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K. Nürnberger, *Informed by Science, involved by Christ, How science can update, enrich and empower the Christian faith* (United States of America: Xlibris, 2013), pp. 264, ISBN: Hardcover 978-1-4836-0595-1. ISBN: E-book 978-1-4836-0596-8.
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“Men despise religion,” wrote Blaise Pascal. “They hate it and are afraid it may be true. The cure for this is first to show that religion is not contrary to reason, but worthy of reverence and respect. Next make it attractive so that good men wish it were true, and then show that it is.” As someone who has a degree in Geology, has been a minister in a mainline denomination for 40 years, and aspires to develop missional congregations I believe that this should set the agenda for Christian apologetics in today’s, increasingly secular and scientifically influenced, world. It is my experience that many (although not all) who accept the validity of much of what science has discovered in the last two centuries despise the gospel because of what they perceive to be the ridiculous reasons many Christians give for rejecting the assured results of honest research especially in the areas of biology, geology and astronomy. This is all the more galling since many have a totally literalist view of interpreting the scriptures that quiet frankly, biblical hermeneutics demonstrate, is not warranted. Then, in addition, many Christians claim experiencing miracles and answers to prayer that are either trivial, can be explained as coincidental or on occasions may even be palpably false.

Nürnberger sets out to fulfill the first objective of Pascal’s program by trying to establish the credibility of the Christian faith from a scientifically philosophical perspective, so that those influenced by science will begin to think about it seriously. In my opinion he does this brilliantly in the first half of his book. He begins with a very well reasoned polemic against the disastrous results of modernity, whilst admitting that it has been very beneficial to humankind in general. In fact the modernity ‘enterprise’ has been so successful that it has overwhelmed our awareness of the transcendent and the resultant ethical and moral restraints this produces. This is leading to a disaster from ecological and sociological perspectives that threaten our very survival on this planet.

Having created discontent with the narrow assumptions of secular modernity he then begins to demonstrate how scientific psychological developmental and neurological theories and discoveries may provide a reasonable explanation for faith in God, which is the cure. He contends that is indeed possible for a scientific naturalist (one who believes that science has demonstrated that nothing immaterial exists) to have faith in God.

He uses the theories of developmental psychology developed by Faber's book, "The Psychological Roots of Religious Beliefs: Searching for angels and the Parent-God" to explain how the possibility for God-consciousness arises through parent-child relationships during growth. He makes the point that the culmination of this process, which frees spirituality and God-consciousness to become self reliant, fully mature and to further develop, comes when the cross of Christ is embraced in all its fullness. Thus the creator God who set in action this this growth process is indeed the author of our faith.

But the question now becomes for those influenced by scientific naturalism, "I see that I might have evolved and been developmentally nurtured to have the possibility of God-consciousness, but is this God real? Does He exist?" So Nürnberger then proceeds to show that the theory of emergence may provide a rational, scientifically acceptable explanation of how God created us, which at the same time provides evidence of his existence. It follows the line of argument of the 19th century preacher Charles Kingsley (author of 'The Water Babies') who commented on Darwin's theory of evolution, that God indeed chose to 'make all things make themselves'. This has received new impetus as a theory since the discovery of cosmological fine-tuning appears to demonstrate that the existence of the Universe, as we know it with the ability to produce humankind, depended upon pre-set, incredibly fine-tuned physical constants. Many scientist believe that this 'presetting' was probabilistically impossible without the intervention of a purposeful Creator.

Emergence theory is the hypothesis that higher orders of existence and life emerge from lower orders by a form of unaided, automatic, self-organization. Thus insentient matter can organize itself to produce life; single cell organisms can organize themselves to produce multicellular beings, unconscious life forms can organize themselves to produce conscious life forms all the way up to Homo sapiens sapiens. Indeed Nürnberger extrapolates this to include the self-organization of spirituality and God-consciousness.

Emergence is certainly a controversial concept. Christian apologists such as Lennox and McGrath find this a difficult to accept and do not believe that enough scientific evidence has yet been amassed to make it more than an idea. However the Christian astronomer Polkinghorne agrees that research seems to indicate that, 'in any complex system there are subtle thresholds that radically transform the systems behaviour when they are crossed' and thus may result in more complex, higher order systems. Moreover because the theory of emergence is advocated by leading scientists who are professed skeptics and atheists it may

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help the searching 'modern' to begin to see that the idea of a biblical purposeful Creator, as witnessed to in the bible and the Christen faith, is not unreasonable.

It is with the second movement in this apologetic that I have problems. It seems to me that in his desire to present Christianity to those influenced by naturalism in lucid, understandable terms Nürnberger becomes too simple and departs, at times, from the witness of the biblical revelation. He describes his conversion and confesses that he has a personal relationship with God, has experienced answers to prayer and what he considers to be miracles. His knowledge of the bible is insightful and his biblical exegesis makes informative and interesting reading. Yet in seeking to 'make good men wish it were true' it is so easy to neglect the ineffable mystery of the Christian revelation. Christianity is anything if not a supernatural, miraculous religion. From the questions and comments that Nürnberger makes in this section of his book he is certainly fully aware of how controversial some of his doctrinal thoughts are! Maybe his purpose is to make us think and debate about these issues which can only serve to make the church aware of how these issues come across to scientific naturalists and perhaps hone our apologetics so that they become more effective.

I would agree with Barth who commented that, 'Trinity is the Christian way of saying God'. This means that I cannot accept Nürnberger's contention that the Trinity is a simple concept. Yes, indeed there is the doctrine of 'divine simplicity' that emerged in the fourth century debates about the Trinity in the early church. Yet this does not mean that humankind can understand His Being and it that it can be logically grasped or represented adequately by any metaphor. Further to this the biblical revelation of the economic Trinity (I am aware of Rahner's rule that the 'economic' Trinity is the 'immanent' Trinity and the 'immanent' Trinity is the 'economic' Trinity) reveals that the three persons of the Godhead are all God who participate in the Trinity's purposing feeling, thinking, communicating and acting. I think it perhaps best to take our cue in apologetics from the presentation to the apostle Paul by the author of the Acts in chapter seventeen. He seeks to build bridges to the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers by being extremely logical and rational yet ends his presentation of the Christian faith by facing them up to the supernatural reality of the miracle of Christ's resurrection. In addition he puts most of his letters within a trinitarian framework.

Finally I must admit that I agree with a comment made by a colleague of Nürnberger, which he, with commendable frankness, records in his book, that Nürnberger is in danger of robbing Christianity of its eschatological hope in expressing uncertainty about the reality of the historical

resurrection, eternal life and the parousia. Scientific naturalists might find these eschatological truths hard to swallow but surely they are the central truths of the gospel, otherwise it is no longer the good news that Jesus proclaimed.

Yet, despite this, I believe that for even for those Christians that disagree with Nürnberger about these doctrinal issues, as I do, this book has great value in contributing to an evangelical missional apologetic that can be used in sharing the gospel with scientific naturalists by helping us to understand their worldview so that we might dialogue with them. It fulfills Pascal's apologetic purposes by demonstrating that Christianity is not contrary to reason, but worthy of respect; will add to the *suma bona* of humankind on this planet if practiced; and that it is based on historical truth.

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