

Matters of Faith and Morals *Ex Suppositione*

Examining the 1616 Inquisition Proceedings against Galileo

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A cursory examination of the proceedings of the Roman Inquisition regarding Galileo and Copernican theory paints an unflattering view of the Church's position and verdict. Viewed out of context, the verdict seems unreasonable, hostile, and ignorant of scientific truth. This has undoubtedly spurred many myths, as well as reinforced the conflict theory of science and religion. The truth, however, is invariably more nuanced and complex. Upon close examination, the 1616 verdict of the Inquisition is primarily concerned with the preservation of interpretational integrity in relation to Holy Scripture, and its rejection of scriptural reinterpretation is based on the Copernican theory's suppositional nature. This position, and the general nature of the verdicts as based in nuanced distinctions, rather than ignorant, sweeping rejections of natural philosophy, can be seen by carefully examining the theological and theoretical positions of the key figures in the Inquisitorial processes of 1616.

The council of Trent provides the greatest amount of theological-historical context for these proceedings. As the official response of the Catholic Church against the 'Great Apostasy' of the Protestant Reformation, it acts not only as an answer to the theologies of Luther and his intellectual descendants, but also provides an explicit framework for the doctrinal unity of the counter-reformational Church.¹ While the Council spanned eighteen years,² two decrees from its fourth session are of particular concern to the issue of Copernicanism and Galileo's 1616 court proceedings; these decrees outline the accepted approach to scriptural interpretation.³ The emphasis in these decrees is implicitly on creating a unity of interpretation within Catholicism, based on a central and irrefutable authority. Thus, the interpretation of Holy Scripture by individuals must not be "contrary to that sense which Holy Mother Church [...] has held and does hold, or even contrary to the unanimous agreement of the Fathers."⁴ Infamously, and crucially for the issue at hand, this assertion is preceded by the limitation that this applies in "matters of faith and morals pertaining to the edification of Christian doctrine."⁵ Decreed seventy years before Galileo's first encounters with the Roman Inquisition,⁶ the council's decrees had already been tried

¹ Richard J. Blackwell, *Galileo, Bellarmine, and the Bible* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), 5.

² *Ibid.*, 6.

³ *Ibid.*, 7-9.

⁴ "Decrees of the Council of Trent Session IV," in *Galileo, Bellarmine, and the Bible*, ed. Richard J. Blackwell (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991 [8 April 1546]), 183.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Blackwell, *Galileo, Bellarmine, and the Bible*, 111.

and tested against the heresies of the Protestant dissenters, and they provided a crucial platform on which to ensure continued Catholic orthodoxy.⁷

Cardinal Bellarmine, renowned for his prowess in theological defense of Catholicism against the theories of many prominent Protestant theologians, was appointed by Pope Paul V to lead the 1616 meetings with Galileo about the Copernican theories.⁸ Bellarmine, champion of the Council of Trent, holds steadfast to certain strict ideals of scriptural interpretation. Every verse of Scripture has a divinely-inspired “literal” interpretation,⁹ whether “simply literal” or “figuratively literal;”¹⁰ there is no superfluous language in the Bible. In addition to this, certain, but not all, passages warrant a level of “spiritual” interpretation.¹¹ For the purposes of the matter at hand, one may disregard this spiritual interpretation, as the question lies in whether certain biblical passages should be interpreted ‘simply’ or ‘figuratively’ in their necessary ‘literal’ meaning. Therefore, even if natural philosophy required a reinterpretation of Scripture,¹² the new interpretation must still at least offer a figurative reading. In deference, again, to the Council, he lays the responsibility for the reinterpretation of Scripture with the Church,¹³ which should apply it only in the face of absolute necessity, for fear of encouraging the liberal application of personal interpretations.¹⁴

Just as Bellarmine’s theological predispositions must be understood before analyzing the verdicts of 1616, one must also understand certain aspects of Galileo’s philosophical framework. Galileo, after solidifying and publicizing his adoption of the Copernican theory,¹⁵ expresses his theories repeatedly *ex suppositione*. This form, while not used in contemporary scholarship, qualifies a theory as demonstrable, but not proven.¹⁶ There is a distinct difference, in Galileo’s time, between those theories that are suppositional by nature, due to the fact that they have not yet been proven as natural philosophical truths, and those theories that cannot, by their nature, be proven to be true.¹⁷ For example, Ptolemaic epicycles fit the latter classification as they are employed for their convenient calculative properties, nevertheless were not maintained as actual truths.¹⁸ This distinction becomes crucial in this matter as the latter position does not need to strictly comply with literal interpretations of Scripture, as it is simply an aid to augment human understanding of God’s creation.¹⁹ The former position proves to be a more problematic

⁷ Blackwell, *Galileo, Bellarmine, and the Bible*, 29.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Robert Cardinal Bellarmine, “Disputations on the Controversies Over Christian Faith Against the Heretics of the Day,” in *Galileo, Bellarmine, and the Bible*, ed. Richard J. Blackwell (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), 189.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 188.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 190.

¹² Robert Cardinal Bellarmine to Reverend Father Paolo Antonio Foscarini, April 12, 1615, in *Galileo, Bellarmine, and the Bible*, ed. Richard J. Blackwell (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), 266.

¹³ Bellarmine, “Disputations on the Controversies Over Christian Faith”, 191.

¹⁴ Bellarmine to Foscarini, 266.

¹⁵ Galileo Galilei, “Galileo’s Considerations on the Copernican Opinion,” in *The Galileo Affair*, ed. and trans. Maurice A. Finocchiaro (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 70-86.

¹⁶ William A. Wallace, “Galileo’s Science and the Trial of 1633,” *The Wilson Quarterly* 7.3 (1983): 161.

¹⁷ Blackwell, *Galileo, Bellarmine, and the Bible*, 171.

¹⁸ Wallace, “Galileo’s Science and the Trial of 1633”, 61.

¹⁹ Galileo Galilei, “Galileo’s Unpublished Notes,” in *Galileo, Bellarmine, and the Bible*, ed. Richard J. Blackwell (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), 273.

distinction, as any scriptural incompatibility must be carefully considered, as the theory enters the world of plausibility, and therefore could possibly necessitate the reinterpretation of Scripture.²⁰

It is with this theological and methodological context that a nuanced understanding of the interactions between Galileo, allied with the Copernican advocates, and Cardinal Bellarmine, representing the Catholic Church, becomes possible. Galileo's theological defense hinges on a few crucial points. He sees his telescopic discoveries, in disproving the necessity of the earth's stability and the sun's mobility, as necessarily elevating the Copernican theory to the level of those ex suppositione that are demonstrably true and plausibly reflect actual truth.²¹ This plausible actuality allows Galileo and the Copernicans to justify both their advocacy of it as such, and their propositions for alternative scriptural interpretations.²²

If one accepts this classification of the Copernican theory as theoretical, yet provable, the next logical step comes in the form of scriptural comparison. Traditionally, perhaps infamously, certain biblical passages have been traditionally interpreted as explicitly advocating the motion of the sun and stability of the earth. Among those seen as advocates of the earth's immovability are Psalm 93:1, Psalm 104:5, and Ecclesiastes 1:4; those that tell of the sun's motion around the earth include Psalm 19:4-6, Ecclesiastes 1:5-6, Isaiah 38:8, Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) 48:23 and 26, and Joshua 10:12.²³ While this matter seems to be addressed in the Bible, the Church Fathers make no specific reference to it in their writings, but generally accept the simple literal interpretation.²⁴

Galileo actively advocates that troublesome scriptural passages, which apparently contradict natural philosophy, should be interpreted using the Principle of Accommodation.²⁵ This principle is applied by St. Augustine, for example, in Genesis 1:17: "does this passage once again convey the idea that God did not work in the way humans usually work, but that the story was told in the way humans could understand it?"²⁶ That is, Scripture, if contradicted by nature, can be interpreted with the consideration that its language was accommodated to the common person of the time, therefore it may not explicitly reflect complex physical truths. For Galileo, this principle provides a solution to the problem of scriptural conflict with his theories. Galileo holds the orthodox position that the Bible is written by the infallible Holy Spirit,²⁷ through human agents, and that these human authors, Moses, David, or Solomon, for example, inherit from the Holy Spirit a complete knowledge of God's works.²⁸ Thus, Galileo uses the Principle of Accommodation not to imply that either the Holy Spirit or the human authors of Scripture were ignorant of natural truths, only that they chose to conceal this knowledge from the masses in order to direct the focus towards spiritual matters. The principle was well established, as Galileo outlines with certain obvious

²⁰ Blackwell, 171.

²¹ Galilei, "Unpublished Notes", 271.

²² Galileo Galilei to Reverend Father Benedetto Castelli, December 21, 1613, in *The Galileo Affair*, ed. and trans. Maurice A. Finocchiaro (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 52.

²³ Paolo Antonio Foscarini, "A Letter to Fr. Sebastiano Fantone, General of the Order, Concerning the Opinion of the Pythagoreans and Copernicus About the Mobility of the Earth and the Stability of the Sun and the New Pythagorean System of the World," in *Galileo, Bellarmine, and the Bible*, ed. Richard J. Blackwell (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), 223-4.

²⁴ Galilei, "Unpublished Notes", 275.

²⁵ Galileo Galilei, "Galileo's Letter to the Grand Duchess," in *The Galileo Affair*, ed. and trans. Maurice A. Finocchiaro (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 93.

²⁶ Augustine of Hippo, "On the Literal Interpretation of Genesis: An Unfinished Book," in *Saint Augustine On Genesis*, trans. Roland J. Teske (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1991), 175.

²⁷ Blackwell, *Galileo, Bellarmine, and the Bible*, 168-9.

²⁸ Galilei, "Unpublished Notes", 272.

instances of its usage: without applying accommodation, “one would have to attribute to God feet, hands, eyes, and bodily sensations,” among other absurd claims.²⁹ This is the framework Galileo frequently suggests for scriptural reinterpretation in the face of newly discovered natural truths.

None of Galileo’s theology, thus far, is particularly heterodox, and it certainly does not approach heresy. His advocacy of the Principle of Accommodation is perfectly within the realm of religious acceptability. The first public letter in which he expounds this theory had a few problematic wording choices, but it was determined by a Vatican consultant that, “though it sometimes uses improper words, it does not diverge from the pathways of Catholic expression,” except for in these few minor wording instances.³⁰ It is clear that Galileo shares, or at least accepts, the Vatican’s view of the technicalities of the interplay between the books of nature and Scripture. The disagreement between Galileo and the Vatican comes when faced with a much more nuanced issue. The focus shifts now to a debate which is less focused on how to deal with disagreements between nature and Scripture, and more a question of at what point these protocols should be enacted. The discussion thus centers on degrees of certainty: questions of when a theory necessitates a reevaluation of traditional interpretation, and more importantly, who makes the judgment of when and how this takes place.

This determination is dependent upon the relationships between the theory in question, the Council of Trent, the Church Fathers, Church Doctrine, and Scripture itself. While the theory is expressed *ex suppositione*, Galileo clearly interprets it as suppositional only insofar as there is not yet distinct proof, but it can, plausibly, be proven to be true.³¹ This position necessarily requires one to consider the scriptural conflicts such a proof would cause. As the question is one of scriptural interpretation, one must first refer to the Council of Trent. The Council would appear to prohibit individual interpretation in this case, as this authority belongs to the Church. Galileo, it would then seem, directly contradicts this precept when he unilaterally advocates the application of the Principle of Accommodation in regards to passages that seem to contradict Copernicanism.³²

In order to justify his treatment of the subject, Galileo invokes the clause that limits this injunction to matters of faith and morality.³³ This justification is also taken up by the Reverend Father Paolo Antonio Foscarini,³⁴ as well as by Diego de Zuñiga,³⁵ both of whom went further than Galileo, specifically outlining alternative interpretations of certain scriptural passages.³⁶ They all make the argument that, due to the nature of the issues and passages, “the disputed proposition [in Scripture] is not a ‘matter of faith because of its subject matter’ [de fide ratione objecti],”³⁷ therefore nullifying the requirement for interpretation in line with Church tradition. This is especially true, for Galileo, as the necessity of the Ptolemaic system, which the traditional interpretations have assumed, has been disproved, providing justification for the search for a new interpretation of

²⁹ Galilei, “Letter to the Grand Duchess”, 92.

³⁰ “Consultant’s Report on the Letter to Castelli”, in *The Galileo Affair*, ed. and trans. Maurice A. Finocchiaro (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 135-6.

³¹ Wallace, “Galileo’s Science”, 161.

³² Galilei, “Letter to the Grand Duchess”, 115.

³³ Galilei, “Unpublished Notes”, 269.

³⁴ Foscarini, “A Letter to Fr. Sebastiano Fantone”, 223.

³⁵ Diego de Zuñiga of Salamanca, “Commentary on Job,” in *Galileo, Bellarmine, and the Bible*, ed. Richard J. Blackwell (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), 185-6.

³⁶ Blackwell, *Galileo, Bellarmine, and the Bible*, 123.

³⁷ Galilei, “Unpublished Notes”, 270.

these passages.³⁸ Thus, as the Bible teaches “how one goes to heaven and not how heaven goes,”³⁹ the passages that refer to apparent cosmological phenomena can and should be interpreted in the light of the most accurate natural philosophy.

Therefore, it is fair to say that Galileo and Bellarmine, as representatives of their respective sides of the Copernican debate, agree on the general approach required of scriptural reinterpretation in the cases of apparent conflict with natural philosophy, but disagree on whether or not such a reinterpretation is required in the case of Copernican theory. The protocol for the application of the Accommodation Principle is not debated, especially not in the 1616 proceedings. The questions that are debated are, first, what category of *ex suppositione* theory Copernicanism falls under after Galileo’s telescopic discoveries, and, second, who holds the authority to decide if a reinterpretation of Scripture is required, and, if so, what form said reinterpretation should take.⁴⁰ Galileo answers that, as his discoveries disprove the necessity of the Aristotelan-Ptolemaic system, the Copernican system should be considered as plausibly true in the natural world. He also interprets the decrees of the Fourth Session of the Council of Trent, specifically the clause limiting Church authority to matters of faith and morals, as allowing for the postulation of alternative interpretations of passages of the Bible which seem to refer to natural phenomenon, and specifically recommends the application of the Principle of Accommodation as a viable justification for said passages. After giving consideration to these arguments, as expressed by Galileo, Foscarini, and de Zuñega in writing, and by Galileo in person during the proceedings of 1616, Cardinal Bellarmine chooses to interpret these contested aspects of the issue differently.⁴¹

As outlined above, Bellarmine had considerable experience as a champion of the Catholic faith. In order to understand the position of Bellarmine, and, by extension, the Church, his assertions shall be examined in a different order than those of Galileo; that is, his treatment of Scripture will be treated before his treatment of the theory of Copernicanism itself. This not only affords greater clarity to arguments that are often presented disjointedly throughout multiple pieces of writing, but it also accords with Bellarmine and Galileo’s respective magisteria. Whereas Galileo’s concern is primarily with theory and its proof in the natural world, a concern to which biblical exegesis is a tangential corollary, Bellarmine’s expertise lies in determinations and defense of traditional Catholic exegesis, to which natural philosophy is a small, if necessary, sub-dominion. While Galileo bases all subsequent scriptural decisions on his natural philosophical foundations, Bellarmine first responds to the scriptural commentary of the Copernicans before judging their theories explicitly.⁴²

Bellarmino’s first, and perhaps most crucial point is the direct result of his unflinching biblical literalism. This literalism, remember, is not the assertion that Scripture must be taken at face value, for he would agree with Galileo that it would be absurd and heretical to assert the actuality of many plain-faced passages in the Bible.⁴³ Rather, this literalism is the assertion that every single verse contains either a simple literal or figurative literal interpretation. This staunch position leads him to the conclusion that any biblical claim, and subsequent interpretation, “is still a matter of faith because of the speaker [*ex parte dicentis*].”⁴⁴ Ironically, Galileo’s caricature of

³⁸ Galilei, “Unpublished Notes”, 271.

³⁹ Cesare Cardinal Baronio, quoted in Galilei, “Letter to the Grand Duchess”, 96.

⁴⁰ Blackwell, *Galileo, Bellarmine, and the Bible*, 167-71.

⁴¹ Bellarmine to Foscarini, 265-7.

⁴² Blackwell, *Galileo, Bellarmine, and the Bible*, 172-3.

⁴³ Bellarmine, “Disputations on the Controversies Over Christian Faith”, 190-1.

⁴⁴ Bellarmine to Foscarini, 266.

Bellarmino's position, that it makes it "a matter of faith' to hold that [...] Tobias had a dog, because the Scriptures say so,"⁴⁵ aligns perfectly with Bellarmine's beliefs.⁴⁶ Galileo would place only those passages which Bellarmine credits with a spiritual interpretation as matters of faith and morality. For Bellarmine, this disconcertingly opens up vast swaths of sacred Scripture to the indiscriminate and multitudinous interpretations he encounters in Protestant theology.⁴⁷ Thus, the insistence that any claim of the Bible, no matter how seemingly mundane, necessarily falls under the category of faith ensures the unity of Catholic thought under the overarching authority of the Apostolic See. Therefore, while perhaps formally aligning himself with Galileo's theology, insofar as he grants that some passages can be interpreted figuratively without demeaning the authority of Scripture, he fundamentally undermines Galileo's subsequent defenses by placing the authority for any biblical exegesis exclusively in the hands of the Church.

Once Bellarmine has successfully established that the issue of any scriptural interpretation falls under the purview of the Fourth Council of Trent's two decrees, and therefore within the discretion of the Church, he proceeds to outline what criteria would, potentially, be required of a natural philosophical theory before it would necessitate the Church's reinterpretation of Scripture. For Bellarmine, if "a true demonstration would be produced [...] then at that time it would be necessary to proceed with great caution in interpreting the Scriptures which seem to be contrary."⁴⁸ Not only is his demand for proof particularly thorough, but, even once a theory reaches said threshold, the emphasis for the scriptural reinterpretation is placed on the caution it requires. Thus, under no circumstances, as far as Bellarmine is concerned, should any authority be recognized, in any deviation from traditional scriptural interpretation, unless explicitly exhorted by the Vatican;⁴⁹ this, itself, would only happen if the circumstances necessitated it with actual proof of a natural philosophical theory. This stance may appear rather radical, but, considering the Church's defensive position against Reformation theology, which looks to radically reinterpret Scripture, oftentimes with no deference to any centralized authority besides Scripture itself,⁵⁰ and Bellarmine's position as the Church's defender in such matters, this position reflects the emphasis on strong, centralized authority and prevalence of tradition that act as hallmarks of the counter-reformational stratagem.⁵¹

Now that he has established the protocol and requirements for natural philosophy to necessitate scriptural reinterpretation, Bellarmine swiftly judges Copernican theory based on these determinations. His Copernican judgements come in two strains: his theological verdict and his professional opinion. While these two may seem to occupy different realms of relevance, they are inexorably interconnected. Theologically, he deems that Copernicanism, as a theory ex suppositione, without proof of actual natural truth, does not warrant the reinterpretation of Scripture.⁵² This does not formally restrict the investigation of Copernicanism as a theory, or restrict the Church from reconsideration of this issue if, in the future, determinate proof is discovered to substantiate claims of natural actuality. That possibility notwithstanding, however, Copernicansim is to be subjected to the traditional interpretation of Scripture, and, as such, can

⁴⁵ Galilei, "Unpublished Notes", 270.

⁴⁶ Blackwell, *Galileo, Bellarmine, and the Bible*, 108-9.

⁴⁷ Bellarmine, "Disputations on the Controversies Over Christian Faith", 191-3.

⁴⁸ Bellarmine to Foscarini, 266.

⁴⁹ Bellarmine, "Disputations on the Controversies Over Christian Faith", 191.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 192-3.

⁵¹ Blackwell, *Galileo, Bellarmine, and the Bible*, 137-43.

⁵² Bellarmine to Foscarini, 265-6.

only be advocated as completely theoretical within Catholic orthodoxy.⁵³ Personally, given his belief in the ultimate perfection of Scripture, Bellarmine “has the greatest doubts” about the possibility of any proof of the theory.⁵⁴ He saw Galileo’s failings in determining actual proof of the system as substantiating the Bible’s simple literal interpretation.⁵⁵ Any replacement for the Ptolemaic system, for Bellarmine, would necessarily fall within the orthodox, and therefore divinely inspired, interpretation of Scripture.⁵⁶ While he does not formally exclude the possibility of the eventual proof of Copernicanism, it is clear that he considers it, at best, a remote and extremely unlikely possibility, unworthy of serious consideration at this point.

It is within the context of these considerations, determinations, and judgements of Cardinal Bellarmine’s that the Vatican issued its official verdicts on the issue of Copernicanism. Accepting that the theory’s level of *ex suppositione* determination does not justify a reinterpretation of Scripture, and that such a judgement and potential reinterpretation falls under the purview of the Vatican’s authority, the verdict focuses on the scriptural references in various Copernican writings.⁵⁷ With the traditional interpretation established as the universal precedent, implicit or explicit reinterpretations or exhortations toward reinterpretation become heretical.⁵⁸ Therefore, the Decree of the Index on March 5, 1616 refers to three works, in relation to Copernicanism: Copernicus’ *On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres*, Diego de Zuñiga’s *On Job*, and Foscarini’s *Letter*.⁵⁹ Copernicus needed isolated lines and passages removed, most of which refer to the actuality of the theory, especially in relation to God and potential scriptural reinterpretation,⁶⁰ and de Zuñiga’s *On Job* needed only the removal of one section of exegesis, on the passage Job 9:6, for which he posits a possible Copernican interpretation.⁶¹ Foscarini’s *Letter* is the only one of the three works that is banned outright; the bulk of his letter is concerned with the potential accommodationist interpretation of passages that conflict with Copernican theory,⁶² therefore there is no overarching orthodox position to be preserved by detailed correction, and the whole work falls under the category of heterodoxy.

The aspect of this affair judged most harshly by history is, perhaps, the special injunction against Galileo, administered by Cardinal Bellarmine himself.⁶³ This infamous injunction, which becomes the focal point of Galileo’s second trial in 1633, requires that Galileo cease to “hold, teach or defend” Copernicanism.⁶⁴ In the light of the preceding discussion, it should be clear from where this position emanates. It is not from the theory itself that any of the controversy or heterodoxy is born, but from the assertion that it reflects actual truth. Thus, the Inquisition proceedings refer to “the above-mentioned opinion that the sun stands still at the center of the

⁵³ Bellarmine to Foscarini, 266.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 266-7.

⁵⁶ Blackwell, *Galileo, Bellarmine, and the Bible*, 40-45; 172.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 119-21.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 120.

⁵⁹ “Decree of the Index,” in *The Galileo Affair*, ed. and trans. Maurice A. Finocchiaro (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 148-9.

⁶⁰ Blackwell, *Galileo, Bellarmine, and the Bible*, 123-4.

⁶¹ de Zuñiga, “Commentary on Job”, 185-6; Blackwell, *Galileo, Bellarmine, and the Bible*, 123.

⁶² Foscarini, “A Letter to Fr. Sebastiano Fantone”, 217-251; Blackwell, *Galileo, Bellarmine, and the Bible*, 123.

⁶³ “Special Injunction,” in *Galileo, Bellarmine, and the Bible*, ed. Richard J. Blackwell (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), 147-8.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 147.

world and the earth moves.”⁶⁵ It is this statement, not as theoretically *ex suppositione*, but as professed truth, that conflicts with Scripture. If the injunction were less ambiguous, and read, for example, ‘hold, teach or defend, the actual truth of Copernicanism without definitive proof,’ this would perhaps avoid further disputes and make the verdict seem much less harsh. Thus, as with all aspects of this affair, Bellarmine’s injunction to Galileo must be considered with distinct nuance and careful contextualization.

The Roman Inquisition’s verdict on Galileo and Copernican theory in 1616, therefore, reflects more of a rejection of free scriptural interpretation based on *ex suppositione* theory, outside of Catholic tradition, than any widespread persecution of Galileo and his fellow Copernicans. Though the Vatican’s position will eventually shift, this comes in light of both stronger evidence in favour of Copernicanism and the growing demand for looser restrictions on natural philosophical theory in general.⁶⁶ History has certainly used the Church’s conservatism in defense of its unified tradition harshly and judgmentally, and hindsight praises Galileo’s theological pragmatism in his advocacy of the application of Augustine’s Principle of Accommodation in the relationship between natural philosophy and Scripture.⁶⁷ The Church’s eventual adoption of Galileo’s theological approach, and the ambiguity of its proceedings certainly aid in this picture of the affair, and of the later trial of 1633.⁶⁸ If this essay has accomplished anything, it has hopefully been to demonstrate the necessity and utility of carefully considering and contextualizing complex historical issues, such as these intricate interchanges between natural philosophy and Catholic theology at the beginning of a burgeoning Scientific Revolution.

⁶⁵ “Special Injunction,” 147.; cf. “Decree of the Index,” 149, “Consultants’ Report on Copernicanism”, 146, “Inquisition Minutes (25 February 1616)”, 147, “Inquisition Minutes (3 March 1616)”, 148, in *Galileo, Bellarmine, and the Bible*, ed. Richard J. Blackwell (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991).

⁶⁶ Maurice A. Finocchiaro, *Retrying Galileo* (Berkeley:University of California Press, 2005) 138.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Blackwell, *Galileo, Bellarmine, and the Bible*, 127-8.

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