

Inevitable Changing of Church Doctrines

As the world becomes more scientifically advanced, our understanding of the natural world changes considerably. New scientific observations contradict the doctrines of the church¹² and therefore the church is inevitably forced to adapt and change its conceptions and understanding³ of its doctrines. Although the church might have been wrong on⁴ its previous ideas of the world, so also were the notions of science⁵ such as geocentric model of the universe.⁶ It makes it difficult for one to ultimately choose what the truth is and which side of the spectrum is the correct.⁷ In stating this, it can be said that the differences in certain doctrines between science and Christianity can be explained when looking at the details and there is a possible explanation as to why such differences are reached.⁸ It may seem that Christians change their doctrines just to conform to the conflicting views of science, but these discoveries help create new interpretations of scripture and show previous ideas as a simple misunderstanding.^{9 10}

¹¹A popular¹² area of controversy between the church and scientists dealt with the idea of the universe and the earth. The idea of understand¹³ the world we live in has been a topic of debate numerous times and over plentiful sub-issues. According to White,¹⁴ one of the Christian church's first doctrines dealing with Earth stated that the world was flat. There was a thought that stated is one sailed to¹⁵ far they would fall off the edge of the world.¹⁶ This idea seemed conceptually sound at the time until Magellan sailed around the world to prove the world was no longer flat.¹⁷ Here is the first example of a Christian doctrine being disproved by science. The Church received loads of¹⁸ repercussions¹⁹ for being incorrect. Immediately following there became²⁰ a problem about the contradiction between the church doctrine and scientific evidence. However, the doctrine could be changed if scripture was looked in a different perspective.²¹

²²This leads one to wonder why or how such a discrepancy could be reached.²³

In Christianity, there often are times where the way things are interpreted need context to support their meaning.²⁴ A specific text could support a certain belief if²⁵ one situation, but without perspective no definitive conclusion can be reached. For example, in Matthew chapter 18 verse 20²⁶ it says, “For where two or three come together in my name, there I am with them.” (New International Version). This is God speaking to the people of Jerusalem. Many Christians falsely use this verse as an example as to²⁷ why people worship in congregations or as to why prayers are sometimes said aloud and in groups. When looking at this verse without context, this explanation can definitely apply and see²⁸ why it is used in support of the previous statements. However, when looking at the context of the scripture, it is obvious that these interpretations are not what the verse was intended to suggest. It talks about²⁹ casting down judgment on people in the previous verses. Therefore it can be concluded that the verse was used to say that human judgment is acceptable and that he will support these decisions.³⁰ This proves that honest mistakes in taking scripture out of context can provide alternative implications. So a possible explanation as to why the church’s doctrine was incorrect³¹ was because of the misunderstanding of scripture and as people became more educated, the alternative description prevailed.

The Christian Church was wrong on the idea of Earth being flat, but as for the model of the universe, science ultimately suffered a misunderstanding.³² The geocentric model of the universe was first explained³³ by the philosophers Aristotle and Ptolemy. Scientist proved³⁴ this concept to be “true”. Although the Christian Church adopted this belief, it was ultimately science that came to this formation of principle. When scientist eventually arrived at the realization of the claim to false,³⁵ all science was not put to shame or deemed “unbelievable”. Just because one facet of science seemed to be incorrect, people still continue to pursue it and believe all things in that area to be true. So it becomes difficult to decipher the differences between the mishaps of

the church and those found in science. It is impossible to state that because either one suffers misconceptions and falsities, that there is an obvious wronging of the other.³⁶ A scientist cannot blame the Christian Church and vice-versa to be true.^{37 38}

Another idea involving science and the adaptation of the Christian Doctrine is due to the evolving or discovery of animals in remote or new locations. This is one of inevitable scientific evidence deals with the logical contradictions of animals.³⁹ First, Bertrand Russell presents an idea that logically does not make sense in the scientific eye but is a Christian doctrine. This issue is the gathering of animals on Noah's ark. Russell argues that how⁴⁰ is it physically possible to fit all species of animals on a boat and also how does a sloth reach the place in time before the flooding of the world. This logically does not make sense,⁴¹ however, Christians believe that all animals were on the ark. It does not necessarily conflict because the bible does not state how or why the animals got there, but that they just did. It could have happen by latching on to other animals or some divine intervention. So consequently,⁴² there is no evidence that shows how this highly improbable thing is⁴³ done, but possibly adds to the mystery and majesty of God.⁴⁴ This example proves⁴⁵ that a Christian belief that does not automatically make sense in the scientific realm, irrefutable.⁴⁶

There are instances where Christianity and science have been wrong, and also circumstances where neither side is wrong nor right. However, the church has been much more reluctant to change than science. This can have explanations that do no demean the value of the religion itself, but the people operating or running the organization. The reluctance to change was due to the scare of losing power. The church ventured as far as to say that you were condemned if you did not believe in these certain doctrines, although there was no scriptural evidence. These statements are erroneous and give a bad image for the reliability of the doctrines, but to no compromise the actual beliefs of Christianity.

The issue becomes whether or not that church deserves to be criticized for false or misleading doctrines. It is unfair for science to say that beliefs cannot evolve and learn⁴⁷ from previous experiences because science participates in the exact same procedure. Scientists who say that the change in the doctrines were⁴⁸ only due to science and were invalid but they actually were adaptations that make sense in scripture. The argument that only science is true is disproved through the false belief in the geocentric theory. Also, as scientists become more educated, so also do theologians. Therefore the context of the scripture used to derive their beliefs can be better understood when looking at greater depth in the context surrounding the verse. The context can provide alternative meanings that could lead to original doctrines. Although there are scientific probabilities that seem highly unlikely to occur, it cannot be disproved that it would not happen. So arguments like that of Noah's ark cannot be used to diminish the Christian doctrine because it has not been proved as untrue. The church has been much more reluctant to change, but this is not because of the lack of solidity in the faith, but fear for lack of power, which shows the doctrines to remain true even if there is an evolution. There is nothing that proves that Christian doctrines cannot change and yet still be true.

¹ A comma is needed between two independent clauses. There are numerous instances of this problem throughout your paper.

² Be consistent in your capitalization. If you're going to say "the Christian Church," then it's "the Church." Make sure it's "Christian doctrine" and "Noah's Ark" throughout. I suggest using Word's "find and replace" function.

³ Avoid redundant modifiers.

⁴ Right preposition?

⁵ I'd put a comma here for clarity.

⁶ This seems to be a competing secondary thesis of your paper, which you discuss in the fourth paragraph (see note at the end of that paragraph). The inclusion of this argument, however, interrupts the flow and direction of your paper, as it does not directly relate, as far as I can tell, to your main thesis. If this double standard regarding the false conclusions of science and religion relates to your thesis of how science has led to better interpretations of scripture, you should figure out how to incorporate it into your main thesis. Otherwise, it's just confusing.

⁷ You can't have "the" and then no noun. Change this to either "correct" (without "the") or "the correct one."

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- ⁸ This sentence is confusing, and it's not clear how it leads your reader from what you've been saying to your thesis.
- ⁹ Agreement of number: "simple misunderstandings"
- ¹⁰ This seems to be your primary thesis: that science has shed light on misinterpretations of scripture, and therefore Church doctrine has only changed to the extent that science has revealed these mistakes and shown how scripture ought to be interpreted. The rest of your paper should be directed at illustrating this.
- ¹¹ Don't put extra spaces between your paragraphs (shown corrected here from when I converted this document to Word).
- ¹² Word choice?
- ¹³ Verb form: "understanding"
- ¹⁴ It's customary to refer to someone by their full name when you first mention them in a paper.
- ¹⁵ Should be "too"
- ¹⁶ There are serious grammatical problems with this sentence.
- ¹⁷ It was flat before and then became not flat? This is a classic (and rather humorous) misplaced modifier.
- ¹⁸ The phrase "loads of" is too informal.
- ¹⁹ What repercussions? Be specific.
- ²⁰ Ungrammatical: should be something like "there arose..."
- ²¹ "looked in a different perspective": ungrammatical. Should be "looked at from..."
- ²² How was scripture "looked at from a different perspective"? What exactly was reinterpreted?
- ²³ What are you referring to here? What discrepancy? Between scripture and what science shows to be true?
- ²⁴ This sentence is grammatically confusing. You're trying to say that consideration of the context is required for certain passages to be interpreted correctly?
- ²⁵ Should be "in"
- ²⁶ Abbreviate as "Mat 18:20"?
- ²⁷ "example as to": wordy and confusing. Try simply "explanation of why..."
- ²⁸ The antecedent of "see" seems to be "explanation." It should be something like "this explanation can definitely apply, and one can see why..."
- ²⁹ "It talks about": This abstract "it" is too colloquial. "The previous verses" should be the subject of the sentence.
- ³⁰ "It talks about casting down...support these decisions": I don't understand. What does this quote have to do with human judgment and God's support for it, and how does the context show that the verse does not explain group worship?
- ³¹ About the shape of the earth? Your analogy with Matthew is interesting, but I'd be more convinced if I could see directly how a false idea about the shape of the earth arose from a misinterpretation of scripture, and how exactly this scripture was reinterpreted to allow for a spherical earth.
- ³² The second half of this sentence is confusing. You're saying it was science that was originally responsible for the error? The phrase "suffered a misunderstanding" makes it sound like someone misunderstood science rather than science being wrong about something in nature.
- ³³ Right word? "Set forth"? "Articulated"?
- ³⁴ This is not true. As we have discussed in class, science does not "prove" anything.

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- ³⁵ “realization of the claim to false”: ungrammatical. Do you mean “realization that this claim was false”?
- ³⁶ A subordinate clause (“because...”) must be set off by commas, and you should only have one instance of the conjunction “that.” So it should read: “It is impossible to state that, because either one suffers misconceptions and falsities, there is an obvious wronging of the other.
- ³⁷ This sentence makes no sense.
- ³⁸ You present an interesting argument in this paragraph – that there’s a double standard when it comes to religion and science arriving at false conclusions – but it doesn’t seem to serve to support your thesis that science has revealed misinterpretations of scripture. If you cannot figure out how to better incorporate this notion of a double standard into your main thesis, I would cut this paragraph entirely.
- ³⁹ There are serious grammatical problems with this sentence. It makes no sense. What is “the logical contradictions of animals” supposed to mean?
- ⁴⁰ This sentence needs to be rewritten. You can’t follow the conjunction “that” with an indirect question (“how is it physically possible...”). You must either say something like, “Russell argues that it would have been physically impossible...” or, if you want to keep the indirect question (though I wouldn’t recommend it), “Russell asks how it would have been...”
Notice that the tense must be past subjunctive (“would have been...”).
- ⁴¹ A semicolon or period must separate two independent clauses.
- ⁴² Redundant: just use “consequently”
- ⁴³ Tense (Noah’s Ark happened in the past): “was done”
- ⁴⁴ This seems to be a very weak argument you present in this paragraph. A doctrine (Noah’s Ark) makes no sense in the light of science, but Christians believe it is true, therefore it must be true anyway? That is an assertion, not an argument. Furthermore, this paragraph again does not support what seems to be your thesis about science leading to better interpretations of scripture, but rather makes the separate argument that science cannot disprove religious doctrines.
- ⁴⁵ Be careful of the word “prove.” Proof implies deductive certainty. An example or illustration is not a “proof,” and claiming that it is undermines your credibility.
- ⁴⁶ You need a main verb in this sentence. “...a Christian belief that does not...*is* irrefutable”?
- ⁴⁷ Again, be careful of antecedents. Beliefs cannot learn, which is what is grammatically implied here.
- ⁴⁸ Verb-subject agreement: “the *changes*...were...”

Your paper is not clearly structured to support a single, clear thesis. You jump around between the idea of science shedding light on scriptural misinterpretations and forcing reinterpretation, the idea of a double standard when it comes to the false conclusions of science and religion, and the idea that science cannot disprove religion. If you want to address all these issues, you must figure out how to relate them in a single, clearly articulated thesis. Or, preferably, you must choose one of these arguments (I’d say the first, since that’s the source of your title and your strongest argument) and have all your body paragraphs support this one argument, since, as it is now, none of these issues is addressed with sufficient depth or precision to be convincing.

Your paper needs serious proofreading for grammatical/syntactical errors: wrong prepositions, verbs in the wrong form or tense, misused words, typos, etc. Many of your

sentences are wordy and make little grammatical sense. I've noted a number of these in my comments above.