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Summary

The central premise of this book is that the fields of theology and science are not exclusive of each other, but fundamentally united as part of one world. This is true, not only of the data, but also of the method. There will be variations of the method forced upon it by the various kinds of subject matter, but the underlying process is the same. We continually refine our theological doctrines, as well as our scientific theories, by comparing them with the data, both old and new, that can be brought to bear on the subject. While doing this, we must continually remind ourselves that the data are primary

We then noted that the existence of science argues strongly for the existence of a God. From astronomy we can deduce that He is outside the universe and yet created it. From quantum mechanics we can deduce that He is continually active in sustaining it. From the fact that life is here, coupled with the complete inadequacy of any scientific explanation for its origin, we can deduce that He is capable of superseding what we commonly call natural law, and of performing what we ordinarily call

miracles. Thus the secular humanist denial of miracles is seen to be invalid, and a theology which involves the supernatural is necessary.

We then dealt with the minimum requirements one might expect from a religious authority. We dealt with what makes it an authority, and what requirements it might need to fulfill to function within a canon, that is, to make it a religious authority. Inerrancy in all details is not a requirement for a religious authority, any more than it is for a secular authority, but a fundamental transparency is. No religious authority has any authority just because it says so. It is authoritative only because and insofar as it allows the truth to come through it unchanged. Four principles for evaluating information from an authority were developed. First, a presumed authority should be considered accurate unless a substantial weight of evidence contradicts it. Second, statements which could be shown to not claim divine authority, to be believed by influential contemporaries, and to be wrong, can be safely ignored without damaging the authority of the rest of a religious authority. Third, the main point(s) of any revelatory event must be correct if the religious authority is to have any meaningful authority. Conversely, if a religious authority is dependable, the main point of any revelatory event within that authority is dependable. Finally, minor points in a revelatory event can be inaccurate without destroying the authority, although the inaccuracies should be understandable given the worldview of the one receiving the revelation.

We then reviewed the Biblical record and noted that without a naturalistic pressure to deny miracles, it could be taken fairly straightforwardly. The resurrection of Jesus has been documented quite impressively from the point of view of history. The historicity of the rest of the New Testament follows quite naturally if the resurrection is granted. The historicity of most of the Old Testament follows, with the only major historical arguments which do not depend on naturalistic presuppositions now centering around Daniel and around Joshua and the Pentateuch. In the case of Daniel, we noted that the available evidence argued strongly for a conservative as opposed to a Maccabean date for its composition, and that evidence was especially persuasive given the early predictions of the respective camps.

We did not have time to deal with all the questions one might raise concerning the Hexateuch. Specifically, we did not deal with the placement of the Exodus and the Conquest in secular history, or with the age of composition of the documents. However, we did

deal with the reliability of the material in Genesis 1-9 as interpreted in a straightforward manner, and this led us into a consideration of radiometric dating. In what will surely come as a surprise to many, the various dating methods, such as potassium/argon, rubidium/strontium, uranium/lead, and uranium disequilibrium dating, actually were more compatible with a short chronology of life on earth than with a long chronology, and this without altering the radioactive time constants. In the case of carbon-14 dating, the evidence is almost conclusive that most fossils are less than 60,000 years old, and a straightforward flood model suggests an age of 4000 to 8000 years. A few careful experiments with accelerator mass spectrometry could make the evidence conclusive.

The method of theology outlined above, using the Bible as source material, was then applied to several subjects. A scientific perspective on the relationship of God to time satisfactorily solves the problem of God's foreknowledge of free choice. A similar perspective on the Trinity suggests the best way to know the character of God, and also cautions against the uncritical acceptance of explanations of the atonement that demand a forgetful or unloving God. Sin in the Biblical sense is noted to have a complex definition, with not all senses necessarily fulfilled in a given situation. Specifically, it can refer to an attitude, acts derived from that attitude, harmful acts, addictions or character traits, or possibly a nature (although the latter concept was not explored significantly). This concept led us to apply the term with caution. The concept of salvation was explored, with results which should reduce the amount of hypocrisy in missions while increasing the joy. Finally, the concept of life after death was explored, with phenomenological evidence for its existence noted. The theological watershed was noted not to be whether the soul (or spirit) was immortal, but whether it was consciously immortal, and this is subject to experimental study by all of us. A Biblical view of life after death revolves around the Second Coming of Jesus, and does not have to put God in the position of being the most sadistic torturer of all time.

Throughout the book I have endeavored not only to argue for positions which I thought were sound, but to avoid overstating my arguments and to instead give alternative positions and their rationales. In particular, there are some places where the evidence is not conclusive now but could become more so if certain experiments were carried out. I have tried to suggest such experiments. This mode of operation would seem to be mandatory

for a theology that expects to be judged by the criteria used in science to distinguish progressive from degenerating research programs. I would be delighted to see such experiments done and plan to be active in getting as many of them done as I can.

This book has obviously not exhausted all there is to theology, or even outlined all the contributions a scientific theology might make. It has in all probability made some mistakes in its presentation. However, I believe that it has outlined a method, and given enough examples of the use of that method so that it can be understood. I believe it is the best method currently available, and hope to expand its use. I hope that it has proved helpful to you. Perhaps some of you have improvements to make. If so, do not be surprised if I test them. But if they stand the test, I welcome them. For we are all in this together.