

*Reading the Fine Print: Finding Connections between Science and Christianity*

Religion and science disagree in answering personal questions and the mysteries about the world beyond our own. Science takes what can be observed and experimented on to explain the physical world. Religion concerns itself with the nature, cause, and purpose of the universe. Christianity, more specifically, views a person's faith as the ultimate answer to otherwise unanswerable questions. The scientific process is gaining acceptance as a fundamental approach to observe and perceive the world. However, to consider it completely different from Christianity's method is, to a certain degree, erroneous. Christians and scientists strive to answer abstract concepts and processes through similar means: evidence, logical reasoning, and a reusable method. Even though scientists and faithful Christians base facts on different terms, the methods of procuring evidence, the search for truth and their historical patterns share commonalities. Science was inevitable. There has never been a time in human history when the current authority was not met by opposition or skepticism. The scientific process, simply put, takes what people see and makes sense out of that. Science did not have the intention of becoming the enemy of anyone; but because it was so different (non-Christian) people saw it for everything that it wasn't.

Science and religion go through similar pains to explain our world. Science may not be able to answer for religion, and vice versa, but in each of their histories there lays a pattern of adaptability, ideological and fundamental revolution that only differ in the details.

Science starts from the ground up, using observable information to see the big picture. Nothing is excludable in the search for scientific truth, at least until otherwise proven wrong. Science can cast a larger net to get a wider array of answers. Christianity takes the omnipotent

approach; since God is all knowing, almighty, everything and anything can be explained so long as it adheres to this one "fact." If God is not the reason then it is unnatural, ungodly and therefore evil.

Science has given us an alternative way to look at the world's universal position along with explanations for life processes. We can live twice as long as we could have a century ago. We know we are made up of trillions of cells and that atoms and elements make up everything. We can attribute reasons for natural occurrences to natural phenomena. Because of science, the world seems more understandable.

However, Christianity held the same credibility that science now has... and for centuries longer. Every sort of question was answerable if one was faithful to God. "Why do I feel this way?" "Where did all this come from?" "What's in store for me in the future?" Questions of any subject were rationally explained to the public as God's knowledge by Bishops and Priests and Popes (and still are today, to a lesser extent). Evidence was provided when necessary so people could not find plausible fault in anything the Church decreed because its power was absolute. To say otherwise was blasphemous. Only after centuries of heated arguments, legal and moral confrontations, and international support that science was accredited by the Church. Yet still, it is only in the last few decades the Church acknowledges its mistake when dealing with radicals such as Galileo Galilee.

The personal histories of science and Christianity cross each other as often as they do because they are methodically similar. Early Christians were persecuted by the Roman Empire because they lacked piety and were suspected of trying to undermine Roman civil order. For the first 300 years, Christianity wore a scarlet letter that gave the Romans reason enough to

blame its believers for city fires, famine, spread of diseases and civil uprisings. The torture, sacrifice and stoning of early Christians was a result of their heretic forms of praise. Even though it was not the only monotheistic religion at the time, Christianity was seen as a thorn in the thumb of the Roman Empire by many contemporary scholars and philosophers (persecution ceased with the first crowned Christian Roman Emperor, Constantine).

Science also faced ridicule, persecution and deadly opposition during its infant years. For centuries, nothing could refute what the Church said to be true. The Church's political power had also made it the only place where knowledgeable men could go. However, we see a change in this monopoly of knowledge by the time power and wealth is shared by the Church and wealthy families. The first "scientists" were apart from the Church in the sense that their explanations had less to do with God and more so with observations in nature. Even though most of the first proposals of heliocentrism, Earth's sphericity, and the idea of antipodes were attributed as alternate meanings of God's will, the Church could not allow itself (or the Holy Scriptures) to be put into question. The proposers of such ideas were considered atheists, heathens, and perpetrators of evil or minions of the Devil himself. Copernicus withheld any attempt of publishing his idea of the Revolutions for more than thirty years. Peter Apian, according to Russell in *A History of The Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom*, had the "foremost duty was to teach SAFE science," and could not show support of Copernican theory. To avoid the stigma the Church associated with alternative theories, early scientists closeted their ideas.

The history and development of both science and Christianity share patterns of opposition, persecution and eventual integration into the worldview. Romans did it to

Christians; Christians did it to science. History repeats itself and goes to show that there are alternate forms of interpreting our world. This explains why there are so many schools of science and why there are so many sects and denominations of the Christian Church.

In some ways, science works on a Christian model. It re-answers questions the Church was originally created to answer. The Church adapted to a growing belief of one god, salvation, and free will. The scientific community was the result of a growing concern of what was truth and the connection between what is observed and what laws governs us. In this respect, finding similarities between science and Christianity is comprehensible.

Science and religion use similar models of adjustment to new observations and ideas. They perceive, question, challenge, and—if the new idea is rationalized and supported with evidence—accept or adapt.

So who is to take the title of victor? Science so far won the debates of earth's spherical nature, the concept of antipodes, and redefined what it means to be "akin to holiness," cleanliness. But people still seek spiritual guidance from Christianity. Even though the former may take credit for these advancements, if something not based on observation needs answering, science can do nothing.