

Theology for a scientific age (1)

God, Christ, and creation

Introduction: On our theology

Now that we have a concrete idea of “science,” what does science mean for “Christian theology,” that is, for how Christians think and speak about their god and about all things in view of him?

The first and most important answer to this question is that Christians should actually think about their theology, and not take it for granted!

What does taking theology for granted look like?

We can do better when we recognize that we should be prepared to think and speak on behalf of the Lord Jesus Christ and his Church. And we can also do better when we recognize that we should be ready to engage people who are intelligent, whose views and positions aren't clear to us, and who are interested in the truth—in short, people we shouldn't mess with.

With these things in mind, what kind of theology does a scientific age—a situation in which science informs much of life—call for?

Theology should be “cosmological”

Science aims to explain the universe, so the scope of Christian theology should be no less. It must be “cosmological”; it must deal with everything. In other words, all of our thinking and speaking as Christians should relate clearly to God creating all things.

What does this look like?

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

God sent his Son to make all things right again.

For this reason he was killed, but God raised him from the dead.

One day Jesus will return to finish what he started.

This account is right because it fits the testimony of the Scriptures and aligns with the creeds and confessions of the Church.

What, then, is the Bible?

How does one read the Bible properly?

What are the creeds and confessions of the Church?

How does one acknowledge them properly?

It also makes God creating all things the starting point for our thinking.

What kind of person is God?

What is a human being?

What is sin?

Why is justification by grace?

What does it mean to believe in God?

And so on.

What about God?

In short:

God is God and you're not. God is the creator and you're a creature.

What does this mean?

- God is not an object in the universe.

- God is completely free.

- Since God is not an object in the universe and God is completely free, we cannot expect to find him or unmistakable evidence of him in the universe. (Science cannot be expected to confirm or refute God’s existence and activity.)
- God needs nothing—and that includes you.
- All things are under his control and will.

What about Jesus Christ?

In short:

Jesus Christ is the eternally begotten Son of God who became man to do the will of God.

What does this mean?

- By becoming man, the Son of God became an object in the universe.
- With respect to the universe, Jesus Christ is completely free.
- Since God made Jesus Lord and Christ, Jesus needs nothing from you.
- God gave Jesus all authority in heaven and on earth. Jesus is how God has control and imposes his will on all things. This is why the Son of God came into the world.
- The truth about Jesus is known especially in his crucifixion and resurrection. (Science cannot be expected to confirm or refute this.)

What about creation?

In short:

All things have been made by, are sustained by, and are responsible to God the Creator.

What does this mean?

- The universe is not divine.
- All things depend completely upon God.
- Since the universe is not divine, and all things depend completely upon God, it is unsurprising that the universe has not apparent purpose or meaning.
- It is also unsurprising that the universe has its own apparent integrity or autonomy.
- None of this confirms or refutes the conjectures and claims of science, but they do give science, which seeks to learn how the world works, both legitimacy and limits.

Why do Christians often struggle with these things?

There is a simple one-word answer:

And what kind?