

PacificMUN

Dare to Speak

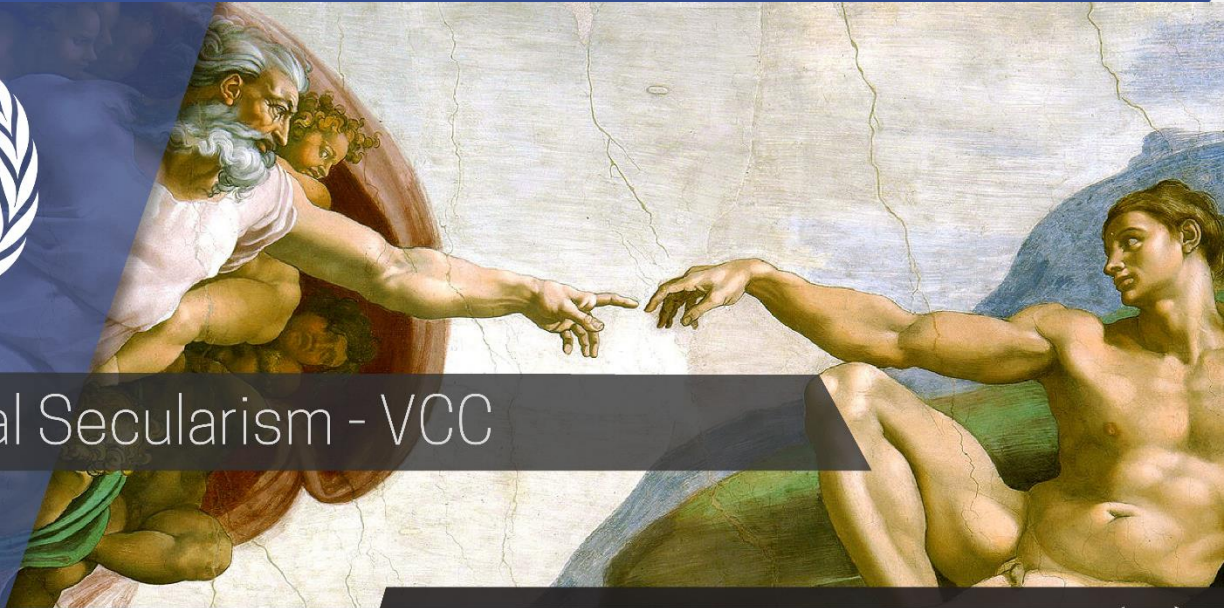


VCC-Topic A
Backgrounder Guide



International Secularism - VCC

Topic A



PacificMUN



Letter from the Director

Dear delegates,

My name is Kevin Roe and I am thrilled to serve as the director for the Third Vatican City Council (VCC). I have been an active participant in the world of MUN since grade 8 and am currently a grade 10 student at Pacific Academy. I find MUN intriguing because the multitude of ideas from people of different backgrounds and cultures allows for ideas to clash together and create fruitful debate. Because of MUN's diverse and unique nature, it has given me the ability to learn with intuition and inclusivity. Outside of MUN, I enjoy debate, attempting to jazz improvise on my saxophone, and watching basketball.

Along with myself are your two wonderful Dais members: Alex Han, a grade 12 student at Port Moody Secondary School, and Kelsi Lee, a grade 12 student at Crofton House School. We hope that we can be of your assistance at all times and make your committee experience at PacificMUN 2019 extraordinary.

Throughout the conference, the delegates of VCC will discuss two topics: The Promotion of Scientific Discussion and International Secularism. Both topics shed light on both internal and external moral conflicts the Church faces today. I strongly believe that each delegate will have different ideas to contribute to these controversial issues that the Vatican currently faces. The Dais team would like to emphasize that religion may be a sensitive topic to some, and only through professionalism will there be productive debate. We expect all delegates to enjoy themselves but also to maintain a level of professionalism due to the sensitive nature of the topic.

We look forward to seeing you at PacificMUN 2019!



Best regards,

Kevin Roe
Director of VCC
PacificMUN 2019

Committee Overview

The Third Vatican Council (Vatican III) is a futuristic simulation where Catholic leaders of the world gather at the Vatican to discuss moral issues that the Church currently faces. Ultimately, the decisions made in the Vatican becomes the mandate for all Catholics across the world. The committee's goal is to find a solution to ethical issues and develop a stance on modern issues.

Like its predecessors, Vatican III hopes to accomplish considerable reforms in the Church and clarify moral issues that plague the Church. The first Vatican City Council (Vatican I) has faced the issues of rising nationalism, liberalism, materialism, and a decline in the Pope's power.¹ These problems were solved with three statements mandating that the pope has full power over the Church, that the Pope's preaches are always right, and that God is the reason behind universal creation whereas science simply explains the method.²

Nearly 100 years after the conservative declarations made by Vatican I, there were still unanswered and newly emerging questions that had to be addressed. These questions of reform and acceptance would be addressed in the 22nd ecumenical council (Vatican II). Vatican II reformed specific ideas of the Church and developed a friendly approach to other religions. Firstly, The Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the World of Today has made efforts in acknowledging the rapid rate of change in the world and connecting the idea of revelation to the needs and values of the contemporary Church. Next, The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church called all Catholics to a life of holiness and to share their faith with non-believers. Finally, Vatican II called for the Church to be more accepting of other religions through dialogue.³

Unlike its predecessors, Vatican III is fictional. However, it is involved with the United Nations as did the previous two councils. The council holds vast influence over the global political and social climate as 1.2 billion, or 16% of the world is Catholic.⁴ The previous two councils have exemplified the Church's ability

¹ <https://www.britannica.com/event/First-Vatican-Council>

² Pope Pius IX, Des Filius, Chapter II

³ <https://www.britannica.com/event/Second-Vatican-Council>

⁴ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-21443313>



to shape the ethical values of Catholic people. This ultimately shows that the Church is capable of shifting the political climate of the globe.

Though the Church may seem powerful, it is not able to directly impose policies on a government and therefore is limited to indirect influence through altering the public opinion.

Topic A: The Promotion of Scientific Discussion

Introduction

The relationship between science and religion was peaceful in the past, but ever since the new age of thinking and scientific discovery during the Renaissance, the relationship between the two fields of study have built into one of conflict. Throughout history, Catholic individuals, bishops, and monks can be attributed with coming up with scientific discoveries or trying to tie science and religion together. In fact, the Big Bang Theory was first thought of by a Belgian priest by the name of Georges Lemaître.⁵ Theories of Lemaitre's kind, were all pursued with the motivation to better understand the Word of God.⁶ However, as society entered into the mid-20th century and 21st century, science and religion started to fully drift apart to the point where common perception dubs a "Religious Scientist" a flagrant oxymoron.⁷ With people perceiving science as a tool to disprove the existence of a God, the Catholic Church was no longer commonly seen as a religion to facilitate scientific discussion.

With science and religion at complete odds and the discoveries made by Catholic scientists used to attack the beliefs of the Church, there are two challenges the international Catholic community currently faces in mixing science with religion. First is the issue of younger generations leaving the Church. For example, approximately 35% of Millennials in the United States identify as an atheist, and in countries like Canada, atheism has doubled, from 12 to 24%, since 1991.⁸ Being part of everyday society which encourages them to view facts as the best way to find the truth, faith tends to be pushed out in the modern-day push for truth. While these young individuals are looking for the truth as told by the world, they are influenced to think the Catholic faith has no fact to back up its doctrine because of the lack of scientific discussion in the community. The lack of scientific discussion has led to millennials born in the Catholic faith to abandon their faith and leave the Church.⁹

⁵ <https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?recnum=8847>

⁶ <http://inters.org/science-and-Catholic-Church-mission>

⁷ <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2017/sep/24/big-issue-no-mystery-science-and-religion-cannot-be-reconciled>

⁸ https://www.huffingtonpost.com/phil-zuckerman/religion-declining-secula_b_9889398.html

⁹ <https://www.osv.com/OSVNewsweekly/Story/TabId/2672/ArtMID/13567/ArticleID/20512/Young-people-are-leaving-the-faith-Heres-why.aspx>



Along with millennials abandoning their faith because of the lack of scientific promotion, there are a plethora of problems delegates will face while discussing this topic. The second challenge the Catholic Church faces with promoting scientific discussion is about improving the public perception of the legitimacy of such discussions. Regardless of whether the Catholic Church is free to discuss science or not, the conclusions from their own scientific discoveries and discussions will come to waste if the international scientific community disregards its findings due to its ties to the Catholic Church. This means there is a need to improve the legitimacy of the Catholic Church in the scientific community to validate its findings to further understand the word of God.

Timeline

4th Century - Augustine of Hippo, a North African Catholic Monk, first argued the creation story in Genesis, should not be necessarily interpreted directly.¹⁰

13th Century - Thomas Aquinas, an Italian Catholic monk, was the first recorded philosopher to try to use science and reasoning to justify the existence of a God. His studies will eventually be used by Catholic scientists, and future popes to tie science and religion together.¹¹

1663 - Galileo Galilei, an Italian Catholic astronomer, was placed under house arrest by the Catholic Church because of a book he published that defends the theory that the sun is the center of our galaxy, not the earth.¹² This incident, known as the Galileo affair, is known as the first ever conflict between science and religion.

1802 - William Paley, an Anglican and a British Naturalist, published the book *Natural Theology*. This book theorizes that life was created by a designer, which is in parallel to the creation theory shown in the book of Genesis.

1859 - The book “The Origin of Species” was published by Charles Darwin. With no official response from the Pope on evolution, most Catholic leaders felt this work was a contradiction to the doctrine of the Church.¹³

1925 - The Scopes Trial, a trial of a Tennessee high school science teacher John Scopes, was as a challenge of the Tennessee state bill which forbade the education of evolution in the classroom. With John Scopes found guilty for teaching evolution, it paved a way for the anti-evolution movement in the

¹⁰ <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2009/may/22.39.html>

¹¹ <http://www.ncregister.com/blog/mark-shea/thomas-and-the-sciences>

¹² <http://www.pewforum.org/2009/11/05/religion-and-science-a-timeline/>

¹³ Artigas, et al., Negotiating Darwin: The Vatican Confronts Evolution 1877-1902, 19



US and lead to states like Texas banning the mention of evolution in textbooks and 22 more making similar attempts.¹⁴

1931 - Georges Lemaître, a Belgian Catholic Priest, and astronomer proposed the idea that the universe came from being at a single point in space and time and since then has been expanding.¹⁵ This theory was later known to be the “Big Bang Theory,” and was faced with heavy opposition from the scientific community of his time.

1950 - Pope Pius XII first responded to the Theory of Evolution by accepting it as a possibility but argued the human soul is created by God.¹⁶

1953 - James Watson and Francis Green, American and British biologists, first discovered the structure of DNA. This led to a revolution in the life sciences and lead to discoveries and which would come under ethical conflict with the Church.¹⁷

1964 - Astronomers Robert Wilson and Arno Penzias discovered cosmic microwave background, leftover radiation from the Big Bang, proved Lemaître’s theory from 1931.¹⁸

1968 - In Epperson v. Arkansas the U.S supreme court rules the state’s criminalization of the teaching of evolution in public schools as unconstitutional and violates the First Amendment.¹⁹ This court ruling created more division between science and faith.

1987 - John Templeton, an American Financier, and a lifelong Presbyterian established the Templeton Foundation which tries to study the relationship between science and faith. Although he is not a Catholic, it shows the first organized approach to reason with both seemingly polarized modes of reasoning

1996 - Pope John Paul II redefined the Catholic view to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences by stating, “Evolution is more than the hypothesis of the development of the human body. However, the creation of the human soul is through God alone.”²⁰

2006 - Richard Dawkins, an atheist, and a biologist published the book The God Delusion which argued that Darwin’s theory of natural selection is far superior to religion in explaining reality, and concludes

¹⁴ <https://www.history.com/topics/scopes-trial>

¹⁵ <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Georges-Lemaitre>

¹⁶ <http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/conlaw/vaticanview.html>

¹⁷ <https://www.nature.com/scitable/topicpage/discovery-of-dna-structure-and-function-watson-397>

¹⁸ <https://www.space.com/33892-cosmic-microwave-background.html>

¹⁹ <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/393/97/>

²⁰ <https://ncse.com/religion/creationists-popes-statement>



science and religion cannot correlate together. This book led to many scientists claiming religion and science cannot mix together and paved the way for scientific challenges of the Catholic/Christian faith.

2017- Pope Francis states that science and religion should overcome the “tragic division” between them and should work together to help humanity.²¹

Historical Analysis

Historically, the Church and science started off as complementary fields but as time progressed, the two slowly drifted apart. In the past, science was often used to support religion. However, it has now shifted to do the opposite, refuting faith.

Early in the 13th century, Thomas Aquinas, a Catholic monk, first recorded Catholic theologian to use reason and argument to justify the existence of God. This method of justification was new in the Catholic community as the rationalization for the existence of God and the Catholic faith were primarily done through faith alone. However, the incorporation of reasoning presented by Thomas Aquinas created a new branch of theology called natural theology, which focuses on the use of facts and experience to justify the existence of God. This ultimately led to major works of William Paley in 1802, which justified the existence of an ultimate creator in his book, “Natural Theology.” However, along with the rise of natural theology and its use of reason was the first major recorded conflict between science and the Church.

The Theory of Evolution and Creationism is cited as the main conflict between the Church and science, but this conflict was one fueled by popular culture, not by the two groups. Although in the beginning, the majority of Catholic leaders did not agree with the theory, Pope John Paul II explained evolution as more than a hypothesis, but that the spirit of humans is created by God himself. The reasoning behind this belief is the abandoning of philosophy as the bridge between science and religion when St. Thomas Augustine created his branch of natural theology. Since Thomas Aquinas’ first-cause argument that scientific inquiry is from God, scientific discussion in the Church about evolution has ceased, even until modern times.²²

The early 2000’s marked the beginning of scientific attacks on the existence of a God and Richard Dawkins was the one spearheading the attack. Richard Dawkins is a well-known biologist and atheist who wrote the book “The God Delusion.” This book explains how there is no God and alludes that science is much superior, declaring that scientists must not be religious and that religious people cannot be scientists. This made the scientific community develop animosity towards the Church and use

²¹ <https://www.thetablet.co.uk/news/8118/science-and-religion-must-overcome-tragic-division-pope-says>

²² <https://catholicexchange.com/brief-exploration-catholic-position-evolution>



existing scientific discoveries made by the Church to disprove the existence of a God. Therefore, when *The God Delusion* was published, it created a culture of scientific attacks on the dogma of the Church.

Current Situation

Although science and the Church were previously in peace, the two are currently at complete odds. Even though the Catholic Church puts forth efforts to amend the relationship, science, the atheistic community, and most members of the Catholic Church all view an ongoing conflict. Although the current Pope, Pope Francis, has done everything in his power to promote scientific discussion in the Church, the perception of division persists, with youth leaving the Catholic religion.

Instated in 2013, Pope Francis has done much to promote scientific discussion. Even though renowned atheists such as Richard Dawkins claim: “Religion is for idiots,” and creates further conflict between the Church and science, Pope Francis continues his efforts in finding common ground for the opposing parties to work together. That common ground is climate change. In his May 2015 encyclical (a papal letter to all the bishops of the Catholic Church), the pope pleaded that Christians have an obligation to protect this world that God gave them. and Seeing this, both groups must cooperate to solve this issue for the good of mankind.

However, this is not the only recent attempt in connecting science with the Church. In 2017’s scientific conference held by the Vatican titled “Black Holes, Gravitational Waves, and Space-Time Singularities,” is another example of the Catholic Church in an attempt to bridge the gap between the two fields. This conference primarily aimed to discuss furthering the quest for truth and an understanding of the universe. The council clarified multiple different ideas. Firstly, it stated that the Big Bang Theory is how God created the universe and that he is responsible for everything on earth. Next, they claimed that Catholic scientists should not be afraid of finding the truth. They further stated that fear is not from God and that pursuing the truth through science will bring Catholics closer to God. Finally, the committee concluded that scientists who are believers should spread their beliefs to fellow believers and remind them that science is a product of the Catholic Church.²³ Therefore, the Church has done a lot to clarify how it will approach science and expressed its will to unite once again.

Despite the Church’s efforts to unite with science, their efforts have not reached the common person. This is shown in a study by the Pew Research Center with European countries as its target sample, which shows that at least third of the population in most countries believe science and religion to be in conflict.²⁴ Despite the efforts of the Catholic Church, in the 4 European nations with Catholic majorities, the same source concludes that 56% of Catholics believe in the existence of a conflict. It is also noted in

²³ <https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/eco-catholic/vatican-conference-unites-science-and-religions-search-truth>

²⁴ <http://www.pewforum.org/2017/05/10/science-and-religion/>



the survey that in regions like the Poland, Ukraine, Hungary, and Bosnia, highly religious people tend to state that there is a misalignment between science and religion. This is because the Church has not made it clear enough that science and religion aren't at odds, and the Church have only taken efforts inside of their organization to promote science but have not engaged with the secular scientific community. These facts all conclude that the public believes in the existence of a disagreement between science and religion.

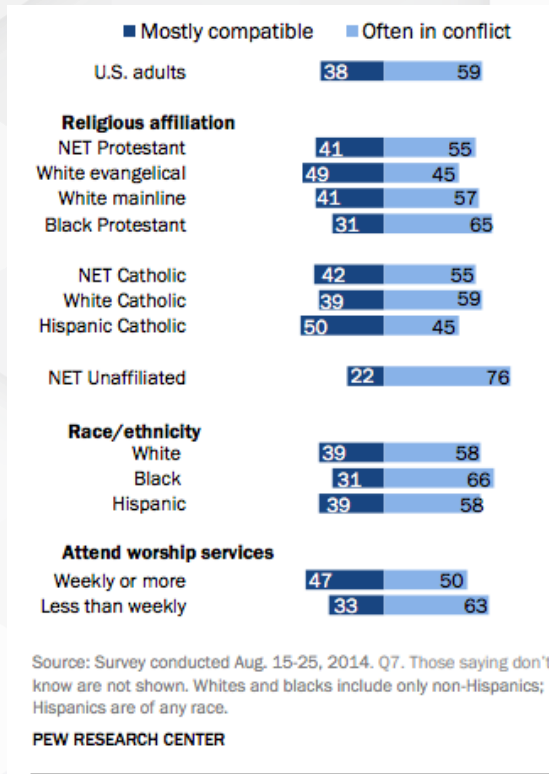


Figure 1: Percentage of religious groups that believe that science and religion are mostly compatible or often in conflict

The conception of conflict between science and the Church is due to evolution.²⁵The general public believes that there is a conflict between the premise of creationism and the naturalist theory of evolution. For example, in the United States, 55% of Catholics believe that there is a conflict between science and religion. The concept of a divine creator and species evolving over time from a microscopic organism are two completely different interpretations of how the world was created. These different interpretations are often cited as clashing ideas that cannot coexist for two main reasons. Firstly, is the predicted age of the Earth. In the Bible, it states the earth is 6000 years old; however, geology mandates that the earth is millions of years older. Secondly, when one takes the Bible literally, it does not state that species like humans evolved over time,

instead it states that the first man, Adam, was carved by the dust of the Earth and the female, Eve, was made from a rib bone from the man. These differences in detail have left many Catholics conflicted and the dispute between the two groups have led to many youths and young adults leaving the Church.

An area of science the Church clashes with general society is in biological and genetic technology. Some examples include stem cell research, contraceptive pills such as birth control, and genetic engineering. Mostly, the Church is against all use of this branch of science as it does not align with the natural plan of God. However, many Catholics agree that stem-cell research is beneficial as its purposes are for the good of humanity. Contraceptives as a whole are widely considered taboo and greatly avoided by Catholic scientists. The Third Vatican City Council must find a way to promote discussion of negatively stigmatized concepts to further current understandings. This is because the Church has an outdated view of contraceptives stating, "They fail to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS," despite being proven otherwise by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Therefore, the lack of

²⁵ http://www.pewinternet.org/files/2015/10/PI_2015-10-22_religion-and-science_FINAL.pdf



discussion of taboo ideas has left the Church to develop an outdated ideology of modern biological, genetic and contraceptive technology.

The internal conflict of reason and faith is one of the reasons why millennials born into the Church choose to later abandon it. This is proven in a study done by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostate (CARA), which showed that one in five of people who left the Catholic faith cited the conflict between the rational, science world as one of the reasons for doing so.²⁶ As more and more youths begin to develop reason and knowledge from their surroundings, it is difficult for such individuals to remain faithful after seeing that the Catholic Church does not express its rational proof. With insurmountable evidence from science about its discoveries and the common perception of the Church relying on faith alone, people that are new to the religion is led to question the faith and ultimately leave.

The catholic Church has not done enough to engage with the secular scientific community, and has resulted common citizens and members of the Church to polarize science and religion. The ethical conflict involving embryonic stem cell research and contraceptive technology, and the conflict of the validity of creationism have not seen a substantive response from the catholic Church. Therefore, the absence of a response, has led to millenials leaving the Church, people questioning the dogma of the Church, and its followers convinced that science and religion are in conflict.

Vatican Involvement

Although Pope Francis has made efforts to mend relations with the scientific community, no official action by an ecumenical council has taken place in the past. With the justification of the ecumenical council and the coverage it receives from the international community, its decisions will determine the future relationship between the Church and the scientific community.

Seeking Resolution

While discussing possible solutions, it is important to come up with solutions that will impact the opinions of the public, advise other religious groups to adopt similar beliefs on science, and/or improve the relationship with the scientific community. With that in mind, there are three possible solutions that may come up during the committee.

²⁶ <https://www.osv.com/OSVNewsweekly/Story/TabId/2672/ArtMID/13567/ArticleID/20512/Young-people-are-leaving-the-faith-Heres-why.aspx>



Progressive Creationism

Progressive Creationism is a theory of creation that first underlies that the Bible should not be taken literally but rather that aspects of creationism that contradicts the scientific timeline should be treated as metaphors. For example, each day of the 7-day creation story can correspond to millions of years where the life forms created were formed through evolution. The second premise it makes is that God is ultimately responsible for everything and that all life has evolved according to his Supernatural design. This theory is a way to tie in the Pope's acceptance of evolution and to bridge the gap between science and the Church. This is because the theory is backed up chronologically and attempts to incorporate science in creation. However, there is one main issue: the theory does not have any scientific backing for the theory of a god using evolution to create the world. This ultimately means that scientists will likely remain skeptical of the Church's attempt at connecting science with religion.

Promotion of Scientific Discovery and Exploration by the Church

In order to pursue the search for scientific proof for a God, it is important that Catholic scientists across the world work together. Therefore, by creating a research group such as the one seen in the US's genome project, it will improve the focus of scientists to try and bridge the gap. This allows Catholic scientists globally to express their religious views freely and make efforts to explain the inner working of our world. However, as with any solution, there are two main problems with this idea. Firstly, it tries to use science to justify faith when its main purpose is to complement and explain it. The balance between science and religion is often that science explains the method of creation whereas religion explains why the world was created. Under the Church's view of science, trying to explain why something works with why it works is not going to get anywhere and it destroys the true purpose of science. Moreover, if the religious research group was to gain evidence, there may be questions of its legitimacy due to suspicions of bias. Thus, This suspicion of bias may ruin the reputation of certain scientists involved, discouraging further scientific discussion in the Church.

Updating the Church's View on Ethical Issues

The Church's view on ethical issues such as contraceptives is one that is outdated and ignores current scientific advancements. Genetic technology such as stem-cell research are fields of science that have not been widely discussed by the Catholic Church. If the Vatican City were to be more lenient with contraceptives and genetic technology, it will raise questions from conservative Christian denominations. However, it can possibly raise support from the scientific community in the form of funding. For example, the Catholic bishops of South Korea donated \$10 million to advance adult stem cell research²⁷ However, the rest of the Catholic community at the time remained very hostile to the donation, claiming that it violates human dignity and the field murders embryos for its stem cells.

²⁷ <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/stem-cell-research/catholic-support-for-ethically-acceptable-stem-cell-research.cfm>



Bloc Positions

North America

Bishops in North America have outlined that embryonic stem cell research and contraceptive technology is ethically wrong, and should not be invested in. All of this information implies that the North American bloc is much like the Centrist party; either for or against the promotion of scientific discussion depending on the field.

Latin America

With the majority of religious Latin Americans being Catholic, this region is one of the more religiously vibrant. Religious Latin Americans believe that there is a conflict between science and the Catholic Church as proven in a survey that depicts 63% of individuals in the Dominican Republic in the belief of a conflict, 62% in Brazil, and 60% in Costa Rica.²⁸ Although many people believe that a conflict exists between science and religion, it is contradictorily the region where Catholic individuals are far more accepting of evolution.

Europe

European clergymen are much more conservative than the Latin American clergymen. This is because Europe was the birthplace of the Renaissance and other modern era literature, art, and even religious practices and teachings. Their views on certain issues such as science are that they do not mix well with religion and should be avoided. These delegates should further stress the harms the scientific community has brought, and that the current ongoing conflict cannot be stopped.

Vatican City

Delegates representing the Vatican City will try and improve relations with the scientific community. Their views are nearly identical to the Pope's and should act accordingly, to promote scientific discussion. Vatican City delegates should support statements made by the Pope and advocate for his statements to other countries.

Africa

As African nations begin to further develop and mend the wounds created by European countries' evangelization to their people, they have become increasingly open to the idea of Catholicism as opposed to the post-colonial era. This has led to Africa to become one of the newer yet vibrant Catholic communities in the world, and consequently harder to implement new controversial doctrine. In addition, there is a lack of scientific education across the continent and it is imperative that the people there are well educated on science before facing the issues between science and religion. Therefore, delegates

²⁸ <http://www.pewforum.org/2014/11/13/chapter-8-religion-and-science/>



that represent African countries should stress the importance of science education as the main way of promoting scientific discussion in the Church.

Asia

Though the Catholic Church is not prevalent in China, other countries such as South Korea or Japan are far more accepting towards the scientific field. Like the example of the South Korean Catholic Church offering 10 million dollars towards adult stem cell research, countries with a strong Catholic body all tend to support certain sciences that improve the quality of life. However, Asian clergymen are skeptical on supporting of embryonic stem cell research. Clergymen from Asia should make sure it first sets the ethical/religious boundaries with scientific study/funding before making any further advancements in science.

Discussion Questions

1. What is your country's Catholic community's stance on ethical issues like embryonic stem cell research or contraceptives?
2. Why is it important to promote science in the Church, specifically in your country?
3. How does the Catholic community look like in your country?
4. What are some efforts by the Catholic Church in your nation to promote scientific discussion?
5. Will the promotion of scientific discussion improve or hurt the Catholic community?
6. What possible solutions are there to improve scientific discussion/advancements?
7. How should the Church promote its stance on science?
8. If actions were to be taken, what changes will happen to the Church?

Further Reading

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2920436/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Zl8zhNWZGQ>

<http://www.pewforum.org/2017/05/10/science-and-religion/>

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