

## Check Your Brains at the Door

### The President of Catholic Answers' Lecture on Galileo



On July 30, 2014, the then future president of *Catholic Answers* gave a lecture on the Galileo affair, which was hosted by the *Institute of Catholic Culture*.<sup>1</sup> The title of the lecture was, “Galileo on Trial: Why the Church was Right,” but you would never guess that title from listening to what Mr. Check actually says in the lecture.

The lecture is quite clear in revealing that Mr. Check doesn't think for a second that the Church was right and Galileo was wrong. He believes just the opposite. He actually believes, on a scientific and biblical basis, that the Church was completely wrong for even considering it had the authority to judge the issue, much less did it decide correctly regarding what goes around what in the universe. Rather, the purpose for Mr. Check's contradictory title is to put a good face on the Church in spite of her presumed errors. To do so, Mr. Check will distort the raw facts of history to the best of his ability. In other words, if the facts don't agree with your thesis, then change the facts.

Mr. Check's approach to the Galileo issue, although somewhat novel, has become, and will continue to be, the standard apologetic used by modern Catholic apologists for years to come, that is, if *Catholic Answers* has anything to say about it. Few Catholics want to consider the traditional belief in a geocentric universe nor can they even imagine that the Church was right in upholding geocentrism against Galileo. Rather, Mr. Check will make it appear that, within its limited historical context, the Church was perfectly justified to defend geocentrism since everyone in society in those days believed it, even though, in the larger historical context, Mr. Check holds that the Church was entirely wrong.

Since the job of an “apologist” is to defend, as best he can, whatever his institution says or does, making a dichotomy between being right in one's own day as opposed to being right for all time is a dichotomy that apparently this new breed of apologists can live with. Essentially, Mr. Check believes that the Church can declare a false doctrine yet be exonerated from doing so because, in a word, She didn't know any better. How, you might ask, does Mr. Check's new apologetic fit in with the Church's traditional belief that the Holy Spirit guides her into all truth – a divine guidance that has produced every other doctrine the Church

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lupqRKxyE2A>

has taught for the last two thousand years? Mr. Check thought of a clever way to get around that bothersome fact, but as he does so, a not-so-dumb person in his audience uncovered his subterfuge. Let's see how it unfolded.

At the 1:09:43 mark, Check receives an email question from "Robert" who lives in San Diego. This was the last of four questions and it closed the evening. The question couldn't have come at a better time, for it took away the façade that Check had built up for the previous hour and exposed his lecture for the facile historiography that it was. The caller's question was prompted by Check's statement, given three times during his lecture, that the condemnation of Galileo and heliocentrism was not a "doctrinal" issue, but only a "pastoral" issue:

**Robert (from San Diego):** "How is this not a matter of doctrine if Galileo was either guilty or suspected of heresy? Canonical trials are not held for matters of bad science but for matters injurious to the faith."

The question, in itself, cuts right to the heart of the issue. For if it is true that the Galileo affair had little to do with doctrine and was merely a "pastoral" issue, then Check is safe and the modern apologetic for Galileo remains in play. But if the Galileo affair was an issue about Catholic doctrine, then the modern apologetic, and Check's endorsement of it, is totally destroyed. As the caller asks this crucial question, we will notice in the video that Mr. Check becomes quite nervous, stuttering and repeating inaudible phrases, for he senses immediately that someone was able to cut through his rhetoric and Check was simply unprepared to answer it. Let's see what Check said:

**Christopher Check:** "Sure, so, ah, Galileo was found guilty (inaudible syllables), suspected of heresy, vehemently suspected of heresy, so not exactly found guilty of heresy, and for holding an opinion that was contrary to Scripture. We can distinguish these things, between doctrine and faith and morals, which is a very limited sphere of the magisterium, the infallibility of the Holy Father covers, but its not a matter of doctrine because (shakes head) it's (laughs)...I don't know how to say it...isn't doctrine. How the universe is ordered or how bridges are built, you know...think of Mr. Newton who comes later and shows us how to build a bridge...these aren't doctrinal questions."

Let's take Check's answer apart, line by line, to see how he obfuscated the issue:

"Sure, so, ah, Galileo was found guilty (inaudible syllables), suspected of heresy, vehemently suspected of heresy, so not exactly found guilty of heresy, and for holding an opinion that was contrary to Scripture."

It appears that Check is trying to reason that since Galileo was not *convicted* of heresy but was only *suspected* of heresy, this difference somehow can be construed to mean that a belief in heliocentrism was not considered heretical in those days, otherwise Galileo would have been *convicted* of heresy, not merely *suspected* of heresy. Granted, Check isn't explicit about this equivalence, but he appears to be implying it without actually committing himself.

What Check either doesn't realize or is deliberately withholding (but which the caller has fully realized) is that it would have been required for the heliocentric view to have first been understood by the pope and the Holy Office as a heresy in order for them to convict *or* suspect someone of that heresy. In other

words, whether or not Galileo was guilty of the heresy of Copernicanism would be determined by the degree of Galileo's commitment to the heresy. The Church made that determination based on how Galileo wrote his book, *The Dialogue of the Two Great World Systems*, and how he tried to excuse himself for not following the Church's 1616 injunction against him "not to teach or speak about heliocentrism." Within these parameters, the Holy Office determined that Galileo may not have fully realized what he was doing or may not have fully embraced heliocentrism in order for him to be considered a full-fledged heretic and subsequently convicted of heresy. Because of this uncertainty, Galileo was only "vehemently suspect" of the heresy of Copernicanism.

But although Galileo escaped being convicted of heresy, the heliocentric doctrine itself did not escape conviction. It was "declared and defined" a heresy (the Church using those very words) in 1616 by Pope Paul V and St. Robert Bellarmine, and remained a heresy at the 1633 trial under Pope Urban VIII and the Holy Office. Here are its immortal words:

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 Systems: Ptolemy and Copernicus"; and whereas the Holy Congregation was afterwards informed that through the publication of the said book the false opinion of the motion of the Earth and the stability of the sun was daily gaining ground, 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 probable: 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.<sup>2</sup>

Either Mr. Check had never read these words or he has made a practice of avoiding them.

At the 54:14 mark Mr. Check says,

"...it's not about papal infallibility. The pope never declared geocentrism as a doctrine."

But the above ecclesiastical document from 1633 tells us that the magisterium not only "declared" it, it "defined" it before it declared it. Quite simply, the very fact that heliocentrism was declared and defined as a heresy in 1616 was the very reason Galileo was suspected of being a heretic in 1633. There was no other place from which the designation of heresy could have come, since no one but the magisterium could officially levy such a decision.

Next Mr. Check says:

"We can distinguish these things, between doctrine and faith and morals, which is a very limited sphere of the magisterium, and the infallibility of the Holy Father covers..."

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<sup>2</sup> *Le Opere di Galileo Galilei*, vol. 15: "non potendo in niun modo esser probabile un'opinione dichiarata e difinita per contraria alla Scrittura divina" (*ibid.*).

Poor Mr. Check. I really pity him. He really doesn't know what he is saying. He is just grasping at words that individually may sound good to the ear but which he puts in no discernible coherence.

First, when Check says, "We can distinguish these things, between doctrine and faith and morals," we can't tell whether he is saying that "doctrine" is to be distinguished from "faith and morals," or that "doctrine, faith and morals" is to be distinguished from something else. What he probably wants to say is that we are to distinguish between doctrinal and non-doctrinal issues, and Mr. Check came to the lecture believing, and determined to teach, that Galileo's teaching was not a matter of doctrine. THAT is his thesis.

But if that is the case, then he never really answers the caller's question, which question was based on the fact that canonical trials are not given for non-doctrinal issues, and no labels of "heresy" or "suspected of heresy" are given for non-doctrinal issues. Mr. Check avoids this specific detail of the caller's question for he knows it is the crux of the issue.

Let's say it again: if the Galileo affair is not about doctrine, then why is heliocentrism "declared and defined" a heresy, and why is Galileo (not to mention Foscarini, whose book on heliocentrism of 1615 was already condemned as heretical; as well as the heliocentric teachings of Copernicus, Zuniga, Kepler, et al) suspected of holding that heresy? These severe moves by the Church against heliocentrists make no sense unless the matter was doctrinal.

Those, like Check, who claim it isn't doctrinal are doing so merely to escape the dire implications. The dire implication is nothing less than this: the Church made a doctrine in 1616 and 1633 that heliocentrism was heretical and those who don't follow it are either deliberately or inadvertently holding a heresy. Suffice it to say, that's quite ominous.

Second, Mr. Check says that determining a matter of doctrine...

"...is a very limited sphere of the magisterium, and [which] the infallibility of the Holy Father covers."

- But weren't Pope Paul V in 1616 and Pope Urban VIII in 1633, along with Cardinal Bellarmine and about two dozen other cardinals, as well as the Holy Office, all the "magisterium" of the Church? Yes, indeed they were.
- Was not their declaration that heliocentrism was "defined and declared" a heresy from the "very limited sphere" of authority given only to the highest officials of the Church? Yes, indeed it was.
- Was this not a time in which the "infallibility of the Holy Father" had not yet been defined and wouldn't be defined for another 250 years or so? Yes, indeed it was.
- And even when papal infallibility was defined in 1870, was there ever a time that the Church, either then or now, officially declared that the "defining and declaring" that heliocentrism is a heresy was either not infallible or not binding on a lesser level of authority to the Church today? No, indeed it did not.

It is a fact worth repeating, namely, the Church, which is the only body with the authority to determine if a papal or conciliar teaching is infallible, has never officially stated that either Paul V or Urban VIII's approval of the heretical nature of heliocentrism was fallible or infallible. By the same token, the Church has never officially revoked or even censored the anti-heliocentric teachings of Paul V or Urban VIII.

We should also add that neither Paul V nor Urban VIII considered their teachings either fallible or reformable. As Fr. Coyne, a member of the pope's 1981 Galileo commission, puts it:

So far as we can conclude from the circumstances of the condemnation, Pope Urban VIII and the cardinals of the Holy Office certainly did not themselves think it to be "reformable." Furthermore, if it was reformable, why has the condemnation of 1633 or, for that matter, the Decree of the Congregation of the Index in 1616 never explicitly been "reformed?"<sup>3</sup>

The late Galileo scholar, Ernan McMullin, although personally believing in heliocentrism, likewise admits:

And let there be no mistake, the judgment of the qualifiers in 1616 and the language of the decree supported by it *were* couched in definitive terms; it was not proposed as something "reformable," to use a term favored by some recent theologians. The decree did not say that in the absence of a demonstration, maintaining the Copernican theses would be risky ("temerarious"). It described the theses as "contrary to Scripture," period, just as the qualifiers had "qualified" the heliocentric claim as "formally heretical."<sup>4</sup>

The clincher comes when Mr. Check makes the following assertion:

...but it's not a matter of doctrine because [shakes head] it's [laughs]...I don't know how to say it...it isn't doctrine. How the universe is ordered or how bridges are built, you know...think of Mr. Newton who comes later and shows us how to build a bridge...these aren't doctrinal questions.

So, to recap, Mr. Check's first line of defense is to avoid the caller's incisive logic that the Church would not issue a declaration of heresy to a non-doctrinal issue. Instead, Mr. Check tries to divert the caller's specific question into an entirely different question (*e.g.*, the building of bridges). Not only that, Mr. Check puts himself above the 1616 and 1633 magisteriums, for what those two magisteriums understood as Catholic doctrine (since they declared opposition to it a "heresy"), Mr. Check arbitrarily decides they were wrong in doing so. What official declaration of the Church does Mr. Check cite to confirm his opinion? Answer: none.

There is little more that can be said. This is the proverbial trap that modern Catholic apologists run into when they choose to side with the popular secular consensus. They must not only reject the Church's decision of "heresy" against that consensus, they must also reject the Church's decision that the issue was a doctrinal matter in the first place. Mr. Check is so entrenched in this apologetic that he shows not the

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<sup>3</sup> *The Church and Galileo*, p. 354. Coyne adds: "In the Galileo case the historical facts are that further research into the Copernican system was forbidden by the decree of 1616 and then condemned in 1633 by official organs of the Church with the approbation of the reigning pontiffs" (*ibid*).

<sup>4</sup> "The Church's Ban on Copernicanism," in *The Church and Galileo*, p. 159.

slightest shame in presenting it, even though he knows in his heart of hearts that it is an absolute contradiction to the Catholic faith for the Church to officially declare a heresy when there is no heresy.

Second, the reasoning Mr. Check uses that leads him to conclude that geocentrism is not Catholic doctrine is rather facile. He does so by setting up his own straw man by comparing the building of a bridge to the creation of the universe. What he hopes to achieve by this straw man is to make you think that since descriptions of building a bridge are neither in Scripture nor Church teaching, then something akin to building a bridge, namely, building a universe, must then be in the same category, and therefore could never be doctrinal.

Mr. Check ignores the fact that both Scripture and the Church consider the building of the universe one of the first doctrinal declarations of God's inspired revelation (e.g., Genesis 1), but never consider the building of a bridge a matter of even theological discussion, much less a doctrine. In making this faulty comparison Mr. Check reveals his own incompetence, if not deliberate attempt to obfuscate the issue to his own advantage.

At the least, Mr. Check should have made reference to Cardinal Bellarmine's declaration to Galileo that, for the simple fact that the building of the universe is part of divine revelation, then it is a matter of doctrine *ex parte decentis*. In other words, simply because God declared the building of the universe in Scripture, it becomes a matter of doctrine, since to deny it is to deny God's revelation. As Bellarmine said to Galileo, it would as wrong to deny the cosmology of Scripture as it would be to deny that Jacob had twelve sons.

But since Mr. Check doesn't bring up Bellarmine's *ex parte decentis* distinction to the audience, either he is ignorant of it or chose to keep it from them. Sadly, Mr. Check believes that by trying to resolve the issue in this manner he is helping the Church, but in reality, he is only hurting it, not to mention forever poisoning his audiences.

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At the 40:30 mark, Mr. Check says that the condemnation of Galileo in 1616 was "a memo to the Holy Office, not a statement by the pope, not *ex cathedra*, certainly not Christian doctrine." By this kind of loose description ("a memo"), I assume Mr. Check's purpose is to make it appear that the decision against Galileo was merely an off-the-cuff or unofficial statement given to the Holy Office that the pope decided not to endorse by writing something himself.

First, we've already debunked Mr. Check's proposal that the decree against Copernicanism was "not Christian doctrine." How could it not be Christian doctrine if Galileo was condemned for being "vehemently suspect of heresy." To be so condemned there had to be a doctrine against Copernicanism that was already deemed a heresy? To suggest otherwise is to say that the magisterium of the Catholic Church was so inept that it isn't even worth discussing.

Second, the so-called "memo" that Check cites could only refer to the statement by Caccini to the Holy Office, which "memo" Check is apparently trying to minimize. Here is the reality: Two Dominican friars who were members of the Inquisition, Niccolò Lorini and Tommaso Caccini, were ordered to investigate

the Galileo affair by the Holy Office. Their investigation began in February 1615.<sup>5</sup> A year later, on February 19, 1616, Caccini submitted two conclusions to the Holy Office [Check's "memo"] that summed up his objections to the Copernican model:

- 1) The sun is at the center of the world and hence immobile in regards to local motion.
- 2) The Earth is not the center of the world and is not immobile, but moves according to the whole of itself, and also with diurnal motion.

What Check also leaves out is the following: In response to the "memo" from Caccini, five days later, February 24, the Holy Office issued these censures. Regarding the first proposition:

- All agreed that this proposition is foolish and absurd in philosophy and is formally heretical, because it explicitly contradicts sentences found in many places in Sacred Scripture according to the proper [literal] meaning of the words and according to the common interpretation and understanding of the Holy Fathers and of learned theologians.

Regarding the second proposition:

- All agreed that this proposition receives the same censure in philosophy and in respect to theological truth, it is at least erroneous in faith.<sup>6</sup>

What Mr. Check also leaves out is how involved the pope, Paul V, was in the process. On February 25, 1616, Pope Paul V ordered Cardinal Bellarmine to summon Galileo and,

"in the presence of a notary and witnesses lest he should prove recusant, warn him to abandon the condemned opinion and in every way abstain from teaching, defending or discussing it."<sup>7</sup>

The meeting had three parts, and this sequence shows how great a part the pope played in the final decision against Galileo. As Fantoli records it:

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<sup>5</sup> "Nel mese di Febraro 1615 il Padre Maestro Fra Nicolò Lorini, Domenicano di Fiorenza, trasmisse qua una scrittura del Galileo, che in quella città correva per manus, la quale seguendo le positioni del Copernico, che la terra si muova sando che tale scrittura fu fratta per occasione di contradire a certe lettioni fatte nell chiesa di S.<sup>ta</sup> Maria Novell dal P. Maestro Caccini sopra il X capitolo di Giosue, alle parole Sol, me movearis: fol. (Antonio Favaro, *Galileo E L'Inquisizione*, pp. 33-34).

<sup>6</sup> Favaro records the original as follows: "Propositiones censurandae. Censura facta in S.<sup>to</sup> Officio Urbis, dei Mercurii 24 Februarii 1616, coram infrascriptis Patribus Theologis. Prima: Sol est centrum mundi, et omnino immobilis motu locali. Censura: Omnes dixerunt, dictum propositionem esse stultam et absurdam in philosophia, et formaliter haeticam, quatenus contradicit expresse sententiis Sacrae Scripturae in multis locis secundum proprietatem verborum et secundum communem expositionem et sensum Sanctorum Patrum et theologorum doctorum. 2.<sup>a</sup>: Terra non est centrum mundum nec immobilis, sed secundum se totam movetur, etiam motu diurno. Censura: Omnes dixerunt, hanc propositionem recipere eandem censuram in philosophia; et spectando veritatem theologicam, ad minus esse in Fide erroneam." The names signed to the document are the eleven members of the papal commission.

<sup>7</sup> Dorothy Stimson, *The Gradual Acceptance of the Copernican Theory of the Universe*, 1917, p. 58. Favaro has the following: "...supradictus P. Commissarius praedicto Galileo adhuc *ibidem* praesenti et constituto praecepit et ordinavit [proprio nomine] S. D. N. Papae et totius Congregationis S. Officii, ut supradictam opinionem, quod sol sit centrum mundi et imbolilis et terra moveatur, omnino relinquat, nec eam de caetero, quovis modo, teneat, doceat aut defendat, verbo aut scriptis; alias, contra ipsum procedetur in S. Officio. Cui praecepto idem Galileus acquievit et parere promisit" (Antonio Favaro, *Galileo e l'Inquisizione*, 1907, p. 62).

As was customary, the meeting had three successive parts. During the first one, the assessor, accompanied by the commissary, informed the pope and the cardinals about the censures approved by the consultors and other questions to be dealt with in connection with the Copernican issue. After that, both of them left the hall and the secret second part of the meeting started, in the presence of the pope and the cardinals alone. This explains why the only official document that is left about the meeting, published by Favaro, concerns solely the third part of it, which took place again in the presence of the assessor and the commissary. The necessity of informing those officials of the Holy Office about the decisions taken by the pope during the secret part of the session – as stated in the document – becomes fully understandable.<sup>8</sup>

Notice what Fantoli is telling us. He points out that one of the normally more reliable Galileo historians, Favaro, leaves out the second and “secret” part of the session – the crucial one telling us how intimately involved Paul V was in directing the whole affair and his “decisions” which then became the official position of the magisterium! So much for Check’s attempt to get the pope off the hook.

Incidentally, the official document from the third session stated the following:

The Most Illustrious Cardinal Millini notified the Reverent Lord Assessor and Lord Commissary of the Holy Office that, after the reporting of the judgment by the Father Theologians against the propositions of the mathematician Galileo, to the effect that the sun stands still at the center of the world and the earth moves even with a diurnal motion, His Holiness ordered the Most Illustrious Cardinal Bellarmine to call Galileo before himself and warn him to abandon these opinions; and if he should refuse to obey, the Father Commissary, in the presence of notary and witnesses, is to issue him an injunction to abstain completely from teaching or defending that doctrine and opinion or from discussing it; and further, if he should not acquiesce, he is to be imprisoned.<sup>9</sup>

Again, we see the Pope’s intimate involvement. He gave the order against Galileo to Bellarmine, and Bellarmine delivered it to Galileo, and Galileo obeyed the order, which is recorded in the minutes of the Holy Office of March 3, 1616:

The Most Illustrious Lord Cardinal Bellarmine having given the report that the mathematician Galileo Galilei had acquiesced when warned of the order of the Holy Congregation to abandon the opinion which he held till then, to the effect that the sun stands still at the center of the spheres but the earth is in motion.<sup>10</sup>

This was followed by a formal decree issued two days later on March 5, 1616. Now notice this: According to the wording of the decree, Paul V’s and Bellarmine’s rejection of Copernicanism was not

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<sup>8</sup> “The Disputed Injunction and Its Role in Galileo’s Trial,” by Annibale Fantoli, in *The Church and Galileo*, p. 118. Fantoli adds: “The division in three parts of the meeting of *feria V* (Thursday), in the presence of the pope, is documented by several records on the functioning of the Holy Office in the first part of the seventeenth century...The absence of any mention of these three stages of the meeting...published by Favaro is due to the fact that these documents, as was customary, mention only the decisions taken, without any information about the way the meetings were held or about the discussions that took place during them” (*ibid.*, p. 144).

<sup>9</sup> *Le Opere di Galileo Galilei*, vol. 19, p. 321, translated by Fantoli.

<sup>10</sup> *Le Opere di Galileo Galilei*, vol. 19, p. 278, translated by Fantoli.

considered some private affair between them and Galileo. The decree stated very clearly that its information was to be “published everywhere” and that its specific audience was the “whole of Christendom”:

Decree of the Sacred Congregation of the most Illustrious Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church specially delegated by Our Most Holy Lord Pope Paul V and the Holy Apostolic See to publish everywhere throughout the whole of Christendom.<sup>11</sup>

Does this not sound very close to the criteria for papal infallibility to be issued some 250 years later in 1870, which state,

“...that the Roman Pontiff, when he speaks *ex cathedra*, that is, when carrying out the duty of the pastor and teacher of all Christians in accord with his supreme apostolic authority he explains a doctrine of faith and morals to be held by the universal Church, through the divine assistance promised him in blessed Peter, operates with that infallibility with which the divine Redeemer wished that His church be instructed in defining doctrine on faith and morals; and so such definitions of the Roman Pontiff from himself, but not from the consensus of the Church, are unalterable.”<sup>12</sup>

Granted, as laymen, we don't have the authority to state that the above paragraph on papal infallibility is to be applied to Paul V and Urban VIII in the Galileo affair, but anyone with the least sensitivity to the parameters of papal infallibility and how the Church operates and defines itself would at least consider the papal decisions against Galileo as a sure candidate for papal infallibility. If not, then they are surely on the next closest level of authority. No wonder Mr. Check seeks to eliminate the 1616 and 1633 decrees against Copernicanism from the category of doctrine. If they are doctrine, then the case is all but closed.

The decree contained six explicit paragraphs reiterating the condemnation not only of the book written by “Nicolaus Copernicus” but, more specifically, the original Greek inventors of heliocentrism as represented by “the Pythagorean doctrine – which is false and altogether opposed to Holy Scripture – of the motion of the Earth and the immobility of the Sun.” Not only was the Church issuing a doctrine, She was relentless in attacking the very root of the problem, – the false ideas propagated by the Greeks. Beginning at line 31, the decrees states:

And whereas it has also come to the knowledge of the said Congregation that the Pythagorean doctrine – which is false and altogether opposed to Holy Scripture – of the motion of the Earth and the immobility of the Sun, which is also taught by Nicolaus Copernicus in *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium*, and by Diego de Zúñiga [in his book] on Job, is now being spread abroad and accepted by many – as may be seen from a certain letter of a Carmelite Father, entitled *Letter of the Rev. Father Paolo Antonio Foscarini, Carmelite, on the Opinion of the Pythagoreans and of Copernicus concerning the Motion of the Earth, and the Stability of the*

<sup>11</sup> “Decretum Sacrae Congregationis Illustrissimorum S.R.E.Cardinalium, a S.D.N. Paulo Papa V Sanctaque Sede Apostolica ad Indicem librorum, eorumdemque permissionem, prohibitionem, expurgationem et impressionem in universa Republica Christiana, specialiter deputatorum, ubique publicandum” (Antonio Favaro, *Galileo E L'Inquisizione*, p. 63; *Le Opere di Galileo Galilei*, vol. 19, p. 323).

<sup>12</sup> Denzinger, 1839, trans. by Roy Defhari, *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, p. 457.

*Sun, and the New Pythagorean System of the World, at Naples, Printed by Lazzaro Scorriggio, 1615*; wherein the said Father attempts to show that the aforesaid doctrine of the immobility of the Sun in the center of the world, and of the Earth's motion, is consonant with truth and is not opposed to Holy Scripture. Therefore, in order that this opinion may not insinuate itself any further to the prejudice of the Catholic truth, the Holy Congregation has decreed that the said Nicolaus Copernicus, *De revolutionibus orbium*, and Diego de Zúñiga, *On Job*, be suspended until they be corrected; but that the book of the Carmelite Father, Paolo Antonio Foscarini, be altogether prohibited and condemned, and that all other works likewise, in which the same is taught, be prohibited, as by this present decree, it prohibits, condemns, and suspends them all respectively.<sup>13</sup>

Perhaps because of rumors that were spreading around Italy that the Holy Office had already declared Galileo a heretic (NB: although Copernicanism was “defined and declared” a heresy in 1616, Galileo would not be convicted of being “vehemently suspect of heresy” until 1633), Galileo wrote to Cardinal Bellarmine in May 1616 asking for a clarification of what occurred in the February and March sessions, prompting Bellarmine to write a certificate for Galileo saying that the Holy Office neither forced him to “abjure” his opinions nor was he punished for them. But at the same time, he reveals that the Pope had already declared and published that Copernicanism was heretical:

We, Robert Cardinal Bellarmine, have heard that Signor Galileo Galilei is being calumniated or alleged to have abjured in our hands and also to have been given salutary penances for this. Having been sought about the truth of the matter, we say that the above-mentioned Galileo has not abjured in our hands, or in the hands of others, here in Rome, or anywhere else that we know, any opinion or doctrine of his; nor has he received any penances, salutary or otherwise. He has only been notified of the declaration made by the Holy Father and published by the Sacred Congregation of the Index, whose content is that the doctrine attributed to Copernicus (that the earth moves around the sun and the sun stands at the center of the world without moving from the east to the west) is contrary to Holy Scripture, and therefore cannot be defended nor held. In witness whereof we have written and signed this with our own hands, on the 26<sup>th</sup> day of May 1616.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Original Latin: “...Et quia etiam ad notitiam praefatae Sacrae Congregationis pervenit, falsam illam doctrinam Pithagoricam, divinaeque Scripturae omnino adversantem, de mobilitate terrae et immobilitate solis, quam Nicolaus Copernicus De revolutionibus orbium coelestium, et Didacus Astunica in Job, etiam docent, iam divulgari et a multis recipi; sicuti videre est ex quadam Epistola impressa cuiusdam Patris Carmelitae, cui titulus: « Lettera del R. Padre Maestro Paolo Antonio Foscarini Carmelitano, sopra l’opinione de’Pittagorici e del Copernico della mobilità della terra e stabilità del sole, et il nuovo Pittagorico sistema del mondo. In Napoli, per Lazzaro Scorriggio, 1615 », in qua dictus Pater ostendere conatur, praefatam doctrinam de immobilitate solis in centro mundi et mobilitate terrae consonam esse veritati et non adversary Sacrae Scripturae; ideo, ne ulterius huiusmodi Opinio in perniciem Catholicae veritatis serpat, censuit, dictos Nicolaum Copernicum De revolutionibus orbium, et Didacum Astunica in Job, suspendendos esse, donec corrigantur; librum vero Patris Pauli Antonii Foscarini Carmelitae omnino prohibendum atque damnandum; aliosque omnes libros, partier idem docentes, prohibendos: prout praesenti Decreto omnes respective prohibet, damnat atque suspendit. In quorum fidem praesens Decretum manu et sigillo Illustrissimi et Reverendissimi D. Cardinalis S. Caeciliae, Episcopi Albanensis, signatum et munitum fuit, die 5 Martii 1616.” Part of above translation taken from de Santillana’s *The Crime of Galileo*, as cited by Fantoli in *Galileo: For Copernicanism and For the Church*, pp. 223-224.

<sup>14</sup> Original Italian: “Noi Roberto Bellarmino, havendo inteso che il Sig. Galileo Galilei sia calunniato o imputato di havere abiurato in mano nostra, et anco di essere stato per ciò penitenziato di penitenzie salutary, et essendo ricercati della verità, diciamo che il suddetto S. Galileo non ha abiurato in mano nostra nè di altri qua in Roma, nè meno in altro luogo che noi sappiamo, alcuna sua opinione o dottrina, nè manco ha ricevuto penitenzie salutary nè d’altra sorte, ma solo gl’è stata denunciata la dichiarazione fatta da Nostro Signore et pubblicata dalla Sacra Congregazione dell’ Indice, nella quale si contiene che la dottrina attribuita al Copernico, che la terra si muova intorno al sole et che il sole stia nel centro del mondo senza muoversi da oriente ad

Once again, by the specific statement “the declaration made by the Holy Father” we see the prominent part played by the pope in the whole affair. According to Bellarmine’s above official letter, the decision that disallowed anyone from asserting the Earth moved was not one formed by the Sacred Congregation and rubber stamped by the pope, but was first decided by the pope and then published by the Sacred Congregation.

That Paul V and Cardinal Bellarmine were of one mind on Galileo and heliocentrism was revealed no better than in a letter written by the Tuscan ambassador in Rome, Piero Guicciardini, to Grand Duke Cosimo II, dated March 4, 1616. According to Finocchiaro’s assessment,

Guicciardini appeared to have some inside information about the proceedings [against Galileo], since his position as ambassador gave him direct access to the pope himself as well as to cardinals and other well-connected diplomats.

After verifying Guicciardini’s factual knowledge of the pope’s mind, Finocchiaro concludes:

The letter observes that Pope Paul V and Cardinal Bellarmine agreed that Copernicanism was erroneous and heretical. This was and remains precious information.<sup>15</sup>

That Pope Paul V’s official decision against Copernicanism was “precious” is quite an understatement. It is the whole ball of wax. It shows that the full weight of the Catholic magisterium was behind the decrees against heliocentrism and Galileo. How much clearer could it be? It is not Bellarmine upon which the weight of this affair is to be laid, and it is certainly not merely the “theologians of the day” who are to carry the brunt of the decision (as is attempted by the author of the 1992 papal speech to the Pontifical Academy of Science). No one but the pope himself is responsible for what occurred, for we surely know that if he had disapproved of what was being told to him by the Holy Office, he would have stopped it in a heartbeat. Again, it was the pope who “first decided” the issue, and subsequently his orders were carried out by Bellarmine and his underlings.

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At the 46:49 mark, Mr. Check claims that the injunction given to Galileo in 1616 not to speak or write about Copernicanism was “irregular since it was not signed or notarized.” This is false. The Galileo historian, Antonio Favaro, says it this way:

As the 1633 discovery of the second Bellarmine document shows, a written injunction was given to Galileo on February 25, 1616 not to teach the heliocentric system. As noted earlier, one of the “Dominican friars” that Galileo admits to being present at the 1616 meeting is Michelangelo Seggizi, who, as was his function as the Commissary of the Holy Office, would

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occidente, sia contraria alle Sacre Scritture, et però non si possa difendere nè tenere. Et in fede di ciò habbiamo scritta e sottoscritta la presente di nostra propria mano, questo di 26 di Maggio 1616. Il med. Di sopra Robert Card. Bellarmino” (Antonio Favaro, *Galileo e l’Inquisizione*, pp. 82, 88).

<sup>15</sup> As stated in *Retrying Galileo*, pp. 158-159. The March 4, 1616 letter from Guicciardini to Cosimo II was not published until 1773 by Angelo Fabroni in *Lettere inedite di uomini illustri*, Florence, two volumes, 1773-1775.

be the one who handed Galileo the injunction. When Galileo was finally summoned before Pope Urban, the existence and delivery of the injunction was confirmed. The 1633 sentence against Galileo stated:

...after being informed and warned in a friendly way by the same Lord Cardinal [Bellarmine], you were given an injunction by the then Commissary of the Holy Office in the presence of a notary and witnesses to the effect that you must completely abandon the said false opinion, and that in the future you could neither hold, nor teach it in any way whatever, either orally or in writing; having promised to obey, you were dismissed.<sup>16</sup>

The injunction mentions the “Commissary of the Holy Office,” Michelangelo Seggizi, “in the name of His Holiness the Pope,” as giving Galileo a legal “injunction” to refrain from asserting that the Earth moves. It reads:

Friday, the 26<sup>th</sup> of the same month [February 1616], at the palace, the usual residence of the said Most Illustrious Lord Cardinal Bellarmine, and in the chambers of His Most Illustrious Lordship, and in the presence of the Reverend Father Michelangelo Seggizi of Lodi, O. P., Commissary of the Holy Office, having summoned the above-mentioned Galileo before himself, the same Most Illustrious Lord Cardinal warned Galileo that the above-mentioned opinion was erroneous and that he should abandon it; and thereafter, indeed immediately, before me and witnesses, the Most Illustrious Lord Cardinal himself being also present still, the aforesaid Father Commissary, in the name of His Holiness the Pope and the whole Congregation of the Holy Office, ordered and enjoined the said Galileo, who was himself still present, to abandon completely the above-mentioned opinion that the sun stands still at the center of the world and the earth moves, and henceforth not to hold, teach, or defend it in any way whatever, either orally or in writing; otherwise the Holy Office would start proceedings against him. The same Galileo acquiesced in the injunction and promised to obey.<sup>17</sup>

Hence, although Bellarmine’s initial document stated that Galileo “has not abjured in our hand nor in the hand of any other person in Rome,” the second document indicates that there was, indeed, cause for abjuration from Galileo since he both received a legal injunction to cease and desist teaching heliocentrism and “acquiesced” to the injunction.

To defend himself, Galileo gave Urban VIII the first document Bellarmine had written – the one that contained no reference to Galileo receiving an injunction from the Holy Office but feigned ignorance of the “injunction.” Galileo states to Pope Urban VIII:

In the month of February 1616, Lord Cardinal Bellarmine told me that since Copernicus’ opinion, taken absolutely, was contrary to Holy Scripture, it could be neither held nor defended, but it could be taken and used *ex suppositione* (suppositionally). In conformity with this I keep a

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<sup>16</sup> *Le Opere di Galileo Galilei*, Antonio Favaro, vol. 19, p. 403, as cited in Fantoli, p. 137.

<sup>17</sup> *Le Opere di Galileo Galilei*, Antonio Favaro, vol. 19, pp. 321-322, translated by Annibale Fantoli in *The Church and Galileo*, pp. 119-120; the same version in Maurice Finocchiaro’s *The Galileo Affair*, p. 147. An *injunction* is a formal order from a court of law or canonical court ordering a person or group to do or not do something.

certificate by Lord Cardinal Bellarmine himself, dated 26 May 1616, in which he says that Copernicus' opinion cannot be held or defended, being against Holy Scripture. I present a copy of this certificate, and here it is.<sup>18</sup>

During the interrogation, Galileo admitted: "there were some Dominican Fathers present" at the meeting of February 26, 1616. Galileo was then asked, "whether at that time, in the presence of those Fathers, he was given any injunction either by them or by someone else concerning the same matter, and if so what?" Galileo gave the following answer:

As I remember it, the affair took place in the following manner. One morning Lord Cardinal Bellarmine sent for me, and told me a certain detail that I should like to speak to the ear of His Holiness before telling others, but then at the end he told me that Copernicus' opinion could not be held or defended, being contrary to Holy Scripture. I do not recall whether those Dominican friars were there at first or came afterward; nor do I recall whether they were present when Cardinal Bellarmine told me that the same opinion could not be held. Finally, it may be that I was given an injunction not to hold or defend the said opinion, but I do not recall it since this is something of many years ago.<sup>19</sup>

Prompted by the inquisitor to explain further, Galileo seems to have a convenient lapse of memory concerning the injunction. He adds:

I do not recall that this injunction was given me any other way than orally by Lord Cardinal Bellarmine. I do remember that the injunction was that I could not hold or defend, and maybe even that I could not teach. I do not recall, further, that there was the phrase "in any way whatever," but maybe there was in fact.... Regarding the two phrases in the said injunction now mentioned, namely "not to teach" and "in any way whatever," I do not retain them in my memory, I think because they are not contained in the said certificate, which I relied upon and kept as a reminder.<sup>20</sup>

According to Bellarmine's second document of February 25, there is no mention that the "injunction" was given orally to Galileo. Perhaps Galileo had a different understanding of what, precisely, an injunction was. Perhaps Galileo did not understand the legal and formal authority an injunction carries, but at least Galileo is coming closer to the reality that an injunction was, indeed, given to him on that date.

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<sup>18</sup> *Le Opere di Galileo Galilei*, Antonio Favaro, vol. 19, p. 339, translated by Annibale Fantoli in *The Church and Galileo*, p. 127. Fantoli adds: "The Latin expression *ex suppositione* had a different meaning for Bellarmine than it did for Galileo. For the cardinal it meant that the Copernican theory could be used as a purely mathematical hypothesis for astronomical calculations and thus for 'saving the phenomena.' For Galileo, it meant that the Copernican theory could be used as a physical hypothesis, which might later on be shown to represent the real constitution of the world. Galileo relied on the latent ambiguity of this expression to justify the writing of the *Dialogue*" (*ibid.*, p. 146).

<sup>19</sup> *Le Opere di Galileo Galilei*, Antonio Favaro, vol. 19, p. 339, translated by Annibale Fantoli in *The Church and Galileo*, p. 128.

<sup>20</sup> *Opere di Galileo Galilei*, Antonio Favaro, vol. 19, p. 340, translated by Annibale Fantoli in *The Church and Galileo*, p. 128. Also in *Galileo E L'Inquisizione*, p. 80, as follows: "Dopo il sodetto precetto io non ho ricercato licenza di scriver il sodetto libro, da me riconosciuto, perchè io non pretendo, per haver scritto detto libro, di haver contrafatto punto al precetto che mi fu fatto, di non tenere nè difender nè insegnare la detta opinione, anzi di confutarla."

Galileo then refers to the injunction in more explicit terms when he is questioned regarding how he obtained an imprimatur for his *Dialogo* when, in fact, he had received an injunction seventeen years earlier from Pope Paul V not to hold or teach that the Earth moves. The implication is that Galileo hid the injunction from the censor in order to lessen the difficulty in obtaining an imprimatur. Galileo's explanation is as follows:

After the above-mentioned injunction, I did not seek permission to write the above-mentioned book...because I did not think that by writing the book I was contradicting at all the injunction given me not to hold, defend or teach the said opinion, but rather that I was refuting it.<sup>21</sup>

So not only does Galileo finally admit he was given a legal injunction by Seggizi, he now begins to distort what really happened with the imprimatur he received for *The Dialogue Concerning the Two Great World Systems*. The censor of the *Dialogue* was Fr. Niccolo Riccardi, a man quite favorable to Galileo and his ideas, although he believed the argument about celestial revolutions to be somewhat useless due to his idea that the angels moved the stars and planets. Still, Riccardi sensed that the *Dialogue* was a thinly veiled advancement of Copernicanism that on the face of it was coming to loggerheads with the 1616 decree of which he was very cognizant. His assistant, Fr. Raffaele Visconti, was given the job to edit the book, wherein he followed the advice of Bellarmine and the 1620 censors that all references to heliocentrism should be treated as hypothetical. Even with these changes, Riccardi was still troubled. His dilemma was compounded by the fact that he was receiving undue pressure from other quarters, namely, the papal secretary Giovanni Ciampoli and the Duke of Tuscany's ambassador, Niccolini.<sup>22</sup> Bowing to the pressure, Riccardi granted an imprimatur to the *Dialogue* in advance, on the condition that he would revise it himself, and then pass on each revised sheet to the printer. This action, of course, was completely devoid of proper protocol and Galileo took full advantage of this breach by seeking to have the book edited and published in Florence, the haven for all things heliocentric at this point in time. Riccardi refused, but Galileo insisted that he must do so because the outbreak of the bubonic plague made it impossible to come to Rome. He also enlisted the help of the Duke, his ambassador, and the papal secretary to put more pressure on Riccardi who eventually succumbed to the "beautiful cousin Caterina who made him yield over a bottle of Chianti at a dinner table." The assigned Florentine editor, the Dominican Fr. Jacinto Stefani, made only a few minor alterations for form's sake and thus Galileo's book was left virtually intact. Riccardi tried to keep at least some control by delaying the submission of his required preface and concluding sections, but even then the subterfuge continued as Caterina was again commissioned to sway Riccardi, although he was said to be "dragged by the hair" when he finally relinquished the needed documents.<sup>23</sup> Needless to say, the printing of the *Dialogue* began in 1631 with the first copies being produced in February 1632. By August, Urban's Holy Office got wind of Galileo's shenanigans with Riccardi. The book was halted and confiscated and Galileo was summoned to Rome in October 1632, which he succeeded in delaying until early 1633.

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Finocchiaro finds that Riccardi "excused himself by saying that he has approved the publication of the *Dialogue* because he had received an order from the pope to do so; the pope denied it saying that these were just words, not to be trusted; but finally the Father Master produced a note by monsignor Ciampoli, secretary to the pope, in which it was stated that His Holiness (in whose presence Ciampoli claimed to be writing) was ordering him to approve the book" (*Retrying Galileo*, p. 188).

<sup>23</sup> Koestler, *The Sleepwalkers*, pp. 488-490.

As regards Galileo's claim that he was not going against the 1616 injunction because he was not defending Copernican doctrine but "refuting it" or that he...

...did not think it necessary to say anything, because I had no doubts about it; for I have neither maintained nor defended in that book the opinion that the Earth moves and that the sun is stationary but have rather demonstrated the opposite of the Copernican opinion, and shown that the arguments of Copernicus are weak and not conclusive...<sup>24</sup>

...is one of the most preposterous and risky excuses he had ever attempted to pass by the magisterium. Not only had he defended Copernicanism, but as Melchior Inchofer, one of the advisors of the Inquisition who thoroughly examined the *Dialogue*, put it:

...if the defendant had not adhered firmly to the Copernican opinion and believed it physically true, he would not have fought for it with such asperity, nor would he have written the *Letter to the Grand Duchess*, nor would he have held up to ridicule those who maintain the accepted opinion, and as if they were dumb mooncalves [and] described them as hardly deserving to be called human beings....he holds all to be mental pygmies who are not Pythagorean or Copernican, it is clear enough what he has in mind, especially as he praises by contrast William Gilbert, a perverse heretic and a quibbling and quarrelsome defender of this opinion.<sup>25</sup>

Inchofer had read Galileo correctly. Although feigning capitulation, the inner Galileo believed in heliocentrism as strongly as he believed his own name. Just a few years earlier in his very long and technical 1624 reply to Francesco Ingoli (a priest who had written a 1616 essay titled: "On the Location and Rest of the Earth, Against the Copernican System"), Galileo states: "I say I have other evidences not previously observed by anyone, which are necessarily convincing about the certainty of the Copernican system."<sup>26</sup> Shortly before he traveled to Rome to face his second trial, he wrote to Elia Diodati in 1633 the following words concerning Libert Froidmont who wrote a book against Copernicus:

When Froidmont or others have established that to say the earth moves is heresy while demonstrations, observations, and necessary conclusions show that it does move, in what swamp will he have lost himself and the Holy Church?<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Original Italian: "Io non dissi cosa alcuna al P. Maestro di S. Palazzo, quando gli dimandai licenza di stampar il libro, del sodetto precetto, perchè non stimavo necessario il dirglielo, non havend'io scropolo alcuno, non havend'io con detto libro nè tenuta nè diffusa l'opinione della mobilità della terra e della stabilità del sole; anzi nel detto libro io mostro il contrario di detta opinione del Copernico, et che le ragioni di esso Copernico sono invalide e non concludenti" (*Galileo E L'Inquisizione*, p. 81).

<sup>25</sup> Santillana, *The Crime of Galileo*, p. 267. The original Latin after the ellipsis is: "...omnes tanquam homunciones [mental pygmies] reputet, qui Pythagoraei aut Copernicani non sunt, satis evidens est quid animi great, eo praesertim quod Guilhelmum Gilbertum, haeticum perversum et huius sententiae rixosum et cavillosum patronum, nimio plus laudet ac ceteris praeferat" (*Galileo E L'Inquisizione*, p. 93). Koestler notes: "Both the judges and the defendant knew that he was lying: both the judges and he knew that the threat of torture (*territo verbalis*) was merely a ritual formula, which would not be carried out; and that the hearing was a mere formality" (*The Sleepwalkers*, pp. 499-500).

<sup>26</sup> Reply to Ingoli, 1624, *Le Opere di Galileo Galilei*, vol. 6, total letter contained in pages 509-561, this portion translated by M. Finocchiaro in *The Galileo Affair*, p. 182. Ingoli was the secretary to the newly created office of Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith.

<sup>27</sup> *Le Opere di Galileo Galilei*, vol. 15, p. 25, as cited and translated in Richard Westfall's *Essays on the Trial of Galileo*, p. 24. Fantoli, directing his remarks against McMullin's thesis (1967, pp. 33-34), contends that "Galileo is aware that such scientific certainty in favor of Copernicanism does not yet exist. But the least that one can say is that it remains possible in the future. Therefore, the choice between Ptolemaic view and that of Copernicus is to be left open in expectation of future 'proofs'"

But in front of the inquisitors Galileo adhered to his story, claiming as a final statement that he would “promise to resume the arguments already brought in favor of the said opinion which is false and has been condemned, and to confute them in such a most effectual manner.”<sup>28</sup>

As the 1633 discovery of the second Bellarmine document shows, a written injunction was given to Galileo on February 25, 1616 not to teach the heliocentric system. As noted earlier, one of the “Dominican friars” that Galileo admits to being present at the 1616 meeting is Michelangelo Seggizi, who, as was his function as the Commissary of the Holy Office, would be the one who handed Galileo the injunction. When Galileo was finally summoned before Pope Urban, the existence and delivery of the injunction was confirmed. The 1633 sentence against Galileo stated:

...after being informed and warned in a friendly way by the same Lord Cardinal [Bellarmine], you were given an injunction by the then Commissary of the Holy Office in the presence of a notary and witnesses to the effect that you must completely abandon the said false opinion, and that in the future you could neither hold, nor teach it in any way whatever, either orally or in writing; having promised to obey, you were dismissed.<sup>29</sup>

As was the case with Paul V, Urban VIII, took the Galileo affair very seriously. There can be little doubt that Urban understood that nothing less than the veracity of Scripture was at stake. He was not about to let a relative upstart reverse fifteen centuries of Church teaching on little more than a scientific hunch. That the pope was interpreting Galileo’s heliocentrism as a direct attack upon Scripture is noted in the text of the sentence against him that was approved by the pope:

...the said certificate [from Bellarmine] you produced in your defense aggravates your case further since, while it says that the said opinion is contrary to Holy Scripture, yet you dared to treat of it, defend it, and show it as probable; nor are you helped by the license you artfully and cunningly extorted since you did not mention the injunction you were under.<sup>30</sup>

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Next, Mr. Check tries to minimize the official proceedings that determined Copernicanism was heretical by claiming that the pope’s decisions were not “ex cathedra.” In addition to what we have already said about this claim (namely, that only the Church, not Mr. Check, can decide whether the papal decisions and decrees against Copernicanism were fallible or infallible, and the Church has made no such judgment), let’s compare this to an unofficial statement by a pope that was afterward declared heretical by the Church. I speak here of Pope Honorius (625-638) who was condemned as a heretic for his statement

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(*Galileo: For Copernicanism and for the Church*, p. 205). But it appears that in Galileo’s characteristic duplicity, he would say whatever he could get away with, depending on the audience to whom he was speaking. If his audience believed in Copernicanism, Galileo treated Copernicanism as a scientific fact. If his audience rejected Copernicanism, Galileo would often treat it as a hypothesis.

<sup>28</sup> *The Crime of Galileo*, p. 277.

<sup>29</sup> *Le Opere di Galileo Galilei*, Antonio Favaro, vol. 19, p. 403, as cited in Fantoli, p. 137.

<sup>30</sup> *Le Opere di Galileo Galilei*, vol. 19, pp. 403-404, as cited in Fantoli, p. 138.

that Jesus had one will instead of two.<sup>31</sup> Suffice it to say, Honorius' statement, which was not official and merely written in a personal letter to Sergius, the patriarch of Constantinople, was condemned as heretical by two popes and three councils, and the heresy was recorded in the *Liber Diurnas* until the fourteenth century.

Comparatively, if geocentrism was a false teaching and Paul V had made himself a heretic by approving the Holy Offices' condemnation of Copernicanism, the Church may have likewise had Paul V condemned centuries later. In the case of Paul V, not only was he not condemned by the Church, all of his actions and words against Galileo were endorsed seventeen years later by Pope Urban VIII when Galileo was officially condemned as being "vehemently suspect of heresy," which means that Urban VIII accepted and applied Paul V's "declaring and defining" of Copernicanism as a heresy. It is also a fact that the Church has never made any official statement that Paul V and Urban VIII were wrong in their decisions against Galileo, and has never made any official statement either rejecting geocentrism or accepting Copernicanism. As such, the decisions of Paul V and Urban VIII stand to this very day, for that is what Catholic Church protocol requires.

Unfortunately, you will never get this kind of in-depth information and analysis from Christopher Check. He, like most Catholic apologists, have already made up their mind that Copernicanism is true and the Church was wrong. Their apologetic then seeks to find some way of saving face for the Church at the same time they reject the Church's decisions against Copernicanism.

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At the 16:10 and 40:00 mark, Mr. Check asserts that Christoph Clavius used Copernicus' model to fix the Julian calendar. This is a half-truth. Clavius might have *attempted* to use the Copernican model to fix the calendar, but the Copernican model was so inaccurate no one could use it for much of anything, much less to fix a calendar. The calendar wasn't fixed until someone figured out (regardless whether the Earth went around the sun or the sun around the Earth) that there were 365.25 days to the year instead of just 365.00 days. Be that as it may, Copernicus' model was inaccurate because he insisted on using perfect circles for the orbits of the planets around the sun – something even Ptolemy knew was wrong and thus invented his "equant" to give the planets irregular orbits. Why did Copernicus use perfect circles? Because he wasn't as interested in developing a correct and accurate model of the solar system as he was of promoting Aristarchus and the Greek Pythagorean school who had a special affection for the sun, often ending up in pagan sun worship. Even though he was a canon of the Church, Copernicus repudiated the Scriptural account of cosmology and, like Galileo after him, insisted that its passages need not be taken literally. Similar to Galileo, Copernicus was also a fornicator. He shacked up with his lover and refused to leave her even when his bishop threatened to discipline him. So why would we expect God to give either of these two men the truth? Not until Galileo repented of his former life in 1639, three years before his death, do we see his personal life change. We have no record of Copernicus doing so.

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At the 35:54 mark, Mr. Check uses the popular canard that Christians should not interpret Genesis literally, otherwise, as Augustine says, they will show themselves to be "foolish and ignorant to non-

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<sup>31</sup> Honorius' statement can be found in Denzinger 251, stating: "Hence we confess on will of our Lord Jesus Christ..."

Christians” about things cosmological. In reality, the passage from Augustine shows how foolish and ignorant Mr. Check and everyone else who uses this passage from Augustine, are. If these so-called apologists would just turn to the next page of Augustine’s treatise, they would find out that they totally misrepresent what he is saying. Even Galileo scholars make the same mistake. For example, Galileo historian, Annibale Fantoli, in his 1997 book *Galileo: For Copernicanism and for the Church*, introduces an argument from Galileo that makes it appear as if Augustine had no commitment or interest in geocentrism and would much prefer dealing with matters of salvation. Fantoli writes:

But, comments Galileo, the mobility or stability of the Earth or of the Sun are not questions of faith or morals, and as to those who uphold the mobility of the Earth none of them has ever wished to abuse the sacred texts by making use of them to bolster his own opinion. And the opinion of the Council, Galileo adds, is in agreement with the attitude of the Fathers who considered it useless to try to solve the problems of nature, as seems to in the case of St. Augustine who, when confronted with the question as to whether the heavens are fixed or move, answered (*De Genesi ad Litteram*, L.2, c.10):

To them I answer that these things should be examined with very subtle and demanding arguments to determine truly whether or not it is so; but I do not have the time to undertake and pursue these investigations, nor should such time be available to those whom we desire to instruct for their salvation and for the needs and benefit of the Holy Church (V, 337; trans. By Finocchiaro 1989, 109).<sup>32</sup>

The problem is that, in context, Augustine is not talking about whether the sun revolves around the Earth or the Earth around the sun. Augustine is concerned with only one question: whether the firmament revolves around the Earth or the stars revolve around the Earth while the firmament remains fixed. Chrysostom posed this very question. He posited that the heavens are immobile, but the sun and stars revolve around a fixed Earth:

The heaven, for instance, hath remained immoveable, according as the prophet says, ‘He placed the heaven as a vault, and stretched it out as a tent over the earth.’ But, on the other hand, the sun with the rest of the stars, runs on his course through every day. And again, the earth is fixed, but the waters are continually in motion; and not the waters only, but the clouds, and the frequent and successive showers, which return at their proper season.<sup>33</sup>

Rest assured, Augustine has no doubts that either the firmament or the stars and sun are revolving around a stationary Earth. As such, we can then understand the context of *De Genesis ad Litteram* L.2, c. 10 more clearly. Augustine writes:

With regard to the motion of heaven, certain Christian writers have enquired whether it is in reality stationary or moving [*e.g.*, Chrysostom]. If it is moving, they say, in what sense is it a firmament? But if it is stationary, how do the heavenly bodies that are thought to be fixed in it travel from east to west and the stars of the Wain complete their smaller orbits near the north

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<sup>32</sup> Annibale Fantoli, *Galileo: For Copernicanism and the Church*, translation by George V. Coyne, S. J., second edition, 1996, p. 203. In *The Case of Galileo*, 2012, Fantoli says: “And he [Augustine] adds that the sacred writers had no intention to teach anything about the form and figure of the heavens nor about any questions about nature ‘since such knowledge was of no use to salvation’” (*The Case of Galileo*, p. 40).

<sup>33</sup> *Homilies to Antioch*, Homily XII, PG 49, 128.

pole? They present the picture of heaven turning either like a sphere, if we suppose another axis not visible to us extending from another pivotal point, or like a disk, if there is no other axis.

Augustine then states what Galileo quoted above, (although the translation is slightly different in this version):

My reply is that there is a great deal of subtle and learned enquiry into these questions for the purpose of arriving at a true view of the matter; but I have no further time to go into these questions and discuss them, nor should they have time whom I wish to see instructed for their own salvation and for what is necessary and useful in the Church.

The remaining part of Augustine's paragraph (that neither Galileo nor Fantoli quote from the passage) confirms that Augustine's concern is whether the firmament revolves around a stationary Earth, or the stars revolve around a stationary Earth, but in both he believes the Earth is stationary:

They must certainly bear in mind that the term "firmament" does not compel us to imagine a stationary heaven: we may understand this name as given to indicate not that it is motionless but that it is solid and that it constitutes an impassable boundary between the waters above and the waters below. Furthermore, if the evidence shows that the heavens actually are immovable, the motion of the stars will not be a hindrance to our acceptance of this fact. The very scholars who have devoted the most exhaustive study to this subject have concluded that if the stars alone were moved while the heavens were motionless, all the known phenomena observed in the motions of the stars might have taken place.<sup>34</sup>

Suffice it to say, the above attempt by Check and his modern supporters to commandeer Augustine to their cause is a typical example of how the great saint's words are often twisted to teach Copernicanism when, in fact, Augustine is teaching the exact opposite. Unfortunately, Augustine's respect of science is often an easy target for abuse by those seeking to boost the ideas of modern science (*e.g.*, evolution and heliocentrism). In the process, little attention is paid to Augustine's devotion to Scripture as the final authority on such matters and neither are his warnings heeded against the false claims of science. He writes:

But since the words of Scripture that I have treated are explained in so many senses, critics full of worldly learning should restrain themselves from attacking as ignorant and uncultured these utterances that have been made to nourish all devout souls....But more dangerous is the error of certain weak brethren who faint away when they hear these irreligious critics learnedly and eloquently discoursing on the theories of astronomy or on any of the questions relating to the elements of this universe. With a sigh, they esteem these teachers as superior to themselves, looking upon them as great men; and they return with disdain to the books which were written for the good of their souls; and, although they ought to drink from these books with relish, they can scarcely bear to take them up.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> *The Literal Meaning of Genesis in Ancient Christian Writers*, editor: Johannes Quasten, translated by John Hammond Taylor, S. J., Vol. 1, NY, Newman Press, 1982, pp. 60-61, from Book 2, Chapter 10, Para. 23: "The motion of heaven and the meaning of the firmament."

<sup>35</sup> *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, Book 1, Chapter 20, Para. 41, Ancient Christian Writers, *ibid.*, p. 44.

At the 54:29 mark, Mr. Check quotes Newman as follows:

Galileo may be right in his conclusions that the Earth moves...it might have been wrong to consider him a heretic, but there was nothing wrong in censoring abrupt, startling, unsettling, unverified disclosures, if such they were, when the limits of revealed truth had not yet been entertained. A man ought to be sure of what he is saying before he risks contradicting the word of God. It was safe, not dishonest, to be slow in accepting what nevertheless turned out to be true. Here is an instance in which the Church obliges Scripture's expositors...to be tender to the popular religious sense.

The basic problem with Newman's apologetic is that it totally divorces itself from the fact that the Church is not a man-made institution but a divine institution, and the only institution on the face of the Earth for all time that was promised the protection of the Holy Spirit who, as Jesus said, would lead the Church into all truth and would be with it to the end of time (John 14-16). Because he ignores this basic fact, Newman ends up making the Church into a mere reactionary group of men who don't like new ideas and who mistakenly thought the Bible and Tradition could be trusted to give them the unadulterated truth. Their only consolation, according to Newman, is that they were sensitive men who saw nothing wrong with pandering to the popular religious sense. Newman doesn't realize that what he tries to protect with one hand he totally destroys with the other. If the Church put the full weight of its magisterium against Copernicanism, not only with one pope but with two (and long before papal infallibility was officially defined), and this same Church faithfully followed the patristic and medieval Tradition laid down before it for the 1600 years prior, how can Newman, with a straight face, convince his audience that the Church is to be relied upon either prior to the Galileo affair or after it, to benefit from the promise of Christ who said that He would lead it into all truth? It makes a mockery of the Church, if not of the whole of Christendom.

At the 55:11 mark, adding insult to injury, Mr. Check exacerbates Newman's faulty apologetic:

This is a pastoral decision made by Cardinal Bellarmine. The story also shows us the humility of the Church because subsequent to the event, under John Paul II, the story has been reviewed and the facts ascertained...the humility of the Church is demonstrated here in acknowledging some excess, perhaps.

Again, it was not a "pastoral decision" either by Bellarmine or Paul V or Urban VIII. If anything, the 1633 trial of Galileo that condemned him as "vehemently suspect of heresy" means that the Church took this matter very seriously and made it an issue of doctrine at the highest levels. The only "pastoral decision" that had to be made at that time was what to do with Galileo once he was convicted. The decision was to put him under house arrest and require him to recite the penitential Psalms, instead of excommunicating him from the Church.

Mr. Check then goes on to make the Galileo affair a matter of "humility" that the Church has the chance to demonstrate under John Paul II, saying, "under John Paul II, the story has been reviewed and the facts ascertained...the humility of the Church is demonstrated here in acknowledging some excess, perhaps."

- But is it a matter of humility for a pope of the Catholic Church to declare that two popes prior to him mistakenly thought they were being guided by the Holy Spirit into all truth as Jesus had promised them?
- Is it humility for a pope to throw out the whole patristic and medieval tradition, not to mention the literal reading of Scripture that the Church had taught for the 1600 years prior to Galileo? It was this very literal reading of Scripture that gave us such doctrines as the Eucharist, Confession, Baptism, Marriage and Divorce, the Priesthood, and many, many other such doctrines.
- Is it humility for a pope to give a blank check to modern science considering all the errors it has made over the centuries; all its convoluted theories about the origins of the cosmos, not to mention that fact that not one solid scientific proof has been established that proves the Earth goes around the sun?
- Is it humility which puts the Church in the precarious position of suggesting that its medieval magisterium committed a gross error not only in its interpretation of Scripture but in even thinking that it had the right of judging the issue?
- Is it humility that now exposes the modern Church itself as being suspect of error in various judgments it has made on certain societal issues since it is a fact that if the medieval Church can err then so can the modern Church?

This is not humility. It is gross negligence of the highest order.

Mr. Check tries to gloss over these facts by claiming that under John Paul II “the story has been reviewed and the facts ascertained,” but there were no new facts ascertained under John Paul II. The Galileo affair had been gone over with a fine-toothed comb for centuries. Each generation has tried to find the magic bullet that would somehow find the “real reason” the medieval Church condemned Galileo, but everything but the real reason was discovered, namely, that the Church was right, both scientifically and biblically, to condemn Galileo’s universe.

The only way the modern Church could possibly “demonstrate its humility” would be as every other pope and magisterium did, that is, to subsume itself under the previous magisterium and agree with it that Galileo was wrong. Instead, in its pride and arrogance, the modern Church chose to elevate itself above the prior Church and declare itself independent of it so that it could foster its “ecumenical” relationship with the world.

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