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**SCIENCE AND RELIGION.  
DISTINCT BUT COMPLEMENTARY**

**Florea ȘTEFAN(a)\*, Foricica ȘTEFAN(b),**

\*Corresponding author

(a) PhD. Professor, Faculty of Theology and Sciences of Education, "Valahia" University of Târgoviște,

(b), "Constantin Cantacuzino" National Pedagogical College Târgoviște, Romania,

E-mail: [pr\\_floreastefan@yahoo.com](mailto:pr_floreastefan@yahoo.com)

**ABSTRACT**

*The relationship between science and faith is as ancient as humanity itself. From the earliest stages of civilization, human beings – endowed with reason and an innate desire to seek meaning – have questioned the nature of the world, the forces governing it, and their own place within the order of creation. The impulse to observe, to interpret, and to explain reality has always coexisted with the deeper spiritual quest to discern purpose, origin, and destiny. Throughout history, many fundamental questions concerning the meaning of the cosmos and of human existence have gradually been approached not only through religious reflection but also through systematic observation and rational inquiry. What began as wonder before the mysteries of nature evolved into structured forms of knowledge, giving rise to what we now call science. Yet these developments did not eliminate the spiritual dimension; rather, they often unfolded alongside theological interpretations of the world. With the growth of technological capabilities and philosophical sophistication—particularly during the medieval period – the interaction between scientific inquiry and religious thought became more articulated and, at times, more complex. Medieval scholasticism, for example, sought to harmonize reason and revelation, integrating emerging forms of scientific reasoning into a theological worldview. This period marked an intensification of dialogue, as intellectual efforts increasingly aimed to comprehend human life from multiple perspectives: material and cosmological, technological and empirical, as well as spiritual and metaphysical.*

**Keywords:** *dialogue between science and religion; knowledge; many mysteries; faith; paradigm.*

**INTRODUCTION**

From the outset, it must be emphasized that there is no opposition between religion and science, only a difference. Science explains many mysteries of the world, but reason alone has its limits. True knowledge transcends reason and relies on the work of the Holy Spirit; without this, the door to Truth remains closed. On this foundation, the Church builds its teachings, showing that through faith and love, humans can advance without limits in the knowledge of God and His creation (Ion Bria, 1987, 61). Thus, science becomes an



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essential step on the path of knowledge, bringing humans closer to authentic answers. The idea that religion and science are mutually exclusive – that by choosing one, you must reject the other – is contradicted by reality. Numerous scientists, both past and present, have been and remain deeply religious. Most true researchers have understood that, without faith in God, authentic knowledge cannot be attained.

Thus, the relationship between science and faith should not be understood merely as a history of conflict or separation, but as part of a broader and enduring endeavor to grasp the fullness of human existence, an endeavor that engages both the analytical power of reason and the contemplative depth of faith.

### 1. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCIENCE AND RELIGION

The more deeply fundamental problems related to the existence of the world and its meaning are investigated, the more they stimulate the human spirit and urge it toward a profound search for truth (Max Planck, 2002, 113). While the Church proclaims the Truth revealed by God, science seeks, through reason and experience, to provide answers and solutions to questions about the world.

#### Main hypotheses:

- Religion transmits the Truth revealed by God.
- Science seeks truth through reason and experience.

The essential difference is not one of opposition, but of level and method: reason is a necessary instrument, but insufficient without the work of the Holy Spirit, who illuminates the human mind to reach the full truth.

It must be stated from the outset that there is no opposition between religion and science, but rather a distinction. Science can explain many of the mysteries of the world, but its initiative is limited because it is based exclusively on reason. True knowledge, however, goes beyond reason; without the support of the Holy Spirit, the door to Truth would remain closed.

Science, as a distinct system of social life, was established relatively late in the history of humanity. Although one can speak of sciences since Antiquity, the system of science, in the modern sense, is a product of the contemporary era. Science is born from a social context, with deep roots in material life, and expresses itself as a superior manifestation of the human attribute of knowing.

The Church confesses that only in God are found “all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3), that is, the true treasure of knowledge. All human faculties and attributes of the spirit that manifest themselves in the scientific field are inspired and guided by the providential power of God.

Thus, between religion and science there is no conflict, but rather two complementary ways of expressing the same reality. Religion is man’s direct and cultivated relationship with God – The Creator of the world – and culture is the way in which man understands and uses the world created by God. Culture includes the totality of relationships cultivated by man in contact with existence: from the way he cultivates the earth and studies the stars, to the way he cultivates friendship, art, and poetry.

Through science, man expresses both his way of life in the world and his understanding and belief about his role in the universe. In its normal state, as the Creator willed it, all human activity is, in a way, cultic, because it takes place in the presence of and within the creation of God. Man was created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26) to represent Him and glorify Him through everything he does in the world.

Religion, as man's relationship with God – distinct from the world but present in it – gives man the consciousness of freedom and superiority over other creatures, but also responsibility toward the Creator. Since God cannot be conceived without the world, and the world without God, faith needs culture, and culture needs faith.

Thus, religion and culture are not parallel entities, but distinct realities that interpenetrate and mutually support each other. Culture provides fertile ground for faith, and faith ensures the fruitfulness and continuity of culture, like a historical liturgy accomplished in becoming and perpetuity, to the glory of God—the Lord of history and the Lover of people (Dumitru Popescu, 1998, 120).

When we hear the words “science” and “religion,” we immediately think of the complex history of their relationship (John F. Haught, 2002, 71). However, this history is not limited to conflicts. There are at least four distinct types of relationships between science and religion:



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- **Conflict** – the belief that science and religion are fundamentally irreconcilable.
- **Contrast** – the view that there is no real conflict because science and religion answer different questions.
- **Contact** – an approach that promotes dialogue, interaction, and consonance, exploring how science can influence and enrich religious and theological understanding.
- **Confirmation** – a calmer but essential perspective that highlights how religion deeply supports and fuels scientific activity.

This classification is valuable only if it serves as a starting point for genuine dialogue. The process often begins with an initial combination, that is, the undifferentiated mixing of religious ideas with superficially understood scientific concepts. If this original confusion had not existed, the flag of conflict might never have been raised. As the process evolves, the conflictual position, which firmly opposes science to religion, becomes extreme and usually requires the more moderate response of contrast.

Contrast allows science and religion to be separated without considering them adversaries, showing that they operate in spheres so different that neither conflict nor combination is possible. For many, the path from combination, through conflict, to dialogue inevitably passes through the clarifications that contrast offers. Nevertheless, the human desire for coherence and unity of knowledge is not easily lost.

The passion for synthesis is revived in contact, the third approach, which calls us to build relationships beyond the distinctions highlighted by conflict and refined by contrast. Contact does not aim for a unity devoid of differences, but for dialogue and interaction between two distinct domains.

Confirmation, the fourth approach, highlights the fundamental unity between science and religion. Although different, both originate in the same deep desire for knowledge and in the radical love of truth that governs human existence. From this perspective, science and religion cannot follow completely separate paths but are called to support each other in the search for truth. But the Holy Fathers did not confuse science with faith, nor did they substitute ancient philosophy or the human sciences of their time for the divine biblical Revelation, teaching that excessive rationalization of the mystery of existence leads to reductionism that hinders true knowledge.

## 2. DIFFERENT ATTITUDES TOWARDS SCIENCE. MODELS, TENDENCIES AND THEORY

Science has become a social phenomenon of prime importance, both through its significant contribution to the development of civilization and through its influence on mentalities. Scientific research presents two complementary aspects: pure science, which discovers laws and builds theories, and applied science, which deals with technological achievements. The public often tends to confuse them, although there is a symbiosis between science and technology that makes them mutually supportive.

In the 21st century science prompts scientists to question humanity's place in the history of the universe. This reflection arises from examining the foundations of major theories and the principles underlying scientific practice itself (Jean Pierre Lonchamp, 2002). Classical science presented mechanistic views of the world, likening the universe to a vast clockwork and man to a small, replaceable component. This perspective profoundly shaped the ethics and mentalities of its era. Scientific objectivity, often regarded as the ultimate criterion of truth, had far-reaching effects that scientists could scarcely have anticipated: the human subject became the "object" of knowledge.

While it is natural for humans to be studied, it is unacceptable for them to be exploited, dissected, or manipulated in the name of science – whether in ideological or experimental contexts. Although most scientists aimed to establish objectivity, scientific concepts inevitably exert a moral influence on society.

In modern studies of the universe and matter, the subject is now partially reintegrated, acknowledging its interconnections with the object. The notion of an "uncertain world" challenges the limits of strict scientific materialism, even as contemporary biology reopens fundamental questions.

The deliberate suspension of foundational certainty prevents the premature replacement of uncertainty with easy answers. The temptation to fill the "void of incompleteness" with a "God who plugs the gaps" exemplifies an approach that must be avoided. A more appropriate path allows humans to confront reality as



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it is, letting reason operate freely while learning to reconcile the uniqueness of the individual with the multiplicity of the world.

Mystery, far from being magical, is part of rational intelligence that advances while recognizing that not all answers are available. Embracing this perspective – seeking the meaning of otherness and the fundamental unity of subject and reality – requires accepting, even in an uncertain world, the existence of intelligibility and the possibility of meaning (Anastasios Yannoulatos, 2003, 211).

We propose to analyze contemporary attitudes toward this major phenomenon of modern society: science. Reactions range from boundless enthusiasm to open hostility.

Today, science is the dominant form of knowledge. Contrary to popular opinion, the scientism characteristic of the 19th century has not disappeared but persists in a more subtle form. Pierre Thuillier, in *Les savoirs ventriloques*, summarizes this ideology in three fundamental postulates:

- Science is the only real knowledge, the most valuable of all forms of knowledge.
- Science can answer all theoretical questions and solve all practical problems, as long as they are formulated in rational terms.
- It is legitimate and desirable for scientific experts to manage all human problems, whether political, economic, or moral.

These postulates are rarely expressed explicitly, functioning rather as tacit premises. Official discourses instead prefer slogans such as “science in the service of man, progress, and freedom,” which subtly convey the same ideas.

### 3. SCIENCE AND RELIGION - DISTINCT BUT COMPLEMENTARY

Science, through research and analysis, discovers the structure of the universe, while faith, based on divine Revelation, discovers its meaning and ultimate purpose. By studying the structure of the universe, humans can observe the relationship between their intelligence and the intelligibility of the laws that govern the cosmos, which can lead to the conclusion that this structure is the fruit of creative Intelligence. Faith, on the other hand, provides the spiritual capacity to contemplate the invisible One (Hebrews 11:27), beyond the limits of the visible.

Man, through his rational faculty of understanding life and the universe, reaches a generally valid and universal conclusion, namely that divine reason is present and active in the structure of matter. This is the novelty that scientific knowledge brings, because on the one hand it is based on the powers of reason, and on the other hand it seeks to understand the presence of God in creation. Of course, this refers to a gracious presence, understood as a working energy of God that permeates the entire creation and becomes a means of knowledge for humanity. The dialogue between science and faith, between science and religion, is founded on this understanding. (Mihai Hincinschi, 2004, 89).

The structure of the universe, revealed by science through the repetition and combination of fundamental elements, can be interpreted as a multiple language. Faith allows us to perceive this language as having been imprinted by the Creator in the universe: “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the work of his hands proclaims its might” (Psalm 18:1).

Thus, the universe can be seen as a non-verbal language and a complex information system, which science observes and faith understands as a sign of transcendent Intelligence: “The invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood from the things that are made, even his eternal power and divinity” (Romans 1:20).

Science arouses not only enthusiasm or fear, but also a special fascination for many. This gave rise to the theory of *concordism*, according to which there should be agreement between the statements of the Bible and those of science. In a broader sense, *concordism* is the attempt to confirm religious truths by means of scientific truths. However, a responsible and authentic dialogue between religion and science presupposes, above all, a common ground. It is often said that science teaches us how the heavens work, and religion how to approach God. The two fields are not rivals, but complementary. The fundamental unity between science and religion is highlighted in the approach called confirmation.



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## CONCLUSION

The dialogue between science and faith is a necessity in the current framework of both religious and scientific research, because it raises the fundamental questions regarding human life in the material world while simultaneously seeking answers that are necessary for reason, through which human beings understand themselves more deeply.

What is the meaning of human life, and what is the meaning of human presence within the material world? Without a doubt, the human person is a being who transcends materiality, and through this metaphysical and transcendent character seeks to overcome the limits of matter. For this reason, science, which most often takes the material world as its object of study and research, can be somewhat limited and relative, whereas Christian theology, having the character of revealed knowledge, offers human beings the necessary answers that concern the entirety of life.

Therefore, the dialogue between science and faith is extremely relevant for society of every age, and even more so for contemporary society, in which a series of problems arise that concern human life, such as ecology, environmental issues, demography, lifestyle, and nutrition. These are only a few aspects that concern the material dimension of human existence, yet human beings also need answers consistent with their spiritual dimension. These answers are received in a fully authentic way through Christian theology, which preserves its revealed character from God, enabling humanity to know the true meaning of life.

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