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THE DIALOGUE BETWEEN SCIENCE AND THEOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

Science, the area of knowledge based on the observation and testing of facts include the working into an ordered system, a base for new knowledge and a guide to ways of getting it. Theology is the belief in the existence of a supernatural ruling power, the creator and controller of the universe who sees to the orderliness of the system. Both realms of knowledge are in search of truth either through experimentation or faith. The impact of issues such as cloning, stem-cell research, spirituality and health, genetic engineering, at the interface of science and religion reverberates worldwide and across disciplines. The forces driving this impact are diverse from globalization of scientific culture, religion responses to the new scientific vision and ethical concerns prompted by biotechnology and environmental threats. The offshore of these revolutionary questions exceed the conceptual limitations of any single discipline, so scientific and religious intellectuals must tear down the cultural wall that have served to quarantine their respective disciplines and address there challenges together. This paper examines the consonance between science and theology as the work and the word of God respectively.

Key Words: Theology, Cloning, Biotechnology, Quarantine, Consonance, Ethics.

INTRODUCTION

Science generally is the area of knowledge based on the observation and testing of facts. It is adjudged as an organized body of knowledge and opinions, which is systematically supported by formal proofs or by observational evidence. It includes the working into an ordered system and also acting as a base for new knowledge and a guide to ways of getting it.

Theology and not religion is the focus of this paper. This is because theology refers to the intellectual dimension within religion (Fliestra, 2002). Everything under religion can't be covered, but the rational reflection upon religious symbols and doctrines can be worked upon. This is the definition of theology in terms of analysis and in terms of constructive proposals (Peters, 1998). Just as science is an intellectual enterprise, theology is an intellectual enterprise within religion.

Theology is the belief in the existence of a supernatural ruling power, the creator and controller of the universe who sees to the orderliness of the system. The orderliness of the system is what science tends to work into consonance between Science and Theology.

Theology and Science have their roots from the word 'knowledge'. All realms of knowledge are always in search of truth. The truth in science is through experimentation while that in theology is through faith. The sources of knowledge are three, knowledge through revelation, which is Theology, knowledge through observation, which is science, and knowledge through reason, which is common to both.

Since both sciences and theology speak about the same reality, ad they both pursue truth, it is reasonable to expect that sooner or later shared understandings between them will develop and each of the two disciplines should eventually be able to recognize some level of truth reported in the other even if their methods differ.

The two fields of endearvour provide areas of correspondence or connection between the understanding o nature discerned scientifically and the understanding of the world as God's creation discerned theologically Several authors in a bid to support the science – theology dialogue provided reasons, facts and figures tc corroborate the need to work together.

Peters, (1998) stated that scientific knowledge should inform and sharpen theological truth claims. In addition scientific thinking reflects upon itself and asks philosophically to what degree the positing of the idea of Goc grants greater illumination for understanding the natural world in which we live.

Science offers a super route to God than religion (Davies, 2002) and it also provides a means to learn more abou God already known through religions (Cobb, 2000). Science has demonstrated the ability to build cumulatively from generation to generation, expanding human knowledge and human ability to control nature through it. In the sphere of values, on the one hand there seems to be no progress in understanding because the goal of life is to increase value. This is the ultimate goal of science as well.

The net of science covers the empirical universe; what it is made of (fact) and why does it work this way (theory). The net of religion and theology extends over questions of moral reasoning and value (Gould, 2004). Science in its quest gets the age of rocks and religion get the rock of ages. It also studies how heavens go and religion determines how to go to heavens. Science asks how and religion asks why?

Albert Einstein's submission on science religion dialogue is instructive; he equates science to language of fact and religion as language of value. Furthermore he succinctly stated that science without religion is lame and religion without science is blind.

Science is driven by a desire to understand, while religion is primarily concerned with meaning and purpose (Fliestra, 2002). At the same time, during American Scientific Affiliation (ASA) conference on the convergence of science and religion at their 57th annual meeting in California, August 2002, Charles Townes said science's question; "How does the universe work?" And religion question; "Does the universe have purpose?.

Townes observed that both must be related somehow. Rather than try to theologize modern science, he suggested recognizing the common assumptions and approaches that theology and science share. Where religion has its beliefs, science has its postulates. Where science relies on intuition, religion works in revelations. Both in turn, use observation, have an aesthetic sense and rely on logic and reason. To illustrate, he stated facts about his work with plasma energy and how his research could lead to cleaner and more efficient fuel sources.

Good theology needs accurate science (Collins 1997). Every culture searches for meaning. Every culture searches for insight into the workings of nature (Giberson, 2002). Natural science explains religion better; ready to explain the supernatural naturally (Peter, 1998). The science – religion – dialogue thrives at the intersection of the searches for meaning and workings of nature. The positive consonance between religion to and scientists will provide a better world for all inhabitants.

Applications on Science – Religion – Dialogue

The impact of issues such as cloning of man, stem-cell research, blood transfusion, spirituality and health, genetic engineering, Genetic determinism, Gay Gene, Crime Gene, etc reverberates worldwide and across disciplines. The forces driving this impact are diverse from globalization of scientific culture, religion responses at the new scientific vision and ethical concerns prompted by biotechnology and environmental threats. The offspore of these revolutionary questions exceed the conceptual limitation of any single discipline, so the dire need for understanding between scientists and religionists.

Several areas ranging from genetics (Peters, 1998), Medicine (Koenig, 2001) Mathematics (Sriraman, 2004) and Ethics have provided good basis for useful application for Science-Religion-dialogue. The understandings have also provided many insights into doctrines and worships in religions. For example, providing satisfactory answers to, divine action and Quilt of laws (Gregersen, 2004) scientific evidences in the Qur'an (Ibrahim, 1997); The concept of soul and spirit and many more.

Spirituality and Health

One of the areas of applications that this review will consider is spirituality and health. A lot of questions can be raised under this. For example why address spirituality in patient care? How does a physician identify and address spiritual needs? When does a physician take spiritual history during the course of medical evaluation? And what results can be expected from addressing patient's spiritual needs?

Koenig (2002) proffered five reasons why spirituality should be included in Medical care. Among the reasons is because many patients are religious, and religious beliefs help them to cope. No fewer than 96% of Americans believe in God, over 90% pray, nearly 70% are members of religious set up and over 40% attends to religious matters within a seven-day cycle (King, 2000).

Furthermore, spirituality needs become particularly pressing at times when medical illness threatens life or way of life. In a study of 101 psychiatric and medical/surgical inpatients at a Chicago hospital, investigators found that the vast majority of psychiatric patients (88%) and medical/surgical patients (76%) reported three or more spiritual needs during hospitalization (Larson et al 1997).

Neglecting the spiritual dimension is just like ignoring a patients' social environment or psychological state, and results in failure to treat the "whole person". Scientists should become increasingly aware of the biological pathways by which social and psychological factors influence physical health and susceptibility to disease (Chibnell and Brooks, 2001). Similar influences would soon be identified for spiritual factors as well.

Other reasons highlighted are

- Religious beliefs influence medical decision especially when patients are seriously ill.
- Religious beliefs and activities are related to better health and quality of life.
- Many patients would like physicians to address their spiritual need.
- Physicians addressing spiritual needs is not new, but rooted in the long historical relationship between religion, medicine and health care.

The ancient Greeks approached medicine holistically, treating sickness and wellness by treating the whole person. The medical Hippocratic oath pioneered a rational method of healing based on finding healthy balances of various humors essential for well-being.

But as medicine became more precise and scientific, it also became more reductionistic. Illness was understood as localized phenomena, affecting isolated parts of the body. Gone was the original idea that mental and spiritual well-being were ultimately connected to physical health.

Patients with an active religious life have spiritual resources that can help them break cycles of addiction, recover from depression, and even spend less time in the hospital. (Koenig, 2004). This assertion came from a study embarked upon in 1998 in North Carolina, U.S.

Diastolic Blood pressure and religious activities of 3,632 people over age 65 were randomly sampled. The result is presented in Figure 1.

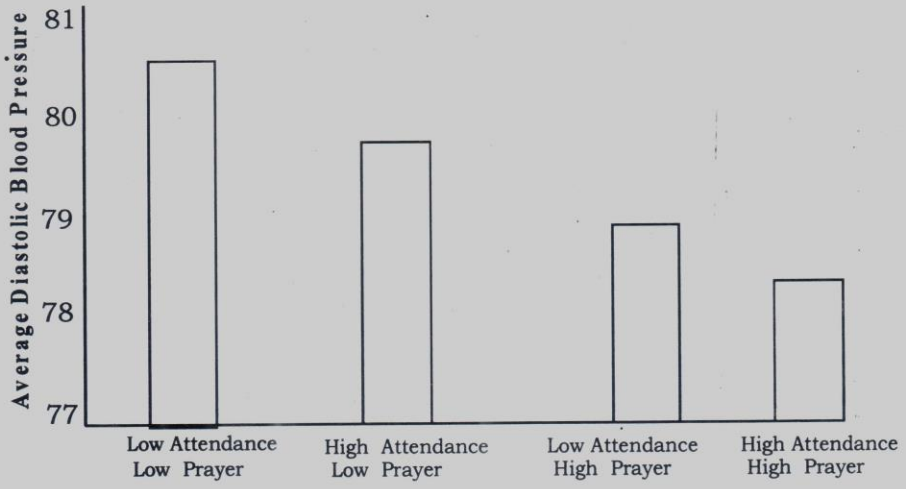

Figure 1 – Religious activity and diastolic blood pressure.

Religious Activity

The figure 1 shows that patients with high attendance at religious houses and participate in high prayer frequency and reading of religious books have diastolic BP of 77.8 while those with low activities has 80.5 which is on a high level for an over 65 years old patient.

The positive correlation of religious activity with diastolic BP further corroborates the need for the forming of medical researchers with theologians and other scholars to create a mass of expertise that will bring back the holistic approach to health care.

Summary and Conclusion

The positive consequence of spirituality in patient care is a pointer to many more advantages in stock for the human race if religionists and scientists decide to work together and consider science as work of God and theology as word of God. Therefore, scientists and religious intellectuals in this part of the Globe should tear down the cultural wall that have served to quarantine their respective disciplines and address these challenges together.

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