

Matthias Petzoldt (Hrsg.)

Theologie im Gespräch mit empirischen Wissenschaften. (Theology in exchange with empirical sciences.) Veröffentlichungen der Wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaft für Theologie 35. Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, Leipzig 2012, 409 pp.

This recommendable volume combines the proceedings of two conferences of the section for systematical theology of the Wissenschaftliche Gesellschaft für Theologie held in Würzburg 2009 and 2010 concerning the dialogue between theology and empirical sciences. It is concluded by a conference paper analysing the relationship of theology, experience and science and arguing for a dialogue in which theology as hermeneutics is based on experience and not on an ultimate foundation. The whole volume can be regarded as taking this approach by combining many different perspectives on the questions and subjects discussed and is thus very informative and helpful.

The first part is dedicated to the dialogue with social sciences and asks – starting with the Religionsmonitor 2008 initiated by the Bertelsmann foundation – about the measurability of religiosity. The first two contributions focus on the Religionsmonitor and its method by presenting the main idea and problems of a quantitative approach in socio-scientific research of religion and analysing the understanding of religion as presented by the Religionsmonitor in regard of the difference between objectivity and subjectivity. The three others are dealing with related questions: The relationship between religious language and practice (drawing on D. Z. Philips and Wittgenstein), the compatibility of the criteria for the centrality of religion used by the Religionsmonitor with a Lutheran approach (recurring on the criteria used by the visitation in early Modern Era) and the task of empirical theology as reconstructing lived experience.

The second and larger part approaches the dialogue with natural sciences and deals with time, beginning with an article on time and eternity as seen by natural sciences, especially quantum physics and its consequences for consciousness. A more philosophical orientated paper analyses structures and relations of time, eternity and natural laws with a stress on the perceptibility of time, its flow, the present and causal structure and the arrow of time. Furthermore, psychological aspects are regarded with inter alia the development of the perception of time, the significance of memory, the emergence of objectively measuring time, cultural and social acceleration and its consequences and several examples for a changed perception of time due to workflow, meditation, isolation, sleep or psychic illnesses. The next article regards different perspectives on the experience of time (philosophical as well as neurophysiological ones), concluding with ethical considerations concerning older people. While another philosophical perspective deals with the temporality of being, the last two contributions discuss the significance of time in theological systems and the questions of God as creator of time and the limits of speaking of God.

(Thomas Fornet-Ponse)