

SCIENCE AND CHRISTIAN ETHICS

There is a growing crisis in scientific research characterized by failures to reproduce experimental results, fraud, lack of innovation, and burnout. In *Science and Christian Ethics*, Paul Scherz traces these problems to the drive by governments and business to make scientists into competitive entrepreneurs who use their research results to stimulate economic growth. The result is a competitive environment aimed at commodifying the world. In order to confront this problem of character, Scherz examines the alternative Aristotelian and Stoic models of reforming character, found in the works of Alasdair MacIntyre and Michel Foucault. Against many prominent virtue ethicists, he argues that what individual scientists need is a regime of spiritual exercises, such as those found in Stoicism as it was adopted by Christianity, in order to refocus on the good of truth in the face of institutional pressure. His book illuminates pressing issues in research ethics, moral education, and anthropology.

PAUL SCHERZ is Associate Professor of Moral Theology and Ethics at The Catholic University of America. He publishes broadly and teaches in the fields of bioethics and the relationship between religion and science.

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Paul Scherz
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NEW STUDIES IN CHRISTIAN ETHICS

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Christian ethics has increasingly assumed a central place within academic theology. At the same time, the growing power and ambiguity of modern science and the rising dissatisfaction within the social sciences about claims to value neutrality have prompted renewed interest in ethics within the secular academic world. There is, therefore, a need for studies in Christian ethics which, as well as being concerned with the relevance of Christian ethics to the present-day secular debate, are well informed about parallel discussions in recent philosophy, science, or social science. *New Studies in Christian Ethics* aims to provide books that do this at the highest intellectual level and demonstrate that Christian ethics can make a distinctive contribution to this debate – either in moral substance or in terms of underlying moral justifications.

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(continued after the Index)

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PAUL SCHERZ

The Catholic University of America



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General Editor's Preface

Two of the previous contributors have had considerable practical experience as working academic scientists before writing their monographs for *New Studies in Christian Ethics*. The first was Celia Deane-Drummond in *Genetics and Christian Ethics* (2006). Her original doctorate was in plant physiology; she held post-doctoral science fellowships at the Universities of British Columbia and Cambridge; and then became a Lecturer in plant physiology at Durham University. Only then did she turn to academic theology. The second was Christopher C. H. Cook in *Alcohol, Addiction and Christian Ethics* (2006). He originally qualified in medicine and trained as a psychiatrist, in time becoming Professor of the Psychiatry of Alcohol Misuse at the University of Kent. He too turned to academic theology at this midpoint in his career. Paul Scherz now joins them (as he explains in his Introduction) with a number of years of practical work as a laboratory biologist before his turn to academic theology. It is one thing for Christian ethicists without any significant background in practical science to write on science-related topics, but it is quite another for these three Christian ethicists. They bring a level of knowledge, experience, and credibility in scientific practice that the rest of us cannot quite match, admirably fulfilling the two central aims of *New Studies in Christian Ethics*:

1. To promote monographs in Christian ethics that engage centrally with the present secular moral debate at the highest possible intellectual level.
2. To encourage contributors to demonstrate that Christian ethics can make a distinctive contribution to this debate – either in moral substance or in terms of underlying moral justifications.

Paul Scherz's focus is on modern scientific culture, offering at the outset timely examples of how the entrepreneurial ideal is increasingly distorting scientific research – encouraging researchers to think of themselves as market actors and their work as being primarily focused on business opportunities. He is especially concerned with three aspects of what many

have called a contemporary crisis in science: (1) problems in reproducibility, (2) a lack of innovation despite increasing hyperbole about the promise of results, and (3) increasing levels of burnout among researchers. With his own direct experience of laboratory research, he is well placed to make these critical points in the opening chapters of this new monograph and then, with his additional theological training, to address them ethically and theologically in subsequent chapters. In the latter it is evident that he has a particular and critical interest in the works of Michel Foucault and Alasdair MacIntyre. He argues that a combination of Aristotelian virtues (following MacIntyre) and Stoic moral techniques (following Foucault) is needed within scientific culture today if its problems are to be addressed adequately. Stoic moral formation in particular, so he and a few other theologians have argued recently, presupposes that virtuous practices need to be cultivated in the midst of communities and social contexts that are not virtuous themselves but are, in various ways and to various degrees, morally distorted. More specifically, Christian faith and practice can, so he believes, deepen the risky truth-speaking that is needed (and sometimes lacking) within the scientific community, by tying it to trust and faith in God.

There is much here to stimulate further discussion. Paul Scherz offers a well-informed, original, and significant challenge to current scientific culture that, I believe, deserves to be taken very seriously indeed.

Acknowledgments

The impetus for this work began long ago, during my scientific training, and required the support and encouragement of a host of people to come to fruition. My deepest debt of gratitude belongs to my mentors, Bill Skarnes, Cliff Tabin, and Didier Stainier, and all of my lab mates in their laboratories. While I could feel the pressures of entrepreneurial science growing during my education, I was lucky enough to be trained by supervisors and colleagues who gave me an example of the best forms of scientific life. It is this training that provided the experiences and resources that allowed for the critique of the problems of contemporary science found in this book.

Though extensively reworked to address the problems of contemporary science, much of the analysis in this book arose from insights in my dissertation research in the Theology Department at the University of Notre Dame. There I benefited from my fellow students, including Luis Vera, Jeff Morgan, David Elliot, Angela Carpenter, and Brian Hamilton, who served as interlocutors throughout my graduate work, especially in the form of the moral theology dissertation writing group. Phil Sloan gave important advice on sections of this project. Jean Porter and Gretchen Reydam-Schils helped me to develop my understanding of Aristotelian and Stoic ethical theory and ensured that that training was well applied in this project. The project would not have been possible without the criticism and encouragement of my advisor, Jerry McKenny. His interest in Foucault's late ethics gave me the push I needed to start this project, and he has continued to provide invaluable support throughout its development into a book. Jerry is simply the best advisor I could have hoped to have had.

My colleagues at the Catholic University of America have been extremely helpful in the development of this project. I would especially like to thank John Grabowski, David Cloutier, and Bill Mattison, who read sections of this book and gave me important advice. I thank the School, especially

Dean Mark Morozowich, for granting a teaching release in order to complete revisions on the book. Catholic University's excellent students have helped me to refine parts of this book, including members of a doctoral seminar on Social and Spiritual Practices. Beth Lofgren, Julie Amajuoyi, and Mariele Courtois served as research assistants for this project thanks to the generosity of the School. Mariele read and commented on the entire manuscript, catching many infelicitous phrases and confusing sentences.

This work benefited from the questions and comments I received following presentations on aspects of this project at Cambridge's Faculty of Divinity, Yale Divinity School, Marquette's Department of Theology, Notre Dame's Virtues working group and Science as Practice Group, Harvard Divinity School's Ways of Knowing Conference, the University of Virginia School of Engineering, and the Conference on Medicine and Religion. The Theology, Medicine, and Culture Initiative at Duke Divinity School was kind enough to host a manuscript workshop where I benefited from the comments and support of Farr Curlin, Stanley Hauerwas, Warren Kinghorn, Brett McCarty, Paul Griffiths, Gopal Sreenivasan, Richard Payne, and Jeffrey Baker. Jeff Bishop and other participants in conferences of the International Academy for Bioethical Inquiry have given me valuable feedback.

This book includes material adapted from prior publications. Sections of Chapters 1 and 2 were developed from my articles "Knowledge and the Scientist-Entrepreneur," in *Pro Ecclesia* 24 (2015): 175–92; and "Trivial Pursuits: The Decline of Scientific Research," in *The Hedgehog Review* 18, no. 3 (2016): 80–9. Part of Chapter 6 is adapted from "Legal Suppression of Scientific Data and the Christian Virtue of *Parrhesia*," in the *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 35, no. 2 (2015): 175–92 (doi: 10.1353/sce.2015.0024). I thank the editors of these journals for the permission to use this material.

It has been wonderful to work with Cambridge University Press. I owe a debt of gratitude to Robin Gill, who has been an insightful, critical, and supportive editor throughout the entire process. Beatrice Rehl has been very helpful in guiding me through the publication process, as has Eilidh Burrett.

This intellectual support was essential to this project, but it also relied on material support from a number of sources. The generosity of Richard and Peggy Notebaert provided the fellowship that funded my graduate training in theology. The Issachar Fund assisted me in securing funding for developing the ideas from my dissertation into this book. The Institute for

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Human Ecology at the Catholic University of America, at which I am a faculty fellow, provided research funding as well as a venue to present my work. The Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture at the University of Virginia, at which I am a visiting faculty fellow, generously provided me with a home away from campus, a venue to present my work, and a rich community of interlocutors, especially Joe Davis, James Hunter, Matt Crawford, and Jay Tolson.

Finally, I thank my family, who has supported me through the long process of completing and revising this work. My children, Iggy and Lucy, filled my weekends and vacations with joy, reminding me that a scholar is never only a scholar, but partakes of even more important vocations. Without China Scherz's encouragement to pursue these ideas and concerns by completing a second doctorate in a completely different field, this book would never have come to be. She has read every word of this book many times after having already discussed all of these ideas in embryonic form before they ever reached the page.

