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God Over All: Divine Aseity and the Challenge of Platonism, by William Lane Craig. Oxford University Press, 2016. 272 pp., Hb., $94. ISBN 9780198786887

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"Platonism" in philosophy of mathematics refers to the view that numbers and other mathematical entities exist as eternal, non-spatiotemporal, non-contingent, causally inert abstract objects. Thus the number "2" really exists, eternally and necessarily, and functions as a truthmaker for propositions involving it. More broadly, within analytic metaphysics "Platonism" typically encompasses both that view of mathematics and a belief in the reality of other abstract objects (e.g., properties, possible worlds, or propositions).

Some maintain that Platonism conflicts with theism, by way of conflicting with the doctrine of divine aseity. According to that doctrine, God is the only truly independent, necessarily existent being, and all other beings depend on God for their existence. But if the number "2" exists in the way Platonists suppose, then it exists outside of God's creative power.

This is how Craig sets up the problem in the first chapter of the book; in the second, he underscores the difficulty by providing Biblical, patristic, and philosophical support for divine aseity, and for the idea that it admits of no exceptions (i.e., the Platonist cannot get away with saying that all *concrete* objects rely on God for existence, but that numbers and other *abstract* objects can exist independently of God.)

If it prompts these theological complications, why take Platonism seriously in the first place? Craig explains this in chapter three, reviewing the principal argument advanced for Platonism within contemporary philosophy: the neo-Quinean Indispensability Argument. The basic idea (and I am simplifying quite a bit here) is that there are literally true propositions that irreducibly reference abstract objects (e.g., "2 + 2 = 4"), and that could not be the case unless the objects referenced in those propositions really existed. The further premise required here is that we are ontologically committed to whatever entities are irreducibly referenced in propositions we take to be literally true.

Some Christian thinkers have sought to reconcile Platonism and theism, and two strategies are covered in chapters four and five: absolute creationism and divine conceptualism. On the former, abstract objects are real but they still rely on God for their existence. This can be fleshed out in two different ways: God *necessarily* creates them (such that abstract objects are necessarily existent, yet still rooted in God's creative activity),

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or God *freely* creates them and could have refrained from doing so. Both options run into problems. On the one hand, if God necessarily creates abstract objects then His sovereignty seems impugned (aren't all of God's creations *freely* created?). On the other hand, if He freely creates them, then odd consequences ensue (like "2 + 2 = 4" being merely contingently true, since God could have chosen not to create numbers). Moreover if properties are among the abstract objects God is supposed to create, then there is also the "bootstrapping problem": it seems like God must first have properties (like omnipotence) in order to create properties, leading to a vicious circularity.

On divine conceptualism, abstract objects are ideas in the mind of God. Historically this has been the more popular method for combining Platonism and theism, but Craig argues that it runs into a variety of problems, including some that are similar to those faced by absolute creationism. For instance, if one asks whether God's thoughts are *caused* by God, one may be dragged into a similar dialectic; i.e., if God is the cause of His thoughts then is He a free cause of them or not? Either answer seems to raise worries. On the other hand if one claims that God does not cause His thoughts, then God's mental life appears utterly unlike our own.

Craig thinks that Christians are better off abandoning Platonism, and the remainder of the book explores ways of doing so. In chapter six he disputes a core claim of the Indispensability Argument, namely that we are ontologically committed to whatever entities are irreducibly referenced in propositions we take to be literally true. Craig argues that this criterion of existence, while commonly adhered to in contemporary philosophy, leads to a variety of bizarre results. Then in chapter seven he attacks the theory of reference underlying the Indispensability Argument. And in chapters eight through ten he explores three strategies for defeating that argument by attacking the claim that mathematical propositions (and other propositions referencing abstract objects) are *literally* true. He provides concise explanations of fictionalism, figuralism, and pretence theory, defending the latter two as potentially workable ways of thinking about mathematics without being a realist about numbers or other abstracta. Chapter eleven concludes with a brief recap and a reaffirmation of the book's thesis: "I conclude that the challenge posed by Platonism to the doctrine of divine aseity can be met successfully. The doctrine that God is the sole ultimate reality is eminently reasonable" (208).

Craig succeeds in making technical debates within metaphysics and philosophy of mathematics accessible to theologians and philosophers of religion. The book will be required reading for anyone working on the puzzles surrounding God and abstract objects. However I should note a

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few points of criticism: Craig's choice to focus on the Indispensability Argument, to the near-total exclusion of other arguments for Platonism, is unwise. In particular the "one over many" argument, which he dismisses in three short paragraphs (44–45), is deserving of significantly more attention. Moreover the problems facing the various versions of nominalism are nowhere addressed; he can hardly be expected to cover that ground in the present short book, but those problems are in my opinion more substantial than Craig realizes. Finally, the discussion of divine conceptualism, and in particular the very brief treatment of divine simplicity, would have benefited from engagement with recent work on these topics by Thomists.

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