

STARTING POINT: Banned Books of the Scientific Revolution



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- EXHIBIT: *Galileo's World*
GALLERY: The Galileo Affair
OBJECTS:
- Diego de Zúñiga, *In Iob commentaria* (Rome, 1591), 2d. ed.; "Commentary on Job."
 - Paolo Foscarini, "Epistola circa Pythagoricorum, & Copernici opinionem de mobilitate terrae, et stabilitate solis," in Galileo, *Systema cosmicum* (Avignon, 1635), 465-495; "Letter."
 - Nicolaus Copernicus, *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium* (Nuremberg, 1543); "On the Revolutions."

The three most famous banned books of the Copernican revolution, listed in chronological order, are *On the Revolutions* of Copernicus (1543); a *Commentary* on the biblical book of Job by Zúñiga, a theologian in Salamanca; and a *Letter* in defense of Copernicus by the Carmelite monk Paolo Foscarini.

In the Exhibit Hall: Read the captions of these three works in *Galileo's World*. The Copernicus is displayed in the main exhibit hall in a large hexagonal case. The Zúñiga and Foscarini are displayed in the Gaylord Room as part of The Galileo Affair gallery. Compare with the captions of adjacent books, such as Galileo's *Letter to the Grand Duchess Christina* and the work by Campanella.

The commentary by Zúñiga lay at the center of controversies over the Sun-centered cosmology of Copernicus and Galileo. First published in 1584, Zúñiga's commentary on the book of Job was the first printed attempt to reconcile the Sun-centered cosmology of Copernicus with Scripture. The first edition appeared in Toledo in 1584, with a Spanish preface.

In response to the Reformation, the Council of Trent sought to minimize novel reinterpretations of scripture. Ironically, disapproval of Copernicus on account of its novelty led to increased interest in Zúñiga's *Commentary*, resulting in a 2d ed., published in Rome, which became prominent in debates over Galileo. The Rome edition of 1594 is almost certainly the one referred to by Galileo and his Italian contemporaries. It bears a new preface addressed to Pope Gregory XIV.

According to the historian of science Robert Westman, Zúñiga was one of just 10 confirmed Copernicans of the 16th century (the only Spaniard, and one of just 3 Catholic Copernicans). Zúñiga owned a copy of the *On the Revolutions* and achieved a working knowledge of Copernicus' system, including some of its technicalities.

In the commentary for Job 9:6 (misnumbered 9:5), Zúñiga summarized evidence for Copernicanism from the precession of the equinoxes. He also argued that Copernicanism did not violate established principles of biblical interpretation. Of the few copies extant, perhaps the majority have the passage scored out. The OU copy managed to escape censure, although in a contemporary Italian binding.

In the Exhibit Hall: Find the Zuniga on display, and search the facing pages for the name of Copernicus. Count the number of times you see “Copernicus” mentioned.

Other theologians came to Copernicus’ defense as well, including Foscarini and Campanella. After the Council of Trent, their efforts were looked upon with increasing suspicion, as the Catholic Church sought to minimize novelties which, to the minds of the Council, might be linked to the Reformation. After Trent, many theologians did not pause to consider the potential reach of the new mathematical methodologies.

Cardinal Conti brought Zúñiga’s *Commentary* to Galileo’s attention in a 1612 letter thanking him for a gift of the telescope. Foscarini drew upon it in drafting his letter, as did Galileo in the *Letter to the Grand Duchess Christina*.

A decree of the Inquisition in 1616 suspended Zúñiga’s *Commentary*, along with Copernicus’ *On the Revolutions*, until they could be corrected. The same decree banned Foscarini’s *Letter* altogether. The decree did not explicitly mention Galileo or his *Letter to the Grand Duchess Christina*.

In the Exhibit Hall: These works of Copernicus, Zúñiga, Foscarini, Campanella and Galileo are all on display as part of the *Galileo’s World* exhibition on the 5th floor of Bizzell Memorial Library.

SEE ALSO:

- [STARTING POINT: THE TRIAL OF GALILEO](#)
- [The Galileo Affair Open Educational Resources](#) (search lynx-open-ed.org)