



# GALILEO GALILEI'S HERESY TRIAL

In 1610, a Catholic Italian scientist named Galileo Galilei published a book called *Starry Messenger*, which described his controversial observations. One of his controversies was the Galileo announcement that Jupiter had four moons and that the sun had dark spots. He also noted that the earth's moon had a rough, uneven surface. This came in direct conflict with Aristotle's theory that the moon and stars were made of a pure, perfect substance. Galileo's observations, as well as his laws of motion, also clearly supported the theories of Copernicus, that is, the sun, not the earth was at the center of their universe. This would put Galileo in direct conflict with the Catholic Church, which placed the earth at the center of their holy universe. Galileo would publish another book, *Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems*. These books and his observations would put Galileo on trial by the Holy Catholic Church for heresy. The following is a transcript of the indictment of Galileo by the Catholic Church.

### Terms to Know

**diurnal** - daily

**contrary** - opposite

**heresy** - belief opposite of the Church

### **Indictment 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 . . . produce(ing) 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 Eminent 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.

## Galileo Indictment

1. What type of document is this? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What is the date of document? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Who or what is the author of the document? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What are the some of Galileo's activities and beliefs that the church says are wrong?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Why, according to the Church are Galileo's actions and ideas wrong?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Underline the sentence or sentences which supports your view for question number five

**Terms to Know**    **Abjuration** - renounce a belief    **contravene** - violate    **penances** - voluntary punishment

### Galileo's Abjuration 1633

...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.

## Galileo Abjuration

7. What does Galileo swear to do in the first paragraph of his abjuration?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. What does Galileo swear to do in the second paragraph of his abjuration?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. Do you think that scientists today are as worried about the reactions from the public and politicians as Galileo and Kepler were? Give reasons or examples to support your opinion. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_





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# KEY

## Galileo Indictment

1. What type of document is this? Catholic Church's Court Transcript
2. What is the date of document? 1633
3. Who or what is the author of the document? The Catholic Church
4. What are the some of Galileo's activities and beliefs that the church says are wrong?  
for believing the sun doesn't move around the earth, that the earth moves and rotates and that the sun is in the center of the world, teaching students those beliefs and publishing those beliefs. And observing sunspots
5. Why, according to the Church are Galileo's actions and ideas wrong?  
Because his beliefs about the universe are opposite or contradict the Catholic Church believes, therefor her heretical.
6. Underline the sentence or sentences which supports your view for question number five

### Terms to Know

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**contravene** - violate

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## Galileo Abjuration

7. What does Galileo swear to do in the first paragraph of his abjuration?  
renounces his beliefs about his original ideas about the universe. He swears he will not write or say any of those beliefs and he will tell the church if he knows anyone else who has those beliefs
8. What does Galileo swear to do in the second paragraph of his abjuration?  
swears to voluntarily be punished by the Church for his actions and will voluntarily be punished by the Church if he violates any more church laws
9. Do you think that scientists today are as worried about the reactions from the public and politicians as Galileo and Kepler were? Give reasons or examples to support your opinion.  
Answers will vary, but students may talk about the differences between politicians and scientists belief on man made climate change.