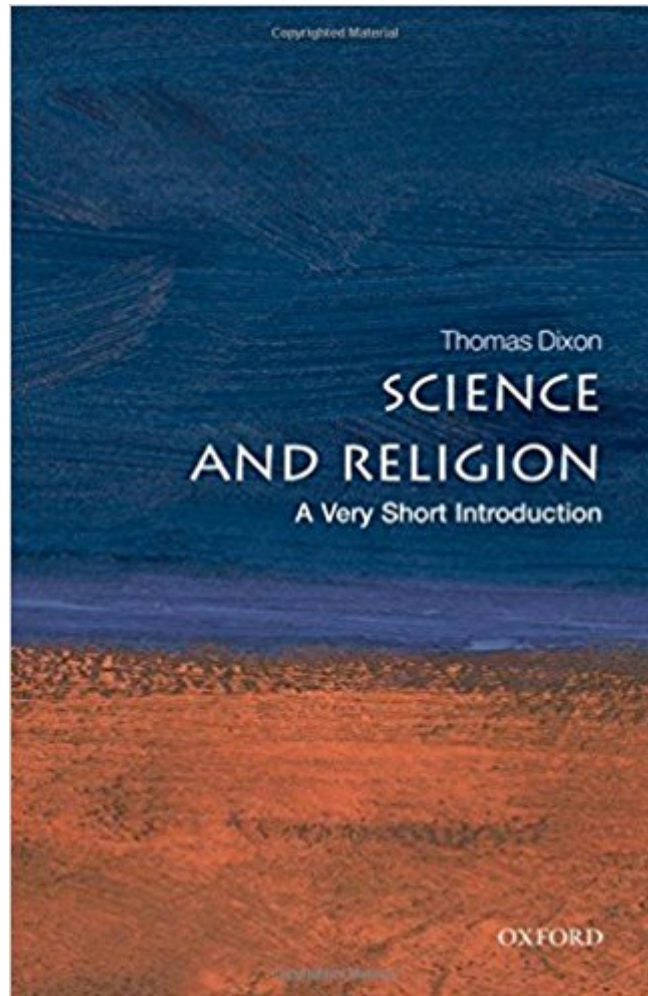




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# Science And Religion: A Very Short Introduction



## Synopsis

The debate between science and religion is never out of the news: emotions run high, fuelled by polemical bestsellers like *The God Delusion* and, at the other end of the spectrum, high-profile campaigns to teach "Intelligent Design" in schools. Yet there is much more to the debate than the clash of these extremes. As Thomas Dixon shows in this balanced and thought-provoking introduction, a whole range of views, subtle arguments, and fascinating perspectives can be found on this complex and centuries-old subject. He explores the key philosophical questions that underlie the debate, but also highlights the social, political, and ethical contexts that have made the tensions between science and religion such a fraught and interesting topic in the modern world. Dixon emphasizes how the modern conflict between evolution and creationism is quintessentially an American phenomenon, arising from the culture and history of the United States, as exemplified through the ongoing debates about how to interpret the First-Amendment's separation of church and state. Along the way, he examines landmark historical episodes such as the Galileo affair, Charles Darwin's own religious and scientific odyssey, the Scopes "Monkey Trial" in Tennessee in 1925, and the Dover Area School Board case of 2005, and includes perspectives from non-Christian religions and examples from across the physical, biological, and social sciences.

About the Series: Combining authority with wit, accessibility, and style, Very Short Introductions offer an introduction to some of life's most interesting topics. Written by experts for the newcomer, they demonstrate the finest contemporary thinking about the central problems and issues in hundreds of key topics, from philosophy to Freud, quantum theory to Islam.

## Book Information

Paperback: 144 pages

Publisher: Oxford University Press; 1 edition (August 1, 2008)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0199295514

ISBN-13: 978-0199295517

Product Dimensions: 6.8 x 0.5 x 4.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 5.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.8 out of 5 stars 25 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #81,320 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #99 in Books > History > World > Religious > Religion, Politics & State #104 in Books > Religion & Spirituality > Religious Studies > Church & State #114 in Books > Religion & Spirituality > Religious Studies > Science & Religion

## Customer Reviews

Science and Religion: Questions for Consideration and Discussion If you think that scientific and religious forms of knowledge are fundamentally different, can you define the essence of that difference? Why has Richard Dawkins's brand of scientific atheism proved so compelling to millions of people in the twenty-first century? Can miracles happen? And how can science help us answer that question? If you think that it is possible to combine science with religious faith then what do you think is most difficult about that combination? Are there any scientific findings that could or should give a religious believer pause for thought? Is "Intelligent Design" a scientific theory? If not, why not?

Thomas Dixon has made a delightful contribution to this OUP series of Very Short Introductions. \* Church Times \* The relationship between science and religion, past and present, is much more varied and more interesting than the popular caricature of conflict. Thomas Dixon gives us the richer picture, and he does it with clarity and verve. This is an ideal introduction to a fascinating subject. \* Peter Lipton, University of Cambridge \* Bracing initiation \* Observer. \* Dixon shows great skill in composing a book which combines coherence and clarity with a strong forward momentum... The interested reader need not hesitate. \* Michael Fuller, The Expository Times \* A marvellous book that should be required reading for dogmatic fundamentalists of every persuasion. \* Patricia Fara, British Journal for the History of Science \* A rich introductory text...on the study of relations of science and religion. \* R. P. Whaite, Metascience \*

When I saw this book on and glossed over its table of contents , I became very excited and had to order the book. Like the author, I a historian of science who is deeply interested in the relationship between science and religion (I also took 10 philosophy courses in my undergrad).The first thing that needs to be said is that this is a well written treatise and you will read right through it just to see what the author says next. These prose are further enhanced greatly by the masterful use of interesting examples and engaging quotes. All-in-all, I would say this book is a page turner.I do however have my gripes with the book. To include such an ambitious amount of content, the author had to give a gloss over of some important issues. The first case of this is in his discussion of Galileo. While he does introduce Galileo as a historical figure, he spends way too much time talking about the realism vs. anti-realism debate in the philosophy of science. If I wrote it, I would have ditched this discussion all together and would have focused more on Galileo.Another major concern is his section on miracles. While I think it is highly relevant to discuss god acting in nature, I thought

the parts on the "first mover" and the "fine-tuning argument" were distracting. It would have been much better if the author would have just stuck to the discussion of Hume, miracles, and the laws of nature. This is already a massive topic without this other stuff. Even given these complaints, I thought that the discussions on evolution and creationism were outstanding. In these parts, he does a very good job of introducing the theory and why creationists get so mad about it. There is also an excellent "further reading" list that includes a lot of essential reading. Overall, I gave this book a 4 because I averaged the content (3 and 1/2) with the writing (4 and 1/2)

While not perfect, this book serves as an excellent introduction to this subject. Dixon proves to be well informed of the issues and manages to cover quite a lot of ground, and he's also sufficiently fair and balanced in presenting the competing arguments. Perhaps the broadest lesson one can glean from the book is that science and religion have always had a messy multidimensional relationship, with many areas of potential agreement and disagreement. Part of the reason is that both science and religion are unavoidably framed in sociocultural and historical contexts, dialectically both affecting those contexts and being affected by them. Moreover, science and religion both have fuzzy boundaries, and both face many similar epistemic difficulties with respect to justifying their beliefs (despite the common but mistaken notion that science is purely objective whereas religion rests purely on faith and subjectivity). The book lays all of this out with the help of many examples, and thereby gives a sense of how complicated matters are, but doesn't provide any final answers. This gives the impression that some disagreement and tension will probably always exist between science and religion, despite whatever progress might be made in finding reconciliations. However, if one wishes to be optimistic, there is still the prospect of finding (creating?) more and more common ground between the two, possibly resulting in worldviews which increasingly draw on the strengths of both, and of course there's already much precedent for this. I say the book isn't perfect mainly because "religion" is mostly taken to mean Western monotheisms, especially Christianity, as Dixon acknowledges up front; I would have preferred to see Eastern views included as well, and I think that would have considerably reshaped the book. I also would have preferred a deeper treatment of the philosophical issues Dixon touches on, in exchange for a bit less time spent on detailing historical cases. But these "imperfections" are largely matters of (my) preference, and again the bottom line is that Dixon has done an excellent job of presenting this subject at an introductory level. I highly recommend the book, and those who enjoy it may want to move on to the extensive *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Science* (Oxford Handbooks in Religion and Theology) edited by Philip Clayton.

I have found the Oxford Short Introductions to be one of the most convenient sources of information on topics from pre-Socratic philosophy to quantum theory. In addition to their great educational value, the size and shape of the books enable me to fit one into the pocket of my cargo pants so that it can accompany me whenever I might need to wait for an appointment. All of my fifty or so short intros are well written and are a great way to become acquainted with areas you may have missed in a college education. (Or wish to become reacquainted with many years later.)

A very easy read. A good introduction to the topic. Would highly recommend as a precursor to a class that has to do with science and religion.

Apparently this one can! Got this book for a class, but it was surprisingly enjoyable. It arrived in perfect condition and on time. Absolutely no complaints.

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