Name: _____

Period: _____

TIME AND SPACE
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NICOLAUS COPERNICUS AND THE HELIOCENTRIC UNIVERSE

Nicolaus Copernicus was a deeply religious man. He worked for the church and often cared for the poor people of Poland, but at night, he studied the heavens. Copernicus measured the positions of the sun, moon, and planets and concluded that the sun is at the center, not the earth. Helios is the ancient Greek word for the sun.

In Copernicus' time, almost everyone believed that the Earth was the center of the universe. People believed that the sun and other heavenly bodies moved in circles around the Earth.

Copernicus feared that his ideas did not agree with how some people interpreted the Bible, so he was careful to share them with a small group of scholars. Martin Luther, a leading religious figure of the day, criticized the idea, saying, "Scripture tells us that Joshua commanded the sun to stand still, and not the earth."

A legend about Copernicus tells of a book he wrote about the sun-centered universe. The book was placed in his hands a few days after he lost consciousness from a stroke. The story has it that Copernicus awoke to see that his work had been published, and then died peacefully. We don't know if that story is true, but it shows how difficult it could be to challenge long-held beliefs, even when new ideas questioned what people had always accepted.

Fill in the Blanks

In 1514, a deeply r__l__g__o__s man named Nicolaus C_____ measured the relative a_____ of heavenly bodies and c_____ that the universe was h__l__o__e__t__i_ because it traveled around the s____. Copernicus circulated his opinion a__o__y__o__s__y because he was afraid of c_____ long held b_____.

Answer in Complete Sentences

1. What does the term *heliocentric* refer to?

_____

_____

*2. Why was Nicolaus Copernicus afraid to publicly declare what he had discovered about the universe?

_____

_____

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*This is a higher order learning question. You must answer the question to the best of your ability, but any reasonable answer will be graded as correct.