

On Storytelling: Deconstructing Common Secular Narratives

There are several secular narratives that shed a negative light on the Christian faith. Examples are "Science liberated us from the shackles of faith", "Christianity supports slavery" or "Medieval Christians taught that the earth is flat". Those are often mentioned in conversations and simply assumed to be true by a large part of society, even though they are often faulty. In this workshop, we will look into how some of these narratives came about, how to debunk them in a conversation, and how we can tell positive narratives in accordance with the truth.

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Introduction

- A. A biblical approach to common secular narratives challenging our faith
 - 2. Corinthians 10:5 "We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ"
 - 1. Peter 3:15 "In your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect"
- B. The story of science emerging through liberation from faith at a German museum
- C. Popularizers of the faith vs. science narrative: Draper and White
- D. How can we tackle these common secular narratives? By deconstructing them and pointing towards widely unknown, positive impacts the Christian faith had

I. Narrative: "Science liberated us from the shackles of faith"

- A. The founding of the university was essentially a church project, the church was the biggest funder for scientific endeavours
- B. Significant contributions towards science and the scientific method came from believers

II. Narrative: "Medieval Christians taught the earth is flat"

- A. The narrative and its invention

- B. Since ancient Greece, educated people knew of the earth's sphericity, the church took the same stance
- C. Wandering soldiers and the imperial insignia as counterproofs

III. Narrative: "Galilei was tortured by the Inquisition for his revolutionary science"

- A. Scientific knowledge at the time was not sufficient to make a definitive judgement whether Galilei is correct
- B. Galilei was questioned because of his disobedience not because of his science
- C. He was never tortured or imprisoned but set under house arrest at his villa in Florence
- D. Galilei kept his faith until his death and is therefore no example for an inherent conflict of faith and science

IV. Narrative: "Christianity supports slavery"

- A. Slavery was common throughout ancient Rome and Greece and many other societies in world history
- B. Although Christians were embroiled in slavery for many centuries, throughout history the Christian faith has given impetus to anti-slavery movements
- C. Historically used bible passages against slavery
Galatians 3:28 "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."
Philemon 10 "I appeal to you for my child, Onesimus [...] I preferred to do nothing without your consent in order that your goodness might not be by compulsion but of your own accord. That you might have him back forever, no longer as a bondservant but more than a bondservant, as a beloved brother [...] So if you consider me your partner, receive him as you would receive me."
1 Timothy 1:9 "that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, [...], *enslavers*, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine"
- D. The early church preached against slavery and bought slaves to educate them to be economically self-sufficient and set them free (e.g. John Chrysostom, 4th century)
- E. William Wilberforce was driven by his faith to work tirelessly for the abolishment of slavery in the British Empire. He played a key role in persuading the British Parliament to pass the Slavery Abolition Act (1833), setting 700.000 slaves free throughout the empire.

References and further reading:

American Association of the Advancement of Science, *Science and Religion, the Draper-White Conflict Thesis* (Accessed 5th March 2023)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZLoZc5DIU9o>

Pablo de Felipe, *The Modern Myth of the Medieval Flat Earth* (Accessed 5th March 2023)

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Ronald L. Numbers, *Galileo Goes to Jail and other Myths about Science and Religion*, 2009

Alvin J. Schmidt, *How Christianity Changed the World*, 2004

Tom Holland, *Dominion: The Making of the Western Mind*, 2019