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Infinitesimal: How a Dangerous Mathematical Theory Shaped the Modern World

By Amir Alexander

Scientific American / Farrar, Straus and Giroux. Hardcover. Book Condition: New. Hardcover. 368 pages. Dimensions: 9.1in. x 6.1in. x 1.1in. Pulsing with drama and excitement, *Infinitesimal* celebrates the spirit of discovery, innovation, and intellectual achievement and it will forever change the way you look at a simple line. On August 10, 1632, five men in flowing black robes convened in a somber Roman palazzo to pass judgment on a deceptively simple proposition: that a continuous line is composed of distinct and infinitely tiny parts. With the stroke of a pen the Jesuit fathers banned the doctrine of infinitesimals, announcing that it could never be taught or even mentioned. The concept was deemed dangerous and subversive, a threat to the belief that the world was an orderly place, governed by a strict and unchanging set of rules. If infinitesimals were ever accepted, the Jesuits feared, the entire world would be plunged into chaos. In *Infinitesimal*, the award-winning historian Amir Alexander exposes the deep-seated reasons behind the rulings of the Jesuits and shows how the doctrine persisted, becoming the foundation of calculus and much of modern mathematics and technology. Indeed, not everyone agreed with the Jesuits. Philosophers, scientists, and mathematicians across Europe embraced infinitesimals...



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