

SCIENCE AND RELIGION  
GRADED PAPER 2  
EJ MITCHELL

## The thesis and arguments

Your thesis is not stated with sufficient clarity, since you don't define what it would mean for religion and science to *coexist*. Your arguments seem to be, at best, a loosely connected set of anecdotes about episodes of conflict between science and religion with no other clear, unifying thread. These arguments do not clearly support your thesis. Unfortunately, there's nothing in the body of your paper to persuade a reader that coexistence (whatever that means) is impossible. Worse, you never anticipate a reader's possible objections. Specifically, science and religion *do* coexist, not only in our current culture, but also within individuals. How do you explain this current state of coexistence?

## The writing

Your paper is riddled with excess verbiage, some of it meaningless or distracting. Your writing mechanics are weak, with many errors in grammar, punctuation, and word choice. These errors are not merely problems for a pedant; they interfere substantially with the clarity and flow of your writing.

## Items marked on the paper

(1) These explanations cannot be **scientifically** supported or disproved, and we **suspect** that they can be neither proved nor disproved, but there may be some rational or logical form of argument that **can** be applied. Therefore, this statement is too strong, asserting a claim that you cannot support.

(2) You do not have a clear thesis statement. They cannot coexist **in what sense?** One must perish from this Earth? A person cannot believe in both? They cannot be rationally reconciled? Your statement is too vague. Worse, in an important sense, your thesis is demonstrably (and trivially) refuted by evidence, since science and religion **do** coexist, and have done so for hundreds of years.

(3) Not even close. Socrates: 470 BC to 399 BC; Plato: 424 BC to 348 BC; Aristotle: 384 BC to 322 BC. At the very earliest, no gospel was written until approximately 100 years after Christ was born. The Bible was not established, and Christianity did obtain anything resembling its current structure, until 200 to 300 years after Christ's birth. These Greek philosophers predated the founders of Christianity by **hundreds of years**.

(4) The quote from Eusebius does not demonstrate a rejection of the validity of an hypothesis; rather, it is an assertion that the hypothesis is irrelevant. Its validity is of no interest, because the topic that it addresses is of no consequence.

(5) You hardly needed to do this type of work to establish that religion (particularly Christianity) does not require (or even desire) empirical evidence to support a claim, and that it prefers scriptural support. You could have asserted this observation with little or no support; it's not controversial, and it's not particularly interesting by itself.

(6) Where is *faith* is this support structure for the theologians arguments? Other than a belief that scripture is divine, what role does faith have here? It seems that in this context, *faith* and *biblical text* are one in the same.

(7) That is not a logical question at all. A logical argument requires premises that are **assumed** to be true (and whose validity is a separate issue), and a conclusion that **must** follow from those premises. The example that you provide is nothing more than an appeal to common sense and everyday experience. It is not a argument based on logic.

(8) First, the Bible doesn't contain doctrines. Theological interpretation of the Bible is the source of those doctrines. Second, there is no inherent reason that a religion could not choose to revise its doctrines in response to new evidence. Many religions **don't** change, and they employ (for many of the reasons we've discussed this semester) various tacticts to avoid that change, but they certainly **could** change. This claim is one that you needed to support, at least with some kind of argument.

**Grade:** C+ and a late submission → C-

Religion and Science: A Failed Emulsification

Word choice: This kn doesn't work here.

Using observation and experimentation, science provides explanations of the natural world. With that as its purpose, science ~~can never be static, as it must always be~~ <sup>with</sup> ready to change ~~due to~~ new discoveries from additional observation and experimentation. Contrastingly, religion, using scripture and faith as support, develops explanations about the natural world that are not nearly as <sup>grammar</sup> adapting as scientific explanations. Because religious explanations of the natural world are based in <sup>word choice</sup> a metaphysical entity, they cannot <sup>1</sup> be disproved or proved, <sup>since</sup> as science has no way to assess their validity. Therefore, by attempting to explain ~~the same~~ worldly phenomena, the <sup>grammar</sup> inevitable conflicting of perspectives <sup>2</sup> prohibits science and religion to coexist.

<sup>awkward</sup> Occurring prior to the origin of Christianity, the idea that the Earth was created below a firmament that rested on pillars was developed by Ancient Egyptians. However, <sup>meaningless</sup> ~~as time progressed,~~ Pythagoras, Plato, and Aristotle <sup>ed</sup> challenged this idea by suggesting

that the Earth was round. <sup>whose?</sup> During this same time period, Christianity was established and <sup>3</sup> their unfledged hypothesis was incapable of persuading the masses, especially fathers of

the Church. In accordance with his interpretation of the New Testament, Eusebius argued that because the end of world was imminent <sup>whose?! Ambiguous antecedent.</sup> their argument was "useless labour," and

that as a result, <sup>tense</sup> it is necessary to turn "our souls to better things".<sup>1</sup> This example of using interpretation as a means of denying the validity of a hypothesis illustrates a

significant reason why religion and science are irreconcilable. <sup>Ush.</sup> By asserting his interpretation as <sup>ok</sup> nearly as equally valid as <sup>awk.</sup> biblical text, Eusebius circumvented obtaining

empirical evidence to support his claim. In science, empirical evidence cannot be omitted if a hypothesis is to be deemed valid. Consequently, that religion allowed the omission to

<sup>4</sup> be omitted. <sup>All religion?</sup>

awkward  
meaningless  
whose?  
tense  
what interpretation?  
He hasn't interpreted anything here.

passive  
ed  
sloppy claim.

I have no idea what this sentence means.

occur established a distinct difference in the methods in which religion and science support their claims.

Christianity? scriptural

5

However, religion uses more than just interpretation to produce explanations of the natural world. In combination with Scripture and interpretation, faith and logical reasoning made it difficult for science to persuade the Church to accept scientific

no cap ^

What?

explanations of the natural world. Defined by geneticist Francis Collins as "evidence of things not seen," faith, in conjunction with logic and biblical text, was used by the

italics

what kind?

6

Church against the scientific idea of antipodes. Lactantius raised the following logical

Nb.

questions: "Is there any one so senseless as to believe that there are men whose footsteps are higher than their heads...[and] that the rains and snow and hail fall upward toward the earth?"<sup>2</sup> Prior to the conception of gravity, as was the case in this situation, these were

7

WC

Gibberish

reasonable questions that hindered the acceptance of antipodes. The Church's argument was furthered ~~with~~ <sup>by ok</sup> biblical support. In the sixth century, Procopius of Gaza argued that if

antipodes with people existed, Christ would have had to go to the other side of the Earth to die for their salvation and by extrapolation, an additional Adam and Eve must have existed prior to his coming. Because the antipodes had not been seen, the Church's

That doesn't follow...

faith resided in Scripture and logical reasoning. Centuries would pass before observations of people at the antipodes would be made. ~~Yet~~ <sup>passive</sup> even with the discoveries of Columbus

and Magellan, both of which were non-scientific expeditions, the Church still failed to be persuaded.

There were no "scientific expeditions" at this time.  
by whom? poor wording

The Church's tendency to resist change, even with the presentation of new evidence, provides another reason for the inability of religion and science to coexist.

Because the results of scientific experiments are predictive models, science must be

willing to change these models if an outcome occurs that goes against the prediction. By rejecting or modifying the model, science can adapt to the phenomena that occur in the natural world. Unlike science, religion cannot change by simply re-writing the doctrines of the Bible. Furthermore, as the Church was a source of power for many aspects—access to printing presses, persecution and the Inquisition, owner of large amounts of land—to admit that its beliefs were wrong on the basis of scientific empirical evidence ran the risk of losing its power and followers; as was the case with Galileo and evolutionist Richard Dawkins. The latter will be discussed first, as it is an example of how religion alone can prove to be incompatible with science.

8

WC!

parallelism problem

grammar!

What?!

what?? he?

As opposed to

The latter what?

Raised in a Christian household, Dawkins began to question the validity of religion when at age 9 he learned that multiple religions existed. He concluded that they cannot all be right, thus they cannot be trusted. This idea can be applied more directly to Christianity if one considers the multitude of denominations, each attempting to explain the natural world. Furthermore, the Bible itself contains discrepancies in trying to describe the same events. This can be seen in the records of the creation of the Earth in Genesis and in the accounts of the life of Christ written by the Apostles. If such divisions and discrepancies exist, Dawkins argues that the Bible should not be interpreted literally but rather as a work of literature to understand our culture. If presented with the aforementioned issues and the support of experimental evidence, religion finds difficulty in maintaining their explanations. Galileo's discoveries are a prime example of this struggle.

religion in combination with something?

Don't use as unmodified pronoun.

How so?

agreement of number

What point are you making here? How does it relate to your thesis?

With observations made from his telescope, Galileo disproved the geocentric theory that the earth was the center of the universe. Evidence gained from the telescopic

observations prevented the Church from forming a legitimate counterargument.

Consequently, the Church made Galileo recant his discoveries. Despite their efforts, that Galileo's discoveries supported the predictive models made by science forced the Church to accept heliocentrism.

*Which predictive models?*

*Observations are empirical evidence*

Because science relies on observation and experiments to gain empirical evidence to support its explanations, it is difficult, if not impossible, to reconcile the views of religion and science, as religion requires nothing but faith to uphold a belief.

*Not enough.*

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<sup>1</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea as quoted in White, p.107

<sup>2</sup> Lactantius as quoted in White, p. 116