

Vittorio Frajese. *Il processo a Galileo Galilei: il falso e la sua prova*.  
Brescia: Morcelliana, 2010. 120 pp. ISBN: 978-88-37224-363.

On 25 February 1616 Galileo was given a precept (usually but inaccurately called an injunction) to cease to defend Copernicus's ideas. Six documents bear directly on the event. One of the key points in dispute concerns the relation between two orders by Paul V, one to Cardinal Bellarmino to admonish Galileo, and another to the Roman Inquisition's commissary (chief operating officer) Michelangelo Seghizzi to give him a precept. It is often thought that these two actions were to succeed one another and Seghizzi was to issue the precept only if Galileo refused Bellarmino's admonition. This is also Vittorio Frajese's view, based on four of the six documents. Nevertheless, a fifth document, the "precept minute," records the administration of both admonition and precept, linking them temporally by the phrase *successive ac incontinenti*, which Frajese translates without discussion as *immediatamente e senza por tempo in mezzo* ("immediately and without putting any time in the middle," 47); it is worth noting that he also misquotes the original as *immediate ac incontinenti*. In large part because of this phrase, since the early 1870s a number of historians have thought that the minute was forged. Frajese comes close to endorsing the opinion of Karl von Gebler (whose nearly diplomatic edition of Galileo's dossier can still be consulted with profit) that the forgery took place in 1616.

On the one hand, Frajese is certainly right about two crucial points. First, Galileo's trial in 1632 was predicated on violation of the precept through publication of his *Dialogo dei due massimi sistema del mondo*. Second, Frajese is also right that no pope ever condemned as heretical the substance of Copernicus's heliocentric views, and it may therefore follow that Galileo's condemnation was theologically illegitimate. On the other hand, much of the rest of this short book

is wrong, beginning from the assertion that the most authoritative of those six documents about 25 February is Bellarmino's certificate to Galileo attesting that he had not abjured which is almost entirely irrelevant.

Frajese differs from von Gebler — one of the small handful of many earlier historians he cites — by arguing that the precept is not a forgery in the technical sense but a falsification, a wresting of the evidence by the Roman Inquisition's chief notary, Andrea de Pettini, at Seghizzi's direction. He improves on most of his predecessors by enlisting the help of his colleague at La Sapienza, the respected medieval paleographer Emma Condello, to establish that the minute is in the notary's hand. But that is all Condello did and Frajese makes other arguments that go well beyond hers, many of them not new. The original points have been refuted by Sergio Pagano ("Il precetto del cardinale Bellarmino a Galileo: un 'falso?' con una parentesi sul radio, madame Curie e i documenti galileiani," *Galilaeana. Journal of Galilean Studies* 7 [2010]: 143–203) and Pagano and myself have disposed of the rest (Thomas F. Mayer, "The Roman Inquisition's Precept to Galileo (1616)," *British Journal for the History of Science* 43.3 [2010]: 327–51). Frajese also adduces a chestnut about the precept minute's legal status long since disposed of by Francesco Beretta. Nor does Frajese assign Seghizzi a motive, other than a vague contention about differences between Jesuits and Dominicans in the handling of "fraternal admonitions." Like Beretta, the man who best knows the records of Galileo's trial, Frajese cannot demonstrate that the pope's order amounted to an "admonition." In forty years of the Inquisition's decree registers, I have no found no other such papal command. As for Seghizzi, my reconstruction of his career (in press) makes it appear highly unlikely that he would have taken any action beyond the strict letter of papal orders.

In common with others who have thought some of the precept documents falsified, Frajese's argument depends on the assumptions that the records kept by the Roman Inquisition are complete and impeccable. Neither claim comes even close to the truth. The author also asserts — but no more — that the Inquisition followed careful procedures. This is certainly true, but he neither demonstrates the point in general nor explains how those procedures might have been deformed in Galileo's case, beyond an alleged oddity or two of record-keeping.

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