In the last decade, the study of the relationship between science and religion has become an academic boomtown, due largely to the interest and largess of Sir John Templeton, who made a fortune in the mutual fund business. Of the three main models of this relationship—conflict, coexistence, and cooperation—the Templeton Foundation funds almost exclusively those who endorse the latter view, which has led to a somewhat artificial uniformity of opinion in much of the recent literature. The main title of Peter Bowler's new history *Reconciling Science and Religion* might make one think that this volume was joining these ranks, but Bowler sees each model as 'the strategy of a particular interest group', all of which are jockeying for influence and he declines to endorse any simple model. His subtitle reveals the focused content of this engrossing book: it deals with the history of *The Debate in Early-Twentieth-Century Britain* about whether and how Christianity and science might be accommodated. Bowler's account of that debate shows that reconciliation is both easier and more difficult than one might today be led to believe.

This particular debate was motivated by the decline of church attendance that had begun in the 1890s. Religious leaders in the Anglican and the Free Churches hoped to stem the erosion of belief by modernizing Christianity so that it was not so grossly out of step with the prevailing scientific worldview. The reconciliation that the Anglican Modernists and others attempted was founded on an optimistic vision of progress and a purposefulness that science was supposedly finding in the material world.

This liberalized natural theology was supported by a group of eminent scientists, including Arthur Thompson, Arthur Eddington, Oliver Lodge, J.B.S. Haldane, and James Jeans. Bowler covers these and a host of lesser-known figures. The book is packed with information and a reader will discover some interesting new fact on nearly every page. The broad study undermines stereotypes by unearthing a wide range of complex positions (of greater or lesser plausibility) that do not necessarily fall along the lines one would expect.

E. W. Barnes, for instance, Canon of Westminster and later a bishop in the see of Birmingham, described himself as a liberal evangelical, and appealed to science to support the Protestant over the Catholic view of the Eucharist. However, he departed from the common evangelical view in his 'gorilla sermons', saying that the simple Genesis story was folklore. Christianity must accept evolution as a fact and recognize man not as a fallen innocent but rather as an animal who was slowly gaining spiritual understanding. None of Christ's teachings was undermined by this, he argued. Physicist Oliver Lodge appealed to science in quite a different manner. His work on electromagnetic radiation had convinced him of the reality of the ether, which he took to provide scientific support for spiritualism and theism. He believed that superior beings inhabited the ethereal plane, and that Christ's resurrection could be explained as his ethereal body made visible. The book also reveals the complexities in the views of opponents of reconciliation. Zoologist E. Ray Lankester, for example, wrote against religion not just because he believed it was an impediment to free thought, but also because he saw it as propping up the British class system.

Of course there were the expected conservative opponents of accommodation. Hilaire Belloc, G.K. Chesterton and C.S. Lewis were among those who worked to hold the line against religious modernism, which they saw as undermining true Christianity. They linked Darwinism and materialism, blaming them for what they saw as a crisis for civilized society. Lewis did not claim that science had to be opposed to religion in principle, but the kind of science he had mind was one that would be constrained by theism. He could not accept evolution and thought that the scientific idea of progress was itself an evil force. Man was fallen and flawed, and could only be redeemed by divine salvation. Bowler concludes that the attempted synthesis broke down when the pessimism of this neo-orthodoxy seemed to be borne out with the outbreak of war, bringing with it a general doubt in the scientific ideal of progress.

The debate often involves questions of epistemology and metaphysics. However, perhaps because scientists and scholars who turn their attention to the relationship of science and religion tend to do so later in life, their philosophical themes often lag a beat or two behind. Jeans and Eddington as well as the Anglican Modernists had been influenced by the idealist philosophy that had flourished in Oxford and Cambridge in the late Victorian period, which took the mental rather than the material as the primary reality, and spoke of gradual progress towards a higher nature. Henri Bergson's antimechanistic philosophy was quite influential. It was easy to link this kind of metaphysics to a view that took biological evolution to be progressive and possibly driven by non-material vital forces. But by this time, idealism was already giving way to
realism and then to logical positivism. That latter philosophy, forcefully heralded in Ayer’s *Language, Truth, and Logic*, would dismiss the opposition between religion and science in quite a different way, on the grounds that the theological utterances were not genuine propositions because they were not open to verification.

To a philosopher’s ears, much of the debate one hears today about science and religion sounds similarly out of touch, echoing what is now recognized as a simplistic positivist view or an equally simplistic rejection of the same. One looks ahead with dread to when the next generation will, no doubt, debate these issues in light of a simple-minded postmodernism.

Although the context and terminology has changed slightly, the lines of the current debate are not that different in the beginning of the 21st century than they were at the beginning of the 20th. We still hear from some quarters the same denunciations of naturalism, materialism and modernism. Conservative Christians continue to regard evolution as anathema and to blame it for social ills. Such unappetizing, reheated fare reminds one of C.D. Broad’s acerbic 1939 comment that the debate on science and religion was not just stale, but had ‘acquired something of the repulsiveness of half-cold mutton in half-congealed gravy.’ Bowler’s rich and nuanced history is a welcome change of fare.