

Meeting: 1003, Atlanta, Georgia, SS 3A, AMS-MAA Special Session on History of Mathematics, I

1003-01-1338 **Charles E. Ford*** (fordce@slu.edu), Dept. of Mathematics and Computer Science, Saint Louis University, St. Louis, MO 63103. *Galileo 1633 and Florensky 1933. The uses of mathematics, science and cosmology in the conflict between the medieval and progressive world views.*

In 1922 the Russian Orthodox priest Pavel Florensky published a book entitled “Imaginary Values in Geometry” in which he used relativity theory to present an Aristotelian - Ptolemaic model of a finite, geocentric universe as described by Dante in his “Divine Comedy.” Florensky (1882 - 1937) had studied mathematics at Moscow University and became a leading figure in the Russian religious philosophical renaissance. After the Revolution, he worked in various Soviet scientific institutions. With the massive collectivization campaign launched in 1929, Florensky came to the attention of Arnost Kolman (1892 - 1979) a leading Soviet ideologue in mathematics and science circles. By 1933 Kolman was at the peak of enthusiasm over the “success” of collectivization. Noting that it was the 300th anniversary of Galileo’s forced renunciation of Copernicanism in 1633 and that mathematics was “an arena of desperate class struggle,” he launched a major attack on Florensky. Florensky was arrested in 1933 and spent four years in labor camps. He was one of approximately 85,000 Russian Orthodox priests executed in 1937. We will discuss the employment of mathematics and science in the ideological struggles of this period. (Received October 04, 2004)