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## Wilson's "Does Altruism Exist? Cultures, Genes, and the Welfare of Others" (Book Review)

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Through this book I have learned how to better present Jesus to others and Smith's words have given me focus and clarity in so many areas that were fuzzy to me before. Consequently, I have shared so many things from this book with others – everyone from fellow members of my church, to my pastor, to university professors who teach Bible, and every one of them has been touched, strengthened, and encouraged by Smith's words.

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**Does Altruism Exist? Culture, Genes, and the Welfare of Others,**

by David Sloan Wilson. New Haven, CT: Yale University/Templeton Press, 2015.

180 pp. \$27.50. ISBN 9780300189490

*Reviewed by Lisa Cutforth-Anderson, Learning Resource Coordinator and  
Old Testament Professor, Alberta Bible College, Calgary, AB*

David Sloan Wilson has written a thought-provoking volume on altruism. He proposes to trace the evolutionary development of altruism in various insect and animal species, culminating in the presence of altruism in *Homo sapiens* as demonstrated through group theory. *Does Altruism Exist?* is well-written, easy to read, and contains documented research and a helpful index. Wilson raises the question whether altruism exists at the thought and feeling level, or exists only in outward deeds; he also questions previous research strategies and claims about altruism. His questioning results in the evidence that several altruistic acts actually stem from selfish motives, even though prosocial acts are evident. He offers several convincing arguments for and about prosocial actions, but one of his major arguments builds from a faulty claim.

He claims that religious altruism, including Christian altruism, does not exist. He purports religious adherents are only altruistic because they exchange altruism for salvation and eternal life. As the founding president of the Evolution Institute and a SUNY Distinguished Professor of Biology and Anthropology, he may be qualified to speak about evolution, but his claims about various world religions and their tenets are not valid or researched. Even the evolutionary claim that he bases his evolutionary theory on is highly suspect, particularly in its wording: “[s]ome of my conclusions are provisional, but others follow from evolutionary theory at such a basic level that they are unlikely to be wrong” (149). For a conclusion based on evolutionary theory, he should have included more support for his evolutionary theory, and why it is unlikely to be wrong.

This book is for a limited audience: evolutionists. His claims about religious adherents and their altruistic motives are unfounded, and unless one is currently an evolutionist, there is little in this volume to convince one of the evolutionary process necessary for the evolution of motives, thoughts and actions.