

Whitehead, A.N. "Religion and Science" in INTERPRETATION OF SCIENCE
Indianapolis, Bobbs-Merrill, 1961.

1. Natural reaction is to see the relationship as one of conflict.

- "When we consider what religion is for mankind, and what science is, it is no exaggeration to say that the future course of history depends upon the decision of this generation as to the relations between them. We have here the two strongest general forces which influence men, and they seem to be set one against the other - the force of our religious institutions, and the force of our impulse to accurate observation and logical deduction." 170-1.
- As one great English statesman once advised his countryman, we need to use large-scale maps of the relationship to preserve us from alarms and panics and general misunderstandings of the true relationships involved.
- Note that a) there has always been a conflict between them, and b) both are in a state of continual development.
- Impact of science led to change of religious view of flat world at center.
- Internal theological development constantly takes place.
- Science is even more changeable than theology, even Galileo and Newtons beliefs not now accepted without qualifications.
- "We are told by logic^{be}ians that a proposition must^{be} either true or false, and that there is no middle term. But in practice we may know that a proposition expresses an important truth, but that it is subject to limitations and qualifications which at present remain undiscovered. It is a general feature of our knowledge that we are insistentlly aware of important truths; ~~but~~ and yet that the only formulations of these truths which we are able to make presuppose a general standpoint of conceptions which may have to be modified." ~~1/1111/1111~~ 172-3.
- Ill. Inquisition said earth was fixed and sun moved. Galileo said vice versa. Newton said both move. Now know that all equally true, depending upon how you fix your sense of rest and motion.
- Ill. Newtons theory of light as particles and Huyghens' theory of light as waves, both useful but no resolution because of lack of deeper insight.
- "We should believe nothing in either sphere of thought which does not appear to us to be certified by solid reasons based upon the critical research either of ourselves or of competent authorities. But, granting that we have honestly taken this precaution, a clash between the two on points of detail where they overlap should not lead us hastily to abandon doctrines for which we have solid evidence. It may be that we are more interested in one set of doctrines than in the other. But, if we have any sense of perspective and of the history of thought, we shall wait and refrain from mutual anathemas.. PP We should wait; but we should not wait passively, nor in despair. The clash is a sign that there are wider truths and finer perspectives within which a reconciliation of a deeper religious and a more subtle science will be found." 174.

2. Their complimentary nature:

- "Science is concerned with the general conditions which are observed to regulate physical phenomena, whereas religion is wholly wrapped up in the contemplation of moral and aesthetic values. On the one side there is the law of gravitation, and on the other the contemplation of the beauty of holiness. What one side sees, the other misses; and vice versa." 174.
- ill. Science sees St. Francis of Assisi and sees no difference from other men, religion sees their profound significance.

- But cannot ignore differences. There can be no active interest which puts aside all hope of a vision of the harmony of truth. "To acquiesce in discrepancy is destructive of candor and of moral cleanliness. It belongs to the self-respect of intellect to pursue every tangle of thought to its final unravelment." 175. The important question is in what spirit do we face the issue?
 - A clash of doctrines is not a disaster - it is an opportunity. ill. discrepancies lead to the discovery of Argon.
 - "In formal logic a contradiction is the signal of a defeat, but in the evolution of real knowledge it marks the first step in progress toward a victory. This is one great reason for the utmost toleration of variety of opinion." 176.
 - "It is easy enough to find a theory, logically harmonious and with important applications in the region of fact, provided that you are content to disregard half your evidence. Every age produces people with clear logical intellects, and with the most painstaking grasp of the importance of some sphere of thought that exactly fits those experiences which claim their interest. Such people are apt resolutely to ignore, or to explain away, all evidence which confuses their scheme with contradictory instances. What they cannot fit in is for them nonsense. An unflinching determination to take the whole evidence into account is the only method of preservation against the fluctuating extremes of fashionable opinion." 177.
 - * - Part of the problem is that we must act before all the data is in. "It is absolutely necessary to trust to ideas which are generally adequate, even though we know that there are subtleties and distinctions beyond our ken." 177
 - Part of the problem is, "We cannot think in terms of an indefinite multiplicity of detail; our evidence can acquire its proper importance only if it comes before us marshaled by general ideas. These ideas we inherit - they form the tradition of our civilization. Such traditional ideas are never static." 177
3. Trend to religious decay in west: Religion is tending to degenerate into a decent formula wherewith to embellish a comfortable life.
- One reason has been that religion has been on the defensive, and on a weak defensive. New ideas have found religious thinkers unprepared. Things proclaimed to be fatal after struggle have been modified. The next generation of religious apologists then congratulates the religious world on the deeper insight which has been gained. The result has been an almost continuous undignified retreat which has almost entirely destroyed the intellectual authority of religious thinkers. Religion will not regain its old power until it can face change in the same spirit as does science. "Its principles may be eternal, but the expression of those principles requires continual development." 179. Much of the change is a disengagement of its own proper ideas from those of an imperfect science in which it developed. This is all to the good.
 - The normal development of science requires modifications in religious statements as they relate to the physical world. If religion is a sound expression of truth this modification only exhibits more adequately the exact point of view which is of importance and this is gain. Progress of science must result in modification of religious thought to the latter's advantage.
 - Unfortunately 16 and 17th century theologians saw themselves as the garrison of a fort surrounded by hostile forces and acted so. This fostered a party spirit that really expresses an ultimate lack of faith.