

Epiphany 2024 - Matthew 2:1-12

Ann Garrido writes in **Reflections** from *Give Us This Day*,

"So often in our modern world...scientific pursuit and religious faith are caricatured as opposing options and we are asked to ally with one or the other. Some say it's impossible nowadays to be a scientist who is also part of a faith community. Some say they've never met a religious person who remains curious and open to pursuing tough questions...But close observation of the natural world coupled with rigorous curiosity is a path that we can trust will lead us closer to God, not further away."

Obviously, either Ann or whoever she quotes have never heard of Father **George Lemaitre**, a Belgian Catholic priest, theoretical physicist, mathematician, astronomer, and professor of physics at the Catholic University of Louvain. He was the first to theorize that the recession of nearby galaxies can be explained by an expanding universe, which was observationally confirmed soon afterwards by **Edwin Hubble**. He first derived "Hubble's law,"! Now called the Hubble-Lemaitre law, and he also proposed the **Big Bang theory** of the origin of the universe, later calling it the beginning of the world.

Only, recently, and reluctantly, has this amazing priest been given the recognition by the scientific community that he deserves. Einstein did admit that only three people in his time really understood his theory of Relativity: **Sir Author Eddington**, Father Georges Lemaitre, and Einstein himself. Einstein didn't believe in the beginning of the universe but firmly believed the universe was constant. In fact, the universe is expanding, and maybe Einstein felt that because Lemaitre was a priest, his conclusion that the universe is expanding meant a beginning or creation of the universe.

In the end, Einstein had difficulty accepting the Big Bang and worked throughout the rest of his life trying to prove otherwise and failed. He also did not believe in the new Quantum Physics, and stated so in his famous quote, "I do not believe that God would create a universe with the roll of dice," in other words, by chance. At least his belief in God was enough to admit the universe existed because of God. "But did this universe coexist with God?" would be the final question, especially to non-believers without the Big Bang!

God had used the natural means of a star to bring the learned Magi to Jerusalem, but to continue their journey, they needed the revelation of scripture. Ironically the experts who instructed them about the scriptures, did not use their knowledge to their own advantage. These priests and scribes of the people were later to mock the King of the Jews as he died on the cross. The story of the Magi is then the first passion prediction in the gospel. But it also anticipates the saying of Jesus about people coming from the east and the west to enjoy the banquet in the kingdom with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, while the sons of the kingdom were rejecting it.

They needed the revelation of scripture to continue their journey. We need the revelation of scripture to continue our journey. And that is where the difficulty begins.