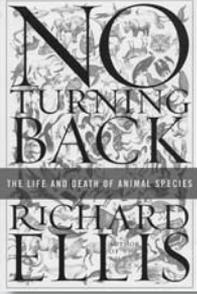


# Book Notes



Ellis, Richard, 2004, *No Turning Back: The Life and Death of Animal Species*, New York: Harper Collins, 448p, ISBN: 0060558032

—reviewed by Ralph D. Winter

After writing 11 books on forms of life in the sea, Ellis wrote one *The Empty Sea*, speaking of extinction of certain forms of underwater life. Then he did a book on already extinct sea life. Now he addresses the *general* question of extinction—of all forms of animal life. This book is a detailed and prodigious effort to give a range of opinions on the massive and mysterious disappearance of a thousand times as many forms of life as now exist. Rather than give answers it commendably stresses the unknowns in the lengthy story of extinctions.

It is clear that the human being has been by far the most destructive force. It is also clear, but mysterious, that present-day animal life is diminutive compared to earlier forms. Take for instance the ammonites with shells six feet across or flying pterosaurs with forty-foot wingspans.

But it does not question the existence of what might readily appear to the quite mysterious factor of violence in nature. It rightly laments the relatively huge attention scholars have given to the *origin* of species compared to their attention to the *demise* thereof.

Davis, James C., 2004, *The Human Story: Our History, From the Stone Age to Today*, New York: Harper Collins, 478p, ISBN: 0060516208

—reviewed by Ralph D. Winter

This is a truly fascinating book. I know of no other book which as simply and as readably recounts the human story in every part of the globe—not in generalities, but with intriguing detail at every point (yet with only the very most important dates, names and places).

Davis devotes a whole chapter to early Hebrew history, which covers the Biblical period, plus a twenty-page chapter to Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam as world faiths. However, religion is fairly absent in the entire remainder of his story. The index makes no mention of D. L. Moody, Billy Graham, Catholic, Protestant, Thomas Aquinas, etc.

This book admirably and winsomely presents the straight secular view of the human story. He is optimistic about the future due to his upbeat story of the past! Unlike Ellis' book, which covers a billion years, this story describes the last few seconds of that longer story (as the last 9 seconds of a 24-hour day).

Knoll, Andrew H., 2003, *Life on a Young Planet: The First Three Billion Years of Evolution on Earth*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 287p, ISBN: 0691120293

—reviewed by Ralph D. Winter

Knoll is Professor of Natural History at Harvard, and a world class paleontologist. His book's main title needs the subtitle to avoid misleading. It does not intend to discuss anything more than life prior to the Cambrian Period that began 543 million years ago. However, he repeatedly acknowledges the perplexities for the concept of Darwinian evolution posed by the suddenness of the Cambrian period. That period between ten and thirty million years in length, even if the latter length, is only 1% of the period of the development of life, and yet is the origin of almost all present forms of life.

He concludes with two pages devoted to comments about science and religion, and the moral power of the latter, and adds, "That these two ways of ways of

comprehending should be confused in either form or purpose strikes me as both absurd and unfortunate (p. 245)."

Diamond, Jared, 2005, *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*, New York: Viking, 598p, ISBN: 0670033375

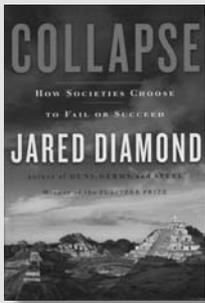
—reviewed by Ralph D. Winter

Having hit a home run with his earlier study entitled *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, Diamond is writing again. One difference is that this book is less boring. Again, his hallmark is his very wide sweep of knowledge which he brings to the plate about the human experience. In *Guns*, the most important thing about the book was the very significant question he raised: "Why and how did the West get ahead of the rest of the world?" In this book he addresses even more lengthily the even more urgent question, "Why do societies fail after flourishing?" This is the other side of the coin. This book and this second question is not more important but is both more fascinating and more urgent.

The book teems with examples of environmentally destructive situations leading to the decline of societies. It is a veritable encyclopedia of what human communities ought not to let happen. Amazing stories of corporate greed fill its pages.

His final, summary chapter is a *tour de force* of dangerous trends such as loss of arable land, toxicity in ground water, etc. But he is "cautiously optimistic." His key point of contrast with past collapsed societies is the fact that today (unlike the past economies he describes) we can be aware of what has gone wrong, and what is going wrong elsewhere, even if at a distance.

Incidentally, the fact that Diamond is a professor of geology demonstrates the fact that many different academic disciplines are being drawn into the conversation about the human future. Now we have *human* geography! The adjective justifies a very different thrust of study and concern from the earlier type of geography that had little or nothing to do with human beings.



Again, there is, as with his previous book, no awareness nor at least no reference to religious or ethical factors pro or con. Academic giants such as Harvard's saintly Christopher

Dawson (*Religion and the Rise of Western Culture, The Dynamics of World History*) are totally missing from the bibliography. I guess geographers don't need to know their history?

Parkin, ed, David, 1985, *The Anthropology of Evil*, Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 288p, ISBN: 0631154329

—reviewed by Ralph D. Winter

Just as some anthropologists make no mention of religion, determinedly seeing it as merely a part of culture, many more—perhaps in order not to appear judgmental—have avoided the word and even the concept of evil.

Parkin, Professor of African Anthropology in the University of London, acknowledges that hiatus. He gathered twelve other anthropologists (one American, the rest British) to address the phenomenon of evil, each from the viewpoint of the non-Western society of which they had special knowledge. He himself contributes one chapter on the perspectives of Muslims and Non-Muslims in coastal Kenya.

The various chapters of the book underscore the near futility of generating any very solid generalizations. Each presents a wildly different situation somewhere in the world. To generalize about concepts of evil is apparently far more difficult than to trace concepts of a high god.

Discussions of Judeo-Christian views, by way of exception to the global kaleidoscope, are to be found in the Editor's own twenty-five page Introduction and in the first chapter

entitled "Theological Thoughts about Evil" by Donald Taylor, a graduate student in his same department.

Both of these essays mention the distinctive personification of evil found in the New Testament—an idea not in the Hebrew Bible to anywhere near the same extent. In both cases this significant transition or progress of concept over the centuries is attributed either to the direct influence (while in Babylonian captivity) of "Persian dualism" (i.e. Zoroastrian dualism) or to the indirect influence of that dualism via Manichaean Christianity, which, indeed, took over unscathed the two equal Gods of the Zoroastrians, one good and one evil.

My own comment from here on, excuse me, is that standard Christianity, as exemplified by New Testament documents, s appropriated the Hebrew word for *adversary* (*satan*), and, perhaps, with the single exception of Jesus calling Peter a hindrance (*satanas*), used it dozens of times to refer to a powerful "god of this world." Even the Post-Exilic book of 1 Chronicles inserts the word *Satan* (21:1-25) in the place of the word *God* in the much earlier (2 Sam 24:1-25) verbatim story of David counting the people. I consider these two passages together to constitute the "Rosetta Stone of Biblical hermeneutics," displaying a new insight into the involvement of Satan, not merely the significance of God's overall sovereignty.

For us today it is very urgent to recognize that Augustine, trying to be different from his earlier Manichaean involvement, unwittingly took over a Neo-Platonic perspective of a god who himself did evil, Satan becoming unemployed. Augustine's enormously influential legacy in Western Christianity (not recognizing Satan's involvement) has led, and still leads, many to wonder why in daily life quite often "God does not make sense."

The missiological significance of this Augustinian "adjustment" is that we even today cannot go all out against evil if it in fact is of God—as when Jonathan Edwards wanted to defeat smallpox with vaccine he was warned

by the Massachusetts pastors that he would be "interfering with Divine Providence."

Souder, William, 2000, *A Plague of Frogs: The Horrifying True Story*, New York: Hyperion, 318p, ISBN: 0786863609

—reviewed by Ralph D. Winter

Here is an impressively thorough, four-year job of a professional newspaper reporter. What details! He leads you almost minute by minute in the lives of those key persons he introduces.

The book is a documentation of the massive, destructive, physical distortions appearing in frogs leading to their worldwide decline and in many cases total extinction. Most of the action in this narrative account takes place at first in northern Minnesota. By the end of the book it includes the entire planet, as well as amphibians and reptiles (not just frogs), since the distortions were that far-flung.

The trouble is that what began as a detective case in a specific locale, and which seemed to be understandable in a fairly short period of time, turns out, disappointingly, to be, even by the end of the book (and the four years), a jumbled mass of multiple factors—parasites, pesticides, increases in ultraviolet light, global warming, etc.

However, facts are facts: 7.5 thousand tons of pesticides are employed on just the corn fields of Minnesota alone (p. 18). And, harvesting of a certain type of frog dropped in ten years from 50 tons annually to less than one ton (p. 278). Unfortunately, the obvious role of pesticides can't even be explored: "Pesticides remain the prime suspect but their source remains off limits to investigators (p. 281)."

The last sentence reminds me of the shocking report of one of *Harpers Magazine* senior reporters, Barbara Ehrenrich, that Monsanto provides the money the American Cancer Society uses to fund their walkathons and runathons, but those funds are given *on the condition* that the ACS

not investigate toxic environments as a source of cancer!

Thus, missiologically, we see that the public continues to be deluded on the subject of the evil effects of contaminated ground water, harmful to sensitive wild life but inevitably to humans as well. Curiously the distortions of wild life seem always to begin in the sexual organs, interfering with procreation. It is said that 40% of the salmon going down the Columbia River change gender by the time they get to the ocean. What about gender confused humans? Obviously a society dominated by commercial considerations is not going to grapple with these problems effectively.

Fortey, Richard, 2004, *Earth: An Intimate History*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 444p, ISBN: 0375406263

—reviewed by Ralph D. Winter

This is another one-word-title book of his, following *Life: A Natural History of Four Billion Years of Life on Earth*. His earlier book relentlessly focused on the development of life forms without a whole lot of reference to the playground on which that development was taking place.

This more recent book fills in the amazing turbulent past of this planet, making you wonder how any kind of life could have survived.

For one thing this book is distinctly more than a jaunt across the globe describing interestingly diverse geography. It does that but at every point is conscious of the long story of millions of years behind what you see. Almost one's first impression is that this planet was not a good place for life to have been spawned. What with enormously destructive volcanic action, earthquakes, hurricanes, tsunamis and asteroidal collisions (barely mentioned), it seems that humans have worked around such events if not tossed like chips in an angry sea.

But it is in fact a travelog. Witty, urbane, highly sophisticated in dialogue, actually exciting to read, it becomes (as with the book on the

plague of frogs) difficult to distill systematic knowledge other than repeated recourse to the fundamental movements of plate tectonics. Inductively you must go. I find such books unnecessarily entertaining page by page but when the reader is not seeking entertainment but insight such books become difficult to mine.

Yet, overall, it is a splendid thing to take into account the long and horrendous history of this planet and not assume that things always used to be this way. The spectacular video, *Our Privileged Planet*, extols the fine tuning of atmosphere and gravitation which enables life as something which was obviously prepared designedly for human life. But it does not acknowledge so readily the stark horror of our planet's geologic past. Surely there was a more pacific planet that could have been chosen! However, if 45 huge asteroidal collisions slammed into the earth in just the last 500 million years was there theological meaning to that? Perhaps this was a repeated extinction of life forms so distorted from God's intent that starting over was the best plan? And then, the destruction that apparently preceded Genesis 1:1 (the result of which is described in 1:2?)—was that a very recent asteroid? The sequence of the following events in Genesis 1 would seem to describe that kind of event. We read of darkness on the entire planet from an enshrouding canopy of dust, the gradual setting of that dust enabling glimmers of light, the eventual appearance (not creation) of the Sun and Moon, etc., all inevitably witnessed in other parts of the planet and later faithfully recorded by Moses.

Regarding the thought just expressed I am very happy to report that after much searching, I discovered virtually in my own cultural backyard amazing support for this pre-Genesis view. See the Reflection on page 106.

Reagan, ed, Michael, 2004, *Reflections on the Nature of God*, Radnor, PA: Templeton Foundation Press, 160p, ISBN: 1932031693

—reviewed by Ralph D. Winter

This has got to be one of the most beautiful books you have ever held in your hands. Most of every page is a beautiful four-color picture of creation. The first part of the book to page 72 portray astronomical pictures that are breathtaking. Page 73 marks a

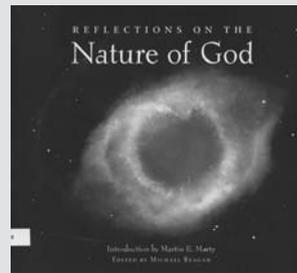
total shift to pictures of sights on earth, mostly animal life—some of the strangest and most exotic pictures you have ever seen.

I have three comments. The title may have been intended to have two quite different meanings. One referring to

nature as the handiwork of God. The other allowing nature to help us understand the nature, the attributes and essence of God.

Secondly, why, why did the editors select outer-space shots achieved by state of the art telescopes and yet not employ microscopes, and even electron microscopes, to display the even more incredible beauties and complexities of nature that are too small to be seen by the naked eye?

Thirdly, it is “passing strange” that the total harshness of outer space and the total violence of life on earth are totally ignored. Is that unworthy of mention? Or merely incomprehensible? Or, perhaps, controversial? Why is it so unlikely for modern man to take note of evil, especially of intelligent evil—the kinds of pathogens, for example, that pull down nine out of ten Americans into premature death usually amidst severe suffering? Can we avoid mixing that kind of information into our understanding of the nature of God? If not, what a handicap for our evangelism! **IJFM**



# InTheNews

## PRESS RELEASE

### *John Stott becomes Lausanne Honorary Chair*

Stott brings Important Historical Perspective, Connection and Vision

(29 June 2005) Rev. Dr. John R. W. Stott has been named Honorary Chair of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization (Lausanne). Dr. Stott is regarded by many as one of the most significant leaders in the evangelical movement. An article in TIME magazine in April named him one of the 100 most influential people in the world.

In making the announcement of Dr. Stott's new connection with Lausanne, Rev. S. Douglas Birdsall, Executive Chair of Lausanne, said in many ways the name John Stott is synonymous with Lausanne because of the key role he has played in the development of the movement. Birdsall added that as an exemplary churchman, scholar and preacher committed to the full counsel of God, Dr. Stott has "a heart and a vision for the world. Thus, he models the catchwords of Lausanne—the whole church taking the whole gospel to the whole world."

Dr. Stott's life-long service to Christ and to the work of the church provides a valuable model for emerging leaders and established leaders around the world to live a life that is, according to Birdsall, "consistent with the gospel we proclaim." Birdsall added that Dr. Stott's involvement with Lausanne will also "provide inspiration for Christian leaders worldwide as they come together to address the task of global evangelization through a revitalized Lausanne movement."

Dr. Stott has been involved with Lausanne in various leadership roles since the beginning of the movement. At the 1974 International Congress on World Evangelization, Dr. Stott served as chair of the drafting committee for the Lausanne Covenant and was one of the Covenant's principal writers. From 1974-81 Dr. Stott chaired the Lausanne Theology and Education Group. During the Second Lausanne International Congress on World Evangelization in 1989, Dr. Stott was drafting committee

chair for the Manila Manifesto, a document that affirmed the Lausanne Covenant and stated, among other things, ". . . the urgent need for churches, mission agencies and other Christian organizations to cooperate in evangelism and social action . . ." Together, the Lausanne Covenant and the Manila Manifesto continue to provide a theological and historical underpinning for denominations, ministries and individuals committed to sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ.

### Lausanne Occasional Papers

Last week, Lausanne held its International Leadership Team meeting in Hong Kong at which time Lausanne announced the release of 31 documents that address many of the major issues facing the church in the 21st Century. The documents, known as the 2004 Forum Lausanne Occasional Papers (LOPs), provide information, analysis and theological perspective on each of 31 issues identified as barriers to world evangelism and include ministry case studies and strategic recommendations to the church for addressing each issue. The 2004 LOPs are available for download at [www.lausanne.org](http://www.lausanne.org).

### Younger Leaders Conference in Malaysia

Lausanne leaders also announced a Younger Leaders Conference in 2006 in Malaysia that will focus on leaders aged 25 to 35, and the exploration of a Third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization to possibly be held between 2008 and 2014.