Gibbons, chapter 4, pp. 45–56) or volunteering across cultures (Henrietta Grönlund, chapter 6, pp. 71–84). In addition to these case studies, the editor includes three contributions by Asian authors who approach the issue from distinct Chinese and Indian perspectives, thereby broadening the spectrum considerably. Yueh-Ting Lee et al. state in “Daoism and Altruism” (chapter 7, pp. 85–100) that altruism “is one of the most essential components” in Daoism (p. 91). Abhik Gupta, the author of chapter 8 (“Altruism in Indian Religions: Embracing the Biosphere,” pp. 101–12), holds that “many Eastern religions . . . are characterized by the altruistic treatment of plants, animals, and even entire ecosystems and landscapes such as rivers, forests, and mountains, and recognize them as ‘kin’ or hold them sacred and inviolable,” suggesting to label this

“biosphere altruism” (p. 102). Indian “philosopher-psychologist” (p. 169) Sangeetha Menon discusses altruism in light of the *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavad Gita* (chapter 9, pp. 113–21). She questions “whether altruism and selfish behavior are better understood if we make a deliberate shift of focus from the act . . . as articulated in preservationist, hedonistic theories evidenced in the sociobiological literature, to formation of self-identities . . . and the process of self-transformation” (p. 114), and deduces that according to the Indian scriptures studied altruism “is not an emotion or action” but expression of “contentment that is experienced in the inner depths” so that “there is no giving up or sacrifice, and no expectation or disillusionment, but only expression of joy” (pp. 120–21). It remains to be seen if such an interpretation is still within the bounds of altruism studies proper.

Chapter 12 (“To Give or Not to Give: Confessions of a Humanitarian Aid Worker,” pp. 151–57), by clinical psychologist and former president of the Society for Cross-Cultural Research Lewis Aptekar, is a stand-alone text in which the author reflects upon his experiences while engaging in relief work in an Ethiopian refugee camp in 1996–1998. The editor is to be lauded for including these very personal musings, which were actually shared on the occasion of the symposium in Santa Fe in 2005, in this otherwise strictly scientific publication (Chapters 1–11 have extensive references, while this one has none), thereby indicating awareness that any serious discussion of altruism cannot ignore the inner struggle of those who make honest attempts at acting altruistically.

Short biographical notes about the contributors (pp. 165–71) and the editor (p. 173) as well as a general index (pp. 175–80) conclude this book, which is a high-quality tool for cross-cultural studies of altruism and beyond.

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