Jerome J. Langford. *Galileo, Science and the Church*. Revised edition with a foreword by Stillman Drake. Ann Arbor: Ann Arbor Paperbacks, 1971. Pp. xv, 207. \$2.45.

The condemnation of Galileo was (and remains) for many people a good reason for leaving the Church with a good conscience. Honest seekers after truth have seen in the trial of Galileo decisive evidence that religion is dangerous, not only when it is wilfully perverted to secular ends, but also, and perhaps more especially, when it is pursued by sincere men who consider themselves the stewards of God's revealed truth.

Every age has martyred Christ's religion by means of its favourite instruments of torture, and our own should not be over-censorious towards its predecessors. Galileo was born in 1564, the year following the close of the Council of Trent, and he grew up in the heyday of a theology which was grievously impaired by what now seem defective concepts of Christianity and human values. The opposition he encountered can only be understood if it is related to a period in which modern liberal values were only just beginning to find a foothold, and it is this task that Fr. Jerome L. Langford, o.p., undertakes in this revised edition of a work first published in 1966.

In the light of the political and ecclesiastical circumstances of the Counter Reformation, the condemnation of Galileo bears an air of inevitability. Theologians and canon-lawyers suspected that he was trying to make scientists the new high-priests of creation, and they feared for their own prestige as much as for that of the Bible. But the main problem was that neither Galileo nor the theologians clearly distinguished between the scientific comprehensiveness and the philosophical certainty of a particular theory. The purpose behind Galileo's celebrated but inconclusive proofs of the motion of the earth was to show that the Copernican hypothesis enabled one to include terrestrial and celestial motions in one comprehensive system of inertial dynamics, whereas the Ptolemaic system did not. But in making this point Galileo also claimed that he had shown that the Copernican system was certainly, absolutely, and necessarily true. This was unnecessary for his scientific purposes, and some theologians also pointed out that it was untenable. But they failed completely to see the point of his scientific intuition of inertial dynamics as the first stage of a comprehensive, verified mathematical physics. Had either party recognized this, the crisis might have been averted.

What is not so clear from Fr. Langford's analysis, however, is that the theologians sensed graver problems and half-realized that with Galileo modern thought had set foot on the slippery path of rationalism. In an age of science, revelation would appear, sooner or later, if not superfluous, at least secondary and slightly inconvenient. Men who accepted the new criterion of truth, according to which the real properties of bodies were the mathematical properties, could not but be embarrassed by having to acknowledge dependence upon the annals and legends of a Semitic tribe. If this was the case, the conflict might have been postponed, but it could not, in the long run, have been averted.

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