




## Faith and Science in Historical Perspective






## The Plan

- Greek Science as a Precursor to Medieval Science
- Islam and Science
- The Galileo Affair
- Isaac Newton's Theology of Science
- Hume's Critique of Induction and the Rise of Naturalism






- Romanticism as a Precursor to Evolutionary Theory
- Creation/Evolution and Intelligent Design
- . . .
- Social Darwinism and Current Applications of Evolutionary Thought in the Social Sciences



## The New Atheists (and a Few Agnostics)

- Great in their fields, but mistaken re. the relationship between science and religion, especially in the history and philosophy of science
- Carl Sagan (1934-1996)
  - Preceded New Atheists, but similar views on role of science and rationalism
- Richard Dawkins
  - *The God Delusion*
- Christopher Hitchens (I recommend his book on Orwell!)
  - *God Is Not Great*
- Michael Shermer
- Sam Harris


## Claims of the 'Brights'

- Science as the study of material interaction (naturalism) is sufficient to explain and understand our world.
- Science is a genuine, objective, **falsifiable** [testable] means of knowledge while religion is, at best, extraneous and at worst, an obstacle to knowledge
- Science and Faith (e.g., Christianity) are in conflict.
  - The "Religion Kills" Thesis


## Dawkins: Religion Is Extraneous

- I don't understand why they waste their time going into this other [religious] stuff which never has added anything to the storehouse of human wisdom, and I don't see that it ever will.
  - (R. Dawkins. Transcript from "Faith and Reason," PBS [n.d.]. Emphasis added.)




## Religion is Extraneous

- But science cannot
  - distinguish is from ought
    - explain its own value
    - explain the value of individual intellectual freedom
  - explain how 'data' led to 'disenchantment'
  - provide a good reason to believe in the intelligibility of phenomena
    - answer Hume's objection to the Principle of the Uniformity of Nature (the PUN)
- Religion has contributed to answers to all of these issues




## Claim: Science and Religion Are, and Have Been, in Conflict

- "Despite a developing consensus among scholars that science and Christianity have not been at war, the notion of conflict has refused to die."
  - Ron Numbers—Prof. of History of Science at Wisconsin-Madison
    - Editor of *Galileo Goes to Jail and Other Myths About Science and Religion*. Harvard University Press (2009).




## Religion Kills (?)

- Claim:
  - Religion kills
  - Secular philosophies based on reason bring tolerance and peace



US National Park Service Photo



Period	Conflict-Related Deaths	World Population (mid-century)	Conflict-related deaths as share of world population
Sixteenth	1.6	493	.32
Seventeenth	6.1	579	1.05
Eighteenth	7.0	757	.92
Nineteenth	19.4	1,172	1.65
<b>Twentieth</b>	<b>109.7</b>	<b>2519</b>	<b>4.35</b>


Data from W. Eckhardt. 1991. War-related Deaths Since 3000 B.C., *Bulletin of Peace Proposals*, 22(4):437-443, 1991.



## Religion has killed more people . . .


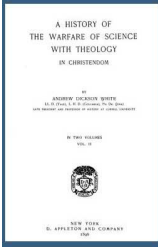
Dictator	Ideology	Regime	Years	Murdered
Joseph Stalin	Communist	USSR	1929-53	42,672,000
Mao Zedong	Communist	China	1923-76	37,828,000
Adolf Hitler	Fascist	Germany	1933-45	20,946,000
20 <sup>th</sup> Century Cause of Death	War: 35 million	Government: 119 million		

Data from R.J. Rummel. *Death by Government* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1994).



## Origin of the Conflict Thesis?

- Metaphor of War: 19<sup>th</sup>-early 20<sup>th</sup> C., especially after Darwin
- Example: Flat Earth


Andrew Dickson White (1832-1918). Photo from Wikipedia Commons.



*From U of OK History of Science Site (Making Fun of Flat Earth Myth and View of Medieval Period as "Dark")*

- "Professor (**idiot voice**): In today's lecture, we will learn about the **Dark Ages**, when people thought the Earth was flat."

Source: Dr. Kerry Magruder, "Shape of the Earth," History of Science Exhibit, University of Oklahoma History of Science Collections (n.d.).



- W. Irving makes flat earth debate part of his narrative on the life of Columbus.






Photo: Wikipedia Commons




### *The Myth*

- How could the 'discovery' of America prove the world was round?
  - Could still be possible that 'edge' was just further out.
- "Irving's account is nothing but misleading and mischievous nonsense."
  - U. of Oklahoma H. SCI. Site
- View "has no support in the historical record."
  - J. Lankford. *History of Astronomy: an Encyclopedia* (Taylor and Francis, 1997), 177.



### *Where Are We Now?*

- History/Philosophy of Science-- Consensus Views
  - Metaphor of war is shoddy intellectual history
  - Rise of science is deeply embedded in culturally-contextualized values and belief systems, most of which were historically religious.



- So to sum up, the epistemological critique of religion — it is an inferior way of knowing — is the flip side of a naïve and untenable positivism. And the critique of religion's content — it's cotton-candy fluff — is the product of incredible ignorance.
  - Dr. Stanley Fish
  - "God Talk, Part 2," *NY Times* (17 May 2009)