This book is an undergraduate textbook (Level 1, UK) concerned with the relation between science and religion, written by a member of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, who has also published extensively in the fields of feminist theology and Christian parapsychology. The contents basically tell the story of “Life, the Universe, and Everything” (cf. *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*), with reference to what it calls five “footprints” of “Divinity” as revealed by the findings of science. With astonishing breadth of scope the book takes the reader on a journey through the contemporary popular official version of our reality as reconstructed from the viewpoint of mainstream scientific perspectives in cosmology, biology, the history of science and the history of religion. The result is basically a “brief history of everything” (see Bill Bryson’s book with the title) compressed into the space of eight chapters spread over two parts (the totality of which is preceded by an introduction and succeeded by an index).

Part One involves the reader exploring the universe in text format and introduces the reader to the five “footprints” that may seem to suggest that there is more to reality than meets the (scientific) eye.

In Chapter One the first two “footprints” are discussed with reference to what is called “Super Bangs” along with other catchy terminology like “pyrotechnics,” “balloons” and “crunches” (all in the context of the evolution of the universe). Here the author touches on everything from the sublime to the ridiculously tiny sub-atomic particles. The discussion also includes mentioning of other idiosyncrasies in what is believed held up to the reader as a mysterious yet intelligible universe. The second “footprint” – Starter Packs – shows the intricacies and riddles of the emergence of life and exposes the phenomenon in all its complex and breathtaking variety.

Chapter Two deals with the third “footprint”: the phenomenon of consciousness. Here the story focuses on the ways in which different life-forms seem to be acutely and differently aware of their surroundings. The tale features amazing instances of how life interacts with the environment, the recognition of other forms, typical responses as well as self-consciousness and creativity.

In Chapter Three the reader is shown the fourth “footprint” when the author asks us to consider the phenomena of love, justice, and mercy from the perspective of scientific explanation. These include the religious view that laws are given by the gods, the historical perspective that humans evolved their own moralities, and a naturalist approach suggesting that what we call morality is very much a form of biologically meaningful behaviour variably and rationally intrinsic to all forms of life.

Chapter Four's fifth “footprint” deals with a history and phenomenology of religious traditions and practices and provides the reader with basic findings from comparative religion, the sociology of religion, as well as insights on the aesthetical dimension, the problem of evil and the concept of miracles. Then follows an extended section on the psychology of religion, dealing with the phenomenon of religious experience and the mystery of what we call the “spiritual”.

After following the five “footprints” we come to Part Two which is concerned with the history of science with special attention to relations with the history of religion.

Chapter Five is entitled “Remember the ancestors” and it tells the story of the *Homo* species since the time of the hunter-gatherers (also noting the significance of fishing and the control of fire). Then the development of agriculture is treated, followed by an introduction to the origins of urban civilisation before moving on to the Bronze and Iron Ages of the biblical period. Here the book briefly touches on the history of the relation between scientific developments in the ancient Near East and Graeco-Roman worlds as these relate to religious beliefs and practices.
from which they were not as yet divorced. Though primarily concerned with Judaeo-Christian religion, the book also features a separate section on Mohammed and Islam and the latter religion’s contributions to science in the Medieval period. The chapter ends with the Middle-Ages in Europe drawing to a close.

In Chapter Six the story continues with the Renaissance and the birth of the modern world and of modern science. Subjects dealt with are natural philosophy, a number of scientific discoveries and technological inventions and religious persecutions. Thereafter the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries and the relation between science and (Christian) religion and all the (familiar) controversies are also brought in for consideration.

Chapter Seven is all about what is called “Re-imaging a faith” and deals with the modern phenomenon of secularisation and the decline of religion in the wake of scientific discoveries (as well as the revival of religious sentiment as a counter-culture). This section includes a discussion of topics such as scientific approaches to theology, fundamentalist opposition to mainstream science (creationism) as well as popular contemporary controversies in the Christian churches as a result of scientific findings, e.g., the debates on feminism, homosexuality, etc.

The final Chapter (Eight) deals with the pros and cons of technological progress and with all the typical ecological questions, e.g., overpopulation, depleted energy resources, medical advances, future prognoses and other unresolved issues.

Each of the eight chapters individually includes a conclusion followed by a section on ideas for discussion as well as references for further reading. Useful definitions of some of the many scientific, theological and philosophical technical terms are also offered in the course of the presentation. The rhetoric of the presentation itself is predominantly descriptive while the evaluative point of view comes across as simultaneously sympathetic and critical with reference to both religion and science (the ideal of objectivity and participation). The discussion therefore strikes one as remarkably neutral even as the narrator has the ability of getting into the skin of all the ideological viewpoints she presents the reader with. The rhetoric is bereft of an over-abundance of technical jargon and formal elaboration so that the text makes for a relatively easy and stimulating read.

The minute features of the discussion provides the impression of an author with an immense general knowledge, aware of the complexities and intricacies of intra-disciplinary debates, yet satisfied with merely noting the related complexity rather than delving into the intricacies and ideology operative at the forefront of specialised research. Nothing more can be expected of an introduction with such a broad scope (hence, the suggestions for further reading, although the sources are rather scant, featuring about a book per topic, even given the allowance for ideological variety). Perhaps the one feature that will be most appreciated concerns the fact that despite the historical format, the narration is never boring: the book reads like a thrilling and immensely profound story that picks out very interesting and relevant bits of data while presenting these with a generous share of humorous interjections.

On the downside, some bits of data are touched on in such a cursory manner so as to be essentially non-informative (e.g., lumping together Latin or Greek technical scientific terminology without any further clarification of the kind of thing being talked about). In such cases at least a word or two about what is being referred to would have been appropriate, particularly given the fact that many readers might not have the relevant scientific and specialised background. Any reader interested in really coming to grips with the profundity of the details the story deals with is therefore advised to make certain use of the suggestions for further reading, as there is no way in which most undergraduate students will appreciate the relevance and intricacies of what it is that they are being confronted with.

From the perspective of Old Testament scholarship, the dependence on specialist writings for the relevant bit of Israelite history overlapping with the biblical period seems to me to be up to date. For histories of Israel the works of Lemche and Shanks appear as suggestions for further