

IS SCIENCE RELEVANT TO THEOLOGY?

I. Positions for Relevance:

1. Direct Relevance. Science and theology confront one another on the questions of facticity.

1.1 A set of scientific statements bears directly on a theological doctrine if that doctrine or its negation can be inferred from those scientific statements. For example archaeological evidence may support or refute biblical or theological statements such as the falling of the walls of Jerico.

1.2 This would not hold if:

- a) the doctrine is not a theological statement, or
- b) the doctrine (or its negation) is not directly inferable from science (in this case theological issues are not related to science).

1.3 The traditional Catholic position, and that of some fundamentalists is that theology is not directly refutable by science.

2. Quasi-Direct Relevance. Science and theology confront one another on their interpretations of the same data.

2.1 This approach sees science and theology at times giving alternative and apparently competing explanations of the same data. For example, Darwin and Hally gave different accounts of creation data. Carles Towns sees physics and religion as competing explanations of deep level reality.

2.2 To negate this position of quasi-direct relevance would would have to show that

- a) science is not in the business of offering explanations, or
- b) theology is not in the business of offering explanations, or
- c) both of the above, or
- d) that theology and science deal with different kinds of questions, and therefore one can expect their answers to be different while not therefore in direct conflict with one another.

3. Indirect Relevance. Science and theology relate to each other only indirectly on the following one or more levels:

3.1 Metaphysical levels: Science and theology confront each other only on the metaphysical level.

- a) for example, Darwin introduced the metaphysics of evolution, Newton that of the universe as a clock, and Whitehead of process.

To negate this position one would have to:

- a) deny metaphysics
- b) deny that there is any good reason for formulating theories in terms of a particular metaphysical scheme for consistency sake.