



Book Reviews

Titters for Tipler

|Joseph Wilson

THE PHYSICS OF CHRISTIANITY by Frank J. Tipler (Doubleday), 286 pages, \$18.95 paper.

Rating: N

Once a respected physicist, Frank Tipler, it appears, has gone off the deep end.

[briefbreak][rssbreak]

Tipler's main thesis here is that the tenets of Christianity, from the Virgin Birth to the coming Apocalypse, can all be explained by physics – no faith required. He stretches the laws of quantum mechanics to absurd lengths to explain Biblical passages, and then claims to be stating the facts as they are known in mainstream physics.

He interprets Biblical parables literally and explains Jesus's resurrection as a case of "electroweak baryogenesis through quantum tunnelling." Apparently, a chemical analysis of the Shroud of Turin proves his thesis. He accuses those who disagree with him of being "anti-science."

I actually laughed out loud at his argument that what made Mary and Jesus so special was that they lacked the gene for "original sin." He claims that the gene that codes for sin is related to the growth of bones in animals, and proof of this, he says, is the fact that protozoa can't commit murder.

In a bizarre circular argument, Tipler argues that the physical laws of the universe don't change because God's word doesn't change, which means that humans were put on earth to ensure that the universe doesn't behave in a way that changes God's laws.

What makes this book pernicious instead of just silly is that it tries to fool people with equations and fancy terminology. Tipler's lack of self-reflection on how his faith has undermined his scientific objectivity is sad.

In an appalling moment of arrogance, Tipler seeks to give us a lesson on what makes a good scientist: "A scientist... must accept the results of experiment, and nothing but the results of experiment."

I started to keep track of all the logical inconsistencies in this book but lost count. Tipler should heed his own advice and stop insulting the traditions of both scientific and religious scholarship with asinine arguments.