

Friend or Foe?

History of Science and Christianity

Conflict Thesis

- Galileo
- Christopher Columbus
- Darwin

Christianity & Birth of Modern Science

- Isaac Newton

Pioneers of early modern science such as Isaac Newton and Robert Boyle saw their work as part of a religious enterprise devoted to understanding God's creation.

-Dr. Thomas Dixon, Professor of History at the University of London ¹

- laws of nature

...historians of science have long known that religious factors played a significantly positive role in the emergence and persistence of modern science in the West. Not only were many of the key figures in the rise of science individuals with sincere religious commitments, but the new approaches to nature that they pioneered were underpinned in various ways by religious assumptions.

-Dr. Peter Harrison, Former Ideos Professor of Science and Religion at Oxford University, now Professor at the University of Queensland ²

Draper-White Thesis

- John William Draper & Andrew Dickson White

While some historians had always regarded the Draper-White thesis as oversimplifying and distorting a complex relationship, in the late twentieth century it underwent a more systematic reevaluation. The result is the growing recognition among historians of science that the relationship of religion and science has been much more positive than is

¹ Thomas Dixon, *Science and Religion: A Very Short Introduction*, pg.2 (<https://goo.gl/e8pAS8>)

² Peter Harrison, "Christianity and the rise of western science" <http://www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2012/05/08/3498202.htm>

sometimes thought. Although popular images of controversy continue to exemplify the supposed hostility of Christianity to new scientific theories, studies have shown that Christianity has often nurtured and encouraged scientific endeavour, while at other times the two have co-existed without either tension or attempts at harmonization. If Galileo and the Scopes trial come to mind as examples of conflict, they were exceptions rather than the rule.

-Dr. Gary B. Ferngren, Professor of History at Oregon State University ³

Flat Earth Myth⁴

- Middle Ages
- ancient Greeks
- Washington Irving & Antoine-Jean Letronne

*...with extraordinary few exceptions **no** educated person in the history of Western Civilization from the third century B.C. onward believed that the earth was flat.*

-Jeffrey Burton Russell, Professor Emeritus of History at the University of California, Santa Barbara ⁵

Galileo Galileo

- complexity of situation
- pope's permission
- Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems* (1632)
- trial

The myths of Galileo's torture and imprisonment are thus genuine myths: ideas that are in fact false but once seemed true-and continue to be accepted as true by poorly educated persons and careless scholars.

-Maurice A. Finocchiaro, Distinguished Professor of Philosophy Emeritus at the University of Nevada-Las Vegas, Author of *The Galileo Affair: A Documentary History*, *The Trial of Galileo: Essential Documents*, and *The Essential Galileo* ⁶

³ *Science and Religion*, pg. ix (<https://goo.gl/nYMGZT>)

⁴https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/post/busting-a-myth-about-columbus-and-a-flat-earth/2011/10/10/gIQAXszQaL_blog.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.13896d4a883e

<https://www.nytimes.com/1992/04/25/us/beliefs-436092.html>

⁵ Jeffrey Burton Russell, "The Myth of the Flat Earth" (<https://www.asa3.org/ASA/topics/history/1997Russell.html>) (<http://www.veritas-ucsb.org/library/russell/FlatEarth.html>)

⁶ *Galileo Goes to Jail and Other Myths About Science and Religion*, Kindle location: 842 of 3176 (<https://amzn.to/2AjpQso>)

Charles Darwin

- natural selection explains origin of species
- Robert Chambers, *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* (1844)
- religious & scientific response mixed
 - William Thomson / 1st Baron Kelvin
 - Charles Hodge, *What is Darwinism?*

To simplify quite a bit, by the turn of the 20th century the neo-Darwinian theory was in trouble, so much so that historians of science refer to that period as 'Darwin's eclipse' ... [there was a] widespread feeling that scientists were on the verge of dealing a death blow to neo-Darwinism.

-Dr. Massimo Pigliucci, Professor of Philosophy at CUNY-City College⁷

Big Bang Theory

-Sir Fred Hoyle's "Big Bang"

...the origin of the Big Bang itself is not susceptible to discussion ...this view of the origin of the Universe is thoroughly unsatisfactory... Creationists and those of similar persuasions seeking support for their opinions have ample justification in the doctrine of the Big Bang. That, they might say, is when (and how) the Universe was created.

-Dr. John Maddox⁸

Many people do not like the idea that time has a beginning, probably because it smacks of divine intervention.

-Stephen Hawking⁹

⁷ Massimo Pigliucci, "The (ongoing) evolution of evolutionary theory" (<https://goo.gl/0G4LwH>)

⁸ "Down with the Big Bang" Maddox, John, *Nature*, Volume 340, Issue 6233, pp. 425 (1989). (Nature Homepage) **Publication Date:** 08/1989 **Origin:** NATURE **DOI:** 10.1038/340425a0 **Bibliographic Code:** 1989Natur.340..425M
<http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v340/n6233/pdf/340425a0.pdf>
<http://adsabs.harvard.edu/abs/1989Natur.340..425M>

⁹ Stephen Hawking, *A Brief History of Time*, p. 49 (<https://goo.gl/PSKN6K>)

Other Myths about Science and Christianity

-The Warfare between Science and Religion: The Idea That Wouldn't Die

by Jeff Hardin (Editor), Ronald L. Numbers (Editor), Ronald A. Binzley (Editor)

-Galileo Goes to Jail and Other Myths about Science and Religion, by Ronald L. Numbers (Editor)

Myth 1. That the rise of Christianity was responsible for the demise of ancient science

Myth 2. That the medieval Christian church suppressed the growth of science

Myth 3. That medieval Christians taught that the earth was flat

Myth 4. That medieval Islamic culture was inhospitable to science

Myth 5. That the medieval church prohibited human dissection

Myth 6. That Copernicanism demoted humans from the center of the cosmos

Myth 7. That Giordano Bruno was the first martyr of modern science

Myth 8. That Galileo was imprisoned and tortured for advocating Copernicanism

Myth 9. That Christianity gave birth to modern science

Myth 10. That the scientific revolution liberated science from religion

Myth 11. That Catholics did not contribute to the Scientific Revolution

Myth 12. That René Descartes originated the mind-body distinction

Myth 13. That Isaac Newton's mechanistic cosmology eliminated the need for God

Myth 14. That the church denounced anesthesia in childbirth on biblical grounds

Myth 15. That the theory of organic evolution is based on circular reasoning

Myth 16. That evolution destroyed Darwin's faith in Christianity—until he reconverted on his deathbed

Myth 17. That Huxley defeated Wilberforce in their debate over evolution and religion

Myth 18. That Darwin destroyed natural theology

Myth 19. That Darwin and Haeckel were complicit in Nazi biology

Myth 20. The Scopes Trial ended in defeat for antievolutionism

Myth 21. That Einstein believed in a personal God

Myth 22. That quantum physics demonstrated the doctrine of free will

Myth 23. That "Intelligent Design" represents a scientific challenge to evolution

Myth 24. That creationism is a uniquely American phenomenon

Myth 25. That modern science has secularized western culture

The greatest myth in the history of science and religion holds that they have been in a state of constant conflict. No one bears more responsibility for promoting this notion than two nineteenth-century American polemicists: Andrew Dickson White (1832-1918) and John William Draper (1811-1882)... Historians of science have known for years that White's and Draper's accounts are more propaganda than history.

-Dr. Ronald Numbers, Professor of the History of Science and Medicine at the University of Wisconsin–Madison ¹⁰

¹⁰ *Galileo Goes to Jail*. pg.1,2,6 (<https://goo.gl/F65JJD>)

Conclusion

- “lens” of conflict thesis
- objective vs. subjective truth
- need for Christian apologists

The reason for promoting both the specific lie about the sphericity of the earth and the general lie that religion and science are in natural and eternal conflict in Western society, is to defend Darwinism. The answer is really only slightly more complicated than that bald statement. The flat-earth lie was ammunition against the creationists. The argument was simple and powerful, if not elegant: “Look how stupid these Christians are. They are always getting in the way of science and progress. These people who deny evolution today are exactly the same sort of people as those idiots who for at least a thousand years denied that the earth was round. How stupid can you get?”

But that is not the truth.

-Jeffrey Burton Russell, Professor Emeritus of History at the University of California, Santa Barbara ¹¹

¹¹ <https://www.asa3.org/ASA/topics/history/1997Russell.html>