1. What is your definition of science and of religion?

The term "science" to me refers to knowledge about the natural world and it can be characterized in terms of both method and content. By the content of science I mean the knowledge embodied in disciplines which are classified as 'natural science' such as physics, chemistry, biology, astronomy, etc. and also those classified as 'social science' such as economics and sociology. I admit that this is not an 'essentialist definition' which would suggest that there is something 'essential' in the content of science which naturally demarcates it from the 'non-sciences' such as literature, history or religious studies. But the subject matter of the sciences, which is the natural world, would sufficiently distinguish it from the non-sciences.

Despite the variation in the content of science, there are certain methodological features which qualify them to be labeled as 'science'. Feyerabend's protestations notwithstanding. Thus even though the content of 'physics' – which refers to knowledge of the behavior of physical objects – and the content of 'economics' – which refers to knowledge of the production and distribution of material goods and services – are different, yet the method by which such knowledge is produced and validated possess certain similarities. For example, they are expressed in terms of quantitative mathematical laws, involving mathematical modeling and verification of those models through empirical evidence.

'Religion' on the other hand involves both knowledge and practice, in which the social and individual practices associated with religion are based on religious knowledge which is accepted on faith by believers. That Divine knowledge, which constitutes the foundation of religion, is revealed to God's messengers who then transmitted them to the followers of the Religion concerned. The content of that religious knowledge vary from one religion to another, although there might be some similarities as in the case of the Abrahamic religions. Religion involves not only doctrines and beliefs, but also a set of practices and rituals based on those beliefs.

2. Do you see any conflicts between your definitions of these two concepts?

According to the way I have defined them, there need not necessarily be any conflict between them, just as how there is no conflict between
Can science dispense with religion?

The different branches of natural science because they refer to different domains of (physical) reality - i.e. the physical, the chemical and the biological. Religious knowledge being knowledge attained by the Prophets through Revelation cannot be subjected to the same epistemological standard which is applied to the natural sciences. Religious knowledge does not claim legitimacy or validity by appeal to rational or empirical means. Since God himself created the ‘rational’ and the ‘empirical’, the knowledge which he revealed cannot therefore be construed by those criteria. Furthermore, religion is also about values, moral, ethics and codes of conduct, i.e. it teaches us how to lead the virtuous life so as to gain the Hereafter and to be close to God (except for Buddhism). Science, on the other hand, dealing strictly with the natural (and not the ‘human’) world, in a supposedly objective and value-neutral manner, cannot therefore have anything to say on the matter, and therefore incapable of making any claims - conflicting or otherwise - about how to lead the virtuous life. But even when there is a potential conflict between them, as when they make claims about the same domain, such as the cosmos or the natural world for example, they cannot be judged by the same standards because they contain different metaphysical assumptions and different epistemological notions. These assumptions and notions should be treated ‘symmetrically’ so that the burden of proof does fall on only one of them. For example, the assumption by scientists that reality is essentially physical in nature should be held in question, just as how the scientist might contest the assumption by religionists about the reality of the spiritual world.

1. Where do you think there may be a conflict between these two?

The areas of potential, and also actual, conflict between the two lay in their epistemological foundations and their conflicting claims about the natural world. As for the latter, the two obvious examples in the history of science pertain to the conflict between Galileo and the Roman Catholic Church on astronomy in the 17th century, and the conflict between Darwin and the theologians in the 19th century. In those two cases, they both make different claims about astronomy and human biology. But even then, the conflict is based on the assumption that there is a ‘fact of the matter’, and that both science and religion are in agreement on the framework that frames or defines the fact of the
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CONTENTS

Prof. John F. Haught ..........................................................189
Prof. Mohammad Hazim Shah .............................................195
Prof. Martinez J. Hewlett ..............................................203
Dr. P. E. Hodgson .........................................................209
Dr. J. Z. Hubert ..............................................................221
Dr. William B. Hurlbut ..................................................227
Dr. Muzaffar Iqbal .........................................................243
Dr. Antje Jacob ..............................................................249
Prof. Teuku Jacob ..........................................................259
Dr. Ibrahim Kalin ...........................................................263
Prof. M. Kamal Hassan ..................................................271
Prof. Vladimir Katasonov ..............................................275
Prof. Terence Gerard Kennedy ........................................281
Dr. M. Zaki Kirmani .......................................................285
Prof. Harold G. Koenig ..................................................291
Prof. Kalerseo V. Laurikainen .........................................295
Prof. John A. McIntyre ..................................................303
Prof. Jamal Mimouni ......................................................307
Dr. George L. Murphy ....................................................313
Prof. Anwar Nasim ........................................................319
Prof. Seyyed Hossein Nasr .............................................323
Dr. Majeda Omar ..........................................................331
Prof. Hans S. Plendl .......................................................337
Prof. John Polkinghorne .................................................341
Michael W. Poole ..........................................................345
Prof. Mazhar Mahmood Quraishi ....................................349
Prof. Karl Helmut Reich ................................................353
Prof. W. Mark Richardson .............................................357
Prof. Holmes Rolston, III ..............................................363
Prof. C. A. Russell .........................................................375
Prof. Robert John Russell .............................................383
Prof. Gunter M. Schütz ..................................................391
Prof. Giuseppe Sermonti ...............................................399
Prof. Misbah-Ud-Din Shami ...........................................403
Prof. Huston Smith .......................................................407
Prof. Wolfgang Smith ...................................................411