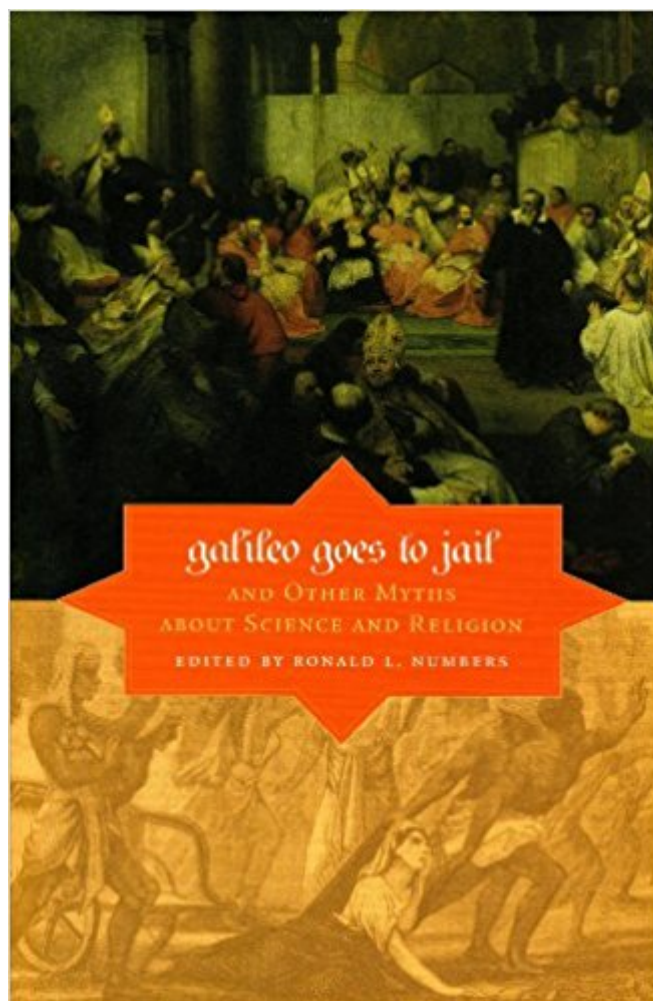


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# Galileo Goes To Jail And Other Myths About Science And Religion



## Synopsis

If we want nonscientists and opinion-makers in the press, the lab, and the pulpit to take a fresh look at the relationship between science and religion, Ronald Numbers suggests that we must first dispense with the hoary myths that have masqueraded too long as historical truths. Until about the 1970s, the dominant narrative in the history of science had long been that of science triumphant, and science at war with religion. But a new generation of historians both of science and of the church began to examine episodes in the history of science and religion through the values and knowledge of the actors themselves. Now Ronald Numbers has recruited the leading scholars in this new history of science to puncture the myths, from Galileo's incarceration to Darwin's deathbed conversion to Einstein's belief in a personal God who "didn't play dice with the universe." The picture of science and religion at each other's throats persists in mainstream media and scholarly journals, but each chapter in *Galileo Goes to Jail* shows how much we have to gain by seeing beyond the myths.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Defining myth as just "a claim that is false," editor Numbers and 24 other scholars debunk 25 falsehoods about science and religion. The most familiar—that the church imprisoned and tortured Galileo, that medieval Islam was hostile to science, that medieval Christians thought the earth was flat, that the church fought against anesthesia—have long been discredited, yet the briefs on them so admirably distill their history that Wikipedia should swipe them. Others—that the church suppressed science, prohibited dissection, and martyred

Giordano Bruno for his scientific work—still have their propagandists. Some remain quite lively, such as that Christianity birthed modern science (see Rodney Stark—s For the Glory of God, 2003), that intelligent design challenges evolution scientifically, and that creationism is a strictly American phenomenon. Many are known primarily, perhaps, to specialists, and one or two may startle those who thought themselves in the know about such figures as Descartes and Newton. The pieces on all 25 have been written and edited for accessibility, making the book excellent for ready reference as well as recreational reading. --Ray Olson --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

An illuminating study of the relationship between science and religion...This book features the contributions of a team of 25 scholars that includes agnostics, atheists, and Christians. Their collective objective is to dispel the "hoary myths" of the supposedly bellicose relationship between religion and science. Readers will be fascinated by the evidence that for advocating Copernicanism, Galileo was not imprisoned (as commonly thought) but interrogated--albeit under the threat of torture--and set up in an apartment. Other misconceptions concern the connection between Darwinian thought and Nazi biology, Einstein's belief in God, and Islam's alleged hostility toward scientific enquiry. (C. Brian Smith Library Journal 2009-03-02)A revealing book...Using "myth" in the popular sense, to mean falsehood, Galileo Goes to Jail debunks widespread misconceptions. (Douglas Todd Vancouver Sun 2009-05-15)A splendid book. (Christopher Howse Daily Telegraph 2009-06-06)As a collection, these myth-busting arguments work to soften the wedge responsible for the schism between science and religion. The topics and writing style will appeal to all readers, but students of science and religion should consider this essential reading. (J. A. Hewlett Choice 2009-07-01)Informative and thought-provoking reading. (Ernan McMullin The Tablet 2009-10-10)The volume's careful organization and execution reveal the kind of planning and teamwork absent from too many edited collections, but which have come to be expected from Numbers...Each chapter of Galileo Goes to Jail begins with two or three epigraphs that clearly convict scholarly and popular literature of perpetuating the myth in question. Most authors then explore the nuances of the myth, its origin, complexity, and longevity, before telling the "rest of the story." (Mark A. Kalthoff First Things 2009-10-01)The authors necessarily spend the bulk of their time debunking attacks on religion in the name of science, but they also clear the muddy waters left behind when pro-religion forces try to obscure the scientific record...As Numbers points out in his introduction, fewer than half of the contributors are religious believers at all; and of those, there are only two evangelicals, one Catholic, and one Jew. In other words, they have no axe to grind, and

their only agenda is to set the historical record straight. Given all of the polemics published today, this is a breath of fresh air. (Ryan T. Anderson Weekly Standard 2009-10-19)[Ronald L. Numbers] is a religious agnostic whose scholarship on the history of American religion and science is marked by meticulous accuracy and impartiality...[This book was written] with ordinary readers, not specialists, in mind, making this a truly rare book: where else can you find such authoritative scholarship delivered so accessibly and fairly on such an important subject? (Edward B. Davis belief.net 2009-08-28)

This very nice anthology debunks some myths that have been expounded recently about the historic conflicts between science and religion. The authors cite their evidence as they offer answers to questions such as Was Galileo imprisoned and tortured for teaching Copernicanism? Did the church suppress the growth of Science? Did the church teach the earth is flat? Has science secularized western culture? and many more. I found much of this book provocative, and much of it comforting as well.

Robert Numbers edited an interesting book titled GALILEO GOES TO TRIAL AND OTHER MYTHS ABOUT SCIENCE AND RELIGION. Mr. Numbers edited essays from knowledgeable scholars to refute popular myths. These scholars have different religious views, and the book is clear that devout Catholics, Hindus, Moslems, and secularists have made significant contributions to expand scientific and mathematics. The first myth was that Ancient Christianity caused a demise in scientific study. For example, the terrible murder of Hypatia in 415 AD was not due to her work in science. Hypatia was caught in a terrible political dispute between Bishop Cyril and the Roman Prefect which had nothing to do with Hypatia's scholarship. While some of the early Church Fathers disagreed with "pagan" Greek and Roman thought, these Fathers accepted much of what the Ancient Romans and especially the Ancient Greeks achieved. St. Augustine (354-430) relied on Platonic thought and rhetoric to make his arguments in his work especially his tome THE CITY OF GOD. He was also aware that the Cosmos was much larger than the earth. Mr. Numbers mentioned that St. Basil of Caesarea (330-379) scolded early Christians for making claims against Greek thought when these Christians were totally ignorant of Ancient Greek learning and made themselves, and Christianity, look foolish. St. Augustine whose work was important to Catholicism was clear that the Bible was often allegorical and not meant to be taken literally. As an aside, unless one knows the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Koine Greek languages, one does not have a perfect understanding of the Bible. Another myth that was exploded in this book was the notion that the Catholic Church

suppressed scientific thought. Michael Shanks' essay in this book undermines this myth. While no mention of the work of St. Albertus Magnus (1193-1280), is made, Shanks cited the work of another devout Catholic. Roger Bacon (c. 1214-1294) who was one of the most creative scientists of his era and credited with experimental science. The myth that Fr. Bacon was jailed was proven false by John Helborn, "no apologist for the Vatican," in his book titled THE SUN IN THE CHURCH. Shanks mentioned several other devout Catholic Churchmen who did advanced scientific work. As mentioned in this review's opening paragraph, men and women of different religious affiliation made significant contributions to science. The essay by Syed Nomanul Haq produced solid proof of Islamic scientific achievements. Abu Hamid al Ghazali (1058-1111) supported advanced scientific and mathematical study. "For example," Qusta Ibn Luqa (820-912) translated the Greek Diophantus' Greek ARITHMETIC as THE ART OF ALGEBRA which was an important advance re mathematic calculation. Haq also cited Islamic scholars not only faithfully translated Greek thought, they embellished it with their glosses and commentaries. C. 1259, the Islamic astronomer Nasir Al-Din a-Tusi proved that the geocentric Ptolemaic theory was wrong. As Haq Fr. noted, Copernicus (c1472-1543), who was a Catholic monk, used Islamic studies to enhance his work. Haq cited other Islamic scholars whose endeavors contributed to mathematics. Another interesting essay in this book was written by Katharine destroyed the myth that Catholic Church authorities prohibited human dissection. The Catholic authorities did not make such prohibition. In fact, Catholics dissected human remains to prepare the dead for burial. What the Catholic authorities did prohibit was grave robbing or removing the dead from prisons or poor houses without permission of family members. When Vesalius (1514-1564) did his work re human anatomy, Catholic authorities were aware of his work. The trial of Galileo (1564-1642) is another myth that has been corrected. Maurice A. Finocchiaro's essay makes this very clear. In 1610 Pope V (1605-1621) and in 1624 Pope Urban VIII (1623-1644) both had elaborate celebrations honoring Galileo's work Galileo's secular rivals initiated the issues that brought Galileo to trial. Finocchiaro disproved the lies that Galileo was placed in a dungeon and tortured. His inquisitors never laid a hand on him. Galileo spent his "imprisonment" in the Tuscan's and Florentine's embassy' and the prosecutor's luxury six room apartment. Galileo has his own chef and wine taster. Galileo's sanctions included house arrest which was a moot point since he was legally blind. He continued his work, and his daughter, a devout Catholic nun, served as his secretary. Other essays disproved that Darwin (1809-1882) worked against Christianity. The popular notions of Darwin as "the bad guy" or the "good guy" are either exaggerated or simply myths that have no bearing in reality. Other myths undermined in this book is that Darwin & co. were complicit in "Nazi" race hallucinations. Such a connection never

existed once readers read the book and sources cited in this book. The essays re Einstein (1879-1955) and quantum mechanics are instructive to understand modern scientific theory. While this reviewer knew some of the topics in this book, the book was informative. Mr. Numbers could have included the work of Father Le Maitre (1894-1966) whose work on an expanding universe was praised by Einsten. Mention could have made of Father Jaki's (1924-2009) who was a formost mathematician, physicist, and astronomy. Anthony Rizzi's book THE SCIENCE BEFORE SCIENCE could have embellished this book. These omissions should not discourage readers from accessing this book. The book is very helpful as a study of the history of science. James E. Egolf November 9, 2014

great

Good condition!

Fascinating chapters that illuminate stories that are often turned into supportive anecdotes for extreme positions!

This book is filled with essays by leading scholars of the history of religion and science. Some are believers, some are not, and some lie somewhere in between. All the essays written are insightful and offer excellent counter arguments to the simplistic idea that religion and science are in a never ending conflict with each other. Each essay is well argued and supported with copious notes and citations to historical documents. After reading "Galileo goes to Jail," you will walk away with a deeper understanding of the nuanced relationship between science and religion. This is a must read for anyone interested in the science and religion.

This books consist of 25 essays written by different authors, with contrasting beliefs and points of views. But they all agreed that there are 25 commons myths about science and religion. This book does an excellent work in debunking common myths that have been heard from both sides (religion and science). Some essays are better than others, but overall, the message is clear: don't believe any argument or presupposition just because someone told you so, go to the primary sources and compare with the official and popular version. The example from Galileo is very enlightening!

A lot of what the media tell us about science, misses the point by a wide margin. Dr. Numbers

investigates deeply, including the original writings of scientific pioneers, and reaches some surprising conclusions!

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