

Theologian Andrew Torrance's essay helpfully argues that a scientific explanation of coming to Christian faith is compatible with a further philosophical/theological explanation from a materialist atheist perspective, a physicalist perspective, or one involving the Holy Spirit's work in a person's life. There is nothing about neurological influences in a person coming to faith that commits one to a materialist explanation being exhaustive. This inference requires further metaphysical assumptions such as reductionism and/or causal closure of the physical to any nonphysical factors. Tom McLeish's essay gives a good discussion with examples of why reductionism often fails in physics (so, why think it holds in any other domains as a general rule?).

Although space does not permit discussion of all the chapters in this book, Torrance's and McLeish's essays illustrate how it is possible to fruitfully situate scientific explanations within larger philosophical and theological frameworks that enhance our understanding of God's good creation. Christians, at least, do not have to be forced to choose between scientific and theological explanations; rather, we can foster mutually beneficial conversations among them.

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THE FAITHFUL SCIENTIST: Experiences of Anti-Religious Bias in Scientific Training by Christopher P. Scheitle. New York University Press, 2023. 224 pages. Hardcover; \$35.00. ISBN: 9781479823710. Paperback; \$28.00. ISBN: 9781479823727. Ebook; \$35.00. ISBN: 9781479823741.

In *The Faithful Scientist*, Christopher P. Scheitle explores the identities and experiences of scientists-in-training and the impact of religion in their lives. The book makes a compelling argument about the connections among religion, race, gender, and diversity in science. Diverging from previous studies of scientists and religion, Scheitle focuses exclusively on graduate students training for scientific (biology, chemistry, physics) and social scientific (psychology, sociology) careers. The book combines quantitative and qualitative findings, drawing on 1,300 surveys and 65 in-depth interviews with both religious and unaffiliated respondents in the United States. Over six chapters, Scheitle pairs a unique dataset of statistical insights with rich quotations highlighting the lived experiences of students in the sciences. These chapters provide readers with an understanding of the religiosity of scientists-in-training, their beliefs about the relationship between religion and science, the stigma that religious students may experience in academic settings, the relevance of religion to peer and advisor relationships, the motivation that religion can provide to pursue scientific work, and the influence family life can have on the experiences of graduate students as they

navigate their identity as developing scientists and as religious individuals.

Scheitle argues against a number of common misconceptions about the relationship between religion and science, such as the idea that top scientists who work at or attend more-prestigious institutions are more likely to be areligious (he finds minimal difference in religiosity based on institutional prestige), or that most scientists see religion as conflicting with science (less than a third of scientists in training hold this view, with the remainder seeing them as either independent or collaborative realms). These insights are likely familiar to those who study the intersection between religion and science or have read previous work by Scheitle, but these findings are also paired with many original insights unique to his sample of graduate students. Among these is discussion of the importance of the advisor-advisee relationship in graduate school and the potential salutary influence of having an advisor of the same faith. Considering the strong positive association between religiosity and the desire to start a family (among Scheitle's sample 75% who report being very religious say having children is very important to them compared with 29% who identify as non-religious), he also shows the increased importance of a department culture that values family and work-life balance for religious graduate students.

A particular strength of Scheitle's work is the way he frames religion as an often-overlooked dimension of diversity in scientific careers. As he shows, not only is religion important to the identities, motivations, and ethics of a sizable minority of graduate students in science, but it also overlaps significantly with other identities that are already underrepresented in scientific careers, such as racial and ethnic minorities, as well as women in the case of some natural science fields. Stigma or instances of being treated with less respect as graduate students due to gender or race were reported by 83% of women, 89% of Black students, and 74% of Hispanic students. For religious graduate students, mistreatment due to race and gender may be compounded by the fact that very (64%) and moderately (46%) religious students reported being treated with less respect due to their religion. In addition to leading students to question their identity as future scientists, religious students who felt they have been treated with less respect were also faced with the dilemma of whether to conceal their religious identity. As with race and gender, discrimination due to religion may lead to fewer students pursuing their field at a higher level, reinforcing their marginal status in the discipline.

One area in which the reader may question the generalizability of Scheitle's findings is the selection of universities from which he drew his sample. Respondents exclusively attend universities in the top 60 (according to *US News* rankings) of their discipline. Given that in some disciplines such as chemistry there are around

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200 schools offering a PhD in the field, it would be reasonable to ask whether these programs are truly representative of the range of student experiences. The top 60 universities in a given field may be a model that is emulated by that discipline as a whole and is therefore an adequate sample, but it would have been interesting to see Scheitle discuss this dynamic further. There are also a number of potential policy implications from these findings that could have been covered in more detail.

The Faithful Scientist provides a strong background on the relationship between religion and scientific training revealing the potential challenges that religious graduate students face. Scheitle's research will appeal to a number of different audiences including sociologists, historians of science, and theologians. It would be a benefit to seminary classes on science and religion. Further, the richness of the qualitative data makes the book very readable for a general audience interested in learning more about the relationship between religion and science.

Notes

¹Elaine H. Ecklund et al., *Secularity and Science: What Scientists Around the World Really Think About Religion* (Oxford University Press, 2019); Elaine Howard Ecklund and Christopher P. Scheitle, *Religion vs. Science: What Religious People Really Think* (Oxford University Press, 2018).

²J. Shulman, "Survey of Ph.D. Programs in Chemistry," American Chemical Society, accessed April 10, 2024, <https://www.acs.org/education/students/graduate/survey-of-phd-programs-in-chemistry.html>.

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SCIENCE AND FAITH IN HARMONY: Contemplations on a Distilled Doxology by Sy Garte. Kregel Publications, 2024. 256 pages, foreword by Sean McDowell. Paperback; \$21.99. ISBN: 9780825448157.

The author of this book of meditations, Sy Garte, is a now-retired distinguished biochemist who held tenured university positions at NYU, Pittsburgh, and Rutgers. He also served in administrative roles at the NIH and the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences. As an author of over 200 scientific papers, he is a first-rate scientist who brings nearly unparalleled scientific expertise to matters of concern for Christians who have an interest in scientific topics. Of particular note, Garte became a Christian quite late in his scientific career (in his 60s), finally rejecting the atheism he had espoused most of his life. (His conversion experience is described in his book *The Works of His Hands*, which has a foreword by Alister McGrath.) This is therefore quite a unique devotional book, for it reflects a full life of secular

scientific experience and practical wisdom combined with the zeal of an adult convert. It is clear that Garte has had an inquiring mind and broad interests throughout his entire life, which help keep the book fresh and full of surprises. He grew up in Brooklyn where his mother was a piano teacher and his father a mandolin-playing chemist. Immersed in music, he attended the prestigious New York High School of Music and Art, but later discovered his greater talents lay in science.

There are 44 meditations (or "contemplations" as the sub-title refers to them), each about five pages long. In these, Garte expounds on an interesting scientific fact or idea and links it to some aspect of Christian life, doctrine, or theology. As in his introduction:

The forty-four chapters are vignettes in various styles. Some include personal stories of my experiences as a scientist, first as an atheist and then as a Christian. And some discuss aspects of science that may be new to you, and even inspiring, in how they relate our faith to God. (p. 14)

There are some connections between the meditations, but generally they may be read in any order, or read only periodically without need of remembering exactly what came before.

One aspect of this book I found particularly helpful are the several resources Garte provides at the end of each chapter for further exploration of the topic of the meditation—usually a scientific topic but sometimes theological or philosophical. There are generally one or two references from two or three of the following categories: books, articles, blogs, and videos. The web-based references are conveniently linked to the author's website (sygarte.com). The videos in particular are excellent learning and teaching resources.

This book is suitable for many audiences, but I would say two categories would be especially well served: non-Christian scientists and engineers, and Christians who have an interest in science but have not done much reading in science and faith. Garte's primary goal as stated in the introduction is to demonstrate the harmony of science and Christianity, thus addressing the perceived conflict between the two, which he believes continues to be a stumbling block for many non-Christians. For a Christian reader, however, Garte's expert treatment of a wide variety of scientific topics and their ties to the Christian life is truly devotional and worshipful. "Distilled doxology" is the phrase Garte uses to describe his project, and indeed he is able to repeatedly take a different scientific topic, strip it down to its basics so that any educated lay audience can understand and, with his fertile imagination and life experiences, tie it to Christianity in original ways, producing a sense of wonder and appreciation for God's providence and grace.