

History had shown that many great minds have been extinguished due to ignorance of the facts and a stubborn unwillingness on the part of Church and/or State leaders to closely examine the evidence which ultimately provides concrete proof as to which perspective was indeed accurate.

---

As Copernicus lay on his deathbed a newly printed copy of his masterwork was brought to him. It was [is] titled, *On The Revolutions Of The Heavenly Spheres*. This astounding work would topple in one fell swoop the cosmological beliefs that had been taught as fact for more than fourteen centuries. Copernicus' death shortly thereafter was a good thing for him because his work contradicted Holy Scripture which was a capital offense punished by death. Copernicus presented mathematical proof that the sun, not the earth, was the center of the solar system. According to Copernicus, the earth, as well as the other planets, revolved around the sun while at the same time spinning about a central axis.

It was difficult at that time to imagine a similar challenge to human beliefs, to conceive of such a sudden and tremendous jolt to our imagination, and a change of perspective that would cause such a complete reversal of what had been taken to be immutable truth by virtually everyone alive, for hundreds of years. The academic community was left stunned and bewildered. The reaction by the leaders of the Catholic Church was predictable. The Heliocentric Theory, as it was known, was declared a heresy and in direct conflict with established church beliefs and teachings.

In the generation following Copernicus, the Heliocentric Theory found wide acceptance throughout the academic world, but not without risk. The Catholic Church increased its opposition to the increasing popular new belief, that the world was not flat. Three young scientists, Antonio Vanini, Jaques Fountianier, and Giordano Bruno, all dedicated adherents of the Heliocentric Theory, were pronounced heretics by the Inquisition and given the dreaded choice--recant or die. They bravely chose death, and the age of modern science began with martyrs.

You know, there is a very poignant and compelling story here that is too often ignored by history. These men willingly chose death under the most inhumane conditions for a cause to which they were devoted. They were obviously men of great integrity with a selfless dedication to truth and knowledge. When you think of it, didn't these men die for freedom of thought? Didn't they die so that all men might be free to think, and to experience their God given right to have and to hold one's own perspective and to share it freely (i.e., free speech)?

When in 1633 the great Galileo Galilei's turn before the Inquisition came he wisely chose to recant and was thus spared the ultimate humiliation and hideous torture of being burnt alive at the stake. But he was not to get off scot-free, due, no doubt, to the prestige he commanded throughout the academic world of that day Pope Urban VIII relented and in a rare gesture of benevolence allowed Galileo to live out

his sentence in the comfort and privacy of his home in Florence where he spent the rest of his life under house arrest. Upon his death in 1642 Galileo was buried obscurely and at the church's contrivance he was denied either a monument or an epitaph to honor his name. To his credit, some 350 years later, in 1992, Pope John Paul II issued an official apology for the church's unjust treatment of Galileo.

Unfortunately before this shift to a new perspective became widely accepted, many great minds were extinguished due to ignorance [of the facts], and a stubborn unwillingness on the part of both Church and/or State leaders to closely examine the every mounting evidence which ultimately provided concrete proof as to which perspective was indeed accurate. The leaders preferred ignorance in the populace.

Two examples based on historical facts and evidence:

- a.. The Earth is a sphere, and therefore cannot be flat.
- b.. There has never been a Law on the books that conferred an Income Tax on most Americans who did not volunteer to pay it, and therefore those same Americans are not lawfully liable to pay Income Tax.

---

So, here is one of those truly "golden" opportunities to choose.

Which is going to be:

Ignorance and stubbornness, or willingness to closely examine the evidence that provides the concrete proof?