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Charles Coulston Gillispie

The eminent historian of science Charles Coulston Gillispie died on October 6, 2015, at the age of 97, according to a [tweet](#) [4] from Princeton University. His books included *Genesis and Geology* (1951), *The Edge of Objectivity* (1960), *Science and Polity in France at the End of the Old Regime* (1980), *Pierre-Simon Laplace, 1749-1827* (1997), and *Science and Polity in France: The Revolutionary and Napoleonic Years* (2004). He also was the editor-in-chief of the *Dictionary of Scientific Biography* (1970-1980).

Gillispie's first book, *Genesis and Geology: A Study in the Relations of Scientific Thought, Natural Theology, and Social Opinion in Great Britain, 1790-1850*, is regarded as a modern classic. In it, he argued — as Nicolaas A. Rupke explained in a 1994 retrospective assessment — that the geological controversies in the generation before the *Origin of Species* "did not represent a clash of science with theology but stemmed from religious differences within the scientific community itself; the conflict was not one of religion versus science but of religion within science." Rupke added, "Gillispie's interpretation marked a radical departure from the popular warfare model," but reserved his highest praise for the book's historical methodology: "With Gillispie's *Genesis and Geology*, the history of the earth sciences

became historical scholarship as we know it." The book was reissued in 1996 with a foreword by Rupke and a new preface by Gillispie.

Gillispie was born in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, on August 6, 1918. He earned a degree in chemistry from Wesleyan University in 1940, served in the US Army during World War II, and earned his Ph.D. from Harvard University in 1949. His academic career was mainly spent in the Department of History at Princeton University. His honors included the International Balzan Prize for History and Philosophy of Science in 1997 and the History of Science Society's George Sarton Medal in 1984 for lifetime scholarly achievement.

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