

Galileo's success (and, one might add, downfall in 1633) was precipitated by his 'knack of self-publicity' and 'sleight of hand' in arguments, and whether his great discoveries could have been made by someone else. Hardly the 'reverential' view, but one which, in my own opinion, is very close to the truth.

Each chapter is thoroughly documented, and concludes with bibliographies of accessible primary and secondary sources. My only criticism of the book as a whole is the absence of an index, for, while the layout and structure are clear and sequential, an index, nonetheless, is a handy way of locating something quickly.

But what of the chapter contents? Not only are they full of solid historical and scientific information, but they 'set the record straight'. There is no heroising or demonising and – as I said – the very positive role played by Christian thinking, from the time of St Augustine and the Church Fathers to Victorian debates about life on other worlds, simply shines through. As it does anyway, if it is not deliberately snuffed out by historical writers pushing secularist agendas.

And there were some chapters which I especially enjoyed. For example, I applaud Paul Marston's treatment of Johannes Kepler, which covered not just the Three Laws, but also the nature of the patronage he received. For the explicitly Copernican Kepler was a lifelong Lutheran, yet for many years he was employed and deeply respected by two fervently Catholic Holy Roman Emperors. Why did Kepler not suffer Galileo's later fate? (Did personal 'style' and temperament play a part?)

And as a Lancastrian myself, I really liked the prominence Paul Marston gave to Jeremiah Horrocks: the young man who, as I have suggested elsewhere, made the next great advances in heliocentric astronomy after Kepler and Galileo – yet in a remote Lancashire village.

At a time, moreover, when the discovery of exo-planets is feeding an obsession with 'ET', Paul Marston's discussion of the long, detailed, and often *Christian* debate about the possibility of God putting life on other worlds is very apposite. I also liked his common-sense approach to the achievement of Sir Isaac Newton, and applaud the way in which he puts paid to those fashionable 'psychoanalysis' theories that try to 'explain' the motives of a seventeenth-century Cambridge bachelor don in the context of twentieth-century Freudian complexes.

I have few criticisms of *Great Astronomers*, with the possible exception of any serious attention being paid to medieval Arabic astronomers, and a handful of typographical errors, one instance being 'Whirley' for 'Shirley'. (210)

But this is an excellent, comprehensive and very accessible book, which not only lays out the terrain of astronomical history, but also documents its intimate, fruitful, and creative relationship with the Judaeo-Christian faith.

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Antoine Bret
The World is Not Six Thousand Years Old – So What?

Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2014.
108pp. \$16.00. ISBN 978-1-62032-705-0

First and foremost, this book is about credibility. The popular misconception that there is a choice to be made between scientific and Christian beliefs about origins, means that books such as this are both important and necessary. Bret argues that science and belief can be perfectly harmonised and that believing in an old earth is no threat to

the Christian faith. Addressed primarily to those in Christian circles with an interest in questions about origins, Bret wants to put the record straight.

In just over 100 pages the case is succinctly and convincingly made. Those that propagate the misconception neither understand the nature of the scientific pursuit nor understand correctly the biblical creation texts. The opening chapters argue that a non-literal reading of parts of Scripture has long been accepted and is essential. Indeed, even a rudimentary understanding of literature demands it. Bret does not question the reliability of the Bible, but correctly questions the reliability of the interpreter. (18) There is also an important chapter (chap. 3) on how science and the scientific community work. He explains how new theories replace old theories; how peer review operates; and how the very nature of the scientific pursuit makes conspiracy theories about science highly implausible.

What I enjoyed most about the book was its boldness. Written with a relaxed tone and in terms that address a wide audience it is not reticent to use phrases such as ‘this is an observed fact in relation to the scientific evidence for an old universe, and utterly wrong in respect of young earth protagonists’. The more technical chapters 4 and 5, where Bret’s expertise in astrophysics comes to the fore, spell out the evidence for why the universe is old. The details may be beyond the technical understanding of some readers, but the overall argument is not lost in the process. The radio dating and astrophysics speak for themselves.

Science is about credibility. Scientific theory stands, falls and is re-shaped by evidence. Christian belief is about credibility. There is no virtue in ignorance. Truth and understanding are the shared pursuit of science and belief. In the interest of being credible, more writing with this type of intellectual rigour and boldness is in my view very

welcome. I would recommend this book.

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Kelly James Clark
Religion and the Sciences
of Origins: Historical and
Contemporary Discussions

London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. 288 pp. pb. £16:00. ISBN: 978-1-137-41480-9

This is a watershed contribution to the literature on science and religion, written by an American Christian philosopher who is neither a scientist nor a theologian and who is therefore able to say much more about the field in overview than might otherwise be convenient. Its design for teaching use at an introductory and undergraduate level is evident in eschewing specialist vocabulary and in its clear explanations of most of the concepts referenced, whether in philosophy, neuroscience or ethics. More examination of the problem of under-determination of theories could support his later arguments. The endnotes helpfully extend the discussion and provide, along with the extensive bibliography, fulsome references to very up-to-date resources on the impressive range of topics covered. Clarke credits a wide range of academics with whom he shared chapter drafts in the production of this Templeton funded volume.

Many chapters begin with a pithy mythological ‘history’ which Clark then critiques and uses as a springboard for theoretical analysis and development of an argument. He sometimes acknowledges significant tangential issues, signposting links and further research. The writing is pleasingly colourful, often humorous and only refers to Richard Dawkins et al when really justified. The passages on significant figures, including Bacon, Boyle, Newton and Descartes are expertly extended to give a multifaceted view of their contributions and interactions. Clark is