

LITERATURE REVIEWS

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A BALANCED VIEW OF SCIENCE AND FAITH

*Reviewed by Clyde L. Webster
Geoscience Research Institute*

SCIENCE, LIFE, AND CHRISTIAN BELIEF: A SURVEY OF CONTEMPORARY ISSUES. Malcolm A. Jeeves and R.J. Berry. 1998. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books. 305 p. Paper, \$19.99.

This book is a revised and updated version of an earlier volume written by Jeeves in 1969 (*The Scientific Enterprise and Christian Faith*) following a small conference of 36 scientists in Oxford, England. Both authors are recognized working scientists and do not claim to be philosophers, historians of science, or theologians. It is their desire to address the contemporary issues at the science-and-faith interface in a manner that is aimed at both the scientifically and nonscientifically trained reader. Another important feature of this book is that the authors are also writing for students, and it is therefore well-referenced to source materials and includes numerous quotations. The book is divided into thirteen chapters which take the reader through the early history of the conflict between religion and science, and ends with the implications of modern science on the Christian thought-and-belief system.

In Chapter 1, Jeeves and Berry set out to examine the Hebrew-Christian and Greek influences on the rise of modern science. In this chapter the authors explore how the various philosophies and attitudes of the Greeks and Christians molded the nature and direction of scientific inquiry. In a well-balanced review of the arising conflict, the authors conclude this chapter with the following statement:

Despite the still too popular conflict metaphor beloved of the media, we nevertheless believe that a biblically based theology is not only plausible, but, on the evidence, remains a key feature in the development of science (p 31).

In Chapter 2, Jeeves and Berry not only examine the laws of nature, but proceed to take on one of the most — if not the most — controversial conflicts between science and religion: miracles. This topic is not approached head-on, but rather from a perspective of the following questions: what are the natural laws of nature? how do these laws function? and how do they relate to one’s understanding of reality? From this perspective of natural laws, miracles are then examined as to type, nature, cause and purpose. The authors then conclude their discussion of miracles with the following statement:

*A ‘law of Parliament’ concept of a law of nature tends to suggest that the uniformity of nature ought to be defined in such a way as to exclude the possibility of miracles. In contrast, the Christian viewpoint is less restrictive; it agrees that it is perfectly legitimate to assume uniformity in nature, but is willing to entertain the possibility of non-uniformity (or miracle), if there are good grounds for doing so. In other words, our conception of natural laws acknowledges that they are based on a finite number of observations or experiments, and that they must always **remain subservient to**, rather than **normative over**, any further observation [p 46; emphasis mine].*

Chapters 3-5 present a concise, informative description of the “scientific method” and its relationship to worldviews, reality, and God’s hand in the universe. Chapters 6-8 address the concepts of Creation, Evolution, and the biblical concept of human nature. For the first time the authors reveal their position on human origins in their support of “theistic creationism” and the belief that “*in God’s Image*” refers to relational and representational aspects rather than genetical or anatomical aspects, implying the mechanisms of evolution and natural selection. Chapters 9-12 examine the nature of sociobiological aspects of modern science, along with the ideas of modern psychology and ecology. Jeeves and Berry conclude their book with a healthy balanced view of science and Christian faith. They further go on to challenge the Christian scientist to nurture and expound his or her faith in a reasonable, balanced manner because of his or her unique insights into the two books of God’s revelation. However, the authors specifically state that they are not promoting some type of “natural theology” but rather a concept of the positive aspect of God’s interactive nature within the

natural world. Jeeves and Berry conclude their treatise with the following thoughts:

*God points us to himself. Science points us beyond its limits. Reason can answer only some of our questions. Our need is not more science, better reason or great faith; it is **faith in a great God*** [p. 254; emphasis mine].

It is this reviewer's opinion that Jeeves and Berry have presented a fresh, invigorating look at the science-and-faith interface — a look that is well-rounded, not attempting to prove or push one theory in favor of another. While I personally do not accept their position on the origins and development of life, humans in particular, I still find myself in a very supportive role of their overall positions on science and faith. I would recommend this book for classroom use whenever the issues of science and religion are considered, as well as to the individual who is seeking a balanced understanding of the interrelational workings of science and Christian faith in a modern setting.