

JESUS AND THE GENOME

Is a coherent worldview that embraces both classical Christology and modern evolutionary biology possible? This volume explores this fundamental question through an engaged inquiry into key topics, including the Incarnation, the process of evolution, modes of divine action, the nature of rationality, morality, chance, love, and even the meaning of life. Grounded alike in the history and philosophy of science, Christian theology, and the scientific basis for evolutionary biology and genetics, the volume discusses diverse thinkers, both medieval and modern, ranging from Augustine and Aquinas to contemporary voices like Richard Dawkins and Michael Ruse. Aiming to show how a biologically informed Christian worldview is scientifically, theologically, and philosophically viable, it offers important perspectives on the worldview of evolutionary naturalism, a prominent perspective in current science–religion discussions. The authors argue for the intellectual plausibility of a comprehensive worldview perspective that combines both Christology and evolutionary biology in intimate relationship.

Michael L. Peterson is Professor of Philosophy at Asbury Theological Seminary. His books include *Science, Evolution, and Religion: A Debate about Atheism and Theism* with Michael Ruse (Oxford, 2016) and *Biology, Religion, and Philosophy: An Introduction* with Dennis R. Venema (Cambridge, 2021). He is also the general editor of the Cambridge Elements series *The Problems of God*.

Timothy J. Pawl is Professor of Philosophy at the University of St. Thomas. His books include *In Defense of Conciliar Christology: A Philosophical Essay* (Oxford, 2016) and *The Incarnation* (Cambridge, 2020). He has published dozens of academic articles and given nearly 100 academic or popular presentations on his work.

Ben F. Brammell is Professor of Biology at Asbury University, where he maintains an active research program in molecular ecology. He has published in many scientific journals, including *Conversation Genetics Resources* and *Comparative Biochemistry and Physiology*. He has received numerous research grants and given more than 100 presentations at scientific meetings.

Jesus and the Genome

The Intersection of Christology and Biology

MICHAEL L. PETERSON

Asbury Theological Seminary

TIMOTHY J. PAWL

University of St. Thomas

BEN F. BRAMMELL

Asbury University



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press & Assessment
 978-1-009-26861-5 — Jesus and the Genome
 Michael L. Peterson, Timothy J. Pawl, Ben F. Brammell
 Frontmatter
[More Information](#)



CAMBRIDGE
 UNIVERSITY PRESS

Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom
 One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
 477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
 314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
 New Delhi – 110025, India
 103 Penang Road, #05-06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment,
 a department of the University of Cambridge.

We share the University's mission to contribute to society through the pursuit of
 education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781009268615

DOI: 10.1017/9781009268585

© Cambridge University Press 2024

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions
 of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take
 place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press & Assessment.

When citing this work, please include a reference to the DOI 10.1017/9781009268585

First published 2024

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

NAMES: Peterson, Michael L., 1950- author. | Pawl, Timothy, author. | Brammell, Ben F.,
 author.

TITLE: Jesus and the genome : the intersection of Christology and biology / Michael
 L. Peterson, Asbury Theological Seminary, Kentucky; Timothy J. Pawl, University of
 St. Thomas, Minneapolis; Ben F. Brammell, Asbury Theological Seminary, Kentucky.
 DESCRIPTION: Cambridge, United Kingdom : Cambridge University Press, 2024. | Includes
 bibliographical references and index.

IDENTIFIERS: LCCN 2024014461 (print) | LCCN 2024014462 (ebook) |
 ISBN 9781009268615 (hardback) | ISBN 9781009268622 (paperback) |
 ISBN 9781009268585 (epub)

SUBJECTS: LCSH: Evolution (Biology)—Religious aspects—Christianity. | Religion and science.
 CLASSIFICATION: LCC BT712 .P48 2024 (print) | LCC BT712 (ebook) | DDC 231.7/652—dc23/
 eng/20240726

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2024014461>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2024014462>

ISBN 978-1-009-26861-5 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-009-26862-2 Paperback

Cambridge University Press & Assessment has no responsibility for the persistence
 or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this
 publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will
 remain, accurate or appropriate.

Since this book reminds us that biological life is about producing progeny,
I dedicate this book to my six inquisitive grandchildren in hopes that they
will grow to understand the truth and reality of the Incarnation and its
perfect harmony with biology — Michael Peterson

Mason Gates Peterson
Daisy Newman Peterson
Brody Lloyd Peterson
Ruby Ann Peterson
James Michael Peterson
Christopher Logos Peterson

Since this book reminds us that theological doctrine is about receiving that
which is taught, I dedicate this book to my mentors. Without any hope of
repaying the great debt I owe them, I here express my admiration of the
goodness and care they showed in my formation and continue to show in
my maturity, or what passes for it, at any rate — Timothy Pawl

Sandra Visser
Gilbert Meilaender
Eleonore Stump
Sandra Menssen

Since this book reminds us that knowing the truth allows a kind
of freedom that we would wish for all whom we love, I dedicate this
book to my nieces and nephew. May they grow in genuine knowledge
and love of the natural world, and may that truth set
them free — Ben Brammell

Gabryella Kateryn Mattern
Beckett Miles Mattern
Maddox Grace Schreiner
Bailey June Schreiner
Lily (Lil) Jane Schreiner

Contents

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>page ix</i>
Introduction	1
1 What Has Christology to Do with Biology?	5
In Search of Our Humanity	6
Tertullian’s Question, Updated	9
Chalcedonian Christology and the Human Genome Project	12
Realism in Christology and Genetics	17
Launching the Project	20
2 The Encounter between Christianity and Science	21
The Scientific Revolution Challenges Religious Views	21
The Machine Model Replaces the Organic Model	25
What Is the Relation between Theology and Science?	29
Do Science and Religion Conflict?	34
Are Science and Religion Independent?	39
Is Dialogue between Science and Religion Possible?	41
Can There Be Integration of Science and Religion?	43
3 The Doctrine of the Incarnation	46
Biblical Background of Belief in the Incarnation	47
Early Debates about the Identity of Jesus	51
The Great Councils and Creeds	53
Orthodox Christology	55
Is Orthodox Christology Self-Consistent?	60
4 Evolutionary Biology and Christian Responses	67
Biology before Darwin	68
Darwin, Paley, and Organic Complexity	71
Mendel, Genetics, and the Modern Synthesis	74
Converging Confirmations of Evolution	78

	What DNA Reveals about Evolution	83
	Responses to Evolution, Christian and Otherwise	92
	An Evolutionary Perspective	99
5	Christology and Genomics	101
	Born of the Virgin Mary	102
	Miracles Generally Considered	103
	The Miracle of the Virgin Birth	106
	Jesus’s Genome in Light of Science and Theology	111
	Sexual Procreation and Original Sin	115
	Genetic Shuffling and God’s Plan	120
6	The Grand Miracle and Empirical Science	130
	The Resurrection and Evolutionary Biology	132
	The Soul and Evolutionary Biology	138
	Truth and Evolutionary Biology	145
	Morality and Evolutionary Biology	149
	Love and Evolutionary Biology	156
7	Reflections on Jesus and Evolutionary Theory	165
	Two Questions of Cosmic Origins	167
	Scientific and Christian Perspectives on the Origin of Life	173
	Population Genetics and the First Humans	177
	Interpreting Adam in Light of Genetics	181
	Christian and Naturalistic Explanations of Suffering	189
	Christology in an Evolutionary World	196
8	Evolutionary Christology in the Worldview Arena	198
	Biological Theories of Religion	199
	Darwin’s Gift to Christology	207
	Biology in Christian and Naturalist Worldviews	212
	Meaning and Purpose in Our Rival Worldviews	215
	Meaning Incarnate	221
	Epilogue: The Impact of Our Study	223
	<i>Glossary</i>	225
	<i>Select Bibliography</i>	233
	<i>Index</i>	235

Acknowledgments

While working on this book, we accumulated many debts of gratitude that we recognize here. Our editor Beatrice Rehl was enthusiastic about the project from the beginning. Darrell Falk and Dennis Venema offered advice along the way. Mara Eller made stylistic suggestions on the manuscript. Michael's research assistant, Jonathan Dean, conscientiously proofread the final draft. And Michael's wife, Rebecca Peterson, also proofread and helped refine the manuscript. We are grateful for all these generous efforts that helped improve the book.

The sabbatical Michael received from Asbury Theological Seminary for fall 2023 provided a perfect opportunity to concentrate on research and writing. Tim received a University Scholars Grant from his home institution, the University of St. Thomas, which provided time to complete this project. And Ben's home institution, Asbury University, made significant contributions to his work in the Galápagos, which afforded Ben the opportunity to do extensive work on this book while on the island of San Cristóbal, the first island Darwin visited.