

Papal Condemnation (Sentence) of Galileo

(June 22, 1633)

Whereas you, Galileo, son of the late Vaincenzo Galilei, Florentine, aged seventy years, were in the year 1615 denounced to this Holy Office for holding as true the false doctrine taught by some that the Sun is the center of the world and immovable and that the Earth moves, and also with a diurnal motion; for having disciples to whom you taught the same doctrine; for holding correspondence with certain mathematicians of Germany concerning the same; for having printed certain letters, entitled "On the Sunspots," wherein you developed the same doctrine as true; and for replying to the objections from the Holy Scriptures, which from time to time were urged against it, by glossing the said Scriptures according to your own meaning: and whereas there was thereupon produced the copy of a document in the form of a letter, purporting to be written by you to one formerly your disciple, and in this divers propositions are set forth, following the position of Copernicus, which are contrary to the true sense and authority of Holy Scripture:

This Holy Tribunal being therefore of intention to proceed against the disorder and mischief thence resulting, which went on increasing to the prejudice of the Holy Faith, by command of His Holiness and of the Most Eminent Lords Cardinals of this supreme and universal Inquisition, the two propositions of the stability of the Sun and the motion of the Earth were by the theological Qualifiers qualified as follows:

The proposition that the Sun is the center of the world and does not move from its place is absurd and false philosophically and formally heretical, because it is expressly contrary to Holy Scripture.

The proposition that the Earth is not the center of the world and immovable but that it moves, and also with a diurnal motion, is equally absurd and false philosophically and theologically considered at least erroneous in faith.

But whereas it was desired at that time to deal leniently with you, it was decreed at the Holy Congregation held before His Holiness on the twenty-fifth of February, 1616, that his Eminence the Lord Cardinal Bellarmine should order you to abandon altogether the said false doctrine and, in the event of your refusal, that an injunction should be imposed upon you by the Commissary of the Holy Office to give up the said doctrine and not to teach it to others, not to defend it, nor even to discuss it; and your failing your acquiescence in this injunction, that you should be imprisoned. In execution of this decree, on the following day at the palace of and in the presence of the Cardinal Bellarmine, after being gently admonished by the said Lord Cardinal, the command was enjoined upon you by the Father Commissary of the Holy Office of that time, before a notary and witnesses, that you were altogether to abandon the said false opinion and not in the future to hold or defend or teach it in any way whatsoever, neither verbally nor in writing; and upon your promising to obey, you were dismissed.

And in order that a doctrine so pernicious might be wholly rooted out and not insinuate itself further to the grave prejudice of Catholic truth, a decree was issued by the Holy Congregation of the Index prohibiting the books which treat of this doctrine and declaring the doctrine itself to be false and wholly contrary to the sacred and divine Scripture.

And whereas a book appeared here recently, printed last year at Florence, the title of which shows that you were the author, this title being: "Dialogue of Galileo Galilei on the Great World System:"; and whereas the Holy Congregation was afterward informed that through the publication of said book the false opinion of the motion of the Earth and the stability of the Sun was daily gaining round, the said book was taken into careful consideration, and in it there was discovered a patent violation of the aforesaid injunction that had been imposed upon you, for in this book you have defended the said opinion previously condemned and to your face declared to be so, although in the said book you strive by various devices to produce the impression that you leave it undecided, and in express terms as probably: which, however, is a most grievous error, as an opinion can in no wise be probable which has been declared and defined to be contrary to divine Scripture.

Therefore by our order you were cited before this Holy office, where, being examined upon our oath, you acknowledged the book to be written and published by you. You confessed that you began to write the said book about ten or twelve years ago, after the command had been imposed upon you as above; that you requested license to print it without, however, intimating to those who granted you this license that you had been commanded not to hold, defend, or teach the doctrine in question in any way whatever.

You likewise confessed that the writing of the said book is in many places drawn up in such a form that the reader might fancy that the arguments brought forward on the false side are calculated by their cogency to compel conviction rather than to be easy of refutation, excusing yourself for having fallen into an error, as you alleged, so foreign to your intention, by the fact that you had written in dialogue and by the natural complacency that every man feels in regard to his own subtleties and in showing himself more clever than the generality of men in devising, even on behalf of false propositions, ingenious and plausible arguments.

And a suitable term having been assigned to you to prepare your defense, you produced a certificate in the handwriting of his Eminence the Lord Cardinal Bellarmine, procured by you, as you asserted, in order to defend yourself against the calumnies of your enemies, who charged that you had abjured and had been punished by the Holy Office, in which certificate it is declared that you had not abjured and had not been punished but only that the declaration made by His Holiness and published by the Holy Congregation of the Index has been announced to you, wherein it is declared that the doctrine of the motion of the Earth and the stability of the Sun is contrary to the Holy Scriptures and therefore cannot be defended or held. And, as in this certificate there is no mention of the two articles of the injunction, namely, the order not “to teach” and “in any way,” you represented that we ought to believe that in the course of fourteen or sixteen years you had lost all memory of them and that this was why you said nothing of the injunction when you requested permission to print your book. And all this you urged not by way of excuse for your error but that it might be set down to a vainglorious ambitions rather than to malice. But his certificate produced by you in your defense has only aggravated your delinquency, since, although it is there stated that said opinion is contrary to Holy Scripture, you have nevertheless dared to discuss and defend it and to argue its probability; nor does the license artfully and cunningly extorted by you avail you anything, since you did not notify the command imposed upon you.

And whereas it appeared to us that you had not stated the full truth with regard to your intention, we thought it necessary to subject you to a rigorous examination at which (without prejudice, however, to the matters confessed by you and set forth as above with regard to your said intention) you answered like a good Catholic. Therefore, having seen and maturely considered the merits of this your cause, together with your confessions and excuses above-mentioned, and all that ought justly to be seen and considered, we have arrived at the underwritten final sentence against you:

Invoking, therefore, the most holy name of our Lord Jesus Christ and of His most glorious Mother, ever Virgin Mary, but this our final sentence, which sitting in judgment, with the counsel and advice of the Reverend Masters of sacred theology and Doctors of both Laws, our assessors, we deliver in these writings, in the cause and causes at present before us between the Magnificent Carlo Sinceri, Doctor of both Laws, Proctor Fiscal of this Holy Office, of the one part, and your Galileo Galilei, the defendant, here present, examined, tried, and confessed as shown above, of the other part—

We say, pronounce, sentence, and declare that you, the said Galileo, by reason of the matters adduced in trial, and by you confessed as above, have rendered yourself in the judgment of this Holy Office vehemently suspected of heresy, namely, of having believed and held the doctrine—which is false and contrary to the sacred and divine Scriptures—that the Sun is the center of the world and does not move from east to west and that the Earth moves and is not the center of the world; and that an opinion may be held and defended as probably after it has been declared and defined to be contrary to the Holy Scripture; and that consequently you have incurred all the censures and penalties imposed and promulgated in the sacred canons and other constitutions, general and particular, against such delinquents. From which we are content that you be absolved, provided that, first, with a sincere heart and unfeigned faith, you abjure, curse, and detest before use the aforesaid errors and heresies and every other error and heresy contrary to the Catholic and Apostolic Roman Church in the form to be prescribed by us for you.

And in order that this your grave and pernicious error and transgression may not remain altogether unpunished and that you may be more cautious in the future and an example to others that they may abstain from similar delinquencies, we ordain that the book of the “Dialogues of Galileo Galilei” be prohibited by public edict.

We condemn you to the formal prison of this Holy office during our pleasure, and by way of salutary penance we enjoin that for three years to come you repeat once a week at the seven penitential Psalms. Reserving to ourselves liberty to moderate, commute or take off, in whole or in part, the aforesaid penalties and penance.

And so we say, pronounce, sentence, declare, ordain, and reserve in this and in any other better way and form which we can and may rightfully employ.

[Signed:]

F. Cardinal of Ascoli
B. Cardinal Gessi
G. Cardinal Bentivoglio
F. Cardinal Verospi
Fr. D. Cardinal of Cremona
M. Cardinal Ginetti
Fr. Ant. s Cardinal of. S. Onofrio

[Three judges did not sign the sentence: Francesco Barberini, Caspar Borgia, and Laudivio Zacchia.]

Source: *Giorgio de Santillana, The Crime of Galileo* (University of Chicago Press 1955), pp. 306-310.