
CONTEMPORARY ISSUES III: THEOLOGY AND SCIENCE

Creation

COSMOLOGY

- Cosmology in thought
- Relation between cosmology and faith
- Relation between faith and reason
- Are cosmological questions relevant?

HOW DOES THEOLOGY RESPOND TO SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERY?

- Option 1: Ignore science and theologize within the traditional cosmology
 - Proposal
 - Theological language is about the journey of salvation; it has little relevance in regard to the structure of the world
 - The meaning of theological truths is embedded in traditional cosmology, to translate this into new cosmological terms is risky
 - Science is only tentative in any case
 - Limitations
 - Theology sounds like it has nothing to say to the modern world
 - Theology speaks naively
 - Religion is only a private matter and one can believe anything, so long as it is personally satisfying
- Option 2: Denounce scientific cosmologies as contributing to atheism
 - Proposal
 - Contemporary science operates by presupposing that God does not intervene in the world
 - This presumption is equivalent to the presumption that there is no God
 - One should not expect that science done in this way will result in a God-centered cosmology
 - The Scriptures are our only true guide to the nature of the world
 - Limitations
 - Theology stands against the contemporary world view
 - Theology promotes sectarianism
 - Reason is seen as the enemy of the faith
- Option 3: Faith statements should be conformed to the findings of science
 - Proposal
 - Science results from the proper functioning of God-given human reason
 - It is the duty of theology to make sense of the truths of science
 - Only by re-visioning faith within the current cosmology can theology be grounded in the truth
 - Only by speaking the language of the contemporary world-view can theology be credible
 - Limitations
 - The truth status of scientific theories is always changing
 - Conforming faith statements to science may result in the loss of essential elements of the faith
 - Relevance should not be sought at the price of truth
 - There is a risk of modernism
- Option 4: The questions of faith, grounded in the Tradition, should be put in careful, long-term dialogue with the findings of science.
 - Scientific cosmology and faith should be kept in a healthy tension.
 - Truths of faith that cannot be easily fit into the new cosmology should not be rejected off-hand or transformed without careful research
 - New cosmologies should be examined for possibly insights that they offer into the questions of faith

MAGISTERIAL STATEMENTS

- The soul does not exist prior to conception (Constantinople II)
- The human soul is created directly by God
- On polygenism: "Now it is in no way apparent how such an opinion (polygenism) can be reconciled with that which the sources of revealed truth and the documents of the Teaching Authority of the Church propose with regard to original sin, which proceeds from a sin actually committed by an individual Adam and which, through generation, is passed on to all and is in everyone as his own." (Humani Generis)

MEETING THE MATERIALIST CRITIQUE: PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

- The selfish gene
 - Human aspirations are the same as those found in more simple life forms
 - Human ideas of universality, ethics, and transcendence are only sophisticated ways that help our more complex brains ensure the survival of our genes
 - Biological altruism
 - Biological usefulness of morality
 - Biological usefulness of faith
- John Haught
 - Layers of explanation
 - Scientific explanations are addressing a different aspect than theological explanations
 - Theology addresses meaning, science addresses "grammar"
- Selfish gene?
 - Even atheist evolutionists defend universal ethical principles
 - Morality serves more than the survival of specific families of genes
 - Belief goes beyond mere coping or survival
 - See John F. Haught, *Making Sense of Evolution*, chapter 9

BIBLIOGRAPHY

John Haught, *God after Darwin: A Theology of Evolution* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000).

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