

its philosophical schools), in Arabia (with its advanced mathematics), in Japan (with its dedicated craftsmen and technologies), or even in ancient Greece or Rome?

The answer is fairly straightforward. Science flourished in societies where a Christian mindset understood nature to be ordered, the work of an intelligent Creator. Science grew where people assumed that the natural world is intelligible and bears the handwriting of its author.

Far from being an obstacle to science, Christian soil was the necessary humus where science took root.

Christianity's unapologetic support of science is borne out by the immense direct contribution of the Church to science itself. To take but one area - that of astronomy - J.L. Heilbron of the University of California-Berkeley has written: **"The Roman Catholic Church gave more financial aid and social support to the study of astronomy for over six centuries, from the recovery of ancient learning during the late Middle Ages into the Enlightenment, than any other, and, probably, all other, institutions."**

With this in mind, Hitchens' claim that "the right to look through telescopes and speculate about the result was obstructed by the Church" seems especially disingenuous. What can be said of astronomy can be said equally of medicine, physics, mathematics and chemistry.

Just as the Christian church patronized the arts, so it vigorously supported scientific research. The caricature of an obscurantist, ignorance-promoting church simply doesn't correspond to historical truth.

Some of history's greatest scientists -- Newton, Pasteur, Galilei, Lavoisier, Kepler, Copernicus, Faraday, Maxwell, Bernard and Heisenberg -- were all Christians, and the list doesn't stop there. Some important scientists, such as astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus, were actually Catholic priests!

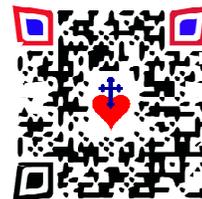
Christianity is not against science, but against an absolutist reading of science. The empirical sciences cannot do everything, and hold no monopoly on knowledge and truth. Many important questions -- the most important, really -- fall outside the purview of science.

What is the meaning of life? How should people treat one another? What happens to us when we die?

No matter how long a white-coated scientist toils and sweats in his laboratory, his instruments will never reveal the answers to these questions. Science is the wrong tool for the job. ... Read more below.

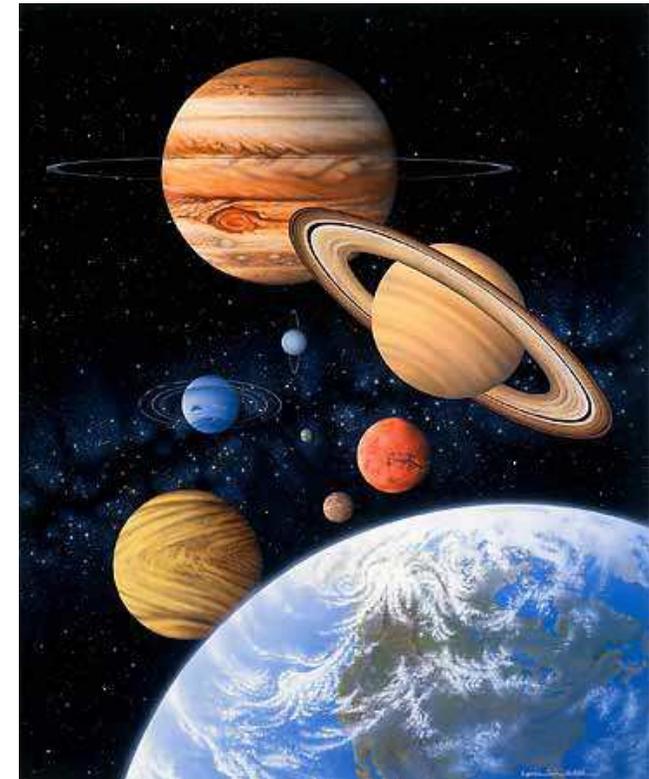
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Myth No.3 Debunked: Religion Is Opposed to Science



FATHER THOMAS D. WILLIAMS, LC

Responds