

Correspondence

Dear Sir,

The April editorial (1996) focussed on a serious concern for science-theology dialogue, ‘The Problem of Theological Illiteracy’. However, it fell well short of the mark in regretting that non-Christians are given ‘the impression that Christians are deists rather than theists’. The implication is that many of our problems would be solved if we could make it clear that we believe in a God who acts in the world.

Belief in theism rather than deism is a relatively small step forward. The distinctive Christian belief is not in ‘God’ but in God who has revealed himself in the history of Israel, culminating in Jesus of Nazareth, as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Western theology has been bedeviled for centuries by the idea that it must start from what Christianity has in common with philosophical theism. The result is emphasis on a single unchangeable divine nature which is immune from suffering. Trinity, Incarnation, and a crucified God then become ‘problems’ to be resolved. Christian theology should begin instead from what makes it Christian—i.e., Christ. This does not make the Trinity or the Passion of God easier to understand, but it does keep the Christian idea of God from being forced into the Procrustean bed of divine attributes conceived by philosophers.

I note just one part of the science-theology dialogue where this makes a significant difference. Many theists have difficulties with the idea that God could have used natural selection as the primary mechanism of evolution. How could a beneficent and omnipotent deity use such an amoral and sometimes cruel process to create species? Proper Christian thought, however, does not simply see an impassible creator forcing millions of generations through this process. Rather, through the Incarnation God becomes a *participant* in the evolutionary process and, on the cross, takes the side of the *losers* in the ‘struggle for survival’. This does not provide a neat answer to all the questions of theodicy, but clearly provides a better standpoint from which to deal with such questions than does generic theism.

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Dear Sir,

In the October (1996) issue of *Science & Christian Belief* Philip Duce’s considerations on the concept of complementarity deal with a number of relevant issues, but not with others. In addition to Howard J. van Till’s

comments, the following can be made. (1) To be unambiguous, a discussion on the relation of science and theology needs to be based on formalized concepts,¹ terms like 'interaction', 'integration', 'symbiosis' etc. being too vague. (2) The narrow definition of complementarity used restricts its explanatory potential.² (3) In its full meaning, complementarity involves three types of implications: (a) ontological (metarelations between the categorically different descriptions/explanations/theories A, B, [C . . .]), (b) epistemological (A, B, [C . . .] are all required for a complete insight), and (c) methodological (e.g., exploration of fright via introspection, physiological measurements, and third-person observation). Whereas science and theology are considered distinct, (a) emphasizes their intrinsic links,³ a topic for intense research.⁴ As to (b), the explanatory potential of A, B, (C . . .) may well depend on the context.⁵ (4) Such considerations are particularly helpful for the religious education of skeptical adolescents,^{6,7} which notably needs to stimulate the form of thought involved.⁸ (5) Nevertheless, given the complexity of the (time-varying) relationships between science and theology, a multilevel-multilogic model is probably more adequate for a general discussion.⁹

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1 Reich, K. Helmut, 'A Logic-Based Typology of Science and Theology', *Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies* (1996) VII (1–2), pp. 149–167.

2 Reich, K. Helmut, 'The Relation between Science and Theology: A Response to Critics of Complementarity', in G. V. Coyne, S. J. & K. Schmitz-Moormann (Eds.), *Studies in Science and Theology (SSTh)*, Yearbook of the European Society for the Study of Science and Religion (ESSAT), Vol. 2, Origins, Time, and Complexity, Part II, Geneva: Labor et Fides (1994), pp. 284–291.

3 Reich, K. Helmut, 'Der Begriff der Komplementarität in Wissenschaft und Alltag' [The concept of complementarity in science and every-day-life], *Scientific Contributions in Education* (1994), No. 105 (School of Education, University of Fribourg, Switzerland).

4 For the current state see e.g., Edwards, Denis, 'The Discovery of Chaos and The Retrieval of the Trinity', *CTNS Bulletin* (1995), 15 (3), 13–24.

5 Bedau, Hugo, & Oppenheim, Paul, 'Complementarity in Quantum Mechanics: A Logical Analysis', *Synthese* 1961, 13 (3), pp. 201–232.

6 Reich, K. Helmut 'Between Religion and Science: Complementarity in the Religious Thinking of Young People', *British Journal of Religious Education* (1989) 11 (1), pp. 62–69.

7 Reich, K. Helmut, 'Relational and Contextual Reasoning in Religious Education: A Theory-Based Empirical Study', in: L. J. Francis, W. K. Kay & W. S. Campbell (Eds.), *Research in Religious Education*, Leominster: Gracewing (1996), pp. 129–144.

8 Reich, K. Helmut, 'From Either/Or to Both-And through Cognitive Development', *Thinking: The Journal of Philosophy for Children* (1995) 12 (2), pp. 12–15.

9 Reich, K. Helmut, 'The Doctrine of the Trinity as a Model Structuring the Relations between Science and Theology'. *Zygon: Journal of Religion & Science* (1995) 30 (3), pp. 383–405.