
Philip Johnson, a graduate of Harvard and the University of Chicago Law School, and a professor at the University of California at Berkeley, is a scholar in criminal law. This is a sequel to his previous much-praised and debated book, Darwin on Trial.

Johnson protests the marginalization of religion in chapter one, “Is God Unconstitutional?” There is a tendency for a religious viewpoint on an ethical issue to be disputed in the public arena because this viewpoint is based on a belief in God. This phenomenon is due to a change in the prevailing religious philosophy from a traditional theism to metaphysical naturalism. Johnson criticizes the scientific basis of this new philosophy, a purely naturalist account of creation. He points out that the proposal of Stephen Hawking in A Brief History of Time about the origin of the physical laws and the conjecture of Francis Crick in The Astonishing Hypothesis about materialistic theory of mind are metaphysical stories, not science. These philosophical speculations rest on the success of the Darwinian theory of evolution. Johnson then summarizes and updates his criticism of evolution in “Is there a Blind Watchmaker?”

After the publication of Darwin on Trial, Johnson engaged in debate and defense of his viewpoint with scientists, Christian and non-Christian alike, and theologians. Here he bemoans theologians who accommodate theology to scientific naturalism and criticizes some Christian scientists in their espousing methodological naturalism as their epistemological base. This methodology holds, by definition, that there is no God of the gaps, and it is inconsistent with theistic realism. He further elaborates in the Appendix about the difference between methodological naturalism and theistic realism in their philosophy and possible scientific hypotheses.

Johnson argues that metaphysical naturalism leads inevitably to relativism in ethics and politics, ultimately to tribalism or partisanship. Also due to the influence of metaphysical naturalism upon law and education, welfare, sexual promiscuity, divorce, and abortion become problems of society. Johnson laments the phenomenon of the cultural war and praises the virtues of civility and open debate in a free and pluralistic society. He points out that conservative Christians are angry, not because of disagreement, but because of marginalization through a subtext of contempt.

Overall this is a learned and thoughtful book which depicts the troubles of American society. The author demonstrates his knowledge of science, literature, philosophy, education, and law.

Most of the book is accurate, especially about the description of problems. However, Johnson places too much blame on the scientific community for social ills. The limits of science regarding origin, purpose, and destiny of humankind are recognized by some eminent scientists. The metaphysical speculations of popular scientists have not been accepted by the scientific world in general. Good science journals are careful about their statements; e.g., the journal Science (14 July 95, p.164) reported about limitations of epidemiological studies. The scientific community also worries about exaggeration, misconduct, and fraud in science.

The author proposes that theistic realism can generate different hypotheses on the question of common ancestry from those based on naturalism. These hypotheses should be falsifiable in the language of Karl Popper. Christians hope that the data from experiment or observation can differentiate these two kind of models derived from theism or naturalism. If so, then natural theology will find its completion and people may recognize God. However, this does not lead to the Triune God as revealed in the Scripture. If natural theology cannot succeed, then Christians need to admit that science is in the realm of general revelation or common grace, and theology covers mostly special revelation or particular grace (Karl Barth also argued for the autonomy of theology). In their natural condition, people are not able to comprehend spiritual truth; similarly, observing the nature world and making logical inference may not open the eyes of faith (the created order is now under a curse, see Gen. 3:17-19).

To lead people to salvific knowledge requires more than natural theology (Ps. 19:1-14 complete verses 1-6). It requires Christian examples and the work of the Holy Spirit. Johnson blames liberal Christianity for leading the path to naturalism. Conservative churches may also be culpable in their neglect of social justice. To solve the problems of the society, Christians have to follow the example of believers in the early church who, according to T. R. Glover, out-thought, out-lived, out-died the adherents of the non-Christian religions in the Roman world. The only way to have a respectable voice in science and intellectual world is to nurture more good scientists and scholars from the evangelical fold.

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This book is a member of a series on “Developing Science and Technology Education” and is authored by Michael Poole, who for 20 years served as a lecturer in Science Education at King’s College, London where he is currently Visiting Research Fellow. The series is designed to encourage teachers and curriculum developers to continue to rethink how science and technology should be taught in schools... what is the relationship between science and technology?” The author’s own purpose is summarized in the final words of the book: “I have argued in this book that science should be neither defied, deni-