
As the intensity of the debate between so-called ‘Darwinians’ and proponents of ‘intelligent design; shows no signs of abatement, *Darwinism and the Divine* is a renewed effort to meld Darwin’s insights into a fresh apologetic for natural theology. McGrath probes ‘the impact of Darwinism on the generic enterprise of natural theology’, which he defines as ‘the exploration of the degree of intellectual resonance between the Christian vision of reality and what is actually observed in nature’ rather than as merely furnishing ‘proof’ of God’s existence (p. 2). The result is an engaging and often trenchant exposition of English natural theology as it intersects the world of science from the Augustan age (1690–1745) to William Paley’s *Natural Theology* (1802) and then collides with Darwin and his publication of *On the Origin of Species* (1859). McGrath builds upon this historical sketch to offer an impassioned advocacy for the plausibility and relevance of Christian natural theology in contemporary discussion.

The book is divided into four parts: an introductory description and delimitation of the concepts of ‘natural theology’ and ‘Darwinism’ as currently (and, according to McGrath, often improperly) used (chs 1–2); an historical outline of the English tradition of natural theology culminating in Darwin’s explication of natural selection in *On the Origin of Species* (chs 3–6); an argument for building upon the Darwinian trajectory by embracing a ‘wider teleology which appropriates evolutionary thought (chs 7–9); a conclusion outlining the outlook for natural theology given its (alleged) revivification, rather than demise, at the hands of science (ch. 10).

In the first part McGrath is concerned to refine the reader’s understanding of natural theology as a paradigm for more robust reflection upon reality, an ‘intellectual scaffolding that allows us to bridge the gap from empirical observation to the transcendent (p. 12). Although its obituary is ubiquitously published, McGrath asserts that natural theology’s persistence points to humanity’s innate yearning for the transcendent. Any endeavour of natural theology, however, must traverse the historical path marked by Charles Darwin and his legacy. It is here that McGrath takes issue with popular notions of ‘Darwinism’; McGrath rejects uses of the term as a shorthand for the entire body of evolutionary thought. He contends rather that current proponents (‘Neo-Darwinians’) have introduced inflated metaphysical assumptions into an historically-conditioned theory of natural selection and, thus, have created an ideology at variance with that intended by Darwin (pp. 32–40).

To substantiate this premise, McGrath traces, in Part 2, the historical development of English natural theology, which emerged in the seventeenth century as an antidote to rising atheism and materialism (p. 51). McGrath touches upon the pantheon of leading lights from this period, who merged scientific ideals with religious and apologetic fervour. Then McGrath turns to a thorough discussion of William Paley and his *Natural Theology* (1802), which McGrath views as the high-water mark of English natural theology (p. 85). McGrath claims that several weaknesses in Paley’s approach—including
Paley’s static view of creation, the exclusion of chance in his teleologically-ordered world and the belief that order as observed in nature inexorably leads to notions of divine design—doomed Paley’s version of natural theology from the start. Paley’s position was especially susceptible to the intellectual bombshell of *On the Origin of Species* (pp. 102–3). McGrath then devotes one of his most substantial sections (chapter 6) to an overview of Darwin, including the events that shaped his view of natural selection, Darwin’s own wrestling with perceived weaknesses in his theory, the impact of his developing religious views on his scientific outlook and the congruence of teleology to his emergent paradigm. McGrath concludes, significantly, that ‘natural theology did not die with the appearance of Darwin’s *Origin of Species*; it simply took new directions’ (p. 172).

Building on that conclusion McGrath seeks to establish in Part 3 that, by incorporating Darwin’s insights, natural theology admits of a ‘wider teleology’. Readers of McGrath’s other Christian apologetic works will find familiar ground here, as the author offers a spirited rationale for Christian theism as the most suitable interpretative paradigm for observations of nature and reality. In chapter 8 McGrath seeks to solidify a link between Christian theology and evolutionary thought by developing a synthetic approach that incorporates both. Here he leans heavily on Augustine as an early Christian theologian who allegedly accommodates evolutionary perspectives within his view of the created order as possessing *rationes seminales* (‘seminal reasons’) that would account for the evolutionary process (pp. 222–33). This ‘fine-tuning’ of the universe is, according to McGrath, consistent with the Christian view of God (p. 230). McGrath concludes Part 3 by exploring the question of whether natural theology itself is merely an unnecessary by-product of evolution, taking the opportunity to debunk ‘Universal Darwinism’ and, specifically, Dawkins’s view of the meme as the fundamental unit of social evolutionary development. McGrath argues that a proper understanding of evolutionary thought invigorates rather than vitiates natural theology in that the latter is simply one of many unintended, beneficent consequences of evolution (pp. 267–68).

In Part 4 McGrath concludes the book by outlining the prospects for natural theology. He avers that natural theology has been given ‘a new lease of life’ through its proposed union with evolutionary thought (p. 280). Further, he is optimistic about the latent fecundity offered by this union to furnish answers to deeper questions of meaning inside the current cultural dialogue between science and faith. For McGrath only Christian theology transcends the limits of the empirical and offers science intelligibility and coherence as an interpretative worldview.

McGrath has produced a significant work that will be essential reading for those who wish to be well versed in current discussions of Darwinism. His command of the literature is wide-ranging and remarkable. In a work that tackles a topic so immense, however, it is hard to imagine there would not be gaps. McGrath focuses on the English tradition, omitting continental sources which may have shed further light on the development of evolutionary thought. Correlatively, he omits some likely factors at work in nascent English natural theology as a response to the culturally prevalent works of