

The Catholic Church's Condemnation of Galileo

Central Historical Question:

Since the Catholic Church apologized to Galileo in 1992, should textbooks be forgiving in their portrayal of the Church's condemning of Galileo in 1633?

The Papal Inquisition's condemnation of Galileo, 1633 (edited)

In 1633 the Roman Inquisition, part of the Counter-Reformation, ordered Galileo to come to Rome for a trial on if his book could be considered heresy (which means to go against the Church's interpretation of the Bible).



We declare that you, Galileo, because of the evidence shown in trial, and your confession, to be guilty of heresy, of having believed and held the doctrine—which is false and contrary to the 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.

Vocabulary: Merriam-Webster

Doctrine: 1 : a set of ideas or beliefs that are taught or believed to be true

Contrary : on the contrary also quite the contrary — used to state that the opposite of what was said before is true

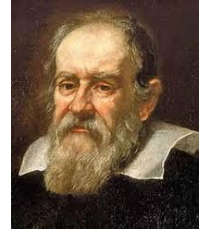
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Recantation of Galileo June 22, 1633

Galileo Galilei was an Italian scientist, mathematician, astronomer and philosopher. His contributions greatly improved early telescopes. He is most known for his book on Heliocentrism as discussed by Copernicus. In 1633 the Roman Inquisition brought him to Rome to stand trial on accusations of heresy. As seen above he was found guilty and sentenced to house arrest for the rest of his life.



I, Galileo, swear that I have always believed, do believe, and by God's help will in the future believe, all that is held, preached, and taught by the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. I abandon the false opinion that the sun is the center of the world and immovable, and I must not teach, verbally or in writing, the said false doctrine, since it is contrary to Holy Scripture.

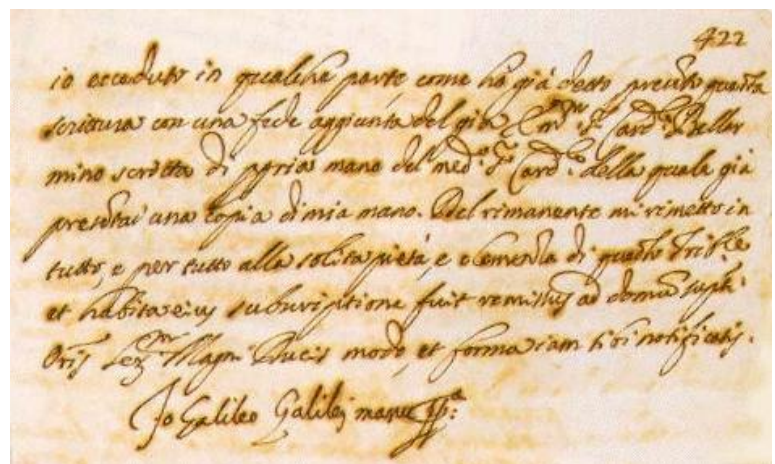
With sincere heart and faith I abjure, curse, and detest my errors and heresies, and I swear I will never again say anything similar. If I break (which God forbid) any of these promises, I submit myself to all the pains and penalties imposed against such delinquents. So help me God.

Vocabulary: Merriam-Webster

Abjure 1 *a* : to renounce upon oath *b* : to reject solemnly.

Picture of his recantation →

<http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/galileo/recantation.html>



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Pope John Paul II, *L'Osservatore Romano*, Nov 4, 1992 (edited)

In 1979 Pope John Paul II asked the Pontifical Academy of Sciences to review the "Galileo case". A Commission of scholars was established in 1981 and on, 31 October they presented their conclusions to the Pope. He thanked them for their work and spoke to them on the roles that faith and science fulfill in human life.



One might ask why should we talk about the Galileo case now, it was so long ago and our errors have been recognized. That is certainly true. However, the underlying problems of this case concern both the nature of science and the message of faith. One day we shall find ourselves in a similar situation, and both sides will need an informed awareness of each field and their own limits.

Galileo was a firm believer and knew the limits of both science and religion. It was through his intuition as a brilliant physicist why he understood how only the sun could function as the centre of the planetary system.

However, during Galileo's time the geocentric representation of the world agreed with the how most people interpreted and understood the teachings of the Bible. The error of the theologians of the time, when they maintained the centrality of the earth, was to think that our understanding of the physical world's structure was, in some way, imposed by the literal sense of Sacred Scripture. The problem Galileo's work then posed to theologians of that age was how could Heliocentrism be compatible with Scripture? Theologians would have to reexamine their own interpretation of the scriptures. Most of them did not know how to do so.

The Galileo case has become a sort of "myth", in which the image fabricated out of the events was quite far removed from reality. In this view, the Galileo case was the symbol of the Church's supposed rejection of scientific progress. This myth has played a considerable cultural role. It has helped to anchor a number of scientists of good faith in the idea that there was an incompatibility between the spirit of science and the Christian faith. It has tragically caused many to believe there is a conflict between science and faith, and they cannot both work together.

I hope that your research and reflection will help to give our contemporaries useful directions for building a harmonious society in a world more respectful of what is human.

Vocabulary: Merriam-Webster Learner's dictionary <http://www.learnersdictionary.com/>

Intuition: a natural ability or power that makes it possible to know something without any proof or evidence : a feeling that guides a person to act a certain way without fully understanding why

Theology: the study of religious faith, practice, and experience : the study of God and God's relation to the world

Impose: 1 a: to cause (something, such as a tax, or punishment) to affect someone or something by using your authority 2 to force someone to accept

Literal 3 : completely true and accurate : not exaggerated

Fabricate 1 : to make or build (something) 2 : to create or make up (a story) in order to trick people

Contemporaries : a person who lives at the same time or is about the same age as another person

Harmonious 3 : not experiencing disagreement or fighting