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Religion vs. Science

In this paper, I will synthesize two texts, Francis Collin's "A New Theology of Celebration" and Steve Paulson's "The Flying Spaghetti Monster." Both authors discuss the war between religion and science. To clarify what I mean by the war between religion and science, I mean that some people (usually atheists) believe that religion cannot be used to know and to explain life's mysteries and truths, but these people believe that science holds all the answers. By contrast, many others believe the opposite to be true. The authors of the texts that I chose disagreed on nearly everything each other had to say on the subject.

The first major point on which Collins and Dawkins disagreed was whether or not religion and science can co-exist in peace and harmony. Collins made it apparent that he was of the opinion that religion and science can co-exist when he stated:

Together in a loving and worshipful attitude, we could formulate a new and wondrous natural theology. This kind of theology celebrates God as the creator, embraces His majestic universe from the far-flung galaxies to the 'fearfully and wonderfully made nature of humanity, and accepts and incorporates the marvelous things that God has given us the chance to discover through science. (Collins 363)

His ideas are certainly optimistic and in general they are somewhat realistic. However, Dawkins showed his opposition to that belief when he said, "Now, suppose science does have limits. What is the value in giving the label 'religion' to those limits? If you simply want to define religion as the bits outside of what science can explain, then we're really not arguing" (Paulson 377). His argument was also quite convincing. Note that "The Flying Spaghetti Monster" is in fact a

compilation of questions and answers from an interview of a renowned atheist named Richard Dawkins.

Another point on which Collins and Dawkins disagreed was whether religion and faith are evil. Collins (himself a Christian) did not believe religion and faith are evil. Collins declared, "...my faith in God has been the rock on which I stand...As one of a large number of scientists who believe in God, I find it deeply troubling to watch the escalating culture wars between science and faith, especially in America....Some [atheists] go so far as to label religious faith as the root of all evil" (Collins 362). Dawkins on the other hand believed religion and [religious] faith to be evil. When asked by Paulson what is so bad about religion Dawkins stated that "it encourages one to believe lies and to be content with inadequate explanations that are not in truth explanations at all" (Paulson 371). Dawkins also said that, "...I think there's something very evil about faith, where faith means believing in something in the absence of evidence, and actually taking pride in believing in something in the absence of evidence" (Paulson 372).

Again, another point on which Collins and Dawkins disagreed was whether religion can answer questions science leaves unanswered. Collins said his faith in God is, "a means to answer critical questions on which science remains silent...." (Collins 362). Collins certainly believed religion can answer questions science leaves unanswered. Dawkins however said that "Darwin with his evolution theory raised man's consciousness to the power of science to explain things and made it unsafe for anyone in the future to resort every time and without criticism to a designer (a person who believes all things were created by God) just because there is no explanation for something at that moment" (Paulson 375-376). From this quote one can gather Dawkins evidently does not believe religion can answer questions science leaves unanswered.

The one thing Dawkins and Collins might have agreed on is that they both are searching for ways to find and explain life's mysteries and truths. Collins has chosen to use science and his religion as a means to find and explain these truths. Collins exclaimed, "If science is a way of uncovering the details of God's creation, then it may actually be a form of worship. Did not

God, in giving us the intelligence to ask and answer questions about nature, expect us to use it? We should be able to learn about God in the laboratory as well as in the cathedral” (Paulson 363). Dawkins has chosen to purely use science as a means to find and explain life’s mysteries and truths. When Dawkins talked about the possibility of consciousness existing he said, “I don’t know the answer. I think one day they [the scientists] will know the answer.... Nobody has an explanation for consciousness. That should be a spur to work harder and try to understand it. Not to give up and just say, ‘Oh well it must be a soul.’ That doesn’t mean anything” (Paulson 376-377).

In conclusion, the one thing Collins and Dawkins could agree on concerning religion and science is that they both are searching for the truth. Whereas Collins and Dawkins had many things they would disagree on. The three main things they would disagree on are: religion and science being able to coexist in peace and harmony, religion and faith being evil, and religion being able to answer questions science leaves unanswered. Dawkins believed science and religion could never exist together in peace and harmony, while Collins believed they could exist peaceably together. Collins believed religion and [religious] faith was not evil, while Dawkins believed the direct opposite. Dawkins did not believe religion could answer questions science leaves unanswered, yet Collins believed it can answer questions science does not. In the end their opinions were mostly in direct opposition to each other.

Works Cited

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