

## *Free Will and the Divine Nature of Humans*

**John S. Talbot**

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The staunch proponents of faith on the one hand and science on the other appear to have little to say to each other, not the least because they barely seem to speak the same language. This divide, however, is not nearly as deep as it may appear. Indeed, many people combine a belief in the divine with appreciation for the lens that science provides to examine the universe. These men and women prove that the human mind can embrace more than just an either-or point of view, and some of them are ideally positioned to offer us a new way to look at the universe.

One of these people is John S. Talbot, author of *Free Will and the Divine Nature of Humans*. A physicist, former ordained minister of the Episcopalian Church, and believer in human potential, Talbot takes readers on a freewheeling tour of science and belief. Along the way, he refocuses the lens just a little bit to allow the reader to contemplate the mysteries of science and faith in a new way, and the effect is electrifying.

Talbot begins with a whirlwind tour of the implications of modern physics for the concept of free will. He then jumps backward in time to review the quest for knowledge of both medieval alchemists and Enlightenment thinkers, with particular emphasis on Descartes and his separation of mind and body.

From there, Talbot tackles the divide between science and the Bible, exploring evidence that supports the Bible as an anthropological record rather than as literal truth. Talbot looks at the scholarly tradition of the Bible, discussing canonical views of Jesus, eschatology, and the apocrypha. Talbot put forth his own view of Jesus—that Jesus was not God incarnate, but rather a teacher who experienced a profound transformation in the desert. Could this transformation have been prompted by a near-death experience?

Talbot rounds out his musings by discussing the evidence for near-death experiences, Teilhard de Chardin's theory of complexification, and the possibilities of a moral universe. This section, based as it is largely on parapsychology, is less immediately accessible than the material that precedes it. Nonetheless, for those willing to set aside their skepticism—at least for the duration of the book—Talbot offers some intriguing ideas.

Talbot's remarkable background as a physicist, minister, and teacher of Silva Mind Control (an ESP-development course) makes him a fascinating guide on this meander through the realms of faith and science. While scholars may howl about a few of his interpretations, there is no question that Talbot's is a quick and agile mind, open to looking at new connections among traditionally disparate ideas. He brings a scientist's rigorous eye to his material, even that which at first appears to be pretty far-out.

Talbot's writing is clear and warm, exhibiting both humor and intellect. The intellectually adventurous, as well as those engaged in self-discovery work, will thoroughly enjoy this romp through the far reaches of humanity's potential.

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