

Natacha Fabbri; Federica Favino (Editors). *Copernicus Banned: The Entangled Matter of the Anti-Copernican Decree of 1616*. (Bibliotheca di Galilaean, 8.) xxv + 252 pp., index. Florence: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 2018. €32 (paper). ISBN 9788822265845.

The publication of *Copernicus Banned* marks the fourth centenary of one of the most controversial actions undertaken by the Catholic Church in the early modern period: the condemnation of heliocentrism. On 24 February 1616 a group of consultants to the Holy Office deemed the stability of the Sun as “foolish and absurd in philosophy” and “formally heretical” and the mobility of the Earth as “absurd in philosophy” and “at least erroneous in faith” (Maurice A. Finocchiaro, ed., *The Galileo Affair: A Documentary History* [California, 1989], pp. 146–147). Following the report of the Holy Office, the Congregation of the Index issued a decree on 5 March 1616 that suspended Copernicus’s *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium* (1543) and Diego de Zuñiga’s *In Job commentaria* (1584) until corrected, prohibited Paolo Antonio Foscarini’s *Letter on the Opinion of the Pythagoreans and of Copernicus* (1615), and banned all Copernican books for advocating a cosmological model that challenged the literal interpretation of the Scriptures. Because the events of 1616 had profound implications for the trial of Galileo in 1633, scholars have generally preferred to analyze the proceedings of 1616 and 1633 together. A very fine and classic example of this approach is the collection of essays edited by Ernan McMullin in 2005: *The Church and Galileo* (Notre Dame).

Conversely, *Copernicus Banned* seeks to “consider the *affaire* of 1616 as an independent event from the process of 1633,” interpreting it as an “entanglement” of several factors (p. xi). Although the pivotal role of Galileo and the specter of the trial of 1633 are very difficult to avoid when considering the condemnation of Copernicus, the book is particularly consistent. In effect, the chapters written by Roberto Bondi, Natacha Fabbri, Franco Motta, Luigi Guerrini, Federica Favino, and Giovanni Pizzorusso look at the promulgation of the decree from very different perspectives and, read together, highlight the importance of considering the historical, political, philosophical, theological, astronomical, and alchemical contexts as distinct tiles of a complex mosaic. On the other hand, Édouard Mehl, Rienk Vermij, and Steven Vanden Broecke shift their attention to the aftermath of the decree and write, respectively, about Kepler and the search for stellar parallax after 1616, the muted debate of Copernicanism in Holland, and the anti-Copernican astrologer Jean-Baptiste Morin.

In “Threats to the Christian Cosmos,” Fabbri examines the theological and doctrinal implications of adopting a heliocentric cosmology on the localization of hell and, most important, on the meaning of the descent of Christ into hell and his ascension into heaven. Fabbri brings forward the arguments of early modern theologians, including Francesco Ingoli and the Jesuits Juan de Pineda, Benito Perera, Melchior Inchofer, and Roberto Bellarmine, and claims that the “temerarious ascent of the earth” and its “outrageous approach to the Empyrean” were definitely “important tiles in the mosaic of events” that led to the condemnation of Copernicus (p. 56). In “Nature, Faith, and the Judge of Faith,” Motta analyzes the historical and political context of the anti-Copernican decree, with particular attention to the role played by Bellarmine. Motta also highlights the importance of equating the condemnation of the motion of the Earth as a heresy with coetaneous issues “with far more theological weight” that were put aside by the Roman Congregations, such as the controversy between the Jesuits and the Dominicans on divine grace and the discussion over papal infallibility (p. 71). In “The Archbishop and Astronomy,” Guerrini delves into the theological circles around Archbishop Alessandro Marzimedici and argues that the Florentine context was more complex than previously understood. By looking at the discussion over the supernova of 1604, Guerrini shows that natural philosophers and theologians adopted different positions regarding the role and epistemic limits of astronomy. Finally, in “Alchemical Implications of 1616 *Affaire*,” Favino places the puzzling election of Cosimo Ridolfi—a central witness in the denunciation of Galileo to the Holy Office in 1615—to the Accademia dei Lincei at the center of a complex network of agents and institutions, including the Roman Congregations, the Medici court, and the magic and alchemical circles in the Italian peninsula.

Copernicus Banned is a valuable addition to the existing scholarship on the Galileo Affair. Its major strengths are arguably the attempt to evaluate the condemnation of heliocentrism in 1616 *per se* and

the assessment of new, or relatively unknown, primary sources, such as the correspondence of Cardinal Orsini. Although there are too many untranslated citations in Latin throughout the book, both in the text and in the footnotes, the chapters are generally well written, and the authors present their arguments clearly. Overall, the book is provocative and original, and I recommend that it be read in conjunction with McMullin's classic *The Church and Galileo*.

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Ovidio Montalbani. *Del vento e delle comete: Speculazioni accademiche*. Edited by Linda Bisello. xxv + 81 pp., notes, index. Florence: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 2017. €25 (paper). ISBN 9788822265258.

The seventeenth century is a very peculiar period in the history of science, one that witnessed the transition from Scholastic and Aristotelian science and philosophy to their modern forms, with the advent of the theories of Galileo, Newton, and others and the emergence of the now-accepted scientific method.

Scholars of this historical period cannot simply be classified within the “traditionalist” and “modernist” categories, so vividly represented by Galileo in his famous “Discorsi e dimostrazioni matematiche intorno a due nuove scienze.” On the contrary, we can find a much larger number of diversified positions, spread between these two opposing views.

Ovidio Montalbani (1601–1671) was a typical representative of the scholars of the seventeenth century, an eclectic figure who was a philosopher, scientist, physician, mathematician, and astrologer, as well as a man of letters. And a very successful one: he held the Chair of Medicine in Bologna between 1629 and 1632 and the Chair of Mathematics between 1633 and 1651. He was a member of several academies—the sort of scientific circles typical of that period—but eventually he pursued a career that went beyond the purely academic.

In the context of the above-cited debate, we can consider Montalbani as falling more on the traditionalist side, even if he showed at least a certain degree of acquaintance with the new theories. Indeed, his position is clearly glimpsed in this volume, which collects five “Discorsi” or talks on natural science written by Montalbani between 1633 and 1646. The work has been edited by Linda Bisello, who is a historian of science specializing in the period from the Renaissance to modern times.

From 1629 Montalbani was in charge of the *taccuino* (“notebook”), a publication of the University of Bologna for the use of physicians that reported the astrological forecasts for the upcoming year. At that time, indeed, medicine was based in part on alleged astronomical—or, more accurately, astrological—influences on the human body.

The practice of providing astrological forecasts was common at the time and continued long after Montalbani's day. We know, for instance, from evidence in the “Rotuli dello Studio”—the Rolls of the Study—that the famous astronomer Giovanni Cassini, who was the holder of the Chair of Astronomy in 1651, was required to provide a complete table of ephemerides of all the planets for each day of the coming year. This task might seem a surprising one for an astronomer, but we must remember that the motivations for it at the time were quite distinctive and were based mainly on astrological beliefs. On the first of January the tables were delivered to the rector, who then made them available to the physicians. The latter in turn used them to determine the course of their medical treatments with reference to the motion of the planets.

Montalbani enriched this simple notebook with a sort of introduction on a particular subject. Every year he dealt with a new subject—botany, hydrology, meteorology, astronomy, history, linguistics, or morality. Each of these introductions is a kind of literary essay, in which the author analyzes some specific