

1992). xxiv + 225 pp., index. Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 2008. €14.50 (paper).

Although this is an apologetic book, I enjoyed reading it. The context: In 1979 Pope John Paul II expressed the hope “that theologians, scholars and historians, animated by a spirit of sincere collaboration, will study the Galileo case more deeply and, in loyal recognition of wrongs from whatever side they come, will dispel the mistrust that still opposes, in many minds, a fruitful concord between science and faith” (*L’Osservatore Romano*, weekly English edition, 26 Nov. 1979). Judging the past is bold: Did the Roman Catholic Church find the courage for it?

In 1981 an interdisciplinary pontifical commission for the study of the “Galileo case” was created. On 31 October 1992 Cardinal Paul Poupard, President of the Pontifical Council for Culture and a member of the commission, presented the pope with the commission’s conclusions; this led to an address by the pope that the media enthusiastically presented as a “rehabilitation” of Galileo. My opinion differed; despite the good intentions of 1979, I found the end result vague and useless. I expressed my criticism in this journal, in “Light on the Galileo Case?” (*Isis*, 1997, 88:484–504), and was honored to see leading Catholic scholars repeat and extend it. What happened behind Vatican doors between 1979 and 1992? The present book, by two authoritative Catholic scholars and with an introduction by Cardinal Poupard, attempts to answer this question.

The authors rely on Vatican sources, including Poupard’s correspondence. They do not produce full documents in the original language, but only relevant passages translated into Spanish; nevertheless, they deserve praise for their clarity.

The first three chapters present the historical background. Chapters 4–10 are central. They present the several branches of the commission, which included highly respectable scholars, as well aware of the challenge but not duly coordinated and failing to set and answer precise questions. A major question, for instance, should have been whether the root of the scandal, the anti-Copernican decree of 1616, was in line with the contemporary official hermeneutics stated by the Council of Trent. Galileo argued in his *Letter to the Grand Duchess Christina* that he had followed it. Pope John Paul II, in his 1992 speech, termed the *Letter* “a short treatise on biblical hermeneutics” (*L’Osservatore Romano*, weekly English edi-

tion, 4 Nov. 1992). Who, then, was responsible for the misinterpretation that damaged the Church so much? An obvious answer is, Saint Robert Bellarmine. The commission, however, did not offer this or any other clear-cut answer to this crucial question.

Without precise questions and adequate coordination, each branch of the commission conducted normal research around the “case,” rendering the enterprise superfluous. A decade elapsed; Church leaders felt under pressure to produce conclusions.

In 1990 this task was assigned to Cardinal Poupard. A Dominican ghostwriter was entrusted to draw up a few proposals for the pope’s conclusive speech. His drafts, presenting views that are at times interesting and at times questionable or even faulty, ended up as the basis of Poupard’s speech in 1992. Who wrote the pope’s evasive speech, which was delivered immediately thereafter? Manuel Artigas and Melchor Sánchez de Toca do not say. In this speech, the pope avoided saying, *inter alia*, whose fault the debacle was and even suggested that Bellarmine was on the same side as Galileo. The whole book seems to be written to justify, above all, Poupard—as though, despite his goodwill, he had become the main target of the critics. The authors nevertheless produce interesting details, making this part an exciting read.

The last two chapters are utterly apologetic; besides justifying Bellarmine, the authors plainly state (p. 210) that criticizing him or the popes involved in the “affair” would have appeared excessively presumptuous. Under such conditions, the commission would have had no chance. Defensiveness is not in the interest of the Church. The Galileo case will end the day the Church renounces defensiveness, frankly and explicitly admits mistakes, assumes responsibility for them, proclaims that it is no longer what it was four hundred years ago, and acknowledges that such a case would be unthinkable today. Despite all this, *Galileo y el Vaticano* remains a praiseworthy contribution to scholarship.

MICHAEL SEGRE

Joshua Blu Buhs. *Bigfoot: The Life and Times of a Legend.* xv + 270 pp., illus., bibl., index. Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 2009. \$29 (cloth).

On the cover of Joshua Blu Buhs’s new book is a pair of brown boots—very hairy, with bare soles, protruding toes, and thick toenails. That they are boots made to look like big feet is clear from their hollowness. That those boots were