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*The Boston Globe***VATICAN ADMITS ERROR IN CONDEMNING GALILEO****Author(s):** Associated Press **Date:** November 1, 1992 **Page:** 2 **Section:** NATIONAL/FOREIGN

VATICAN CITY -- Pope John Paul II formally proclaimed yesterday that the Roman Catholic Church erred in condemning the astronomer Galileo for holding that the Earth is not the center of the universe. Galileo's condemnation resulted from a "tragic mutual incomprehension" and became a symbol for the church's "supposed rejection of scientific progress," the pope said in a speech to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences. The speech was the Vatican's final word on the matter nearly four centuries after the astronomer was found guilty of violating church doctrine by contending the Earth revolves around the sun, and not vice versa. Vatican specialists appointed by John Paul had studied the case for 13 years.

Galileo was forced to recant his beliefs and ordered imprisoned. He died under house arrest, blind but working on his theories to the end.

The pope had already admitted church errors in Galileo's condemnation by the church Inquisition.

"Galileo, who practically invented the experimental method, understood why the sun could function as the center of the world," the pope told church officials and scholars gathered in the marble-inlaid Sala Regia at the Apostolic Palace.

The theologians of the time, in maintaining the "centrality of the Earth," erred by thinking that the "literal sense of sacred Scripture" explained the physical world.

In fact, the pontiff said, there are two realms of knowledge, "one which has its source in Revelation and one which reason can discover by its own power." The two realms are distinct but compatible, he said.

The president of the Academy of the Lincei in Rome, of which Galileo was a member, said the pope's speech was a long time coming.

"This is not only about a rehabilitation, but about a recognition of errors and of guilt," said Giorgio Salvini, a physicist.

John Paul said it was important to understand the issue in case of future conflicts between religion and science. Later in the speech he mentioned biology and "biogenetics," evidently referring to genetic engineering, and said:

"Many recent scientific discoveries and their possible applications affect man more directly than ever before . . . to the point of seeming to threaten the very basis of what is human."

Galileo Galilei lived from 1564 to 1642. He built the first complete astronomical telescope and used it to gather evidence supporting Copernicus' theory that the Earth revolves around the sun.

The theory already had been denounced in 1616 as dangerous to the faith, and Galileo was warned to stop teaching it.

He defied the warning by publishing his "Dialogues Concerning the Two Chief World Systems," directed at nonspecialists, in 1632 and was tried a year later as a heretic.

Galileo defended himself by saying study of the natural world would promote religious understanding. Church authorities branded him a suspected heretic and forced him to say he "abjured, cursed and detested" his

beliefs.

He was sentenced to life imprisonment, a penalty later changed to house arrest, where he spent the last eight years of his life.

The church relented over the centuries. In 1757, Galileo's "Dialogues" was removed from a list of publications banned by the church.

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