

SCIENCE AND RELIGION  
GRADED PAPER 2 REVIEWS  
ALICE WOOLVERTON

## Paper 1

Overall, this review is thorough and thoughtful. I dislike the organization—a review ordered by the text itself—because comments about grammatical errors are intermingled with comments about the quality of the arguments. Each of your paragraphs is a hodgepodge of commentary about a given paragraph, and thus it is more difficult for the recipient of this review to gain high-level insight about consistent patterns across the paper.

Consequently, I think you also missed some opportunities to comment on the depth of the thesis, the flow of the arguments and their relevance to the thesis, and the depth of the conclusion. These were lacking, but your review either missed those aspect of the paper or buried the commentary among statements about errors in punctuation.

(1) No, Bill Clinton’s support is irrelevant to an academic argument. It was a nice political and public benefit for Collins, but it carries no weight here.

**Grade:** A- and minor lateness → B+.

## Paper 2

This review was thoughtful and helpful to the writer. From high-level concepts to low-level grammar, you provided specific corrections and suggestions, revealing a careful reading of the text. It lacked, however, larger comments about how you received the paper. For example, this paper contained some inflammatory language and, one could reasonably argue, presented its arguments with a clear bias. You provided no commentary about the paper as a whole that might have helped the author address these kinds of pervasive problems.

**Grade:** B+ and minor lateness → B.

## The Harmony and Discord of Religion, Science, and Determinism, Review

### Introduction:

The first sentence of your essay is a rather broad and generalized statement. Perhaps you could say instead that the study of religion and science seek to explain reasons for.....

Not all human beings do this. The sentences that begin, "several choose..." and "as long as one..." are generalizations that need some supporting information. You are correct that many scientists do not accept religion and many religious followers do not accept science, but that fact needs more, an example perhaps, to add to your argument. The word "narrow-mindedly" is not a good choice for a few reasons. You are stating that believing in just science or just religion is narrow-minded. Are all non-religious scientists narrow-minded? It is impossible to prove this. You could say instead that some scientists, like Collins, have been able to reconcile science and religion by seeing them as complementary instead of contrasting ideas.

Your point about **d**eterminism is interesting. Yes, not all scientists accept **d**eterminism and thus those who do not can be religious. But, your point implies that those scientists who do not accept **d**eterminism can be religious without any other conflicts. I don't think this is true, as there are many other conflicts that put science and religion at odds. ✓

### Paragraph 1:

You repeat "belief" twice in your first sentence. Collins is an excellent example that supports your essay well. However, your summary of him could be better and more specific. A direct quote from his interview would help. The sentence that begins "For Collins," contains "hand in hand." This a cliché. Instead you could say science and

religion complement each other and do not clash (not clashing). The rest of this sentence is grammatically incorrect and could be easily reworked. The quotation, "a hint of God's mind" is good. More quotations from Collins would be great. In the sentence that begins, "President Clinton..." you say "back up." I think support is a more formal and accurate word choice. Clinton's support of Collins is an excellent point! You should add another sentence after Clinton's quotation to conclude better. Just stating the significance of the former president's support would be a good last sentence.

Paragraph 2:

You do not need the phrase "the reason" at the beginning of the first sentence. The phrase "net to catch God in" should be replaced with "net in which to catch God." You use many examples in this paragraph that are good evidence, but that don't exactly connect/ you do not explain their connection. Dawkin's idea about the existence of God and Russell's point go well together, but Collins' idea does not connect. Is your point that humans must prove God's existence and thus science cannot? Or do you want to argue that science has no way of explaining "human's free will and sense of morality"? These points are not synonymous, so I think that your argument would be clearer if you removed "and that science has no way of explaining human's free will and sense of morality," and left the "net" phrase, as this supports Dawkin's and Russell's ideas.

You seem to switch ideas quickly to the "reason so many Christians find science and religion incompatible." Clearly, this is an important point, but it does not belong in the same paragraph about why science cannot prove God. You should explain Dawkins', Russell's, and Collins' quotations you just mentioned instead of changing ideas so

No. You are a reviewer not an editor.

quickly. You should remove the word “ones” before “who were born into...” because it is unnecessary. Also the phrase “a number” at the beginning of this sentence is vague and fairly inaccurate. Do “a number of the most devout Christians” develop their faith later in life? Collins is the only example we have of this idea, so you don’t want to generalize that it is very common. The phrase “hand in hand” is a cliché and too casual for a paper. Instead, you could say “supporting this idea...”



The concluding sentence of this paragraph could be improved:

*“Too narrow of an interpretation of science or religion can cause them to appear disjunctive, but if one remains open-minded to all ideas and understands that Genesis shouldn’t be taken as a literal reading, Collins believes that science and religion can be complementary.”*

The phrase “open-minded” seems like it makes sense with your argument, but your examples really are not about open-mindedness. Do you really mean someone being “open minded to ALL ideas”? Also, you haven’t mentioned Genesis once before this sentence. You could weave the contrasting parts of Genesis with the ideas of evolution into your essay so that this idea is supported, because it is a potentially good point. Also, I don’t think you meant to write the last phrase about Collins because it does not fit with “one” or the rest of the sentence.

Paragraph 3:

Your opening sentence is strong. I think you are forgetting that Christianity also believes in an all-mighty God. We see God act against peoples’ free will many, many times in the Bible. In fact, God seems to have complete control over the actions of men. The “sphere”

example about determinism really has nothing to do with your essay. Yes, it helps to explain the idea, but it does not help your essay be more persuasive. The word “basically” is too casual and could be removed. The last sentence of this paragraph is a run-on, but is very interesting and could become a strong argument if developed more. You really need to think about what this paragraph has to do with scientists being religious, though. Try to always connect back to your introduction/ thesis statement. I feel like you are trying to fit points together without actually connecting them with your own ideas.

Paragraph 4:

The phrase “religious folk” is casual and slightly derogative towards religious people. You could remove the phrase “on scientific grounds” because I don’t think it is meaningful. I am confused by this paragraph. You are trying to prove that determinism not only goes against religion (previous paragraph), but that it also is not supported by religion. This is a very good argument, but where is your support? Your examples are valid but do not explain this idea at all. For example, you quote Russell saying that we do not have “any strong reason to believe in determinism.” If he were a Christian, then this quotation would support your argument, but he is not. He is a scientist and does not state that determinism and religion are contrasting.

No, he was a mathematician & philosopher.

Conclusion:

yes

Your conclusion seems too short and doesn’t make a concluding point that you haven’t already written. Include more about “the scripture” and how it goes against science if you want to use this in your conclusion/ essay. You also need to be more clear about who ... OK

grammar?

determinism is not consistent with religious views in your essay if you want to end the

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entire essay with this sentence.

Faith and Epistemic Principles: Why Religious Belief Should Seem Unreasonable to  
Scientists, Review

Introduction:

The words “many” and “some” are not strong in your first sentence because they are vague and generalizations. The phrase “taught to go about thinking” is wordy; “because of how scientists think and form beliefs” would be more concise. The phrase “that is” in the third sentence is distracting when you are defining “epistemic.” You could try, “science is founded on fundamental epistemic principles, ways that we claim to know about the universe.” The fourth sentence (“in affirming...”) is rather long and a little confusing. You could take out “of a sort” and add “religious” before principles to clarify. Your thesis statement is clear and concise. Overall, your introduction supports your thesis statement well, but I think you could introduce an example that you will later write about in your body paragraphs in your introduction. Without this example, a reader is slightly lost as to what the principles are to which you refer and what specifically you are going to discuss.

Paragraph 1:

In the first sentence, I recommend removing “statement and.” In the second sentence, “it as” can be removed. I do not see how the opening of this paragraph relates to your argument. You say yourself that Sir Isaac Newton has a “clearer statement... as it applies to science.” So where does Occam’s razor fit in? You jump from Newton’s quote, which does work with your argument, to parsimony. Why do you define this word? As a reader,

I am confused and think your argument would be stronger without it. I like your point that science is an inductive discipline, but I think that your card example has nothing to do with your main idea nor does it help to explain inductive reasoning. Inductive reasoning is not a foreign idea and your example about the Law of Gravity explains it enough. Moreover, I think you should be careful with the word "intuition." Is intuition synonymous with inductive reasoning? Making a sound explanation that one thinks is correct or "safe" is not the same thing as using intuition.

Your paragraph becomes much clearer after the Newton's Law of Gravity quotation. The sentence that begins "indeed, sometimes..." claims that it is "simpler" to believe in God's existence than to make "naturalistic explanations." Is there <sup>Careful</sup> proof that anyone thinks this is simpler? Certainly, this argument supports your thesis, but is it true? Who believes this? You go on to argue that believing in God is actually extremely complex, the opposite of simple in fact. Dawkin's quotation supports this complexity claim well. Your second example, however, is a little convoluted. The sentence that begins "secondly..." is seven lines long and could be shortened by editing out some unnecessary words and/or splitting the sentence into two or three more concise and clearer statements. You say that these religious arguments that (Jesus was born of a virgin etc.) are "without any evidence." Isn't this your personal belief. Some people believe the Bible is "evidence" and others believe these ideas without evidence. Who is to say that we need evidence to believe something? Scientific theories grow from ideas that have no "evidence" and if no one believed in them, then wouldn't science never progress?



Paragraph 2:

Your argument in this paragraph is strong. The sentence that begins “notice that the same would be...” contains a rather broad generalization. If God did interact with the physical world, why could we not prove his existence? Wouldn't God's hypothetical interactions with humans prove that God existed? These arguments could be used against your claim. In the sentence that begins “however, again...” you use the word intuition. I think that this word choice is incorrect. Some people's intuition tell them that God exists and how is that intuition any less legitimate than someone's intuition that tells them that God does not exist?

Conclusion:

*Not true.*

In general, using “I” in formal essays is not accepted. Your ideas are very interesting, persuasive, and clear, but using “I” almost detracts from the validity of your argument.

*What?*

Your point that it is unreasonable to uphold ideas such as Russel's teapot is unreasonable for anyone is the strongest point in your paper. This idea is ~~very~~ important because it goes beyond the ~~realm~~ <sup>realm</sup> of science and religion. Perhaps you could weave this idea into the rest of your paper, because for me, it was the strongest part.