

2-1-2009

Review of Cosmology: From Alpha to Omega: The Creative Mutual Interaction of Theology and Science

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Theological Studies, Vol. 70, No. 1 (February 2009): 246. [Publisher link](#). This article is © SAGE Publications and permission has been granted for this version to appear in [e-Publications@Marquette](#). SAGE Publications does not grant permission for this article to be further copied/distributed or hosted elsewhere without the express permission from SAGE Publications.

Book Review of *Cosmology: From Alpha to Omega: The Creative Mutual Interaction Of Theology And Science*,

by Robert John Russell.

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Grounded in 25 years of teaching and reflection, physicist-theologian Robert Russell has developed an impressive method for exploring the relationship between Christian theology and the natural sciences that he calls “creative mutual interaction” (CMI). Here he applies the method to three topics: (1) God and creation ex nihilo in light of scientific cosmology, (2) continuous creation and the problem of natural “evil” in relation to physics and biology, and (3) eschatology when considering theories about the future of the universe. Most of the ten essays were previously published or delivered as lectures, but R. has revised and arranged them neatly into a systematic treatment. His grasp of the subject matter has been nourished by conversations with major contributors to the burgeoning interdisciplinary religion-science field, many with whom he has worked closely through various endeavors sponsored by the Center for

Theology and the Natural Sciences (Berkeley, Calif.), which he founded in 1981 and continues to direct.

Particularly illuminating is R.'s introduction that traces the steps leading to his CMI method. His journey began with his early encounter at Carlton College with the "critical realism" of Ian Barbour, the doyen of the interdisciplinary religion-science field, and led subsequently to Arthur Peacocke's epistemic holism and Sallie McFague's understanding of models and metaphors, to Ernan McMullin's notion of "consonance" (to which R. adds "dissonance"), to Wolfhart Pannenberg's qualifications about the contingency of the universe and to Nancey Murphy's use of Lakatos's configuration of scientific research method for modeling theological exploration. A diagram of CMI (23) helps visualize the manner in which R.'s method yields effective reconstructions of theological claims informed by the natural sciences and new venues of scientific research inspired by these reconstructions.

Scholars interested in an option for relating theology and the natural sciences that retains the distinctiveness of both will appreciate R.'s insightful efforts. Professors who focus on the relationship between the disciplines will find the book most appropriate for graduate students.