H-Net Reviews
in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Olson G, Richard. *Science and Religion, 1450-1900.* Westport: Greenwood Press, 2004. 320 pp. $67.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-313-32694-3.

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Published on H-Ideas (January, 2008)

Professor Olson is no stranger to the topic, having published widely on the interactions between science and religion, including his work *Science Deified and Science Defied* (1982). The excellence of his present volume reviewed in this article is evidenced by its 2006 reprint in paperback by Johns Hopkins University Press.

In his analysis, Olson takes a middle way between Kantians who claim science and religion are completely separate disciplines with no authentic interactions, and modern liberal Protestant theologians influenced by Alfred Whitehead who "insist that God is part of the natural world and co-evolves with it; so any change in scientific knowledge of nature constitutes a change in our understanding of God" (p. 2). Instead, Olson posits that both disciplines have interacted and even cooperated. Even acknowledging the precept of biblical accommodation, the complete separation of theology–"the queen of the sciences"–from the natural sciences throughout most of the early modern period was inconceivable. Olson also convincingly claims that science's descriptive knowledge and religion's prescriptive knowledge do not necessarily conflict; in an applied case study, he demonstrates that seemingly obvious cases of "war" between science and religion such as Galileo's trial often are about other cases of struggle entirely. For instance, Galileo could be a jerk about priority of discovery, and he was often a jerk to Jesuit astronomers who could have been powerful patrons and who instead, became powerful enemies.

With this conceptual basis established, comes a rapid presentation in accessible prose of Christian humanism, science and Catholicism (1550-1700), science and religion in England (1590-1740), Newtonian religion, Kant and post-Kantian reactions, mosaic and secular geology, and Darwinism. I was particularly impressed with the clarity of the description of hermeticism and the Yates thesis, a topic which is often impenetrable to undergraduates.

In a survey such as this, where the author has to pick and choose his topics, particular areas must be omitted. That said, while the section on nineteenth-century life sciences (focusing on natural theology and Darwinism) is excellent, there is little about the chemical or astronomical sciences in the nineteenth centuries.[1] For instance, the "interpenetration" of scientific and religious ideas in Faraday's work was briefly mentioned in a sentence introduction, but nothing follows. Faraday was a devout member of the Sandemanian denomination, a branch of the Church of Scotland. As Geoffrey Cantor has demonstrated, Faraday's concept of a divine unity in nature was key to his understanding of the relationship between forces of nature such as electricity, light, and magnetism.[2] The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion at St. Edmund's College, University of Cambridge also recognizes his combination of a "deep religious faith with an outstanding scientific career."[3]

I also noticed a certain bias towards Anglo-American sources in the bibliography.[4] That said, I was thus surprised that Rob Iliffe's online Newton Project, which was created to scan, transcribe, and analyze Newton's theological manuscripts (http://www.newtonproject.sussex.ac.uk/) was not listed. It is possible that the book's remit did not allow for internet sources to be included. But the online apparatus surrounding the Newton Project is quite accessible to advanced undergraduates, David Haycock's work on William Stukeley being particularly noteworthy.

Olson however has written a book that will become an indispensable reference for undergraduate research and pedagogy for this rich and interesting topic. As his volume ends with Charles Darwin, I hope that Professor Olson will soon delight the scholarly community with his treatment of scientific and religious interactions in the twentieth century. The book is highly recommended.

Notes

[1]. This was also a point noted by Helge Kraugh in her review of this work in *Centaurus* 49, no. 2 (2007): 181-182.

[2]. Geoffrey Cantor, *Michael Faraday: Scientist and Sandemanian* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991).

[3]. "Who was Michael Faraday?" Faraday Institute for Science and Religion, St. Edmund's College, Cambridge, http://www.st-edmunds.cam.ac.uk/faraday/Faraday.php, accessed July 1, 2007.

[4]. Again I must agree with Kraugh in this point.

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Citation: Anna Marie Roos. Review of G, Olson; Richard, *Science and Religion, 1450-1900.* H-Ideas, H-Net Reviews. January, 2008.
URL: http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=14006

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