

Galileo's Second Deposition, April 30, 1633

Called personally to the hall of the Congregations, in the presence and with the assistance of those mentioned above and of myself, the above-mentioned Galileo Galilei, who has since then petitioned to be heard, having sworn an oath to tell the truth, was asked by the Fathers the following:

Q: That he state whatever he wished to say.

A: For several days I have been thinking continuously and directly about the interrogations I underwent on the 16th of this month and in particular about the question whether sixteen years ago I had been prohibited, by order of the Holy Office, from holding, defending, and teaching in any way whatever the opinion, then condemned, of the earth's motion and sun's stability. It dawned on me to reread my printed Dialogue, which over the last three years I had not even looked at. I wanted to check very carefully whether, against my purest intention, through my oversight, there might have fallen from my pen not only something enabling readers or superiors to infer a defect of disobedience on my part, but also other details through which one might think of me as a transgressor of the orders of Holy Church. Being at liberty, through the generous approval of superiors, to send one of my servants for errands, I managed to get a copy of my book, and I started to read it with the greatest concentration and to examine it in the most detailed manner. Not having seen it for so long, I found it almost a new book by another author. Now, I freely confess that it appeared to me in several places to be written in such a way that a reader, not aware of my intention, would have had reason to form the opinion that the arguments for the false side, which I intended to confute, were so stated as to be capable of convincing because of their strength, rather than being easy to answer. In particular, two arguments, one based on sunspots and the other on the tides, are presented favorably to the reader as being strong and powerful, more than would seem proper for someone who deemed them to be inconclusive and wanted to confute them, as indeed I inwardly and truly did and do hold them to be inconclusive and refutable. As an excuse for myself, within myself, for having fallen into an error so foreign to my intention, I was not completely satisfied with saying that when one presents arguments for the opposite side with the intention of confuting them, they must be explained in the fairest way and not be made out of straw to the disadvantage of the opponent, especially when one is writing in dialogue form. Being dissatisfied with this excuse, as I said, I resorted to that of the natural gratification everyone feels for his own subtleties and for showing himself to be cleverer than the average man, by finding ingenious and apparent considerations of probability even in favor of false propositions. Nevertheless-even though, to use Cicero's words, "I am more desirous of glory than is suitable" -if I had to write out the same arguments now, there is no doubt I would weaken them in such a way that they could not appear to exhibit a force which they really and essentially lack. My error then was, and I confess it, one of vain ambition, pure ignorance, and inadvertence. This is as much as I need to say on this occasion, and it occurred to me as I reread my book.

With this, having obtained his signature, and having sworn him to silence, the Fathers formally concluded the hearing.

I, Galileo Galilei, have testified as above.

And returning after a little, he said:

And for greater confirmation that I neither did hold nor do hold as true the condemned opinion of the earth's motion and sun's stability, if, as I desire, I am granted the possibility and the time to prove it more clearly, I am ready to do so. The occasion for it is readily available since in the book already published the speakers agree that after a certain time they should meet again to discuss various physical problems other than the subject already dealt with. Hence, with this pretext to add one or two other Days 77 I promise to reconsider the arguments already presented in favor of the said false and condemned opinion and to confute them in the most effective way that the blessed God will enable me. So I beg this Holy Tribunal to cooperate with me in this good resolution, by granting me the permission to put it into practice.

And again he signed.

I, Galileo Galilei, affirm the above.