

HOW THEOLOGY IS A SCIENCE?

Apologetics

Závadka, 7th February 2015

OUTLINE

0. INTRODUCTION: THE NOTION OF “SCIENCE”

- 0.1. WHEN WE SAY “SCIENCE”
- 0.2. THEOLOGY – WHAT IS IT ACTUALLY?

1. THE HYPOTHESIS

- 1.1. HAVE CORRECT DEFINITIONS
- 1.2. HAVE A CORRECT ATTITUDE

2. THE METHOD

- 2.1. THE CONDITIONS OF CONTACT
- 2.2. THE CONDITIONS OF DISCERNMENT

3. THE CALIBRATION AND TUNING

- 3.1. TO BE ABLE TO UNDERSTAND/TO SEE
- 3.2. TO BE ABLE TO FOLLOW CHRIST

4. TO REMEMBER

0. INTRODUCTION: THE NOTION OF “SCIENCE”

- [*science*.:] “A branch of study which is concerned either with a connected body of demonstrated truths or with observed facts systematically classified and more or less colligated by being brought under general laws, and which includes trustworthy methods for the discovery of new truth within its own domain.”¹

Though in what follows we will often refer to “nature” or “the natural world” as that which science investigates, we must understand that the “world” of the scientist includes much more than our planet and its inhabitants. Judging by its subject matter, then, science is the study of very nearly everything.²

- science ↔ religion/theology (1) conflict, (3) unity, (4) complementarity
- Does the scientific mind require the naturalist worldview?
- recommended: McGrath, A, Pearcey & Thaxton: *The soul of science*.

0.1. WHEN WE SAY “SCIENCE”

- “science” = natural science in popular understanding
- science = truth
- science = rigorous (parsimonious) method
- science = communicable to everybody
- Math must be applicable... (KANT)³
- science ⇒ control
- naturalist worldview (→ Marxism before 1989) → Dawkins; (The New Atheism...)

¹ *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2009.

² CAREY, S. S. *A Beginner’s Guide to Scientific Method*, Boston : Wadsworth, 2011, p. 1.

³ „Ich behaupte aber, daß in jeder besonderen Naturlehre nur so viel *eigentliche* Wissenschaft angetroffen werden könne, als darin *Mathematik* anzutreffen ist.“ (KANT, I. *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Naturwissenschaft*, Leipzig : C.E.M. Pfeffer, 1900, p. 6.)

0.2. THEOLOGY – WHAT IS IT ACTUALLY?

- medieval “queen of the sciences”
- today – a matter of personal opinion...

0.2.1. THE INTERNET MIND

Is Theology a science?

Best Answer

It's anti-science.

Theology is more like a walk through a freak show that has been going on throughout the history of mankind. (<https://ph.answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20110807064936AAAb531T>)

0.2.2. THEOLOGY AND MODERN SCIENCE

- (1) history of science

[WHITEHEAD:] “When We compare this tone of thought in Europe with the attitude of other civilisations when left to themselves, there seems but one source for its origin. It must come from the medieval insistence on the rationality of God, conceived as with the personal energy of Jehovah and with the rationality of a Greek philosopher. Every detail was supervised and ordered: the search into nature could only result in the vindication of the faith in rationality. Remember that I am not talking of the explicit beliefs of a few individuals. What I mean is the impress on the, European mind arising from the unquestioned faith of centuries. By this I mean the instinctive tone of thought and not a mere creed of words.”⁴

- (2) philosophy of science (conditions of thinking) → Thomas Torrance; Alister McGrath

- *creation* ⇒ mind over matter
- *the Incarnation* ⇒ mind united with matter

Against any idea that the natural order was chaotic, irrational or inherently evil (three concepts which were often regarded as interlocking), the early Christian tradition affirmed that the natural order possessed a goodness, rationality and orderedness which derived directly from its creation by God.⁵

- (3) scientists/theologians – Newton the theologian

- “...der Gott der Physik ist die kosmische Ordnung.”⁶

0.2.3. THEOLOGY - A COMPLEX OF SCIENCES

- eg. historiography (the writing of history); historiology (the knowledge or study of history)
- textual criticism (the study of manuscripts)
- archaeology (the scientific study of the remains and monuments of antiquity)
- linguistics (ancient languages – Hebrew, Assyrian, Arabic, Greek, Coptic...)
- hermeneutics (the science of interpreting texts)
- logic and argumentation (methodical employment or presentation of arguments)
- pastoral theology (psychology → understanding human inward experience)
- philosophy: ontology→existence, epistemology→faith, axiology→ethics
- systematic theology (systematically organized doctrines of the Bible)

0.2.4. KNOWING “THE GOD WHO IS THERE”

- The most important of all is *theology proper*: (1) the existence of God, (2) the revelation from God, (3) the possibility to contact God

1. THE HYPOTHESIS

- “A supposition or conjecture put forth to account for known facts; esp. in the sciences, a provisional supposition from which to draw conclusions that shall be in accordance with known facts, and which serves as a starting-point for further investigation by which it may be proved or disproved and the true theory arrived at.”⁷

⁴ WHITEHEAD, A. N. *Science and the Modern World*, p.

⁵ McGRATH, A. *Scientific Theology I*, Grand Rapids : Eerdmans, 2001, p. 163.

⁶ PAGELS, H. *Cosmic Code*, Berlin : Ullstein, 1983, p. 106.

⁷ *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2009.

1.1. HAVE CORRECT DEFINITIONS

- “Let God be God!” (Don’t attack “a straw man”)⁸ **Acts 17:23** ...the **unknown god**...
- begin where you really are and with who you really are...
- The attributes of the *real* God: omnipresence, omniscience, omnipotence, holiness, justice, goodness, providence,
- “world” – “man” – “sin” – “knowledge” – “the gospel”

1.2. HAVE A CORRECT ATTITUDE

- [to seek] **Acts 17:26-27** And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, ²⁷ that they should seek God (ζητεῖν τὸν θεόν), in the hope that they might feel their way toward him and find him (ψηλαφήσειαν αὐτὸν καὶ εὔροιεν). Yet he is actually not far from each one of us,
- [to honor] **Psalm 111:10** The fear of the LORD is the **beginning of wisdom**... **Proverbs 1:7** The fear of the LORD is the **beginning** of knowledge...
- [to change one’s life] **John 7:17** If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God

2. THE METHOD

- “Method’ comes from the Greek meta (after) plus hodos (path or way). A method is a way to achieve an end; a scientific method is a way to achieve the ends of science. ... The main features traditionally ascribed to ‘the scientific method’ - including clear statement of a problem, careful confrontation of theory with fact, open-mindedness, and (potential) public availability or replicability of evidence...⁹

2.1. THE CONDITIONS OF CONTACT

- [help from God] **Mt 7:8** For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.
- [spiritual communication] **John 3:3** Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. → **John 3:16** [**Jude 1:18-19** ...scoffers, following their own ungodly passions." ¹⁹ It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit.]
- **John 4:24** God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth...
- **Luke 11:13** If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

2.2. THE CONDITIONS OF DISCERNMENT

- **1 Cor 2:12-16** Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. ¹³ These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. ¹⁴ But the natural man (ψυχικὸς ἄνθρωπος) does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned. ¹⁵ But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is *rightly* judged by no one. ¹⁶ For "who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

3. THE CALIBRATION AND TUNING

- "...to set an instrument so that readings taken from it are absolute rather than relative..."¹⁰
- from *carnality* to *spirituality* ... (**1 Cor 3:1-2** But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. ² I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you

⁸ Wiki: ...an informal fallacy based on the misrepresentation of an opponent's argument...

⁹ *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, "Scientific method"

¹⁰ *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2009.

were not ready for it.)

3.1. TO BE ABLE TO UNDERSTAND/TO SEE

- **2Cor 4:18** ...as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.
- **Mat 22:29** "You are deceived, because you don't **know the Scriptures** or the power of God.
- **Luke 24:45** And He opened their understanding (διήνοιξεν αὐτῶν τὸν νοῦν), that they might comprehend the Scriptures
- **2Tim 3:16-17** All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching (διδασκαλία), for reproof (ἐλεγμός), for correction (ἐπανόρθωσις), and for training (παιδεία) in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God¹ may be competent, equipped for every good work.

3.2. TO BE ABLE TO FOLLOW CHRIST

- **Mt 4:4** Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.
- **Acts 1:8** But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."
- **Col 1:29** To this *end* I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.

4. TO REMEMBER

- Theology is a complex of sciences of which the most important is the knowledge of the living God.
- To know the real God must begin with the best definitions available to my mind and brutal honesty about my attitude to the [hypothetical] "god" I imagined.
- The goal of knowing God has to be reconciliation and obedience – He does not help noncommittal curiosity.