

Despite its obvious religious seriousness, the Galileo affair is unquestionably one of the most entertaining episodes in the history of the confrontation between the organized church and the natural sciences. Perhaps for this reason, it is also one of the most well-studied episodes of its kind, attracting considerable attention from historians and philosophers of science, as well as church historians and the occasional theologian. The distinctive feature of Blackwell's contribution lies in its analysis of Paolo Antonio Foscarini's *Lettera sopra l'opinione de' Pittagorici* of January 6, 1615 (which found its way onto the *Index* the following year). Blackwell provides, for the first time, a readable and largely reliable (to judge by the portions I checked against the original) English translation of this letter in its totality. The English translation of this work, and a cluster of important contemporary documents relating to the Galileo controversy, add significantly to the importance of this book.

Those hoping for new insights into Galileo's methodology or mentalité will be rather disappointed by this book, which adds little to our understanding of the debate or its background. But Blackwell's contribution to the debate lies elsewhere. He allows us to view the controversy from the standpoint of Bellarmine, and gain an understanding of the theological concerns and methods which led this important Jesuit writer to oppose Galileo with such force, as well as the influence of the internal politics of the Society of Jesus upon the course of events. Blackwell's presentation of early seventeenth-century Jesuit thought will seem to many readers to lack originality and depth; however, in that Blackwell's intended readership will include those historians of science who find theology somewhat trying, this may easily be excused. Too often, the theological aspects of the episode are marginalized or trivialized by historians; Blackwell's highly readable account demonstrates how significant these aspects are, and allows them to be readily understood by those who might otherwise be tempted to pass them by.

This is a readable and informative account of the Galileo affair, which deserves to be widely read.

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