The Clash Of Titans – Science Vs Religion Essay, Research Paper

The Clash of Titans: Science vs ReligionSince the beginning of human history there have been many explanations for events that seem out of human control. In recent civilized history, religious and scientific views have often clashed with one another. Religious ideas are usually presented first and then enough scientific evidence accumulates to defy religious beliefs. These findings of science are met with incredulity and most are considered heresy. From the middle ages and to around the 18th century, religious ideology was the most accepted way of explaining the unexplainable. During the next couple hundred years, many members of academia, using science to back them up, came up with new ways of dealing with the unanswerable questions. When the church had the greatest power, men and women of science were viewed as the “bad guys.” In most cases it was safer to believe in the church and their ideas, in order not to be excommunicated or shunned by society, than to place their trust in quack scientists. As a result, many conflicts arose between men of religion and men of science. In the last chapter of The Descent of Man, Charles Darwin made it clear that his work was highly speculative and some of his conclusions would end up being proved false. In this, he states that false facts can hinder the progress of science much more than false ideas can. This can be seen throughout history as some of the church’s views were completely wrong, yet they were believed to be the truth and therefore went un-contested for hundreds of years. Even if a scientist set out to prove the church wrong and can up with some very strong evidence contrary to popular belief, he was usually shunned and his ideas denounced publicly. It is not until many people have similar evidence and findings do they gain any credibility with normal people and the church. “…False views, if supported by some evidence, do little harm, for every one takes a salutary pleasure in proving their falseness and when this is done, one path towards error is closed and the road to truth is often at the same time opened” (Darwin, 264). Darwin believes that if a scientific view is false, then by continuing study and research the truth may be arrived at. By taking such a stance, he is never really hesitant about publishing his work. He knows that people may view his ideas skeptically, but only through trial and error may the truth be arrived at. By following this line of thought, one may deduce that if no one presented new ideas, then intelligent thought would have no place in a society like that. Darwin knew and accepted the risks involved in presenting new ideas. Voltaire also was a revolutionary thinker. Although, he presented ideas of his own, he decided to satirize science and religion. In Candide, the main character Candide, was put through many tests and unfortunate accidents. Through these misfortunes, we get a glimpse of how Voltaire viewed science, philosophy, and religion. In each community or society, there are different views expressed on a host of ideas. Pangloss is Voltaire’s humanization of such societies and their thinking. “…Master Pangloss, the greatest philosopher of the whole province, and consequently of the whole world” (Voltaire, 2). Each society, church, men of academia, believes that their ideas are correct and therefore are the best of the world. It is true, even to this day, that each nation has a different set of standards, reasoning, and beliefs on how life works and what are the best possible things to believe in. In some cases, nations try to push those beliefs on other nations. This results in a push for new scientific research and other religious and philosophical beliefs of that nation, to combat the ideas that are being impressed on them. In both cases there is a constant gathering of new information. Thus, growth in understanding and the opportunity for higher thinking, are achieved.

The Bible is considered by some people to be the truth. In extreme cases, they take the Bible quite literally and do not leave any room for the arguments of science. The views in the Bible, especially on the subject of creation, had been the predominate way of thinking about how the Earth and humans were formed. Most religions, in the Christian world, believe that God created Adam and Eve. “…The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (Genesis, 2:7). “And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man” (Genesis, 2:22). For the most part of history, this what people believed. They had no notion of evolution or any of the ideas presented by Charles Darwin. This belief that God created man out of the dust of the earth and Eve from one of Adam’s ribs, was the way that religion portrayed the formation of man. Until the idea of evolution came around, people believed their religion for lack of a better answer. Even in today’s society there are fundamental religious sects that take the Bible literally and believe in creationism, not evolution. The main cause for so much strife over who has the correct answer stems from the point that there is not one single idea that has been proven beyond doubt. Until that day, there will always be constant struggling to find the right answer with the best proof. The question that comes to mind is, is this conflict really necessary to gain ground in our deepest unresolved mysteries of science and religion? This question is extremely valid and should be answered yes. If there were no conflicting views on issues, there would be no gaining of new information. There would be no progress in either scientific understanding or an upward growth of the spirituality of man. Mundane and lifeless could be terms used to express such societies that do not question and argue. It is true that some arguments on science and religion have caused wars or other acts of hate. The Crusades are a perfect example on how conflicting religious beliefs can cause serious confrontations between nations and their views. If people did not try to advance their scientific views, then no progress could be made in the fields of biology, psychology or any other field of science. On the other hand, if there were no arguments or conflicting views the world might be a happier and less angry place to live. On the downside of this, there would be no reason to stimulate the mind and intellect. Technological advances would come to a halt because no one wants to argue their new and different ideas. This would lead to a dumbing down of man’s ability to reason and think. Religion has held the upper hand in ways of thinking about the unexplainable. It has been that way until the 18th century when revolutionary views on society were presented by great philosophers, such as Voltaire or Freud. With the onset of Charles Darwin’s book, The Descent of Man, a whole new process of science was introduced to explain how human beings came to be. In all cases religious beliefs superseded these new, radical views. It was not until they had enough scientific evidence and popular support did they gain any recognition in a society dominated by religion. The men and women of science were considered the “bad guys,” yet they continued to press their ideas until people took notice of them and realized that they may have some truth. These conflicts between religion and science are necessary if society wants to remain intellectually active.