

Mark Shea and the “Synthesis of All Heresies”

In 1907, Pope St. Pius X, one of the most orthodox men ever known in the Catholic Church, wrote one of the Church’s most famous and penetrating treatises, *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*,¹ which in Latin means, “Feeding the Lord’s Flock.” Pius had a lot of “feeding” to do because vicious wolves were gathering around the flock.

In brief, the encyclical condemned the heresy known as “Modernism.” Pius X addressed Modernism in detail because it was seeping into the hierarchy and the academic institutions of Catholicism at an alarming rate.

One of his most quoted sentences from the encyclical states: “And now, can anybody who takes a survey of the whole system be surprised that We should define it as the synthesis of all heresies?”

Essentially, Pius X defined Modernism in three ways:

- 1) philosophical agnosticism, taught by the 18th century German philosopher, Immanuel Kant,
- 2) immanentism, taught by the 18th century German philosopher, Friedrich Schleiermacher,
- 3) evolutionism and dialecticism, taught by the 18th century German philosopher, G. W. Friedrich Hegel.

It is the third phase of Modernism that I address in this paper.

In essence, Hegel taught that all knowledge is a product of an evolutionary or dialectical process in man’s thinking. There were three phases to man’s thinking:

- 1) Thesis
- 2) Antithesis
- 3) Synthesis

Although theoretically the Hegelian dialectic can be applied to any historical movement, to understand it more practically in light of the controversy today between Science and Religion, let’s apply the Hegelian dialectic to one of Mark Shea’s favorite topics of derision, namely, cosmology (how the universe originated and operates).

Whether he knows it or not (and my guess is that Shea doesn’t know the difference between a Hegelian synthesis and Katherine Heigl), nevertheless, Shea is representative of the typical

¹ http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_x/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-x_enc_19070908_pascendi-dominici-gregis_en.html, September, 8, 1907. No. 39.

Hegelian-inclined modernism about which Pius X warned us. As such, Shea would agree with the following dialectic about the development of our knowledge of cosmology:

- 1) **Thesis:** the universe and all its accompanying parts and biological organisms were created instantaneously and out of nothing by God in six 24-hour days, a universe in which Earth was motionless at the center; a universe in which all of its material substance and biological organisms are preponderantly the same as they were when originally created no more than 7000 years ago, and which the highest of them all is man who, in the first person of the human race, Adam, received an eternal soul from God.
- 2) **Antithesis:** the universe began from a random quantum fluctuation which caused a homogeneous explosion and uniform expansion of baryonic mass and energy that had no center or boundary, which, by the same randomness, evolved into more complex substances over billions of years, and eventually formed into biological organisms on Earth, the most complex of which is man.
- 3) **Synthesis:** God, out of nothing, created a quantum substance which He designed to explode homogeneously into a uniform expansion of baryonic mass and energy that had no center or boundary, and which was created with the inherent ability to evolve slowly over billions of years into more complex substances, and eventually into biological organisms that filled the Earth, the most complex of which is man, who then multiplied into many men, each receiving an eternal soul when they crossed the anthropological line from hominid to homosapien.

In case you weren't aware, the "Synthesis" is theistic evolution, which is taught in almost all of Catholic higher education today, and it is a classic Hegelian synthesis. It is simply an amalgamation of the Thesis and the Antithesis in order to save the salient characteristics of both.

Interestingly enough, the Hegelian dialectic's format is similar to Aristotle's syllogism:

- | | |
|------------------|------------------------|
| 1) Major premise | ("All men are mortal") |
| 2) Minor premise | ("John is a man") |
| 3) Conclusion | ("John is mortal") |

But the crucial difference between the Hegelian dialectic and the Aristotelian syllogism is that the latter requires both the Major and Minor premises to be correct in order to reach a correct Conclusion, otherwise the syllogism is invalid.

In the Hegelian dialectic, neither the Thesis nor the Antithesis has to be correct, and thus neither does the Synthesis. The dialectic simply indicates how we arrived at a Synthesis, not necessarily whether the Synthesis is correct.

As noted, Pius X condemned the Hegelian dialectic, and it was precisely for the reason that it could not determine the truth or correctness of any issue. It merely asserted that the Synthesis was a product of the dialectic in man's thinking. For Hegel, perhaps man's thinking could evolve toward correctness, but it could never reach it. It could only reach a Synthesis from the battle between the Thesis and the Antithesis.

The futility of the Hegelian dialectic is noted by the fact that the resulting Synthesis would then become the next Thesis, awaiting the complimentary but conflicting Antithesis, in order to form the next Synthesis. The same tri-fold process occurs *ad infinitum*, and thus never reaches the real or complete truth.

In a word, Hegel's dialectic would put man into a vicious circle, like a dog chasing its tail. It actually led right back to Kant's "philosophical agnosticism," which taught that we cannot really know anything for certain.

Conversely, Catholicism teaches that we can, indeed, know various things for certain since they are presupposed as coming from divine revelation, which always tells the real and unadulterated truth.

Unfortunately, in many ways, the Hegelian dialectic has overtaken much of modern Catholicism today. Pius X's fear that Modernism would eventually seep into the 20th century hierarchy and academia and cripple it almost beyond recognition is happening right before our eyes. In many cases, revelation has been ignored, rejected, or maligned, and the Hegelian dialectic has filled the vacuum.

On the popular level, Mark Shea is one of the best examples of the Catholic Hegelian dialectic at work (regardless whether Shea knows it or not). His theology (if we can call it that) is a mish-mash of worldly ideas and Catholic doctrine.

On his blog for March 26, 2014, Mr. Shea posted his latest diatribe, "Puny Humans, Vast Universe," which, in a few words, tries to assume a middle position, or Synthesis, between the new television series, *Cosmos*, and our movie, *The Principle*.² From his caricatures of the two features, it is obvious Mr. Shea believes his position to be the only sane and cogent of the three options.

² Produced by Stellar Motion Pictures, LLC, Los Angeles, CA, featuring Kate Mulgrew as narrator, and also featuring cosmologists, Lawrence Krauss, Max Tegmark, George Ellis, Michio Kaku, Bernard Carr, John Hartnett, and many others. *The Principle* is a feature documentary exposing the unadvertised side of modern cosmology, with a special critique of its foundation, namely, the "Copernican Principle." Executive Producer: Robert Sungenis; Producers: Rick Delano and Jeffrey Foy; Director: Kathryn Thomas; Associate Producer: Brian Oblerholzer. Music by Richard Robson Remix, and theme song by JES. Animations and graphics by BUF Compaigne. See: <http://www.theprinciplemovie.com/>

As we analyze his position, however, the unnerving truth is that Mr. Shea's is the most dangerous and insane of all. Bear with me as I take this onion apart, layer by layer, until we finally get to the most frightening reality of all.

Shea writes:

Puny Humans, Vast Universe

March 26, 2014 By Mark Shea 1 Comment

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/markshea/2014/03/puny-humans-vast-universe.html>

Given that Cosmos is busy regurgitating the myth of the War on Science by the Evil Catholic Church of Evilness (on the one hand) and Bob Sungenis is just about to embarrass the Faith with a movie on geocentrism that even his own attorney calls "fringe science"...

R. Sungenis: Just a little house cleaning before we get to the real issue. Mr. Shea's attempt to use my attorney's phrase "fringe science" is typical of how Shea often misinterprets the words and intent of his opponents. In this case, I'll allow a fellow blogger, Hans Lundahl to make the counter point.

The wording about "even his own attorney" calling it that makes it kind of sound as if "fringe science" were something bad. Maybe it is socially so in circles Mark P. Shea likes to frequent. But it could be that the lawyer is simply repeating a description which Robert Sungenis uses himself, and does not despite this effort from the Pastry Pontiff (yes, that is a thing he likes to call Mark) himself consider embarrassing. He might be spelling it out as in fringe as in minority and science as here is where the real science is.

Which is precisely correct. Thank you, Mr. Lundahl.

But let's back up a bit so that we can discover Mr. Shea's real bone of contention.

The real issue for Mark Shea and, for that matter, many of the likeminded modernist and Hegelian Catholics who make up a significant portion of Catholicism today, is this: **"Bob Sungenis is just about to embarrass the Faith with a movie on geocentrism."**

Obviously, Shea is deathly afraid that this Catholic son is going to take us back to medieval Catholicism. Didn't you know that today we are all intelligent and sophisticated Catholics since we have unshackled ourselves from the superstitions and ignorance of the past? It's a whole new Church with a whole new vision! Indeed, it is, but, as we shall see, "new" is precisely the problem.

In actuality, I won't be embarrassing "the Faith"—that is, the true Faith of Catholicism—but I will deeply embarrass the cadre of Catholic liberals and modernists who believe in the above

Hegelian Synthesis: the Big Bang; theistic evolution; that Newton proved Galileo correct; and that Scripture and Tradition have little or no authority to decide these issues.

Biblical Scholarship

First, I should give you a little education on the how's and why's on Catholic modernism. Basically, Catholic liberals and modernists are people who teach that much of Scripture's testimony on history is false. For example, they believe that various accounts in Old Testament (Adam and Eve, the Flood, the tower of Babel, the genealogies, the exodus, Daniel's prophecies, Jonah and the fish, etc.), and even various accounts in the Gospels, are merely fictional or mythical stories created by authors who redacted the original accounts to suit their own political or cultural preferences.

From my 40 years of experience in these circles, I'm sad to tell you that Modernism comprises about 90% of "Catholic biblical scholarship" today. Hard to believe? Then I suggest you visit any Catholic university or seminary today for a firsthand look. Similar to today's scientists who use all kinds of fancy math equations to give a veneer of credibility to their latest pipe dream about the universe, biblical scholars use all kinds of sophisticated but specious "criticisms" (historical, form, redaction, textual, contextual, etc.) to make their analysis appear highly studied and intellectual.

(But I'll let you in on a little secret. In reality, it is all mere sophistry designed to escape the grip that Holy Writ has over their personal lives, and which they despise).

This "critical" view of the Bible was introduced by a number of Catholic liberal theologians in the late 1800s and pushed to prominence after Vatican II. Unfortunately, it spread to almost all Catholic seminaries, universities, high schools and grade schools, and, in varying degrees, in almost all Catholic apologetic institutions today. It is no exaggeration to say that almost every institution with the word "Catholic" in front of it today has succumbed to this heterodox hermeneutic.

Mark Shea is merely one of the more visible and popular purveyors of this modernist hermeneutic but certainly not the most intellectually gifted or the deepest thinker. As he himself once said on his own masthead: "Where no stupid comment on any topic went left unsaid," or something to that effect. Mark Shea is more like a Catholic hatchet man, supported by big money to keep the coffers happy and the masses in line with the status quo. No boat rockers need apply at the offices of Mark Shea and his handlers.

In order to keep the masses in line with the status quo, Hegelian dialecticians have a unique way of dealing with Scripture. For example...

If they don't like what the Bible says about the role of women in the Church, they use any number of the above literary "criticisms" to posit that St. Paul's writings on women were based on the cultural bias of his day or perhaps that St. Paul himself was a misogynist.

If they don't like what the Bible says about homosexuality, they likewise use any number of the above literary "criticisms" and then claim that the passages which seem to condemn homosexuality were written by authors who were culturally biased and scientifically illiterate, and/or they claim that the only sin in Sodom was inhospitality, not homosexuality.

If they don't like the miracles of the Bible, they claim that miracles were merely ordinary events later embellished by the authors to make it look like a real miracle.

If they don't like the prophecy of the Bible, they claim that it was not actually a real prophecy; rather, it was written after the event in question and made to appear that it was predicting the future.

If they don't like the Bible's description of the beginning of the world, they claim the authors borrowed their description from the surrounding pagan cultures, and these cultures were prone to creating fictional stories and myths about how the world began.

And, of course, if they don't like the Bible's insistence that the sun and stars revolve around a stationary Earth, they claim that the authors were primitive thinkers who only wrote from an "as you see it" point of view and had no capability to distinguish the real from the phenomenal.

For any or all of the above, they then claim that the current sciences of cosmogony, cosmology, anthropology, paleontology, archeology, physics, chemistry, biology, philology, and many other sophisticated ways of looking at the evidence, all support their conclusion.

In the end, the Bible is reduced to the play toy of modern man.

But let's take away the window dressing and be a little more honest with what is really happening.

Essentially, the new hermeneutic of Modernism says that most of the Bible is a big lie, for, no matter how you try to dress it up, according to the Modernists the ancients did little more than give us a bunch of fabricated stories and cultural biases that they then passed off as "the word of God."

In effect, they lied to us. Hence, little of what they say is worth the paper it's written on. We can learn nothing from them, except, perhaps, how primitive and stupid they were.

Vatican II

How do today's modern Hegelian Catholics attempt to justify this new approach to Scripture in the face of all previous traditional Catholic teaching which held firmly to the fact that all of Scripture's history was inspired, inerrant and factual, and that the people writing it were not biased or stupid? They use two basic ways:

First, due to their inordinate admiration for modern scientists as the epitome of honesty and the total antithesis of used car salesmen, they believe virtually anything these scientists claim concerning how the universe began and operates, despite the fact that most of these scientists are avowed atheists who even admit that they interpret the empirical data in line with their atheism and are sworn enemies of the propositions in Sacred Scripture. Since these modern scientists claim to have disproven many of the historical statements in the Bible, liberal and modernist Catholics eat it up like ice cream. The inevitable Hegelian synthesis works like this:

Thesis: The Bible claims to provide authentic narratives of historical events.

Antithesis: Modern science has shown these historical events never took place; and that all cultures were prone to create mythical stories to compensate for their ignorance about the universe.

Synthesis: Most of the Bible is made up of myths and only a fraction of it has real truth.

Second, in order to give at least a semblance of ecclesiastical approval for modern scientific opinion to trump the Bible, modernist Catholics have devised a very clever way to gain that approval. They have commandeered one of the documents from Vatican II, titled *Dei Verbum*, to give a veneer of authority to their use of the Hegelian dialectic on Scripture and Catholic doctrine.

First, a Word from Galileo

But before I give you specifics on how they do so, what would you guess is the main event in Church history that prompted these Catholic modernists to justify their Hegelian interpretation of *Dei Verbum*?

If you think it was the Galileo affair, you win the \$64,000 prize! Here's how we know.

The first indication comes from the 1992 speech of John Paul II to the Pontifical Academy of Science (or perhaps we should say, the speech of Cardinal Paul Poupard, since he wrote it for the pope). Here are the words from Paragraph 6 of the speech:

The upset caused by the Copernican system thus demanded epistemological reflection on the biblical sciences, an effort which later would produce abundant fruit in modern

exegetical works and *which has found sanction and a new stimulus in the Dogmatic Constitution Dei Verbum of the Second Vatican Council.*

Did you catch that? The pope's speech is asserting that, in some way as yet undefined, Vatican II's document, *Dei Verbum*, changed the course of Catholic history!

More specifically, since the majority of the Catholic prelature had, by this time in history, accepted the Copernican solar system as a scientific fact (which taught that the Earth goes around the Sun, as opposed to previous Church belief that the Sun went around the Earth), this forced post-Vatican II Catholics to change their understanding of how to interpret Scripture.

Make no mistake about it. Notice that, without any citation in the 1992 speech to an official Catholic document declaring dogmatically that the Catholic Church has officially accepted the Copernican system as fact, or even any citation that the Catholic Church had officially rescinded and reversed the condemnations of Galileo and the decrees against Copernicanism facilitated by pope's Paul V and Urban VIII in 1616 and 1633, nevertheless, the pope's 1992 speech asks us to accept the unprecedented and shocking proposal that our whole understanding of both Scriptural revelation and interpretation was changed instantly and forever by "the new stimulus of *Dei Verbum*," which, in case anyone wasn't looking, now requires us to conclude that twenty prior centuries of Catholic understanding of Scripture could be tossed away like trash.

We, of course, were under the impression that Catholic doctrine wasn't supposed to change. Apparently, there is an exception to that rule – at least that's what the Hegelian modernists want us to believe.

Let's look at another source in order to help verify this astounding phenomenon.

Pope Benedict XVI admitted much the same in a speech reported in *L'Osservatore Romano* on February 14, 2013. He stated:

So we went to the Council not only with joy, but with enthusiasm. There was an incredible anticipation. We hoped that everything would be renewed, that a new Pentecost would truly come, a new era of the Church – because at that time, the Church was still strong enough: Sunday practice still good, the vocations to the priesthood and to religious life were already a bit reduced but still sufficient. Nonetheless, we felt that the Church was not advancing, it was diminishing, and it seemed rather a reality of the past and not the bringer of the future.

And in that moment, we hoped that this relationship would be renewed, that it would change; that the Church would once again be a force of tomorrow and a force of today. *And we knew that the relationship between the Church and the modern period was a bit in conflict, beginning with the error of the Church in the case of Galileo Galilei; we thought we could correct this wrong beginning and find the union between the Church*

and the best forces in the world in order to open up the future of humanity, to open true progress. So we were full of hope, of enthusiasm, and of the will to do our part for this thing.³

I dare say we now have it from the horse's mouth that Vatican II was implemented for the express purpose of correcting the so-called "errors" of the traditional Church.

But here is the kicker, and which will explain to you in crystal clarity why I am on this "Galileo Was Wrong: The Church Was Right" crusade. The first and foremost "error"—the only error that receives mention, and the one "error" that eventually led them to look for other "errors"—was the Church's decision against Galileo!

Now isn't that amazing. Are you beginning to realize how important the Galileo issue is? So this crusade of mine that Mark Shea claims is only going to "embarrass the Faith," is not merely about making sure we have the correct cosmology. It is not just about whether the Earth goes around the Sun or the Sun around the Earth.

Behold, it is about whether we can read and interpret all of Scripture at face value, as literally as our Fathers did when they read passages in Scripture concerning Baptism and the Eucharist. Our Church Fathers, our medievals, and all our popes for almost two millennia said we had an obligation to read Scripture in that way, unless it was impossible to do so. Vatican II's *Dei Verbum*, we are told, gave us a "new stimulus" that told us we no longer had that obligation. Huum! Do you smell something fishy here?

Since Father Joseph Ratzinger was present at Vatican Council II in 1962 and personally knew many of its major participants, his inside knowledge of what we can now call the "Galileo mentality" of Vatican II must be taken as a reliable testimony. Due to his witness, it seems safe to conclude that if the prelature of the early 1960s had not concluded that the Church of the early 1600s made an "error" in the Galileo case, Vatican Council II may never have happened.

But now we come to a very serious crossroads: either: (a) the Church of 1600s was in error when it condemned Galileo and heliocentrism, or (b) the prelature's reason for initiating Vatican II and subsequently facilitating a "new stimulus" to change how we view Scripture is in error.

³ Pope Benedict's farewell address to priests at the Vatican, as reported by *L'Osservatore Romano*, February 14, 2013, page 4, paragraph #5 in the article "Al concilio pieno di entusiasmo e speranza." The fifth paragraph in the original Italian is: "Allora, noi siamo andati al Concilio non olo con gioia, ma con entusiasmo. C'eras un'aspettativa incredibile. Speravamo che tutto si rinnovasse, che venisse veramente una nuova Pentecoste, una nuova era della Chiesa, perché la Chiesa era ancora abbastanza robusta in quel tempo, la prassi domenicale ancora buona, le vocazioni al sacerdozio e alla vita religiosa erano già un po' ridotte, ma ancora sufficienti. Tuttavia, si sentiva che la Chiesa non andava avanti, si riduceva, che sembrava piuttosto una realtà del passato e non la portatrice del futuro. E in quel momento, speravamo che questa relazione si rinnovasse, cambiasse; che la Chiesa fosse di nuovo forza del domani e forza dell'oggi. E sapevamo che la relazione tra la Chiesa e il periodo moderno, fin dall'inizio, era un po' contrastante, cominciando con l'errore della Chiesa nel caso di Galileo Galilei; si pensava di correggere questo inizio sbagliato e di trovare di nuovo l'unione tra la Chiesa e le forze migliori del mondo, per aprire il futuro dell'umanità, per aprire il vero progresso. Così, eravamo pieni di speranza, di entusiasmo, e anche di volontà di fare la nostra parte per questa cosa."

In any case, Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI have admitted one of the most significant yet most disturbing aspects of the modern prelature. Once the prelature rejected the Church's traditional belief in geocentrism on the basis that science had proven it to be a mistaken view of the cosmos, the Bible would never be looked at in the same way again. Incredibly, the Bible went from an infallible record of history to a rather fallible record, virtually overnight.

As noted earlier, this "new way" not only permitted unbridled speculation about the cosmos and its origins, but it spilled over into many other "sciences" (psychology, sociology, anthropology, archeology, physiology, etc.), which then created new ways to regard sin, sexuality, marriage, women, homosexuality, and just about any subject one could propose as an alternate view to escape what was literally taught or commanded in Scripture.

Let's flesh this out a bit to show how serious this is. Since it is now believed that the Fathers of the Church, the medieval theologians, and the magisterium of the 1600s were all wrong about how to interpret the Bible, that is, that they were wrong in believing that the Bible, always and everywhere, provided a literal and accurate truth concerning the material world, nothing less than a new foundation for the Catholic Church has been built by the modern prelature.

This new and unprecedented modification to the doctrine of biblical inerrancy, which, as we have seen from the words of two modern popes, is attributed to Vatican II's document, *Dei Verbum*, and it became the atomic bomb that destroyed the old foundation.

Pope Urban VIII v. Galileo

Before we investigate what specifically Pope John Paul II meant when he referred to "*a new stimulus in the Dogmatic Constitution Dei Verbum of the Second Vatican Council*," let us see how previous popes would have reacted to what John Paul II's 1992 speech suggests.

What we find is, just as Pope St. Pius X forewarned us of Modernism's assault into the 20th century prelature, so Pope Paul V and Pope Urban VIII saw the same mortal danger for the same prelature when they exposed the real intent of Galileo's doctrine. This is easily seen in the numerous dialogues between the major players of the issue.

For example, although modern Catholic apologists often attempt to cast Pope Urban VIII's 1633 condemnation of Galileo as if it was prompted by Urban's pride for believing that Galileo had insulted him in his book, the *Dialogo*, that accusation is simply not true. The real truth is, Pope Urban was beside himself with fear over what Galileo's doctrine would do to the Church. We see this mainly in his protracted discussions with the archduke of Tuscany, Cosimo Medici, in an attempt to enlist the archduke's help in stopping the "heresy" of Galileo.

The pope's involvement and seriousness of mind is noted in how he communicated directly and privately with the Grand Duke of Tuscany's ambassador, Francesco Niccolini, who then reported his communications back to the Grand Duke's secretary of state, Andrea Cioli. Over the period

of September 1632 to June 1633 the resolve of Pope Urban VIII against both heliocentrism and Galileo was made crystal clear for both the hierarchy of the Church and the Tuscany government. Beginning on September 5, 1632, Niccolini writes to Cioli:

Yesterday I did not have the time to report to Your Most Illustrious Lordship what had transpired (in a very emotional atmosphere) between myself and the Pope in regard to Mr. Galilei's work....I too am beginning to believe...that the sky is about to fall. While we were discussing those delicate subjects of the Holy Office, His Holiness exploded in great anger, and suddenly he told me that even our **Galilei had dared enter where he should not have, in the most serious and dangerous subjects which could be stirred up at this time.** I replied that Mr. Galilei had not published without the approval of his ministers....He answered, with the same outburst of rage, that he had been deceived by Galileo and Ciampoli...⁴

Niccolini, clearly trying to make headway for Galileo, explained to Urban that Galileo's book, the *Dialogo*, was "dedicated to our Most Serene Patron," namely, the Grand Duke who, as was common in those days, had been secretly financing Galileo's work. But the pope's reply showed he was not going to budge an inch, and the reasons were theological in nature. Urban called Galileo's book nothing less than "**the worst harm to religion...ever conceived.**" Niccolini describes the pope's reaction as follows:

He said that he had prohibited works which had his pontifical name in front and were dedicated to himself, and that in such matters, **involving great harm to religion (indeed the worst ever conceived)**, His Highness [the Grand Duke] too should contribute to preventing it, being a Christian prince....I retorted that...I did not believe His Holiness would bring about the prohibition of the already approved book without at least hearing Mr. Galilei first. His Holiness answered that this was the least ill which could be done to him and that he should take care not to be summoned by the Holy Office; that he has appointed a Commission of theologians and other persons versed in various sciences, serious and of holy mind, who are weighing every minutia, word for word, **since one is dealing with the most perverse subject one could ever come across**....Finally, he told me to write to our Most Serene Patron that the doctrine is extremely perverse, that they would review everything with seriousness, and that His Highness should not get involved but should go slow; furthermore, not only did he impose on me the secret about what he had just told me, but he charged me to report that he also was imposing it on His Highness [the Grand Duke].⁵

On September 11, Niccolini writes:

⁴ *Le Opere di Galileo Galilei*, vol. 14, p. 383, translated by Finocchiaro in *The Galileo Affair*, p. 229.

⁵ *Le Opere di Galileo Galilei*, vol. 14, p. 384, translated by Finocchiaro in *The Galileo Affair*, p. 230.

In fact, the Pope believes that the Faith is facing many dangers and that we are not dealing with mathematical subjects here but with Holy Scripture, religion, and Faith....However, above all he says, with the usual confidentiality and secrecy, that in the files of the Holy Office they have found something which alone is sufficient to ruin Mr. Galilei completely; that is, about twelve years ago, when it became known that he held this opinion and was sowing it in Florence, and when on account of this he was called to Rome, he was prohibited from holding this opinion by the Lord Cardinal Bellarmine, **in the name of the Pope and the Holy Office**. So he says he is not really surprised that His Highness is acting with so much concern, for he has not been told all the circumstances of this business.⁶

On September 18, Niccolini reports that the pope has no qualms about his strong reaction against Galileo:

He [the pope] retorted that in cases where religion might suffer damage, it was less harmful to overreact occasionally than to be remiss as a result of the reasons I mentioned, and thus **to endanger Christianity with some sinister opinion**; furthermore, he had been told by His Holiness that, **since we are dealing with dangerous dogmas**, His Highness [the Grand Duke, Cosimo Medici] should put aside all respect and affection toward his Mathematician and be glad to contribute himself to **shielding Catholicism from any danger**.

I replied by again humbly begging him to consider that Mr. Galilei is Mathematician to His Highness, currently employed and salaried by him, and also universally known as such. His Holiness answered that this was another reason why he had gone out of the ordinary in this case and that Mr. Galileo was still his friend, but these opinions were condemned about sixteen years ago and Galileo had gotten himself into a fix which he could have avoided; for **these subjects are troublesome and dangerous, this work of his is indeed pernicious, and the matter is more serious than His Highness thinks....**Then he added, telling me to report it fully to His Most Serene Highness, that one must be careful not to let Mr. Galilei spread **troublesome and dangerous opinions** under the pretext of running a certain school for young people...⁷

On November 13, 1632, Niccolini again shows the pope's resolve in silencing the Copernican doctrine and bringing Galileo to trial in Rome:

⁶ *Le Opere di Galileo Galilei*, vol. 14, p. 388, translated by Finocchiaro in *The Galileo Affair*, pp. 232-233.

⁷ *Le Opere di Galileo Galilei*, vol. 14, pp. 388-389, translated by Finocchiaro in *The Galileo Affair*, pp. 235-236.

...this morning I discussed it with His Holiness himself. After mentioning that Mr. Galilei is ready to obey and to comply with what he will be ordered to do, I undertook to explain to His Holiness the same things at great length, to move him to pity poor Mr. Galileo, who is now so old and whom I love and adore....However, His Holiness told me that...there was no way of avoiding Mr. Galilei's coming to Rome...for indeed it was necessary to examine him personally, **and that God would hopefully forgive his error** of having gotten involved in an intrigue like this after His Holiness himself (when he was cardinal) had delivered him from it...**Finally, he reiterated that one is dealing with a very bad doctrine.**⁸

As the time gets nearer to the trial, Pope Urban's resolve seems to strengthen even more. On March 13, 1633, Niccolini writes:

I replied that I hoped His Holiness would double the obligation imposed on His Highness by exempting him from this [the trial]....but he again said he does not think there is any way out, and **may God forgive Mr. Galilei for having meddled with these subjects. He added that one is dealing with new doctrines and Holy Scripture**, that the best course is to follow the common opinion since he too is attracted to them and is a friend of the new philosophy; further, Mr. Galileo had been his friend, they have conversed and dined several times together familiarly, and he was sorry to have to displease him, **but one was dealing with the interests of the faith and religion.** I think I went on to add that if he is heard, he will easily give every satisfaction, though with the proper reverence which is due the Holy Office. He replied that Mr. Galilei will be examined in due course, **but there is an argument which no one has ever been able to answer: that is, God is omnipotent and can do anything;** but if He is omnipotent, why do we want to bind him? I said that I was not competent to discuss these subjects, but I had heard Mr. Galilei himself say that first he did not hold the opinion of the earth's motion as true and then that since God could make the world in innumerable ways, one could not deny that He might have made it this way. However, he got upset and told me that one must not impose necessity on the blessed God; seeing that he was losing his temper, I did not want to continue discussing what I did not understand, and thus displease him, to the detriment of Mr. Galilei.⁹

On April 9, 1633, Niccolini adds the same. By this time Galileo is suffering from arthritis:

However, I could hide neither the ill health of this good old man, who for two whole nights had constantly moaned and screamed on account of his arthritic pains....This morning I spoke to His Holiness about it, and, after I expressed appropriate thanks for

⁸ *Le Opere di Galileo Galilei*, vol. 14, pp. 428-429, translated by Finocchiaro in *The Galileo Affair*, pp. 238-239.

⁹ *Le Opere di Galileo Galilei*, vol. 15, p. 67-68, translated by Finocchiaro in *The Galileo Affair*, p. 247.

the advance notice he was so kind to give me, **His Holiness said he was sorry that Mr. Galilei had gotten involved in this subject, which he considers to be very serious and of great consequence for religion.** Nevertheless, Mr. Galilei tries to defend his opinions very strongly; but I exhorted him...not to bother maintaining them and to submit to what he sees they want him to hold or believe about that detail of the earth's motion. He was extremely distressed by this, and, as far as I am concerned, since yesterday he looks so depressed that I fear greatly for his life.¹⁰

On June 19, 1633, Niccolini reveals that it is the pope himself that formulated the conclusion that Galileo's cosmology was "erroneous and contrary to Holy Scripture":

This morning His Holiness displayed very friendly feelings in innumerable ways....Again I pleaded that Mr. Galilei's trial be brought to an end....However, he said that in regard to the issue, there is no way of avoiding prohibiting that opinion, since **it is erroneous and contrary to the Holy Scripture dictated by the mouth of God**; and in regard to the person, as ordinarily and usually done, he would have to remain imprisoned here for some time because he disobeyed the orders he received in the year 1616.¹¹

Similar to the Arian Crisis

As we can see, the concern over protecting the veracity of Scripture against the heretical machinations of Galileo is so pronounced in the writings of Pope Urban VIII that when we then see two popes of the 20th century side with Galileo and consequently create a so-called "new stimulus" from a conciliar document to forever alter how we assess and interpret Scripture, it's almost as if we have two different Churches. That's how much the Galileo affair has affected us.

How can we explain the dichotomy? I think it is rather easy.

Make no mistake about it. This is a crisis of faith.

In fact, it is a crisis of faith on par with what occurred during the Arian crisis in the third and fourth centuries *when almost every prelate in the Catholic Church held to the belief that Christ was not divine*. Even Pope Liberius had at least partially succumbed to the Arian heresy.

In fact, even when the Council of Chalcedon in 451 AD put the final touches on the orthodox understanding of who Christ is, the Arian heresy wasn't totally eradicated until several centuries later.

¹⁰ *Le Opere di Galileo Galilei*, vol. 15, p. 84-85, translated by Finocchiaro in *The Galileo Affair*, p. 249.

¹¹ *Le Opere di Galileo Galilei*, vol. 15, p. 160, translated by Finocchiaro in *The Galileo Affair*, p. 255.

It's hard to imagine that the majority of the Catholic prelature could have been so deceived, but history shows that this is precisely the case. Not only were they deceived, they were fighting tooth and nail against one of the only prelates defending the orthodox faith, St. Athanasius.

Likewise, it is no more difficult to believe that the modern Catholic prelature has been deceived by the Hegelian dialectic, the result of which is the unprecedented amount of sin and faithlessness we have seen over the last 50 years.

Today almost every Catholic prelate, not to mention almost every Catholic university professor, apologist, and CCD teacher, is operating under the false belief that the Bible is not altogether accurate and that modern science has proven the Bible wrong on a number of issues. It is a heterodox environment of monumental proportions and its toll on our society has been nothing short of cataclysmic.

Dei Verbum 11

As noted in the pope's 1992 speech, this "new way" of looking at the Bible has been launched by a popular but unofficial interpretation of the key document in question from Vatican II, namely, *Dei Verbum 11*.

This may be hard for you to grasp, but the whole controversy rests on one simple phrase in *Dei Verbum 11*, namely, "**for the sake of our salvation.**" How, you ask, could such a simple and innocent looking statement cause such destruction? Yes, by all appearances, the phrase seems rather wholesome and does not seem to contain anything that would cause such a titanic shift in Catholic thinking.

But appearances can be deceiving.

As it has been said that the innocent face of Helen of Troy launched a thousand ships, it can analogously be said that the innocent phrase "for the sake of our salvation" has launched a thousand heresies in the modern age. As uncanny as it may seem, this seemingly innocuous statement, "for the sake of our salvation" was surreptitiously made into the very foundation for one of the most revolutionary and destructive ideas in Church history.

The full sentence in question from paragraph 11 of *Dei Verbum* reads as follows:

Since, therefore, all that the inspired authors, or sacred writers, affirm should be regarded as affirmed by the Holy Spirit, we must acknowledge that the books of Scripture, firmly, faithfully and without error, teach that truth which God, for the sake of our salvation, wished to see confided to the sacred Scriptures.¹²

¹² Austin Flannery, *Vatican Council II, The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, New York, Costello Publishing Co. second printing, 1977, p. 757. The edition of Walter M. Abbot has a slightly different syntax: "Therefore, since everything asserted by the inspired authors or sacred writers must be held to be asserted by the

Obviously, from this straightforward grammatical structure, “for the sake of our salvation” should easily be interpreted as nothing more than an affirmation that God made all of Scripture inerrant so that we can have the surest foundation upon which we can attain salvation. That is the undemanding sense of the words. In fact, this simple interpretation is proven by the official footnotes of *Dei Verbum 11* that were published at the same time (but the footnotes are never discussed in modernist expositions on the passage).¹³

Unfortunately, the liberals and modernists, the very stench of the modern Church about which Pope St. Pius X warned us in his *Syllabus of Errors*, grew by leaps and bounds in the 20th century. They organized nothing less than a theological *coup d’etat* after Vatican II that ripped *Dei Verbum 11* from its straightforward meaning and turned it into a ten-headed theological monster.

Instead of interpreting “for the sake of our salvation” as simply an affirmation that God made all of Scripture inerrant so that we can have the surest foundation upon which we can attain salvation, these modernists twisted it to mean that Scripture is only inerrant when it speaks “for the sake of our salvation.” Did you catch that?

Let’s see the Hegelian dialectic at work:

Thesis: Scripture is inspired and inerrant in all that it says.

Antithesis: Modern science has shown that Scripture is not inerrant in all that it says.

Synthesis: Scripture is inspired and inerrant only when it speaks about salvation.

In other words, the Modernists want us to accept that Scripture is only without error when it speaks on salvation, and it is not inerrant, and thus not reliable, when it speaks about anything else, including history and the cosmos. This was a view of Scripture never before taught in the whole history of the Catholic Church. (See Appendix).

Holy Spirit, it follows that the books of Scripture must be acknowledged as teaching solidly, faithfully and without error that truth which God wanted put into sacred writings for the sake of salvation.” Flannery puts the clause “for the sake of our salvation” immediately after “God,” thus indicating God’s motivation for giving us Scripture, *i.e.*, so that we can be saved. In the Abbott edition, “for the sake of our salvation” is put at the end of the sentence and which might suggest that it modifies “truth” rather than “God.” For a thorough analysis and refutation of this thesis please see Fr. Brian Harrison’s penetrating critique: “The Truth and Meaning of Scripture According to *Dei Verbum 11*,” in *Living Tradition*, No. 59, July 1995 located at the archives of the rforum.org.

¹³ Immediately after the sentence “...the books of Scripture, firmly, faithfully and without error, teach that truth which God, for the sake of our salvation, wished to see confided to the sacred Scriptures,” *Dei Verbum 11* gives footnotes from five sources stating that Scripture is inerrant in its totality. They are: (1) St. Augustine’s *The Literal Interpretation of Genesis* 2, 9, 20 and *Epistle* 82, 3. (2) St. Thomas, *De Veritatis*, q. 12, a. 2; (3) The Council of Trent, Ses. IV, *de canonicis Scripturas* (Denz. 783; (4) Leo XIII’s *Providentissimus Deus*: EB 121, 124, 126, 127; (5) Pius XII’s *Divino Afflante*: EB 539. None of these sources state or suggest that Scripture is only inerrant when it speaks on salvation.

But for those who are a little disturbed at Satan's prowess, let's make this clear right here and now: It wasn't *Dei Verbum II* that taught this new doctrine, for no one can find a statement in it that says "Scripture is only inerrant when it speaks about salvation." Rather, it was the Hegelian modernist *interpretation* of *Dei Verbum II* that taught this new doctrine.

Unfortunately for them and fortunately for us, since this modernist interpretation has never been officially defined and declared to be a Catholic dogma by any pope since Vatican II, it has no canonical force whatsoever. It is merely the popular opinion of the majority of the Catholic prelature just as Arianism was in the third century.

The danger is, however, that popular opinions have a way of making themselves appear as if they are the canonical truth. It's the same trick that Satan pulled in the Garden of Eden.

The Hegelian Torchbearers

One of the more popular torchbearers for this "new way" to view of the Bible was the late Fr. Raymond Brown, editor of the *New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, one of the most influential Catholic theologians in the world. So good was he at his modernist trade that he taught at one of the most liberal *Protestant* seminaries in the world, Union Theological Seminary, until he died in 1998. He writes:



"Scriptural teaching is truth without error to the extent that it conforms to the salvific purpose of God."¹⁴ In another work he spells it out more clearly:

"In the last hundred years we have moved from an understanding wherein inspiration guaranteed that the Bible was totally inerrant to an understanding wherein *inerrancy is limited to the Bible's teaching of 'that truth which God wanted put into the sacred writing for the sake of our salvation.'* In this long journey of thought the concept of inerrancy was not rejected but was seriously modified to fit the evidence of biblical criticism which showed that

the Bible was not inerrant in questions of science, of history, and even of time-conditioned religious beliefs."¹⁵

¹⁴ *New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, p. 1169.

¹⁵ *The Virginal Conception and Bodily Resurrection of Jesus*, Paulist Press, 1973, pp. 8-9. He adds: "Historical and critical studies of doctrine may lead to a similar modification of an over-simplified understanding of the infallibility of Church teaching....While the public admission of historical relativity in doctrinal formulations is a recent phenomenon in official Catholicism....A clear example is the variation in the last 125 years in the presentation of the Church's teaching about evolution. The Church has infallibly taught the doctrine that God was specially involved in creating man in His image and likeness. For almost 1900 years that theological doctrine was interpreted to include the how of man's creation, namely, by direct divine action forming man's body from the earth, and woman's body from man's. Today no serious theologian accepts this understanding of the how, because of the

Just in case you missed it, what Fr. Brown and the rest of modern Catholicism twisted this simple phrase, “for the sake of our salvation,” to mean is that Scripture is only error-free when it is speaking directly about salvation. Everything else, which, I would estimate, comprises about 80 to 85% of Scripture, could be as error-filled and fictional as the testimony of Bill Clinton telling us he “did not have sex with that woman, Miss Lewinsky.”

Let’s make no mistake about it. You can window dress it by calling it fiction, myth, historical embellishment, redaction, or whatever, but it essentially boils down to the same thing – nothing Scripture says beyond the topic of “salvation” can be trusted, and, in fact, it may be the case that 80 to 85% of the Bible is a pack of lies, according to the Hegelian modernists in the Catholic Church today.

As we have seen, the Bible’s inerrancy was sacrificed primarily in order to make room for Copernicus and Galileo, with Darwin, Freud, Marx and a few other humanistic icons, running a close second.

Once the decision was made that the Church made an error with Galileo, the modernist exegete was now on the lookout for “error” and “inaccuracies” on every page of the Bible, which then led him to separate the error-free “salvation message” from the error-filled “historical/scientific message.”

If you find my analysis hard to believe, just pick up a copy of the Catholic *New American Bible* (copyright, 1971), probably the most quoted and influential of all modern Catholic Bibles. Give yourself a few hours and read its footnotes, beginning at Genesis. You will be amazed at how many times you read such qualifications as “this incident is fictional” or “the author is mistaken,” or something to that effect.

Not surprisingly, Fr. Brown was a staunch Darwinian evolutionist and he used a significant amount of his *New Jerome Biblical Commentary* to promote the theory of evolution, basing his view on the supposition that, since the Bible was not inerrant when it spoke about cosmogony or cosmology, he had every right to espouse evolution.

Secular scientists began to use the same rationale. Carl Sagan, for example, was smart enough to see where the modern Catholic prelatry’s double-dealing with Scripture eventually led. He states in his book, *Pale Blue Dot*:



scientific evidence favoring evolution; yet the changed understanding of the how has not negated the infallibility of the Church’s teaching for we have learned to distinguish between the theological insight and the physical imagery in which it was clothed” (*ibid*, p. 9).

“But if the Bible is not everywhere literally true, which parts are divinely inspired and which are merely infallible and human? As soon as we admit there are scriptural mistakes (or concessions to the ignorance of the times), then how can the Bible be an inerrant guide to ethics and morals?”¹⁶

For as much as I disagree with Sagan’s view of the cosmos, unfortunately, his reasoning about the use of Scripture is spot on.

And, of course, this mentality doesn’t stop at cosmology. It spills over into our culture. Why do you think there is presently a “readjustment” in Catholic thinking regarding homosexuality? It’s because King Science has told us that homosexuality is caused by our genetic makeup and thus it’s not really our decision whether we are gay or straight – the very opposite of what Scripture teaches. So again, the modern mentality is: the Bible must be wrong and Science is right. From these two truths, status quo Catholics will make a Hegelian synthesis, and everyone will be happy, just like Carl Sagan is happy.

I wouldn’t doubt at all that the reason Mark Shea also appears soft on homosexuality (as noted in his defense of his homosexual friend, “Perry,” who lived with another homosexual male before he died last year, yet also claimed to be a practicing and devout Catholic) is that he has imbibed, in part or in whole, this “new way,” this Hegelian dialectic, of viewing Scripture.

The Real Truth

The real and unadulterated truth is that, for two-thousand years, the *official teaching* of Catholic Church has been very clear that *all* of Scripture is inerrant, whether it is speaking of salvation, history, the cosmos or any other propositional truth.

Hence, there simply is no precedent for interpreting the phrase “for the sake of our salvation” as anything more than the very reason the Bible, *in toto*, was made inerrant by the Holy Spirit, that is, so we, as even the atheist Carl Sagan recognized, would have no doubt about the veracity of the entire message of God, Who cannot lie and Who leads us to salvation.

As noted, the footnotes of *Dei Verbum* 11 make this truth perfectly clear as it quotes from some of the same Fathers, theologians, popes and councils that Bellarmine and Urban VIII depended upon to condemn the cosmology of Galileo and uphold the total inerrancy of Holy Writ.

Likewise, the teaching of geocentrism is the long-held traditional view of the Catholic Church. But the Hegelian dialecticians in the Catholic Church have rejected many traditional doctrines in favor of modern innovations that have no patristic, scriptural or official ecclesiastical support behind them. Instead, they have made the opinions of popular scientists their infallible magisterium.

¹⁶ *Pale Blue Dot*, pp. 40, 42.

Mark Shea seeks to make it appear that geocentrism makes the Catholic Church look like an anti-science, anti-modern, anti-establishment institution that simply refuses to budge even in the face of proof after proof that its traditional views have been discredited. I sometimes wonder that if modern science began to tout that there is “no proof” for a wafer of bread turning into the body and blood of Christ, whether someone like Mark Shea might be tempted to agree with it.

It wouldn't be the first time. There was a whole movement begun by modernist Catholics coming out of Vatican II, led by Father Eduard Schillebeeckx, who were similarly “embarrassed” by the traditional Catholic doctrine of “transubstantiation.” This group of theologians were instead pushing for “transignification” – that the wafer only signified Christ's presence, but Christ wasn't actually there. This, they thought, would be more ecumenically satisfying, since Catholics and Protestants after Vatican II were “rethinking” a lot of old ideas in an attempt to bury their 400-year old hatchet. Perhaps this is the reason why nearly 40% of Catholics today don't believe in the presence of Christ in the Eucharist.¹⁷

Mark Shea has a similar reason for wanting to reject the Church's traditional acceptance of geocentrism. Embarrassed by what he believes was a categorical error when the Church condemned Galileo, Shea wants to promote ecumenical relations with modern academia so that the Church never again has to face such “embarrassment.” In effect, Shea will accept the unproven theories of atheistic scientists and sacrifice the doctrines of traditional Catholicism in order to promote ecumenism.

For the record, the ecumenists of the post-Vatican II era also wanted to “rethink” baptism, confession, confirmation, marriage and divorce, justification, priestly orders and celibacy, scripture inerrancy, women's role in the Church, contraception, abortion, homosexuality, and many other issues. They had joint conferences on some of these issues for at least thirty years after Vatican II. In one of these conferences, the Lutheran/Catholic Joint Declaration on Justification of 1998 managed to change the 400-year old teaching of the Council of Trent that man was not justified by faith alone. In section 2C of the Annex to the LNJD, it states that “man is justified by faith alone.” How's that for a Hegelian synthesis?

Many such traditional beliefs and practices were just too “embarrassing” for the new guard of modernist Catholics, and as a consequence, many of them, at least in practice, have indeed changed the modern Catholic Church.

So beware when you see the “we will be embarrassed” argument. It may simply mean:

“We think that the views of traditional Catholicism were superstitious and uneducated. We now look at the world through telescopes and microscopes, and interpret the data by Einstein and Freud and Crick and Watson, and sometimes even Karl Marx. My gosh, we now know that man evolved and wasn't created as an Adam and Eve. We now know

¹⁷ <http://ncronline.org/news/catholics-america/knowledge-and-belief-about-real-presence>

there was no Flood and no Tower of Babel. We know that Jesus didn't really walk on water but only slid through shallow water and his redactors made it appear like a miracle. We are sophisticated Christians that don't depend on any of the outmoded ideas of the past. Least of all can we accept that the sun goes around the Earth."

What Modern Science Really Says about Geocentrism

Of course, the big piñata for people of Mr. Shea's status quo mentality is geocentrism. It is the ultimate of "embarrassing" doctrines from the past.

That is quite ironic, however. The belief in geocentrism has about ten times the Catholic patristic pedigree than, say, the doctrine of the Assumption of Mary, but this fact just flies right over the proverbial heads of people in Mr. Shea's world.

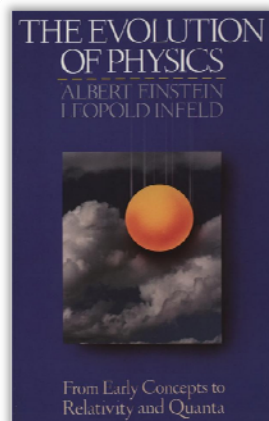
It's also quite ironic when one considers the fact that the opening words of the Bible are not directly about God, that is, His makeup, His nature, or any description at all of who He is.

The Bible starts, rather, with the cosmos, in grand and glorious detail. Sounds awful important, doesn't it? Could it be that we need to know where we are in the universe in order to understand why God created us and what he expects from us? Check out Psalm 19 and Romans 1:18-20 and Romans 10:17-18 for the answer to that question.

Unfortunately, the cosmos of Genesis has become the biggest stumbling block for modernist Catholics because, quite simply, they just "know" that it can't be right, thanks to Galileo and Darwin.

Various Catholics of all stripes, including some very conservative, will believe a wafer turns into God and that water poured on the forehead saves a soul from hell, but simply can't fathom how God could make the sun and stars go around the Earth. That's just too much, thank you!

The grand irony in the face of this equivocating Catholic mentality is, thanks to modern science, it's much easier to believe the sun and stars go around the Earth than it is to believe that a wafer turns into God! Science has nothing to say about transubstantiated wafers, but it does have a lot

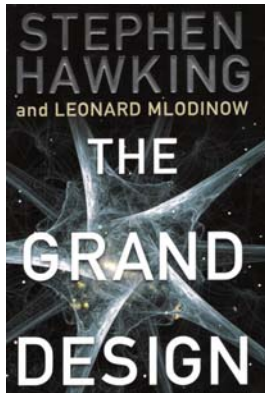


to say about the fact that the sun and stars can revolve around the Earth, and, believe it or not, modern science agrees with it!

One can find this astounding fact of science in exactly 1.7 seconds on the Internet by plugging in the words: "Einstein, sun, earth, coordinate system, Copernicus, Ptolemy" into one's search engine. Here is what you will come up with from Einstein's own words:

"The struggle, so violent in the early days of science, between the views of Ptolemy and Copernicus would then be quite meaningless. Either coordinate system could be used with equal justification. The

two sentences: ‘the sun is at rest and the Earth moves,’ or ‘the sun moves and the Earth is at rest,’ would simply mean two different conventions concerning two different coordinate systems.”¹⁸



And if you don’t believe Einstein’s assessment, then perhaps you will believe the opinion of the most popular physicist alive today, Stephen Hawking:

“So which is real, the Ptolemaic or Copernican system? Although it is not uncommon for people to say that Copernicus proved Ptolemy wrong, that is not true....one can use either picture as a model of the universe, for our observations of the heavens can be explained by assuming either the earth or the sun to be at rest.”¹⁹

My, my! What do we have here? Although Mark Shea is “embarrassed” to entertain the idea that the sun revolves around the Earth, the two greatest physicists that the world has to offer don’t seem to be embarrassed by it at all.

How come? Simple. They know a lot more science than Mark Shea, and they aren’t embarrassed to admit that the science makes our teaching on geocentrism high on the list of water-cooler conversation. Imagine that. So, in conclusion, I must say:

MARK SHEA. I DO DECLARE! IT'S ABOUT TIME YOU GIT SOME OF DAT SCIENTIFIC EDUMACATION!

While I’m here, let me comment on the article in *Catholic Answers* magazine that Mr. Shea is touting.

Shea writes the following...

I thought it might be fun to revisit one of most mysterious arguments trotted out by the fundamentalist mystics of physicalism (both Christian and atheist): the notion that the physical size of the universe or the physical location of the earth has some sort of spiritual significance. Here’s a piece I wrote some years ago for *Catholic Answers* magazine.

Our place in the cosmos has been a source of fascination since the first human looked up at the splendor of the night sky. Every culture has reacted to the spectacle of the

¹⁸ *The Evolution of Physics: From Early Concepts to Relativity and Quanta*, Albert Einstein and Leopold Infeld, 1938, 1966, p. 212.

¹⁹ *The Grand Design*, Stephen Hawking and Leonard Mlodinow, NY, Bantam, 2010, p. 41.

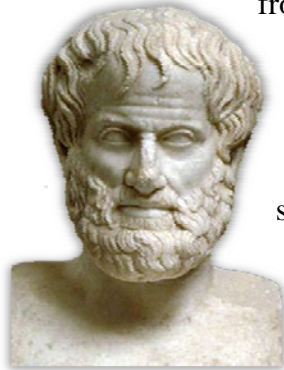
heavens with religious awe. The Babylonians and the Chinese watched the stars for omens. Petroglyphs in North America record novas. Greek gods are in the constellations. Vanished cultures erected immense monuments like Stonehenge to watch the movements of the heavens. Ancient Egypt was rocked by a religious movement led by Akhenaten, who worshiped the sun.

The sense of wonder about our place in the universe was shared by the chosen people. The Psalmist pours out his amazement:

When I look at thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast established; what is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou dost care for him? (Ps. 8:3–4)

In antiquity, nobody had yet teased out categorical distinctions between miracles and magic, science and superstition, revelation and folklore. Asking if a man was practicing chemistry or alchemy, astronomy or astrology, science or magic, myth or religion would have been a nonsense question to ancients. They knew that things were connected, but they were only beginning to understand how.

R. Sungenis: Notice how Mr. Shea sets up the scenery so that he can casually convince you that everyone before the twentieth century was just a dumb cluck that couldn't distinguish reality from fantasy. This kind of sweeping generalization is part-and-parcel of Shea's rhetorical repertoire.



In reality, it is Mark Shea who is the creator of myths. Many of the prominent ancients were well aware of a marked distinction between science and magic and between astronomy and astrology. Ever read Aristotle, Mr. Shea? He was so good at distinguishing fantasy from reality that Thomas Aquinas, of all the people in the world, chose the pagan Aristotle to be his mentor. Not bad for a guy who was born about 2400 years ago.

For the record, we still have astrologers today. In fact we have more of them today than they did in Aristotle's time. Just pick up any of the thousands of newspapers printed on a daily basis across the world today. Horoscopes are a billion dollar business that never seems to die no matter how wrong they may be.

Appealing to the scientists we have today won't neutralize this fact. I suggest Mr. Shea bone up on the critical literature available, especially in the field of cosmology. There are plenty of modern cosmologists who also don't know the difference between science and magic. They make up all kinds of magical substances that don't have the slightest evidence of existence. They do so in order to shore up the magical universe they want to live in – one that creates itself and goes on forever so that they don't have to answer to any God.

Their magic includes everything from Inflation, to Dark Matter, to Dark Energy, to Multiverses, to Wormholes to Blackholes. If you want the gory details, read my recent paper on the BICEP2 claims that purport to have found evidence for the Big Bang.

(see <http://galileowaswrong.com/your-biceps-are-too-small-mr-big-bang/>)

Mr. Shea continues:

Did the Israelites Believe in Astrology?

Yet we moderns often try to force ancients into our categories. For example, scholars tell us there is evidence that Israel encamped around the tabernacle in such a way as to reflect the constellations (Num. 2), and there are ancient synagogues with mosaics of the zodiac inlaid in the floor. This could lead us to the conclusion that the Israelites "believed in" astrology.

This is false. Rather, it is evidence of a sacramental understanding of the world. Israel saw itself as the beginning of a new world order, symbolized by the "heavenly host." The link between the "heavenly host" and the "earthly host" of Israel was very strong in the biblical mind, for both are ruled over by the same God—*Yahweh Sabaoth* (the "Lord of hosts"). The earthly tabernacle was a miniature of God's heavenly dwelling: Both were attended by the armies of the Lord, the people of Israel and the angels in heaven, respectively. Similarly, in Genesis 37:9, Jacob and his sons are likened to the sun, the moon, and twelve stars.

The conviction that earth and heaven are both guided by a common Creator runs through Scripture. We are told "from their courses [the stars] fought against Sisera" (Jgs. 5:20). Likewise, both Ezekiel and Revelation portray heavenly creatures around the throne of God, corresponding to the constellations. Scholars point out that the four cherubim mentioned in Revelation 4:6–7 conform to the middle signs in the four quarters of the zodiac. The lion is Leo, the ox is Taurus, the man is Aquarius, and the eagle is Scorpio. John lists them in counter-clockwise order, backward around the zodiac.

But this is not an appeal to astrology. It is an example of the biblical and sacramental understanding that the creation in the heavens, like all the rest of creation, is a sign made by and pointing to God. In the words of Psalm 19:1, "The heavens are telling the glory of God." To the ancient biblical mind, the groupings of the stars are not random, because nothing in all creation is random. The macrocosm of creation showed the glory of God writ large across the heavens, and the microcosm of the temple declared his

glory on a human scale. For the biblical authors, as for us, everything is connected, but it is not the stars doing the connecting. It is God, the creator of heaven and earth.

R. Sungenis: Mr. Shea left out the most salient fact of the “biblical and sacramental” Hebrew understanding of the cosmos, namely, that it was **GEOCENTRIC!** The only thing required of Mr. Shea to get to that truth was for him to read the rest of Psalm 19, the very verse he quoted above.

2 The heavens declare the glory of God; the sky proclaims its builder's craft.

3 One day to the next conveys that message; one night to the next imparts that knowledge.

4 There is no word or sound; no voice is heard;

5 Yet their report goes forth through all the earth, their message, to the ends of the world. God has pitched there a tent for the sun;

6 it comes forth like a bridegroom from his chamber, and like an athlete joyfully runs its course.

7 From one end of the heavens it comes forth; its course runs through to the other; nothing escapes its heat. (Psa 19:2-7 NAB)

Evidently, the Earth’s centrality must have some import in the whole scheme of things, otherwise God wouldn’t bother pointing it out to us dozens of times in Scripture.

Shea continues:

We’re Nothing but a Small Blue Dot

In Scripture, the action takes place on earth, not in the sky, and the main story is of God and his people, culminating in the revelation of Christ. Astronomical events, such as the star of Bethlehem, point to what God is doing in the affairs of men. Like road signs, these phenomena point the pilgrim soul on his way to Christ and are then quickly forgotten.

But in an age that has come to doubt or even forget Christ, pagan ideas—including ideas about the heavens—can reassert themselves. We live in such a time.

R. Sungenis: Interestingly enough, many of these “reasserted” ideas come from the modern scientists that Mr. Shea glorifies. The very cosmologist that Mr. Shea contacted a few months ago to elicit a dismissal of our movie, Lawrence Krauss, is an avowed atheist who believes the universe had no need of a Creator but just popped into existence all by itself, from some quantum

soup of which neither he nor any of his colleagues can tell us the origin. In fact, if you have read any of Krauss' books, you know that he is an encyclopedia of "pagan ideas," many of which are "reasserting" themselves in our time, and Mark Shea either seems to be oblivious to them or purposely ignores them. I guess that as long as Krauss preaches Scientism's gospel of evolution, Mark Shea is a happy Hegelian.

Shea continues:

It is not unusual to meet people who have a physicalist view of man's place in the cosmos. One particularly crude argument asserts that the Bible errs by focusing on the earth and not the sky, because, as H. G. Wells said, "Man is utterly insignificant compared to the size of the universe!" They produce numerous illustrations of our smallness for popular science shows. A camera pulls back until the earth shrinks to (in Carl Sagan's phrase) a "small blue dot," then the solar system becomes a pinpoint that vanishes into an arm of the Milky Way, which itself becomes an indistinct smudge of light disappearing into billions of other galaxies. People set real store by such thinking. But that's not because they are hard-headed scientists looking at cold facts. It's because they are poets who think they are philosophers. They can't refrain from supposing that immense differences in physical size *mean* something. But as G. K. Chesterton dryly replied to his friend Wells's contention, "Man is small compared to the nearest tree."

In short, size doesn't matter. Michael Jordan does not have greater spiritual worth than Michael J. Fox because he's taller. Because people are the size of ants compared to the Twin Towers does not mean the buildings were more important than the people killed in them. But when size differences become vast, we tend to wax poetic and to forget these obvious facts.

R. Sungenis: Yes, Dr. Sagan was deceived into demoting the Earth's importance by comparing it to the size of the universe. But Mr. Shea is deceived in making it seem as if neither God, the Scripture, nor the Church have any interest or reason for insisting that the inspired words of biblical revelation be taken at face value. Dr. Sagan is just following Mark Shea's Hegelian hermeneutic to its logical conclusion, which, as Dr. Sagan so eloquently stated:

"But if the Bible is not everywhere literally true, which parts are divinely inspired and which are merely infallible and human? As soon as we admit there are scriptural mistakes (or concessions to the ignorance of the times), then how can the Bible be an inerrant guide to ethics and morals?"²⁰

Mr. Shea might retort that *Dei Verbum 11* answers Dr. Sagan's question by limiting inerrancy to Scripture's statements on salvation, but Dr. Sagan would return the favor and tell Mr. Shea that

²⁰ *Pale Blue Dot*, pp. 40, 42.

his reasoning is merely a *petitio principii*, and then ask Mark Shea to show him where the Catholic Church officially taught such a limitation to inerrancy before Vatican II, and also ask him where either Vatican II or any other official teaching subsequent to Vatican II categorically decreed such a limitation to inerrancy. As we noted earlier, the only official commentary on *Dei Verbum 11* are the footnotes of *Dei Verbum 11* and none of them teach that inerrancy is limited to statements on salvation.

In the end, it simply doesn't matter to Mr. Shea that the whole Church, including the consensus of the Fathers and medievals, along with popes and cardinals for over 1800 years, believed in geocentrism as firmly as they believed a wafer turned into the body of Christ.

It wasn't until Newton, who was anti-Catholic to the core, convinced everyone that his $F = ma$ formula required the Earth to revolve around the Sun that things really began to change. His rule over science managed to hold sway for about 200 years until Ernst Mach came along and showed everyone that Newton was, at best, incomplete in his knowledge. Mach went on to convince Einstein, and both of them agreed that, even if we use Newton's own laws, we can make the universe rotate around a fixed Earth just as we can make the Earth rotate in a fixed universe.

But, of course, the horses had already left the barn and there was little possibility of getting them back, which results in Mark Shea concluding that geocentrists are quacks, when, in fact, he is the quack for not knowing either this history or the science, and an insidious quack for not caring whether he knows it or not.

From merely a practical point of view, why would it be beneficial to tell the world that the Earth is in the center of the universe and doesn't move?

For the simple fact that the world would have one less excuse to ignore God and Jesus Christ. Once we show them that the Earth is in the center, mankind knows instinctively that it could not happen by chance. It means Someone, with a capital S, had to put the Earth in that unique position. It means that that Someone is bigger and better than us. It then means they are subject to him and need to fall on their knees in worship.

Of course, ideologues like Mark Shea miss all this, for the simple reason that they don't want to be "embarrassed" by having to teach what the world now considers to be an antiquated belief.

Shea continues:

A Christian Speaking Idiotically

Similar thinking is at work in the insistence of a small cadre of reactionary Catholics on geocentrism. They claim that the earth is the center of the universe and that all other heavenly bodies orbit around it. Some even insist that the earth does not rotate on its

axis but that the entire universe moves around the earth every twenty-four hours. That this is folly has been proven many times.

R. Sungenis: Well, after failing to tell us that the “biblical and sacramental” Hebrew view of the cosmos was geocentrism; after failing to tell us about the patristic and medieval consensus on geocentrism; and after failing to read the rest of Psalm 19 or cite any other Scripture that teaches geocentrism, Mr. Shea now adds insult to injury by telling us that geocentrism is a “folly” which “has been proven many times.”

Mr. Shea, as of this date, I’m going to call you a bold-faced liar. Reason? You’ve been challenged at least a dozen or more times over the last ten years to provide just one scientific proof for your boastful claims against geocentrism. You’ve been asked to publically debate the issue, since you seem so cock sure of your opinion. But you declined each challenge.

So let’s stop this little dance. Here’s challenge number 23 for you.

If you, Mark Shea, can provide just one scientific and indisputable proof that the Earth rotates and revolves around the Sun, I will give you \$1,000.00.

If you can’t, then you owe me \$1,000.00. Put your money where your mouth is, Mr. Shea, otherwise, shut up.

Shea continues:

The real question is why anybody would insist on geocentrism as vital to the faith in the first place.

R. Sungenis: Before Mr. Shea attempts to answer his own question, let’s answer it here. We’ll start by stating that we don’t consider geocentrism “vital to the faith,” if by that accusation Mr. Shea means we put geocentrism on par with the doctrines of salvation. This is merely Mr. Shea’s attempt at a red herring. But, of course, making it appear as if we consider it “vital” creates a nice strawman for Mr. Shea to beat up.

Here’s the scoop. Let’s see if you can get this one straight, for once, Mr. Shea. We believe in geocentrism because Scripture teaches it, the Fathers taught it, the medievals taught it, it was endorsed by the Tridentine catechism; it was supported by the rest of the Church for over 1800 years; and its rival, heliocentrism, was officially and specifically condemned by the work and approval of three popes over the course of 50 years as a threat to the very nature and substance of Scripture and its proper interpretation.

We’ll tell you the same thing that St. Robert Bellarmine told Galileo. Geocentrism is just as important for the veracity and inerrancy of Scripture as when the Scripture says Jacob had twelve

sons. Therefore anyone who says Jacob did not have twelve sons, denies the inerrancy of Scripture and places his soul in eternal jeopardy.

Unfortunately, just as in the Arian crisis when almost all of the prelature had denied the deity of Christ, so in our day most of the hierarchy, not to mention most of the lay apostolates, have denied the full inerrancy of Scripture.

Mr. Shea continues:

The answer is twofold. First, converts who were once Fundamentalists and who used to read Scripture literally become Catholic and proceed to read Scripture and Catholic documents literally.

R. Sungenis: Absolutely false. If there were any “Fundamentalists” in the world before the Protestants, their name was “Catholic”!

If not, how does Mr. Shea explain that of all the denominations and churches in the world, the Catholics are the only ones that interpret John 6:54 (“Whoever eats my body and drinks my blood has eternal life”) and Matthew 26:26 (“This is my body”) as literally as it can possibly be interpreted?

Ironically, it’s the Protestant “Fundamentalists” who refuse to interpret this passage literally!

How does Mr. Shea explain the fact that the Catholics were the first and one of the only to interpret John 3:5 (“unless a man is born of water and the spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven”) as literally as it can be interpreted, namely, that water is necessary for salvation?

Ironically, it’s the Protestant “Fundamentalists” who refuse to interpret this passage literally!

How does Mr. Shea explain the fact that the Catholics were the first and one of the only to interpret John 20:23 (“Whosoever sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven”) as literally as it can be interpreted?

It’s the Protestant “Fundamentalists” who refuse to interpret this passage literally!

I could go on with many more, but I think you get the picture.

In fact, before the late 19th and 20th centuries, all Catholics read Genesis 1 and 2 literally, that is, that God made the world instantaneously in six days. It wasn’t until Darwin came along that a band of modernist and liberal “Catholics” decided that science had disproven a literal reading of Genesis. It was only then that the Mark Shea’s of the world began to make the bogus claim that “Catholics don’t interpret the Bible literally like Protestant Fundamentalists do.”

Nothing could be further from the truth. The real truth is that modernists like Mark Shea have made the popular opinions of modern science their infallible magisterium, which they then use to pick and choose what Scripture passages they want to interpret literally or not so literally.

Mr. Shea continues:

Second, they tend to believe that "if it's old, then it's part of Tradition." Since pre-Copernican Christians assumed a Ptolemaic universe, then that must be part of Tradition. To geocentrists, heliocentrism is just another modernist corruption of the faith.

R. Sungenis: Poor Mr. Shea. He never gets anything right. Heliocentrism was an invention of the Greeks, not the moderns. Copernicus merely borrowed from Pythagoras and Aristarchus, and then Kepler and Newton tried to make them credible by using fancy math equations.

No, Mr. Shea. Heliocentrism is wrong because the Church said it was wrong; the Fathers said it was wrong; the medievals said it was wrong, and so did the popes and bishops for over 1800 years.

Mr. Shea continues:

Augustine replied to this thinking:

It not infrequently happens that something about the earth, about the sky, about other elements of this world, about the motion and rotation or even the magnitude and distances of the stars, about definite eclipses of the sun and moon, about the passage of years and seasons, about the nature of animals, of fruits, of stones, and of other such things may be known with the greatest certainty by reasoning or by experience, even by one who is not a Christian. It is too disgraceful and ruinous, though, and greatly to be avoided, that he [the non-Christian] should hear a Christian speaking so idiotically on these matters and, as if in accord with Christian writings, that he might say that he could scarcely keep from laughing when he saw how totally in error they are. . . .

With Scripture it is a matter of treating about the faith. For that reason . . . if anyone, not understanding the mode of divine eloquence, should find something about these matters [about the physical universe] in our books, or hear of the same from those books, of such a kind that it seems to be at variance with the perceptions of his own rational faculties, let him believe that these other things are in no way necessary to the admonitions or accounts or predictions of Scripture. In short, it must be said that our authors knew the truth about the nature of the skies, but it was not the intention of the

Spirit of God, who spoke through them, to teach men anything that would not be of use to them for their salvation. (*The Literal Interpretation of Genesis*, 1:19–20; 2:9)

R. Sungenis: If I hear this quote from Augustine taken out of context one more time I think I'm going to be sick.

Mr. Shea and all other Catholic apologists for Galileo have simply misconstrued Augustine's words. In reality, Augustine's words are an indictment against them all.

The reason is simple. Augustine goes on to explain to whom he is applying his words a few pages later. In Book 2, Chapters 4-5, the question of the "waters above the firmament" (Gn 1:6-9) comes to the fore. These distant waters have been one of the more divisive issues between literalists and non-literalists, since the Firmament is, according to Genesis 1:14-17, the heavens in which the sun and stars were placed, yet Genesis 1:7 insists that there are waters above the firmament, that is, above the heavens. The logical question is: if the "water above" is to be taken literally, then when, where, why and how is this possible, for it seems to contradict the established facts of science. In answer, Augustine begins by referring to vaporous waters in the air as a possible solution. He writes:

Taking these theories into account, a certain commentator [Basil] has made a praiseworthy attempt to demonstrate that the waters are above the heavens, so as to support the word of Scripture with the visible and tangible phenomena of nature.... Hence, from the existence of the air between the vapors that form the clouds above and the seas that stretch out below, our commentator proposed to show that there is a heaven between water and water. This painstaking enquiry is, in my opinion, quite praiseworthy.

But Augustine goes even further in the next analysis, for now he tries to show that there are waters even above the starry heavens. He does so by calling into question the prevailing scientific theories, and in the end, relying on the veracity of Scripture, no matter how hard it may be to accept. He writes:

Certain writers, even among those of our faith, attempt to refute those who say that the relative weights of the elements make it impossible for water to exist above the starry heaven. They base their arguments on the properties and motions of the stars. They say that the star called Saturn is the coldest star, and that it takes thirty years to complete its orbit in the heavens because it is higher up and therefore travels over a wider course.

We notice that Augustine is challenging the prevailing scientific opinion current in his day regarding the nature of stars. Augustine will go on to argue that Saturn, which was then understood as a star, generates heat as it makes its orbit, but that it is cooled by the waters near it, above the heavens, even though some in Augustine's day denied that these waters existed. He writes:

It is true, indeed, that by its own motion, moving over a vast space, it takes thirty years to complete its orbit; yet by the motion of the heavens it is rotated rapidly in the opposite direction...and therefore, it ought to generate greater heat by reason of its greater velocity. The conclusion is, then, that it is cooled by the waters that are near it above the heavens, although the existence of these waters is denied by those who propose the explanation of the motion of the heavens and the stars that I have briefly outlined.

Finally, although admitting he may not have the precise solution to the issue, nevertheless, Augustine maintains that Scripture is the greater authority in this realm, and if it says that the water is above the heavens, then it is there:

With this reasoning some of our scholars attack the position of those who refuse to believe that there are waters above the heavens while maintaining that the star whose path is in the height of the heavens is cold. Thus they would compel the disbeliever to admit that water is there not in a vaporous state but in the form of ice. But whatever the nature of that water and whatever the manner of its being there, we must not doubt that it does exist in that place. The authority of Scripture in this matter is greater than all human ingenuity.²¹

The most penetrating aspect of Augustine's bold defense of Scripture is that it is said in a context in which the objector doubts whether water above the firmament exists at all. Augustine's answer is simple: we may not know where or in what form it resides there, but based on Scripture we know for certain that it exists. This is where Augustine starts. It is his bedrock of truth. The Scripture said it, and he believes it.

Hence we can safely say that, for Augustine, the "embarrassing situation" does not necessarily occur when a faithful expositor tries to find scientific support for biblical propositions; rather, it occurs when the biblical skeptic tries to elevate scientific theory into fact, requiring Scripture either to conform to the theory, or be totally ignorant of the theory. As Augustine warned:

But more dangerous is the error of certain weak brethren who faint away when they hear these irreligious critics learnedly and eloquently discoursing on the theories of astronomy or on any of the questions relating to the elements of this universe. With a sigh, they esteem these teachers as superior to themselves, looking upon them as great men; and they return with disdain to the books which were written for the good of their souls; and, although they ought to drink from these books with relish, they can scarcely bear to take them up.²²

²¹ *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, Bk 2, Ch. 5, No 9.

²² *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, Book 1, Chapter 20, Para. 41, *Ancient Christian Writers*, *ibid.*, p. 44. Aquinas said the same thing regarding the superiority of Scripture to decide such matters: "Whether, then, we understand by the firmament the starry heaven, or the cloudy region of the air, it is true to say that it divides the waters from the

Another critic of the traditional Catholic hermeneutic who argues along the same lines as Mr. Shea is George Sim Johnston. Johnston appeals to St. Augustine's statement: "I will send you the Paraclete who will teach you about the course of the sun and moon. For He willed to make them Christians, not mathematicians."

But this actually speaks more against Johnston's case than for it. Notice first that Augustine reaffirms that the sun and the moon move, not the Earth. Obviously, Augustine does not intend to go against all the statements he made in his other works affirming the Earth's motionlessness and the sun's movement.

Second, Augustine's concern regards only that the Lord did not intend to teach how the sun and moon move in their courses, not that the Lord did not intend to teach that the sun and moon move. That is, the Lord did not desire to give us detailed information as to what pushes or pulls the sun and moon around the Earth, or how it is that they keep such precise time year after year. But we can certainly conclude from the Lord's teaching that the sun and moon move. Christians don't have to become "mathematicians" in order to know the simple fact that the celestial bodies revolve around the Earth. A child could understand it. Mathematics is necessary only when one wants to calculate such things as how fast the sun and moon accomplish their appointed tasks or how far away they are from Earth.

Hence, because the Lord taught them in Scripture that the sun and moon move around the Earth, it was for that very reason that St. Augustine and St. Thomas were both geocentrists, in opposition to the Greeks and Indians who were promoting heliocentrism.

Johnston's attempt to commandeer Augustine to support heliocentrism is common among Catholic authors who are seeking some way to counter the Magisterium's condemnation of Copernican cosmology and Galileo's support of it in the 1600s. All these attempts, of course, are done in the face of the fact that Augustine believed firmly in geocentrism and defended it vigorously. Ignoring these facts, heliocentric advocates will often appeal to Augustine's general hermeneutical principles concerning the need to be cautious when science and Scripture seem to clash, or they will take Augustine's comments out of context and make it appear as if he is saying one thing when, in fact, he is saying quite another.

Shea continues:

How to Go to Heaven

As another famous Catholic named Galileo put it: "The purpose of revelation is to tell us how to go to heaven, not how the heavens go."

waters, according as we take water to denote formless matter, or any kind of transparent body, as fittingly designated under the name of waters..." (*Summa Theologica*, Bk. 1, Ques. 68, Art 3).

R. Sungenis: Again, Mr. Shea needs to bone up on the history instead of making arguments from clichés. The Catholic Church has never taught that, “The purpose of revelation is to tell us how to go to heaven, not how the heavens go.” This quip came from one liberal cardinal, Baronius, during Galileo’s day, but the Church never adopted it as the truth. How could they, since it was that very Church in Baronius’ day that condemned Galileo?

Moreover, I suggest Mr. Shea read the new book by David Wootton, *Galileo: Watcher of the Skies* (2010). Wootton shows that Galileo was not a practicing Catholic for most of his life and was actually living in mortal sin. It wasn’t until 1639, three years before his death, that Galileo had a conversion experience and became a true Catholic. Prior to that, Galileo was part of an underground movement that was trying to usurp the authority of the Catholic Church.

Interesting enough, do you know what Wootton says about Catholic liberals and modernists, like Mr. Shea? He writes:

“The second problem with the liberal Catholic view is that it accepts without question the claims made on behalf of modern science.”²³

Shea continues:

The fact that modern geocentrists persist in their beliefs despite all the evidence to the contrary tells us that they are confusing physical reality with spiritual reality.

R. Sungenis: No, the only one confusing reality is Mark Shea. The first reality he confuses is his refusal to admit that there is no proof for either heliocentrism, acentrism, the Big Bang, long ages, or any of the dozens of theories modern scientists put forth today. Allow me to quote from a book written in the mid-twentieth century by a colleague of Einstein’s, a book for which Einstein wrote the Foreword. He writes:

...we can’t feel our motion through space, nor has any physical experiment ever proved that the Earth actually is in motion.²⁴

If Mr. Shea disagrees, then he needs to show us the proof to the contrary. But Mr. Shea never has, and never will. That’s because he’s not interested in the truth of this issue. He is only interested in preserving the status quo and not being “embarrassed.”

Shea continues:

²³ *Galileo: Watcher of the Skies*, Yale University Press, 2010, p. 261.

²⁴ Lincoln Barnett, *The Universe and Dr. Einstein*, 1948, 1960, p. 73.

Just as some people think our physical size means something, so others think our physical location means something. They believe that if we are not literally at the center of the physical heavens, then we cannot be at the center of God's heart.

But humans have dignity because they are made in the image and likeness of God, not because of where they happen to be located in God's universe. Such obvious physicalism was put to bed three thousand years ago, when the king of Syria was rudely disabused of the notion that God was a God of the hills, not of the plains (1 Kgs. 20:23). Neither is he a God of the earth, or of the Andromeda Galaxy. Wherever we are physically, we are spiritually at the center of God's love.

R. Sungenis: In debating tactics we call this 'bait and switch.' Why? Because our argument has never been "if we are not literally at the center of the physical heavens, then we cannot be at the center of God's heart." That's absurd. Our argument has always been that Scripture teaches, and modern science supports, the fact that God DID put us in a special place in the universe (i.e., the center), and it is for us to recognize this fact and teach it as a truth of revelation, instead of burying it in the file of "inconvenient facts I wish I never knew."

If, in that process, one makes the argument that being in the center couldn't happen by chance and therefore the universe came into being by the hand of a divine Creator (as opposed to what Krauss and Sagan tout, that is, that the universe created itself), then so be it. Mark Shea simply doesn't want to admit this simple fact. His job is to maintain the status quo and stop that status quo from being "embarrassed."

I rest my case.

March 31, 2014

Appendix on Scripture and the Fathers of the Church

The Catholic Church's Teaching on Scripture's Inerrancy

The Catholic Church, throughout her two-thousand year history, has been very clear and adamant in her teaching that Scripture contains no error when it speaks on theology, history, science, mathematics or any other discipline or factual proposition. Scripture cannot err because God is its main author:

- **Pius IX**, condemned the following notion: “The prophecies and miracles set forth and recorded in the Sacred Scriptures are the fiction of poets, and the mysteries of the Christian faith the result of philosophical investigations. In the books of the Old and the New Testament there are contained mythical inventions...”²⁵
- **Pope Leo XIII**: “It is absolutely wrong and forbidden either to narrow inspiration to certain parts only of Sacred Scripture or to admit that the sacred writer has erred.”²⁶
- **Pope Pius X**, condemned the notion: “Divine inspiration does not extend to all of Sacred Scriptures so that it renders its parts, each and every one, free from every error.”²⁷
- **Pope Benedict XV**: “...the divine inspiration extends to all parts of Scripture without distinction, and that no error could occur in the inspired text.”²⁸
- **Pope Pius XII**, repeats Leo XIII decree: “It is absolutely wrong and forbidden either to narrow inspiration to certain parts only of Sacred Scripture or to admit that the sacred writer has erred.”²⁹
- **Pope Pius XII**, condemns the notion: “...immunity from error extends only to those parts of the Bible that treat of God or of moral and religious matters.”³⁰
- **1964 Pontifical Biblical Commission**: “...that the Gospels were written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, who preserved their authors from every error.”

²⁵ *Syllabus of Errors*

²⁶ *Providentissimus Deus*

²⁷ *Lamentabili Sani*

²⁸ *Spiritus Paraclitus*

²⁹ *Divino Afflante Spiritu*

³⁰ *Humani Generis*

- **1998 Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith:** “...the absence of error in the inspired sacred texts...”³¹
- **Pope Leo XIII:** “For the sacred Scripture is not like other books. Dictated by the Holy Spirit, it contains things of the deepest importance, which, in many instances, are most difficult and obscure....For all the books in their entirety...with all their parts, have been written under the dictation of the Holy Spirit.”³²
- **Council of Trent:** “...the purity itself of the Gospel is preserved in the Church, which promised before through the Prophets in the Holy Scriptures...and [the Synod] clearly perceiving that this truth and instruction are contained in the written books and in the unwritten traditions, which have been received by the apostles from the mouth of Christ Himself, or from the apostles themselves, at the dictation of the Holy Spirit, have come down even to us, transmitted as it were from hand to hand, [the Synod] following the examples of the orthodox Fathers, receives and holds in veneration with an equal affection of piety and reverence all the books both of the Old and of the New Testament, since one God is the author or both, and also the traditions themselves, those that appertain both to faith and to morals, as having been dictated either by Christ's own word of mouth, or by the Holy Spirit, and preserved in the Catholic Church by a continuous succession”.³³
- **Vatican Council 1:** “If anyone shall not accept the entire books of Sacred Scripture with all their divisions, just as the sacred Synod of Trent has enumerated them, as canonical and sacred, or denies that they have been inspired by God: let him be anathema.”
- **1994 Catechism of the Catholic Church:** “Sacred Scripture is the speech of God as it is put down in writing under the breath of the Holy Spirit.” “God inspired the human authors of the sacred books...it was as true authors that they consigned to writing whatever he wanted written, and no more.”³⁴
- **Pope Leo XIII:** “It is futile to argue that the Holy Spirit took human beings as his instruments in writing, implying that some error could slip in...For by his supernatural power he so stimulated and moved them to write, and so assisted them while they were writing, that they properly conceived in their mind, wished to write down faithfully, and

³¹ *Professio Fidei*

³² *Providentissimus Deus*

³³ *Denz.*, 783

³⁴ ¶¶ 81, 106.

expressed aptly with infallible truth all those things, and only those things, which He himself ordered; otherwise He could not Himself be the author of the whole of Sacred Scripture.”³⁵

- **Code of Canon Law** (1983): “Even after ordination to the priesthood, clerics are to pursue sacred studies and are to strive after that solid doctrine founded in sacred scripture, handed on by their predecessors, and commonly accepted by the Church, as set out especially in the documents of councils and of the Roman Pontiffs. They are to avoid profane novelties and pseudo-science.”³⁶

The Catholic Church’s Doctrine on the Binding Nature of the Teaching of the Church Fathers:

On April 12, 1615, Robert Cardinal Bellarmine wrote a personal letter to Fr. Paolo Antonio Foscarini, who had been advocating the heliocentric view for some time. In the letter Bellarmine states:

Second, I say that, as you know, the Council prohibits interpreting Scripture against the common consensus of the Holy Fathers; and if Your Reverence wants to read not only the Holy Fathers, but also the modern commentaries on Genesis, the Psalms, Ecclesiastes, and Joshua, you will find all agreeing in the literal interpretation that the sun is in heaven and turns around the earth with great speed, and that the earth is very far from heaven and sits motionless at the center of the world. Consider now, with your sense of prudence, whether the Church can tolerate giving Scripture a meaning contrary to the Holy Fathers and to all the Greek and Latin commentators.

Cardinal Bellarmine was referring to the ecumenical **Council of Trent** which stated the following decree regarding the authority of the consensus of the Fathers of the Church on the interpretation of Scripture:

Furthermore, in order to restrain petulant spirits, It decrees, that no one, relying on his own skill, shall, in matters of faith, and of morals pertaining to the edification of Christian doctrine, wresting the sacred Scripture to his own senses, presume to interpret the said sacred Scripture contrary to that sense which holy mother Church, whose it is to judge of the true sense and interpretation of the holy Scriptures, hath held and doth hold; or even contrary to the unanimous consent of the Fathers; even though such

³⁵ *Providentissimus Deus*

³⁶ Canon 279.1

interpretations were never intended to be at any time published. Contraveners shall be made known by their Ordinaries, and be punished with the penalties by law established.³⁷

The teaching of the supreme authority of the consensus of the Fathers of the Church was reiterated in the same infallible form by **Vatican Council I** in 1870:

But, since the rules which the holy Synod of Trent salutarily decreed concerning the interpretation of Divine Scripture in order to restrain impetuous minds, are wrongly explained by certain men, We, renewing the same decree, declare this to be its intention: that, in matters of faith and morals pertaining to the instruction of Christian Doctrine, that must be considered as the true sense of Sacred Scripture which Holy Mother Church has held and holds, whose office it is to judge concerning the true understanding and interpretation of the Sacred Scriptures; and, for that reason, no one is permitted to interpret Sacred Scripture itself contrary to this sense, or even contrary to the unanimous agreement of the Fathers.³⁸

Pope Leo XIII confirmed the words of Cardinal Bellarmine and the Councils in his encyclical *Providentissimus Deus*:

...and, most of all, that they may understand that God has delivered the Holy Scriptures to the Church, and that in reading and making use of His Word, they must follow the Church as their guide and their teacher. St. Irenaeus long since laid down, that where the *charismata* of God were, there the truth was to be learnt, and that Holy Scripture was safely interpreted by those who had the Apostolic succession. His teaching, and that of other Holy Fathers, is taken up by the Council of the Vatican, which, in renewing the decree of Trent declares its “mind” to be this – that “in things of faith and morals, belonging to the building up of Christian doctrine, that is to be considered the true sense of Holy Scripture which has been held and is held by our Holy Mother the Church, whose place it is to judge of the true sense and interpretation of the Scriptures; and therefore that it is permitted to no one to interpret Holy Scripture against such sense or also against the unanimous agreement of the Fathers.” By this most wise decree the Church by no means prevents or restrains the pursuit of Biblical science, but rather protects it from error, and largely assists its real progress.

The Professor of Holy Scripture, therefore, amongst other recommendations, must be well acquainted with the whole circle of Theology and deeply read in the commentaries of the Holy Fathers and Doctors, and other interpreters of mark. This is inculcated by St. Jerome, and still more frequently by St. Augustine, who thus justly complains: “If

³⁷ Council of Trent, Session IV.

³⁸ Vatican Council I, Chapter II, Denz. 1788.

there is no branch of teaching, however humble and easy to learn, which does not require a master, what can be a greater sign of rashness and pride than to refuse to study the Books of the divine mysteries by the help of those who have interpreted them?" The other Fathers have said the same, and have confirmed it by their example, for they "endeavored to acquire the understanding of the Holy Scriptures not by their own lights and ideas, but from the writings and authority of the ancients, who in their turn, as we know, received the rule of interpretation in direct line from the Apostles." The Holy Fathers "to whom, after the Apostles, the Church owes its growth – who have planted, watered, built, governed, and cherished it," the Holy Fathers, We say, are of supreme authority, whenever they all interpret in one and the same manner any text of the Bible, as pertaining to the doctrine of faith or morals; for their unanimity clearly evinces that such interpretation has come down from the Apostles as a matter of Catholic faith. The opinion of the Fathers is also of very great weight when they treat of these matters in their capacity of doctors, unofficially; not only because they excel in their knowledge of revealed doctrine and in their acquaintance with many things which are useful in understanding the apostolic Books, but because they are men of eminent sanctity and of ardent zeal for the truth, on whom God has bestowed a more ample measure of His light. Wherefore the expositor should make it his duty to follow their footsteps with all reverence, and to use their labors with intelligent appreciation.

In 1965, **Vatican Council II** reiterated the Church's teaching on the authority of the Fathers:

This tradition which comes from the Apostles develop in the Church with the help of the Holy Spirit. For there is a growth in the understanding of the realities and the words which have been handed down. This happens through the contemplation and study made by believers, who treasure these things in their hearts (Lk 2:19,51) through a penetrating understanding of the spiritual realities which they experience, and through the preaching of those who have received through episcopal succession the sure gift of truth. For as the centuries succeed one another, the Church constantly moves forward toward the fullness of divine truth until the words of God reach their complete fulfillment in her.

The words of the holy fathers witness to the presence of this living tradition, whose wealth is poured into the practice and life of the believing and praying Church.³⁹

The bride of the incarnate Word, the Church taught by the Holy Spirit, is concerned to move ahead toward a deeper understanding of the Sacred Scriptures so that she may increasingly feed her sons with the divine words. Therefore, she also encourages the study of the holy Fathers of both East and West and of sacred liturgies.⁴⁰

³⁹ *Dei Verbum*, Ch. 2, 8.

⁴⁰ *Dei Verbum*, Ch. 6, 23.

...faithful to the truth which we have received from the apostles and Fathers of the Church, in harmony with the faith which the Catholic Church has always professed.⁴¹

Following the study of Sacred Scripture, the Holy Fathers, the doctors and liturgy of the Church, and under the guidance of the Church's magisterium...⁴²

The knowledge of the sacred minister ought to be sacred because it is drawn from the sacred source and directed to a sacred goal. Especially is it drawn from reading and meditating on the Sacred Scriptures, and it is equally nourished by the study of the Holy Fathers and other Doctors and monuments or tradition.⁴³

...the words and deeds which God has revealed, and which have been set down in Sacred Scripture and explained by the Fathers and by the magisterium.⁴⁴

The Fathers of the Church proclaim without hesitation...⁴⁵

This doctrine is contained in the word of God and it was constantly proclaimed by the Fathers of the Church.⁴⁶

⁴¹ *Unitatis Redintegratio*, Ch. 3, II, 24.

⁴² *Lumen Gentium*, Ch. 8, IV, 67.

⁴³ *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, Ch. 3, 3, 19.

⁴⁴ *Ad Gentes*, Ch. 3, 22.

⁴⁵ *Ad Gentes*, Ch. 1, 3.

⁴⁶ *Dignitatis Humanae*, Introduction, 10.