

# Take and read

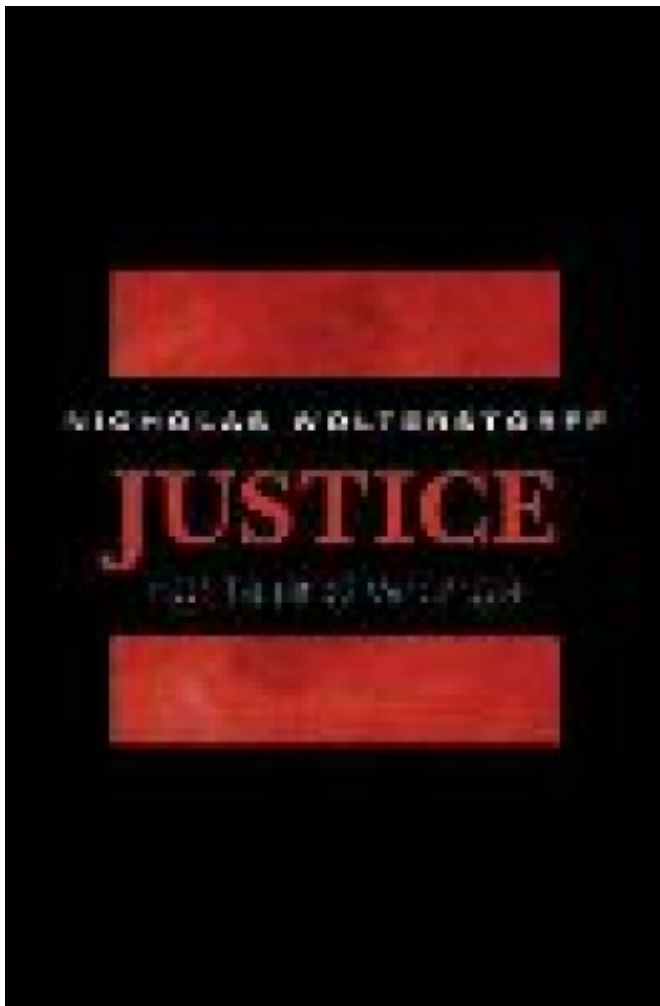
selected by [Robin Lovin](#) in the [May 6, 2008](#) issue

## In Review



### **A Secular Age**

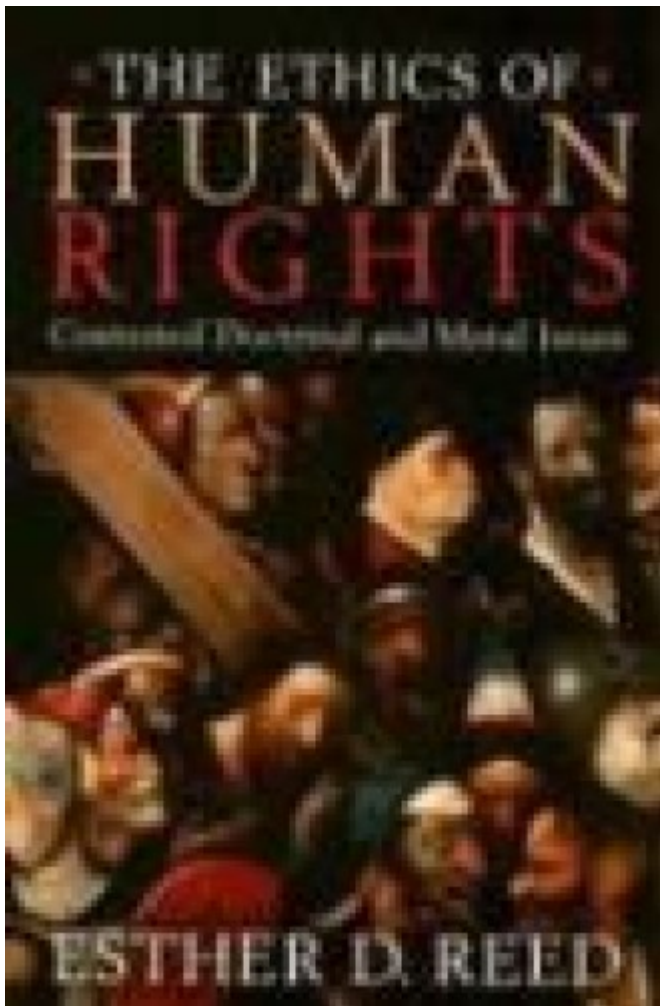
Charles Taylor  
Belknap



## **Justice: Rights and Wrongs**

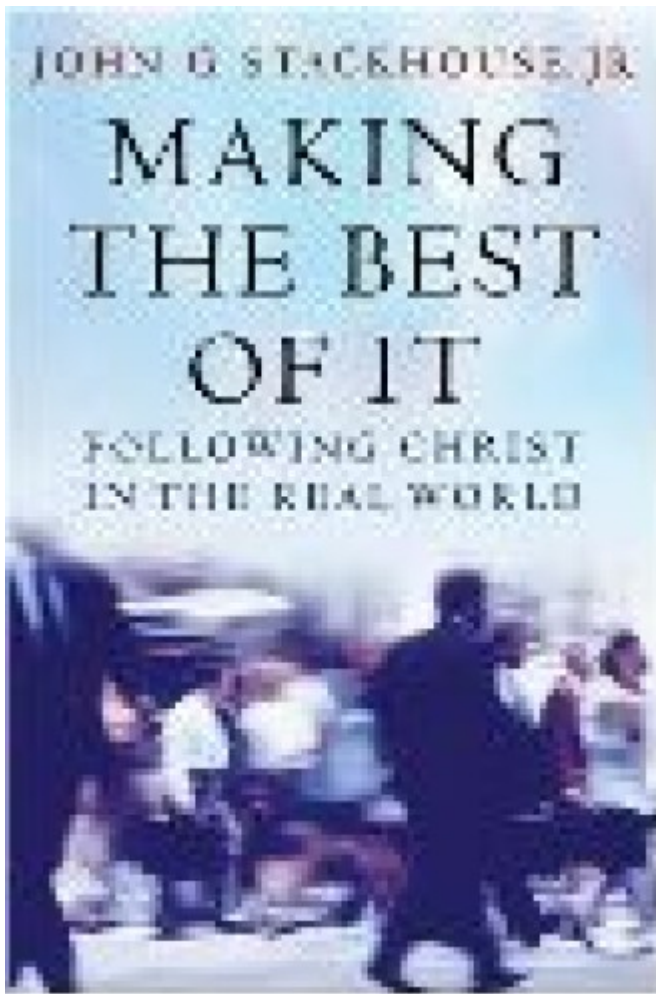
Nicholas Wolterstorff

Princeton University Press



## **The Ethics of Human Rights: Contested Doctrinal and Moral Issues**

Esther D. Reed  
Baylor University Press



**Making the Best of It: Following Christ in the Real World**

John G. Stackhouse  
Oxford University Press

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

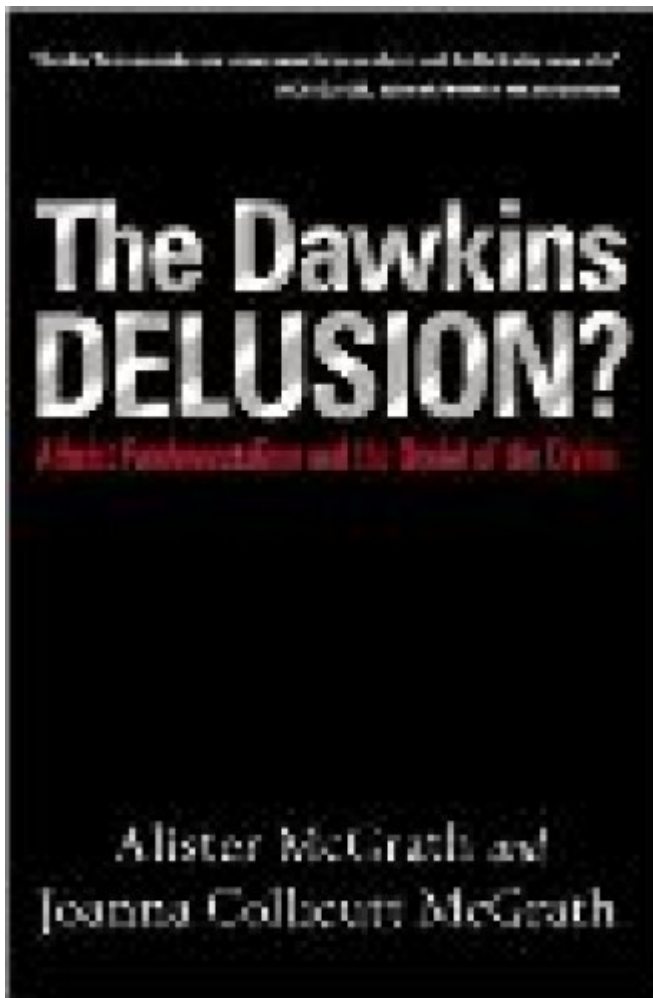
The **GOD** Delusion

Richard  
Dawkins

**The God Delusion**

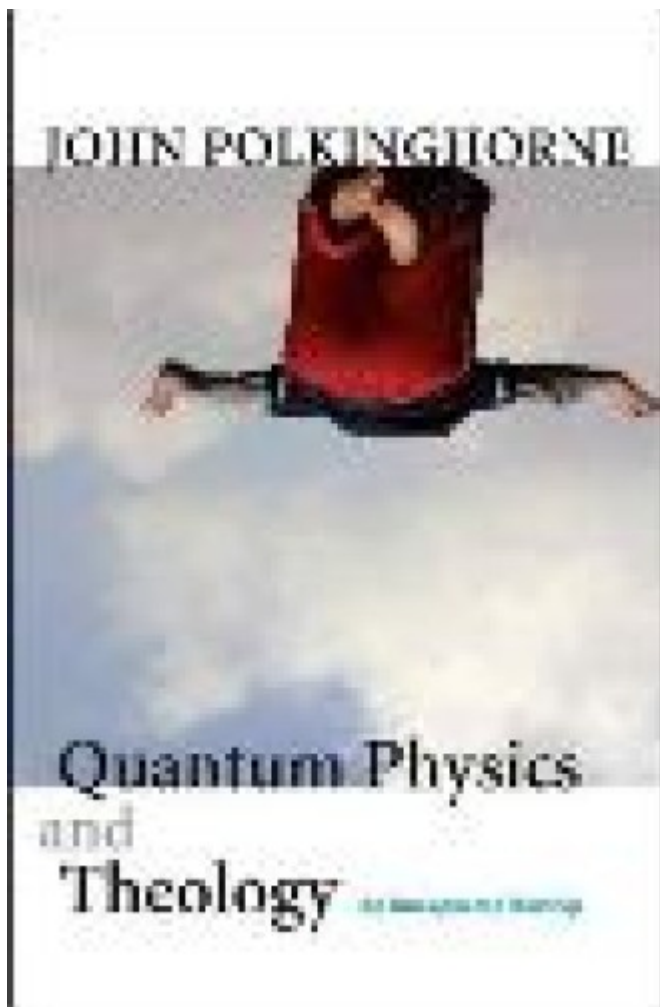
Richard Dawkins

Mariner



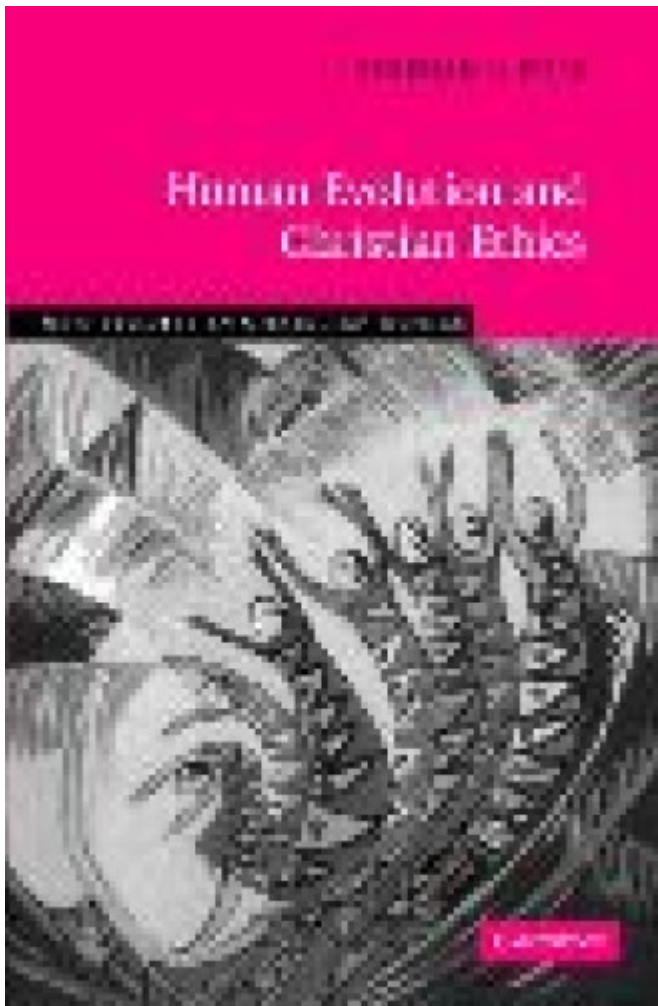
## **The Dawkins Delusion? Atheist Fundamentalism and the Denial of the Divine**

Alister McGrath and Joanna Collicutt McGrath  
InterVarsity



## **Quantum Physics and Theology: An Unexpected Kinship**

John Polkinghorne  
Yale University Press

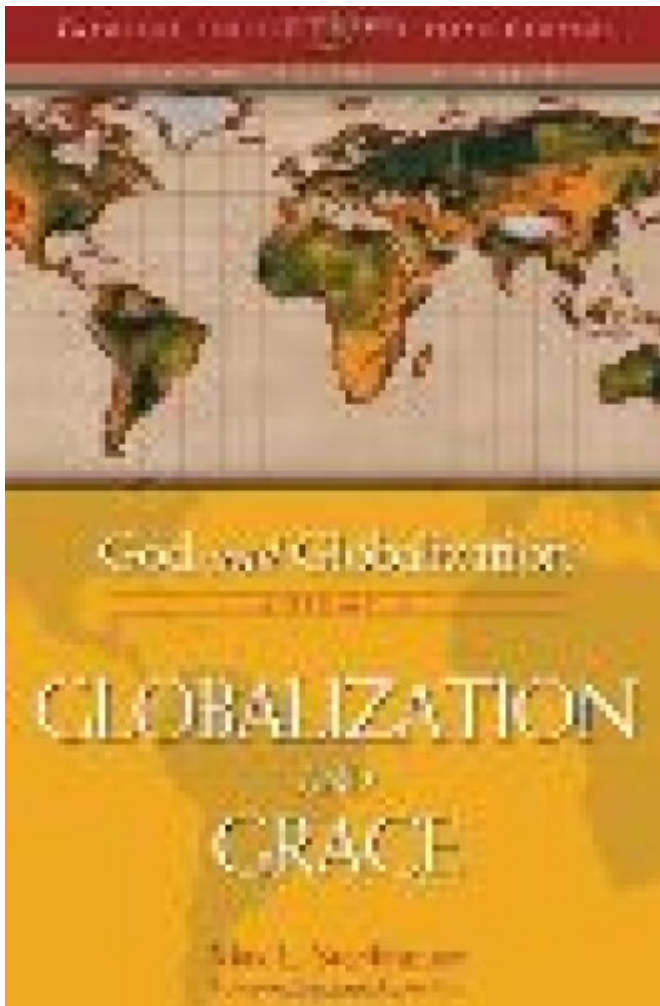


## **Human Evolution and Christian Ethics**

Stephen J. Pope

Cambridge University Press

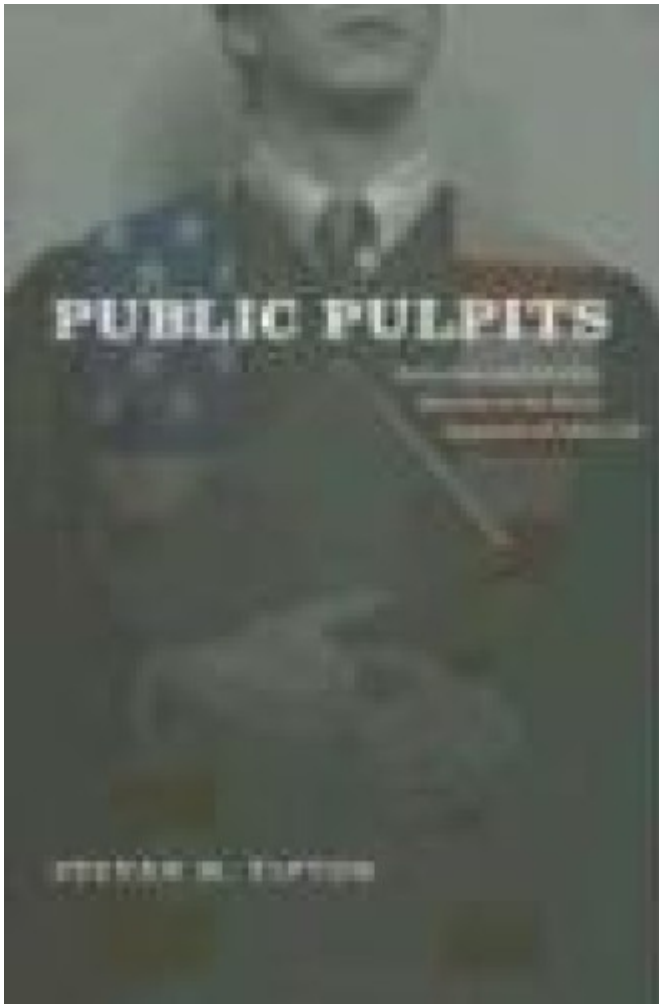




**God and Globalization, Volume 4: Globalization and Grace**

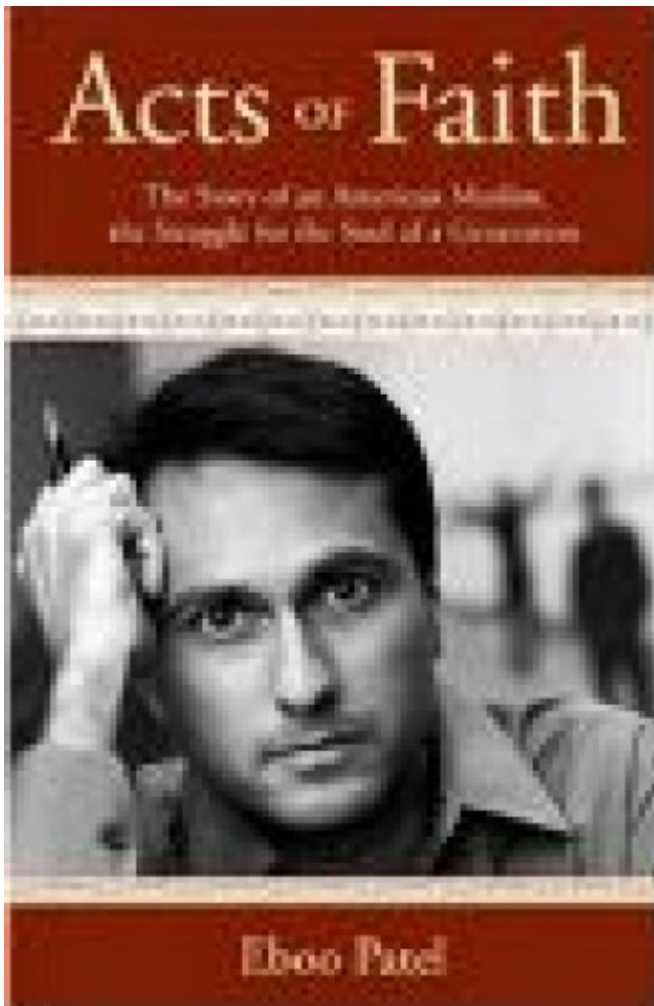
Max L. Stackhouse

Continuum



**Public Pulpits: Methodists and Mainline Churches in the Moral Argument of Public Life**

Steven M. Tipton  
University of Chicago Press



## **Acts of Faith: The Story of an American Muslim, the Struggle for the Soul of a Generation**

Eboo Patel

Beacon

Two distinguished scholars offer us important new statements about Christian ethics. Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age* offers a sweeping review of history to show that Christian thought is not antagonistic to modernity but has a permanent place in it. In *Justice: Rights and Wrongs*, Nicholas Wolterstorff reaches far back into biblical tradition and Greek philosophy to trace a distinctive vision of justice based on the worth that God confers on each person. For Wolterstorff, respect for human worth entails respect for human rights; this marks an important turn away from the tendency in recent theology to dismiss talk about rights as an Enlightenment innovation that is alien to Christian ethics.

Those who are interested in Wolterstorff's reclamation of rights will also want to read the new study by British ethicist Esther D. Reed, *The Ethics of Human Rights*. Reed, too, finds ideas of rights in Christian tradition, and she regards the fact that torture has become a plausible tool in the war on terrorism as the result of a skeptical retreat from the strong claims about human dignity that are required to sustain a vigorous defense of human rights. Rounding out this list of comprehensive restatements of Christian ethics is *Making the Best of It*, by Canadian theologian John G. Stackhouse. Stackhouse draws on C. S. Lewis, Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Reinhold Niebuhr to demonstrate that an unapologetically evangelical Christian ethics need not withdraw from the realities of life in society.

Issues related to religion and science continue to appear in headlines and pose hard questions for people in the churches. Although Taylor's *A Secular Age* may convince serious students that the conflict between religion and science is not real, the continued popularity of Richard Dawkins's *The God Delusion*, now available in paperback, is a reminder that questions remain to be answered from the pulpit and in church study groups. In *The Dawkins Delusion?* Alister McGrath and Joanna Collicutt McGrath provide a concise and understandable response to Dawkins's "atheist fundamentalism."

For those who want to explore the relationship between science and religion in greater depth, theologian and physicist John Polkinghorne continues his insightful treatment of science and theology as dialogue partners in *Quantum Physics and Theology*. Public conflicts between science and religion, however, tend to pit evolutionary biology against creationist critics, especially where the origins of human life are concerned. Stephen Pope focuses on these issues in *Human Evolution and Christian Ethics*. Pope argues that evolutionary theory makes important positive contributions to our understanding of human flourishing and the role of faith in the development of human life.

While Taylor, Wolterstorff and Reed take a long view of Christian history and Polkinghorne and Pope lead us back to the origins of everything, two new works bring history and theology to bear on contemporary society. Max Stackhouse completes the four-volume *God and Globalization* with his own constructive statement, *Globalization and Grace*. Stackhouse argues that the theological themes of creation, providence and salvation provide the basis for a genuinely public theology of global scope. Steven Tipton's *Public Pulpits* is a rarity in the literature of recent years, a book that focuses on the politics of mainline churches rather than

those of the religious right or the evangelical left. Tipton's most important contribution is his discerning sociological portrait of American mainline Protestantism at the beginning of the 21st century, and he combines this with a strong sense of history and an ability to bring moral questions into sharper focus.

Finally, there is a friendly challenge to Christian ethics in the work of a young American Muslim, Eboo Patel. *Acts of Faith* tells how Patel discovered the pluralism of Islam and how he built the Interfaith Youth Core to help young people of all faiths to build relationships with those of different faiths. This is the best recent American statement about living one's faith in a pluralistic society. It challenges Christian ethics to try to make a similar statement in its own terms.