



The War Between Science and Religion: A Modern Myth

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Today, anyone who is truly informed knows that science and religion are at war with each other. They have always been at war, are still at war and will forever be at war because they represent two fundamentally different ways of viewing the world. We are told that religion is based on subjective faith while science is based on objective reason. There are thousands of different beliefs which vary from culture to culture and from person to person and from time to time but science produces hard facts that are singular and unchangeable. The inescapable conclusion is that science and reason lead to objective knowledge, a materialistic understanding of reality and an enlightened worldview free from the rule of God. Only the ignorant and superstitious could believe otherwise.

We are taught that following the fall of Rome it was the oppressive influence of the Church that plunged Europe into the Dark Ages - 800 years of ignorance, superstition and misery which ended only when Europe was finally rescued, first by the Renaissance and then by the Enlightenment. In the early 1600's it was the Church that tortured and imprisoned Galileo because of his heliocentric views and today it is Christianity that is the enemy of science and social progress.

All of this makes a great story but the problem is that none of it is true. These ideas constitute a mythology constructed during the past 200 years by bitterly anti-Christian intellectuals and have been repeated so often that they have become common knowledge.

Recent works however by scholars such as Rodney Stark, author of the book [*The Victory of Reason*](#) are beginning to set the record straight providing a dramatically different account of the relationship between science and Christianity and the impact Christianity has had on Western Civilization.

Modern science emerged in Christian Europe, there and nowhere else. The science we know today has its roots in rational Christian theology which presupposes a personal knowable God who makes Himself known through Revelation and is Creator of all things.

The cosmos exhibits a rational order because it is a Created Order. Man has the capacity to reason because he was created in God's image. The rationality of man and the rationality of the natural world are the same rationality because they have the same Author. Thus, the natural world is comprehensible to the mind of man and science is possible. The natural philosophers of the 16th and 17th centuries such as Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler and Newton all believed these things and for them, when they were doing science, they were doing God's work.

Christian Faith and Reason led to an understanding of the true nature of reality and from that understanding - and only from that understanding - science emerged.

As for the so-called "Dark Ages", after the barbarian invasions and the fall of Rome in the 5th century, Europe, far from descending into centuries of misery, experienced a renewal that brought creativity, industry, innovations and technological advances that could never

have been imagined under Roman rule. Optimism returned to Europe and the lot of the average man was greatly improved.

How can we account for such a transformation? In a word – taxes - or rather, lack of taxes. When Rome fell the crushing taxes imposed to support its hedonist excesses and maintain its power around the Mediterranean Basin fell with it. And as for the influence of Christianity, the re-Christianization of Europe in the centuries that followed led to the establishment of centers for learning, the development of towns, trades, industry and commerce. Christian Europe rapidly established a 200 year technology lead over the rest of the world.

As the mythology goes, Galileo was tried, tortured and thrown into prison by the Church because he held to the Copernican view. In reality, the Church was quite open to the Copernican view but insisted that because of its implications for scriptural interpretation it be treated *hypothetically* until such time that sufficient evidence was available to establish its proof. Galileo agreed and was granted permission to publish his book *Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems* which contrasted the Copernican heliocentric view with that of the accepted Aristotelian geocentric view.

However not only did Galileo present the Copernican view as absolute fact, on the last page of his book he ridiculed his old friend Pope Urban VIII who had personally encouraged and authorized Galileo to write his book. Consequently, Galileo was brought before the Inquisition. He was tried and found guilty but allowed to return to Florence where he lived out the last ten years of his life under house arrest in comfortable quarters where he was allowed to pursue his studies and entertain guests. It was also during this time that he published his most important works on mechanics. No torture. No prison.

As for Christianity being the enemy of science and social progress, it is the Christian concepts of personal liberty and Natural Law that provide the moral foundation of our culture and it is that foundation that accounts for the spectacular success of the U.S. as an economic, military and technological superpower.

During the past 100 years Europe has abandoned its Christian heritage for socialism and humanism which always lead to economic and moral bankruptcy. If we look to our Christian roots for guidance, we will do well. If we look to modern Europe, we will follow them to economic and moral ruin.

There is no war between science and religion but there is a war, a war that is raging between Good and Evil, Right and Wrong, Truth and Lie. The mythology that there is a war between science and religion is a Lie told in the service of Evil.