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CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY AND THE NEW ATHEISM: THE HIERARCHY OF EXPLANATIONS

The hierarchy of explanations is necessary. Both science and theology are rooted, each in its own way, in the human desire to understand and know, but they seek understanding and truth from within formally distinct horizons of inquiry. These horizons do not overlap, compete, or conflict with each other, and what constitutes data, evidence, and confirmation in one is not the same as in the other.

INTRODUCTION

The greatest problem of the 21st century is the anthropological questions. It goes with the same fundamental questions which pervade human life: Who am I? Where have I come from and where am I going? Why is there evil? What is there after this life? These are questions which have their common source in the quest for meaning which has always compelled human heart. In fact, the answer given to these questions decides the direction which people seek to give to their lives.¹ Science and religion have tried to answer these fundamental questions. Surprisingly, the relationship between science and religion is extremely complex because there is no simple way to define either “science” or “religion,” and moreover the meanings of both terms have changed, sometimes profoundly, in the course of time.² What Alfred North Whitehead states in 1925 is still germane to our situation: “When we consider what religion is for mankind, and what science is, it is no exaggeration to say that the future course of history depends upon the decision of this generation as to the relations between them. We have here the two greatest general forces [...] which influence man, and they seem to be set against the other”.³ Today science and religion may seem no closer to a resolution than ever; yet they remain very much alive and continue to evoke an interesting range of responses.

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¹ John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, no. 1.

² C. C. Hefling, *Science and Religion*, in: *Catholic Encyclopedia*, eds. M. Glazier and M. K. Hellwig, Collegeville 2004, p. 763.

³ A. N. Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, New York 1967, pp. 181–182.

While Catholic theology has always held that there can be no real conflict between genuine science and real faith, it does acknowledge that “scientific materialism”⁴ is irreconcilable with the belief in God. It is indubitable that truth does not contradict truth, as such, religion (the Church) has nothing to fear from science. The French philosopher and mystic Simone Weil says, “Christ likes us to prefer truth to him, because, before being Christ, he is truth. If one turns aside from him to go to the truth, one will not go far before falling into his arms”.⁵

The purpose of this article is to show the ways in which New Atheists and theologians have viewed the truths of existence. We need to connect the world of religion and science. Religious believers must never be afraid to learn from science about the immensity of the universe. Scientific knowledge, properly understood can only enlarge our sense and concept of God. Therefore, the Church in her missionary consciousness needs to meet the intellectual and spiritual needs of the scientifically educated.⁶ Again, the purpose of this article is to show that there is a hierarchy of explanations.⁷

RELIGION AND ITS THEOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING

Religion and science for a long time have seemed to be in search of different kinds of truth, as if there is not one truth in existence as a whole. The history of the disputes which breaks out on this great theme does not interest us here in detail. For many generations the main lines among scholars on the issue of science and religion (reason and faith) is very evident. It is the matter of determining, on the one hand, which truths are or can be arrived at by exercising the “natural” powers of human reason, which truths belong, on the other hand, exclusively to “supernatural” revelation and therefore can be known only by the supernatural power of faith. Given this distinction of ways in which truth is knowable, difficulties arise only insofar as a truth belonging to one category appears to contradict a truth belonging to the other. This difficulty cannot be easily resolved by making an assumption that there are two disparate kinds of “truths”.⁸ On this Catholic thought adopts the position of Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas holds that truth is one, because God, who is Truth itself and the source of all that is true, is one. From this it follows that any apparent contradiction between the contents of revelation and the achievements of reason must be only apparent; it cannot be real. Hence, there is need to examine

⁴ Materialism is the belief that matter, the purely physical realm, is all there is to reality. Scientism is the belief that science is the only reliable road to truth. And when scientism and materialism are combined it gives science the appearance of being inherently atheistic.

⁵ J. F. Haught, *Responses to 101 Questions on God and Evolution*, New York 2001, p. 39.

⁶ My arguments against New Atheism come especially from the works of J. F. Haught.

⁷ J. F. Haught, *Responses to 101 Questions on God and Evolution*, p. 57.

⁸ C. C. Hefling, *Science and Religion*, in: *Catholic Encyclopedia*, p. 764.

and possibly accept the hierarchy of explanations when it comes to the issues of truth which is one.

The hierarchy of explanations is necessary because both science and religion can become weapons of ideological conflicts and that makes it all the more difficult to address on its own merits the question of their respective claims to truth. It is true that individual scientists have sometimes gone out of bounds, by arrogating to science the final word on what does and does not exist, what is and is not real, what the human mind can and cannot know. Likewise, it is true that individual theologians have sometimes gone out of bounds, by pronouncing on questions of empirical facts.

St Anselm of Canterbury gives the famous and classic definition of theology as “faith seeking understanding” (*fides quaerens intellectum*). This definition does not preclude reason but clearly acknowledges that faith, the lived relation between God and humanity, grounds the starting of theological reflection or as Anselm states, “understanding”. In Anselm’s definition, faith is a knowledge that finds illumination through reasoned understanding.⁹ It is open to truth wherever it is. Faith seeks understanding so that understanding can contribute to a living, growing faith that makes a difference in life. Theology is the self-articulated understanding of its journey with God.

NEW ATHEISM: WHAT IS IT?

New Atheism is a social and political movement that began in the early 2000s in favour of atheism and secularism promoted by a collection of modern atheist writers who have advocated the view that religion should not simply be tolerated but should be countered, criticized, and exposed by rational argument wherever its influences arises. The New Atheists’ philosophies and arguments are generally consistent with those of their predecessors (the atheists); what is “New” is a difference in style and profitability. New Atheists consider belief in God erroneous as well as detrimental to society, and espouse their views frequently and publicly. The “New Atheist” label for these critics of religion and religious belief emerged out of journalistic commentary on the content of their books,¹⁰ although many of these anti-religious thinkers reject the “New Atheist” label. The main prominent figures of the New Atheism known as the “Four Horsemen of the Non-Apocalypse” are Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, Sam Harris, and finally Daniel Dennett. These men are referred to as “Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse”, a reference to the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse mentioned in the Book of Revelation

⁹ J. J. Mueller, *Theology*, in: *Catholic Encyclopedia*, p. 829.

¹⁰ J. E. Taylor, *The New Atheists*, in: *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, www.iep.utm.edu [12th February, 2016].

in the Bible (Rev. 6:1–8). While The Four Horsemen are arguably the foremost proponents of the New Atheism, there are a number of other current, notable New Atheists who are trying in the name of science to debunk religion and especially the idea of God.

The New Atheists write mainly from a scientific perspective. In spite of their different approaches and occupations, they tend to share general assumptions and viewpoints. These positions constitute the background theoretical framework that is known as the New Atheism. The framework has a metaphysical component, an epistemological component, and an ethical component. Regarding the metaphysical component, the New Atheist authors share the central belief that there is no supernatural or divine reality of any kind. The epistemological component is their common claim that religious belief is irrational. The moral component is the assumption that there is a universal and objective secular moral standard.¹¹ Unlike previous writers (the hard-core atheists), many of whom thought that science was indifferent, or even incapable of dealing with the “God” concept, Dawkins argues on the contrary in his book “The God Delusion”, claiming the “God Hypothesis” is a valid scientific hypothesis, having effects in the physical universe, and like any other hypothesis can be tested and falsified. Other New Atheists propose that the personal Abrahamic God is a scientific hypothesis that can be tested by standard methods of science. These New Atheists conclude that the hypothesis fails any such tests, and argue that scientific naturalism is sufficient to explain everything we observe in the universe. Nowhere, they argue, is it necessary to introduce God or the supernatural to understand reality. New Atheism have been associated with the argument from divine hiddenness and the idea that “absence of evidence is evidence of absence” when evidence can be expected.

THE NEW ATHEISM AND ITS SECULAR APOTHEOSIS OF SCIENCE

For the New Atheists theology is now completely superfluous. Science alone can tell us what religion is really all about, and it can provide better answers than theology to every important question people ask. Science is even qualified to decide whether or not God exists. This belief system that the New Atheists subscribe is known as “scientific materialism” or “scientific naturalism”. According to Haught, scientific naturalism, which shapes the mind of the new atheists, has the central dogmas or tenets that: apart from nature, which includes human beings and our cultural creations, there is nothing. There is no God, no soul, and no life after death. Nature is self-originating, not the creation of God. The universe has no overall point of purpose, although individual human lives can be lived purposefully. Since

¹¹ Ibidem.

God does not exist, all explanations and all causes are purely natural and can be understood only by science. All the various features of living beings, including human intelligence and behavior, can be explained ultimately in purely natural terms, and today this usually means in evolutionary, specifically Darwinian, terms. In addition, they maintain that faith in God is the cause of innumerable evils and should be rejected on moral grounds. Morality, they say, does not require God, and people behave better without faith than with it.¹²

After the attack at the World Trade Center's twin towers in September 2001, Sam Harris presents in his books "The End of Faith" and "Letter to a Christian Nation" that we can rid the world of faith not by violence but by reason and the spread of science.¹³ More so, that the root cause of the most insane forms of violence is not poverty and injustice anyway. Rather, it is faith and theology. Only "the end of faith", says Harris, holds any promise for saving the world.¹⁴ The New Atheists want to make it very clear that what is so evil about the God religions is not only the crude anthropomorphic images of deity that arise from our baser natures-forces like greed, hatred, and fear, but also that they arise from "faith" rather than from "evidence".¹⁵ For the New Atheists it is faith, which for them is belief without evidence, which makes the world so much more miserable than it needs to be. Evidence, for the New Atheists, means whatever is scientifically testable, empirically available, or publicly observable. Extraordinary claims such as religion require an "extraordinary kind of testing", but none is available. Since science alone can reliably verify or falsify human propositions, one must conclude that religious ideas, lacking physical evidence as they do, cannot legitimately claim to be truthful. So, only claims for which there is "sufficient evidence" are acceptable to those who want an end to human misery.¹⁶ The insistence by the New Atheists that it is morally wrong to believe anything without scientific evidence or to accept any claims that cannot be verified in principle by "objective" scientific knowing is shockingly unethical. This is because faith makes an opening wide enough for atheism too.¹⁷ Dawkins fully supports Harris and even extends the attack on religious moderates that the teachings of "moderate" religions, though not extremist in themselves, are an open invitation to extremists.¹⁸

The New Atheists also take a swipe at the Bible and other religious literatures. They maintain that since the allegedly inspired literature of the God religions is a product of faith, there is no reason to take it seriously. Aside from an aesthetical-

¹² J. F. Haught, *God And The New Atheism: A Critical Response To Dawkins, Harris, And Hitchens*, Louisville 2008, pp. xiii–xiv.

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 2.

¹⁴ S. Harris, *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason*, New York 2005, p. 45.

¹⁵ J. F. Haught, *God And The New Atheism*, pp. 3–4.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 5.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*.

¹⁸ R. Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, London 2006, p. 306.

ly appealing passage here and there, the Scriptures of all religions are worthless. Whatever seems morally right or aesthetically charming in our allegedly sacred books and traditions could have been arrived at by reason operating independently of faith.¹⁹ Furthermore, they maintain that the “holy books” are polluted in at least four ways: first, by the simple fact of their antiquity; second, by their failure to provide true (that is, scientific) knowledge; third, by their tolerance of rules of conduct and role models that fail to meet the New Atheists’ standard; and, fourth, by their promotion of faith.²⁰

ANSWERING THE NEW ATHEISTS: CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGIANS/AUTHORS

Ian Markham expresses gratitude to the so called New Atheists, Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, and Christopher Hitchens for writing the books that have stimulated so much debate. They have all done the Church a big favour. After years of being on the defensive, we are back into the business of apologetics.²¹ Reechoing what A.N. Whitehead says, “a class of doctrine is not a disaster – it is an opportunity”.²² There are vast literatures in response to the New Atheism. Borden Painter, paraphrasing Winston Churchill says, ‘Never have so many written so much in response to so few’. For Borden Painter these three books from mainstream traditions: Ian Markham (Anglican/Episcopal); John Haught (Roman Catholic); and David Bentley Hart (Eastern Orthodox) are very important in answering the New Atheism. Each author has his own style and set of substantive issues, but the three also share common ground in challenging the New Atheists and presenting a case for Christianity. All three contend that New Atheism is but ‘Old Atheism Writ Small’. The New Atheist may believe that they stand on a tradition descended from the Enlightenment, but the critics find the recent version soft in comparison. Haught classifies the new atheists as the soft-core atheist different from the hard-core atheist. If Markham, Haught, and Hart have an atheist hero it is Friedrich Nietzsche.²³ David B. Hart argues that Nietzsche may have rejoiced in rejecting a Christian morality that had “weakened the wills of western man,” but

¹⁹ J. F. Haught, *God And The New Atheism*, p. 7.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 96.

²¹ I. S. Markham, *Against Atheism: Why Dawkins, Hitchens, and Harris Are Fundamentally Wrong*, Oxford 2010, p. viii.

²² A. N. Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, p. 185.

²³ B. Painter, *Answering Neo-Atheists in Conversation in Religion and Theology*, Oxford 2010, p. 217.

he understood that modernity with science at the center and without God would let us loose in a new world of both human opportunity and risk.²⁴

Haught devotes a chapter to the question *Can We Be Good without God?* He attacks the New Atheists for misconstruing the Bible as a manual of morality and thus failing to understand a Christian framework for what is good. Dawkins' discussion of morality and the Bible is a remarkable display of ignorance and sarcasm.²⁵ Again, for Haught, in Christian theology the ultimate source of right and wrong is God Himself. Reason cannot lead to a legitimate morality for without the clearing made by faith, reason withers, and conduct has no calling. Faith is what gives reason a future and morality a meaning.²⁶ Therefore, God is not and will never be detached from the world but instead absolutely related to it.²⁷

Dawkins writes that God is a delusion – a psychotic delinquent invented by mad, deluded people.²⁸ Faith is “blind trust, in the absence of evidence, even in the teeth of evidence”. It is a “process of non-thinking”. Faith is evil precisely because it requires no justification, and brooks no argument.²⁹ Theologians today understand faith as the commitment of one's whole being to God. But the New Atheists, echoing an obsolete theology, think of faith in a narrow intellectual and propositional sense. The seat of faith for them is not a vulnerable heart but a weak intellect.³⁰ Haught, in this illuminating passage says: “Of course, all knowing has to start from somewhere, and that somewhere is rightly called faith, even if our critics are offended by the term. At some foundational level all knowing is rooted in a declaration of trust, in a ‘will to believe.’ For example, we have to trust that the universe makes some kind of sense before we can even begin the search for its intelligibility”.³¹

THE HIERARCHY OF EXPLANATIONS

Roman Catholicism and science have often been regarded as incompatible with each other. Certainly, tensions and contradictions have arisen between them. But does an awareness of these tensions then lead one, inevitably, to conclude that there is an inherent conflict between Catholic theology and science? Regrettably, in the discussion of science and theology, Galileo's case always serves as an exam-

²⁴ D. B. Hart, *Atheists Delusion: The Christian Revolution and Its Fashionable Enemies*, London 2009, p. 229.

²⁵ J. F. Haught, *Science and Religion: From Conflict to Conversation*, p. 68.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 75.

²⁷ J. F. Haught, *God And The New Atheism*, p. 96.

²⁸ R. Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, p. 38.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 308.

³⁰ J. F. Haught, *God And The New Atheism*, p. 5.

³¹ *Ibidem*, p. 6.

ple to illustrate the complexity of the relationship between Roman Catholicism and science. In the late 19th century, the notion of ‘warfare’ between theology and science was popularized by two books in particular: “History of the Conflict between Religion and Science” (1874) by John William Draper and “A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom” (1896) by Andrew Dickson White. These books in particular are critical of the Roman Catholic Church.

The subject matter of theology and science is so vast that no single volume could address its many facets in depth. But the scientific issues are examined by the Church on the basis of their impact on Catholic theology and the interpretation of Scripture. Evolution is discussed more than any other topic in science because it is the greatest source of contention and is frequently associated with New Atheism. Both science and theology are rooted, each in its own way, in the human desire to understand and know, but they seek understanding and truth from within formally distinct horizons of inquiry. These horizons do not overlap, compete, or conflict with each other, and what constitutes data, evidence, and confirmation in one is not the same as in the other.³²

Pius X was deeply interested in scientific issues and had contributed to the foundation of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences. In his address to the Academy on 3rd December 1939, he expressed his vision of science as the study of God’s creation and activity. John Paul II says that the Church in her “diakonia of the truth” proclaims that Jesus is “the way, the truth, and the life” (Jn 14:6). He continues that the Church believes that every truth attained is but a step towards that fullness of truth which will appear with the final revelation (1 Cor 13:12).³³ The desire for truth is part of human nature itself. But the answers to these existential questions show the complementary aspects of our search for the truth. The Pope warns of the danger of “Philosophical pride”³⁴ which seeks to present its own partial and imperfect view as the complete reading of all reality. It is in the same vein that the Church and the theologians reject scientific materialism as presented by New Atheists.

But according to the New Atheists, one must decide between theological and scientific explanations. Each reader must choose one rather than the other. It cannot be both. On this, Haught in this illuminating passage maintains that it is possible for instance to teach science in our schools (even evolution) without it sounding like atheistic propaganda: “The students have to learn science deliberately and rightly, and leave out any reference to God when it tries to explain anything. But this exclusion of God must be understood as methodological rather than metaphysical [...]. Science must try to explain things as thoroughly as it can in purely natural terms. To fit god into an explanatory gap that science itself may eventually

³² J. F. Haught, *Resting on the Future*, New York 2015, p. 6.

³³ John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, no. 2.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, no. 4.

bridge is to shrink the Creator into a ‘*God-of-the-gaps*’.³⁵ If we locate God only in the dark regions of human inquiry, such a deity will become obsolete as soon as science shines its light in there. We should instead seek to locate divine reality and religious understanding of science at an ultimate level of explanation, on to which scientific ingenuity can never penetrate in principle.³⁶ The term “metaphysical” here refers to what is real. A metaphysical exclusion would mean that God does not exist at all and there can have no explanatory role, at any level, in the hierarchy of explanations. As soon as a scientist claims that what science sees is all there is, the boundary has already been crossed from methodological to metaphysical. Regrettably, when scientists cross this boundary it is no longer science, but belief. This is because they are turning scientific method into the ultimate metaphysical explanation of life. Alister McGrath says that science may have its limits is in no way a criticism or defamation of the scientific method. Every intellectual tool that we possess needs to be calibrated, in other words, to be examined to identify the conditions under which it is reliable. This is a legitimate demand for calibration of intellectual accuracy. Therefore following Max Bennett and Peter Hacker, he argues that scientific theories do not and are not intended to describe and explain “everything about the world” – such as its purpose.³⁷ Whitehead adds, “Science is concerned with the general conditions which are observed to regulate physical phenomenon; whereas religion is wholly wrapped up in the contemplation of moral and aesthetic values. On the one side there is the law of gravitation, on the other the contemplation of the beauty of holiness. What one side sees, the other misses; and vice versa”.³⁸

The Church exists for the salvation of souls and is entrusted by divine authority to teach the truth and nothing but the truth. But the New Atheists have questioned the credibility of the whole Bible, and there is a widespread misunderstanding that geology is at variance with the Book of Genesis. Pope Leo XIII in his encyclical letter “*Providentissimus Deus*,” while discussing the question on how to interpret Scripture, admonishes his readers not to look for scientific information in biblical texts. In 1909, the Pontifical Biblical Commission declared that the narrative in the Book of Genesis conveys “fundamental truths” necessary for salvation to “a less developed people”. The literal style is simple and figurative in keeping with their limited intellectual capacities.

Gerald Molloy (1834–1960) in his book “*Geology and Revelation*” makes it clear that God is the author of both the Book of Nature and the Book of revelation

³⁵ God-of-the-gap approach of Christian apologetics of the 18th and 19th century asserted that there were necessary “gaps” in a naturalist or scientific understanding of reality. They argued that God needs to be proposed in order to deal with these gaps in scientific understanding.

³⁶ J. F. Haught, *Responses to 101 Questions on God and Evolution*, p. 74.

³⁷ A. McGrath and J. C. McGrath, *The Dawkins Delusion? Atheistic Fundamentalism and the Denial of the Divine*, Illinois 2007, p. 38.

³⁸ A. N. Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, p. 184.

– there could be no contradiction.³⁹ Molloy argues that a book should be judged by the purpose that it was meant to serve. Genesis is not written to teach natural science – it is to serve the spiritual needs of God’s chosen people. Furthermore, the inspired authors, it was contended, did not lead his readers into error – he simply left them in ignorance of events that were deemed irrelevant to their needs. The purpose of the author was to impress upon the Hebrews that God is the Creator of everything.⁴⁰ Benedict XVI on this says, “Thus Scripture would not wish to inform us about how the different species of plant life gradually appeared or how the sun and moon and the stars were established. Its purpose ultimately would be to say one thing: God created the world”.⁴¹

The major obstacle to the reconciliation of science and theology is the conflation of science with materialist philosophy by the New Atheists on the one hand, and on the other hand, the persistence of biblical literalism (the expectation that the Bible prove that it is truly “inspired”, should yield a quality grade of scientific information). Literalism, Haught argues, protects the religious fundamentalist from hearing the Word of God while giving the New Atheist a pretext for mocking ancient religious literatures for its scientific naiveté.⁴²

THE CHALLENGES OF THE NEW ATHEISM TO THE WORLD AND THE CHURCH

The question sometimes asked is why (New) Atheists do not forget God, but take up this obvious position to attack God and promote their doctrine. New Atheism tends to promote the culture of people living as if God does not exist and to cut themselves off from their roots of ancient Christian and spiritual traditions. The result, according to Robert Cardinal Sarah⁴³, is that most people especially Western populations now regard Jesus Christ as a sort of idea but not as an event, much less as a person whom the apostles and many witnesses of the Gospel met and loved and whom they consecrated their whole life.⁴⁴

The atheistic orientation of a life is almost always a decision by the will. On the moral level, God is considered as someone who creates obstacles to confine our will by imposing laws; God becomes the enemy of liberty and autonomy. Sarah says that atheism is thus a decision to ignore reason, which would bring us

³⁹ D. O’Leary, *Roman Catholicism and Modern Science: A History*, New York 2006, pp. 11–12.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 13–14.

⁴¹ Benedict XVI, ‘*In the Beginning...*’. *A Catholic Understanding of the Story of Creation and the Fall*, Michigan 1990, p. 5.

⁴² J. F. Haught, *Resting on the Future*, p. 6.

⁴³ Robert Cardinal Sarah was born in Guinea, West Africa. He is currently the Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments.

⁴⁴ R. Sarah, *God Or Nothing. A Conversation on Faith*, San Francisco 2015, p. 167.

back to our Creator, the true light that should enlighten us, guide us, and show us the paths of life. He goes further to say that “man intends to dominate nature and to assert his independence through his achievements in science and technology. But science should not separate us from God. On the contrary, it should bring man closer to divine love.”⁴⁵ Morality, love, freedom, technology, and science are nothing without God’s presence.⁴⁶ Man can devise the most magnificent works, but they will be mere sand castles and shifting illusions unless they are related to God. The efforts of New Atheism to promote the eclipse of God; the new rule to forget heaven so that man might be fully free and autonomous, will surely lead man to practical materialism, disorderly or abusive consumption, and the creation of false moral norms. Material well-being and immediate satisfaction will become the only reason for living. Good becomes evil, beauty is ugly, love becomes the satisfaction of several primal sexual instincts, and truths are all relative.⁴⁷ Whether it is militant or still in the larval state, Atheism always leads to the same consequences. Man is treated as an object, cut off from his spiritual roots and blinded by the artificial lights of material goods or achievements. Finally, all atheism seeks to change the very nature of man.⁴⁸ As always, the eclipse of what is divine means the debasement of what is human.⁴⁹

The New Atheism propaganda gives rise to subjectivism, relativism, liberalism and individualism. These evils are widespread and it is not easy to combat them. They attempt to complete the process of the social disappearance of God. Therefore, the Church must continue to fight this battle against the liquidation of God because it is a battle of mankind.

There are varieties of topics in this article that undoubtedly require further in-depth investigation. Though, it will not be easy since New Atheism hijacks and presents science as a doctrine incompatible with the truths of religion, and even the media often do their part deliberately to discredit the Church’s position, to distort it, or to silence it.

CONCLUSION

Cardinal Sarah asks this simple but very important question: “Must the world change its attitude, or must the Church change her fidelity to God?”⁵⁰ This confusion calls for rapid response. But science provides no answer to the anthropological-cum- transcendental questions raised above. To reduce all knowledge to

⁴⁵ Ibidem, p. 168.

⁴⁶ Ibidem, p. 170.

⁴⁷ Ibidem, p. 171.

⁴⁸ Ibidem.

⁴⁹ Ibidem, p. 180.

⁵⁰ Ibidem, p. 173.

scientific knowledge is to condemn man to ignorance about the things that matter most in life. One can easily refute the rigid insistence by the New Atheists that real scientists are atheists. McGrath affirms that most unbelieving scientists are atheists on grounds other than their science; they bring those assumptions to their science rather than basing them on their science.⁵¹ And he immediately warns that one of the greatest disservices that Dawkins has done to the natural sciences is to portray them as relentlessly and inexorably atheistic.⁵² We have religious scientists. McGrath, therefore, calls on the scientific community to rise and protest against the abuse of their ideas in the service of such an atheistic fundamentalism.

For John Paul II and Benedict XVI, the true work of a theologian consists of entering into the Word of God so as to seek to grasp it rationally, to the extent possible, and to share it with the utmost clarity with the people of his time. Theology and science are like two lights that require each other. This marvelous complementarity is a gift of God. Scientific rigor should not discourage Christians at all. For scientific research (not scientism as being championed by New Atheism), is always an advance in our Christian understanding of revelation and of the world. On this Haught says that a science-conscious theology, therefore, can remain entirely continuous with the long history of our religious searching even as it widens the quest for fulfillment. Evolution and cosmology do not require the termination but the transformation of our search for meaning and redemption.⁵³ We must make room in the age of science for faith and fortify faith's sincerity by exposing it continually to science.⁵⁴ The barriers that the New Atheists have tried to set up between science and religion/theology are groundless because they are artificial: there can be no contradiction in God.

As regards the different approaches between science and religion, Haught proposes the conflict, contrast, contact, and confirmation approaches. He submits that the best approach is the confirmation approach. It suggests that science and religion, different though they may be, share a common origin in the remote and mysterious fountainhead of a simple human desire to know. If there is really evolution of religious thoughts (theology), then the interaction between religion and science is one great factor in promoting this development. But the two magisteria must be maintained. The magisterium of science which deals with empirical realm and the magisterium of religion/theology which deals with the questions of ultimate meaning (the origin and purpose of existence) can complement each other in answering our anthropological questions and questions about the Ultimate Concern. The principles of faith are complementary with the principles of science.

⁵¹ A. McGrath and J. C. McGrath, *The Dawkins Delusion? Atheistic Fundamentalism and the Denial of the Divine*, p. 44.

⁵² *Ibidem*, p. 48.

⁵³ J. F. Haught, *Resting on the Future*, p. 2.

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 5.

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TEOLOGIA CHRZEŚCIJAŃSKA A NOWY ATEIZM: HIERARCHIA WYJAŚNIEŃ

Streszczenie

Dialog Kościoła ze współczesnym społeczeństwem, zwłaszcza po Soborze Watykańskim II, prowadzi do otwarcia teologii na wiele dziedzin kultury i nauki. Obecnie Kościół systematycznie proponuje budowanie relacji między nauką i wiarą. To spowodowało radykalną zmianę i przejście od podejrzeń i wrogości do komplementarności i uznania potrzeby obustronnej współpracy w czasach kryzysu kultury naukowo-technologicznej. Rozszerzenie do prawdy wysuwane przez naukę opartą na racjonalności jest przez Kościół powszechnie uznawane, lecz twierdzenie „nowych ateistów”, że nauka stanowi ostateczne wyjaśnienie, musi zostać odrzucone, gdyż nie jest ona w stanie odpowiedzieć na pytanie o sens ludzkiego życia. Nie może być fundamentalnych konfliktów między wiarą a rozumem, ponieważ odnoszą się one do tego samego Bożego źródła wszelkiej prawdy. Nauka musi akceptować swoje granice poprzez określenie intelektualnej precyzji, inaczej mogłaby zostać potraktowana nie jako metoda poznawcza, lecz jako wiara.

Keywords: religion, science, new atheism, scientism, hierarchy of explanations

Słowa kluczowe: religia, nauka, nowy ateizm, scjentyzm, hierarchia wyjaśnień