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J. P. Moreland. Christianity and the Nature of Science:

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J. P. Moreland. *Christianity and the Nature of Science: A Philosophical Investigation*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998. Pp. 250 + annotated bibliography. No Price Listed.

[1] The topic of this book is somewhat more specific than the title suggests. Its main question is whether "creation science" is really a science or not. The book is essentially a primer in the history and philosophy of science for those interested in the creation/evolution debates. It does not pretend to consider the biblical or theological adequacy of creation science, nor the facts that each side musters in its favor. Instead the author aims to show that, at minimum, objections to the scientific status of creationism fail to be convincing because they are insufficiently informed by the history and philosophy of science. Put another way: this is a sourcebook, not necessarily for winning the next court case or school board debate in the creation/evolution controversy - indeed, the book's tone is not at all polemical, and its measured tone is itself a contribution to the controversy - but certainly for moving those debates to another level of sophistication concerning what it means to be a science.

[2] The book has three basic premises. First, that it is imperative for Christianity to interact with the contemporary world "in a humble, Christ-honoring, and well informed way" (11); and if it is to do so, it must interact with the most important influence shaping that world, science. Second, that one's philosophy of science is foundational to how one integrates theology and science. And third, that the prevailing philosophy of science in the present context of the creation/evolution controversy is modern in the pejorative sense, that is, it assumes that scientism is true, that scientific realism is true, and that a clear line of demarcation can be drawn between science and all other disciplines.

[3] With those things in mind, the book sets about making its case for the scientific status of creationism. The lion's share of the book - 5 of 6 chapters - is devoted to the history and philosophy of science, which is the author's strength, and the area where he thinks the creation/evolution controversy has been most clearly lacking in depth. In chapters 1 and 2, the author argues that, contrary to common opinion (reflected, for example, in the decision against creationism in the 1981 case *McLean v Arkansas*) there is no necessary and sufficient set of conditions, and no "scientific method", that can provide a sure line of demarcation between science and all other fields. In chapter 3, he argues that scientism (the view that "science, exclusively and ideally, is our model of intellectual excellence" 104), besides being self-refuting in its strong form (only what can be physically measured belongs to science), is falsified by the existence of a variety of limitations to science, especially those presuppositions that underlie science whose justification is philosophical rather than scientific. In chapters 4 and 5, the author argues that a realist interpretation of scientific theories should not be presumed in all cases, but that an "eclectic" model should be employed, selecting realism or antirealism on a case by case basis.

[4] The first five chapters, which make mostly parenthetical reference to creationism, could stand on their own as a primer in the history and philosophy of science, concluding with the interesting suggestion of an "eclectic" model. Those well-versed in the philosophy of science will find all but the last 10 pages of these five chapters (where the author sets forth the eclectic model, with criteria for deciding whether to view a theory in realist or antirealist terms) to be review. Those not-so-well-versed in the philosophy of science will find these chapters dense, even though replete with examples from the history of science (sometimes too briefly set forth), but necessary.

[5] The real strength of this book is its sense of the impact of alternatives in the philosophy of science for the creation/evolution controversy. That strength is used to show what avenues are open for a defense of creationism. If, for example, one takes scientism in its strong sense and views scientific theories in exclusively realistic terms, then the prospects for the scientific status of creationism are dimmed by the light of evolution. But if there are valid reasons to object to both scientism and realism, and this book claims that there are, then the prospects for creationism significantly improve.

[6] Assuming a context of modernism, and limiting oneself to considerations in the philosophy of science, the book is quite thorough. Most reasons for dismissing the scientific status of creationism are, in fact, inadequate from the perspective of contemporary history and philosophy of science. But two reservations present themselves. In the first place, a book with as grand a title as "Christianity and the Nature of Science" ought to have more to say about the adequacy of creationism from the perspective of biblical studies and theology. While there are many "external" objections from scientists to the scientific status of creationism, there are, I take it, at least as many "internal" objections from Christians about its adequacy as a mode of interpreting Scripture, or its adequacy as notions for creation and providence. Thus, the title of the book is perhaps hyper-ambitious for its content.

[7] But one cannot expect a book to cover all fields. And, rather than chastisement, the author is to be commended for limiting himself to his own field of expertise. A second objection is perhaps more to the point. For Christianity and Christian theology to interact with society today is no longer to interact with exclusively "modern" notions of science, such as those the book assumes. Instead, our contemporary context is both modern and post-modern, with strong tendencies toward relativism in addition to those toward scientism. Perhaps because the book is simply a re-print, with no revisions, from its original 1989 edition (it has no references beyond 1987), it cannot have noticed this shift. But when the contemporary context is post-modern as well as modern, then perhaps what is needed for a defense of Christianity is not only for theology to assert its rationality against modern claims by qualifying realism with a dose of antirealism, as this book does, but also for theology and science to defend critical realism as a common front against a post-modern relativism that views them both as expressions of communal will to power.

Reviewed by Edward Hogan  
Creighton University

  
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