background is minimal, but also that there is need for theological exploration of what "atheism" means for many today.

A short concluding chapter, "From Rhetoric to Reality," takes the research outcomes towards action. Its main message is that space is needed "where atheist scientists and religious believers can *find their own* connections" (p. 149, emphasis added; this does not mean more conferences!). The final heading is, "Why We Should Care" (p. 150). The answer given is: for the well-being of science, religion—and the common good.

An Index concludes this significant publication, which I have no hesitation in commending to interested readers.

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David Bradshaw and Richard Swinburne (eds.): *Natural Theology in the Eastern Orthodox Tradition*

St Paul, MN: IOTA Publications, 2021; xii + 204 pages.
ISBN-13: 9781735295138.

The volume here considered includes seven contributions preceded by an introduction. The editors, David Bradshaw (Professor of Philosophy at the University of Kentucky) and Richard Swinburne (Emeritus Professor of the Philosophy of Religion at the University of Oxford; Fellow of the British Academy) are Orthodox Christian philosophers. The volume explores the suitability of the idea of natural theology—understood as "the attempt to support the existence of God, and to investigate the divine attributes, through philosophical reasoning" (p. 1)—for Orthodox Christian ways of knowing. Its aim is to retrieve natural theology as integral to Orthodox Christianity's patrimony. The volume is meant for historians of culture, philosophers, religious studies

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scholars, and theologians, the contributions illustrating high academic standards that exceed the reach of average readers.

The challenge the volume addresses is the fact that natural theology was, and largely remains, typical for Western Christian thinking. The chapter by Richard Cross shows just that ("Medieval and Early Modern Natural Theology in the West"; pp. 65–88). The opinions presented within this volume are not of one piece. Thus, Richard Swinburne ("Natural Theology for Today"; pp. 175–196) firmly believes that natural theology suits Orthodox Christianity, with a range of contributions, by Alexei Fokin ("Natural Theology in Patristic Thought: Arguments for the Existence of God"; pp. 23–50), David Bradshaw ("Natural Theology in St Gregory Palamas"; pp. 51–64), and Paul Gavrilyuk ("Natural Theology in Modern Russian Religious Thought"; pp. 89–124), providing historical evidence that supports this view. Their contributions fortunately complement the unilateral account of the facts in *The Oxford Handbook of Natural Theology* (John Hedley Brooke, Russell Re Manning, and Fraser Watts, eds., 2013), which, except for Christopher Knight's input (pp. 213–226), makes no reference to non-Western Christian authors. In turn, by examining the thinking of several modern and contemporary Orthodox authors, Dionysios Skliris ("Reactions of Modern Greek Theologians to Natural Theology"; pp. 125–148) and Travis Dumsday ("Experiential Objections Against Natural Theology in Some Recent Orthodox Thinkers"; pp. 149–174) present the contrary view.

The volume undertakes to show that these stances are not irreconcilable. Bradshaw's contributions, that is, the chapter referred to above and the "Introduction" to the volume (pp. 1–22), suggest that they complement one another. Their complementarity, in turn, would secure the coherence of the volume itself. The argument Bradshaw puts forward is, to a large extent, compelling. In short, Orthodox Christians of past and present times have been combining various ways of knowing, ranging from rational and fideistic to experiential, contemplative, and mystical perspectives (pp. 4–15, 51–52). There would be room for natural theology, too.

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One of the most important lessons of this volume is the point of Bradshaw (pp. 4–8) and Swinburne (pp. 190–193), namely, that ancient and medieval theologians capitalised on arguments for God formulated by other cultures, including the available sciences, which they adopted, reinterpreted, and further developed. Theology is not insular, we learn. Relatedly, Swinburne points out that contemporary natural theology should devise new arguments that take into consideration the scientific culture (p. 194). This is an excellent reminder of the fact that, naturally, theology spearheads in two directions, engaging both those within and the outsiders. The two forms of discourse differ significantly but they cross paths often, including by deploying arguments pertaining to natural theology, sometimes drawing upon the available sciences. The usefulness of natural theology is unquestionable, regardless of the type of discourse that nestles it. Especially when it comes to outsiders, arguments derived from faith, the church's inner life, and the mystical experience (such as those discussed at pp. 149–174) cannot suffice. It is there that natural theology reigns.

But, I would say, to consider natural theology autonomous from the Christian experience, as Swinburne appears to propose (pp. 175–190), is unprofitable, unless it amounts to an academic exercise. For the Orthodox Christian tradition (see pp. 23–50, 51–64, 125–148, 149–174), an independent natural theology is as illegitimate and ineffectual as the modern separation of systematic, pastoral, liturgical, historical, and biblical theologies. This is more so today, when the age of natural theology in its classical form, of logical persuasion, is over (see Keith M. Parsons, "Perspectives from Analytic Philosophy," in *The Oxford Handbook of Natural Theology*, pp. 247–261, esp. 259–260). It is not over because the logic of natural theologians is faulty; as Swinburne's chapter shows, the logic is actually sophisticated. It is over because contemporary scientific culture does not draw conclusions based on logic; conclusions must be tested experimentally and substantiated factually. A different kind of rational persuasion is needed, therefore: one that builds, say, upon scientifically established facts *and* spiritual insight—moreover, one that works at the nexus of many disciplines, in patristic

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fashion. In suggesting this, I partially agree with Bradshaw and Swinburne's proposal that natural theology can, and should, be redeployed by Orthodox thinkers.

That said, I take exception to the fact that Swinburne presents Orthodox Christianity as welcoming a kind of natural theology that matches scholastic and modern rationalism. There are cracks in the wall of this assumption. On the one hand, Bradshaw and Fokin's chapters highlight the complexity of patristic and Byzantine ways of knowing, ultimately anchored in experience. On the other hand, as Skliris and Dumsday show, experientially obtained knowledge has moved major contemporary Orthodox theologians to oppose natural theology in its scholastic sense. Bruce Foltz (*The Noetics of Nature: Environmental Philosophy and the Holy Beauty of the Visible*, 2014) and Christopher Knight (*Eastern Orthodoxy and the Science–Theology Dialogue*, 2022) refer to this type of knowledge as "noetic" perception and consider it irreducible to rationalism. True, as Gavrilyuk's contribution shows, rationalism fared well in certain early modern Russian circles. But this trend matches what Georges Florovsky famously called the "Babylonian captivity" of Orthodox theology (*Aspects of Church History*, 1987; pp. 157–182), not a traditional way of knowing. What Florovsky meant by that phrase is the estrangement of Orthodox theology from its tradition by cultivating Western intellectualism. Against this backdrop, the idea of an Orthodox Christian natural theology emerges as a loaded concept unless we understand it outside the rationalist paradigm.

Be that as it may, the volume under consideration adds new dimensions to the complex world of natural theology, for which the editors and the contributors should be warmly congratulated.

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