INTRODUCTION

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Surprisingly, relatively little social science or humanities research has been undertaken that explores the relationship between science and religion in society, or as part of popular cultures past and present—especially in a global context. Remarkably, we have barely even begun to scratch the surface in this field of study. And yet the public's views on and relationship to "science" and "religion" in society drive at the very heart of debates that relate to what it means to be human; how we should live our lives or structure our societies; the nature of morality and political decision making; women's, LGBTQ, or transgender rights; current or future medical practice; how publics engage with science in pluralistic societies; how we relate to or impact on the natural world or climate change; and the role or impact of technological developments in society and what the future might ultimately hold for humanity.

The topic of science and religion is never far from the public consciousness, fraught as it is with the potential for controversy. In our experience, it doesn't take much prompting for people to come up with examples of controversy. The idea of a ceaseless conflict between these abstract entities, science on the one hand and religion on other, seems to be an integral part of the public consciousness. The clas-

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sic examples of Darwin, Galileo, Scopes, and more recent controversies over creationism are nearly always readily dropped into conversation. As this is an area that the two editors of this collection have both been working in for at least the past decade, we have had the opportunity to speak about evolution and religion in several countries worldwide. The genuine interest that people have in these debates never ceases to amaze, from taxi drivers in far-flung places to audiences at public events to people seated next to us or our research colleagues on planes and trains. Science and religion are topics of conversation that rarely fails to elicit some kind of response, be it a well-considered personal position or a tentative exploration of a position. After all, science and religion arguably shape many of the ways in which we interact with the world, think about ourselves or society, and wrestle with the kinds of existential questions that trouble most of us at some point in our lives. And herein lies the current issue with research in this field: this vast wealth of differing publics' perceptions of science and religion and all the ensuing debates, issues, concerns, and questions relating to the interaction between these two ways of encountering the world have been, for the most part, ignored.

This in part is due to one of the key underpinning assumptions about the relationship between science and religion to date: namely, that it is a relationship that is principally epistemic in nature. In other words, there is a strong assumption that it is a relationship that can be boiled down mostly to two different systems of knowledge with competing claims or concerns about the world, society, and the nature of the universe.[1] There is significant potential for controversy when these two knowledge systems contradict each other, as John H. Evans argues in chapter 12. An explicit or implicit epistemological approach has led scholars to concentrate their research on the intersection between theological positions and contemporary scientific positions. This is an area that has been studied in great depth and has in some instances proved to be a fruitful endeavor. After all, science and religion do act as systems of knowledge in different ways for different actors, and it is philosophically and theologically interesting to map these out.[2] It is also understandable that this narrower epistemic framing of the interaction between the two leads to the tendency to presuppose the relationship between them as defined and exemplified by conflict. For any notion of compatibility between two systems of knowledge is necessarily framed as counteroppositional to conflict, or indeed counterintuitive to a conflictual norm, given that they are binary opposites. Thus, even when seeking to challenge the idea of an inherent conflict between the two, the adoption of a principally epistemic position in effect begins from a position that inadvertently endorses, or even perpetuates, the very conflict model to be unpicked. This volume seeks to move away from the underpinning assumption of a necessary conflict between two warring epistemic systems of thought. While we are not seeking to deny all

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notions of a potential for clashes between epistemic positions relating to science and religion, we are arguing that this is only one aspect of what is a far more complex, multifaceted, and distinctly more interesting picture. It is vital to acknowledge that both science and religion, separately and together, serve as far more than abstract knowledge systems that are distinct from the societal contexts in which their claims to knowledge about the nature of being and the universe are elucidated.

It is also important to note that the terms "science" and "religion" are themselves contested. Historically, the boundaries between the two have been less clear than we might perhaps consider them to be today, as Peter Harrison argues (see chapter 8). Historians of science have challenged what is often referred to as the conflict thesis for some time, instead arguing for an understanding of the relationship between science and religion that better represents the historical complexity (see chapter 1). We have to concede that the epistemic conflict model has a limitation; it assumes there has always been a clear demarcation between the aims and endeavors of both science and religion. This notion is very much a construct of the more recent ascent from the late nineteenth century to the present of science as a core foundation of modern society. And this gives us our first clue as to why we should not view science and religion principally through an epistemic lens. First, historically, their relationship has been much more nuanced and indeed more complex than it is often presented today. The boundaries between the two authorities are far less clear over the *longue durée*, epistemically or institutionally. Second, this blurring of boundaries arises in part because neither can be removed from its social, cultural, or indeed political context where a clear division between scientific systems of knowledge and religious ways of thinking cannot always be neatly drawn at an individual level or at a societal level. Furthermore, the recognition of the fallibility of humans' ability to interpret the world around us in an absolutely objective manner is now a guiding maxim in many fields of research, and the indisputable word of human beings from a scientific, or religious, perspective is increasingly seen as a problematic concept. Today, we are far more used to challenging or critiquing the notion of either objective scientific or religious knowledge and their related hegemonic structures. Recognizing this does not need to take us down a precariously postmodern relativistic path in an era currently tagged as post-truth. From Descartes onward, we have become relatively comfortable with accepting the idea that we do not need our knowledge about the universe to be certain; we do, however, need it to be reliable. There is, therefore, an element of trust, or faith, inherent in accepting any kind of knowledge about the universe and our place in it. In this regard, then, science and religion are not so distinct, and neither is as dogmatic as the other sometimes perceives it to be. If we accept that both science and religion

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are part of the fabric of our society from which any claim to knowledge cannot be separated, we also need to recognize that they carry with them cultural, social, and political cache or consequences. Furthermore, as Western Europe and North America are increasingly becoming more "secular," we need to understand these debates against the backdrop of public perceptions of a secularizing society and shifting demographics in terms of religious, spiritual, or indeed non-religious identities. As explained in our preface to the book, it was from this foundation that the Science and Religion: Exploring the Spectrum (SRES) project team started designing our research in 2013.

Even in the past few years, there has been a welcome upsurge in interest in this field of research. The increasing fascination with this field of study is perhaps unsurprising, given that over the past decade discussions in the public domain concerning the relationship between science, rationality, reason, and faith have become increasingly polemic and polarized—perhaps most well documented in Anglophone contexts, for example in the case of the debates involving the New Atheists. At the same time, the authority, levels of trust, and traditional structures of authority for *both* "science" and "religion" are being challenged or questioned in public and (geo)political domains. Alongside public debates and questions about the role of "truth" in society, we are also witnessing increasingly polarized debates about related issues, such as the perception of a threat to modernity from changing faith demographics due to migration. These interrelated sociopolitical drivers will potentially contribute to further intensification of public domain discussion of conflict narratives, not only surrounding science and religion but also related to assertions of a conflict between rational thought and religiosity. Conversely, we are increasingly witnessing appropriation of "religious values" for populist rhetoric globally, which may ultimately lead to further polarization and distrust between what are perceived to be secular and religious positions, especially in relation to social values. None of these broader societal or political trends can be ignored when it comes to researching scientific and religious worldviews and their role in society. There is, then, an ever-growing need to build a better understanding of the intersections between science and religion, and by extension rationalism, modernity, and belief in society. Thus, this volume is timely in seeking to broaden the scope of research beyond an epistemic framing, and by doing so it highlights some of the opportunities for more socially orientated research into the relationship between science and religion.

When we use the term "religion" we are not referring solely to Christianity. Though the focus of this volume is not a comparative religion frame, we are seeking to examine these issues from across a spectrum of religious, spiritual, and nonreligious groups, individuals, or identities. A number of the chapters actually focus

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on more humanist or non-religious perspectives alongside spiritual and religious perspectives. Moreover, we are not looking only at Christian populations as in these chapters we are not specifying groups by religious tradition. This approach draws on the growing trend of research in unbelief or non-religion and also reflects that the countries we have predominantly been working on to date are not majority Christian contexts when compared to the growing non-religious populations in both countries. The majority position in the United Kingdom, for example, is now arguably non-religion. One of the broader implications of the social turn that is currently taking place in the study of science and religion is that the foregrounding of epistemic issues relating to specific religious tradition or doctrinal stances is lessening to allow for other social and cultural factors to be analyzed. Although Christianity is an important topic in the volume, our research includes all forms of religion, spirituality, and non-religion. The sociological and social psychological studies included non-Christians as well as those who would classify themselves as non-religious. The conclusions arising out of this research thus have consequences and implications for the future study of all forms of religion, spirituality, or non-religion.

While we seek to understand religion in all of its diversity, the chapters in this volume mainly deal with Canada, United States, and Britain (with two notable exceptions in the work of Unsworth and Ecklund, et al.). This in part reflects the primary locus of research to date (United States) and also the goals of the SRES project laid out in the preface, which forms the backbone of this collection of studies and was undertaken in the United Kingdom and Canada. This volume is critical and theoretical in its focus—it is not meant as a case study approach to comparative contexts or religious stances. Rather, it is a needed contribution to outlining the possibilities, theoretical context, and methodological implications and limitations in the development of an entire field of research.

The chapters are divided into four parts. Part 1 examines public perceptions of evolutionary science and religion in the past as well as the present. In the first chapter, Lightman, Nickerson, and Tajbakhsh suggest how historians can provide new insights into the study of science and religion by examining the role of those who were instrumental in shaping the public discussion of their relationship. This chapter focuses on British publishers such as John Murray and Alexander Macmillan, the reception of Draper's *History of the Conflict between Science and Religion* (1874) in British journals, and the periodical reviews of Darwin's evolutionary tracts in Canadian periodicals. Turning from the nineteenth century to current public perceptions, in chapter 2 Fern Elsdon-Baker explores the role that evolutionary science might play in both religious and non-religious publics' social identity and how this relates to the broader perception that religious individuals or publics will expe-

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rience a form of conflict between science and religion. This chapter highlights how the public's perception of an intrinsic conflict between religious identity and accepting evolutionary science could play an important role in the way members of the public, across both religious *and* non-religious publics, approach this subject. Focusing specifically on the public in the United States, Jonathan Hill reviews various attempts to measure American belief in science and religion conflict. He concludes that responses to conflict survey questions are sensitive to wording decisions and available response categories. Hill calls for future research to further investigate how science functions as a social identity for some members of the public and the role this might play in reinforcing the conflict narrative between science and religion. Rounding out part 1, Alex Hall draws our attention from the United States to the twentieth-century British public. He discusses the influential role of the media in the dissemination and popularization of ideas, facts, and worldviews across British society. Focusing on the medium of television, this chapter explores how programs as diverse as blockbuster documentaries, educational broadcasts, and science fiction dramas have presented content about evolution in postwar Britain.

Part 2 tackles the issue of how public discourse about science and religion relates and contributes to the formation of cultural identities for individuals or groups. Paul Merchant's chapter opens this section with detailed life story interviews with individuals who made significant contributions to public discourse on science and religion in the last three decades of the twentieth century: science journalist Bernard Dixon, BBC World Service program maker Martin Redfern, and moral philosopher Mary Midgley. The oral histories reveal ways in which all three, in their writing and broadcasting on science and religion, were driven by strong personal rejection of what they saw as prevalent scientific, reductionist accounts of the world. While Merchant draws life story oral histories of prominent intellectuals to understand how individuals deal with conflict and identity issues, Tom Kaden and Stephen Jones use public interviews and focus groups to examine the views of scientists and members of the public. Kaden and Jones are interested in the ways in which qualitative research can shift the focus in debates about how people view science and religion, and they argue for a subtler understanding of the subject that gives recognition to individuals' lived experiences. In the final chapter of part 2, social psychologists Carissa Sharp and Carola Leicht argue that religion and science both function as belief systems, providing people with explanations about the world around them and with a social identity. Sharp and Leicht attempt to refine our understanding of people's perceptions of the relationship between science and religion, focusing on how individuals perceive that relationship from a social psychological perspective. They use social identity theory as a theoretical framework,

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which enables them to shed light onto the science-religion debate from a unique angle, thereby going beyond a "belief systems" approach.

Part 3 investigates the relationship between science, secularization, and religion. The chapters within this section raise questions about the validity of the secularization thesis and its theoretical sibling the conflict thesis, and they explain why these theses continue to exert so much influence. Peter Harrison observes that over the past three decades, scholars studying the historical relations between science and religion have directed much of their energy toward dispelling the conflict narrative—the idea that science and religion are inherently opposed to each other and that this opposition has repeatedly played itself out in history. Despite their efforts, the conflict motif remains as powerful as ever, and Harrison seeks to offer an account of its origins and persistence, examining the emergence of three related versions of the conflict narrative and showing how, in various ways, the narrative functioned to shape and maintain particular self-understandings or group identities. Amy Unsworth reflects on the view that science is the prime driver behind secularization and the associated notion of an inevitable conflict between science and religion. In her chapter, Unsworth first draws on examples from modern history in the USSR, eastern Germany, and Turkey to examine the ways in which various actors have been inspired by a narrative of scientific progress and have promoted science in various ways to try to bring about secularization at the level of individual belief and practice. In the next chapter, Rebecca Catto draws our attention from the diverse trajectories of religious decline in the twentieth century toward one specific public space, the modern scientific workplace. Religious life scientists whose daily work involves evolutionary science do not necessarily encounter direct discrimination, but they are obliged to reflect upon their existential culture in relation to their work, variously by colleagues, students, and the media, and to engage in impression management in a way that their non-religious colleagues are not. Catto contends that an implicit, and sometimes explicit, secular hegemony is in operation in the scientific workplace.

Both of the chapters in part 4 deal with future directions for research on science and religion. Elaine Howard Ecklund, David R. Johnson, and Robert A. Thomson Jr. examine the methodological challenges and possibilities for studying religion and science in different global contexts. How do scholars get people on the ground to participate in survey research and do in-depth interviews about religion and science topics, some of the most controversial topics to study? They specifically discuss the intricacies of survey research on debated topics in different national contexts. Whereas Ecklund, Johnson, and Thomson deal with the global context, in the final chapter of our volume John H. Evans focuses on the challenges of studying the American context. He argues that recent research has suggested that, at least in the

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American context, any relationship involving knowledge is quite minor compared to an often conflictual relationship involving values or morality. He describes a research agenda that will focus upon deep and deeply consequential value conflicts between religion and science over issues such as consequentialist versus deontological morality, the normative grounding of ethics, the possibility of normative teleologies, and whether there are truths or facts that are not about the natural world.

As a whole, this volume calls for a rather ambitious reconceptualization of the study of science and religion. The authors are not just recommending that the conflict thesis be abandoned. That recommendation has been heard frequently in recent decades. They are also suggesting that the conflict thesis is more ingrained in the scholarship than previously imagined, and that the only way to root it out is to pursue a multidisciplinary reenvisioning of our work where possible. As this volume serves to highlight, using the tools of the historian, the social psychologist, and the sociologist as well as working in multidisciplinary teams make it possible for us to uncover new ways of understanding the complicated relationship between science and religion.

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