

Review of:

Extraterrestrial Intelligence and the Catholic Church: Are We Alone in the Universe with God and the Angels?

Authored by Paul Thigpen, published by Tan Books, 2022

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Buckle up and prepare for a wild ride. After a lifelong contemplation of the subject, popular author Paul Thigpen has decided to make a case for aliens living on other worlds, and perhaps visiting ours. Catholics will be interested in what he has to say because Paul attempts to use scriptural, magisterial, and traditional sources to support his pro-alien view. The book is 433 pages, half of which is an historical overview of the subject from Plato to Pope John Paul II.

The research it must have taken to collect and collate everyone who ever had a published thought about aliens is remarkable. I think Paul's is the first book to do so. So if you want a "Who's Who?" on which side someone was in the debate about aliens, Paul's book is the place to go.

Here are some examples of some of the more famous names in history who took sides on the issue. Those marked Y gave at least some indication of the possibility for other inhabited worlds, although some who said Yes qualified it by adding that although God could do it, he didn't do it: ¹

Out of this list of 66 names, 25 said No to the possibility of aliens, while 41 said Yes, with 2 unknown. Of the list of 39 in the footnote, 18 said No and 27 said Yes, with 2 unknown. So the Yeses have it by about 65%. This may not mean much since we don't know what kind of selection process Paul employed. One interesting note is that most of the No votes come from those who lived before the Copernican revolution. I will say more about the Copernican revolution and its relation to aliens later in my review.

Aristotle: N	Ockham: N	Issac Newton: Y	Emm. Swedenborg: Y
Plato: Y	Buridan: N	George Bentley: Y	Joseph Smith: Y
Plutarch: Y	Oresme: N	John Locke: Y	Ellen White: Y
Origen: Y	Bonaventure: N	George Berkeley: Y	Ben Franklin: Y
Jerome: N	Nicholas of Cusa: Y	Godfried Leibniz: Y?	John Adams: Y
Augustine: N	Giordano Bruno: Y	C. S. Lewis: Y	Thomas Paine: Y
Hippolytus: Y	Melanchthon: N	Edm. Halley: Y	Cotton Mather: Y
Chrysostom: Y	Johannes Kepler: Y	Alexander Pope: Y	John Wesley: N
Athanasius: Y	Galileo: Y	Immanuel Kant: Y	John H. Newman: N?
Pope Zachary: N	Caccini: N	Martin Luther: ?	Thomas Huxley: N?
Albert the Great: N	Riccioli: N	Gassendi: Y	Charles Darwin: ?
Roger Bacon: N	Descartes: Y	J. Hutchinson: N	Flammarion: Y
Aquinas: N	Huygens: Y	Boscovich: Y	Anne C. Emmerich: Y

¹ Other's in Paul's book include: Robert Burton: N; John Donne: N; Campanella: Y; Mersenne: N; John Wilkins: Y; Fontenelle: Y; Isaac Watts: ?; Henry More: Y; Cadonicci: N; Chalmers: Y; Whewell: N; A.R. Wallace: N; de Vere: N; Meynell: Y; Montignez: Y; Abbe Pioger: Y; Ortolan: Y; Perujo: Y; Secchi: Y; Joseph Pohle: Y; Schanz: Y; Searle: ?; DeConcilio: Y; Fr. T. Hughes: N; Abbe Filachou: N; Abbe Burque: N; Fr. A. Hewitt: Y; J. Boiteux: N?; Courbet: N; Vakoch: Y; Zubek: Y; A. Milne: N; E.L. Mascall: Y; Raible: Y; K. J. Delano: Y; J.A. Breig: N; Jacques Monod: N; Ben Wiker: N; T. Dailey: N; J. Keel: N; Marie George: Y?; O. Putz: Y; R. Kereszty: Y; P. Hess: Y; J Funes: N; J. Moritz: N

Fr. Stanley Jaki: N
Garrigou-Lagrange: N
Pierre de Chardin: Y
Yves Congar: Y

Karl Rahner: N
Padre Pio: Y
Paul VI: Y
John Paul II: Y?

Paul Davies: Y
Francis Crick: N
Pat Robertson: N
Fr. D. Longenecker: N

David Wilkinson: N?
E. McMullin: Y?
Fr. George Coyne: Y

Once you get past the vast history of opinions on aliens, Paul gives his own ideas in the latter half of the book, and he is certainly happy that the history shows he is not a lone wolf howling in the night.

But it is here I began to ponder what would have made someone like Paul Thigpen go so far in trying to prove what appears to be an unproveable case. From where was the passion coming that leads Paul to answer every possible objection he could think of?

There were at least two strong motivators. One of them doesn't appear until the last chapter, which is titled "What about UFOs?" There Paul recommends the 2010 book by investigative journalist, Leslie Kean, titled, "UFOs: Generals, Pilots, and Government Officials Go on the Record." Commenting on Kean's work, Paul says, "In fact, it was Kean's reporting for *The New York Times* that prompted the writing of the present book," although Paul adds, "I have wanted to write on this subject for many years..." (p. 364).

The Influence of C. S. Lewis' Alien Fiction

As for the other motivator, one thing I noticed over and over again was Paul's passionate devotion to C. S. Lewis. In fact, if I counted up the references correctly, Paul quotes from C. S. Lewis more than any other author of the last two thousand years. At times it appeared Paul's book was an apology for Lewis and Lewis' repertoire of science fiction novels, many of them about aliens, a subject that Paul says he has been contemplating from childhood with a late friend of his. Hence it appears Paul had already been desensitized to the idea of alien existence long before he wrote his book.

C. S. Lewis' notion of the "cosmic Christ" plays prominently in Paul's assortment of catch phrases that are supposed to bring us to a quick understanding of the possibility that Christ has and will be redeeming aliens until the end of time.

One of Lewis' more popular works, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, which features a lion named Aslan, Paul informs us that the popular notion of Aslan being "an allegorical figure of Christ" who "creates the world of Narnia and dies on behalf of a sinner and rises again, and in the end, he judges all the creatures of that fanciful world," is wrong. To correct it, Paul quotes from Lewis himself, saying,

"Aslan is an invention giving an imaginary answer to the question, 'What might Christ become like if there really were a world like Narnia and he chose to be incarnate and did and rise again in that world as he actually has done in ours? This is not an allegory at all' (pp. 315-316).

In other words, C. S. Lewis' primary intention was not to give an allegory as to what Christ already did but to propose what he might still do for the aliens of the universe. In that sense, Lewis' work is more of what we might call a docu-novel in which fictional characters represent realities that the author believes are true. We know we are following Lewis' bread crumbs because Mr. Thigpen says just a line later,

“In this light, Aslan might prompt us to consider: Given the problematic implications of the ‘cosmic Christ’ notion, if intelligent extraterrestrial races exist, might multiple incarnations of God in different species be possible? (p. 316).

What this tells us of Paul’s thinking process as he wrote the book is that he knew it had to be an all or nothing endeavor. That is, he couldn’t just raise the question of alien existence that one might find on television documentaries like *Unsolved Mysteries*. Once Paul put his toe in this water he couldn’t leave without diving deep into the Christian doctrine of the atonement since, for Christians, the topic of alien existence merely begs the question concerning what relationship aliens would have to God, and especially in the area of the last four things.

This forces Paul to go into a whole array of speculative theological thoughts, some of them quite bizarre to the uninitiated, about how God would manifest himself to aliens; or even whether aliens were considered sinful and needed to be redeemed in the first place. Often when Paul gets into a sticky theological wicket, he calls C. S. Lewis to the rescue to help him out of the conundrum, even though Lewis was not Catholic.

Multiple Marys and Multiple Christs to Save Multiple Aliens

Toward the end, Paul comes to the point of having to admit that his notion of redeeming aliens must include the possibility of having multiple Marys to produce the multiple Christ’s that will have to assume multiple alien physiologies. Surprisingly, Paul’s only reticence to this weird proposal is that we need not worry if Mary would lend herself to be multiplied because, being humble, Mary would present no competition to the alien Marys who are to bring alien Christ’s to the universe’s multitude of aliens. I will allow Paul to say it in his own words:

“Instead, I mean that the Son of God, the eternal Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, might unite to Himself the nature of one or more intelligent extraterrestrial races. This means we would not be talking about multiple Persons; He would be, in each incarnation, the very same divine Person, the Son of God. But that one divine Person would have joined to Himself numerically distinct, multiple natures of created rational races, and made them His own, in the kind of hypostatic union that Saint Thomas was describing” (p. 319).

As for Mary and multiple Marys, Paul adds,

“If the divine Son of God should become incarnate in extraterrestrial races, then His mother on other planets could also be rightly called the ‘Mother of God.’ He would, in fact, have several mothers—though their multiplicity would do nothing to diminish the exalted dignity of each one” (p. 346).

“Finally, even if there are multiple incarnations with multiple Mothers of God and of the Church, who are also multiple Queens of the Universe through the divine Majesty of their Son, the modest mother of Jesus that I know would not consider herself dishonored or diminished in any way. Nor would she view her ‘sisters’ as rivals or be jealous of them. She is Mother Most Humble” (p. 347).

At this point Paul steps back a bit and admits, “We are in admittedly deep waters here, and if I offer any speculations that the Church should later rule out, I will be the first to reject them” (p. 346).

When Paul’s logic led him to the point that he had to envision multiple Christs and multiple Marys to make saving various aliens redemptively feasible, one wonders whether at this point Paul had thoughts of abandoning the whole endeavor because the waters were not only deep they were becoming an abyss.

But Paul trudged onward. One of Paul’s constant refrains is that we can’t deny him the right to write his book and express his personal speculations about aliens because, after all, “anything is possible for God.” Paul repeats this phrase so often it becomes a rhetorical device to ward off any critic who might think Paul has gone too far or gone off the edge entirely.

Dominus Jesus

One of the better examples in the book of Paul’s reluctance to question his position, even in the face of what others see as a strong hint that Paul is on the wrong track, is Paul’s treatment of the 2000 document, *Dominus Jesus*, written by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, at that time Prefect of the CDF.

First, Paul admits that *Dominus Jesus* has been “cited as evidence that the existence of multiple incarnations would be contrary to the teaching of the Church” (p. 330). But as a mother defending her tormented child, Paul quickly reminds us that *Dominus Jesus* “is not infallible, nor does it even carry the weight of a papal encyclical,” yet admits “it was ratified and confirmed by Pope Saint John Paul II” and admits it “takes up what has been taught in previous magisterial documents...that are part of the Christian faith” (p. 331).

Next Paul gives us a list of the half dozen times that *Dominus Jesus* says that salvation is only for the human race, and he even italicizes such phrases as “salvific revelation of God *to humanity*,” and “Jesus Christ has a significance and a value *for the human race and its history*, which are unique and singular, proper to him alone, exclusive, universal, and absolute” (p. 332).

Yet after all the emphasis on the human race as the only recipient of God’s salvation, Paul decides to focus on another statement of *Dominus Jesus* that is more to his agenda. It says,

“There is only one salvific economy of the One and Triune God, realized in the mystery of the incarnation, death, and resurrection of the Son of God, actualized with the cooperation of the Holy Spirit, and extended in its salvific value to all humanity *and to the entire universe*” (emphasis his).

As Paul italicizes “*and to the entire universe*,” his commentary on it follows:

“This statement does have an explicit cosmic scope and could indeed be read as support for a ‘cosmic Christ’....God’s salvation in Christ on Earth makes a contribution to His greater redemptive plan for the cosmos....it cannot be ruling out multiple incarnations; the Church has never definitively settled or even addressed that issue” (p. 333).

As we can see, no matter how many times *Dominus Jesus* speaks of the uniqueness of Christ and the uniqueness of His salvation to humanity—which fact even Paul admits on the previous

page when he says that *Dominus Jesus* “did not have in view intelligent races on other planets”—Paul still reads into this single phrase, “and to the entire universe,” what he wants to see—the possibility of alien life on other planets. As a rule, when the ambiguity of language offers Paul the slightest crack through which he can wiggle, Paul will invariably take the opportunity. Normally, when phrases like “and to the entire universe” are used in a scholarly soteriological context, it refers only to St. Paul’s words in Roman 8:20-21 that when Adam sinned the whole creation was cursed and forced to decay, but which will be liberated from the curse at the Second coming of Christ.

Pope Pius II Rejects Other Inhabited Worlds

Despite all of Paul’s wiggling, I think it is clear the Church has ruled against Paul’s ideas. First, on Nov. 14, 1459, Pope Pius II wrote an encyclical titled, *Cum sicut accepimus*, in which he condemned the errors of one Zanini de Solcia. Zanini was teaching such things as: sex before marriage is legal; Jesus died because of the law of the stars; all Christians are to be saved, and last but not least,

“That God created another world than this one, and that in its time many other men and women existed and that consequently Adam was not the first man” (Denz 717c).

About 140 years later, Giordano Bruno promoted the idea of alien worlds. He was eventually excommunicated and executed, but mainly for holding many other heterodox doctrines. But the like-minded astro-pluralist ideas of Cusa and Oresme were also shunned by the Church.

Paul Thigpen, being an erudite scholar, certainly didn’t miss Pius II’s condemnation in his 433 page book, but here he reserves himself the right to dismiss it from concern. Paul writes:

“Pope Pius does not appear to be making a blanket condemnation of the general notion that God has created other inhabited worlds. Rather, he seems to be rejecting the more specific idea that God created a world inhabited by members of the human race before He created our world. The latter notion would of course imply that Adam and Eve were not the first parents of the entire human race. The more general scenario of God’s creating an intelligent race in a prior world, a race not related to ours, would not” (p. 48).

Paul appears to make a cogent qualification. He says that Pius II limited his scope to the idea that there were *no humans* before Adam that could have inhabited other planets. This emphasis on *humans* leaves room for Paul to conclude that Pius II was not excluding aliens, only excluding humans from other worlds.

The brevity (one paragraph) with which Paul addresses Pius II’s condemnation, especially with the “if it doesn’t say no, then it becomes a yes” kind of argumentation, got me a little suspicious. This was a flaming arrow right at the heart of Paul’s position, so why didn’t he take more time to address it with more than an argument from silence?

Let’s ask the fair question: Did Pius II limit himself from including aliens in the condemnation? The answer would have to be no. This is so because Pius II’s statement comes in two parts that are separated by a conjunction, and each part has one condemnation. The first condemnation is: “That God created another world than this one.” The second condemnation is: “that in its time many other men and women existed and that consequently Adam was not the first man.”

Paul focuses on the second condemned thesis which he then believes allows him to assert that Pius II is only saying that *humans* cannot be on other planets. But Paul fails to do justice to Pius II's first condemnation, *i.e.*, that God created another world than this one. Since God did not create another world than this one, then obviously there is no other world that aliens could live on. In fact, it is only after the primary argument (*i.e.*, that God created no other worlds) is it then possible for Pius II to conclude that there could be no humans prior to Adam.

Although it is reasonable to say that Pius II might not have been thinking of aliens, *per se*, he was certainly thinking of the possibility of other inhabitable worlds and to that specific question he gave a definitive no.

Now, perhaps Pius II's statement isn't infallible, but at the least Paul cannot say, as he does very often in his book, that "the Church has not even addressed the issue of other worlds, much less decided upon it."

Church Dogma and "Multiple Christs"

The other problem that Paul runs into with his idea of "multiple Christs" having to assume the varying physiologies of different aliens is that it appears Church dogma will not allow it. The Church has held that the union of Christ's divine nature to his human nature is unique and inseparable; and that once it was decided for Christ to have two natures, that fact remains for eternity and will not be altered. For example, one council says,

"In this Son of God we believe there are two natures, one of divinity, the other of humanity, which the one person of Christ so united in Himself that the divinity can never be separated from the humanity, nor the humanity from the divinity. Christ, therefore, is perfect God and perfect man in the unity of one person" (Denz 283, also 290 and 291).

In Paul Thigpen's theology, Christ can or could add more natures to his divine Person, and by extension can add innumerable alien natures to live alongside his already chosen human nature, and this conglomeration will still be identified as the "Second Person of the Trinity."

Paul must propose a divine/alien hypostasis since aliens, being are under the curse of sin and death, will need to be redeemed from the curse.

At this point, numerous questions flood our mind. Is Paul Thigpen telling us that when we see Christ in heaven he will look human and alien to us, with multiple alien faces and physiologies? Instead of praying, "O Jesus our redeemer," will we be praying "O Jesus our redeemers"? When Mary looks at her Son, what is she going to see? A man with many faces? A man with many bodies; an amalgamation of bodies; or one body for each day of the week, as it were? What kind of monstrous phantasmagoria has Paul unleashed on us?

Thomas to the Rescue?

At this point Paul calls Thomas to his aid. Paul raises the question, "...if intelligent extraterrestrial races exist, might multiple incarnations of God in different species be possible?" (p. 316). Paul gives what he thinks is Thomas' answer, with Thomas saying, "the divine Person is able to assume, in addition to a human nature that has already been assumed, another numerically

different human nature” (ST, III 3.7 or St III 3.7 ad 2). Paul’s only qualification to Thomas’ proposal is to say, “The conclusion, of course, is not that God has certainly done so, but rather that it is certainly possible for him to do so.”

For the record, Thomas engaged in a lot of theological speculation on many topics, consonant with the Scholastic age in which he lived. As such, in the same section, Thomas says even more esoteric things:

“Therefore the Divine power could have united human nature to the Person of the Father or of the Holy Ghost, as It united it to the Person of the Son. And hence we must say that the Father or the Holy Ghost could have assumed flesh even as the Son” (*Summa, Tertia Pars*, III, Art. 5).

“The Incarnate Person subsists in two natures. But the three Persons can subsist in one Divine Nature. Therefore they can also subsist in one human nature in such a way that the human nature be assumed by the three Persons” (Art. 6)

“Therefore it is not impossible that two or three Divine Persons should assume one human nature, but it would be impossible for them to assume one human hypostasis or person. “In the hypothesis that three Persons assume one human nature, it would be true to say that the three Persons were one man, because of the one human nature” (Art. 6).

And finally, the one from Thomas that Paul chose:

“Whatever the Father can do, that also can the Son do. But after Incarnation the Father can still assume a human nature distinct from that which the Son has assumed; for in nothing is the power of the Father or the Son lessened by Incarnation of the Son. Therefore it seems that after Incarnation the Son can assume another human nature distinct from the one He has assumed” (*Tertia Pars*, III, Art 7).

Notice that Thomas says that even if the Son were to assume another nature, that nature would be *human*. This fact is important to the discussion since Paul acknowledges that Thomas doesn’t believe in the possibility of aliens or multiple worlds, saying,

“...with the newly rediscovered philosophy of Aristotle. Not surprisingly, then, Saint Thomas followed Aristotle in concluding that there could be only one cosmos...Because of the oneness of God, he insisted, it was fitting for him to create only one world, mirroring His own perfection. The philosopher cited a Gospel passage to buttress this claim: ‘It is said [Jn 1:10]: “The world was made by him [God], where the world is named as one, as if only one existed”’ (p. 37).

Since Paul doesn’t prefer this side of Thomas, he claims that,

“...this comment seems to have been more of a passing remark than a substantive argument. As with most medieval commentators on this issue, his primary arguments were not from Scripture but from Aristotle: one Craftsman, one ordering, one end—one universe...Division implies imperfection....And this one consideration, the creative omnipotence of God—unforeseen by Aristotle or the atomists—eventually presented a serious challenge to Saint Thomas’s conclusions about the plurality of worlds” (p. 38).

So, when Paul needs Thomas, we are told that Thomas believes in the possibility that Christ could have multiple natures. But when Paul wants to distance himself from Thomas, Thomas is an “Aristotelian” who doesn’t consult Scripture (and, incidentally, Scripture says nothing about Christ assuming multiple natures).

The fact is Thomas wasn’t a geocentrist merely because Aristotle was. Thomas was following the consensus of the Fathers and the medieval tradition’s face-value interpretation of Scripture that said the Earth is motionless and everything else revolves around it; the Church officially confirming that view in its 1633 condemnation of Copernicanism as a heresy—and one in which Galileo was convicted of being “vehemently suspect of heresy.” Obviously, he couldn’t be convicted of being suspect of heresy unless the heresy had already been defined, which it was in 1616. Hence the stars were put in the cosmos not to raise alien life but to satisfy the physics that requires a large number of stars for the angular momentum of a daily rotating universe.

Be that as it may, I think Thomas was wrong to suggest that Christ could assume more than one human nature. Thomas bases his conjecture on the premise that “Now the power of a Divine Person is infinite, nor can it be limited by any created thing. Hence it may not be said that a Divine Person so assumed one human nature as to be unable to assume another” (*Summa, Tertia Pars*, III, 7). Certainly the created cannot limit the divine, but that doesn’t mean the divine can do anything. Scripture is clear that God cannot lie, and thus God cannot do everything; and thus his options are not “infinite” (Titus 1:2; Heb 6:13-18). But having two human natures in one divine Person would be a contradiction, an illogicality, an incongruity, not to mention perverse and ludicrous.

Just to belabor the point for the sake of argument, if the assuming of multiple natures in one Divine Person were allowed in order to redeem aliens, when does Paul propose this assumption of natures will happen? In Christianity, Christ came, as Galatians 4:4 says, “in the fullness of time.” When does he come for aliens and assume their nature? This leads to other pertinent questions: Do they have their own Scriptures that prophecy of such an event? Do they have their own Church to guard against heretics that might deny such prophecy? Do they have a sacred tradition? Do they have sacraments? Do they have alien saints? The questions become endless. But they are all superfluous because the Person of Christ has already been settled as one divine nature and one human nature for all eternity.

Still, to the question of when the alien hypostasis is to occur, Paul himself already admitted that as of yet, “God has certainly not done so.” Or, hypothetically speaking, perhaps unawares to Paul the alien hypostasis has already happened, but if that were the case then the Church would have been teaching the hypostasis incorrectly for the last 2000 years since Christ would not be divine and human but divine, human and multiple alien, not to mention that the Church has no message from heaven that there was, is, or will be an assumption of multiple alien physiologies to the Second Person of the Trinity. Logic tells us that the mere fact that it hasn’t happened, in face of the fact that Paul thinks aliens have existed for thousands or even millions of years, means that it *isn’t* going to happen, and his inclination toward this end is nothing but a close encounter of the pipe dream kind.

Different Ways to Save Cursed Beings

Paul then purposes that God could have offered a number of possible salvation plans that didn't include the suffering and death of Christ so that God could dispense forgiveness to aliens without a hypostasis or an atonement and thus be totally independent from what Christ did on Earth. But this proposal just begs the question as to why, on Earth, would God require his Son's submission to the cross to the point of disregarding his Son's desperate cry in Gethsemane for another way to accomplish the atonement? Why would God give a pretense of forcing an excruciating suffering and death on Christ that he knows is easily dispensable due to other options he has available?

In other words, it's one thing to say that God "could have" offered another way of salvation; it is quite another to show how that way would be theologically feasible considering, as our Fathers, medievals, and the Council of Trent teach that God chose to be propitiated with a supreme sacrifice from an innocent victim in order to preserve God's honor and appease his wrath. The whole Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation, is rather explicit that only this pure sacrifice to God will move him to offer salvation and remove the curse from creation. Those who might venture elsewhere for their atonement soteriology simply don't understand the nature of sin, the nature of the atonement, or even the nature of God.

Scripture is clear that when Adam sinned, the whole world, the universe necessarily included, was cursed with sin and death, as Paul clearly teaches in Rom 5:12-14 ("Therefore as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned") and 8:20-22 ("the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now").

This means that aliens, if they exist, must die, and they die because of the curse of sin and death given to all of creation, and that would mean aliens are inseparably tied into the human race, which makes humanity not only the superior race but the race upon which the weal or woe of the creation stands. This won't sit well with Paul Thigpen's astro-theology because aliens are supposed to be, well, alien, and have little or nothing to do with the human race, which is the very reason Paul thinks that Christ would need to add their alien natures to his nature to save them.

Aliens with No Rational Souls

Paul's other alternative is that aliens don't have rational souls and are more or less like animals. As such, they will live a natural happiness in this life but will be annihilated at the end.

But if aliens don't have rational souls and are just basically animals, then what purpose would they serve for God?

Here on Earth, plants and animals were made for man and thus they have a purpose. Even angels were made for man, and thus have a purpose. In turn, man was made for God, and thus everything fits together and has its ontological purpose fulfilled; and will go on that way forever.

As for Scripture, there are none that come to Paul's rescue. Scripture is so silent about aliens that one can hear a theological pin drop. Although Paul desperately tries to conform Scripture to his

agenda, the endless refrain from him is, “well, even though Scripture is silent about aliens, it is still possible that aliens exist because Scripture never says no.”

Be that as it may, at one point Paul is quoting from Scottish scientist Sir David Brewster (1781-1868) and writes:

“Among the more interesting of his arguments against Whewell from Scripture was his interpretation of Isaiah 45:12 (King James Version): ‘For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens, God himself that formed the earth, and made it; he hath established it, created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited.’ For Brewster, this statement implied that planets created without inhabitants would have been created in vain. He concluded that the biblical prophets knew about the existence of extraterrestrial intelligences” (p. 148, as taken from Brewster’s *More Worlds Than One*, 1870).

I must admit that if I was in Paul’s camp and was looking for a Scripture that supported ETI, Isaiah 45:12 would be it! Why Paul didn’t make more of this, I’m not sure. Perhaps it was because it appeared that the verse was pointing to the Earth as inhabitable, not the heavens. Even then, the ambiguity might have been enough to lead people to think that Isaiah was saying the heavens were made to be inhabited, not just the Earth.

But it’s a good thing Paul didn’t elaborate on this passage, since it turns out that Brewster misquotes or mistranslates it. The “King James Version” that is allegedly the source, does not say “he...created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited.” At Isaiah 45:12 the KJV says, “I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, *and all their host have I commanded*,” and this is true of all King James versions from 1611 onward, including all non-King James versions of the Bible. No one has Brewster’s translation. The original Hebrew is: וְכָל צְבָאָם צִוִּיתִי which translated means, “and I ordered all their host.”

Why the Interest in Aliens?

When we look out into the cosmos, we see millions of stars. We are told that these stars are “billions of light years” from us. This vastness causes many to wonder whether there are any planets with life circling those stars. Indeed, SETI (Search for ExtraTerrestrial Intelligence) was formed in the 20th century for this very purpose (but with no positive results as of yet). But alien enthusiasts march forward. Of this search, Paul quotes from Michael Rosenwald in *The Washington Post*: “What was once a ticket to the political loony bin has leaped off Hollywood screens and out of science-fiction novels and into the national conversation” (p. 370).

Paul has a whole section of his book with intriguing insights and conclusions from various authors of how we might interpret such stellar vastness, such as, “the claim that God must surely fill all worlds throughout the universe with intelligent inhabitants, lest He waste such vastness of space” (p. 145); that “planets created without inhabitants would have been created in vain” (p. 148); that “the most common argument for the probable existence of ETI was the glory of God” (p. 183), etcetera.

Paul, like most who will read his book, has accepted the post-Copernican theories of modern science that “the age of the universe is many billions of years” (p. 349); that we evolved from apes (p. 283) and that the universe is Copernican (p. 357).

With this modern view of the universe, people like Paul Thigpen can't help but wonder about alien life, especially with the imaginative C. S. Lewis as the mentor. After all, Lewis himself said,

"Go out on a starry night and walk alone for half an hour, resolutely assuming that the pre-Copernican astronomy is true. Look up at the sky with that assumption in your mind. The real difference between living in that universe and living in ours will then, I predict, begin to dawn on you."²

But for those brave enough to consider it, when the Earth was taken out of the center of the cosmos by modern man; and man was told that he descended from apes and amoebas, there has never been a more drastic upheaval in human history that has adversely affected man, both intellectually and psychologically. As historian Herbert Butterfield put it,

"The Copernican revolution outshines everything since the rise of Christianity and reduces the Renaissance and Reformation to the rank of mere episodes, mere internal displacements, within the system of medieval Christendom.

Since it changed the character of men's habitual mental operations even in the conduct of the non-material sciences, while transforming the whole diagram of the physical universe and the very texture of human life itself, it looms so large as the real origin both of the modern world and of the modern mentality, that our customary periodization of European history has become an anachronism and an encumbrance."³

It is commonly admitted by historians that the Copernican Revolution spawned both the French and Bolshevik revolutions, not to mention Darwin's evolution. Karl Marx said he was indebted to Copernicus. Friedrich Engels, co-author with Marx of the *Communist Manifesto*, reveals that the Copernican revolution was the beginning of modern man's humanistic religion:

What Luther's burning of the papal Bull was in the religious field, in the field of natural science was the great work of Copernicus... from then on the development of science went forward in great strides, increasing, so to speak, proportionately to the square of the distance in time of its point of departure..."⁴

The nihilist Friedrich Nietzsche, being a bit more realistic about what the Copernican revolution did to man, despondently concluded through his character Zarathustra, "God is dead."

"Where has God gone?" he cried. "I shall tell you. We have killed him – you and I. We are his murderers. But how have we done this? How were we able to drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What did we do when we unchained the Earth from its sun? Whither is it moving now? Whither are we moving now? Away from all suns? Are we not perpetually falling? Backward, sideward, forward, in all directions?

² C. S. Lewis, *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Literature*, 1966, p. 47.

³ Owen Barfield, *Saving the Appearances: A Study in Idolatry*, 2nd edition, Wesleyan University Press, 1988, pp. 50-51.

⁴ Nicholas Rescher, *Scientific Progress*, Oxford, United Kingdom, 1978, pp. 123-124.

Is there any up or down left? Are we not straying as through an infinite nothing? Do we not feel the breath of empty space? Has it not become colder? Is it not more and more night coming on all the time? Must not lanterns be lit in the morning?

Do we not hear anything yet of the noise of the gravediggers who are burying God? Do we not smell anything yet of God's decomposition? Gods, too, decompose. God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him. How shall we, murderers of all murderers, console ourselves?"⁵

All of this sentiment led to the cosmic atheist himself, Carl Sagan, who writes:

The Earth is a very small stage in a vast cosmic arena. Our posturings, our imagined self-importance, the delusion that we have some privileged position in the Universe, are challenged by this point of pale light. Our planet is a lonely speck in the great enveloping cosmic dark. In our obscurity, in all this vastness, there I see no hint that help will come from elsewhere to save us from ourselves.⁶

As long as there have been humans we have searched for our place in the cosmos. Where are we? Who are we? We find that we live on an insignificant planet of a humdrum star lost in a galaxy tucked away in some forgotten corner of a universe in which there are far more galaxies than people.⁷

In the face of all these atheists and agnostics, interestingly enough, science has come full circle on the Copernican revolution. It has, pun unintended, revolved right back to where it started. Paul Thigpen is ignorant of it, as are most other people, because it is still rather gauche to speak about pre-Copernican cosmology in polite society, even among Catholics who are devotees of the geocentrist Thomas Aquinas. The fact is, Newton and Einstein have already admitted that the geocentric world of yesteryear is a viable scientific reality.

Recently found among Newton's papers is the last page to his *Principia Mathematica* that somehow never made it to publishing. In it Newton admits the following:

"In order for the Earth to be at rest in the center of the system of the Sun, Planets, and Comets, there is required both universal gravity and another force in addition that acts on all bodies equally according to the quantity of matter in each of them and is equal and opposite to the accelerative gravity with which the Earth tends to the Sun....Since this force is equal and opposite to its gravity toward the Sun, the Earth can truly remain in equilibrium between these two forces and be at rest. And thus celestial bodies can move around the Earth at rest, as in the Tychonic system."⁸

Coming back full circle, two hundred years after Newton, it was Ernst Mach and Albert Einstein who found the missing "force" for Newton's geocentric alternative. Eventually a name was put on

⁵ "The Gay Science" in Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1885).

⁶ *Pale Blue Dot: A Vision of the Human Future in Space*, 1977, p. 9.

⁷ "A Gift for Vividness," C. Sagan, *Time Magazine*, Oct. 20, 1980, p. 61.

⁸ Steven Weinberg, *To Explain the World: The Discovery of Modern Science*, HarperCollins, 2015, pp. 251-252. Originally from George E. Smith of Tufts University in the essay titled: "Newtonian Relativity: A Neglected Manuscript, an Understressed Corollary."

it that we know as “General Relativity.” Max Born gave one of the best explanations to educate the public on this new wrinkle in science, saying,

“Thus we may return to Ptolemy’s point of view of a ‘motionless Earth.’ This would mean that we use a system of reference rigidly fixed to the Earth in which all stars are performing a rotational motion with the same angular velocity around the Earth’s axis...one has to show that the transformed metric can be regarded as produced according to Einstein’s field equations, by distant rotating masses. This has been done by Thirring. He calculated a field due to a rotating, hollow, thick-walled sphere and proved that inside the cavity it behaved as though there were centrifugal and other inertial forces usually attributed to absolute space. Thus from Einstein’s point of view, Ptolemy and Copernicus are equally right. What point of view is chosen is a matter of expediency.”⁹

As such, the billions of stars in the universe are not, as some claim, “a waste of space if it doesn’t have inhabitants.” Those stars, as the physics shows us, are needed to keep the universe rotating around a fixed Earth, and thus they serve their highest purpose. In a word, all the stars are required for a single rose to bloom on Earth.

When we rejected Scripture, the Church, our tradition, and even Thomas Aquinas, and replaced them with Copernicus and Darwin, we left ourselves open to anything the powers-that-be, including demonic powers, would use to fill the vacuum, and aliens are right at the top of the list.

As Mike Jones once educated us to the fact that the 1980s movie “Aliens” wasn’t really about grotesque extraterrestrials growing in our abdomens and popping out unawares; rather, it was a *Monsters of the Id* type social commentary about the guilt the human race feels for ripping out its babies from mommy’s uterus. So I believe the search for aliens today is one of many expressions of our collective guilt after we have already removed God from our lives.

To view the Earth as just a speck of dust in some forgotten corner of the universe is itself an expression of our collective guilt, and it incites what is known as “Pascal’s horror,” of which Pascal said, “I am terrified by the emptiness of these infinite spaces” (*Pensées sur la religion*, 1669). Arthur Koestler put it best when he said:

The notion of limitlessness or infinity, which the Copernican system implied, was bound to devour the space reserved for God....This meant, among other things the end of intimacy between man and God. Homo sapiens had dwelt in a universe enveloped by divinity as by a womb; now he was being expelled from the womb. Hence Pascal’s cry of horror.¹⁰

But What About UFOs?

Paul himself said it was the UFO issue, particularly the testimonies from those who claim to have seen UFOs, that pushed him over the edge and prompted him to write his book, ostensibly to provide what he believed was the proper theological approach to aliens. As Paul puts it,

“...if the day should come when the world has a public, undeniable encounter with ETI, or an official disclosure of its existence, Catholic and other Christians must be prepared

⁹ Max Born, *Einstein’s Theory of Relativity*, 1962, 1965, pp. 344-345.

¹⁰ Arthur Koestler, *The Sleepwalkers: A History of Man’s Changing Vision of the Universe*, 1959, 1979, p. 222.

to assimilate that new empirical information through careful reflection and prayer. Just as their spiritual ancestors had to grapple with the theological implications of the Copernican revolution or the new encounter with peoples in the Western Hemisphere, they will have much to ponder that will require a response of “faith seeing understanding” (p. 357).

Paul’s book, as he sees it, provides the Church with the talking points that must be covered to prepare the Church for her mission. I can’t help but conclude, however, that as the theological underpinnings of Paul’s thesis came up wanting, so does his view that UFOs are aliens from another world.

Basically, Paul’s appeal to the prospect of alien life depends heavily on the “unexplained” phenomena that has occurred within Earth’s environs in the last century or so. From the House Intelligence Committee’s report of June 25, 2021, Paul lists all the ariel feats that UFO craft have demonstrated, such as,

“...extraordinary maneuvering capabilities: hypersonic speeds (up to five times the speed of sound); no observable means of propulsion; and extremely rapid acceleration and abrupt change of direction—all beyond the known capabilities of human terrestrial aircraft” (p. 367).

“In a majority of these cases, ‘UAP [Unidentified Ariel Phenomena] were registered across multiple sensors, to include radar, infrared, electro-optical, weapon seekers, and visual observation’...and efforts to avoid detection by radar or other electronic systems, indicating intelligent control” (p. 368).

Pointing the finger at a more-than-likely government coverup of alien visits, Paul says,

“Meanwhile, recall the *New York Times* report: We must consider that the military or perhaps civilian government contractors...may in fact possess retrieved crashed UAP material, as many alleged witnesses have claimed, going all the way back to the famous Roswell, New Mexico incident of 1947....Perhaps for decades, a more startling theory suggests the government has actually operated secret alliances with alien visitors or even alien colonizers” (p. 379).

As to how alien spacecraft would make the long trek from stars that are millions of light years away from Earth, Paul says,

“I find unconvincing any claims that UAP cannot possibly represent interstellar travelers because the laws of physics do not allow for movement beyond the speed of light....The emerging science of breakthrough propulsion studies, working at the edge of known physics, suggest the serious possibility of space drives, warp drives, gravity control, and faster-than-light travel through the manipulation of space-time itself” (p. 377).

Whereas prior to 2021 all evidence about UFOs was basically suppressed by the US government, the House Committee signaled “an important change in military policy; previously, fear of stigma and even retribution typically kept witnesses from reporting” (p. 368).

As regarding testimony from those who claim to have witnessed seeing aliens, Paul appeals to the approach of Monsignor Corrado Balducci (d. 2008), the Italian theologian and exorcist from the archdiocese of Rome, who complained about the,

“...facile dismissal of all the testimony by countless observers who have witnessed UAP, simply because they attest to extraordinary events....unexplained by science [that] must automatically be ruled out as mistaken or fraudulent, even when the witnesses are competent, credible, and numerous” (p. 373).

Balducci cites Fr. Herbert Thurston, SJ (d. 1939), a researcher into paranormal phenomena, who saw “extraordinary events that were also frequently dismissed out of hand as fraud, simply because science could not account for the activity” (p. 374).

Besides the innate credibility engendered by dozens of witnesses that tell similar stories, Paul’s second line of defense against what he calls “an absurd extreme of hypercriticism” is good old fashioned “humility.” Indeed, Paul sprinkles his book with calls for humility about a half-dozen times, one section titled “Humility, Humility, Humility” (p. 358). It is his hope that humility will neutralize what he sees as knee-jerk reactions from people he thinks should know better.

Few would argue with Paul at this point, at least against cavalier opponents, but the call for humility could also be a ploy to lower the built-in defenses of human rationale that, unless there is solid concrete evidence to the contrary, needs much more than “what ifs” and “with God anything is possible” arguments.

This caution becomes especially needful when Paul then asks us to consider that UFOs are possibly “ultraterrestrial,” that is, “non-human intelligent beings who inhabit our planet alongside us, largely hidden from our view.” This group of non-humans, says Paul, include folklore images as “satyrs, nymphs, fairies, pixies, leprechauns, elves, dwarfs, trolls, brownies, menehune and stick people” (pp. 383-4).

To support this possibility, Paul once again calls on C. S. Lewis who “took the subject seriously and in a lecture at Oxford he even referred to someone he knew who had encountered fairies” (p. 385).

This prompts Paul to make a footnote that “fairies” are similar to the “planetary spirits” that Anne Catherine Emmerich said were “fallen spirits but not devils,” to which Paul adds that fairies may be what C. S. Lewis understood in his book *Discarded Image* as “...‘demoted’ angels who were sympathetic to Lucifer’s rebellion but did not actually join him in it; they were expelled from heaven and banned to dwell on Earth or in the airy regions above it, where they interacted with human beings” (p. 388, fn 37).

With so many options to fill the UFO void, by this time the reader must sense that Paul’s book is an attempt, so to speak, to throw enough spaghetti against the wall to see what will stick.

One area that Paul does not cover very well in his book is the US military’s and the CIA’s involvement in the whole charade of UFOs.

Since its founding in 1974, the National UFO Reporting Center (NUFORC) has documented around 90,000 UFO sightings, with almost 95% of those sightings supposedly easily explained away as military tests, weather balloons, or other terrestrial activity.¹¹

¹¹ <https://stacker.com/maryland/see-how-many-ufo-sightings-have-occurred-maryland>

“Other terrestrial activity” includes CAI operations that, by this time, have been investigated to the point that “conspiracy theory” is no longer a viable option to dismiss them. In fact, the UFO contactee movement (those people allegedly abducted by aliens) was led by people that worked hand-in-hand with the CIA. Beginning with the CIA’s “MKULTRA” program that was developed for psychological warfare in the late 1950s and through the 1960s when Howard Menger and George Adamski admitted they had worked for the CIA, and that their mission was part of a CAI-financed experiment to test public reactions to the idea of extraterrestrial contact, including the famous case of the interracial couple of “abductees,” Betty and Barney Hill, that was eventually exposed as a complete hoax.¹²

Since 95% of UFOs can be explained by terrestrial activity, this leaves 5% unexplained, which means that Paul Thigpen is basing his alien scenario on a very thin margin.

Within this thin margin, Paul would be remiss, of course, if he did not cover demonic activity as a possible cause of UFO phenomena. To that angle, Paul says,

“I think it likely that some reported UAP encounters are indeed diabolical....Nevertheless, I believe we must not assume that diabolical activity in some cases implies such activity in all cases” (pp. 381-382).

We would agree that diabolical activity would not explain “all cases,” but if 95% of cases can be explained from terrestrial sources, then Paul is hard pressed to show that the remaining 5% are from extraterrestrial sources. But that is like a wife saying, “I know 95% of the reasons my husband committed adultery, but I don’t know the other 5%, so I’m going to chalk it up to alien influence.”

Additionally, Paul is led to his conclusion of alien influence because he conveniently defines demonic activity as being limited to,

“Alien abduction accounts reporting assault or injury of the abductee, direct manipulation of the abductee’s thoughts, or alleged ‘spiritual revelations’ of an occult nature and witchcraft” (p. 382).

Not only is abduction and manipulation of human thought precisely what the CIA did in the 1960s and beyond, Paul’s self-serving definition of demonic activity leads Paul to conclude:

“The great majority of UAP reports include no elements of manipulated thoughts, spiritual ‘revelations,’ or malicious injury to witnesses....At the same time, in the case of so-called ‘nuts-and-bolts’ UAP—especially if a clearly physical object has crashed, allowing retrieval of debris—we would be hard pressed to explain why demons, who are purely spiritual beings, would need to be transported by physical vehicles” (p. 382).

Apparently, the thought never crossed Paul’s mind that since the primary occupation of demons is to deceive the human race, why would a demon waste his time presenting himself as a demon when his interests are best served by appearing as an alien who rides in a fantastic spaceship, especially to those who are predisposed to believe that alien beings exist? Paul’s naiveté regarding the power of the demonic world was quite shocking for an author who seemed, up to this point, to be working with all his theological marbles.

¹² See: “The Pied Pipers of the CIA” at https://www.eyeofthepsychic.com/ufo_ciapipers/

With preternatural power, the demonic world can reform physical material to look like a spacecraft, and have it appear to maneuver at light speed without any means of propulsion. They could even leave debris of the craft if that was what was needed to convince the diehard skeptic. It is all possible because preternatural power is not limited to Paul's "manipulating thoughts and spiritual revelations." Demons can reform matter just as the magicians of Egypt could make snakes appear from rods (Ex 7:11); make blood appear from water (Ex 7:22); and make frogs appear from the land (Ex 8:7). Just replace talking serpents with talking "aliens"; and jumping frogs with "alien" spacecraft and one has found a likely source for the phenomena. The witch of Endor could raise the body of Samuel from the dead to speak to Saul (1Sm 28:11), and everything from appearing as a talking serpent to Eve, to having control over the world and tempting Jesus with such power, is in the devil's repertoire. Thus St. Paul calls Satan "the god of this world" who can transform himself into an angel of light, or, in this case, into an "alien of light" (2Co 4:4; 11:15). Various saints testify that the devil even appeared to them as Jesus or Mary. ("Demons According to St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross," Fr. Antonio Moreno, OP).

What greater way to deceive than to take our eyes farther off of God than they already are by convincing us that aliens exist and are visiting us, and since they can move spaceships faster than a bouncing pinball in a pinball machine—are obviously far superior to us and evidently the answer to our problems. And, of course, what greater boon is all this to the modern atheistic mentality that castigates the tiny ex nihilo world of Scripture and presents aliens as proof that Carl Sagan was right all along.

In fact, all Paul's testimony of the extraordinary capability of "alien spacecraft" just begs the obvious question, and one which Paul never addresses in his book, that is, if these aliens are so far advanced in their technology, then why have they been playing cat and mouse with us for the last hundred years and not just conquered us? Or did aliens come just to perform an ariel circus for our entertainment?

The answer is plain. They aren't aliens. God doesn't allow Satan and his minions to conquer the material world. God only allows demons to deceive human beings, but allows the demons to use any physical means to do so.

If Paul Thigpen would have spent more time analyzing the UFO phenomena from the military and demonic influences than from the C. S. Lewis influences, I think his book would have been written much differently.

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