

GALILEO THE THEOLOGIAN

SCIENCE & RELIGION INSIGHTS FOR TODAY

Sunday School Edition

Denis O. Lamoureux DDS PhD PhD

St. Joseph's College, University of Alberta

INTRODUCTION

Galileo Galilei

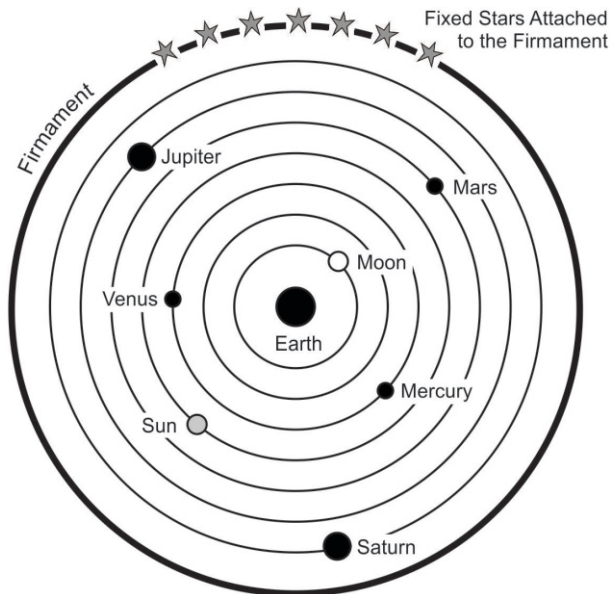
born 15 Feb 1564, died 8 Jan 1642

Astronomy of the Day

Aristotle (384-322 BC) & Ptolemy (100-170 AD)

Geocentricity Greek *gē*: earth

spherical earth in centre of spherical universe

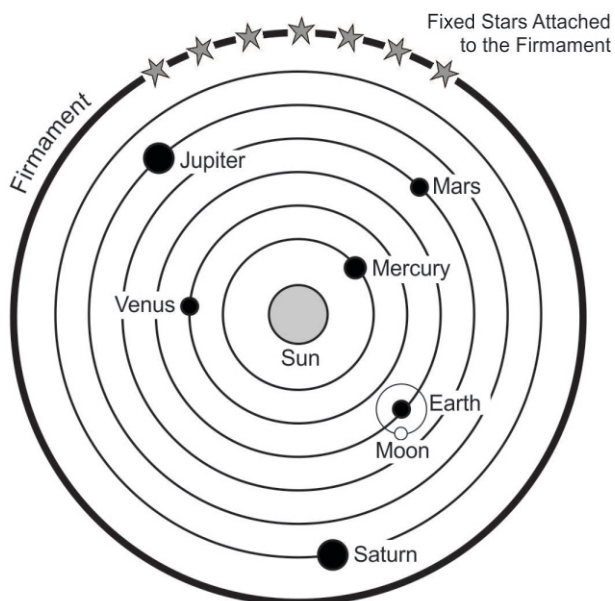


Nicholas Copernicus (1473-1543)

Heliocentricity Greek *hēlios*: earth

spherical sun in centre of spherical universe

On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres (1543)



The Contribution

Science based on observations & experiments, and not on the writings of Aristotle

Dialogue on the Two Principal World Systems: Ptolemaic and Copernican (1632)

The Problem

The ideas of Aristotle closely connected to theology I, Galileo ... have been judged of heresy, namely of having believed that [1] the sun is the center of the world & motionless and [2] the earth is not the center and moves... With a sincere heart and faith I reject, curse, and detest these errors and heresies.

Trial of Galileo (22 Jun 1633) *Galileo Affair*, 292

☛ Galileo became the symbol of the Warfare between Science & Religion

FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLE: TWO DIVINE BOOKS

Scripture & Nature from God

For the Holy Scripture and nature derive equally from the God; the former as the dictation of the Holy Spirit and the latter as the most obedient follower of God's orders.

"Letter to Grand Duchess Christina" in *GA*, 93

Scripture & Nature Reveal God

God reveals Himself to us no less excellently in the effects of nature than in the sacred words of Scripture.

GA 93

Primacy of Scripture over Nature in Theology

Where human reason cannot reach & where consequently one cannot have a science, but only faith, it is appropriate to conform absolutely to the literal meaning of Scripture.

GA 104

Primacy of Nature over Scripture in Science

In disputes about nature one must not begin with the authority of biblical passages, but instead with sensory experience and necessary demonstrations.

GA 93

NATURE: THE BOOK OF GOD'S WORKS

God Created Faithful Laws of Nature

Nature is relentless & never changes & never violates the terms of the laws imposed on her by God. *GA* 93

Science Is a Gift from God

I do not think one has to believe that the same God who has given us our senses, language, and intellect would want us to set aside the use of these... Indeed, who wants the human mind put to death? ... When one is in possession of scientific information it too is a gift from God. *GA* 96-7,105

Science Assists in Interpreting Scripture

After becoming certain of some scientific conclusions, we should use these as very appropriate aids to the correct interpretation of Scripture. *GA*, 93

SCRIPTURE: THE BOOK OF GOD'S WORDS

Scripture is Inerrant, NOT its Interpreters

Holy Scripture can never lie or err, its declarations are absolutely true ... as long as its true meaning has been grasped... Though the Scripture was inspired by the Holy Spirit ... we cannot claim that all interpreters speak by divine inspiration, because if this were true then there would be no disagreement between them. GA 49, 51, 92, 96

Science in Scripture is Incidental

Scripture speaks **incidentally** of the earth, water, sun, or other created thing... Sciences are discussed in Scripture to a very minor extent and with disconnected statements; such is precisely the case of astronomy. GA 93-4

Science in Scripture is Ancient & Accommodated

Statements dictated by the Holy Spirit were expressed by biblical writers in such a way as to **accommodate** to the abilities of people who were not educated ... in order not to sow confusion into the minds of the common people and make them more stubborn in believing spiritual truths involving higher mysteries ... I shall further say that it was not only respect for the inability of common people, but it was the **current opinion of those times**. GA 92, 106-7
i.e., it was the science-of-the-day; ancient science

THE MESSAGE-INCIDENT PRINCIPLE



SCIENCE & RELIGION CONFLICT

Concordism is the Main Cause of Conflict

Definition of Concordism

the assumption that statements in the Bible about nature align with the facts of science.

The reason they [Galileo's enemies] advance to condemn the idea of the earth's mobility and sun's stability is this: Since in many places in Holy Scripture one reads that the sun moves [Eccl 1:5, Josh 10:13, Ps 19:6] and the earth stands still [1 Chr 16:30, Ps 93:1, 104:5] and since the Scripture can never lie or err, it follows as a logical conclusion, that anyone claiming the sun is motionless and the earth moving, this claim is erroneous and damnable. GA 90

Problem with Concordism

Geocentricity is not true
The Bible has ancient science

Other Factors Contributing to the Conflict

Excessive Biblical Literalism

Though the Scripture cannot err, nevertheless some of its interpreters may sometimes err in various ways. One of these errors is very serious and very frequent. This is when they want to limit themselves always to the literal meaning of words. GA 49

Ignorance & Lack of Charity

Now that we are discovering that Copernicus' theory is based on clear observations & logical arguments, some people come along who, without having even seen his book [*Revolutions of Heavenly Spheres*], give its author the reward of so much work by trying to have him declared a heretic. GA 90

SUMMARY: GALILEO'S SCIENCE & RELIGION

- The motion or rest of the earth or the sun are not articles of faith and are not against morals. GA 109
- The primary purpose of Holy Scripture is for the worship of God and the salvation of souls. GA 93
- The intention of the Holy Spirit is to teach us how one goes to heaven, and not how heaven goes. GA 97

CONCLUSIONS

1. Galileo Affair is NOT about a flat earth!!!
2. NO warfare between Galileo's Science & Religion
3. Biblical interpretation is the KEY to a peaceful relationship between Science & Religion:
Accommodation & Incidental Ancient Science
4. Is the origins debate today a recycling of the Galileo Affair with evolution the issue instead of astronomy?
The Question:
Does the Bible have an ancient understanding of the origin of the universe & life?
5. Time for a new saying?

*The intention of the Bible is to teach us
THAT God is the Creator,
and not
HOW He created.*

BIBLIOGRAPHY

MA Finocchiaro, *The Galileo Affair: A Documentary History*
Berkeley, CA: U of California Press, 1989. Abbreviated: GA
Note: Some quotations have been modified in order to make them easier to understand.

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