

Modern History Sourcebook:
The Crime of Galileo:
Indictment and Abjuration of 1633

Whereas you, Galileo, son of the late Vincenzo Galilei, of Florence, aged seventy years, were denounced in 1615, to this Holy Office, for holding as true a false doctrine taught by many, namely, that the sun is immovable in the center of the world, and that the earth moves, and also with a diurnal motion; also, for having pupils whom you instructed in the same opinions; also, for maintaining a correspondence on the same with some German mathematicians; also for publishing certain letters on the sun-spots, in which you developed the same doctrine as true; also, for answering the objections which were continually produced from the Holy Scriptures, by glozing the said Scriptures according to your own meaning; and whereas thereupon was produced the copy of a writing, in form of a letter professedly written by you to a person formerly your pupil, in which, following the hypothesis of Copernicus, you include several propositions contrary to the true sense and authority of the Holy Scriptures; therefore (this Holy Tribunal being desirous of providing against the disorder and mischief which were thence proceeding and increasing to the detriment of the Holy Faith) by the desire of his Holiness and the Most Emminent Lords, Cardinals of this supreme and universal Inquisition, the two propositions of the stability of the sun, and the motion of the earth, were qualified by the Theological Qualifiers as follows:

1. The proposition that the sun is in the center of the world and immovable from its place is absurd, philosophically false, and formally heretical; because it is expressly contrary to Holy Scriptures.
2. The proposition that the earth is not the center of the world, nor immovable, but that it moves, and also with a diurnal action, is also absurd, philosophically false, and, theologically considered, at least erroneous in faith.

Therefore . . . , invoking the most holy name of our Lord Jesus Christ and of His Most Glorious Mother Mary, We pronounce this Our final sentence: We pronounce, judge, and declare, that you, the said Galileo . . . have rendered yourself vehemently suspected by this Holy Office of heresy, that is, of having believed and held the doctrine (which is false and contrary to the Holy and Divine Scriptures) that the sun is the center of the world, and that it does not move from east to west, and that the earth does move, and is not the center of the world; also, that an opinion can be held and supported as probable, after it has been declared and finally decreed contrary to the Holy Scripture, and, consequently, that you have incurred all the censures and penalties enjoined and promulgated in the sacred canons and other general and particular constituents against delinquents of this description. From which it is Our pleasure that you be absolved, provided that with a sincere heart and unfeigned faith, in Our presence, you abjure, curse, and detest, the said error and heresies, and every other error and heresy contrary to the Catholic and Apostolic Church of Rome.

1630 A.D. [See note below. The date should be 1633]

Important Note: I have been unable to locate a printed source for the above text. A different translation, with the text of Galileo's abjuration, was posted by Evan Soule, 10/18/1998 at <http://www.escribe.com/science/vortex/msg00017.html> . Again this is without a printed source, but with the correct date of 1633.

See the Galileo Timeline at Rice University

The following are excerpted portions from the

Sentence of the Tribunal of the Supreme Inquisition against Galileo Galilei, given the 22nd day of June of the year 1633

"It being the case that thou, Galileo, son of the late Vincenzo Galilei, a Florentine, now aged 70, wast denounced in this Holy Office in 1615:

"That thou heldest as true the false doctrine taught by many, that the Sun was the centre of the universe and immoveable, and that the Earth moved, and had also a diurnal motion: That on this same matter thou didst hold a correspondence with certain German mathematicians....

"That the Sun is the centre of the universe and doth not move from his place is a proposition absurd and false in philosophy, and formerly heretical; being expressly contrary to Holy Writ: That the Earth is not the centre of the universe nor immoveable, but that it moves, even with a diurnal motion, is likewise a proposition absurd and false in philosophy, and considered in theology ad minus erroneus in faith.....

"Invoking then the Most Holy Name of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and of His most glorious Mother Mary, ever Virgin, for this Our definite sentence, the which sitting pro tribunali, by the counsel and opinion of the Reverent Masters of theology and doctors of both laws, Our Counsellors, we present in these writings, in the cause and causes currently before Us, between the magnificent Carlo Sinceri, doctor of both laws, procurator fiscal of this Holy Office on the one part, and thou Galileo Galilei, guilty, here present, confessed and judged, on the other part:

"We say, pronounce, sentence, and declare, that thou, the said Galileo, by the things deduced during this trial, and by thee confessed as above, hast rendered thyself vehemently suspected of heresy by this Holy Office, that is, of having believed and held a doctrine which is false, and contrary to the Holy Scriptures, to wit: that the Sun is the centre of the universe, and that it does not move from east to west, and that the Earth moves and is not the centre of the universe: and that an opinion may be held and defended as probable after having been declared and defined as contrary to Holy Scripture; and in consequence thou hast incurred all the censures and penalties of the Sacred Canons, and other Decrees both general and particular, against such offenders imposed and promulgated. From the which We are content that thou shouldst be absolved, if, first of all, with a sincere heart and unfeigned faith, thou dost before Us abjure, curse, and detest the above-mentioned errors and heresies and any other error and heresy contrary to the Catholic and Apostolic Roman Church, after the manner that We shall require of thee.

"And to the end that this thy grave error and transgression remain not entirely unpunished, and that thou mayst be more cautious in the future, and an example to others to abstain from and avoid similar offences,

"We order that by a public edict the book of DIALOGUES OF GALILEO GALILEI be prohibited, and We condemn thee to the prison of this Holy Office during Our will and pleasure; and as a salutary penance We enjoin on thee that for the space of three years thou shalt recite once a week the Seven Penitential Psalms, reserving to Ourselves the faculty of moderating, changing, or taking from, all other or part of the above-mentioned pains and penalties.

"And thus We say, pronounce, declare, order, condemn, and reserve in this and in any other better way and form which by right We can and ought.

Ita pronunciamus nos Cardinalis infrascripti.

F. Cardinalis de Asculo.

G. Cardinalis Bentivolius

D. Cardinalis de Cremona.

A. Cardinalis S. Honuphri.

B. Cardinalis Gypsius.

F. Cardinalis Verospus.

M. Cardinalis Ginettus.

GALILEO'S ABJURATION.

I, Galileo Galilei, son of the late Vincenzo Galilei of Florence, aged 70 years, tried personally by this court, and kneeling before You, the most Eminent and Reverend Lord Cardinals, Inquisitors-General throughout the Christian Republic against heretical depravity, having before my eyes the Most Holy Gospels, and laying on them my own hands; I swear that I have always believed, I believe now, and with God's help I will in future believe all which the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church doth hold, preach, and teach.

But since I, after having been admonished by this Holy Office entirely to abandon the false opinion that the Sun was the centre of the universe and immoveable, and that the Earth was not the centre of the same and that it moved, and that I was neither to hold, defend, nor teach in any manner whatever, either orally or in writing, the said false doctrine; and after having received a notification that the said doctrine is contrary to Holy Writ, I did write and cause to be printed a book in which I treat of the said already condemned doctrine, and bring forward arguments of much efficacy in its favour, without arriving at any solution: I have been judged vehemently suspected of heresy, that is, of having held and believed that the Sun is the centre of the universe and immoveable, and that the Earth is not the centre of the same, and that it does move.

Nevertheless, wishing to remove from the minds of your Eminences and all faithful Christians this vehement suspicion reasonably conceived against me, I abjure with sincere heart and unfeigned faith, I curse and detest the said errors and heresies, and generally all and every error and sect contrary to the Holy Catholic Church. And I swear that for the future I will neither say nor assert in speaking or writing such things as may bring upon me similar suspicion; and if I know any heretic, or one suspected of heresy, I will denounce him to this Holy Office, or to the Inquisitor and Ordinary of the place in which I may be.

I also swear and promise to adopt and observe entirely all the penances which have been or may be by this Holy Office imposed on me. And if I contravene any of these said promises, protests, or oaths, (which God forbid!) I submit myself to all the pains and penalties which by the Sacred Canons and other Decrees general and particular are against such offenders imposed and promulgated. So help me God and the Holy Gospels, which I touch with my own hands.

I Galileo Galilei aforesaid have abjured, sworn, and promised, and hold

myself bound as above; and in token of the truth, with my own hand have subscribed the present schedule of my abjuration, and have recited it word by word. In Rome, at the Convent della Minerva, this 22nd day of June, 1633.

I, GALILEO GALILEI, have abjured as above, with my own hand.