



## The Scientific Revolution: Its Classical and Christian History with Dr. Ted Davis

### Lesson 2.3: Why History Matters: Why Historians Reject the Conflict Thesis

#### Outline:

Why do modern historians almost unanimously reject the Conflict Thesis?

- The majority of such scholars are not religious. Draper and White have no historical merit.
- “Many people today acquiesce in the widespread myth, devised in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, of an epic battle between ‘scientists’ and ‘religionists.’ Despite the unfortunate fact that some members of both parties perpetuate the myth by their actions today, this ‘conflict’ model has been rejected by every modern historian of science; it does not portray the historical situation.” Lawrence Principe, *The Scientific Revolution: A Very Short Introduction* (2011), p. 37
- “In the late Victorian period it was common to write about the ‘warfare between science and religion’ and to presume that the two bodies of culture must always have been in conflict. However, it is very long time since these attitudes have been held by historians of science.” Stephen Shapin, *The Scientific Revolution* (1996), p. 195
- “Draper takes such liberty with history, perpetuating legends as fact that he is rightly avoided today in serious historical study.” Colin Russell, *The History of Science and Religion in the Western Tradition: An Encyclopedia* (first edition, 2002), p. 10
  - “The same is nearly as true of White, though his prominent apparatus of prolific footnotes may create a misleading impression of meticulous scholarship.”
- “Historians of science have known for years that White’s and Draper’s accounts are more propaganda than history.” Ronald L. Numbers, *Galileo Goes to Jail and Other Myths About Science and Religion* (2009), p. 6
- “Although it is not difficult to find instances of conflict and controversy in the annals of Christianity and science, recent scholarship has shown the warfare metaphor to be neither useful nor tenable in describing the relationship between science and religion.” – Lindberg & Numbers
  - conflict ≠ CONFLICT
- “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 endeavor, 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.” Gary Ferngren, *Science & Religion: A Historical Introduction* (2002), p. ix

- In other words, we have a paradoxical situation:
  - The larger the historical target, the harder it is to hit. The “warfare” view entirely missed the target.