

**FEATURE: Fighting an Imaginary War
(Last in SERIES of 2)**

- PROF.: On our previous program we began talking about “The War That Never Was” – the imaginary conflict between science and the Christian religion.
- VOICE: And you left me with an important question unanswered: How did the man who started this battle, think creating a “war between science and religion” would change his employment situation?
- FORMAT: THEME AND ANNOUNCEMENT
- VOICE: Professor, on our previous program we put several puzzle pieces on the table. Today let's see if we can fit them together.
- PROF.: Most of the pieces we discussed yesterday involved English biologist Thomas H. Huxley. He called himself the “gladiator-general” in what he described as a “war” between science and religion. When he started, there wasn't even a word for “scientist,” because science was not a profession, and he wanted to change that.
- VOICE: But Huxley lived in the nineteenth century, from 1825 to 1895. Many scientific discoveries had been made by then. How did that happen, if there were no professional scientists?
- PROF.: Some early scientists had family wealth, so they didn't need paid employment. For example, Copernicus was the son of a rich merchant, so he had leisure time to do science as a hobby.
- VOICE: Today, many universities do research and development. Wasn't that true during Huxley's lifetime?
- PROF.: No. In the article we began discussing last time, Dr. Timothy Larsen writes, “Until several decades into the nineteenth century, there were only two universities in England, Oxford and Cambridge...” Both specialized in teaching the literature and philosophy of ancient Greece and Rome, so they had few faculty positions in the natural sciences.
- VOICE: If these universities had “a few” faculty positions in the natural sciences, couldn't Huxley have qualified for one of them?
- PROF.: He probably could have met their *academic and intellectual* requirements. But in his lifetime, British universities required their faculty to be ordained ministers in the Church of England.

- VOICE: You mentioned yesterday that Huxley called himself an agnostic, meaning that he didn't know whether God existed. So that probably would keep him from being employed by either of the universities that existed in England.
- PROF.: Yes. Larsen writes, "Indeed, being a priest in the Church of England was widely seen as the most sensible way to make a living for someone who wished to pursue scholarly interests. It was a learned profession that allowed one considerable time to invest in intellectual pursuits of one's own choosing. ... Thus most scientific work in England was being done by clergymen. Moreover, much of it was remarkably good work. Not only were many of the nation's greatest men of science also clergymen, but numerous, more obscure clergyman up and down the country also were carefully, actually, and accurately cataloging the natural world and discovering its secrets."
- VOICE: I can see how this would annoy Huxley. He wanted to be a man of science himself, but his agnostic views kept him from making a living either as a professor or as a clergyman.
- PROF.: In fact, as famous as Huxley was, his career was not as a university professor or some other position that would be suitable for a scientist of his reputation today. Rather, he was fortunate to make a living by lecturing at the government school of mines, and even this opportunity would not have been available earlier in the century.
- VOICE: So the puzzle pieces are fitting into place. Huxley and others who aspired to turn "scientist" into a profession, "needed" a war between science and religion to achieve their goal. That harmonizes with Dr. Larsen's statement yesterday, "Huxley was not witnessing a fight between faith and science; he was trying to provoke one."
- PROF.: Larsen elaborates, "The purpose of the war was to discredit clergymen as suitable figures to undertake scientific work, in order that the new breed of professionals would have an opportunity to fill in the gap for such work created by eliminating the current men of science." Huxley and his allies claimed that the religious convictions of clergymen disqualified them from pursuing their scientific inquiries objectively.
He adds, "More to the point, however, ... clergymen were undertaking this work for the sheer love of science and thus hindering the expectation that it would be done for money by paid full-time scientists. Clergymen were branded amateurs in order to facilitate the creation of a new category of professionals."
- VOICE: So money was a major motive for inventing the "war between science and religion."

PROF.: Yes, money and the prestige and respect that these men would receive if they could elevate science to the level of a profession.

VOICE: You mentioned “Huxley *and his allies.*” Who were some of the others who joined the “gladiator-general” in promoting the idea of warfare?

PROF.: In 1874, Francis Galton wrote a book called *English Men of Science: Their Nature and Nurture*. Galton also wanted a war, so he researched his book by sending out questionnaires to men of science.

Larsen reports the results of the survey and Galton's reaction to the results: “To his disappointment, the overwhelming majority reported that *religious beliefs were in no way a hindrance to scientific work*. In an ironically unscientific way, he decided to ignore these results and simply to assert in his book that religious convictions were ‘uncongenial’ to the pursuit of science, despite the fact that his own data did not support that conclusion.”

VOICE: He wanted a certain answer so strongly, that he ignored the overwhelming majority and substituted his own opinion. That's the exact opposite of the scientific principle of “following where the facts lead.”

PROF.: Larsen interprets, “To reframe my argument in another way, I am suspicious of the assumption that it was something intrinsic to the nature of modern discoveries that caused the perception that faith and learning were at odds. To continue with our case study, I am suspicious, specifically, of the assumption that the advance of scientific knowledge in the last 150 to 200 years has created an unprecedented problem for the reconciliation of faith and learning. The story in the nineteenth century is actually one in which orthodox Christian ministers, theologians, churches, and denominations accepted dramatic scientific developments with remarkably little fuss. Christians quickly accepted the new findings of geology, for example, and an earth that is millions of years old was the normative view among clergymen even well before Charles Darwin's book *On the Origin of Species.*”

VOICE: Dr. Larsen entitles his article, “‘War Is Over, If You Want It’: Beyond the Conflict between Faith and Science.”

PROF.: Yes. He asks, “If the notion is actually fictitious – that it is getting harder, if not becoming impossible, to reconcile [biblical] Christian faith with the latest findings by scholars – then where do we go from here?”

He answers, “After the conflict between faith and learning comes the integration of faith and learning. This is what came before the warfare imagery as well. In other words it has always been the task of learning, thinking Christians who take seriously both orthodoxy and the latest learning and to find a way to think about both of them in a coherent, faithful, non-compartmentalized way.”

VOICE: “A coherent, faithful” way would mean a way where facts learned from science and facts learned from the Bible harmonize instead of “battling.”

PROF.: Yes, and a “non-compartmentalized way” would be a way that doesn’t isolate scientific facts from biblical facts by putting them into air-tight “compartments” where they don’t interact with each others and clarify each other.

Dr. Larsen elaborates, “Integration does not mean that historic Christian commitments are abandoned and contorted in the face of every wind of intellectual fashion. Neither does it mean that new scholarly findings leave our old ways of speaking about the faith completely untouched. Rather, it means that difficult intellectual work is needed, that of making the call of what is and is not a part of ‘the faith which was once delivered to the saints’.”

VOICE: Does he have suggestions on how we can “make the call”?

PROF.: He answers, “Integration is not easy, and it is all the harder in a time when a climate of suspicion has been created by the now entrenched warfare model. ...For integration to be successful, it involves both a commitment to, and sympathetic and learned understanding of, the content of the Christian faith and the scholarly discipline under consideration. In other words, pastors who know the Bible and theology well but are ignorant of...the secular body of knowledge cannot do integration. Likewise, scholars who know their [scientific] discipline well but who only have a hazy understanding of...the Scriptures and classic Christian orthodoxy cannot do integration effectively either – even if they happen to be personally devout Christians.”

VOICE: So Christian scholars should read about science, and scientists should read the Bible and Christian theology.

PROF.: Yes. Dr. Larson concludes, “...[T]he way forward must be a sympathetic collaboration between groups of people of goodwill from both of these areas of expertise – a collaboration that results in everyone becoming progressively more literate in both areas. This will mean making strategic friendships, projects, and consultations, and committing or spending a portion of our reading time studying material outside our own discipline. For example, to continue with the case study I have followed throughout, scientists reading theology, and theologians reading science. War is over, if you want. Long live integration.”

FORMAT: THEME AND ANNOUNCEMENT

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