

ness of mathematics in the natural sciences and justifies Clouser's argument on how God "impacts" human development of scientific theories.

Notes

- ¹R. Clouser, "Prospects for Theistic Science," *PSCF* 58 (2006): 2-15.
- ²P. Le Morvan, "Is Clouser's Definition of Religious Belief Itself Religiously Neutral," *PSCF* 58 (2006): 16-7.
- ³H. Halvorson, "Comments on Clouser's Claims for Theistic Science," *PSCF* 58 (2006): 18-9.
- ⁴D. Ratzsch, "On Reducing Nearly Everything to Reductionism," *PSCF* 58 (2006): 20-2.
- ⁵M. Alexanian, "Physical and Nonphysical Aspects of Nature," *PSCF* 54 (2002): 287-8.
- ⁶*Ibid.*
- ⁷*Ibid.*
- ⁸It is important to remark that some religions consider parts of Nature as divine and so worship the creature rather than the Creator. Therefore, for such religions the set SN is not empty but contains those deified objects in Nature as elements of SN.
- ⁹Clouser ought to indicate that theology plays no role in science. However, metaphysics is indeed regulative of science, history, formal logic, and mathematics and constitutive of some aspects of theology.
- ¹⁰Nihilism is the more proper term when some forms of knowledge are eliminated.
- ¹¹The choice of Clouser of what constitutes "religious beliefs" obfuscates the issue properly raised by his detractors. The generic term "supernatural" allows one to consider existence that goes beyond Nature or what cannot be properly termed as natural.
- ¹²The finite number of creatures is described as elements of sets, whereas God is characterized by a set of infinite order that contains all sets, which together encompass the whole of his creation. Therefore, the existence of all that is depends on God's self-existence.
- ¹³B. A. Hedman, "Cantor's Concept of Infinity: Implications of Infinity for Contingence," *PSCF* 46 (1993): 8-16.
- ¹⁴Science does not deal with first causes. The scientist qua human being creates scientific theories that deal only with secondary causes. However, the human elements of consciousness and rationality are not an integral part of the laws and models themselves. Note that theoretical models of Nature and the predictions that follow from them are exactly like mathematical systems with axioms and theorems like Euclidean geometry. However, logical connections, which may or may not correspond to causal physical influences, propagate equally well in either direction. Therefore, the choice of what constitutes an axiom or a theorem is arbitrary.
- ¹⁵Eugene P. Wigner, "The Unreasonable Effectiveness of Mathematics in the Natural Sciences," *Communications on Pure and Applied Mathematics* 13, no. 1 (1960), 1-14.

Moorad Alexanian
 ASA Member
 Department of Physics and Physical Oceanography
 University of North Carolina Wilmington
 Wilmington, NC 28403-5606
 alexanian@uncw.edu

Reading God's Works in a Non-Christian Context

I wish to thank George Murphy for again stimulating my thinking about general revelation in his article "Reading God's Two Books" (*PSCF* 58, no. 1 [March 2006]: 64-7). His recommendation, which I agree with, is that people need to read the book of God's Word before reading the book of God's Works, for natural theology is dependent on revelation for its validity. While this approach is theologically sound, and appropriate for Christian theologians, it is practically inadequate in the normal experience of

people in the real world. I spend most of my time working with scientists and medical personnel who are not Christians and who have no knowledge of the Bible.

First, many people around the world are not interested in reading the Bible, which they perceive as being "owned" by Christians and is just for Christians. But these people will read and observe and marvel at nature, which they all equally enjoy (Matt. 5:45). Therefore, where we meet most unbelievers is at the interface of God's works and his Words, they having already read the former but not the latter. We do not have the luxury of organizing their order of reading these two books. Furthermore, I find many people's interest especially piqued when they see the way in which the Bible logically and systematically explains the origins and meaning of the natural world which they had only previously observed.

Second, few cultures that I am familiar with find the god behind nature to be "cruel and ruthless." They may find this god to be capricious, but not evil. *Attitudes to Nature* (Jean Holm, ed. [New York: Pinter Publishers, 1994]), which I reviewed in these pages several years ago, introduced the views to nature of the main world religions. Virtually all of the religions introduced reflected a sense of harmony and unity between humans and the created world. Therefore I do not share Murphy's concern that reading nature before reading God's Word will prejudice people toward erroneous or unchangeable views of God.

Within this context, how can we successfully lead people to do what Murphy is suggesting, to read God's Word, first and foremost? My challenge for scientists interested in engaging unbelievers in reading God's Word with interest, is to employ what Reinhold Niebuhr dubbed "middle level axioms," to wit, to use the jargon and concepts we have in common with these people to present the beliefs we hold as Christians. For example, one might use the word "environment" rather than "creation," and then pour into the word "environment" all that you know to be true about that creation from the Word of God. This way you will not be discredited by listeners who perceive you to blindly hold to your pet, Christian words. This approach is useful when talking with unbelievers from other cultural contexts, and I might add, it is increasingly necessary when talking with people in the US and other Western countries who have been raised in a post-Christian context. I have spent considerable time working out how this works in the Chinese context, where I live and work, and would be willing to share a manuscript I have on this topic with interested readers (email me).

I am pleased to see Murphy accepting, albeit reluctantly, the value of the classical view of building Christian theology on the foundation of natural theology. Even though it is not his preference, we must admit the common experience of the people in the world is to read God's two books backwards. Finally, I want to thank Dr. Murphy for helping me with my thoughts and writing on these issues currently and in the past.

Mark A. Strand
 ASA Member
 Evergreen
 6660 Delmonico Dr., Ste. 201
 Colorado Springs, CO 80919
 MARKSTRAND3@aol.com