

Thomas F. Mayer, ed. *The Trial of Galileo, 1612–1633*.

Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012. xii + 210 pp. \$24.95. ISBN: 978-1-4426-0519-0.

During the past twenty years a great deal has been written about Galileo's trial at the hands of the Roman Inquisition in 1633. Since 1998 most of this scholarship has been based on the availability to researchers of the archives of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, containing the Vatican File on Galileo. Yet while so

much excellent research has recently been carried out concerning Galileo's confrontation with Church authorities, the accessibility of the primary material, especially for undergraduate students learning about the Galileo affair for the first time, is limited. One is forced to wade through an array of books intended mostly for specialist audiences. Mayer's book corrects this problem and provides a sourcebook that is an ideal tool for any instructor introducing students to Galileo's trial and an excellent accompaniment to the insightful analysis found in the secondary literature.

Mayer does not provide fresh perspectives on the trial. He does not unveil some never-before-seen source. Instead, in chronological order, he makes available many of the documents found in the archives that pertain to the trial. The result is a collection of English-translated primary material easily accessible to students for the purpose of critically analyzing the context of the trial and interests of the figures involved in it. Students attempting to engage with the material are given further assistance with some detailed headings, summaries, footnotes, guiding questions, and suggested secondary literature.

This book, in the process of increasing the availability of primary sources, also helps dismiss popular misconceptions. Students reading the notes and letters of inquisitors, papal aides, Galileo's allies, and Galileo himself will learn from these sources that Galileo was not imprisoned or tortured and that the Church hierarchy did not possess an irrational antisience agenda. What is particularly clear from reading these translated documents is that Church authorities and advisors to the Congregation insisted upon the long-established and widely held belief among scholars of the period that mathematicians should not comment publicly about philosophy and theology, especially if such commentary challenged the perceived realities of the cosmos or the doctrines of faith. Among questions about the wording of the precept of 1616 and Galileo's beliefs about the motion of the earth and immobility of the sun, this issue about separation of the mathematical art of astronomy from the grander disciplines of philosophy and theology is of immense importance for students grappling with the intellectual context and motives of Galileo's prosecutors.

This book is not, however, without its shortcomings. First, there is a strange lacuna in the chronology that is not explained or justified in the introduction. Mayer provides his readers with only two letters between the years 1616 and 1632, neither of which hint at the election of two new popes during that period and the promotion of some of Galileo's allies to positions of influence. Extant documents show evidence of a correspondence network during that time reflecting on the changing politics of Rome and the possible benefits for Galileo's work. This is rather important for students wishing to understand Galileo's motivations for writing *Dialogue*. Equally important is the observation of the comets of 1618. Galileo, using a pseudonym, published an interpretation of the comets' movements that skirted around the issue of Copernicanism, but clearly questioned the efficacy of Aristotelianism. Soon after he published *The Assayer* (1623), in which he escalated his attack on scholasticism, attracting favorable commentary from none other than

Pope Urban VIII. None of this is documented in Mayer's sourcebook, despite it having a crucial role to play in the motivations for the legal proceedings which later followed.

The second problem with this sourcebook is the introduction. For such a short piece, Mayer could be forgiven for broad generalizations, such as on Galileo's apparent arrogance, supposedly the cause of a "face to face culture" (11). Perhaps more unfortunate are a couple of inaccuracies. Mayer opens with the line: "Galileo's case has nearly always been portrayed as a cosmic struggle between science and religion" (1). This might have been a fair comment ten or fifteen years ago, but it ignores recent scholarly literature that has done so much to debunk this myth. Mayer is also inaccurate when arguing that the Council of Trent insisted on a literal interpretation of scripture. Instead the Tridentine Council insisted upon expert theological interpretation based on the writings of the Church Fathers. This might seem like a minor point, but it is an important issue for Galileo's prosecutors aiming to assess the precise nature of Galileo's crime.

LUCIANO BOSCHIERO
Campion College, Australia