

## GALILEO WROTE

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In 1632 Galileo wrote his important work, the *Dialogue Concerning the Two World Systems*. He was condemned for a second time. A century earlier Copernicus had written his book, *On the Revolution of the Celestial Spheres*

While written in 1530, it was not published until 1543, the year of his death. He taught that the accepted system was in error in claiming that the earth was static at the centre of the universe with the sun and the planets rotating around it. Galileo constructed a telescope more advanced than previously developed and directed it toward the moons of Jupiter, which he saw revolved around the planet. He accepted the viewpoint of Copernicus and realised he had proof of a heliocentric system. But it went against the universally accepted view of the church and he met with bitter opposition until his death. The reason for the hostility was because the church pontificated in the name of religion on how the solar system was constructed. It pronounced about the physical on the basis of what it believed to be demanded by the dogmas of faith. The furthest thing from the mind of the church was that the understanding of the physical world, in this case the solar system, should not be within the realm of ecclesiastical pronouncement, i.e. in the realm of theology. Only when that prejudice was removed did Enlightenment take place and the door to the modern world opened. It took much time and much pain, not least on the part of the most enlightened scientists of the era. What eventuated was that the area of scientific research moved from Italy to the north and west. The initial prejudice was absent there. Scientific progress was to culminate in the person of Isaac Newton (1642 - 1727).

So what is to be learned from the whole sorry episode of prejudice and persecution of the best minds of several centuries, the importance of two important principles for action.

Recognise the difference.

Leave alone.

The decisive difference between theological thought, argument and conclusions and scientific thought and procedures and conclusions means that each has its own sphere of operation. The church had drawn conclusions only available to the physicist astronomer. It had no right to usurp the position of demanding teacher requiring its own view to be held, The scientist remained within his legitimate sphere of operation. The ecclesiastic usurped his position claiming authority where he had none. .

For both physical scientist and churchman there was, and is, a legitimate sphere of operation when it comes to drawing conclusions and determining what one is to believe. There should be no encroachment. Indeed, rightly understood there can be none. The prelates learned that to their shame. Hence our principle, 'Leave alone!'. It is a lesson hardly yet learnt in certain Christian circles. Where alternative so-called

scientific accounts are provided for the beginnings of the cosmos taken to be unfriendly to believers' accounts the believer will reply . 'We give the scientific world the true account of 'creation'. That is the claim. Without embarrassment the 'creationist' challenges the scientific account full of confidence that he is appropriately engaged in the pseudo-scientific endeavour to establish an alternative physical explanation of the cosmos.