

he replies (267). But Brand exhibits no predilection for easy answers.

In his passion to defend young-earth creationism and flood geology, Brand overlooks several of the most crucial science/faith questions. Why is death a seemingly integral component of all modern, healthy ecosystems? Why did an all-wise God create a world in which pain and death could become so prevalent? How does death relate to the problem of evil? Did God create the universe in such a way that both chance and determinism would play a role? How is chaos involved in determining order? Does God ever use chaos and other natural processes to create? What stewardship responsibilities do Christians have toward the creation? These questions transcend the interesting, but more mundane considerations of evolving gene pools, enigmatic fossils, and planetary chronology. Readers, however, will need to look elsewhere for discussions of these issues.

Faith, Reason, and Earth History is poorly indexed, but well referenced and richly illustrated. It will provide a useful starting point for discussions of science and faith in churches, colleges, and universities. I applaud Brand's effort to address this contentious and potentially divisive topic with candor, thoughtfulness, and humility.

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Byrne, James M. *Religion and the Enlightenment: From Descartes to Kant*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996. xiii+253 pp. Paper, \$22.00.

James Byrne, senior lecturer in theology and religious studies at St. Mary's University College in London, has published an excellent book on seventeenth- and eighteenth-century religious thought. *Religion and the Enlightenment: From Descartes to Kant* seeks to place in context and understand the ideas, both religious and secular, that gave rise to modernity and modern religious thinking.

The book is divided into ten chapters. The first two provide a historical introduction and context to the Enlightenment, while the next seven chapters analyze the thought and writings of major thinkers from Descartes to Kant. The concept undergirding the whole book is Byrne's belief that the Enlightenment is not to be studied as "a clear and unified train of thought . . . or as simply an interesting historical period." Rather, he views the Enlightenment "as a particular cultural space within which there emerged new ideas, new developments, even new scientific disciplines, and which has shaped for better or for worse the world in which we live today" (229-230). In spite of attempts to concisely reduce the Enlightenment to a few characteristics, he specifies that one should not be misled to think that this period was therefore a coherent movement. The reality was that this "period was one of intellectual exploration and even thinkers who are sometimes brought under the same label actually held widely divergent views" (14); the Enlightenment "varied from nation to nation and from culture to culture" (52). According to the author, the common cause of the Enlightenment is not to be found in what its most famous thinkers agreed on but rather in what they rejected: "the weight of tradition, the power and influence of the church,

superstition in all its forms, obscurantism in the sciences, and an overly negative vision of human potential" (179).

According to Byrne, in his two first historical chapters, the Enlightenment was characterized by a dynamic concept of reason as a means to discover the truth about humanity and the world, a scepticism with which it approached social and religious institutions and historical traditions, and the emergence of the scientific method to acquire new knowledge. Arising out of the Thirty Years War (1618-1648), this period saw numerous attacks on Christianity and religious life and thought "which sowed the seeds of the predominantly secular society in which we live today" (17). But the Enlightenment did not see a widespread exodus of believers from the Christian churches, for it was virtually impossible to conceive a purely secular society at that time, because the "eighteenth century remained, on the whole, a period of widespread religious practice and even revival" (31). Important religious movements such as Pietism in Germany and Methodism in England emerged during this period, ran parallel to the Enlightenment, and were untouched by it. Thus, for Byrne, the "emergence of the secular world was gradual" (32).

In chapter 3, he introduces Enlightenment thought with the works of French philosopher René Descartes whose philosophical principle, *Je pense donc je suis*, is, according to Byrne, the basis for his contributions to subsequent Christian theology. Descartes' *Méditations* formulate a rational philosophy that is independent of all sensory perception which leads to a rational argument for the existence of God and the immortality of the soul.

In chapter 4, in contrast to Descartes, Blaise Pascal is presented as one who did not share the Enlightenment ideal and whose understanding of the depravity of human nature in his *Pensées* and other works emphasized the limitations of reason and its abilities to know God on its own. Byrne affirms that "Pascal's thought is a reaction to key elements of Enlightenment thinking almost from its inception" (95). Nevertheless, the author believes that Pascal's "emphasis on the intensely personal nature of the commitment of religious belief, his nuanced judgment on the use of reason, and his dogged insistence on the essentially alienated state of humanity make his thought highly attractive to the contemporary reader" (92). Thus, for Byrne, Pascal exemplifies the difficulties in trying to analyze the Enlightenment and conceive it as a unified train of thought.

In chapters 5 and 6, Byrne discusses how deism and atheism arose as the role of reason as a means of understanding eternal truths shifted to become a way of investigating the present world. According to the author, this "shift in reason's self-understanding had implications for the role of religion in interpreting the world and for the way in which God's relation to the world was viewed" (100). Byrne sees in the works of Spinoza, Locke, Shaftesbury, Paine, and others, attempts to rationalize all religious thought to the point of establishing all beliefs independently from revealed religion and religious authority. Since the eighteenth-century society could not be conceived without reference to religion, which would have meant the abandonment of all morality, Byrne believes the far distant God of deism was the answer to religious skepticism on its way to atheism. Yet, such thinkers as Pierre Bayle asserted that virtuous conduct and moral life were possible

outside the realms of religious life, on the basis of individual conscience, the next step on the path to atheism became evident. If one is to be skeptical about all revealed religion, then one might as well be skeptical about the existence of the deist God. The works of Voltaire, Diderot, and Hume built upon this concept. But again, Byrne emphasizes, one is to be careful not to interpret atheism as a widespread thought in the eighteenth century. Explicit atheism was confined to a few radical thinkers among the educated people and gradually became part of the popular consciousness.

In chapter 7, "New Light or Old?: Science and Religion," Byrne traces the evolution of the concept of materialism from the time of Newton to the end of the eighteenth century. As Newtonian inductive reasoning replaced Cartesian deductive thinking, problems arose as to who or what was responsible for the inherent properties of matter. "Simply put, if the theories and observations of science could explain nature, then why postulate the intervention of anything beyond nature? . . . Thus," estimates Byrne, "this problem of the nature of matter—on the surface a purely scientific issue—turns out to be of crucial significance in understanding what was at stake between science and religion in the Enlightenment" (157). Such thinking would spread doubt on major tenets of religious orthodoxy such as the immateriality of the soul. What we see happening in the middle of the eighteenth century is the de-theologizing of human physiology; where Newton had seen the power of God, others saw only natural processes.

In chapter 8, Byrne presents another thinker whose thought ran counter to the Enlightenment's ideals, Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Although he thinks Rousseau's thought was radically independent and open to conflicting interpretations, Byrne nonetheless believes that his clear rejection of the doctrine of original sin and acceptance of mankind's nature as inherently good made his teaching "subtly but deeply destructive of traditional Christian morality. . . . His vision of human innocence was instrumental in the emergence of a de-theologized anthropology on which the rationale of the human sciences depends" (201).

Lastly, Byrne addresses Kant's critique of reason and claims that there "is no doubt that in his critique of religious thought and practice, in his demand that we take responsibility for our own moral lives, in his advocacy of toleration and rejection of all sectarian differences, he [Kant] formulated a vision of the human person before God that still stands as one of the greatest achievements of Enlightenment thought" (226). In his book Byrne argues forcefully and effectively about the various facets of Enlightenment thinking and its impact upon modern religious thought. One beauty of this book lies in its openness about the difficulty of systematically categorizing Enlightenment thinking and its honest presentation of various and contrasting viewpoints and ideas. Byrne's mastery of the works of major thinkers is evident, and his ability to detect in them various seminal ideas is remarkable. This book, which can serve as a textbook in graduate-level modern theology courses, is well worth reading as an introduction to the Enlightenment period and to modern ways of thinking.