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THE
CALUMNY

AGAINST THE CATHOLIC CHURCH,

IN REFERENCE TO

GALILEO,
EXPOSED.

MONTREAL:
D. & J. SADLER, 179 NOTRE DAME STREET.

1849.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE following Historical sketch was published in the *Pilot* Newspaper of this City, of the 9th December, 1848, and was prepared in refutation of aspersions uttered by the Rev. HENRY WILKES, in his Lecture on "The Freedom of the Mind," delivered before the Mercantile Library Association of this City, and in presence of His EXCELLENCY LORD ELGIN. It is taken, in part, from an article published in the United States, a few years since, by an "American Catholic," in answer to erroneous statements made by the late JOHN QUINCY ADAMS; but it is chiefly composed of the facts, reasoning, and language, of the famous reply of the DUBLIN REVIEW—supposed to be written by DOCTOR WISEMAN—to Professor Powell, which was received so gratefully by the Catholic public, and which startled so many Protestants into the belief that more was to be said on the reputed punishment of GALILEO, than had been "dreamt of in their philosophy."

Mr. WILKES was very anxious to *improve* the occasion referred to, by a flourish of eloquence on the GALILEO theme,—how that Philosopher suffered from the Inquisition, and yet, "stamped his foot and said," &c.; and then, "how incompetent was the Inquisition to fetter the human soul." With what justice the Rev. Lecturer indulged his darling hate of the Catholic Church in that instance, the following pages will show. They will also prove how unjust was his insinuation, that had COPELAND

NICUS lived somewhat longer, he, too, would have been brought to trial for heresy—committed in writing his work. Did **Mr. WILKES** know, when he uttered the words to this effect, which appear on the 9th page of his published Lecture, that the money to publish **COPERNICUS'** book was furnished by a **CARDINAL**—that the publication was superintended by a **BISHOP**—and that the book itself was dedicated to a **POPE**? He scarcely could have known these facts; and, then, if he did not, why did he dare to “lecture” his fellow-citizens without having made the little inquiry by which he would have discovered them? It is not necessary to enlarge further on **Mr. WILKES'** conduct; Catholics know well the propensity of his order to libel their faith, and the authorities and institutions connected with it; they have also had experience of the little effect which the best and clearest contradictions have in inducing retraction or apology. Nevertheless, it is right to repeat the truth;—it will probably have its effect in time.

MONTREAL, JANUARY, 1849.

COPERNICUS.—GALILEO.

Nicholas Copernicus, a Priest of the Catholic Church, and the Apostle of Modern Astronomy, acquired his scientific education at the University of Bologna, where, Laplace tells us, "Astronomy was taught with success." In Rome, he was appointed to a Professorship, and for years lectured to crowded halls on his favorite study. After he had discovered the true theory of the solar system, he continued for thirty-six years, with a persevering resolution seldom equalled, the laborious task of "testing its truth by observation and the scrutiny of details." "This was the reason why he delayed the publication of his system for thirty-six years," says his English Protestant Biographer of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge. "The opinions," he adds, "on which it is based were *widely known* to be entertained by him long before the work itself appeared." A Protestant compatriot of Copernicus, Karl Adolf Menzel, the distinguished historian, gives a second reason for this delay—viz.: his indifference to renown, and says, "his discovery had its first promoter at Rome; and that Copernicus, if he had needed a protector, would have found one in the lover of science, Pope Paul III." So widely known were

the opinions of Copernicus on the subject of the earth's motion, that it was publicly satirised in a farce brought out in the Theatre of Elbing. The personal popularity of Copernicus, however, was so great, that the piece was hissed. For many years, the publication of his work was in vain urged by Cardinal Scomberg, who accompanied his solicitation by the *funds necessary for its printing*. One of the Cardinal's letters, dated 1536, is prefixed to the work. Another dignitary of the church, the Bishop of Culm, himself *superintended its publication, and it was dedicated to the Head of the Church, Paul III.*, "on the express ground," says Sir David Brewster, "*that the authority of the Pontiff might silence the calumnies of those who attacked these opinions by arguments drawn from Scripture.*"

It will be seen, from these facts, that it is to Rome we are mainly indebted for the new theory of the earth's motion—that in Rome it had its birth, in Rome it was fostered and matured, and that but for Roman auspices—the countenance of Popes and Cardinals—its adoption had, in all human probability, been thrown back to a distance which it would be now no purpose to try to calculate.

Galileo Galilei was born at Pisa in February, 1564. When a youth, he was intended for the medical profession; but having manifested a great fondness for mathematics, his father reluctantly consented to his pursuit of that study. At the age of twenty-six, when about to leave the School of Mathematics, he was noticed by Cardinal del Monte, and recommended to the reigning Duke of

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Tuscany as a young man of whom the highest expectations might be entertained. He was immediately nominated lecturer on Mathematics in his native city. Galileo now pursued his researches in physics with increased diligence and ardour. At that period the doctrines of Aristotle still reigned in the schools, although Leonardo da Vinci, who lived in the early part of the sixteenth century, Nizzoli, his contemporary, Giordano Bruno, and Beneditti, who wrote about the time of Galileo's birth, had already, by many striking and successful experiments, shaken the authority of the Stagyrte in matters of science. Galileo followed zealously in their path, and proved by experiments the fallacy of the many prevailing opinions. His want of consideration, however, for those less enlightened than himself, and the severity with which he denounced existing errors, caused a rupture between him and his hearers, which soon ripened into enmity, and ultimately rendered his stay at Pisa so unpleasant, that he left. Sir David Brewster remarks, in commenting on this incident—"Forgetting that all knowledge is progressive, and that the errors of one generation call forth the comments, and are replaced by the discoveries of the next, Galileo did not anticipate that his own speculations and incompleated labours might one day provoke censure; and he therefore failed in making allowance for the prejudices and ignorance of his opponents. He who enjoys the proud lot of taking a position in advance of his age, need not wonder that his less gifted contemporaries are left behind. Men are not necessarily obstinate because they cleave to deeply-rooted and venerable errors:

nor are they absolutely dull when they are long in understanding, and slow in embracing newly discovered truths."

In September, 1592, the Republic of Venice appointed Galileo to the Chair of Mathematics in the University of Padua. There he remained till 1610, when he was called to Florence by Cosmo II. to fill the station of Grand Ducal Mathematician. This period of 18 years was nobly employed for science. During this time he invented the telescope, improved the thermometer, wrote many valuable papers, and completed numerous inventions.

Galileo visited Rome for the first time in the early part of the year 1611. His fame had long preceded him. Nowhere were his discoveries better appreciated, his merits more highly prized, than in the capital of the Christian world. His visit was a continued ovation. Honors the most distinguished were lavished upon him. "*Whether we consider Cardinal, Prince, or Prelate,*" says Salisbury, "*he found an honorable welcome from them all, and had their palaces as open and free to him as the houses of private friends.*" His reception was indeed, as is beautifully remarked, "*as though one of his own starry wonders had dropt from the sky.*" Having brought with him his best telescope, he erected it in the garden of Cardinal Bandini. For weeks all classes, prelate, priest, layman, noble, and plebeian, -flocked to see the wonders given for the first time to human gaze. The spots on the sun, lately discovered by Galileo, were the particular object of their curiosity. It was during this visit that Galileo became a mem-

ber of the celebrated Lyncæan Academy. This was a philosophical society founded in 1603 by a young Roman nobleman (Frederigo Cesi). Its chief object was the investigation of the physical sciences. A short extract from its regulations will show that there was some light in that day and region, and may also afford some edification to societies of our day:—

“The Lyncæan Academy desires for its academicians, philosophers eager for real knowledge, who will give themselves to the study of nature, and especially to the mathematics; at the same time it will not neglect the ornaments of elegant literature and philosophy, which, like a graceful garment, adorn the body of science. In the pious love of wisdom, and to the praise of the most good and most high God, let the Lyncæans give their minds, first to observation and reflection, and afterwards to writing and publishing. It is not with the Lyncæan plan to find leisure for recitations and declamatory assemblies; the meetings will neither be frequent nor full, and chiefly for transacting the necessary business of their society; but those who wish to enjoy such exercises will in no respect be hindered, provided they attend them as accessory studies, decently and quietly, and without making promises and professions of how much they are about to do.”

These regulations would be well given at full length if space permitted. Their simple gravity, their absence of pretension, their piety, from a refreshing contrast with the idle declamation and vain assumption of too many modern academic lights.

Galileo had now attained reputation, wealth, station, and high honors. With leisure and means at his command, he could pursue, with every advantage, his professional career, adding new riches to science, and fresh laurels to fame. His pupils had been called to fill the scientific chairs in the principal Universities of Italy. His friends and correspondents were philosophers, princes and prelates. All this distinction and prosperity did not, however,—as is too often the case in the history of the human mind,—tend to Galileo's moral advantage; the pride of intellect and thirst for glory of the man were too strong for the philosopher's love of science. The path to the Copernican system lay open and broad before him. He must needs render it rugged and difficult by obstacles of his own creation. Flushed with his success as a mathematician, and elated by the plaudits of his many admirers, he entered upon the unwise course of combating Scriptural difficulties, and commenced that series of theological epistles known to all who are properly informed of his history, and which formed the sole ground of his ultimate impeachment. It was, however, a considerable time before any decided steps were taken to check his course in that direction. Rome that had fostered Copernicus, and founded his system, could not desire to harm or trouble Galileo, and did not; and, hence, when Larini submitted to the Holy Office a copy of a letter which he thought implicated the man whose powers he probably envied, the Inquisition demanded in *limine* the production of the original,—this not being forthcoming proceedings were stayed, and the purpose of the denunciator

was defeated. In this case the Inquisition knew who had the original letter, but no application was made for it, and Galileo was not so much as cited. So little did the authorities of Rome desire angry collision with the new doctrines, that at the very moment when they were accused of trying to crush this doctrine, by means of the Inquisition, the talented Jesuit, Torquato de Cuppis, is delivering lectures in the Roman College (Bellarmine's own) in support of the same Copernican doctrine,—while in the Pope's own University (Sapienza) another Jesuit is delivering similar lectures. The correspondence of the leading characters on that occasion, which have come down to us, shews the light in which they were disposed to look at the affair. Monsignor Dini, Bishop of Fermo, writing to Galileo states, that Cardinal Barbarini, afterwards Pope Urban VIII., told him how Galileo should comport himself, viz., “with circumspection and as a mathematician;” and adds that he, the Cardinal, “*never heard a word either in his own or in Bellarmine's congregation of quiet interissi of Galileo's, although, in either, the first mention of such things is made.*” On the last day of February, 1615, Ciampoli, the friend of Galileo, and subsequently Secretary to Pope Urban VIII., writes to say that Barbarini repeated to him that it was only required of Galileo “not to travel out of the limits of physics and mathematics, and to confine himself to such reasoning as Ptolemy and Copernicus used, leaving Scripture to the theologians.” On the 21st March, the same writer says, that Cardinal Bellarmine stated, “that the conclusion come to was, that by confining himself to the sys-

tem and ITS DEMONSTRATION, without interfering with the Scriptures, *Galileo would be secure against any contradiction.*" On the 15th of the next month (April), Bishop Dini, in a letter to his friend, testified to Bellarmine's having remarked to him (Dini) that there was no question about Galileo (the case had by this time been dismissed), and that by pursuing the course mentioned, that of speaking as a mathematician, he would be put to no trouble. Favorable as all this was to Galileo, and free as it left him, he still would not be pleased; he set his heart on having his adopted theory received as an unquestioned and unquestionable truth, nor could he rest easy till that object should be accomplished. Almost immediately after all this proof of the disposition of those in power to deal fairly and favorably with him, we find him, *uncited, and of his own free will*, proceeding to Rome, placing himself before the Inquisition to learn, as he says, "what he should believe on the Copernican system." Again was he well and kindly dealt with, and all encouragement given to his scientific zeal. Hear himself declare his triumph:—"*My affair has been brought to a close, so far as I am individually concerned: the result has been signified to me by all their Eminences, the Cardinals, who manage these affairs in the most liberal and obliging manner, with the assurance that they had felt as it were with their own hands, no less my candour and sincerity that the purposes of my persecutors. So that, so far as I am personally concerned, I might return home at any moment.*" He did not so return; his characteristic ardor and impetuosity would not let him. *He*

remains to try to obtain a decision that his opinion is in accordance with Scripture. Through the agency of a Cardinal Orsini, who seems to have lent himself to his views, and imbibed no small portion of his heat and imprudence, he *pressed* for a decision. But the Cardinals waxed cold on the subject, and from time to time it was postponed; at length the Pope, irritated by importunities, did direct that the whole affair should be tried by the Inquisition. Unfavorable, however, as were the circumstances under which the question was referred, good sense and moderation prevailed, and the only judgment pronounced was, that the doctrine "*appeared to be contrary to the Sacred Scripture.*" Such is the account left us by a contemporary who assisted Galileo in his cause, *and who wrote this account at Rome for the philosopher at his own request*; and Galileo himself writing the day after the decision says, "the result has not been favorable to his enemies; the doctrine of Copernicus *not having been declared heretical*, but only as not consonant to the Sacred Scripture: whence, the sole prohibition is of those books in which that consonance is maintained." With regard to the philosopher himself, they deemed it prudent to reduce him to silence on the subject. Yet even this step (of silencing him) they did not take but as a last resort, commissioning one of their number (Bellarmine) to intimate to him their decision, and try, by all the arts of friendly persuasion, to engage him to give up "agitating," as the Ambassador terms it, the question; and if he had a mind to hold these opinions, to hold them in peace. It was only when this last expedient failed, the bio-

grapher in Fabbioni tells us, that Bellarmine had him juridically bound to silence, and in doing so dispensed with any circumstance that might tend, unnecessarily, to irritate his wounded pride: *he was even furnished with a positive certificate that he was not called upon to renounce his opinions.* Immediately after this provocation had taken place, he was admitted to a long and friendly audience with the Pope, and was dismissed with every demonstration of favour and regard. Such is the plain unvarnished statement of the facts of this (the second) inquiry by the Inquisition into the doctrine and conduct of Galileo: it was of *his own seeking*, against the advice of his friends, and arose out of his heated anxiety to give *the law in the interpretation of Scripture*; was marked by much intemperance and indiscretion on his part, by kindness and good feeling on that of the Court; it left him the enjoyment of his opinions, but reduced him, as "*an ecclesiastical precaution,*" to silence in doing so: it warred not with the doctrine, for it left any other teacher to enforce the same views; nay, scarcely was the ink dry on the paper that recorded this decision, when the chair of astronomy in the Pope's own University of Bologna was offered to the immortal Kepler, who, after Galileo, was the most active, and, before Galileo and all others, the most efficient advocate of Copernicanism in his day. Why then, it may be asked, was Galileo, and why Galileo alone, silenced? The answer is already given, and is still further attested by the Ambassador of his Prince, resident on the spot, who, in his despatch dated the day before the sentence was pronounced, de-

scribes Galileo as unmanageable, — “resisting his friends, heated in his opinions, vehement, obstinate, and passionate.”

It is astonishing how completely this “opportunity silence,” as the authorities called it, was followed by peace in the scientifico-religious world. The astronomer is still admired, still courted as ever; Cardinal Barbarini composes verses in his honor, and mounts the papal throne. From that moment Copernicanism is fully in the ascendant; it is enough that any one should be the friend of Galileo, or a partaker in his opinions, — he is immediately placed round the pontifical person, in some post of honor and profit. In fine, Galileo himself comes to Rome, not in consequence of a citation, as a Mr. Dunkwater asserts, but in compliance with the advice of his illustrious friend, Prince Cesi, to offer his congratulations to his brother Academician, Barbarini, on his recent elevation to the Chair of St. Peter. He is loaded with honors. The substantial proofs of papal partiality and esteem with which he returns to his own country, are recorded in almost every history of his time. Among the favors thus conferred by the Pope, was a pension for life of one hundred crowns yearly for Galileo himself; and upon his son, Vincenzo, a pension of sixty crowns. This occurred in the spring of 1624. “In this manner,” says the *Edinburgh Review* (October 1837), “did the Roman Pontiff propitiate the excited spirit of the philosopher, and declares before the Christian world, that he was the enemy neither of Galileo, nor of science.” All is now bright with promise. From one end of the court to the other, it is pro-

claimed that the Geocentric doctrine is *not* a matter of faith—that its opposite is *not* heresy. The Pope frequently expressed himself to the same effect. Every thing promised well for Galileo and his opinions, and nothing could have marred these prospects, but his own rash temper. Unfortunately this temper did, again, force him into a wrong course,—one discreditable alike to his head and his heart. To the wonder and astonishment of all, he seizes the change at Rome, which a prudent man would have used otherwise, to publish his *Four Days Dialogues*, in which he not only gives all preponderance to argument in favor of the opinion of his choice, but treats the opposite opinion and its advocates with ridicule and contempt! The very first page, addressed *To the Discreet Reader*, most indiscreetly satirises the Decree of 1616 by *name*, in a vein of the most bitter irony and sarcasm. It was a daring attempt; and the air of defiance with which it was paraded, made it scarcely possible that any tribunal, pretending to public respect, should tamely submit to be thus ostentatiously trampled upon. The writer had the further imprudence to make pointed allusions to the reigning Pontiff,—holding up to condemnation, in his Dialogue, arguments which the Pope had previously used against the Earth's motion. Gratitude should have taught him to spare one who had always been his friend, and who at that particular time was favoring, in the most marked manner, both Galileo and his theory. However, the shaft was sped, and the natural consequence soon followed. Steps were taken to vindicate the violated order of 1616. Galileo was summoned to Rome,

but in consequence of his age, "he was allowed to come at his leisure;" and we have the testimony of his Protestant Biographer, Sir David Brewster, that "during the trial he was treated with the most marked indulgence;" that, "he stood at the judgment seat with the recognized attributes of a sage, and though an offender against the laws of which they (the Inquisitors) were the guardians, yet the highest respect was paid to his genius, and the kindest commiseration to his infirmities."

Sir David gives a very candid exposition of the state of the question between Galileo and the Roman authorities in his work (*Life of Galileo*), pp. 79, et seq. He admits that from the period of the accession of Pope Urban VIII., "Galileo *must have felt himself secure, and in possession of the fullest license to prosecute his researches, and publish his discoveries, provided he avoided theological questions;*" and that the particular kindness of the Pope towards him "*must be regarded as a donation to science itself, and as a declaration to the Christian world, that religion was not jealous of philosophy, and that the Church of Rome was willing to respect and foster even the genius of its enemies.*" [How different to the charge of "bigotry and prejudice" imprudently uttered by Mr. Wilkes!] The trial and condemnation which now took place were based on the infraction of the order of 1616. Such is evident from the documents given in Venturi; and Campanella, altogether in the interest of Galileo, even to violence, tells us that the infringement of the injunction of 1616 was the cause of the proceeding in 1633. Indeed it is idle to talk of *the doctrine* being put

down. We have seen that the highest authorities in Rome favored it, some directly, some passively; while in the Universities it was openly taught; and, what is more, *Kepler, the Lutheran, was received in Rome, and appointed to a chair of astronomy, after he had been persecuted at home, and the doctrine of the earth's motion, as taught by him, condemned by the Protestant Divines of Tubingen as "damnable and contrary to the Bible."* For this we have the authority of the Protestant, Wolfgang Menzel, who also informs us that "it was with difficulty Kepler saved his own mother from being burnt alive as a witch." This is far worse treatment than Galileo ever suffered; yet Mr. Wilkes refers not to it. Neither did he say one word in condemnation of the penal laws against Ireland, whereby ignorance was enacted, and a whole nation's mind prescribed, making it felony for the professors of the religion of their fathers to get taught at home, and double felony to get taught abroad.

In further refutation of the charge, that the Inquisition condemned the theory of Galileo, as well as his rashness in trying to subdue every thing to his purpose, it may be well again to remark, that the state of feeling in Rome, at the time, towards science was most liberal and enlightened—and far, indeed, in advance of those countries whose writers, down even to our days, have taken particular pleasure in decrying the character of Italy in this respect. Already could she boast of Leonardo da Vinci, her Francastoris, her Casalpiniis. Her academies were the result, as they are the proof, of her vigorous and her generous love of science. That of the Lyncean at Rome would alone do honor

to any age or country. Its foundation preceded by half a century that of the Royal Society of London, and of the French Academy of Paris; and was the model, according to Salisbury, on which they were founded! But to return. It is the fashion with small orators to talk of the punishment of Galileo. It appears he was subjected to four days nominal confinement, and we find him immediately after receiving the hospitalities of an Archbishop, in whose house he remained months previous to returning to Florence. Would a prominent divine of the Church thus honor a *heretic*,—one just condemned as such?

But was not the opinion declared to be heretical? No,—and in thinking otherwise men permit themselves, perhaps wilfully, to be deceived, by the *words of course* of a legal instrument, the set phrases of a Court of Justice, without attending to the *public acceptation* of those terms, which, more than their grammatical construction, *ever decides their meaning*: The words “heretical,” “heresy,” in the sentence of 1633, are but the *stylus curiæ*; the evidence is most decisive, that of the Pontiff in whose name it issued. “No,” says the Pope, “the Church has not condemned that system, nor is it to be considered as heretical, but only as rash.” But do we not see the two propositions, the one declaring the immobility of the sun, the other the motion of the earth, both condemned in the sentence as respectively heretical and erroneous in faith? Yes; but the condemnation is solely the work of the qualifiers, inferior officers of the Inquisition, as indictments in our courts are drawn up, with all their superfluities, by the clerks. The

whole history of Galileo's trial proves, that the abstract question they left where they found it, and we have the most ample evidence that it was never pronounced heretical. Why then is it styled throughout the sentence as a heresy? The reason has already been assigned; it is the style of a court, which being primarily established against "*heretical depravity,*" by a very natural adaptation of language, styles every thing that comes before it "*heresy,*" *even of offences not at all against faith; nay, matters of fact which have nothing whatever to do with opinion; the sole punishment of excommunication inflicted on the staunchest and most unsuspected in faith, for some moral fault, constitutes in the language of the court a "heretic;"* and to shew that this is not an explanation adopted for the convenience of the occasion, any one that wishes for its confirmation has only to consult the *Directorium Inquisitorum* of Nicholas Eymerick, compiled many a long year before Galileo was thought of. It was only then, in that wide, improper, and *technical* sense, that the opinion in the sentence is denominated a "*heresy;*" and the circumstance offers no more proof that it was ever held as such, in the proper and ordinary sense of the word, than the language of our courts of law affords to show that one man was a debtor to the Queen, that another sought to kill her, and that she would dispose of the four quarters of a man executed for treason.

In conclusion, it may be well to state that, even if the authorities of Rome did reject the theory of the earth's motion—which they did not—it would have been no more than that great man, the pride

of England, Lord Bacon, did. Hume tells us, that he "*rejected, with the most positive disdain, the system of Copernicus.*" The Danish astronomer, Tycho Brahe, refused also to admit its truth; the Huguenot professor, Ramus, ten years after the death of Galileo, would not embrace the doctrine; and we have already seen how the Theologians of Tubingen decided in the case of Kepler. But, strange to say, writers who assail Rome with all imaginable bitterness, *for her mere precautionary measures*, find excuses, and in some instances justification, for the real persecution of Kepler, and the positive non-belief of Bacon and others. So it is, and so it will be, while certain prejudices prevail of which it would not be worth while here to speak. One thing, however, ought to be observed—Gentlemen, undertaking to instruct the public by lectures, &c., incur no small responsibility, and should remember how many minds they are likely to do injury to by stating what is not true.