

## QUESTIONS ARISING FROM THE 1<sup>ST</sup> PLATO TEXT SELECTION

1. Apologists and fathers in the early church saw many affinities between Plato and biblical thought, as did Christian humanists in the Renaissance. Christian Platonists, for instance, maintained that Hellenism is as much the progenitor of Jesus Christ as is Israel. Some spoke of a discarnate Logos found in Greek philosophy.

Is this assessment correct?

What happens when Israel is undervalued?

Is ancient Greek philosophy as important for Christians as the Hebrew bible?

How extensive is the affinity?

What is the relation of classical learning to biblical faith?

Is the "discarnate Logos" the Logos of John?

2. In the *Timaeus* Plato wants to link the ethics of the *Republic* and the order of the natural world. It appears that ethics presupposes metaphysics.

How is a metaphysical system "chosen?"

If modernity shuns both biblical faith and metaphysics, then what is the ground of modernity's ethics?

How is modernity's concern with "values" related to ethics and metaphysics?

Can "values" be distinguished from mere preferences or whims?

3. Plato says that the order of nature provides order for both the city-state and the individual.

What (dis)similarities are there between the order of nature and what theology has called "laws of nature" or "orders of creation?" between the order of nature and the apostolic assertion that all things were made through Christ? (John 1, Colossians 1, Hebrews 1.)

4. The fundamental issue in Greek philosophy is Being (i.e., Being-itself as opposed to beings.) Being is grasped by "intelligence" or "reason."

What is the fundamental issue in scripture? How is it "grasped?"

5. How does Plato's understanding of creation differ from *creatio ex nihilo*?
6. What are (dis)similarities between the chaos of the creation and the chaos referred to in scripture (e.g., Genesis 1, Noah stories, Christ's stilling of the storm)?
7. Where does the doctrine of the Trinity disagree with Plato's notion that "the father of all this universe is past finding out?"
8. How do Plato and scripture respectively account for the perduring "frustration" of the created order?
9. How do Plato and the church differ on the role of matter in creation?
10. Plato maintains that the human soul, in order to attain its true destiny, must leave the sensible world and return to a supersensible world.

How would prophet and apostle comment on this notion?

11. How do Greek and Hebrew minds differ on the meaning of "soul?"
12. Both Plato and scripture say little about space but much about time. Where do they differ with respect to time? to history?
13. While the bible begins with the creation story (Genesis), the logic of scripture indicates that Israel knew God as creator only after it knew God as the one who had rescued it from slavery in Egypt and had disclosed himself to it at Sinai. Plainly, then, according to the logic of scripture, knowledge of God the redeemer precedes knowledge of God the creator.

What happens in Christian thought when knowledge of the creator is said to precede knowledge of the redeemer?