

The Theological Status of Heliocentricity, Oct 1997

J. S. Daly

Introductory commentary [opinion] by P. Ellwanger

The 71-page Daly paper has recently been converted into an electronic format for possible wider circulation. Anyone having a copy of the original 1997 release should replace it with this draft, as a number of typo errors have been corrected, some of which were vital to a correct understanding of the paper.

Also, anyone having a copy of the 1885 book on the matter of alleged Earth movement [by Fr. W. W. Roberts] will profit greatly from this Daly thesis.

I believe if Mr Daly's exhaustive analysis & conclusions are not entirely correct, they come very close to being so. Some of my reasons for believing this include the following:

1. 17th century nuances in ecclesiastical terminology gave meanings of key words differently enough from those of Fr. Roberts' time, & most certainly from those of the present time, so as to be cause for crucial & dangerous misinterpretations of a Church event that took place almost four centuries ago.
2. During none of the Galileo proceedings was geocentricity [G] &-or rejection of heliocentricity [H] declared Catholic dogma binding upon all Catholics.
3. Back then the civil-ecclesiastical penalty for "heresy" [as we understand that term today] was death. Galileo got little more than a slap on the wrist. At no point was he threatened with excommunication, nor was such a penalty even remotely attached to those 17th century proceedings.
4. Paul V & his Congregations back then did an awkward [if not downright poor] job of placing that matter into proper ecclesiastical perspective. The issue could have been made

absolutely clear as to the significance of this issue for Catholicism – which would have avoided the long-term embarrassment to subsequent popes & the Church

5. Galileo's infraction was one of disobedience to Church authority & of placing himself in occasion of sin by advancing the **H**-position, in face of Scriptural passages that clearly support the **G**-position. That matter contained no grounds for excommunication, neither then nor now.

6. There is no question in my mind [or in Daly's] that **H** is wrong – because it is opposed to Scripture. There is also no doubt in my mind that those who believe in **H** are not, *ipso facto*, excommunicated, since the **G**-position has never been declared dogma or the **H**-position opposed to dogma.

7. Whether or not one rejects the Daly thesis, I believe it incumbent upon those interested in this subject to carefully study his meticulous research before attempting to instruct others on either side of the issue. I don't see how Daly could have been more objective [neutral] in presenting what appear to be all of the ecclesiastical PROs & CONs of this highly complex matter impacting on the Faith.

I therefore offer as my opinion that I am not certain whether or not the 1616 decree against Copernicanism was-is a matter of heresy binding on all Catholics. I believe each Catholic must attempt to arrive at a position based on the information available to us some 400 years after the fact. A pope could clarify the matter for the Church but, alas, no pope has as yet done that by any official infallible pronouncement.

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