

Between 1650 and 1750, four Catholic churches were the best solar observatories in the world. Built to fix an unquestionable date for Easter, they also housed instruments that threw light on the disputed geometry of the solar system, and so, within sight of the altar, subverted Church doctrine about the order of the universe. A tale of politically canny astronomers and cardinals with a taste for mathematics, *The Sun in the Church* tells how these observatories came to be, how they worked, and what they accomplished. Above all, the book illuminates the historical niches in which science and mathematics thrived—protected and financed by the Catholic Church.

"In this elegant work . . . Heilbron, upending common views of the Church's relationship to science after it condemned Galileo, shows that Rome handsomely supported astronomical studies, accepting the Copernican hypothesis as a fiction convenient for calculation."

—*New Yorker*

"[Readers] will be surprised to discover what Heilbron shows: that the Catholic Church served as perhaps the largest patron of sophisticated astronomical research throughout the controversies over Copernicus and his sun-centered scheme . . . [Heilbron] turns the tables on tired stories of the war between science and religion."

—D. Graham Burnett, *New York Times Book Review*

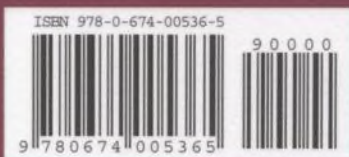
"[A] gripping story . . . with a splendid literary flair."

—George V. Coyne, *Nature*

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