J.B. Stump and Alan B. Padgett (eds),

The Blackwell Companions are a well-known and prestigious series that always form an up-to-date and high-quality entry to a certain academic domain. That is also the case for this Companion that focuses on the relations between science and Christian belief. It contains 54 essays that were written especially for this Companion. No existing material was used, which means that the book contains new texts only. One of the other attractive qualities of this publication is that we find many of the most prolific authors represented in it. Readers of Philosophia Reformata will no doubt appreciate to see, for instance, Alvin Plantinga, Richard Swinburne, Denis Alexander, William Lane Craig, J.P. Moreland and John Polkinghorne mentioned as authors in the table of contents. Other names are missing, such as Alister McGrath and John Lennox, but that of course is unavoidable. Some of such names are there, but in a chapter title rather than as authors (in Part IX). Not all chapters are written by Christian authors and thus the editors have ensured that we do not get a biased perspective on the topic.

The book consists of eleven major parts. Together they form a broad and multifaceted treatment of the complex science – Christianity relations. I use the word “relations” in plural quite consciously because the book shows that it would be naïve to think that the relation between science and Christianity is the same for all areas in which this theme features in academic and public discussions. One wish remains for the reader once having gone through the complete content, and that is to get a more systematic treatment of the matter. Now the various essays are fairly independent and focused on a specific sub-topic in the part in which it is placed, and it would have been nice if there had been some chapters offering a more encompassing view for that particular part.

This is felt strongly already in Part I, titled ‘Historical Episodes’. In fact, the five chapters in this part do not each deal with a period, but with a very specific topic of which it is by no means evident that it is representative for a certain period. Early Christian belief in creation, the Galileo affair, women and mechanical science, Christian responses and Darwinism and Fundamentalism and science to me would seem entirely unconnected issues that can hardly be claimed to offer a window on a certain period in history. Perhaps I missed the point, but I do not see logic in this part. That, of course, does not mean that each of the chapters does not have a value in itself. The point made in Chapter 1 (by Christopher B. Kaiser), for instance, that the Christian faith historically had an important impact on the development of natural science in
the Western world, has been made before by many others, but some of the examples presented here are new and interesting. It is a pity that creationism is already made ridiculous in the very first part in Chapter 5. Perhaps unintentionally, but yet, it sets a negative tone for the rest of the book, and I think a thorough philosophical treatment of the issue should be more nuanced.

Part II is titled ‘Methodology’. Again, any kind of systematic discussion on that theme as a whole is missing, but the individual chapters are good reads. Mikael Stenmark in Chapter 6 argues for a clear distinction in goals between science and Christian faith. According to him, a lot of the conflicts between them would be solved if this difference would be taken into account. Science cannot provide answers to quests for the meaning of life, nor can Christian faith provide scientific accounts for natural phenomena. What remains a bit unclear is how the two relate then (after all, ‘How to relate Christian faith and science’ is the very title of the chapter). Chapter 7 by Nicholas Rescher deals with authority. It discusses the different sources of authority for religion and science. In Chapter 8 we already encounter the second text that deals with feminism. One could question if this is not a bit too much for a theme that in the science-religion debate hardly seems to play a major role. Probably, there are personal preferences with respect to this theme in the editorial team. In Chapter 9 Alan Padgett makes a plea for methodological naturalism in natural sciences. It is followed by a chapter written by Alvin Plantinga that shows the internal inconsistency of naturalism. It offers a reply to the critique against his earlier publications (including his recent book *Where the Conflict Really Lies: Science, Religion, and Naturalism*) that there might be a natural relation between survival and the truth of beliefs that was developed in the course of the evolutionary process.

Part III is on natural theology. It opens with a chapter by Richard Swinburne that offers an updated discussion of traditional arguments for the existence of God that are derived from the results of natural sciences and/or philosophy. In Chapter 12, Gregory E. Ganssle offers some counterarguments against the claim that such arguments are in fact based on a “God of the gap” conception of God. In Chapter 13, J.B. Stump, one of the editors, discusses natural theology after modernism. Although natural theology seems to have died in the period of modernism, later doubts about the absolute distinction between facts and values can, however, evoke new openings for natural theology in the postmodern era. In the next chapter, Paul K. Moser argues that natural theology arguments necessarily fall short when it comes to proving God’s existence. In the same line, Alexander R. Pruss and Richard M. Gale in Chapter 15 discuss the internal inconsistencies in natural theology argumentation in that they seem to lead to an inconsistent concept of “God”.