

REASON

true or false?

CATHOLICS ARE OFTEN ACCUSED OF BEING OPPOSED TO SCIENCE AND REASON. PEOPLE MAY READ THE BIBLE AND ASK HOW WE CAN BELIEVE THAT SOME OF THESE STRANGE STORIES ARE TRUE. TAKE FOR EXAMPLE THE STORY OF BALAAM AND THE TALKING DONKEY.

IF YOU READ THE STORY OF BALAAM AND THE TALKING DONKEY (NUMBERS 22:22-35), YOU MIGHT FIND IT STRANGE THAT BALAAM DOES NOT APPEAR TO FIND IT ODD THAT HIS DONKEY IS TALKING. WHEN THE DONKEY ASKS HIM A QUESTION HE SIMPLY ANSWERS IT, AS IF HE REGULARLY HAS CONVERSATIONS WITH HIS FARM ANIMALS.

HOW SHOULD WE UNDERSTAND THIS STORY? AS CATHOLICS, ARE WE SUPPOSED TO BELIEVE THAT DONKEYS CAN TALK, JUST LIKE WE CAN? OF COURSE NOT! WE KNOW THROUGH OUR EXPERIENCE, AND THROUGH SCIENCE, THAT DONKEYS ARE NOT CAPABLE OF SPEECH LIKE WE ARE. SO, IS THE BIBLE LYING TO US? OF COURSE NOT! THE BIBLE IS NOT LYING ABOUT THE EXISTENCE OF TALKING DONKEYS BECAUSE THE AUTHOR IS NOT TRYING TO TELL US THAT TALKING DONKEYS EXIST.

THINK ABOUT THE LAST BOOK YOU READ. NOW IMAGINE

REASON

HOW DIFFERENT THAT BOOK WOULD HAVE BEEN IF THEY HAD READ IT AS A DIFFERENT GENRE. SPECIFICALLY, HOW DIFFERENT WOULD FICTIONAL BOOKS BE IF THEY WERE READ AS HISTORICAL BOOKS?

WHEN WE READ ANYTHING, WE HAVE TO DISCOVER WHAT THE AUTHOR INTENDED TO SAY IF WE WANT TO UNDERSTAND IT PROPERLY. MANY AUTHORS USE DIFFERENT GENRES TO MAKE THEIR POINT, DEPENDING ON WHAT THEIR STRENGTHS ARE. THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE ARE VERY MUCH THE SAME.

questions

1

WHAT ARE YOUR INITIAL THOUGHTS ABOUT FAITH, THE BIBLE, SCIENCE, & REASON?

REASON

genres of the bible

REMEMBER THAT THE BIBLE IS NOT A SINGLE BOOK, BUT A SMALL LIBRARY. THERE ARE 73 BOOKS OF THE BIBLE, EACH WRITTEN UNDER DIFFERENT CIRCUMSTANCES, BY DIFFERENT AUTHORS, AND FOR DIFFERENT REASONS. WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT INSPIRED THE AUTHORS TO WRITE THESE BOOKS, THEY MADE USE OF THEIR SPECIFIC GIFTS AND TALENTS. KING DAVID MADE USE OF HIS TALENT FOR MUSIC AND POETRY WHEN HE WROTE THE PSALMS. SAINT PAUL MADE USE OF HIS GIFT FOR INSTRUCTION WHEN HE WROTE HIS LETTERS. OTHER AUTHORS MADE USE OF SYMBOLISM AND SHORT STORIES TO CONVEY THE TRUTH. BUT JUST BECAUSE THE TRUTH IS CONVEYED IN A NON-LITERAL OR NON-HISTORICAL WAY DOES NOT MAKE IT UNTRUE. IT JUST MEANS WE HAVE TO LOOK A LITTLE HARDER TO UNDERSTAND THE TRUTH.

IF WE WANT TO UNDERSTAND WHAT THE BIBLE REALLY MEANS, WE FIRST NEED TO UNDERSTAND THE LITERAL SENSE OF SCRIPTURE, OR WHAT THE AUTHOR INTENDED TO SAY. FROM THERE, WE CAN LOOK AT THE OTHER SENSES OF SCRIPTURE: THE MORAL SENSE, THE ALLEGORICAL SENSE, AND THE ANAGOGICAL SENSE.

THE MORAL SENSE TEACHES US HOW TO LIVE OUR LIVES,

REASON

SO READING A PASSAGE IN THE MORAL SENSE MIGHT MEAN SEEING AN EXAMPLE OF RIGHT VERSUS WRONG. DURING THE EXODUS, WHEN THE ISRAELITES WANDERED THE DESERT FOR 40 YEARS AFTER DISOBEYING GOD, WE MIGHT LEARN THAT WE OUGHT TO OBEY GOD'S COMMANDS, EVEN WHEN THEY ARE DIFFICULT OR THE TASKS HE ASKS US TO DO ARE DAUNTING.

THE ALLEGORICAL SENSE VIEWS THE PASSAGE AS FORESHADOWING SOMETHING ELSE IN SALVATION HISTORY. WHILE THE ISRAELITES WERE WANDERING IN THE DESERT, THEY FOUND THEMSELVES ATTACKED BY POISONOUS SNAKES. GOD COMMANDED MOSES TO CREATE A BRONZE SNAKE AND MOUNT IT ON A POLE, AND COMMAND THOSE WHO HAD BEEN BITTEN TO LOOK UPON THAT SNAKE TO RECOVER THEIR HEALTH. THIS STORY CAN BE SEEN AS AN ALLEGORY FOR THE REDEMPTIVE DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST ON THE CROSS. JESUS WAS RAISED ON THE CROSS, JUST AS THE SERPENT WAS RAISED ON THE POLE, AND HE SAVES US FROM ETERNAL DEATH, JUST AS THOSE WHO WERE BITTEN BY THE POISONOUS SNAKES DID NOT DIE.

THE ANAGOGICAL SENSE TEACHES US ABOUT AND DIRECTS US TOWARD ETERNITY. WE CAN COMPARE THE ISRAELITES FINALLY FOLLOWING JOSHUA INTO THE PROMISED LAND TO OUR OWN ENTRY INTO HEAVEN AFTER

REASON

A DIFFICULT JOURNEY ON EARTH.

PERHAPS THE MOST HELPFUL THING TO REMEMBER WHEN READING SCRIPTURE IS THAT THE BIBLE IS NEVER TRYING TO TEACH US SCIENTIFIC TRUTHS IN THE SAME WAY A TEXTBOOK IN SCHOOL WOULD TEACH US SCIENTIFIC TRUTHS. WHILE THERE ARE CERTAINLY PLACES IN SACRED SCRIPTURE WHERE WE CAN FIND SCIENTIFICALLY VERIFIABLE TRUTH, BUT IN OTHER PLACES THE INTENT IS MUCH DEEPER. LOOKING IN THE BIBLE STRICTLY FOR SCIENCE IS LIKE LOOKING IN YOUR CHEMISTRY BOOK FOR EVIDENCE OF WORLD WAR II. THE BIBLE IS MEANT TO HELP US KNOW AND LOVE GOD AND DIRECT OUR LIVES TO HIM. THIS IS WHY GOD INSPIRED THE AUTHORS TO WRITE THEIR MESSAGES. TO READ IT LOOKING FOR ANYTHING ELSE BESIDES A REVELATION OF GOD'S IDENTITY AND WHAT HE DESIRES FOR US IS TO SET OURSELVES UP FOR FAILURE.

questions

2

HOW ARE EACH OF THE SENSES (LITERAL, MORAL, ALLEGORICAL, ANALOGICAL) IMPORTANT TO OUR PERSONAL FAITH LIFE?

REASON

faith & reason

THE WAY WE, AS CATHOLICS, READ AND UNDERSTAND SCRIPTURE IS A PERFECT EXAMPLE OF HOW WE OUGHT TO USE BOTH FAITH AND REASON TO COME TO KNOW THE TRUTH. GOD CREATED US TO KNOW HIM. HE SLOWLY REVEALED HIMSELF TO US OVER TIME AND GAVE US THE GIFT OF FAITH TO BE ABLE TO ACCEPT THAT DIVINE REVELATION SO THAT WE COULD KNOW HIM. BUT GOD ALSO GAVE US THE GIFT OF REASON. HE REVEALED HIMSELF IN A WAY THAT MAKES SENSE TO OUR REASON SO THAT THERE MIGHT NOT BE A CONFLICT BETWEEN FAITH AND REASON.

GOD IS THE AUTHOR OF ALL TRUTH. WE CAN DISCOVER THIS TRUTH IN DIFFERENT WAYS LIKE FAITH, SCIENCE, OR PHILOSOPHY. AS THE AUTHOR OF TRUTH, GOD CANNOT LIE, SO THERE CAN NEVER BE ANY REAL CONFLICT BETWEEN FAITH AND SCIENCE, FAITH AND REASON, OR SCIENCE AND REASON.

WHEN WE FEEL THAT THERE IS, WE EITHER MISUNDERSTAND THE SCIENCE, MISUNDERSTAND THE FAITH, OR MISUSE OUR REASON. AND LET US NOT FORGET THAT "SCIENCE" HAS BEEN WRONG. JUST AS ANY HUMAN ENDEAVOR, SCIENCE HAS EVOLVED AND GROWN. THERE

REASON

WAS A TIME WHEN THE BEST SCIENTISTS IN THE WORLD BELIEVED THAT FLIES SPONTANEOUSLY GREW OUT OF ROTTEN MEAT. IT WAS CALLED SPONTANEOUS GENERATION.

questions

3

WHY DO YOU THINK PEOPLE BELIEVE THAT FAITH & CATHOLICISM OPPOSE SCIENCE & REASON?

4

HOW CAN WE SEARCH FOR THE TRUTH SO THAT WE DO NOT MISUNDERSTAND FAITH, SCIENCE, OR REASON?

REASON

scientific discoveries

IT IS NOT JUST RECENTLY THAT THE CATHOLIC CHURCH HAS INVESTED IN MAINTAINING THE UNITY OF HUMAN INTELLECT AND FAITH. THIS HAS BEEN TRUE SINCE THE VERY FIRST DAYS OF THE CHURCH. IN FACT, MANY OF THE GREAT INTELLECTUAL ACTIVITIES AND SCIENTIFIC ADVANCEMENTS THAT HAVE BEEN MADE THROUGHOUT HISTORY ARE DUE TO THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, ESPECIALLY CATHOLIC MONKS.

MONKS DURING THE MIDDLE AGES WERE INSTRUMENTAL IN DEVELOPING NEW FARMING AND AGRICULTURAL TECHNOLOGIES AND PRACTICES. IN FACT, THEY WERE THE FIRST TO INTENTIONALLY BREED CATTLE FOR SPECIFIC CHARACTERISTICS, RATHER THAN ALLOWING THE PROCESS TO HAPPEN NATURALLY AND RANDOMLY. THE CHURCH HAS SO GREATLY ADVOCATED FOR A SHARPENING OF THE INTELLECT THAT THE MODERN UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OWES ITS EXISTENCE TO THE CATHOLIC CHURCH. THE EARLIEST UNIVERSITIES SPRANG UP NEAR THE END OF THE 12TH CENTURY. THEY DEVELOPED OUT OF THE SO-CALLED "CATHEDRAL SCHOOL" SYSTEM, WHICH HAD BEEN OPERATED BY THE CHURCH AT A TIME WHEN VIRTUALLY NO ONE ELSE WAS INTERESTED IN EDUCATION.

REASON

BUT PERHAPS MORE THE POINT, THERE HAVE BEEN MANY CATHOLIC SCIENTISTS AND PHILOSOPHERS WHO HAVE CARRIED ON THE INTELLECTUAL TRADITION OF THE CHURCH. CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING EXAMPLES:

FR. GREGOR MENDEL: AN AUGUSTINIAN FRIAR WHOSE WORK SERVES AS THE BASIS OF MODERN GENETICS. YOU HAVE PROBABLY LEARNED ABOUT HIM IN YOUR BIOLOGY CLASS WHEN YOU USED PUNNETT SQUARES TO DETERMINE THE LIKELIHOOD OF CERTAIN TRAITS BEING INHERITED BY OFFSPRING. WORKING WITH PEA PLANTS, FR. MENDEL DETERMINED THAT GENES ARE INHERITED IN PAIRS AND THAT THERE ARE DOMINANT AND RECESSIVE GENES.

ROGER BACON: A FRANCISCAN FRIAR WHO CRITICIZED THE BLIND ACCEPTANCE OF IDEAS AND EMPHASIZED THE NEED TO TEST AND EXAMINE THINGS. ALTHOUGH HIS WORK CERTAINLY WAS NOT PERFECT, HIS IDEAS SERVE AS THE FOUNDATION FOR THE MODERN SCIENTIFIC METHOD.

FR. GEORGE LEMAITRE: A BELGIAN PRIEST AND CONTEMPORARY OF EINSTEIN, LEMAITRE IS KNOWN AS THE FATHER OF THE BIG BANG THEORY. WHEN LEMAITRE FIRST PROPOSED HIS THEORY, EINSTEIN TOLD HIM HE WAS A FOOL AND HIS PHYSICS WERE NONSENSE. BUT LEMAITRE PERSISTED AND AFTER ONLY A FEW YEARS, EINSTEIN WAS

REASON

CONVINCED AND CALLED THE BIG BANG THEORY "THE MOST SATISFACTORY EXPLANATION" OF THE ORIGINS OF THE UNIVERSE.

THESE ARE JUST A FEW OF THE MANY MEMBERS OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH WHO HAVE FURTHERED OUR UNDERSTANDING OF SCIENCE. THEY DO NOT EVEN BEGIN TO COVER ALL OF THE CATHOLICS WHO HAVE REVOLUTIONIZED THE WORLD OF PHILOSOPHY LIKE WILLIAM OF OCKHAM, ST. AUGUSTINE, AND ST. THOMAS AQUINAS.

TODAY, WE CONSTANTLY HEAR THAT FAITH AND REASON ARE ON OPPOSITE SPECTRUMS AND CANNOT BE RECONCILED. WE ARE TOLD THAT TO BE A PERSON OF FAITH IS TO BE OPPOSED TO SCIENCE AND PHILOSOPHY. BUT GOD DID NOT CREATE THIS WORLD WITH COMPETING TRUTHS. RATHER, HE GAVE US BOTH SCIENCE AND REASON SO THAT WE COULD GROW IN OUR KNOWLEDGE AND LOVE OF HIM.

WHENEVER WE INVESTIGATE THE NATURAL WORLD AROUND US, WHICH IS CREATED BY GOD, WE LEARN MORE ABOUT HIM. AS PSALM 19:1 TELLS US, "THE HEAVENS ARE TELLING THE GLORY OF GOD; AND THE FIRMAMENT PROCLAIMS HIS HANDIWORK."

REASON

questions

5

WHAT STANDS OUT TO YOU IN THIS SECTION?

6

WHAT WAYS DO YOU BELIEVE THAT FAITH & SCIENCE
"OPPOSE"? HOW CAN YOU INVESTIGATE THOSE
"OPPOSITIONS"?