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Volume 61 | Issue 1

Article 28

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5-1-2018

## Pichalakkattu's "Bridging mathematics, philosophy and theology: Fuzzy logical thinking for science-religion dialogue" (book review)

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### Recommended Citation

Andrews, Grace (2018) "Pichalakkattu's "Bridging mathematics, philosophy and theology: Fuzzy logical thinking for science-religion dialogue" (book review)," *The Christian Librarian*: Vol. 61: Iss. 1, Article 28. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.55221/2572-7478.1925>

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# Book Reviews

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Pichalakkattu, B. (2017). *Bridging mathematics, philosophy and theology: Fuzzy logical thinking for science-religion dialogue*. Bali Nagar, New Delhi: Christian World Imprints. 135 pp. \$25.00. ISBN 9789251482116

Do science and religion have anything in common? What is the role of truth in inter-faith dialogue? What model of logic best offers a tool for precisely evaluating imprecise realities? Binoy Pichalakkattu, a Jesuit of Kerala Province, India, who holds doctorates in mathematical statistics and in systematic theology, attempts to answer these and similar questions in his work *Bridging Mathematics, Philosophy, and Theology*. This work has a broad but clear scope, employing the mathematical concept of fuzzy sets as a logical framework for viewing and evaluating science and religion. Pichalakkattu clearly defines his objectives, proposing that a fuzzy model of critical realism works better than classical, binary logic as a measure for the seemingly incomprehensible realities found in both science and religion. The glossary at the beginning of the book, mathematical figures throughout, repeated internal summaries within the text, explanatory footnotes, and an appendix explaining the fuzzy subethood theorem provide clarity to Pichalakkattu's argument. Well-documented with footnotes and a bibliography, this book should interest scholars in the fields of mathematics, philosophy, and theology but can also serve as a springboard for further research for those unfamiliar with one or more of these fields.

Pichalakkattu spends a significant portion of the book (chapters 1-3) tracing the historical development of critical realism and placing it in a fuzzy, postmodern context, defining terms throughout. He argues strongly that fuzzy logic belongs in a postmodern, rather than a modern, worldview because of its inherent non-binary nature, allowing for degrees of truth and overlap rather than strict black-and-white, either/or measures of truth and falsehood. In the fourth chapter, the fuzzy model of critical realism is applied to time and eternity, the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, and various religions' claims to uniqueness. The book closes with an evaluation of the limitations and possibilities for fuzzy thinking, demonstrating the flaws and dangers, but also the ultimate benefit, of applying fuzzy thinking to religion and science. Pichalakkattu sees religion and science as disciplines in pursuit of the same object – truth – and in need of each other for a more complete understanding of that object.

Through this work, Pichalakkattu displays a solid comprehension of the scholarship in the fields he is discussing, referencing such works as Bhaskar's *A Realist Theory of Science*, Derrida's *Of Grammatology*, Fortman's *The Triune God*, Knitter's *Introducing Theologies of Religions*, Kosko's *Fuzzy Thinking: The New Science of Fuzzy Logic*, Peacocke's *Intimations of Reality: Critical Realism in Science and Religion*, Russell's *Time in Eternity: Pannenberg, Physics and Eschatology in Creative Mutual Interaction*, and Wright's *The New Testament and the People of God*, to name only a few. While Pichalakkattu acknowledges his indebtedness to previous scholarship, his work stands squarely on its own, integrating a diverse array of disciplines and ideas under the unifying conceptual model of fuzzy critical realism. For such a broad topic in so brief a work, *Bridging Mathematics, Philosophy and Theology* is surprisingly thorough, clearly laying the foundation for Pichalakkattu's argument and succinctly building on that foundation for a compelling conclusion. While some readers may legitimately disagree with Pichalakkattu on scholarly, logical, or scriptural grounds, his book is worth reading and adding to an academic library collection as an interesting and intellectually stimulating work of scholarship.

**Reviewer**

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